WRITINGS OF WILLIAM GURNALL

by William Gurnall

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by William Gurnall, compiled for study and devotional reading.

23 Chapters

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01 - Volume 1

The Christian In Complete Armour

Volume One A Treatise of The Whole Armour of God

Volume 1 1. A Sweet and Powerful Encouragement to the War 2. Directions for managing this War successfully, 3. The reason why the Christian must be armed, ‘That ye may be able to stand’

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7. First Piece—The Christian’s Spiritual Girdle.

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"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

— Ephesians 6:10-20. The Introduction

Paul was now in bonds, yet not so close kept as to be denied pen and paper; God, it seems, gave him some favour in the sight of his enemies: Paul was Nero’s prisoner, but Nero was much more God’s. And while God had work for Paul, he found him friends both in court and prison. Let persecutors send saints to prison, God can provide a keeper for their turn. But how does this great apostle spend his time in prison? Not in publishing invectives against those, though the worst of men, who had laid him in; a piece of zeal which the holy sufferers of those times were little

acquainted with: nor in politic counsels, how he might wind himself out of his trouble, by sordid flattery of, or sinful compliance with, the great ones of the times. Some would have used any picklock to have opened a passage to their liberty and not scrupled, so escape they might, whether they got out at the door or window. But this holy man was not so fond of liberty or life, as to purchase them at the least hazard to the gospel. He knew too much of another world, to bid so high for the enjoying of this; and therefore he is regardless what his enemies can do with him, well knowing he should go to heaven whether they would or no. No, the great care which lay upon him, was for the churches of Christ; as a faithful steward he labors to set the house of God in order before his departure. We read of no despatches sent to court to procure his liberty; but many to the churches, to help them to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. There is no such way to be even with the devil and his instruments, for all their spite against us, as by doing what good we can wherever we be come. The devil had as good have let Paul alone, for he no sooner comes into prison but he falls a preaching, at which the gates of Satan's prison fly open, and poor sinners come forth. Happy for Onesimus that Paul was sent to jail; God had an errand for Paul to do to him and others, which the devil never dreamed of. Nay he doth not only preach in prison, but that he may do the devil all the mischief he can, he sends his epistles to the churches, that tasting his spirit in his afflictions, and reading his faith, now ready to be offered up, they might much more be confirmed; amongst which Ephesus was not least in his thoughts, as you may perceive by his abode with them two years together, Acts 19:10; as also by his sending for the elders of this church as far as Miletus, in his last journey to Jerusalem, Acts 20:17, to take his farewell of them as never to see their faces in this world more. And surely the sad impression which that heart-breaking departure left on the spirits of these elders, yea, the whole church, by them acquainted with this mournful news, might stir up Paul, now in prison, to write unto this church, that having so much of his spirit, yea, of the spirit of the gospel, left in their hands to converse with, they might more patiently take the news of his death. In the former part of this epistle, he soars high in the mysteries of faith. In the latter, according to his usual method, he descends to application; where we find him contracting all those truths, as beams together, in a powerful exhortation, the more to enkindle their hearts, and powerfully persuade them to 'walk worthy of their vocation,' Ephesians 4:1, which then is done, when the Christian's life is so transparent that the grace of the gospel shines forth in the power of holiness on every side, and from all his relations, as a candle in a crystal glass, not in a dark lantern, lightsome one way and dark another: and therefore he runs over the several relations of husband, wife, parents, children, masters, and servants, and presseth the same in all these.

Now having set every one in his proper place, about his particular duty; as a wise general after he has ranged his army, and drawn them forth into rank and file, he makes the following speech at the head of the Ephesian camp, all in martial phrase, as best suiting the Christian's calling, which is a continued warfare with the world, and the prince of the world. The speech itself contains two parts.

First, A short but sweet and powerful encouragement, Ephesians 6:10. Secondly, The other part is spent in several directions for their managing this war the more successfully, with some motives here and there sprinkled among them, Ephesians 6:11-20. We begin with the first.

Chapter 2

01.01 - A Sweet and Powerful Encouragment to the War

Part First A Sweet and Powerful Encouragement to the War "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.' — Ephesians 6:10 The apostle begins his speech with the word of encouragement to battle: 'Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord;' the best way indeed to prepare them for the following directions. A soul deeply possessed with fear, and dispirited with strong apprehensions of danger, is in no posture for counsel. As we see in any army when put to flight by some sudden alarm, or apprehension of danger, it is hard rallying them into order until the fright occasioned thereby is over; therefore the apostle first raiseth up their spirits, 'be strong in the Lord.' As if he should say, Perhaps some drooping souls find their hearts fail them, while they see their enemies so strong, and they so weak; so numerous, and they so few; so well appointed, and they so naked and unarmed; so skilful and expert at arms, but they green and raw soldiers. Let not these or any other thoughts dismay you; but with undaunted courage march on, and be strong in the Lord, on whose performance lies the stress of battle, and not on your skill or strength. It is not the least of a minister's care and skill in dividing the word, so to press the Christian's duty, as not to oppress his spirit with the weight of it, by laying it on the creature's own shoulders, and not on the Lord's strength, as here our apostle teacheth us. In this verse (under four heads or branches), We have first, A familiar appellation, 'my brethren.' second, An exhortation, 'be strong.' third, A cautionary direction annexed to the exhortation, 'in the Lord.' fourth, An encouraging amplification of the direction, 'and in the power of his might,' or in his mighty power.

BRANCHES FIRST AND SECOND. The appellation, 'my brethren.'— The exhortation, 'be strong.'

We have, Branch First, a familiar appellation, 'my brethren.' This we shall waive, and begin with,

Branch Second, the exhortation—'be strong;' that is, be of good courage, so commonly used in scripture phrase: 'Be strong and courageous,' 2 Chronicles 32:7; 'Say to them that are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong,' Isaiah 35:4. Or, unite all the powers of your souls, and muster up your whole force, for you will have use for all you can make or get. From whence the point is this.

[Christian courage and resolution —wherefore necessary.]

Doctrine, The Christian of all men needs courage and resolution. Indeed there is nothing that he does as a Christian, or can do, but is an act of valour. A cowardly spirit is beneath the lowest duty of a Christian, 'be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest'—What? stand in battle against those warlike nations? No, but that thou mayest 'observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee,' Joshua 1:7. It requires more prowess and greatness of spirit to obey God faithfully, than to command an army of men; to be a Christian than a captain. What seems less, than for a Christian to pray? yet this cannot be performed aright without a princely spirit: as Jacob is said to behave himself like a prince, when he did but pray; for which he came out of the field God's banneret. Indeed if you call that prayer, which a carnal person performs, nothing is more poor and dastard-like. Such an one is as great a stranger to this enterprise, as the craven soldier to the exploits of a valiant chieftain. The Christian in prayer

comes up close to God, with a humble boldness of faith, and takes hold of him, wrestles with him; yea, will not let him go without a blessing, and all this in the face of his own sins, and divine justice, which let fly upon him from the fiery mouth of the law; while the other's boldness in prayer is but the child, either of ignorance in his mind, or hardness in his heart; whereby not feeling his sins, and not knowing his danger, he rushes upon duty with a blind confidence, which soon quails when conscience awakes, and gives him the alarm, that his sins are upon him, as the Philistines on Samson: alas, then in a fright the poor-spirited wretch throws down his weapon, flies the presence of God with guilty Adam, and dares not look him in the face. Indeed there is no duty in the Christian's whole course of walking with God, or acting for God but is lined with many difficulties, which shoot like enemies through the hedges at him, while he is marching towards heaven: so that he is put to dispute every inch of ground as he goes. They are only a few noble-spirited souls, who dare take heaven by force, that are fit for this calling. For the further proof of this point, see some few pieces of service that every Christian engageth in.

First.—The Christian is to proclaim and prosecute an irreconcilable war against his bosom sins; those sins which have lain nearest his heart, must now be trampled under his feet. So David, 'I have kept myself from my iniquity.' Now what courage and resolution does this require? You think Abraham was tried to purpose, when called to take his 'son, his son Isaac, his only son whom he loved,' Genesis 22:2, and offer him up with his own hands, and no other; yet what was that to this? Soul, take thy lust, thy only lust, which is the child of thy dearest love, thy Isaac, the sin which has caused the most joy and laughter, from which thou hast promised thyself the greatest return of pleasure or profit; as ever thou lookest to see my face with comfort, lay hands on it and offer it up: pour out the blood of it before me; run the sacrificing knife of mortification into the very heart of it; and this freely, joyfully, for it is no pleasing sacrifice that is offered with a countenance cast down —and all this now, before thou hast one embrace more from it. Truly this is a hard chapter, flesh and blood cannot bear this saying; our lust will not lie so patiently on the altar, as Isaac, or as a 'Lamb that is brought to the slaughter which was dumb,' but will roar and shriek; yea, even shake and rend the heart with its hideous outcries. Who is able to express the conflicts, the wrestlings, the convulsions of spirit the Christian feels, before he can bring his heart to this work? Or who can fully set forth the art, the rhetorical insinuations, with which such a lust will plead for itself? One while Satan will extenuate and mince the matter: It is but a little one, O spare it, and thy soul shall live for all that. Another while he flatters the soul with the secrecy of it: Thou mayest keep me and thy credit also; I will not be seen abroad in thy company to shame thee among thy neighbours; shut me up in the most retired room thou hast in thy heart, from the hearing of others, if thou wilt only let me now and then have the wanton embraces of thy thoughts and affections in secret. If that cannot be granted, then Satan will seem only to desire execution may be stayed awhile, as Jephthah's daughter of her father: 'let me alone a month or two, and then do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth,' Judges 11:36-37, well knowing few such reprieved lusts but at last obtain their full pardon; yea, recover their favour with the soul. Now what resolution doth it require to break through such violence and importunity, and notwithstanding all this to do present execution? Here the valiant swordsmen of the world have showed themselves mere cowards, who have come out of the field with victorious banners, and then lived, yea, died slaves to a base lust at home. As one could say of a great Roman captain who, as he rode in his triumphant chariot through Rome, had his eye never off a courtesan that walked along the street: Behold, how this goodly captain, that had conquered such potent armies, is himself conquered by

one silly woman.

Second.—The Christian is to walk singularly, not after the world's guise, Romans 12:2. We are commanded not to be conformed to this world, that is, not to accommodate ourselves to the corrupt customs of the world. The Christian must not be of such a complying nature as to cut the coat of his profession according to the fashion of the times, or the humor of the company he falls into; like that courtier, who being asked how he could keep his preferment in such changing times, which one while had a prince for Popery, another while against Popery, answered, he was e salice, non ex quercu ortus—he was not a stubborn oak, but bending osier, that could yield to the wind. No, the Christian must stand fixed to his principles, and not change his habit; but freely show what countryman he is by his holy constancy in the truth. Now what an odium, what snares, what dangers doth this singularity expose the Christian to? Some will hoot and mock him, as one in a Spanish fashion would be laughed at in your streets. Thus Michal flouted David. Indeed, the world counts the Christian for his singularity of life the only fool; which I have thought gave the first occasion to that nick-name, whereby men commonly express a silly man or a fool. Such a one, say they, is a mere Abraham; that is, in the world's account, a fool. But why an Abraham? Because Abraham did that which carnal reason, the world's idol, laugh's at as mere folly; he left a present estate in his father's house to go he knew not whither, to receive an inheritance he knew not when. And truly such fools all the saints are branded for by the wise world. 'You know the man and his communication,' said Jehu to his companions, asking what that mad fellow came for, who was no other than a prophet, 2 Kings 9:11. Now it requires courage to despise the shame which the Christian must expect to meet withal for his singularity. Shame is that which proud nature most disdains, to avoid which many durst not 'confess Christ openly,' John 7:13. Many lose heaven because they are ashamed to go in a fool's coat thither. Again, as some will mock, so others will persecute to death, merely for this nonconformity in the Christian's principles and practices to them. This was the trap laid for the three children; they must dance before Nebuchadnezzar's pipe, or burn. This was the plot laid to ensnare Daniel, who walked so unblameably, that his very enemies gave him this testimony, that he had no fault but his singularity in his religion, Daniel 6:5. It is a great honour to a Christian, yea, to religion itself, when all their enemies can say is, They are precise, and will not do as we do. Now in such a case as this, when the Christian must turn or burn, leave praying, or become a prey to the cruel teeth of bloody men; how many politic retreats and self-preserving distinctions would a cowardly unresolved heart invent? The Christian that hath so great opposition had need be well locked into the saddle of his profession, or else he will soon be dismounted.

Third.—The Christian must keep on his way to heaven in the midst of all the scandals that are cast upon the ways of God by the apostasy and foul falls of false professors. There were ever such in the church, who by their sad miscarriages in judgement and practice have laid a stone of offence in the way of profession, at which weak Christians are ready to make a stand, as they at the bloody body of Asahel, 2 Samuel 2:22, not knowing whether they may venture any further in their profession, seeing such, whose gifts they so much admired, lie before them, wallowing in the blood of their slain profession: [from being] zealous professors, to prove perhaps fiery persecutors; [from being] strict performers of religious duties, [to prove] irreligious atheists: no more like the men they were some years past, than the vale of Sodom (now a bog and a quagmire) is, to what it was, when for fruitfulness compared to the garden of the Lord. We had need of a holy resolution to

bear up against such discouragements, and not to faint; as Joshua, who lived to see the whole camp of Israel, a very few excepted, revolting, and in their hearts turning back to Egypt, and yet with an undaunted spirit maintained his integrity, yea, resolved though not a man beside would bear him company, yet he would serve the Lord.

Fourth.—The Christian must trust in a withdrawing God, Isaiah 50:10. Let him that walks in darkness, and sees no light, trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. This requires a holy boldness of faith indeed, to venture into God's presence, as Esther into Ahasuerus', when no smile is to be seen on his face, no golden sceptre of the promise perceived by the soul, as held forth to embolden it to come near, then to press in with this noble resolution, 'If I perish, I perish,' Esther 4:16. Nay, more, to trust not only in a withdrawing but a 'killing God,' Job 13:15; not when his love is hid, but when his wrath breaks forth. Now for a soul to make its approaches to God by a recumbency of faith, while God seems to fire upon it, and shoot his frowns like envenomed arrows into it, is hard work, and will try the Christian's mettle to purpose. Yet such a masculine spirit we find in the poor woman of Canaan, who takes up the bullets of Christ shot at her, and with a humble boldness of faith sends them back again in her prayer.

Fifth.—The believer is to persevere in his Christian course to the end of his life: his work and his life must go off the stage together. This adds weight to every other difficulty of the Christian's calling. We have known many who have gone into the field, and liked the work of a soldier for a battle or two, but soon have had enough, and come running home again, but few can bear it as a constant trade. Many are soon engaged in holy duties, easily persuaded to take up a profession of religion, and as easily persuaded to lay it down, like the new moon, which shines a little in the first part of the night, but is down before half the night is gone—lightsome professors in their youth, whose old age is wrapped up in thick darkness of sin and wickedness. O, this persevering is a hard word! this taking up the cross daily, this praying always, this watching night and day, and never laying aside our clothes and armour, I mean indulging ourselves, to remit and unbend in our holy waiting on God, and walking with God. This sends many sorrowful away from Christ, yet this is a saint's duty, to make religion his every-day work, without any vacation from one end of the year to the other. These few instances are enough to show what need the Christian hath of resolution. The application follows.

[Use or Application]

Use First.—This gives us reason why there are so many professors and so few Christians indeed; so many that run and so few obtain; so many go into the field against Satan, and so few come out conquerors; because all have a desire to be happy, but few have courage and resolution to grapple with the difficulties that meet them in the way to their happiness. All Israel came joyfully out of Egypt under Moses' conduct, yea, and a mixed multitude with them, but when their bellies were pinched with a little hunger, and the greedy desires of a present Canaan deferred, yea, instead of peace and plenty, war and penury, they, like white■livered soldiers, are ready to fly from their colours, and make a dishonorable retreat into Egypt. Thus the greatest part of those who profess the gospel, when they come to push of pike, to be tried what they will do, deny to endure for Christ, grow sick of their enterprise. Alas! their hearts fail them, they are like the waters of Bethlehem. But if they must dispute their passage with so many enemies, they will even content themselves with their own cistern, and leave heaven to others who will venture more for it. O how

many part with Christ at this cross-way! Like Orpah, they go a furlong or two with Christ, while he goes to take them off from their worldly hopes, and bids them prepare for hardship, and then they fairly kiss and leave him, loath indeed to lose heaven, but more loath to buy it at so dear a rate. Like some green heads, that childishly make choice at some sweet trade, such as is the confectioner's, from a liquorish tooth they have to the junkets[i] it affords, but meeting with sour sauce of labour and toil that goes with them, they give in, and are weary of their service. So the sweet bait of religion hath drawn many to nibble at it, who are offended with the hard service it calls to. It requires another spirit than the world can give or receive to follow Christ fully.

Use Second.—Let this then exhort you, Christians, to labour for this holy resolution and prowess, which is so needful for your Christian profession, that without it you cannot be what you profess. The fearful are in the forlorn of those that march for hell, Revelation 21:1-27; the violent and valiant are they which take heaven by force: cowards never won heaven. Say not that thou hast royal blood running in thy veins, and art begotten of God, except thou canst prove thy pedigree by this heroic spirit, to dare to be holy despite men and devils. The eagle tries her young ones by the sun; Christ tries his children by their courage, that dare to look on the face of death and danger for his sake, Mark 8:34-35. O how uncomely a sight is it to see, a bold sinner and a fearful saint, one resolved to be wicked, and a Christian wavering in his holy course; to see guilt put innocence to flight, and hell keep the field, impudently braving it with displayed banners of open profaneness; [to see] saints hide their colours for shame, or run from them for fear, who should rather wrap themselves in them, and die upon the place, than thus betray the glorious name of God, which is called upon by them to the scorn of the uncircumcised. Take heart therefore, O ye saints, and be strong; your cause is good, God himself espouseth your quarrel, who hath appointed you his own Son, General of the field, called 'the Captain of our salvation,' Hebrews 2:10. He shall lead you on with courage, and bring you off with honour. He lived and died for you; he will live and die with you; for mercy and tenderness to his soldiers, none like him. Trajan, it is said, rent his clothes to bind up his soldiers' wounds: Christ poured out his blood as balm to heal his saints' wounds; tears off his flesh to bind them up. For prowess, none to compare with him: he never turned his head from danger: no, not when hell's malice and heaven's justice appeared in field against him; knowing all that should come upon him, [he] went forth and said, 'Whom seek ye?' John 18:4. For success insuperable: he never lost battle even when he lost his life: he won the field, carrying the spoils thereof in the triumphant chariot of his ascension, to heaven with him: where he makes an open show of them to the unspeakable joy of saints and angels. You march in the midst of gallant spirits, your fellow-soldiers every one the son of a Prince. Behold, some, enduring with you here below a great flight of afflictions and temptation, take heaven by storm and force. Others you may see after many assaults, repulses, and rallyings of their faith and patience, got upon the walls of heaven, conquerors, from whence they do, as it were, look down, and call you, their fellow-brethren on earth, to march up the hill after them, crying aloud: 'Fall on, and the city is your own, as now it is ours, who for a few days' conflict are now crowned with heaven's glory, one moment's enjoyment of which hath dried up all our tears, healed all our wounds, and made us forget the sharpness of the fight, with the joy of our present victory.' In a word, Christians, God and angels are spectators, observing how you quit yourselves like children of the Most High; every exploit your faith doth against sin and Satan causeth a shout in heaven; while you valiantly prostrate this temptation, scale that difficulty, regain the other ground, you even now lost out of your enemies' hands. Your dear Saviour, who stands by with a reserve for your relief at a pinch,

his very heart leaps within him for joy to see the proof of your love to him and zeal for him in all your combats; and will not forget all the faithful service you have done in his wars on earth; but when thou comest out of the field, will receive thee with the like joy as he was entertained himself at his return to heaven of his Father.

[Christian courage and resolution —how obtained.]

Now, Christian, if thou meanest thus courageously to bear up against all opposition, in the march to heaven, as thou shouldst do well to raise thy spirit with such generous and soul-ennobling thoughts, so in an especial manner look thy principles be well fixed, or else thy heart will be unstable, and an unstable heart is weak as water, it cannot excel in courage. Two things are required to fix our principles.

First. An established judgement in this truth of God. He that knows not well what or whom he fights for [may] soon be persuaded to change his side, or at least stand neuter. Such may be found that go for professors, that can hardly give an account what they hope for, or whom they hope in; yet Christians they must be thought, though they run before they know their errand; or if or if they have some principles they go upon, they are so unsettled that every wind blows them down, like loose tiles from the house top. Blind zeal is soon put to a shameful retreat, while holy resolution, built on fast principles, lifts up its head like a rock in the midst of waves. 'The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits,' Daniel 11:32. The angel told Daniel who were the men that would stand to their tackling, and bear up for God in that hour, both of temptation and persecution, which should be brought upon them by Antiochus; [that] not all the Jews, but some of them, should be corrupted basely by flatteries, others scared by threats out of their profession; only a few of fixed principles, who knew their God whom they served, and were grounded in their religion, these should be strong, and do exploits: that is, to flatteries they should be incorruptible, and to power and force unconquerable.

Second. A sincere aim at the right end of our profession. Let a man be never so knowing in the things of Christ, if his aim is not right in his profession, that man's principles will hang loose; he will not venture much or far for Christ, no more, no further than he can save his own stake. A hypocrite may show some mettle at hand, some courage for a spurt in conquering some difficulties; but he will show himself a jade at length. He that hath a false end in his profession, will soon come to an end of his profession when he is pinched on that toe where his corn is—I mean, called to deny that [which] his naughty heart aimed at all this while. Now his heart fails him, he can go no farther. O take heed of this squint eye to our profit, pleasure, honour, or anything beneath Christ and heaven; for they will take away your heart, as the prophet saith of wine and women, that is, our love, and if our love be taken away, there will be little courage left for Christ. How courageous was Jehu at first, and he tells the world it is zeal for God! But why doth his heart fail him then, before half his work is done? His heart was never right set; that very thing that stirred up his zeal at first, at last quenched and cowed it, and that was ambition. His desire of a kingdom made him zealous against Ahab's house, to cut off them who might in time jostle him besides the throne: which done, and he quietly settled, he dare not go through stitch with God's work, lest he should lose what he got by provoking the people with a thorough reformation. Like some soldiers [who] when once they meet with a rich booty at the sacking of some town, are spoiled for fighting ever after.

BRANCH THIRD A cautionary direction, 'be strong in the Lord.' In this we have a cautionary direction. Having exhorted the saints at Ephesus, and in them all believers, to a holy resolution and courage in their warfare, lest this should be mistaken, and beget in them an opinion of their own strength for the battle, the apostle leads them out of themselves for this strength, even to the Lord: 'be strong in the Lord.' From whence we observe.

[The saint's strength lies in the Lord.]

Doctrine. That the Christian's strength lies in the Lord, not in himself. The strength of the general in other hosts lies in his troops. He flies, as a great commander once said to his soldiers, upon their wings; if their feathers be clipped, their power broken, he is lost; but in the army of saints, the strength of every saint, yea, of the whole host of saints, lies in the Lord of hosts. God can overcome his enemies without their hands, but they cannot so much as defend themselves without his arm. It is one of God's names, 'the Strength of Israel,' 1 Samuel 15:29. He was the strength of David's heart; without him this valiant worthy (that could, when held up in his arms, defy him that defied a whole army) behaves himself strangely for fear, at a word or two that dropped from the Philistine's mouth. He was the strength of his hands, 'He taught his fingers to fight,' and so is the strength of all his saints in their war against sin and Satan. Some propound a question, whether there be a sin committed in the world in which Satan hath not a part? But if the question were, whether there be any holy action performed without the special assistance of God concurring, that is resolved, 'Without me ye can do nothing,' John 15:5. Thinking strength of God, 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God,' 2 Corinthians 3:5. We apostles, we saints that have habitual grace, yet this lies like water at the bottom of a well, which will not ascend with all our pumping till God pour in his exciting grace, and then it comes. To will is more than to think, to exert our will into action more than both. These are of God: 'For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure,' Php 2:13. He makes the heart new, and having made it fit for heavenly motion, setting every wheel, as it were, in its right place, then he winds it up by his actuating grace, and sets it on going, the thoughts to stir, the will to move and make towards the holy object presented; yet here the chariot is set, and cannot ascend the hill of action till God puts his shoulder to the wheel: 'to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not,' Romans 7:18. God is at the bottom of the ladder, and at the top also, the Author and Finisher, yea, helping and lifting the soul at every round, in his ascent to any holy action. Well, now the Christian is set on work, how long will he keep close to it? Alas, poor soul, no longer than he is held up by the same hand that empowered him at first. He hath soon wrought out the strength received, and therefore to maintain the tenure of a holy course, there must be renewing strength from heaven every moment, which David knew, and therefore when his heart was in as holy a frame as ever he felt it, and his people by their free-will offering declared the same, yet even then he prays, that God would 'keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of his people, and prepare their heart unto him,' 1 Chronicles 29:18. He adored the mercy that made them willing, and then he implores his further grace to strengthen them, and tie a knot, that these precious pearls newly strung on hearts might not slip off. The Christian, when fullest of divine communications, is but a glass without a foot, he cannot stand, or hold what he hath received, any longer than God holds him in his strong hand. Therefore, Christ, when bound for heaven, and ready to take his leave of his children, bespeaks his Father's care of them in his absence. 'Father, keep them,' John 17:11; as if he had said, they

must not be left alone, they are poor shiftless children, that can neither stand nor go without help; they will lose the grace I have given them, and fall into those temptations which I kept them from while I was with them, if they be out of thy eye or arms but one moment; and therefore, 'Father, keep them.'

Again, consider the Christian as addressing himself to any duty of God's worship, still his strength is in the Lord.

[1. Prayer.] Would he pray? Where will he find materials for his prayer? Alas, he 'knows not what he should pray for as we ought,' Romans 8:26. Let him alone, and he will soon pray himself into some temptations or other, and cry for that which [it] were cruelty in God to give; and therefore God puts words in our mouths: 'Take with you words and say,' Hosea 14:2. Well, now he hath words put into his mouth. Alas, they will freeze in his very lips, if he hath not some heart-heating affections to thaw the tap. And where shall this fire be had? Not a spark to found on his own hearth, except it be some strange fire of natural desires, which will not serve. Whence then must the fire come to thaw the iciness of the heart, but from heaven? The Spirit, he must stretch himself upon the soul, as the prophet on the child, and then the soul will come to some kindly warmth and heavenly heat in its affections. The Spirit must groan, and then the soul will groan. He helps us to these sighs and groans which turn the sails of prayer. He dissolves the heart and then it [i.e. prayer] bursts out of the heart by groans of the lips by heavenly rhetoric, out of the eyes as from a flood-gate with tears. Yet further, now the creature is enabled to wrestle with God in prayer, what will he get by all this? Suppose he be weak in grace, is he able to pray himself strong, or corruption weak? No, this is not to be found in prayer, as an act of the creature; this drops from heaven also: 'In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul,' Psalms 138:3. David received it in duty, but had it not from his duty, but from his God. He did not pray himself strong, but God strengthened him in his prayer.

[2. Hearing the Word.] Well, cast your eyes once more upon the Christian, as engaging in another ordinance of hearing the word preached. The soul's strength to hear the Word is from God. He opens the heart to attend, Acts 16:14, yea, he opens the understanding of the saint to receive the Word, so as to conceive what it means. It is like Samson's riddle, which we cannot unfold without his heifer. He opens the womb of the soul to conceive by it, as the understanding to conceive of it, that the barren soul becomes a 'joyful mother of children.' David sat for half a year under the public lectures of the law, and the womb of his heart shut up, till Nathan comes, and God with him, and now is the time of life. He conceives presently, yea, and brings forth the same day, falls presently into the bitter pangs of sorrow for his sins, which went not over till he had cast them forth in that sweet 51st Psalm. Why should this one word work more than all the former, but that now God struck in with his word, which he did not before? He is therefore said to 'teach his people to profit,' Isaiah 48:17. He sits in heaven that teacheth hearts. When God's Spirit, who is the headmaster, shall call a soul from his usher to himself, and say, —Soul, you have not gone the way to receive by hearing the word. Thus and thus conceive of such a truth, improve such a promise —presently the eyes of his understanding open, and his heart burns within him while he speaks to him. Thus you see the truth of this point, 'That the Christian's strength is in the Lord.' Now we shall give some demonstrations [or reasons].

[Why the saint's strength is laid up in God.]

Reason First. The first reason may be taken from the nature of the saints and their grace. Both are creatures, they and their grace also. Now[ii], 'it is in the very nature of the creature to depend on God its Maker,' both for being and operation. Can you conceive and accident to be out of its subject, whiteness out of the wall, or some other subject? It is impossible that the creature should be, or act without strength from God. This to be, act in and of himself, is so incommunicable a property of the Deity, that he cannot impart it to his creature. God is, and there is none besides him. When God made the world, it is said indeed he ended his work, that is, of creation: he made no new species and kinds of creatures more; but to this day he hath not ended his work of providence: 'My Father worketh hitherto,' saith Christ, John 5:17, that is, in preserving and empowering what he hath made with strength to be and act, that therefore he is said to hold our souls in life. Works of art, which man makes, when finished, may stand some time without the workman's help, as the house, when the carpenter that made it is dead; but God's works, both of nature and grace, are never off his hand, and therefore as the Father is said to work hitherto for the preservation of the works of nature, so the Son, to whom is committed the work of redemption, he tells us, worketh also. Neither ended he his work when he rose again, any otherwise than his Father did in the work of creation. God made an end of making, so Christ made an end of purchasing mercy, grace, and glory for believers, by once dying; and as God rested at the end of creation, so he, when he had wrought eternal redemption, and 'by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high,' Hebrews 1:3. But he ceaseth not to work by his intercession with God for us, and by his Spirit in us for God, whereby he upholds his saints, their graces, and comforts his life, without which they would run to ruin. Thus we see as grace is a creature, the Christian depends on God for his strength. But further,

Reason Second. The Christian's grace is not only a creature, but a weak creature, conflicting with enemies stronger than itself, and therefore cannot keep the field without an auxiliary strength from heaven. The weakest goes to the wall, if no succour comes in. Grace in this life is but weak, like a king in the cradle, which gives advantage to Satan to carry on his plots more strongly to the disturbance of this young king's reign in the soul, yea, he would soon make an end of the war in the ruin of the believer's grace, did not Heaven take the Christian into protection. It is true indeed, grace, wherever it is, hath a principle in itself that makes it desire and endeavour to preserve itself according to its strength, but being overpowered must perish, except assisted by God, as fire in green wood, which deads and damps the part kindled, will in time go out, except blown up, or more fire put to that little; so will grace in the heart. God brings his grace into the heart by conquest. Now, as in a conquered city, though some yield and become true subjects to the conqueror, yet others plot how they may shake off this yoke; and therefore it requires the same power to keep, as was to win it at first. The Christian hath an unregenerate part, that is discounted at this new change in the heart, and disdains as much to come under the sweet government of Christ's sceptre, as the Sodomites that Lot should judge them. What, this fellow, a stranger, control us! And Satan heads this mutinous rout against the Christian, so that if God should not continually reinforce this new planted colony in the heart, the very natives (I mean corruptions) that are left, would come out of their dens and holes where they lie lurking, and eat up the little grace the holiest on earth hath; it would be as bread to these devourers.

Reason Third. A third demonstration may be taken from the grand design which God propounds to himself in the saint's salvation; yea, in the transaction of it from first to last. And that is twofold. 1.

God would bring his saints to heaven in such a way as might be most expressive of his dear love and mercy to them. 2. He would so express his mercy and love to them, as might rebound back to him in the highest advance of his own glory possible. Now how becoming this is to both, that saints should have all their ability for every step they take in the way to heaven, will soon appear.

1. Design. God would bring his saints to heaven in such a way as might be most expressive of his dear love and mercy to them. This way of communicating strength to saints, gives a double accent to God's love and mercy.

(1.) It distills a sweetness into all the believer hath or doth, when he finds any comfort in his bosom, any enlargement of heart in duty, any support under temptations, to consider whence came all these, what friend sends them in. They came not from my own cistern, or any creature's. O it is my God that hath been here, and left his sweet perfume of comfort behind him in my bosom! my God that hath unaware to me filled my sails with the gales of his Spirit, and brought me off the flats of my own deadness, where I lay aground. O, it is his sweet Spirit that held my head, stayed my heart in such an affliction and temptation, or else I had gone away in a fainting fit of unbelief. How can this choose but to endear God to a gracious soul? His succors coming so immediately from heaven, which would be lost, if the Christian had any strength to help himself (though this stock of strength came at first from God). Which, think you, speaks more love and condescent: for a prince to give a pension to a favorite, on which he may live by his own care, or for this prince to take the chief care upon himself, and come from day to day to this man's house, and look into his cupboard, and see what provision he hath, what expense he is at, and so constantly to provide for the man from time to time? Possibly some proud spirit that likes to be his own man, or loves his means better than his prince, would prefer the former, but one that is ambitious to have the heart and love of his prince would be ravished with the latter. Thus God doth with his saints. The great God comes and looks into their cupboard, and sees how they are laid in, and sends in accordingly as he finds them. 'Your heavenly Father knows you have need of these things,' and you shall have them. He knows you need strength to pray, [to] hear, [to] suffer for him, and, in ipsâ horâ dabitur, 'in the very hour it will be given.'

(2.) This way of God's dealing with his saints adds to the fulness and stability of their strength. Were the stock in our own hands, we should soon prove broken merchants. God knows we are but leaking vessels, when fullest we could not hold it long; and therefore to make all sure, he sets us under the streaming forth of his strength, and a leaking vessel under a cock gets what it loseth. Thus we have our leakage supplied continually. This is the provision God made for Israel in the wilderness: He clave the rock, and the rock followed them. They had not only a draught at present, but it ran in a stream after them, so that you hear no more of their complaints for water. This rock was Christ. Every believer hath Christ at his back, following him with strength as he goes, for every condition and trial. One flower with the root is worth many in a posie, which though sweet yet doth not grow, but wither as we wear them in our bosoms. God's strength as the root keeps our grace lively, without which, though as orient as Adam's was, it would die.

2. Design. The second design that God hath in his saints' happiness is, that he may so express his mercy and love to them as may rebound back to him in the highest advance of his own glory therein, Ephesians 1:4, Ephesians 1:12, which is fully attained in this way of empowering saints, by a strength not of their own, but of their God his sending, as they are put to expense. Had God

given his saints a stock of grace to have set up with and left them to the improvement of it, he had been magnified indeed, because it was more than God did owe the creature; but he had not been omnified as now, when not only the Christian's first strength to close with Christ is from God, but he is beholden still to God for the exercise of that strength, in every action of his Christian course. As a child that travels in his father's company, all is paid for, but his father carries the purse, not himself, so the Christian's shot is discharged in every condition; but he cannot say this I did, or that I suffered, but God wrought all in me and for me. The very comb of pride is cut here; no room [is left] for any self-exalting thoughts. The Christian cannot say, that I am a saint is mercy; but being a saint, that my faith is strong, this is the child of my own care and watchfulness. Alas, poor Christian! who kept thine eye waking, and stirred up thy care? Was not this the offspring of God as well as thy faith at first? No saint shall say of heaven when he comes there, 'This is heaven, which I have built by the power of my might.' No, 'Jerusalem above is a city whose builder and maker is God.' Every grace, yea, degree of grace, is a stone in that building, the topstone whereof is laid in glory, where saints shall more plainly see, how God was not only Founder to begin, but Benefactor also to finish the same. The glory of the work shall not be crumbled and piece-mealed out, some to God and some to the creature, but all entirely paid in to God, and he acknowledged all in all.

[Use or Application]

Use First. Is it the Christian's strength in the Lord, not in himself? Surely then the Christless person must needs be a poor impotent creature, void of all strength and ability of doing anything of itself towards its own salvation. If the ship launched, rigged, and with her sails spread cannot stir, till the wind come fair and fill them, much less the timber that lies in the carpenter's yard hew and frame itself into a ship. If the living tree cannot grow except the root communicate its sap, much less can a dead rotten stake in the hedge, which hath no root, live of its own accord. In a word, if a Christian, that hath his spiritual life of grace, cannot exercise this life without strength from above, then surely one void of this new life, dead in sins and trespasses, can never be able to beget this in himself, or concur to the production of it. The state of unregeneracy is a state of impotency. 'When we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly,' Romans 5:6. And as Christ found the lump of mankind covered with the ruins of their lapsed estate (no more able to raise themselves from under the weight of God's wrath which lay upon them, than one buried under the rubbish of a fallen house is to free himself of that weight without help), so the Spirit finds sinners in as helpless a condition, as unable to repent, or believe on Christ for salvation, as they were of themselves to purchase it. Confounded therefore for ever be the language of those sons of pride, who cry up the power of nature, as if man with his own brick and slime of natural abilities were able to rear up such a building, whose top may reach heaven itself. 'It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but God that sheweth mercy,' Romans 9:16. God himself hath scattered such Babel-builders in the imagination of their hearts, who raiseth this spiritual temple in the souls of men, 'not by might, nor by a power,' of their own, 'but by his Spirit,' that so 'grace, grace,' might be proclaimed before it forever. And therefore, if any yet in their natural estate would become wise to salvation, let them first become fools in their own eyes, and renounce their carnal wisdom, which perceives the things of God, and beg wisdom of God, who giveth and upbraideth not. If any man would have strength to believe, let them become weak, and die to their own, for, 'by strength shall no man prevail,' 1 Samuel 2:9.

Use Second. Doth the Christian's strength lie in God, not in himself? This may for ever keep the Christian humble, when most engaged in duty, most assisted in his Christian course. Remember, Christian, when thou hast thy best suit on, who made it, who paid for it. Thy grace, thy comfort is neither the work of thy own hands, nor the price of thy own desert; be not, for shame, proud of another's cost. That assistance will not long stay which becomes a nurse to thy pride; thou art not lord of that assistance thou hast. Thy Father is wise, who when he alloweth thee most for thy spiritual maintenance, even then keeps the law in his own hands, and can soon curb thee, if thou growest wanton with his grace. Walk humbly therefore before thy God, and husband well that strength thou hast, remembering that it is borrowed strength. Who will waste what he begs?[iii] or who will give that beggar that spends idly his alms? when thou hast most, thou canst not be long from thy God's door. And how canst thou look him on the face for more, who hast embezzled what thou hast received?

BRANCH FOURTH. An amplification of the direction, 'and in the power of his might.' In this branch we have an encouraging amplification annexed to the exhortation, in these words 'and in the power of his might,' where a twofold inquiry is requisite for the explication of the phrase. First, What these words import, 'the power of his might.' Second, What it is to 'be strong in the power of his might.'

First. What these words import, 'the power of his might.' It is an Hebraism, and imports nothing but his mighty power, like that phrase, 'to the praise of the glory of his grace,' Ephesians 1:6 that is, to the praise of his glorious grace. And his mighty power imports no less than his almighty power; sometimes the Lord is styled 'strong and mighty,' Psalms 24:8, sometimes 'most mighty,' sometimes 'almighty,' no less is meant in all than God's infinite almighty power.

Second. What it is to 'be strong in the power of his might.' To be strong in the power of the Lord's might, implies two acts of faith. First, a settled firm persuasion that the Lord is almighty on power. 'Be strong in the power of his might,' that is, be strongly rooted in your faith, concerning this one foundation truth, that God is almighty. Second, It implies a further act of faith, not only to believe that God is almighty, but also that this almighty power of God is engaged for its defence; so as to bear up in the midst of all trials and temptations undauntedly, leaning on the arm of God Almighty, as it were his own strength. For that is the apostle's drift, as to beat us off from leaning on our own strength, so to encourage the Christian to make use of God's almighty power, as freely as if it were his own, whenever assaulted by Satan in any kind. As a man set upon by a thief stirs up all the force and strength he hath in his whole body to defend himself and offend his adversary; so the apostle bids the Christian 'be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,' that is, Soul, away to thy God, whose mighty power is all intended and devoted by God himself for thy succor and defence. Go strengthen and entrench thyself in it by a steadfast faith, as that which shall be laid out to the utmost for thy good. From whence these two notes [or doctrines], I conceive, will draw out the fatness of the words. Doctrine First, That it should be the Christian's great care and endeavour in all temptations and trials to strengthen his faith on the almighty power of God. Doctrine Second, The Christian's duty and care is not only to believe that God is almighty, but strongly by faith to rest on this almighty power of God, as engaged for his help and succour in all his trials and temptations.

[Of acting our faith on the almighty power of God.]

Doctrine First. It should be the Christian's great care in all temptations and trials to strengthen his faith on the almighty power of God. When God holds forth himself as an object of the soul's trust and confidence in any great strait or undertaking, commonly this attribute of his almighty power is presented in the promise, as the surest holdfast for faith to lay hold on. As a father in rugged way gives his child his arm to lay hold by, so doth God usually reach forth his almighty power for his saints to exercise their faith on, [as He did for] Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose faith God tried above most of his saints before or since, for not one of those great things which were promised to them did they live to see performed in their days. And how doth God make known himself to them for their support, but by displaying this attribute? 'I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty,' Exodus 6:3. This was all they had to keep house with all their days: with which they lived comfortably, and died triumphantly, bequeathing the promise to their children, not doubting, because God Almighty had promised, of the performance. Thus, Isaiah 26:1-21, where great mercies are promised to Judah, and a song penned beforehand to be sung on that gaudy day of their salvation; yet because there was a sharp winter of captivity to come between the promise and the spring-time of the promise, therefore, to keep their faith alive in this space, the prophet calls them up to act their faith on God Almighty. 'Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength,' Isaiah 26:4. So when his saints are going to the furnace of persecution, what now doth he direct their faith to carry to prison, to stake, with them but this almighty power? 'Let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator,' 1 Peter 4:19. Creator is a name of almighty power; we shall now give some reasons of the point.

Reason First. Because it is no easy work to make use of this truth, how plain and clear soever it now appears, in great plunges of temptation, that God is almighty. To vindicate this name of God from those evil reports which Satan and carnal reason raise against it, requires a strong faith indeed. I confess this principle is a piece of natural divinity. That light which finds out a Deity will evince, if followed close, this God to be almighty; yet in a carnal heart, it is like a rusty sword, hardly drawn out of the scabbard, and so of little or no use. Such truths are so imprisoned in natural conscience, that they seldom get a fair hearing in the sinner's bosom, till God gives them a jail-delivery, and brings them out of their house of bondage, where they are shut up in unrighteousness with a high hand of his convincing Spirit. Then, and not till then, the soul will believe [that] God is holy, merciful, almighty; nay, some of God's peculiar people, and not the meanest for grace amongst them, have had their faith for a time set in this slough, [and] much ado to get over these difficulties and improbabilities which sense and reason have objected, so as to rely on the almighty power of God, with a notwithstanding. Moses himself [was] a star of the first magnitude for grace, yet see how his faith blinks and twinkles till he wades out the temptation: 'The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them?' Numbers 11:21-22. This holy man had lost the sight for a time of the almighty power of God, and now he projecting how this should be done; as if he had said in plain terms, How can this be accomplished? For so God interprets his reasoning: 'And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord's hand waxed short?' Numbers 11:23. So Mary, 'Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died,' John 11:32. And her sister Martha, 'Lord, by this time he stinketh,' John 11:39. Both [were] gracious women, yet both betrayed the weakness of their faith on the almighty power of Christ; one limiting him to place—'f thou hadst been here,' he had not died; as if Christ could not

have saved his life absent as well as present—sent his health to him as well as brought it with him;—the other to time —'now he stinketh;' as if Christ had brought his physic too late, and the grave would not deliver up its prisoner at Christ's command. And thou hast such a high opinion of thyself, Christian, that thy faith needs not thy utmost care and endeavour for further establishment on the almighty power of God, when thou seest such as these dash their foot against this kind of temptation?

Reason Second. The second reason may be taken from the absolute necessity of this act of faith above others, to support the Christian in the hour of temptation. All the Christian's strength and comfort is fetched without doors, and he hath none to send of his errand but faith; this goes to heaven and knocks God up, as he in the parable his neighbour at midnight for bread: therefore, when faith fails, and the soul hath none to go to market for supplies, there must needs be a poor house kept in the meantime. Now faith is never quite laid up till the soul denies, or at least questions, the power of God. Indeed, when the Christian disputes the will of God, whispering within its own bosom, will he pardon? will he save? this may make faith go haltingly to the throne of grace, but not knock the soul off from seeking the face of God. Even then faith on the power of God will bear it company thither: 'If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;' if thou wilt, thou canst pardon, thou canst purge. But when the soul concludes he cannot pardon, cannot save, this shoots faith to the heart, so that the soul falls at the foot of Satan, not able more to resist; now it grows more listless to duty, indifferent whether it pray or not, as one that sees the well dry breaks or throws away his pitcher.

Reason Third. Because God is very tender of this flower of his crown, this part of his name: indeed we cannot spell it right and leave out this letter, for that is God's name, whereby he is known by all his creatures. Now man may be called wise, merciful, mighty: God only, all-wise, all-merciful, almighty; so that when we leave out this syllable all, we nickname God, and call him by his creature's name, which he will not answer to. Now the tenderness that God shows to this prerogative of his appears in three particulars.

1. In the strict command he lays on his people to give him the glory of his power. 'Neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid,' but 'sanctify the Lord of hosts himself,' Isaiah 8:12-13; that is, in this sad posture of your affairs, when your enemies associate, and you seem a lost people to the eye of reason, not able to contest with [those] united powers which beset you on every side, I charge you, sanctify me in giving me the glory of my almighty power. Believe that your God is able of himself, without any other, to defend you, and destroy them.

2. In his severity to his dearest children, when they stagger in their faith, and come not off roundly, without reasoning and disputing the case, to rely on his almighty power. Zacharias did but ask the angel, 'whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years?' yet for bewraying therein his unbelief, had a sign indeed given him, but such a one as did not only strengthen his faith, but severely punish his unbelief, for he was struck dumb upon the place. God loves his children should believe his word, not dispute his power; so true is that of Luther: 'God loves the obedient, not the cavilling.'[iv] That which gave accent to Abraham's faith was that he was 'fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform,' Romans 4:21.

3. In the way God takes of giving his choicest mercies and greatest salvations to his people, wherein he lays the scene of his providence, so that when he hath done it may be said, Almighty

power was here. And therefore, God commonly puts down those means and second causes, which if they stood about his work would blind and hinder the full prospect thereof in effecting the same. ‘We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead,’ 2 Corinthians 1:9. Christ stayed while [until] Lazarus was dead, that he might draw the eyes of their faith more singly to look on his power, by raising his dead friend, rather than curing him being sick, which would not have carried so full a conviction of almightiness with it. Yea, he suffers a contrary power many times to arise, in that very juncture of time, when he intends the mercy to his people, that he may rear up more magnificent pillar of remembrance to his own power, in the ruin of that which contests with him. Had God brought Israel out of the Egypt in the time of those kings which knew Joseph, most likely they might have had a friendly departure and an easy deliverance, but God reserves this for the reign of that proud Pharaoh, who shall cruelly oppress them, and venture his kingdom, but will satisfy his lust upon them. And why must this be the time, but that God would bring them forth with a stretched-out arm? The magnifying of his power was God’s great design. ’In very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth,’ Exodus 9:16.

4. In the prevalency which an argument that is pressed from his almighty power hath with God. It was the last string Moses had to his bow, when he begged the life of Israel: ‘The nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able,’ &c., Numbers 14:15-16. And ‘Let the power of my Lord be great,’ Numbers 14:17; and with this he hath their pardon thrown him. The application of this point will fall in under the next, which is [Of acting our faith on the almighty power of God, as engaged for our help.]

Doctrine Second. That it is the saint’s duty, and should be their care, not only to believe God Almighty, but also strongly to believe that this almighty power of God is theirs, that is, [is] engaged for their defence and help, so as to make use of it in all straits and temptations. First, I shall prove that the almighty power of God is engaged for the Christian’s defence, with the grounds of it. Second, [I shall prove] why the Christian should strongly act his faith on this.

First. I shall prove that the almighty power of God is engaged for the Christian’s defence, with the grounds of it. God brought Israel out of Egypt with an high hand, but did he set them down on the other side of the Red Sea, to find and force their way to Canaan, by their own policy or power? When he had opened the gate of their iron house of bondage, and brought them into the open fields, did he vanish as the angel from Peter, when out of prison? No, ‘The Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went,’ Deuteronomy 1:31. This doth lively set forth the saint’s march to heaven; God brings a soul out of spiritual Egypt by his converting grace, that is, the ‘day of his power,’ wherein he makes the soul willing to come out of Satan’s clutches. Now when the saint is upon his march, all the country riseth upon him. How shall this creature pass the pikes, and get safely by all his enemies’ borders? God himself enfolds him in the arm of his everlasting strength. ‘We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.’ 1 Peter 1:5. The power of God is that shoulder on which Christ carries his sheep home, rejoicing all the way he goes, Luke 15:5. These everlasting arms of his strength are those eagles’ wings, upon which the saints are both tenderly and securely conveyed to glory, Exodus 19:4. There is a five-fold tie or engagement that lies upon God’s power to be the saints’ life-guard.

First Tie. The near relation he hath to his saints. They are his own dear children; every one takes care of his own—the silly hen, how doth she bustle and bestir herself to gather her brood under her wing when the kite appears? no care like that which nature teacheth. How much more will God, who is the Father of such dispositions in his creature, stir up his whole strength to defend his children? ‘He said, They are my people, so he became their Saviour,’ Isaiah 63:8. As if God had said, Shall I sit still with my hand in my bosom, while my own people are thus misused before my face? I cannot bear it. The mother as she sits in her house hears one shriek, and knowing the voice, cries out, ‘O it is my child.’ Away she throws all, and runs to him. Thus God takes the alarm of his children’s cry: ‘I heard Ephraim bemoaning himself, saith the Lord;’ his cry pierced his ear, and his ear affected his bowels, and his bowels called up his power to the rescue of him.

Second Tie. The dear love he beareth to his saints engageth his power. He that hath God’s heart cannot want his arm. Love in the creature commands all the other affections, sets all the powers of the whole man on work; thus in God, love sets all his other attributes on work. When once God pitched his thoughts of doing good to lost man, then wisdom fell on projecting the way, almighty power that undertook to raise the fabric according to wisdom’s model. All are ready to effect what God saith he likes. Now the believing soul is an object of God’s choicest love, even the same with which he loves his Son, John 17:26.

1. God loves the believer as the birth of his everlasting counsel. When a soul believes, then God’s eternal purpose and counsel concerning him, whom he chose in Christ before the foundation of the world, and with whom his thoughts went so long big, brings forth. And how must God needs love that creature whom he carried so long in the womb of his eternal purpose? This goodly fabric of heaven and earth had not been built, but as a stage whereon he would in time act what he decreed in heaven of old, concerning the saving of thee, and a few more his elect. And therefore according to the same rate of delight, with which God pleased and entertained himself in the thoughts of this before the world was, must he needs rejoice over the soul now believing, with love and complacency inconceivable; and God having brought his counsel thus far towards its issue, surely will raise all the power he hath, rather than be disappointed of his glory within a few steps of home; I mean, his whole design in the believer’s salvation. The Lord who hath chosen his saints Zechariah 3:1-10, as Christ prays for Joshua their representative, will rebuke Satan and all their enemies.

2. God loves the saints as the purchase of his Son’s blood. They cost him dear, and that which is so hardly got shall not be easily lost. He that was willing to expend his Son’s blood to gain them, will not deny his power to keep them.

3. God loves the saints for their likeness to himself, so that if he loves himself, he cannot but love himself appearing in them; and as he loves himself in them, so he defends himself in defending them. What is it in a saint that enrageth hell but the image of God, without which the war would soon be at an end? It is the hatred that the panther hath to man that makes him fly at his picture. ‘For thy sake we are slain all the day long:’ and if the quarrel be God’s, surely the saint will not go forth to war at his own cost.

Third Tie. The covenant engageth God’s almighty power, ‘I am the Almighty God; walk before me,’ Genesis 17:1. There is a league offensive and defensive between God and his saints; he gives it under his hand that he will put forth the whole power of his godhead for them, ‘The Lord of hosts is

the God of Israel, even a God to Israel,' 1 Chronicles 17:24. God doth not parcel himself out by retail, but gives his saints leave to challenge whatever a God hath, as theirs; and let him, whoever he is, sit in God's throne and take away his crown, that can fasten any untruth on the Holy One; as his name is, so is his nature, a God keeping covenant for ever. The promises stand as the mountains about Jerusalem, never to be removed; the weak as well as the strong Christian is within this line of communication. Were saints to fight it out in open field by the strength of their own grace, then the strong were more likely to stand, and the weak to fall in battle; but both castled in the covenant, are alike safe.

Fourth Tie. The saints' dependence on God, and expectation from God in all their straits, oblige his power for their succour. Whither doth a gracious soul fly in any want or danger from sin, Satan, or his instruments, but to his God? As naturally as the cony to her burrow. 'What time I am afraid,' saith David, 'I will trust in thee,' Psalms 56:3. He tells God he will make bold of his house to step into when taken in any storm, and doth not question his welcome. Thus when Saul hunted him, he left a city of gates and bars to trust God in open field. Indeed all the saints are taught the same lesson, to renounce their own strength, and rely on the power of God; their own policy, and cast themselves on the wisdom of God; their own righteousness, and expect all from the pure mercy of God in Christ, which act of faith is so pleasing to God, that such a soul shall never be ashamed, 'The expectation of the poor shall not perish,' Psalms 9:18. A heathen could say, when a bird scared by a hawk flew into his bosom, I will not betray thee unto thy enemy, seeing thou comest for sanctuary unto me. How much less will God yield up a soul unto its enemy when it takes sanctuary in his name, saying, 'Lord, I am hunted with such a temptation, dogged with such a lust, either thou must pardon it, or I am damned; mortify it, or I shall be a slave to it; take me into the bosom of thy love, for Christ's sake; castle me in the arms of thy everlasting strength, it is in thy power to save me from, or give me up into, the hands of my enemy. I have no confidence in myself or any other: into thy hands I commit my cause, my life, and rely on thee.' This dependence of a soul undoubtedly will awaken the almighty power of God for such an one's defence. He hath sworn the greatest oath that can come out of his blessed lips, even by himself, that such as thus fly for refuge to hope in him, shall have strong consolation, Hebrews 6:17. This indeed may give the saints the greater boldness of faith to expect kindly entertainment when he repair to God for refuge, because he cannot come before he is looked for. God having set up his name and promises as a strong tower, both calls his people into these chambers, and expects they should betake themselves thither.

Fifth Tie. Christ's presence and employment in heaven lays a strong engagement on God to bring his whole force and power into the field upon all occasions for his saints' defence. One special end of his journey to heaven, and abode there, is that he might, as the saints' solicitor, be ever interceding for such supplies and succours of his Father as their exigencies call for; and the more to assure us of the same before he went, he did, as it were, tell us what heads he meant to go upon his intercession when he should come there; one of which was this, that his Father should keep his children while they were to stay in the world from the evil thereof, John 17:15. Neither doth Christ take upon him this work of his own head, but hath the same appointment of his Father for what he now prays in heaven, as he did for what he suffered on earth. He that ordained him a Priest to die for sinners, did not then strip him of his priestly garments, as Aaron, but appoints him to ascend in them to heaven, where he sits a Priest for ever by God's oath. And this office of

intercession was erected purely in mercy to believers, that they might have full content given them for the performance of all that God had promised; so that Jesus Christ lies lieger at court as our ambassador, to see all carried fairly between God and us according to agreement; and if Christ follows his business close, and be faithful in his place to believers, all is well. And doth it not behove him to be so, who intercedes for such dear relations? Suppose a king's son should get out of a besieged city, where he hath left his wife and children, whom he loves as his own soul, and these all ready to die by sword or famine; if supply come not sooner, could this prince, when arrived at his father's house, please himself with the delights of the court, and forget the distress of his family? Or rather would he not come post to his father, having their cries and groans always in his ears, and before he eat or drink, do his errand to his father, and entreat him if ever he loved him, that he would send all the force of his kingdom to raise the siege, rather than any of his dear relations should perish? Surely, sirs, though Christ be in the top of his preferment, and out of the storm in regard of his own person, yet his children left behind in the midst of sins, Satan, and the world's batteries, are in his heart, and shall not be forgotten a moment by him. The care he takes in our business appeared in the speedy despatch he made of his Spirit to his apostles' supply, when he ascended, which as soon almost as he was warm in his seat, at his Father's right hand, he sent, to the incomparable comfort of his apostles and us, that to this day, yea, to the end of the world, do or shall believe on him.

Second. [I shall prove why the Christian should strongly act his faith on this almighty power as engaged for his help.] —The second branch of the point follows [namely], that saints should eye this power of God as engaged for them, and press it home upon their souls till they silence all doubts and fears about the matter; which is the importance of this exhortation, 'Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.' Fortify and entrench your souls within the breastwork of this attribute of God's mighty power made over to you by God himself.

First. As it is the end of all promises to be security to our faith, so [it is] of those in particular where his almighty power is expressly engaged, that we may count this attribute our portion, and reap the comfort it yields as freely as one may the crop of his own field. 'Walk before me,' saith God to Abraham, 'I am God Almighty;' set on this as thy portion, and live upon it. The apostle teacheth us what use to make of promises, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,' Hebrews 13:5; there is the promise, and the inference which he teacheth us from this, follows, 'So we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper,' Hebrews 13:6. We, that is, every believer, may boldly say, that is, we may conclude, God will help, not sneakingly, timorously, perhaps he will; but we may boldly assert it in the face of men and devils, because He that is almighty hath said it. Now for a Christian not to strengthen his faith on this incomparably sweet attribute, but to sit down with a few weak unsettled hopes, when he may, yea, ought to be strong in the faith of such promises, what is it but to undervalue the blessing of such promises? As if one should promise another house and land, and bid him make them as sure to himself as the law can bind, and he should take no care to effect this: would it not be interpreted as a slighting of his friend's kindness? Is it a small matter that God passeth over his almighty power by promise to us, and bids us make it as sure to ourselves as we can by faith, and we neglect this, leaving the writings of the promises unsealed on our hearts?

Second. Our obedience and comfort are strong or weak, as our faith is on this principle.

1. Our obedience, that being a child of faith, partakes of its parent's strength or weakness. Abraham being strong on faith, what an heroic act of obedience did he perform in offering up his son! His faith being well set on the power of God, he carries that without staggering which would have laid a weak faith on the ground. No act of faith more strengthens for duty, than that which eyes God's almighty power engaged for its assistance. 'Go in this thy might,' said God to Gideon, 'have not I called thee?' As if he had said, Can I not, will I not carry thee through thy work? Away goes Gideon in the faith of this, and doth wonders. This brought the righteous man from the East to God's foot, though he knew not whither he went, yet he knew with whom he went, God Almighty. But take a soul not persuaded of this, how uneven and unstable is he in his obediential course! Every threat from man, if mighty, dismays him, because his faith [is] not fixed on the Almighty, and therefore sometimes he will shift off a duty to comply with man, and betray his trust into the hands of a sorry creature, because he hath fleshly eyes to behold the power of a man, but wants a spiritual eye to see God at his back, to protect him with his almighty power; which, were his eyes open to see, he would not be so routed in his thoughts at the approach of a weak creature. 'Should such a man as I flee?' said good Nehemiah, Nehemiah 6:11. He was newly come from the throne of grace, where he had called in the help of the Almighty, 'O God, strengthen my hands,' Nehemiah 6:9. And truly, now, he will rather die upon the place, than disparage his God with a dishonorable retreat.

2. The Christian's comfort increaseth or wanes, as the aspect of his faith is to the power of God. Let the soul question that, or his interest in it, and his joy gusheth out, even as blood out of a broken vein. It is true, a soul may scramble to heaven with much ado, by a faith of recumbency, relying on God as able to save, without this persuasion of its interest in God; but such a soul goes with a scant side-wind, or like a ship whose masts are laid by the board, exposed to wind and weather, if others better appointed did not tow it along with them. Many fears like waves ever and anon [so] cover such a soul, that it is more under water than above; whereas one that sees itself folded in the arms of almighty power, O how such a soul goes mounting afore the wind, with her sails filled with joy and peace! Let affliction come, storms arise, this blessed soul knows where it shall land and be welcome. The name of God is his harbor, where he puts in as boldly, as a man steps into his own house, when taken in a shower. He hears God calling him into this, and other his attributes, as chambers taken up for him. 'Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers,' Isaiah 26:20. God calls them his, and it were foolish modesty not to own what God gives. 'Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength,' Isaiah 45:24; that is, I have righteousness in God's righteousness, strength in his strength, so that in this respect Christ can no more say that his strength is his own, and not the believer's, than the husband can say, My body is my own and not my wife's. A soul persuaded of this may sing merrily with the sharpest thorn at his breast; so David, 'My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise,' Psalms 57:7. What makes him so merry in so sad a place as the cave where now he was? he will tell you Psalms 57:1, where you have him nestling himself under the shadow of God's wings, and now well may he sing care and fear away. A soul thus provided may lie at ease on a hard bed. Do you not think they sleep as soundly who dwell on London-bridge, as they who live at Whitehall or Cheapside, knowing that the waves that roar under them cannot hurt them? even so may the saints rest quietly over the floods of death itself, and fear no ill.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. Is the almighty power of God engaged for the saints' defence? surely then they will have a hard pull, the saints' enemies, who meddle with them who are so far above their match. The devil was so cunning, he would have Job out of his trench, his hedge down before he could fall on. But so desperate are men, they will try the field with the saints, though encircled with the almighty power of God. What folly were it to attempt or sit down before such a city, which cannot be blocked up so as no relief can get in? the way to heaven cannot. In the church's straitest siege, 'there is a river which shall make glad this city of God,' with seasonable succours from heaven. The saints' fresh-springs are all from God, and it is as feasible for sorry man to stop the water-courses of the clouds, as to dam up those streams, which invisibly glide like veins of water in the earth, from the fountain-head of his mercy into the bosom of his people. The Egyptians thought they had Israel in a trap, when they saw them march into such a nook by the sea-side. 'They are entangled, they are entangled;' and truly so they had been irrecoverably, had not that almighty power which led them on, engaged to bring them off with honor and safety. Well, when they are out of this danger; behold they are in a wilderness where nothing is to be had for back and belly, and yet here they shall live for forty years, without trade or tillage, without begging or robbing of any of the neighbor nations; they shall not be beholden to them for a penny in their way. What cannot almighty power do to provide for his people? what can it not do to protect them against the power and wrath of their enemies? Almighty power stood between the Israelites and the Egyptians, so that, poor creatures, they could not so much as come to see their enemies. God sets up a dark cloud as a blind before their eyes, and all the while his eye through the cloud is looking them into disorder and confusion. And is the Almighty grown weaker now-a-days, or his enemies stronger, that they promise themselves better success? No, neither; but men are blinder than the saints' enemies of old, who sometimes have fled at the appearances of God among his people, crying out, 'Let us flee, for the Lord fighteth for them.' Whereas there be many now-a-days will rather give the honor of their discomfitures to Satan himself, than acknowledge God in the business; more ready to say that the devil fought against them, than God. O you that have not yet worn off the impressions which the almighty power of God hath at any time made upon your spirits, beware of having anything to do with that generation of men, whoever they are. Come not near their tabernacle, cast not thy lot in amongst them, who are enemies to the saints' of the most High; for they are men devoted to destruction. He ripped open the very womb of Egypt, to save the life of Israel his child, Isaiah 43:3.

Use Second. This shows the dismal, deplorable condition of all you who are yet in a Christless state. You have seen a rich mine opened, but not a penny of this treasure comes to your share; a truth laden with incomparable comfort, but it is bound for another coast, it belongs to the saints, into whose bosom this truth unlades all her comfort. See God shutting the door upon you, when he sets his children to feast themselves with such dainties. 'Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty,' Isaiah 65:13. God hath set his number which he provides for. He knows how many he hath in his family: these and no more shall sit down. One chief dish at the saints' board is the almighty power of God. This was set before Abraham, and stands before all his saints, that they may eat to fulness of comfort on it; but thou shalt be hungry. He is almighty to pardon, but he will not use it for thee, an impenitent sinner. Thou hast not a friend on the bench, not an attribute in all God's name, will speak for thee: mercy itself will sit and vote with the rest of its fellow-attributes for thy damnation. God is able to save and help in a time of need; but upon what acquaintance is it that thou art so bold with God, as to expect

his saving arm to be stretched forth for thee? Though a man will rise at midnight to let in a child that cries and knocks at his door, yet he will not take so much pains for a dog that lies howling there. This presents thy condition, sinner, sad enough, yet this is to tell thy story fairest; for that almighty power of God which is engaged for the believer's salvation, is as deeply obliged to bring thee to thy execution and damnation. What greater tie than an oath? God himself is under an oath to be the destruction of every impenitent soul. That oath which God sware in his wrath against the unbelieving Israelites, that they should not enter his rest, concerns every unbeliever to the end of the world. In the name of God consider, were it but the oath of a man, or a company of men, that like those in the Acts, should swear to be the death of such a one, and thou wert the man, would it not fill thee with fear and trembling night and day, and take away the quiet of thy life, till they were made friends? What then are their pillows stuffed with, who can sleep so soundly without any horror or amazement, though they be told that the Almighty God is under an oath of damning them, body and soul, without timely repentance? O bethink yourselves, sinners, is it wisdom or valor to refuse terms of mercy from God's hands, whose almighty power, if rejected, will soon bring you into the hands of justice? And how fearful a thing that is, to fall into the hands of Almighty God, no tongue can express, no, not they who feel the weight of it.

Use Third. This speaks to you, who are saints indeed. Be strong in the faith of this truth, make it an article of your creed; with the same faith you believe that there is a God, believe also this God's almighty power is thy sure friend, and then improve it to thy best and advantage. As,

1. In agonies of conscience that arise from the greatness of thy sins, fly for refuge into the almighty power of God. Truly, sirs, when a man's sins are displayed in all their bloody colors, and spread forth in all their killing aggravations, and the eye of conscience awakened to behold them through the multiplying or magnifying glass of a temptation, they must needs surprise the creature with horror and amazement, till the soul can say with the prophet, For all this huge host, there is yet more with me than against me. One Almighty is more than many mighties. All these mighty sins and devils, make not one almighty sin, or an almighty devil. Oppose to all the hideous charges brought against thee by them this only attribute. As the French ambassador once silenced the Spaniard's pride in repeating his master many titles, with one that drowned them all, God himself, when he had aggravated his people's sins to the height, then to show what a God can do, breaks out into a sweet promise: 'I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger;' and why not? 'I am God, and not man,' Hosea 11:9. I will show the almightiness of my mercy. Something like our usual phrase when a child or a woman strikes us, I am a man, and not a child or a woman, therefore I will not strike again. The very considering God to be God, supposeth him almighty to pardon as well as to avenge. And this is some relief. But then to consider it is almighty power in bond and covenant to pardon, this is more. As none can bind God but himself, so none can break the bond himself makes: and are they not his own words, that 'he will abundantly pardon?' Isaiah 55:7. He will multiply to pardon, as if he had said, 'I will drop mercy with your sin, and spend all I have, rather than let it be said my good is overcome of your evil.' It fares with the gracious soul in this case as with a captain, that yields his castle upon gracious terms of having his life spared, and he safely conveyed to his house, there to be settles peaceably in his estate and possessions, for all which he hath the general's hand and seal, on which he marches forth; but the rude soldiers assaulting him, and putting him in fear of his life, he appeals to the general, whose honor is now engaged for him, and is presently relieved, and his enemies punished. Thou mayest, poor soul,

when accused by Satan, molested by his terrors, say, It is God that justifies; I have his hand to it, that I should have my life given me as soon as I laid down my arms and submitted to him, which I desire to do. Behold, the gates of my heart are open to let the Prince of peace in, and is not the Almighty able to perform his promise? I commit myself to him as unto a faithful Creator.

2. Improve this almighty power of God, and thy interest therein, in temptations to sin, when thou art overpowered, and fliest before the face of thy strong corruption, or fearest thou shalt one day fall by it; make bold to take hold of this attribute, and reinforce thyself from it again to resist, and in resisting, to believe a timely victory over it. The Almighty God stands in sight of thee while thou art in the valley fighting, and stays but for a call from thee when distressed in battle, and then he will come to thy rescue. Jehoshaphat cried when in the throng of his enemies, and the Lord helped him; much more mayest thou promise thyself his succor in thy soul combats. Betake thyself to the throne of grace with that promise, ‘Sin shall not have dominion over you;’ and before thou urgest it, the more to help thy faith, comfort thyself with this, that though the word almighty is not expressed, yet it is implied in this and every promise, and thou mayest without adding a tittle to the Word of God, read it in thy soul; sin shall not have dominion over you, saith the Almighty God, for this and all his attributes are the constant seal to all his promises. Now, soul, put the bond in suit, fear not the recovery, it is debt, and so due. He is able whom thou suest, and so there is no fear of losing the charge of the suit; and he that was so gracious to bind himself when he was free, will be so faithful, being able, to perform now he is bound; only, while thou expectest the performance of the promise, and the assistance of the almighty power against thy corruptions, take heed that thou keep under the shadow of this attribute, and condition of this promise, Psalms 91:1. The shadow will not cool except in it. What good to have the shadow, though of a mighty rock, when we sit in the open sun? to have almighty power engaged for us, and we throw ourselves out of the protection thereof by bold sallies into the mouth of temptation? The saints’ falls have been when they run out of their trench and hold; for, like the conies, they are a weak people in themselves, and their strength lies in the rock of God’s almightiness, which is their habitation.

3. Christian, improve this, when oppressed with the weight of any duty and service, which in thy place and calling lies upon thee. Perhaps thou findest thy duty of thy calling too heavy for thy weak shoulders, make bold by faith to lay the heaviest end of thy burden on God’s shoulder, which is thine (if a believer) as sure as God can make it by promise. When at any time thou art sick of thy work, and ready to think with Jonas to run from it, encourage thyself with that of God to Gideon, whom he called from the flail to thrash the mountains, ‘Go in this thy might,’ hath not God called thee? Fall to the work God sets thee about, and thou engagest his strength for thee. The way of the Lord is strength. Run from thy work, and thou engagest God’s strength against thee; he will send some storm or other after thee to bring home his runaway servant. How oft hath the coward been killed in a ditch, or under some hedge, when the valiant soldier stood his ground and kept his place got off with safety and honor? Art thou called to suffer? flinch not because thou art afraid, thou shalt never be able to bear the cross; God can lay it so even, thou shalt not feel it, though thou shouldst find no succor till thou comest to the prison door, yea, till thou hast one foot on the ladder, or thy neck on the block, despair not. ‘In the mount will the Lord be seen.’ And in that hour he can give thee such a look of his sweet face, as shall make the blood come in the ghastly face of a cruel death, and appear lovely in thy eye for his sake. He can give thee so much comfort in hand, as thou shalt acknowledge God is aforehand with thee, for all thy shame and pain thou

canst endure for him; and if it should not amount to this, yet so much as it will bear all the charges thou canst be put to in the way, lies ready told in the promise, 1 Corinthians 10:13. Thou shalt have it at sight, and this may satisfy a Christian, especially if he considers, though he doth not carry so much of heaven's joy about him to heaven as others, yet he shall meet it as soon as he comes to his Father's house, where it is reserved for him. In a word, Christian, rely upon thy God, and make thy daily applications to the throne of grace for continual supplies of strength; you little think how kindly he takes it, that you will make use of him, the oftener the better, and the more you come for, the more welcome. Else why would Christ have told his disciples, 'Hitherto you have asked nothing,' but to express his large heart in giving? loath to put his hand to his purse for a little, and therefore by a familiar kind of rhetoric puts them to rise higher in asking, as Naaman when Gehazi asks one talent, entreats him to take two. Such a bountiful heart thy God hath, while thou art asking a little peace and joy, he bids thee open thy mouth wide and he will fill it. Go and ransack thy heart, Christian, from one end to the other, find out thy wants, acquaint thyself with all thy weaknesses, and set them before the Almighty, as the widow her empty vessels before the prophet; hadst thou more than thou canst bring, thou mayest have them all filled. God hath strength enough to give, but he hath no strength to deny. Here the Almighty himself (with reverence be it spoken) is weak; even a child, the weakest in grace of his family that can but say father, is able to overcome him; and therefore let not the weakness of thy faith discourage thee. No greater motive to the bowels of mercy to stir almighty power to relieve thee than thy weakness, when pleaded in the sense of it. The pale face and thin cheeks, I hope, move more with us, than the canting language of a stout sturdy beggar; thus [with] that soul that comes laden in the sense of his weak faith, love, patience, the very weakness of them carries an argument along with them for succor.

Objection Answered [A grand objection that some disconsolate souls may raise against the former discourse, answered.]

Objection. O but, saith some disconsolate Christian, I have prayed again and again for strength against such a corruption, and to this day my hands are weak, and these sons of Zeruiah are so strong, that I am ready to say, All the preachers do but flatter me, that do pour their oil of comfort upon my head, and tell me I shall at last get the conquest of these mine enemies, and see that joyful day wherein with David, I shall sing to the Lord, for delivering me out of the hands of all mine enemies. I have prayed for strength for such a duty, and find it come off as weakly and dead-heartedly as before. If God be with me by his mighty power to help me, why then is all this befallen me?

Answer First. Look once again, poor heart, into thy own bosom, and see whether thou findest not some strength sent unto thee, which thou didst overlook before; this may be, yea, is very ordinary in this case, when God answers our prayer no in the letter, or when the thing itself is sent, but it comes in at the back-door, while we are expecting it at the fore; and truly thus the friend thou art looking for may be in thine house and thou not know it. Is not this thy case, poor soul? Thou hast been praying for strength against such a lust, and now thou wouldst have God presently put forth his power to knock it on the head and lay it for dead, that it should never stir more in thy bosom. Is not this the door thou hast stood looking for God to come in at? And [yet there is] no sight or news of thy God's coming that way. Thy corruption yet stirs, it may be is now more troublesome than before. Now thou askest where is the strength promised to thy relief? Let me entreat thee before

thou layest down this sad conclusion against thy God or self, [to] see whether he hath not conveyed in some strength by another door. Perhaps thou hast not strength to conquer it so soon as thou desirest; but hath he not given further praying strength against it? Thou prayest before, but now more earnestly, all the powers of thy soul are up to plead with God. Before, thou wast more favorable and moderate in thy request, now thou hast a zeal, thou canst take no denial, yea, [will] welcome anything in the room of corruption. Would God but take thy sin and send a cross, thou wouldst bless him. Now, poor soul, is this nothing? [Is this] no strength? Had not thy God reinforced thee, thy sin would have weakened thy spirit of prayer, and not increased it. David began to recover himself when he began to recover his spirit of prayer. The stronger the cry, the stronger the child, I warrant you. Jacob wrestled, and this is called his strength, Hosea 12:3. It appeared, there was much of God in him when he could take such hold of the Almighty as to keep it, though God seemed to shake him off. If thus thou art enabled, soul, to deal with the God of heaven, no fear but thou shalt be much more able to deal with sin and Satan. If God hath given thee so much strength to wrestle with him above and against denials, thou hast prevailed with the stronger of the two. Overcome God, and he will overcome the other for thee. Again, perhaps thou hast been praying for further strength to be communicated to thee in duty, that thou might be more spiritual, vigorous, united, sincere, and the like, therein, and yet thou findest thy old distempers hanging about thee, as if thou hadst never acquainted God with thy ail. Well, soul, look once again into thy bosom with an unprejudiced eye, though thou dost not find the assisting strength thou prayed for, yet hast thou no more self-abasing strength? perhaps the annoyance thou hast from these remaining distempers in duty, occasion thee to have a meaner opinion of all thy duties than ever, yea, they make thee abhor thyself in the sense of these, as if thou hadst so many loathsome vermin around thee. Job's condition on the dunghill, with all his botches and running sores on his body, appears desirable to thee, in comparison of thine, whose soul, thou complainest, is worse than his body. O this afflicts my soul deeply, that thou shouldst appear before the Lord with such a dead divided heart, and do his work worst that deserves best at thy hands. And is all this nothing? Surely, Christian, thine eyes are held as much as Hagar's, or else thou wouldst see the streamings forth of divine grace in this frame of thy heart; surely others will think God hath done a mighty work in thy soul. What harder and more against the hair than to bring our proud hearts to take shame for that whereof they naturally boast and glory? And is it nothing for thee to tread on the very neck of thy duties, and count them matter of thy humiliation and abasing, which others make the matter of their confidence and self-rejoicing? Good store of virtue hath gone from Christ to dry this issue of pride in thy heart, which sometimes in gracious ones [so] runs through and through their duties, that it is seen, or may be, by those that have less grace than themselves.

Answer Second. Christian, candidly interpret God's dealings with thee. Suppose it be as thou sayest; thou hast pleaded the promise, and waited on the means, and yet findest no strength from all these receipts, either in thy grace or comfort. Now take heed of charging God foolishly, as if God were not what he promiseth; this were to give that to Satan which he is all this while gaping for. It is more becoming the dutiful disposition of a child, when he hath not presently what he writes for to his father, to say, My father is wiser than I. His wisdom will prompt him what and when to send to me, and his fatherly affections to me his child will neither suffer him to deny anything that is good, or slip the time that is seasonable. Christian, thy heavenly Father hath gracious ends that hold his hand at present, or else thou hadst ere this heard from him.

1. God may deny further degrees of strength to put thee on the exercise of that thou hast more carefully. As a mother doth by her child that is learning to go, she sets it down, and stands some distance from it, and bids it come to her. The child feels its legs weak and cries for the mother's help, but the mother steps back on purpose that the child should put forth all its little strength in making after her. When a poor soul comes and prays against such a sin, God seems to step back and stand at a distance, the temptation increaseth, and no visible succour appears, on purpose that the Christian, though weak, should exercise that strength he hath. Indeed, we shall find the sense of a soul's weakness, is an especial means to excite into a further care and diligence. One that knows his weakness, how prone he is in company to forget himself, in passion how apt he is to fly out; if there be a principle of true grace, this will excite him to be more fearful and watchful, than another that hath obtained greater strength against such great temptations. As a child that writes for money to his father. None comes presently. This makes him husband that little that he hath the better, not a penny now shall be laid out idly. Thus, when a Christian hath prayed against such a sin again and again, and yet finds himself weak, prone to be worsted, O how careful will this, should this make such a one of every company, of every occasion! Such a one had not need give his enemy any advantage.

2. God may deny the Christian such assisting strength in duty, or mortifying the strength of corruption, as he desires, purely on a gracious design that he may thereby have an advantage of expressing his love in such a way, as shall most kindly work upon the ingenuity of the soul to love God again. Perhaps, Christian, thou prayest for a mercy thou wantest, or for deliverance out of some great affliction, and in the duty thou findest not more assistance than ordinary, yea, many distractions of spirit in it, and misgiving thoughts with unbelieving fears after it. Well, notwithstanding those defects in thy duty, yet God hears thy prayer, and sends in the mercy on purpose that he may greaten his love in thine eye, and make it more luscious and sweet to thy taste, from his accepting thy weak services, and passing by the distempers of thy spirit. Here is less strength for the duty, that thou mayest have more love in the mercy; nothing will affect a gracious heart more than such a consideration. See it in David, 'I said in my haste, All men are liars. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?' Psalms 116:11-12. As if David had said, Notwithstanding all the comfortable messages I had from God by his prophets concerning this matter, my own prayers, and those remarkable providences, which carried in them a partial answer to them, and performance of what was promised, yet I betrayed much unbelief, questioning the truth of the one, and the return of the other; and hath God, notwithstanding all my infirmities, fulfilled my desire, and performed his promise? O what shall I render unto the Lord? Thus David reads God's mercy through the spectacles of his own weakness and infirmity, and it appears great; whereas if a mercy should come in, as an answer to a duty managed with such strength of faith, and height of other graces, as might free him and his duty from usual infirmities, this might prove a snare, and occasion some self-applauding, rather than mercy-admiring thoughts in the creature.

3. God may communicate the less of his assisting strength, that he may show the more of his supporting strength, in upholding weak grace. We do not wonder to see a man of strong constitution that eats his bread heartily and sleep soundly, live. But for a crazy body, full of ails and infirmities, to be so patched and shored up by the physician's art that he stands to old age, this begets some wonder in the beholders. It may be thou art a poor trembling soul, thy faith is weak, and thy

assaults from Satan strong, thy corruptions stirring and active, and thy mortifying strength little, so that in thy opinion they rather gain ground on thy grace, than give ground to it. Ever and anon thou art ready to think thou shalt be cast as a wreck upon the devil's shore; and yet to this day thy grace lives, though full of leaks. Now is it not worth the stepping aside to see this strange sight? A broken ship with masts and hull rent and torn, thus towed along by almighty power through an angry sea, and armadas of sins and devils, safely into its harbor. To see a poor dilling or rush-candle in the face of the boisterous wind, and not blown out! In a word, to see a weak stripling in grace held up in God's arms till he beats the devil craven! This God is doing in upholding thee. Thou art one of those babes, out of whose mouth God is perfecting his praise, by ordaining such strength for thee, that thou, a babe in grace, shalt yet foil a giant in wrath and power.

Answer Third. If after long waiting for strength from God, it be as thou complainest, inquire whether the JÎ 6"J"XP@4H, that which hinders, be not found in thyself. The head is the seat of animal spirits, yet there may be such obstructions in the body as the other members may for a time be deprived of them; till the passage be free between Christ thy head and thee, thy strength will not come, and therefore be willing to inquire,

1. Hast thou come indeed to God for strength to perform duty, to mortify corruption and the like? Perhaps thou wilt say, Yes, I have waited on those ordinances which are the way in which he hath promised to give out strength. But is this all? Thou mayest come to them, and not wait on God in them. Hast thou not carnally expected strength from them, and so put the ordinances in God's stead? Hath not the frame of thy spirit some affinity with theirs, 'We will go into such a city, and buy and sell, and get gain?' James 4:13. Hath not thy heart said, I will go and hear such a man, and get comfort, and strength? And dost thou wonder thou art weak, barren and unfruitful? Are ordinances God, that they should make you strong or comfortable? Thou mayest hear them answer thee, poor soul, as the king to the woman in the siege of Samaria. Help, O prayer, sayest thou, or, O minister; how can they help except the Lord help? These are but Christ's servants. Christ keeps the key of his wine cellar; they cannot so much as make you drink when you come to their master's house; and therefore, poor soul, stay not short of Christ, but press through all the crowd of ordinances, and ask to speak with Jesus, to see Jesus, and touch him, and virtue will come forth.

2. Ask thy soul whether thou hast been thankful for that little strength thou hast. Though thou art not of that strength in grace to run with the foremost and hold pace with the tallest of thy brethren, yet thou art thankful that thou hast any strength at all, though it be but to cry after them whom thou seest outstrip thee in grace, this is worth thy thanks. All in David's army attained not to be equal with his few worthies in prowess and honor, and yet did not cashier themselves: thou hast reason to be thankful for the meanest place in the army of saints, the least communications of gospel-mercy and grace must not be overlooked. As soon as ever Moses with his army was through the sea, they strike up before they stir from the bank side, and acknowledge the wonderful appearance of God's power and mercy for them, though this was but one step in their way; [for] a howling wilderness presented itself to them, and [though] they [were] not able to subsist a few days with all their provision, for all their great victory, yet Moses will praise God for this handsel of mercy. This holy man knew the only way to keep credit with God, so as to have more, was to keep touch, and pay down his praise for what was received. If thou wouldst have fuller communications of divine strength, own God in what he hath done. Art thou weak? Bless God thou hast life. Dost

thou through feebleness often fail in duty, and fall into temptation? Mourn in the sense of these; yet bless God in that thou dost not live in a total neglect of duty, out of a profane contempt thereof, and instead of falling through weakness, thou dost not lie in the mire of sin through the wickedness of thy heart. The unthankful soul may thank itself it thrives no better.

3. Art thou humble under the assistance and strength God hath given thee? Pride stops the conduit. If the heart begin to swell, it is time for God to hold his hand, and turn the cock, for all that is poured on such a soul runs over into self-applauding, and so it is as water spilt, in regard of any good it doth the creature, or any glory it brings to God. A proud heart and a lofty mountain are never fruitful. Now beside the common ways that pride discovers itself, as by undervaluing others, and overvaluing itself, and such like, you shall observe two other symptoms of it. (1.) It appears in bold adventures, when a person runs into the mouth of temptation, bearing himself up on the confidence of his grace received. This was Peter's sin, by which he was drawn to engage further than became an humble faith, running into devil's quarters, and so became his prisoner for a while. The good man, when in his right temper, had thoughts low enough of himself, as when he asked his Master, Is it I? But he that feared at one time lest he might be the traitor, at another cannot think so ill of himself, as to suspect he should be the denier of his Master. What, he? No, though all the rest should forsake him, yet he would stand to his colors. Is this thy case, Christian? Possibly God hath given thee much of his mind; art thou skilful in the Word of life, and therefore thou darest venture to breathe in corrupt air, as if only the weak spirits of less knowing Christians exposed them to be infected with the contagion of error and heresy. Thou hast a large portion of grace, or at least thou thinkest so, and venturest to go where an humble-minded Christian would fear his heels should slip under him. Truly, now thou temptest God to suffer thy lock to be cut, when thou art so bold to lay thy head in the lap of a temptation. (2.) Pride appears in the neglect of those means whereby the saints' graces and comforts are to be fed when strongest. Maybe, Christian, when thou art under fears and doubts, then God hath thy company, thou art oft with thy pitcher at his door; but when thou hast got any measure of peace, there grows presently some strangeness between God and thee; thy pitcher walks not as it was wont to these wells of salvation. No wonder if thou, though rich in grace and comfort, goest behind-hand, seeing thou spendest on the old stock, and drivest no trade at present to bring in more. Or if thou dost not thus neglect duty, yet maybe thou dost not perform with that humility which formerly beautified the same: then thou prayed in the sense of thy weakness to get strength, now thou prayest to show thy strength, that others may admire thee. And if once, like Hezekiah, we call in spectators to see our treasure, and applaud us for our gifts and comfort, then it is high time for God, if he indeed love us, to send some messengers, to carry these away from us, which carry our hearts from him.

Answer Fourth. If thy heart doth not smite thee from what hath been said, but thou hast sincerely waited on God, and yet hast not received the strength thou desirest, yet let it be thy resolution to live and die waiting on him. God doth not tell us his time of coming, and it were boldness to set on of our own heads. Go, saith Christ, to his disciples, 'tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high,' Luke 24:49. Thus he saith to thee, Stay at Jerusalem, wait on him in the means he hath appointed, till thou beest endued with further power to mortify thy corruptions, &c. And for thy comfort know,

1. Thy thus persevering to wait on God will be an evidence of strong grace in thee. The less encouragement thou hast to duty, the more [is] thy faith and obedience to bear thee up in duty. He

that can trade when times are so dead, that all his ware lies upon his hand, and yet draws not in his hand, but rather trades more and more, sure his stock is great. What! no comfort in hearing, no ease to thy spirit in praying, and yet more greedy to hear, and more frequent in prayer. O soul, great is thy faith and patience!

2. Assure thyself when thou art at the greatest pinch [that] strength shall come. They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength: when the last handful of meal was dressing, then is the prophet sent to keep the widow's house. When temptation is strong, thy little strength is even spent, and thou ready to yield into the hands of thine enemies, then expect succors from heaven, to enable thee to hold out under the temptation. Thus with Paul, 'My grace is sufficient for thee,' i.e. there is power from heaven to raise the siege, and drive away the tempter. Thus with Job, when Satan had him at an advantage, then God takes him off, like a wise moderator [who], when the respondent is hard put to it by a subtle opponent, takes him off, when he would else run him down. 'Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. James 5:11.

[i]. Junkets, an old word, which generally, as here, means sweetmeats.—Ed.

[ii]. Inesse est de esse creaturæ.

[iii]. Nemo prodiget quod mendicat—no one will squander what he begs.

[iv]. Deus amat curristas non quœristas.

Chapter 3

01.02 - Directions for Managing This War Succesfully

Part Second.

Directions for managing this War successfully, with some Motives sprinkled among them.

Direction First. The Christian must be armed, and the Reason why.

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. (Ephesians 6:11). This verse is a key to the former, wherein the apostle had exhorted believers to encourage and bear up their fainting spirits on the Lord, and the power of his might. Now in these words he explains himself, and shows how he would have them do this, not presumptuously [to] come into the field without that armour which God hath appointed to be worn by all his soldiers, and yet with a bravado, to trust to the power of God to save them. That soul is sure to fall short of home (heaven I mean), who hath nothing but a carnal confidence on the name of God, blown up by its ignorance of God and himself. No, he that would have his confidence duly placed on the power of God, must conscientiously use the means appointed for his defence, and not rush naked into the battle, like that fanatic spirit at Munster, who would needs go forth, and chase away the whole army then besieging that city, with no other cannon than a few words charged with the name of the Lord of hosts, which he blasphemously made bold to use, saying, In the name of the Lord of hosts depart. But himself soon perisheth, to learn others wisdom by what he paid for his folly. What foolish braving language shall ye hear drop from the lips of the most profane and ignorant among us! They trust in God, hope in his mercy, defy the devil and all his works, and such like stuff, who are yet poor naked creatures without the least piece of God's armour upon their souls. To cashier such presumption from the saints' camp, he annexeth this directory to his exhortation, 'Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.' So that the words fall into these two general parts. FIRST, A direction annexed to the former exhortation, showing how we may in a regular way come to be strong in the Lord, that is, by putting on the whole 'armour of God.' SECOND, A reason or argument strengthening this direction, 'that ye may be able to stand against the wile of the devil.'

DIRECTION I.—FIRST GENERAL PART.

[The Christian must be armed for the War, 'Put on the whole armour of God.'] In this part we have a direction annexed to the former exhortation, showing how we may in a regular way come to be strong in the Lord, that is, by putting on the whole 'armour of God.' In this observe, first, The furniture he directs, and that is 'armour.' second, The kind or quality of this armour—'armour of God.' third, The quantity or entireness of the armour—the 'whole' armour of God. fourth, The use of this armour—'put on' the whole armour of God.

BRANCH FIRST.

[The furniture or armour needful —what it is.] To begin with the first, the furniture which every one must get that would fight Christ's battles, [and that is 'armour.'] The question here will be, What is

this armour?

First. By armour is meant Christ. We read of putting on the ‘Lord Jesus,’ Romans 13:14, where Christ is set forth under the notion of armour. The apostle doth not exhort them for rioting and drunkenness to put on sobriety and temperance, for chambering and wantonness [to] put on chastity, as the philosopher would have done, but bids, ‘put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ;’ implying thus much [that] till Christ be put on, the creature is unarmed. It is not a man’s morality and philosophical virtues that will repel a temptation, sent with a full charge from Satan’s cannon, though possibly it may the pistol-shot of some less solicitation; so that he is the man in armour, that is in Christ. Again,

Second. The graces of Christ, these are armour, as ‘the girdle of truth, the breast-plate of righteousness,’ and the rest. Hence we are bid also [to] ‘put on the new man,’ Ephesians 4:24, which is made up of all the several graces, as its parts and members. And he is the unarmed soul, that is the unregenerate soul, not excluding those duties and means which God hath appointed the Christian to use for his defence. The phrase thus opened, the point is, to show that to be without Christ is to be without armour.

[The Christless and graceless soul is without armour, and therein his misery.]

Observe. That a person in a Christless graceless state is naked and unarmed, and so unfit to fight Christ’s battles against sin and Satan. Or thus, A soul out of Christ is naked and destitute of all armour to defend him against sin and Satan. God at first sent man forth in complete armour, ‘being created in true righteousness and holiness,’ but by a wile the devil stripped him, and therefore as soon as the first sin was completed, it is written, ‘they were naked,’ Genesis 3:7, that is, [they were] poor weak creatures, at the will of Satan, a subdued people disarmed by their proud conqueror, and unable to make head against him. Indeed it cost Satan some dispute to make the first breach, but after that he hath once the gates opened to let him in as conqueror into the heart of man, he plays rex [or king]. Behold, a troop of other sins crowd in after him, without any stroke or strife; instead of confessing their sins, they run their head in a bush, and by their good-will would not come where God is, and when they cannot fly from him, how do they prevaricate before him? They peal one of another, shifting the sin rather than suing for mercy. So quickly were their hearts hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. And this is the woeful condition of every son and daughter of Adam; naked he finds us, and slaves he makes us, till God by his effectual call delivers us from the power of Satan into the kingdom of his dear Son, which will further appear, if we consider this Christless state in a fourfold notion.

First. It is a state of alienation from God: ‘Ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise,’ &c. Ephesians 2:12. Such an one hath no more to do with any covenant-promise, than he that lives at Rome hath to do with the charter of London, which is the birthright of its own denizens, not [of] strangers. He is without God in the world; he can claim no more protection from God, than an out-lawed subject from his prince. If any mischief befalls him, the mends is in his own hands; whereas God hath his hedge of special protection about his saints, and the devil, though his spite be most at them, dares not come upon God’s ground to touch any of them, without particular leave. Now what a deplored condition is that wherein a soul is left to the wide world, in the midst of legions of lusts and devils, to be rent and torn like a silly hare among a pack of hounds, and no God to call them off! Let God leave a people,

though never so warlike, presently they lose their wits, cannot find their hands. A company of children or wounded men may rise up, and chase them out of their fenced cities, because God is not with them; which made Caleb and Joshua pacify the mutinous Israelites at the tidings of giants and walled cities with this, ‘They are bread for us, their defence is departed from them.’ How much more must that soul be as bread to Satan, that hath no defence from the Almighty? Take men of the greatest parts, natural or acquired accomplishments, who only want an union with Christ, and renewing grace from Christ. O what fools doth the devil make of them, leading them at his pleasure, some to one lust, some to another! The proudest of them all is slave to one or other, though it be to the ruining of body and soul for ever. Where lies the mystery, that men of such parts and wisdom should debase themselves to such drudgery work of hell? Even here. They are in a state of alienation from God, and no more able of themselves to break the devil’s prison, than a slave to run from his chain.

Second. The Christless state is a state of ignorance, and such must needs be naked and unarmed. He that cannot see his enemy, how can he ward off the blow he sends? One seeing prophet leads a whole army of blind men whither he pleaseth. The imperfect knowledge saints have here, is Satan’s advantage against them. He often takes them on the blind side. How easily then may he with a parcel of good words carry the blind soul out of his way, who knows not a step of the right! Now that the Christless state is a state of ignorance, see Ephesians 5:8: ‘For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.’ Ye were darkness, not in the dark, so one that hath an eye may be. A child of light is often in the dark concerning some truth or promise, but then hath a spiritual eye, which the Christless person wants, and so is darkness. And this darkness cannot be enlightened, but by its union with Christ, which is expressed in the following phrase: ‘But now are ye light in the Lord.’ As the eye of the body once put out, can never be restored by the creature’s art, so neither can the spiritual eye—lost by Adam’s sin—be restored by the teaching of men or angels. It is one of the diseases Christ came to cure, Luke 4:18. It is true, there is a light of reason, which is imparted to every man by nature, but this light is darkness compared with the saints’, as the night is dark to the day, even when the moon is in its full glory. This night-light of reason may save a person from some ditch or pond—great and broad sins—but it will never help him to escape the more secret corruptions, which the saint sees like atoms in the beams of spiritual knowledge. There is such curious work the creature is to do, which cannot be wrought by candle-light of natural knowledge. Nay more, where the common illumination of the Spirit is superadded to this light of nature, yet there is darkness compared with the sanctifying knowledge of a renewed soul, which doth both discover spiritual truths, and warm the heart at the same time with the love of truth, having like the sun a prolific and quickening virtue, which the other wants; so that the heart lies under such common illuminations, cold and dead. He hath no more strength to resist Satan, than if he knew not the command; whereas the Christian’s knowledge, even when taken prisoner by a temptation, pursues and brings back the soul, as Abraham his nephew, out of the enemies’ hands. This hints the third notion,

Third. The Christless state is a state of impotency: ‘For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly,’ Romans 5:6. What can a disarmed people that have not sword or gun do to shake off the yoke of a conquering enemy? Such a power hath Satan over the soul [as that], Luke 11:21, he is called the strong man that keeps the soul as his palace. If he hath no disturbance from heaven, he need fear no mutiny within; he keeps all in peace there. What the

Spirit of God doth in a saint, that in a manner doth Satan in a sinner. The Spirit fills his heart with love, joy, holy desires, fears; so Satan fills the sinner's heart with pride, lust, lying. 'Why hath Satan filled thy heart?' saith Peter. And thus filled with Satan (as the drunkard with wine), he is not his own man, but Satan's slave.

Fourth. The state of unregeneracy is a state friendship with sin and Satan. If it be enmity against God, as it is, then friendship with Satan. Now it will be hard to make that soul fight in earnest against his friend. Is Satan divided? Will the devil within fight against the devil without?—Satan in the heart shut out Satan at the door? Sometimes indeed there appears a scuffle between Satan and a carnal heart, but it is a mere cheat, like the fighting of two fencers on a stage. You would think at first they were in earnest, but observing how wary they are, [and] where they hit one another, you may soon know they do not mean to kill; and that which puts all out of doubt, when the prize is done you shall see them making merry together with what they have got of their spectators, which was all they fought for. When a carnal heart makes the greatest bustle against sin by complaining of it, or praying against it, follow him but off the stage of duty, where he hath gained the reputation of a saint—the prize he fights for—and you shall see them sit as friendly together in a corner as ever.

[Use and Application.]

Use First. This takes away the wonder of Satan's great conquests in the world. When you look abroad and see his vast empire, and what a little spot of ground contains Christ's subjects, what heaps of precious souls lie prostrate under this foot of pride, and what a little regiment of saints march under Christ's banner, perhaps the strangeness of the thing may make you ask, I shell stronger than heaven? —the arms of Satan more victorious than the cross of Christ? No such matters. Consider but this one thing, and you will wonder that Christ hath any to follow him, rather than that he hath so few. Satan finds the world unarmed; when the prince of the world comes, he finds nothing to oppose; the whole soul is in a disposition to yield at first summons. And if conscience, governor for God in the creature, stands out a while, all the other powers, as will and affections, are in a discontent, like mutinous soldiers in a garrison, who never rest till they have brought over conscience to yield, or against its command set open the city gate to the enemy, and so deliver traitorously their conscience prisoner to their lusts. But when Christ comes to demand the soul, he meets a scornful answer. 'Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of the Most High. We will not have this man to reign over us.' With one consent they vote against him, and rise up as the Philistines against Samson, whom they called the destroyer of the country. 'Ye will not come unto me,' saith Christ. O how true are poor sinners to the devil's trust! They will not deliver the castle they hold for Satan till fired over their heads. Pharaoh opposeth Moses on one hand, and Israel cry out upon him on the other. Such measure hath Christ both at Satan's hand and the sinner's. That which lessened Alexander's conquests was, [that] he overcame a people buried in barbarism, without arms and discipline of war; and that which heightened Caesar's, though not so many, he overcame a people more warlike and furnished. Satan's victories are of poor ignorant graceless souls, who have neither arms, nor hands, nor hearts to oppose. But when he assaults a saint, then he sits down before a city with gates and bars, and ever riseth with shame, unable to take the weakest hold, to pluck the weakest saint out of Christ's hands; but Christ brings souls out of his dominion with a high hand, in spite of all the force and fury of hell, which like Pharaoh and his host pursue them.

Use Second. This gives a reason why the devil hath so great a spite against the gospel. Why? Because this opens a magazine of arms and furniture for the soul. The word is that tower of David, ‘Builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men,’ Song of Solomon 4:4. Hence the saints have ever had their armour, and the preaching of the gospel unlocks it. As gospel-light ascends, so Satan’s shady kingdom of darkness vanisheth, Revelation 14:6; there one angel comes forth to preach the everlasting gospel, and another angel follows at his back, Revelation 14:8, crying Victory, ‘Babylon is fallen, is fallen.’ The very first charge the gospel gave to the kingdom of darkness, shook the foundations thereof, and put the legions of hell to the run. The seventy whom Christ sent out, bring this speedy account of their ambassage, ‘Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name;’ and Christ answers, ‘I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.’ As if he had said, It is no news you tell me, I beheld Satan falling when I sent you: I knew the gospel would make work where it came: and therefore no wonder Satan labors to dispossess the gospel, which dispossesseth him; he knows that army is near lost, whose magazine is blown up. It is true indeed, under the very gospel the devil rageth more in such swinish sinners, as are given over of God to be possessed of that fiend, for rejecting of his grace; but he is cast out of others, who ‘before the loving-kindness of God to man appeared in the gospel,’ were commanded by him, ‘serving divers lusts and pleasures;’ but now by the light of the gospel they see their folly, and by the grace it brings are enabled to renounce him. This, this is that which torments the foul spirit, to see himself forsaken of his old friends and servants, and this new Lord to come and take his subjects from him: and therefore he labours either by persecution to drive the gospel away, or by policy to persuade a people to send it away from their coasts. And was he ever more likely to effect it among us? What a low esteem hath he brought the preaching of the gospel unto? the price is fallen half and half to what it was some years past, even among those that have been counted the greatest merchants upon the saints’ exchange. Some that have thought it worth crossing the seas, even to the Indies—almost as far as others fetch their gold—to enjoy the gospel, are loathe now to cross the street to hear it, at so cheap a rate; and some that come, who formerly trembled at it, make it most of their errand to mock at, or quarrel wit it. Nay, it is come to such a pass, that the Word is so heavy a charge to the squeamish stomachs of many professors, that it comes up again presently, and abundance of choler with it, against the preacher, especially if it fall foul of the sins and errors of the times, the very naming of which is enough to offend, though the nation be sinking under their weight. What reproaches are the faithful ministers of the gospel laden withal! I call heaven and earth to witness, whether ever they suffered a hotter persecution of the tongue, than in this apostatizing age. A new generation of professors are started up, that will not know them to be the ministers of Christ, though those before them (as well in grace as time, [and] more able to derive their spiritual pedigree than themselves), have to their death owned them for their spiritual fathers. And must not the ark needs shake, when they that carry it are thus struck at, both in their person and office? What are these men doing? Alas, they know not. ‘Father, forgive them.’ They are cutting off their right hand with their left; they are making themselves and the nation naked, by despising the gospel, and those that bring it.

Use Third. Consider your deplored estate, [you] who are wholly naked and unarmed. Can you pity the beggar at your door (when you see such in a winter day, shivering with naked backs, exposed to the fury of the cold), and not pity your own far more dismal soul-nakedness, by which thou liest open to heaven’s wrath and hell’s malice? Shall their nakedness cover them with shame, fill them with fear of perishing, which makes them with pitiful moans knock and cry for relief, as it is

reported of Russia, where their poor, through extreme necessity, have this desperate manner of begging in their streets: ‘Give me and cut me, give me and kill me.’ And canst thou let Satan come and cut thy throat in thy bed of sloth, rather than accept of clothes to cover, yea, armour to defend thee?—I mean Christ and his grace, which in the gospel is tendered to you. Do not lightly believe your own flattering hearts, if they shall tell you, You are provided of these already. I am afraid many a gaudy professor will be found as naked in regard of Christ, and truth of grace, as drunkards and swearers themselves. Such there are, who content themselves with a Christ in profession, in gifts, and in duties, but seek not a Christ in solid grace, and so perish. Those indeed are an ornament to the Christian, as the scarf and feather to the soldier, but these quench not the bullet in battle; it is Christ and his grace [that] doth that. Therefore labour to be sound rather than brave Christians. Grace embellished with gifts, is more beautiful, but these without grace are only the richer spoil for Satan.

BRANCH SECOND.

[The kind or quality of armour needful —Armour of God.] The subject of this branch is the quality or kind of that armour, the Christian is here directed to provide. It is not any trash will serve the turn; better none than not armour of proof, and none [is] such ‘but the armour of God.’ In a twofold respect it must be of God. First, In institution and appointment. Second, In constitution.

[The armour we use against Satan must be divine in the institution, and only as God appoints.]

Observe First. The Christian’s armour which he wears must be of divine institution and appointment. The soldier comes into the field with no arms but what his general commands. It is not left to every one’s fancy to bring what weapons he please; this will breed confusion. The Christian soldier is bound up to God’s order; though the army be on earth, yet the council of war sits in heaven; this duty ye shall do; these means ye shall use. And [those who] do more, or use other, than God commands, though with some seeming success against sin, shall surely be called to account for this boldness. The discipline of war among men is strict in this case. Some have suffered death by a council of war even when they have beaten the enemy, because out of their place, or beside their order. God is very precise in this point; he will say to such as invent ways to worship him of their own, coin means to mortify corruption, obtain comfort in their own mint: ‘Who hath required this at your hands?’ This is truly to be ‘righteous over-much,’ as Solomon speaks, when he will pretend to correct God’s law, and add supplements of our own to his rule. Who will pay that man his wages that is not set on work by God? God tells Israel the false prophets shall do them no good, because they come not of his errand, Jeremiah 23:32; so neither will those ways and means help, which are not of God’s appointing. God’s thoughts are not as man’s, nor his ways as ours, which he useth to attain his ends by. If man had been to set forth the Israelitish army, now to march out of Egypt, surely this wisdom would have directed rather to have plundered the Egyptians of their horses and arms, as more necessary for such an expedition, than to borrow their jewels and ear-rings. But God will have them come out naked and on foot, and Moses keeps close to his order; yea, when any horses were taken in battle, because God commanded that they should be houghed, they obeyed, though to their seeming disadvantage. It was God’s war they waged, and therefore but reasonable they should be under his command. They encamped and marched by his order, as the ark moved or rested. They fight by his command. The number is appointed by him—the means and weapons they should use—all are prescribed by God, as in the

assault of Jericho. And what is the gospel of all this—for surely God hath an eye in that our marching to heaven, and our fighting with these cursed spirits and lusts that stand in our way—but that we should fight lawfully, using those means which we have from his mouth in his Word? This reproveth two sorts:

Reproveth First, Those that fight Satan in armour that hath no divine institution.

1. The Papist. Look into his armour, and hardly a piece will be found armour of God. They fight in the pope's armour. His authority is the shop wherein their weapons are forged. It were a kind of penance to your patience, to repeat all the several pieces of armour with which they load silly souls —too heavy indeed for the broadest shoulders among them to bear—yea, more than the wiser sort of them mean to use. Their masses, matins, vigils, pilgrimages, Lent-fasts, whippings, vows of chastity, poverty, with a world of such trash!—where is a word of God for these? Who hath required these things at their hands? A thousand woes will one day fall upon those impostors, who have stripped the people of their true armour of God, and put these reeds and bulrushes in their hands. This may justify us in the sight of God and men for our departure from them who will force us to venture the life of our souls in such paper-armour, when God hath provided better.

2. The Carnal Protestant, who fights in fleshly armour, 2 Corinthians 10:3. The apostle speaks there of 'warring after the flesh,' that is, with weapons or means which man's carnal wisdom prompts to, and not God's commands, and [which] so are weak. How few are clad with other in the day of battle!

(1.) When Satan tempts to sin, if he hath not presently a peaceable entrance, yet the resistance commonly made is carnal; the strength carnal they rest on, their own, not God's; the motive's carnal, as the fear of man more than of God; [as to which] one saith, 'How shall I do this and sin against God?' Many in their hearts say, How shall I do this and anger man, displease my master, provoke my parents, and lose the good opinion of my minister? Herod feared John, and did many things. Had he feared God, he would have labored to have done everything. The like may be said of all other motives, which have their spring in the creature, not in God; they are armour which will not out-stand shot. If thy strength lie in a creature-lock, it may be soon cut off; if in God it will hold, as his command: It is written. I cannot do it, but I must set my foot on the law of my Maker, or on the love of Christ. I cannot come at my lust, but I must go over my bleeding Savior, and therefore away, foul tempter, I hate thee and thy motion. This foundation is rock, and will stand; but if it be some carnal respect that balanceth thee, another more weighty may be found of the same kind, which will cast the scales another way. She that likes not the man because of his dress only, may soon be gained when he comes in another habit. Satan can change his suit, and then thy mouth will be stopped when thy carnal argument is taken off.

(2.) When the Word or conscience rebukes for sin, what is the armour that men commonly cover their guilty souls withal? Truly no other than carnal. If they cannot evade the charge that these bring, then they labor to mitigate it, by extenuating the fact. It is true, they will say, I did (I confess) commit such a fault, but I was drawn in. 'The woman gave me, and I did eat,' was Adam's fig-leaf armour. It is but once or twice, and I hope that breaks no such squares. Was this such a great business? I know jolly Christians will do as much as this comes to. I thank God, I cannot be charged with whore or thief. This is the armour that must keep off the blow. But if conscience will not be thus taken off, then they labor to divert their thoughts, by striking up the loud music of carnal

delights, that the noise of one may drown the other; or with Cain, they will go from the presence of the Lord, and come no more at those ordinances which make their head ache, and hinder the rest of their raving consciences. If yet the ghost haunts them, then they labor to pacify it with some good work or other, which they set against their bad; their alms and charity in their old age, must expiate the oppression and violence of their former days; as if this little frankincense were enough to air and take away the plague of God's curse, which is in their ill-gotten goods. Thus poor creatures catch at any sorry covering, which will not so much as hide their shame, much less choke the bullet of God's wrath, when God shall fire upon them. There must be armour of God's appointing. Adam was naked for all his fig-leaves, while God taught him to make 'coats of skins,' Genesis 3:21, covertly (as some think) shadowing out Christ the true Lamb of God, whose righteousness alone was appointed by him to cover our shame, and arm our naked souls from the sight and stroke of his justice.

Reproveth Second. Those who use the armor of God, but not as God hath appointed; which appears in three sorts.

1. When a person useth a duty appointed by God, not as armor of defence, but as a cover for sin. Who would think him an enemy that wears Christ's colors in his hat, and marcheth after Christ in his exercise of all the duties of his worship? Such a one may pass all the courts of guard, without so much as being bid [to] stand. All take him for a friend. And yet some such there are, who are fighting against Christ all the while. The hypocrite is the man; he learns his postures, gets the Word, hath his tongue tipped with Scripture language, and walks in the habit of a Christian, merely on a design to drive his trade the more closely, like some highwayman in our days, who rob in the habit of soldiers, that they may be the less suspected. This is desperate wickedness indeed, to take up God's arms and use them in the devil's service; of all sinners such shall find least mercy, false friends shall speed worse than open enemies.

2. They use not the armour of God, as God hath appointed, who put a carnal confidence therein. We must not confide in the armour of God, but in the God of this armour, because all our weapons are only 'mighty through God,' 2 Corinthians 10:4. The ark was the means of the Jews safety, but [being] carnally applauded and gloried in, hastened their overthrow: so duties and ordinances, gifts and graces in their place, are means for the soul's defence. Satan trembles as much as the Philistines at the ark, to see a soul diligent in the use of duty and exercise of grace; but when the creature confides in them, this is dangerous. As some, when they have prayed, think they please God for all day, though they take little heed to their steps. Other have so good an opinion of their faith, sincerity, knowledge, that you may as soon make them believe they are dogs, as that they may ever be taken in such error or sinful practice. Others, when assisted in duty, are prone to stroke their own head with a bene fecisti Bernarde, and so promise themselves to speed, because they have done their errand so well. What speak such passages in the hearts of men, but a carnal confidence in their armour to their ruin? Many souls, we may safely say, do not only perish praying, repenting, and believing after a sort, but they perish by their praying and repenting, &c., while they carnally trust in these. As it falls out sometimes, that the soldier in battle loseth his life by means of his own armour, [because] it is so heavy he cannot flee with it, and so close buckled to him that he cannot get it off, to flee for his life without it. If we be saved, we must come naked to Christ for all our duties; we will not flee to Christ while confiding in them. Some are so locked into them, that they cannot come without them, and so in a day of temptation are trampled under the

feet of God's wrath and Satan's fury. The poor publican throws down his arms, that is, all confidence in himself, cries for quarter at the hands of mercy, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' He comes off with his life—he went away justified; but the Pharisee, laden with his righteousness, and conceited of it, stands to it, and is lost.

3. They do not use the armour of God as such, who in the performing of divine duties, eye not God through them, and this makes them all weak and ineffectual. Then the Word is mighty, when read as the Word of God; then the gospel preached, powerful to convince the conscience, and revive the drooping spirit, when heard as the appointment of the great God, and not the exercise of a mean creature. Now it will appear in three things, whether we eye divine appointment in the means.

(1.) When we engage in a duty, and look not up to God for his blessing. Didst thou eye God's appointment in the means, thou wouldst say, Soul, if there come any good of thy present service it must drop from heaven, for it is God's appointment, not man's. And can I profit whether God will or no, or think to find, and bring away, any soul-enriching treasure from his ordinance, without his leave? Had I not best look up to him, by whose blessing I live more than by my bread?

(2.) It appears we look not at God's appointment, when we have low thoughts of the means. What is Jordan that I should wash in it? What is this preaching that I should attend on it, where I hear nothing but I knew before? what these beggarly elements of water, and bread, and wine! Are not these the reasonings of a soul that forgets who appoints them? Didst thou remember who commands, thou wouldst not question what the command is. What though it be clay, let Christ use it and it shall open the eyes, though in itself more like to put them out. Hadst thou thy eye on God, thou wouldst silence thy carnal reason with this, It is God sends me to such a duty; whatsoever he saith unto me I will do it, though he should send me, as Christ to them, to draw wine out of pots filled with water.

(3.) When a soul leaves off a duty, because he hath not in it what he expected from it. Oh, saith the soul, I see it is vain to follow the means as I have done; still Satan foils me, I will even give over. Dost thou remember, soul, it is God's appointment? Surely then thou wouldst persevere in the midst of discouragements. He that bids thee pray without ceasing; he that bids thee hear, bids thee wait at the posts of wisdom. Thou wouldst reason thus, God hath set me on duty, and here I will stand, till God takes me off and bids me leave praying.

[The armour we use against Satan must be divine by constitution.]

Observe Second. The Christian's armour must be of God in regard of its make and constitution. My meaning is, it is not only that God must appoint the weapons and arms the Christian useth for his defence: but he must also be the efficient of them, he must work in them and for them. Prayer is an appointment of God, yet this is not armour of proof, except it be a prayer of God flowing from his Spirit, Jude 1:20. Hope, that is the helmet the saint by command is to wear, but this hope must be God's creature; 'who hath begotten us to a lively hope,' 1 Peter 1:3. Faith, that is another principal piece in the Christian's furniture, but it must be faith of God's elect, Titus 1:1. He is to take righteousness and holiness for his breastplate, but it must be true holiness: 'Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness,' Ephesians 4:24. Thus you see that it is not armour as armour, but as armour of God, that makes the soul impregnable. That which is

born of God overcometh the world—a faith born of God, a hope born of God. But the spurious adulterous brood of duties and graces, being begot of mortal seed, cannot be immortal.

Must the soul's armour be of God's make? Be exhorted then to look narrowly whether the armour ye wear be the workmanship of God or no. There is abundance of false ware put off now-a-days; little good armour worn by the multitude of professors. It is Satan's after-game he plays, if he cannot please the sinner with his naked state of profaneness, to put him off with something like grace, some flighty stuff, that shall neither do him good, nor Satan hurt. Thus many [are] like children, that cry for a knife or dagger, and are pleased as well with a bone knife and wooden dagger, as with the best of all. So they have some armour, it matters not what. Pray they must, but little care how it be performed. Believe in God? yes, they hope they are not infidels. But what [the armour] is, how they came by it, or whether it will hold in an evil day, this never was put to the question in their hearts. Thus thousands perish with a vain conceit [that] they are armed against Satan, death, and judgment, when they are miserable and naked, yea, worse on it [their conceit] than those who are more naked, those I mean who have not a rag of civility to hide their shame from the world's eye; and that in a double respect,

First. It is harder to work on such a soul savingly, because he hath a form, though not the power, and this affords him a plea. A soul purely naked, nothing like the wedding garment on, he is speechless. The drunkard hath nothing to say for himself, when you ask him why he lives so swinishly; you may come up to him, and get within him, and turn the very mouth of his conscience upon him, which will shoot into him. But come to deal with one who prays and hears, one that is a pretender to faith and hope in God; here is a man in glittering armour, he hath his weapon in his hand, with which he will keep the preacher, and the word he chargeth him with, at arm's length. Who can say I am not a saint? What duty do I neglect? Here is a breastwork he lies under, which makes him not so fair a mark either to the observation or reproof of another; his chief defect being within, where man's eye comes not. Again, it is harder to work on him, because he hath been tampered with already, and miscarried in the essay. How comes such a one to be acquainted with such duties—to make such a profession? Was it ever thus? No, the word hath been at work upon him, his conscience hath scared him from his trade of wickedness, into a form of profession, but, taking in short of Christ, for want of a thorough change, it is harder to remove him than the other. He is like a lock whose wards have been troubled; which makes it harder to turn the key than if never pottered with. It is better dealing with a wild ragged colt, never backed, than one that in breaking hath took a wrong stroke; [with] a bone quite out of joint than false set. In a word, such a one hath more to deny than a profane person. The one hath but his lusts, his whores, his swill, and dross, but the other hath his duties, his seeming graces. O how hard it is to persuade such a one to light, and hold Christ's stirrup, while he and his duties are made Christ's footstool.

Second. Such an one is in deepest condemnation. None sink so far into hell as those that come nearest heaven, because they fall from the greatest height. As it aggravates the torments of the damned souls in this respect above devils, [because] they had a cord of mercy thrown out to them, which devils had not so, by how much God by his Spirit waits on, pleads with, and by both gains on [one] soul more than others, by so much such a one, if he perish, will find hell the hotter. These add to his sin, and the remembrance of his sin in hell thus accented will add to his torment. None will have such a sad parting from Christ as those who went half-way with him and then left him.

Therefore, I beseech you, look to your armour. David would not fight in armour he had not tried, though it was a king's. Perhaps some thought him too nice. What! is not the king's armour good enough for David? Thus many will say, Art thou so curious and precise? Such a great man doth thus and thus, and hopes to come to heaven at last, and darest not thou venture thy soul in this armour? No, Christian, follow not the example of the greatest on earth; it is thy own soul thou venturest in battle, therefore thou canst not be too choice of thy armour. Bring thy heart to the Word, as the only touch-stone of thy grace and furniture; the Word, I told you, is the tower of David, from whence thy armour must be fetched; if thou canst find this tower stamp on it, then it is of God, else, not. Try it therefore by this one scripture-stamp. Those weapons are mighty which God gives his saints to fight his battles withal. 'For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God,' 2 Corinthians 10:4. The sword of the Spirit hath its point and edge, whereby it makes its way into the heart and conscience, through the impenitency of the one and stupidity of the other (wherewith Satan, as with buff and coat of mail, arms the sinner against God) and there cuts and slashes, kills and mortifies lust in its own castle, where Satan thinks himself impregnable. The breastplate which is of God, doth not bend and break at every pat of temptation, but is of such a divine temperament, that it repels Satan's motions with scorn on Satan's teeth. Should such an one as I sin, as Nehemiah in another case; and such are all the rest.

Now try whether your weapons be mighty or weak; what can you do or suffer more for God than an hypocrite that is clad in fleshly armour? I will tell you what the world saith, and if you be Christians, clear yourselves, and wipe off that dirt which they throw upon your glittering armour. They say, These professors indeed have God more in their talk than we; but when they come down into their shops, relations and worldly employment, then the best of them all is but like one of us. They can throw the tables of God's commandments out of their hands as well as we; [can] come from a sermon, and be as covetous and gripping, as peevish and passionate, as the worst. They show as little love to Christ as others, when it is matter of cost, as to relieve a poor saint or maintain the gospel; you may get more from a stranger, an enemy, than from a professing brother. O Christians, either vindicate the name of Christ, whose ensign you seem to march after, or throw away your seeming armour, by which you have drawn the eyes of the world upon you. If you will not, Christ himself will cashier you, and that with shame enough ere long. Never call that the armour of God which defends thee not against the power of Satan.

Take, therefore, the several pieces of your armour and try them, as the soldier before he fights will set his helmet or head-piece as a mark, at which he lets fly a brace of bullets, and as he finds them so will wear them or leave them. But be sure thou shootest scripture-bullets. Thou boastest of a breastplate of righteousness. Ask thy soul, Didst thou ever in thy life perform a duty to please God, and not to accommodate thyself? Thou hast prayed often against thy sin, a great noise of the pieces have been heard coming from thee by others, as if there were some hot fight between thee and thy corruption, but canst thou indeed show one sin thou hast slain by all thy praying? Joseph was alive, though his coat was brought bloody to Jacob; and so may thy sin be, for all thy mortified look in duty, and outcry thou makest against them. If thou wouldst thus try every piece, thy credulous heart would not so easily be cheated with Satan's false ware.

Objection. But is all armour that is of God thus mighty? We read of weak grace, little faith; how can this then be a trial of our armour whether of God or not?

Answer. I answer, the weakness of grace is in respect of stronger grace, but the weak grace is strong and mighty in comparison of counterfeit grace. Now, I do not bid thee try the truth of thy grace by such a power as is peculiar to stronger grace, but by that power which will distinguish it from false. True grace, when weakest, is stronger than false when strongest. There is a principle of divine life in it which the other hath not. Now life, as it gives excellency—a flea or a fly by reason of its life, is more excellent than the sun in all his glory—so it give strength. The slow motion of a living man, though so feeble that he cannot go a furlong in a single day, yet coming from life, imports more strength than is in a ship, which though it sails swiftly, hath its motion from without. Thus possibly an hypocrite may exceed the true Christian in the bulk and outside of a duty, yet because his strength is not from life, but from some wind and tide abroad that carries him, and the Christian's is from an inward principle, therefore the Christian's weakness is stronger than the hypocrite in his greatest enlargements. I shall name but two acts of grace whereby the Christian, when weakest, exceeds the hypocrite in all his best array. You will say, then grace is a weak stay indeed, when the Christian is persuaded to commit a sin, a great sin, such a one as possibly a carnal person would not have it said of him for a great matter. So low may the tide of grace fall, yet true grace at such an ebb will appear of greater strength and force than the other.

1. This principle of grace will never leave till the soul weeps bitterly with Peter, that it hath offended so good a God. Speak, O ye hypocrites can ye show one tear that ever you shed in earnest for a wrong done to God? Possibly you may weep to see the bed of sorrow which your sins are making for you in hell, but ye never loved God so well as to mourn for the injury ye have done the name of God. It is a good gloss Augustine hath upon Esau's tears Hebrews 12:16-17. —Flevet quòd perdidit, non quòd vendidit —he wept that he lost the blessing, not that he sold it. Thus we see an excellency of the saint's sorrow above the hypocrite's. The Christian by his sorrow shows himself a conqueror of that sin which even now overcame him; while the hypocrite by his pride shows himself a slave to a worse lust than that he resists. While the Christian commits a sin he hates; whereas the other loves it while he forbears it.

2. When true grace is under the foot of a temptation, yet then it will stir up in the heart a vehement desire of revenge. [It is] like a prisoner in his enemies' hand, who is thinking and plotting how to get out, and what he will do when out, waiting and longing every minute for his delivery, that he again may take up arms. 'O Lord God, remember me,' saith Samson, 'I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. Jude 1:16. Thus prays the gracious soul, that God would but spare him a little, and strengthen him but once before he dies, that he may be avenged on his pride, unbelief, and those sins whereby he hath most dishonoured God. But a false heart is so far from studying revenge, that he rather swells like the sea against the law which banks his lust in, and is angry with God who hath made sin such a leap, that he must hazard his soul if he will have it.

BRANCH THIRD.

[The entireness of our armour.

It must be the whole armour of God.] In this branch observe the quantity or entireness of the saints' furniture or armour, 'the whole armour of God.' The Christian's armour must be complete, and that in a threefold respect.

First. He must be armed in every part cap-à-pie, soul and body, the powers of the one, and the senses of the other, not any part left naked. A dart may fly in at a little hole, like that which brought a message of death to Ahab, through the joints of his harness, and Satan is such an archer as can shoot at a penny breadth. If all the man be armed, and only the eye left without, Satan can soon shoot his fireballs of lust in at that loophole, which shall set the whole house on flame. Eve looked but on the tree, and a poisonous dart struck her to the heart. If the eye be shut, and the ear be open to corrupt communication, Satan will soon wriggle in at this hole. If all the outward senses [of a man] be guarded, and the heart not kept with all diligence, he will soon by his own thoughts be betrayed into Satan's hands. Our enemies are on every side, and so must our armour be, 'on the right hand and on the left,' 2 Corinthians 6:7. The apostle calls sin ■µ"D\"< ,ÛB,D\FJ"J@<, an enemy that surrounds us, Hebrews 12:1. If there be any part of the line unguarded or weakly provided, there Satan falls on; [as] we see the enemy often enter the city at one side, while he is beat back on the other, for want of care to keep the whole line. Satan divides his temptations into several squadrons, one he employs to assault here, another to storm there. We read of fleshly wickedness and spiritual wickedness; while thou repellest Satan tempting thee to fleshly wickedness, he may be entering thy city at the other gate of spiritual wickedness. Perhaps thou hast kept thy integrity in the practical part of thy life; but what armour hast thou to defend thy head, thy judgment? If he surprise thee here, corrupting that with some error, then thou wilt not long hold out in thy practice. He that could not get thee to profane the Sabbath among sensualists and atheists, will under the disguise of such a corrupt principle as Christian liberty prevail. Thus we see what need we have of universal armour, in regard of every part.

Second. The Christian must be in complete armour, in regard of the several pieces and weapons, that make up the whole armour of God. Indeed there is a concatenation of graces; they hang together like links in a chain, stones in an arch, members in the body. Prick one vein, and the blood of the whole body may run out at the sluice; neglect one duty, and no other will do us as good. The apostle Peter, in his second epistle, 2 Peter 1:5-7, presseth the Christians to a joint endeavour to increase the whole body of grace; indeed, that is health when the whole body thrives. 'Add,' saith he, 'to your faith virtue.' Faith is the file-leading grace. Well, hast thou faith, add virtue. True faith is of a working stirring nature, without good works it is dead or dying. Fides pinguescit operibus—'faith fattens or becomes strong on works,' Luther. It is kept in plight and heart by a holy life, as the flesh which plasters over the frame of man's body, though it receives its heat from the vitals within, yet helps to preserve the very life of those vitals. Thus good works and gracious actions have their life from faith, [and] yet are necessary helps to preserve the life of faith; thus we see sometimes the child nursing the parents that bare it, and therein [he] performs but his duty.

Thou are fruitful in good works, yet thou art not out of the devil's shoot, except thou addest to thy virtue, knowledge. This is the candle without which faith cannot see to do its work. Art thou going to give an alms? If it be not oculata charitas, if charity hath not this eye of knowledge to direct when, how, what, and to whom thou art to give, thou mayest at once wrong God, the person thou relievest, and thyself. Art thou humbling thyself for thy sin? For want of knowledge in the tenor of the gospel, Satan may play upon thy ignorance, and either persuade thee thou art not humbled enough, when, God knows, thou art almost quackled[i] with thy tears, and even carried down by the impetuous torrent of thy sorrow into despair, or else showing thee thy blubbered face, may

flatter thee into a carnal confidence of thy humiliation.

Perhaps thou seest the name of God dishonoured in the place where thou livest, and thy spirit is stirred within thee, as Paul's at Athens; now if knowledge sits not in the saddle to rein and bridle in thy zeal, thou wilt be soon carried over hedge and ditch, till thou fallest into some precipice or other by thy irregular acting. Neither is knowledge enough, except thou beest armed with temperance, which here, I conceive, is that grace, whereby the Christian, as master of his own house, so orders his affections, like servants, to reason and faith, that they do not regularly move, or inordinately lash out into desires of, cares for, or joy in the creature comforts of this life, without which Satan will be too hard for thee. The historian tells us, that in one of the famous battles between the English and French, that which lost the French the day was a shower of English arrows, which did so gall their horse, as put the whole army into disorder, [for] their horse knowing no ranks, did tread down their own men. The affections are but as the horse to the rider, on which knowledge should be mounted; if Satan's barbed arrows light on them, so that thy desires of the creature prove unruly, and justle with thy desires of Christ, [if] thy care to keep thy credit or estate put thy care to keep a good conscience to disorder, and thy carnal joy in wife and child trample down or get before thy joy in the Lord, judge on which side victory is like to fall.

Well, suppose thou marchest provided thus far in goodly array towards heaven, while thou art swimming in prosperity, must thou not also prepare for foul way and weather—I mean in an afflicted estate? Satan will line the hedges with a thousand temptations, when thou comest into the narrow lanes of adversity, where thou canst not run from this sort of temptation, as in the campaign of prosperity. Possibly, thou that didst escape the snare of an alluring world, mayest be dismounted by the same when it frowns; though temperance kept thee from being drunk with sweet wines of those pleasures, yet for want of patience thou mayest be drunk with the wine of astonishment, which is in affliction's hands; therefore, saith the apostle, 'to temperance, add patience.' Either possess thyself in patience, or else some raving devil of discontent will possess thee. An impatient soul in affliction is a bedlam in chains, yea, too like the devil in his chains, [who] rageth against God, while he is fettered by him.

Well, hast thou patience?—an excellent grace indeed, but not enough. Thou must be a pious man as well as patient. Therefore, saith the apostle, 'to patience, add godliness.' There is an atheistical patience, and there is a godly Christian patience. Satan numbs the conscience of one, and [so] no wonder he complains not, that feels not; but the Spirit of Christ sweetly calms the other, not by taking away the sense of pain, but by overcoming it with the sense of his love. Now godliness comprehends the whole worship of God, inward and outward. If thou beest never so exact in thy morals, and not a worshipper of God, then thou art an atheist. If thou dost worship God, and that devoutly, but not by Scripture rule, thou art but an idolater. If according to the rule, but not in spirit and truth, then thou art an hypocrite, and so fallest into the devil's mouth. Or if thou dost give God one piece of his worship, and deniest another, still Satan comes to his market. 'He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination,' Proverbs 28:9.

Yet, Christian, all thy armour is not on. Thy godliness indeed would suffice, wert thou to live in a world by thyself, or hadst nothing to do but immediate communion with God. But, Christian, thou must not always dwell on this mount of immediate worship, and [since] when thou descendest, thou hast many brethren and servants of thy Father, who live with thee in the same family, thou

must deport thyself becomingly, or else thy Father will be angry. Thou hast brethren, heirs of the same promise with thee, therefore you must add to godliness 'brotherly-kindness.' If Satan can set you at odds, he gives a deep wound to your godliness. You will hardly join hearts in a duty, that cannot join hands in love. In the family there are not only brethren, but servants, a multitude of profane carnal ones, who though they never had the names of sons and daughters, yet retain to God's family. And thy heavenly Father will have thee walk unblameably, yea winningly, to those that are without, which thou mayest do, thou must add to brotherly-kindness, 'charity;' by which grace thou shalt be willing to do good to the worst of men. When they curse thee, thou must pray for them, yea, pray for no less than a Christ, a heaven, for them. 'Father, forgive them,' said Christ, while they were raking in his side for his heart-blood. And truly, I am persuaded this last piece of armour hath given Satan great advantage in these our times, we are so afraid our charity should be too broad. Whereas in this sense, if it be not wide as the world, it is too strait for the command which bids us 'do good to all.' May not we ministers be charged with the want of this, when the strain of our preaching is solely directed to the saints, and no pains taken in rescuing poor captive souls, yet uncalled, out of the devil's clutches? He may haul them to hell without disturbance, while we are comforting the saints, and preaching their privileges; but in the meantime, let the ignorant be ignorant still, and the profane profane still, for want of a compassionate charity to their souls, which would excite us to the reproving and exhorting of them, that they might also be brought into the way of life, as well as the saints encouraged, who are walking therein. We are stewards to provide bread for the Lord's house. The greatest part of our hearers cannot, must not, have the children's bread, and shall we therefore give them no portion at all? Christ's charity pitied the multitude, to whom in his public preaching he made special application, as in that famous sermon, most part of which is spent in rousing up the sleepy consciences of the hypocritical Pharisees, by those thunderclaps of woes and curses so often denounced against them, Matthew 23:1-39. Again, how great advantage hath Satan from the want of this charity in our families? Is it not observed how little care is taken by professing governors of such societies for the instructing their youth? Nay, it is a principle which some have drunk in, that it is not their duty. O where is their charity in the meantime, when they can see Satan come within their own walls, and let them drive a child, a servant, in their ignorance and profaneness, to hell, and not so much as sally out upon this enemy by a word of reproof or instruction, to rescue these silly souls out of the murder's hand? We must leave them to their liberty forsooth, and that is as fair play as we can give the devil. Give but corrupt nature enough of this rope, and it will soon strangle the very principles of God and religion in their tender years.

Third. The entireness of the saint's armour may be taken not only for every part and piece of the saint's furniture, but for the completeness and perfection of every piece. As the Christian is to endeavour after every grace, so is he to press after the advance and increase of every grace, even to perfection itself. As he is to add to his faith virtue, so he is to add faith to faith—he is ever to be completing of his grace. It is that which is frequently pressed upon believers. 'Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect,' Matthew 5:48. 'And purify yourselves, as God is pure.' There we have an exact copy set, not as if we could equalize that purity and perfection which is in God, but to make us strive the more, when we shall see how infinitely short we fall of our copy, when we write the fairest hand; so 'Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing,' James 1:3-4, or [be] wanting in nothing. Thou who makest a hard shift to carry a little burden with thy little patience, wouldst sink under a greater, therefore

there is need that patience should be ever perfecting, lest at last we meet a burden too heavy for our weak shoulders. Take a few reasons why the Christian should thus be completing of his grace.

First. Because grace is subject to decays, and therefore ever needs completing. [It is] as in an army, especially [one] which often engagest in battle; their arms are battered and broken, one man hath his helmet bent, another his sword gaped, a third his pistol unfixed, and therefore recruits are ever necessary. In one temptation the Christian hath his helmet of hope beaten off his head, in another his patience hard put to it. The Christian had need have an armourer's shop at hand to make up his loss, and that speedily, for Satan is most like to fall on when the Christian is least prepared to receive the charge. 'Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to sift you;' he knew they were at that time weakly provided—(Christ their captain now to be taken from the head of their troop; discontents among themselves, striving who should be greatest; and their recruits of stronger grace, which the Spirit was to bring, not yet come). Now he hath a design to surprise them; and therefore Christ, carefully to prevent him, promiseth speedily to despatch his Spirit for their supply, Acts 1:4, and in the meantime sends them to Jerusalem, to stand as it were in a body in their joint supplications upon their guard, while he comes to their relief; showing us in the weakness of our grace what to do, and whither to go for supply.

Second. Because Satan is completing his skill and wrath. It is not for nought that he is called the old serpent—subtle by nature, but more by experience, wrathful by nature, yet every day more and more enraged; like a bull, the longer he is baited, the more fury he shows. And therefore we who are to grapple with him, now his time is so short, had need come well appointed into the field.

Third. It is the end of all God's dispensations, to complete his saints in their graces and comforts. Wherefore doth he lop and prune by afflictions, but to purge, that they may bring forth more fruit, that is, fuller and fairer? John 15:2. Tribulation works patience, Romans 5:3; it is God's appointment for that end. It works, that is, it increaseth the saints. Patience enrageth indeed the wicked, but meekens the saints. It is his design in the gospel; he preacheth to carry on his saints from 'faith to faith,' Romans 1:17, and accordingly he hath furnished his church with instruments, and those with gifts, 'For the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ,' Ephesians 4:12. Wherefore doth the scaffold stand, and the workman on it, if the building go not up? For us not to advance under such means is to make void the counsel of God. Therefore the apostle blames the Christian Jews for their non-proficiency in the school of Christ: 'When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God,' Hebrews 5:12.

[Use and Application.]

Use. O how few are there endeavour thus to promove in their spiritual state, and labour to perfect what is yet lacking in their knowledge, patience, and the rest.

1. Tell some of adding faith to faith, one degree of grace to another, and you shall find they have more mind to join house to house, and lay field to field. Their souls are athirst, ever gaping for more. But of what? not of Christ or of heaven. It is earth. Earth they never think they have enough of, till death comes and stops their mouth with a shovel-full, digged out of their own grave. What a tormenting life must they needs have, who are always crying for more weight, and yet cannot press their covetous desires to death? O sirs, the only way—if men would believe it—to quench

this thirst to the creature, were to enkindle another after Christ and heaven. Get but a large heart vehemently thirsting after these, and the other will die alone, as the feverish thirst doth when nature comes to her temper.

2. Others labour not thus to perfect grace, because they have a conceit they are perfect already, and upon this fancy throw away praying, hearing, and all other ordinances, as strings for those babes in grace to be carried by, who are not arrived to their high attainments. O what fools does pride make men! Truly heaven were no such desirable place, if we should be no more perfect than thus—a sort of people that are too high for this world, and too low for another. The way by which God cures this frenzy of pride, we have in these days seen to be something like that of Nebuchadnezzar; to give them the heart of a beast, I mean, for a time, to suffer them to fall into beastly practices, by which he shows them how far they are from that perfection they dreamed of so vainly.

3. Others who have true grace, and desire the advancement of it, yet are discouraged in their endeavour for more, from too deep a sense of their present penury. Bid some such labour to get more power over corruption, more faith on, and love to God, that they may be able to do the will of God cheerfully, and suffer it in the greatest afflictions patiently, yea, thankfully, and they will never believe, that they whose faith is so weak, love so chill, and stock so little in hand, should ever attain to anything like such a pitch. You may as well persuade a beggar with one poor penny in his purse, that if he shall go and trade with that, he shall come to be lord-Mayor of London before he die. But why, poor hearts, should you thus despise the day of small things? Do you not see a little grain of mustard-seed spread into a tree, and weak grace compared to it, for its growth at last as well as littleness at first? Darest thou say thou hast no grace at all? If thou hast but any, though the least that ever any had to begin with, I dare tell thee, that he hath done more for thee in that, than he should in making that which is now so weak, as perfect as the saint's grace is now in heaven. (1.) He hath done more, considering it as an act of power. There is a greater gulf between no grace and grace, than between weak grace and strong, between a chaos and nothing, than between a chaos and this beautiful frame of heaven and earth. The first day's work of both creations is the greatest. (2.) Consider it as an act of grace. It is greater mercy to give the first grace of conversion, than to crown that with glory. It is more grace and condescension in a prince to marry a poor damsel, than having married her, to clothe her like a princess; he was free to do the first or not, but his relation to her pleads strongly for the other. God might have chosen whether he would have given thee grace or no, but having done this, thy relation to him, and his covenant also, do oblige him to add more and more, till he hath fitted thee as a bride for himself in glory.

BRANCH FOURTH.

[The use of our spiritual armour —put on the whole armour of God.] The fourth and last branch in the saints' furniture is, the use they are to make thereof[ii], 'put on the whole armour of God.' Briefly, what is this duty, put on? These being saints, many of them at least, whom he writes to, it is not only putting on by conversation, what some of them might not yet have, but also, he means they should exercise what they have. It is one thing to have armour in the house, and another thing to have it buckled on; to have grace in the principle, and grace in the act. So that our instruction will be, [Our armour or grace must be kept in exercise.]

Doctrine. It is not enough to have grace, but this grace must be kept in exercise. The Christian's armour is made to be worn; no laying down, or putting off our armour, till we have done our warfare, and finished our course. Our armour and our garment of flesh go off together; then, indeed, will be no need of watch and ward; shield or helmet. Those military duties and field-graces—as I may call faith, hope, and the rest—shall be honourably discharged. In heaven we shall appear, not in armour, but in robes of glory. But here these are to be worn night and day; we must walk, work, and sleep in them, or else we are not true soldiers of Christ. This Paul professeth to endeavour. 'Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men,' Acts 24:16. Here we have this holy man at his arms, training and exercising himself in his postures, like some soldier by himself handling his pike, and inuring himself before the battle. Now the reason of this is,

First. Christ commands us to have our armour on, our grace in exercise. 'Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning,' Luke 12:35. Christ speaks either in a martial phrase, as to soldiers, or in a domestic, as to servants. If as to soldiers, then let your loins be girded and your lights burning, that is, we should be ready for a march, having our armour on—for the belt goes over all—and our match lighted, ready to give fire at the first alarm of temptation. If as to servants, which seems more natural, then he bids us, as our master that is gone abroad, not through sloth or sleep [to] put off our clothes, and put out our lights; but [to] stand ready to open when he shall come, though at midnight. It is not fit the Master should stand at the door knocking, and the servant within sleeping. Indeed there is no duty the Christian hath in charge, but implies this daily exercise: 'pray' he must—but how?—'without ceasing;' 'rejoice'—but when?—'evermore;' 'give thanks' —for what? 'in everything,' 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. The shield of faith, and helmet of hope, we must hold them to the end, 1 Peter 1:13. The sum of all which is, that we should walk in the constant exercise of these duties and graces. Where the soldier is placed, there he stands, and must neither stir nor sleep till he be brought off. When Christ comes, that soul shall only have his blessing whom he finds so doing.

Second. Satan's advantage is great when grace is not in exercise. When the devil found Christ so ready to receive his charge, and repel his temptation, he soon had enough. It is sad 'he departed for a season,' Luke 4:13; as if in his shameful retreat he had comforted himself with hopes of surprising Christ unawares, at another season more advantageous to his design; and we find him coming again, in the most likely time indeed to have attained his end, had his enemy been man, and not God. Now if this bold fiend did thus watch and observe Christ from time to time, doth it not behove thee to look about thee, lest he take thy grace at one time or other napping? what he hath missed now by thy watchfulness, he may gain anon by thy negligence. Indeed he hopes thou wilt be tired out with continual duty. Surely, saith Satan, when he sees the Christian up and fervent in duty, this will not hold long. When he finds him tender of conscience, and scrupulous of occasion to sin, [he saith,] This is but for a while, ere long I shall have him unbend his bow, and unbuckle his armour, and then have at him. Satan knows what orders thou keepest in thy house and closet, and though he hath not a key to thy heart, yet he can stand in the next room to it, and lightly hear what is whispered there. He hunts the Christian by the scent of his own feet, and if once he doth but smell which way thy heart inclines, he knows how to take the hint; if but one door be unbolted, one work unmanned, one grace off its cárriage, here is advantage enough.

Third. Because it is so awky[iii] a business, and hard a work, to recover the activity once lost, and to revive a duty in disuse. ‘I have put off my coat,’ saith the spouse, Song of Solomon 5:3. She had given way to a lazy distemper, was laid upon her bed of sloth, and how hard is it to raise her! Her Beloved is at the door, beseeching her by all the names of love which might bring her to remembrance the near relation between them; [he crieth], ‘My sister, my love, my dove, open to me,’ and yet she riseth not. He tells her ‘his locks are filled with the drops of the night,’ yet she stirs not. What is the matter? Her coat was off, and she is loath to put it on. She had given way to her sloth, and now she knows not how to shake it off; she could have been glad to have her Beloved’s company, if himself would have opened the door; and he desired as much hers, if she would rise to let him in, and upon these terms they part. The longer a soul hath neglected a duty, the more ado there is to get it taken up; partly, through shame, the soul having played the truant, now knows not how to look God in the face; and partly, from the difficulty of the work, being double to what another finds that walks in the exercise of his grace. Here is all out of order. It requires more time and pains for him to tune his instrument, than for another to play the lesson. He goes to duty as to a new work, as a scholar that hath not looked on his book some while; his lesson is almost out of his head, whereas another that was even now but conning it over, hath it[iv] [at his finger ends]. Perhaps it is an affliction thou art called to bear, and thy patience [is] unexercised. Little or no thoughts thou hast had for such a time—while thou wert frisking in a full pasture—and now thou kickest and flingest, even as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, Jeremiah 31:18; whereas another goes meekly and patiently under the like cross, because he had been stirring up his patience, and fitting the yoke to his neck. You know what a confusion there is in a town at some sudden alarm in the dead of the night, the enemy at the gates, and they asleep within. O what a cry is there heard! One wants his clothes, another his sword, a third knows not what to do for powder. Thus in a fright they run up and down, which would not be if the enemy did find them upon their guard, orderly waiting for his approach. Such a hubbub there is in a soul that keeps not his armour on; this piece and that will be to seek when he should use it.

Fourth. We must keep grace in exercise in respect of others our fellow-soldiers. Paul had this in his eye when he was exercising himself to keep a good conscience, that he might not be a scandal to others. The cowardice of one may make others run. The ignorance of one soldier that hath not skill to handle his arms, may do mischief to his fellow-soldiers about him. Some have shot their friends for their enemies. The unwise walking of one professor makes many others fare the worse. But say thou dost not fall so far as to become a scandal, yet thou canst not be so helpful to thy fellow■brethren as thou shouldst. God commanded the Reubenites and Gadites to go before their brethren ready armed, until the land was conquered. Thus, Christian, thou art to be helpful to thy fellow-brethren, who have not, it may be, that settlement of peace in their spirit as thyself, not that measure of grace or comfort. Thou art to help such weak ones, and go before them, as it were, armed for their defence; now if thy grace be not exercised, thou art so far unserviceable to thy weak brother. Perhaps thou art a master, or a parent, who hast a family under thy wing. They fare as thou thrivest; if thy heart be in a holy frame, they fare the better in the duties thou performest; if thy heart be dead and down, they are losers by the hand. So that as the nurse eats the more for the babe’s sake she suckles, so shouldst thou for their sake who are under thy tuition, be more careful to exercise thy own grace, and cherish it.

Objection. O but, may some say, this is hard work indeed, our armour never off, our grace always in exercise. Did God ever mean religion should be such a toilsome business as this world make it?

Answer First. Thou speakest like one of the foolish world, and showest thyself a mere stranger to the Christian's life that speakest thus. A burden to exercise grace! Why, it is no burden to exercise the acts of nature, to eat, to drink, to walk, all are delightful to us in our right temper. [But] if any of these be otherwise, nature is oppressed, as, if stuffed, then [it is] difficult to breathe; if sick, then the meat [is] offensive we eat. So take a saint in his right temper, [and] it is his joy to be employed in the exercise of his grace in this or that duty: 'I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord,' Psalms 122:1. His heart leaped at the motion. When any occasion diverts him from communion with God, though he likes it never so well, yet it is unwelcome and unpleasing to him. As [for] you, who are used to be in your shops from morning to night, how tedious is it to be abroad some days, though among good friends, because you are not where your work and calling lies! A Christian in duty is one in his calling—as it were in his shop, where he should be, and therefore far from being tedious. Religion is [so] burdensome to none, as to those who are infrequent in the exercise of it. Use makes heavy things light. We hardly feel the weight of our clothes, because fitted to us, and worn daily by us, whereas the same weight on our shoulder troubles us. Thus the grievousness of religious duties to carnal ones, is taken away in the saints, partly by the fitness of them to the saints' principles, as also by their daily exercise in them. The disciples, when newly entered into the ways of Christ, could not pray much or fast long; the bottles were new, and that wine too strong, but by the time they had walked a few years, they grew mighty in both. Dost thou complain that [the] heaven-way is rugged? Be the oftener walking in it, and that will make it smooth.

Answer Second. Were this constant exercise of grace more troublesome to the flesh, which is the only complainer, the sweet advantage that accrues by this to the Christian, will abundantly recompense all his labour and pains.

1. The exercise of thy grace will increase thy grace. 'The hand of the diligent maketh rich.' The provident man counts that lost which might have been got; not only when his money is stole out of his chest, but when it lies there unimproved. Such a commodity, saith the tradesman, if I had bought with that money in my bags, would have brought me in so much gain, which is now lost. So the Christian may say, My dawning knowledge, had I followed on to know the Lord, might have spread to broad day. 'I have more understanding,' saith David, 'than all my teachers.' How came he by it? He will tell you in the next words—'for thy testimonies are my meditation,' Psalms 119:99. He was more in the exercise of duty and grace. The best wits are not always the greatest scholars, because their study is not suitable to their parts; neither always proves he the richest man that sets up with the greatest stock. A little grace well husbanded by daily exercise will increase, when greater [grace] neglected shall decay.

2. As exercise increaseth, so it evidenceth grace. Would a man know whether he be lame or no, let him rise; he will sooner be satisfied by one turn in a room, than by a long dispute, and he sitting still. Wouldst thou know whether thou lovest God? Be frequent in exhorting acts of love; the more the fire is blown up, the sooner it is seen, and so of all other graces. Sometimes the soul is questioning whether it hath any patience, any faith, till God comes and puts him into an afflicted estate, where he must either exercise this grace or perish. Then it [the soul] appears like one that

thinks he cannot swim, yet being thrown into the river, then uniting all his strength, he makes a shift to swim to land, and sees what he can do. How oft have we heard Christians say, I thought I could never have endured such a pain, trusted God in such a strait? But now God hath taught me what he can do for me, what he hath wrought in me. And this thou mightest have known before, if thou wouldst have oftener stirred up and exercised thy grace.

3. Exercise of grace doth invite God to communicate himself to such a soul. God sets the Christian at work, and then meets him in it. Up and doing, and the Lord be with you. He sets a soul reading as the eunuch, and then joins to his chariot a praying, and then comes the messenger from heaven—'O Daniel, greatly beloved.' The spouse, who lost her beloved on her bed, finds him as she comes from the sermon. 'It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth,' Song of Solomon 3:4.

[Use and Application.]

Use First. This falls heavy on their heads, who are so far from exercising grace, that they walk in the exercise of their lusts. Their hearts are like a glass house, the fire is never out, the shop-windows never shut, they are always at work, hammering some wicked project or other upon the anvil of their hearts. There are some who give full scope to their lusts; when their wicked hearts will, they shall have; they cocker[v] their lusts as some their children, [and] deny them nothing; as it is recorded of David to Adonijah, [they] do not so much as say to their souls, Why doest thou so? why art thou so proud, so covetous, profane? They spend their days in making provision for these guests; as at some inns, the house never cools, but as one guest goes out another comes in—as one lust is served, another is calling for attendance; as some exercise grace more than others, so there are greater traders in sin, that set more at work than others, and return more wrath in a day than others in a month. Happy are such, in comparison of these, who are chained up by God's restraint upon their outward man or inward, that they cannot drive on so furiously as those who, by health of body, power and greatness in place, riches and treasures in their coffers, numbness and dedolency[vi] in their consciences, are hurried on to fill up the measure of their sins. We read of the Assyrian, that he 'enlarged his heart as hell,' stretching out his desires as men do their bags that are thracked[vii] full with money to hold more, Habakkuk 2:5. Thus the adulterer, as if his body were not quick enough to execute the commands of his lust, stirs it up by sending forth his amorous glances, which come home laden with adultery, blows up his fire with unchaste sonnets and belly-cheer, proper fuel for the devil's kitchen; and the malicious man, who that he may lose no time from his lust, is a tearing his neighbour in pieces as he lies on his bed, [and] cannot sleep unless some such bloody sacrifice be offered to his ravening lust. O how may this shame the saints! How oft is your zeal so hot that you cannot sleep till your hearts have been in heaven, as you are on your beds, and there pacified with the sight of your dear Saviour, and some embraces of love from him!

Use Second. It reproves those who flout and mock at the saints, while exercising their graces. None jeered as the saint in his calling. Men may work in their shops, and every one follows his calling as diligently as they please; and no wonder made of this by those that pass by in the streets; but let the Christian be seen at work for God, in the exercise of any duty or grace, and he is hooted at, despised, yea, hated. Few so bad indeed, but seem to like religion in the notion; they commend a sermon of holiness like a discourse of God or Christ in the pulpit, but when these are

really set before their eyes, as they sparkle in a saint's conversation, they are very contemptible and hateful to them. This living and walking holiness bites, and though they like the preacher's art in painting forth the same in his discourse, yet now they run from them, and spit at them. This exercise of grace offends the profane heart, and stirs up the enmity that lies within; as Michal, she could not but flout David to see him dancing before the ark. He that commended the preacher for making a learned discourse of zeal, will rail on a saint expressing an act of zeal in his place and calling; now grace comes too near him. A naughty heart must stand some distance from holiness, that the beams thereof may not beat too strongly on his conscience, and so he likes it. Thus the Pharisees the prophets of old; these were holy men in their account, and they can lavish out their money on their tombs, in honour of them; but Christ, who was more worth than all of them, he is scorned and hated. What is the mystery of this? The reason was, these prophets are off the stage, and Christ on. Pascitur in vivis livor, post fata quiescit—envy feeds on the living, but after death it ceases.

Use Third. Try by this whether you have grace or no. Dost thou walk in the exercise of thy grace? He that hath clothes, surely will wear them, and not be seen naked. Men talk of their faith, repentance, love to God; these are precious graces, but why do they not let us see these walking abroad in their daily conversation? Surely if such guests were in thy soul, they would look out sometimes at the window, and be seen abroad in this duty and that holy action. Grace is of a stirring nature, and not such a dead thing, like an image, which you may lock up in a chest, and none shall know what God you worship. No, grace will show itself; it will walk with you into all places and companies; it will buy with you, and sell for you; it will have a hand in all your enterprises; it will comfort you when you are sincere and faithful for God, and it will complain and chide you when you are otherwise. Go to, stop its mouth, and Heaven will hear its voice, it will groan, mourn and strive, even as a living man when you would smother him. I will as soon believe a man to be alive, that lies peaceably as he is nailed up in his coffin, without strife or bustle, as that thou hast grace, and never exercise it in any act of spiritual life. What! man, hast thou grace, and carried as peaceably as a fool to the stocks by thy lust? Why hangest thou there nailed to thy lust? If thou hast grace, come down and we will believe it; but if thou beest such a tame slave as to sit still inder the command of lust, thou deceivest thyself. Hast thou grace, and show none of it in the condition thou art placed in? May be thou art rich; dost thou show thy humility towards those that are beneath thee? dost thou show a heavenly mind, breathing after heaven more than earth? It may be thy heart is puffed with thy estate, that thou lookest on the pooras creatures of some lower species than thyself, and disdainest them, and as for heaven thou thinkest not of it. Like that wicked prince that said, He would lose his part in paradise rather than in Paris. Art thou poor? why dost [thou] not exercise grace in that condition? Art thou contented, diligent? May be instead of contention thou repinest, canst not see a fair lace on thy rich brother's cloth, but grudgest it; instead of concurring with providence by diligence to supply thy wants, thou art ready to break through the hedge into thy neighbour's fat pasture; thus serving thy own turn by a sin, rather than waiting for God's blessing on thy honest diligence. If so, be not angry we call thee by thy right name, or at least question whether we may style thee Christian, whose carriage is so cross to that sacred name, which is too holy to be written on a rotten post.

Use Fourth. Be exhorted, O ye saints of God, to walk in the exercise of grace. It is the minister's duty, with the continual breath of exhortation, and if need be, reproof, to keep this heavenly fire

clean on the saints' altar. Peter saw it necessary to have the bellows always in his hands, 'I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth,' 2 Peter 1:12. That shall not take him off; as long as he is in this tabernacle, he saith he will stir them up, and be putting them in remembrance, 2 Peter 1:13. There is a sleepy disease we are subject to tin this life; Christ though he had roused up his disciples twice, yet takes them napping the third time. Either exercise thy grace, or Satan will act hy corruption; as one bucket goes down the other riseth; there is a body of sin within, which likely a malignant party watcheth for such a time to step into the saddle, and it is easier to keep them down than to pull them down. Thy time is short, and thy way long, thou hadst best put on, lest thou meanest to be overtaken with the night before thou gettest within sight of thy Father's house. How uncomfortable it is for a traveller in heaven's road, above all other, to go potching in the dark, many can with aching hearts tell thee. And what hast thou here to mind like this? Are they worldly cares and pleasures? Is it wisdom to lay out so much cost on thy tenement, which thou art leaving, and forget what thou must carry with thee? Before the fruit of these be ripe which thou art now planting, thyself may be rotting in the grave. 'Time is short,'[viii] saith the apostle, 1 Corinthians 7:29. The world is near its port, and therefore God hath contracted the sails of man's life; but a while, and there will not be a point to choose whether we had wives or not, riches or not; but there will be a vast difference between those that had grace and those that had not; yea, between those that did drive a quick trade in the exercise thereof, and those that were more remiss. The one shall have an 'abundant entrance into glory,' 2 Peter 1:2; while the other shall suffer loss in much of his lading, which shall be cast overboard, as merchandise that will bear no price in that heavenly country. Yea, while thou art here others shall fare the better by thy lively graces. Thy cheerfulness and activity in thy heavenly course will help others that travel with thee; he is dull indeed that will not put on, when he sees so much metal for God in thee who leadest the way. Yea, thy grace will give a check to the sins of others, who never stand in such awe, as when grace comes forth and sits like a ruler in the gate, to be seen of all that pass by. The swearer knows not [that] such majesty is present, when the Christian is mealy-mouthed, and so goes on and fears no colours, whose grace, had it but her dagger of zeal ready, and courage to draw it forth in a wise reproof, would make sin quit the place, and with shame run into its hole: 'The young men saw me, and hid themselves: and the aged arose, and stood up. The princes refrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth,' Job 29:8, 9. And doth not God deserve the best service thou canst do him in thy generation? Did he give thee grace to lay it up in a dead stock, and none to be the better? or can you say that he is wanting to you in his love and mercy? Are they not ever in exercise for your good? Is the eye of providence ever shut? No, he slumbers not that keeps thee. Is it one moment off thee? No, 'the eye of the Lord is upon the righteous;' he hath fixed it for ever, and with infinite delight pleaseth himself in the object. When was his ear shut, or his hand, either from receiving thy cries, or supplying thy wants? Nay, doth not thy condition take up the thoughts of God? And are they any other than thoughts of peace which he entertains? A few drops of this oil will keep the wheel in motion.

[i]. Quackle is an old word meaning to choke or suffocate.—Ed.

[ii]. ¦<*F"Fb2, J¬< B"<@B8\"< J@Ø 2,@Ø.

[iii]. Awky conveys the meaning of being odd or out of order.

[iv]. Ad unguem.

[v]. Note: Cocker means to coddle or pamper; indulge. — SDB [vi]. Dedolency, absence of, or want of compunction.

[vii]. To Thrack means generally to load or burden.

[viii]. Ð 6"4D@H FL<0FJ"8µ0<@H

Chapter 4

01.03 - The Reason Why the Christian Must be Armed, "That Ye May Be Able to Stand'

DIRECTION I.—SECOND GENERAL PART [The reason why the Christian must be armed, ‘That ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.’]

These words present us with the reason why the Christian soldier is to be thus completely armed, ‘That ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.’ The strength of this argument lies in these two particulars [or branches]. First, The danger, if unarmed. The enemy is no mean contemptible one, no less than the devil, set out as a cunning engineer by his wiles and stratagems. Second, The certainty of standing against all his wits and wiles, if we be thus armed. As [there is] no standing without armour, so [there is] no fear of falling into the fiend’s hands if armed.

BRANCH FIRST.

[The danger, if unarmed.] The saint’s enemy is the devil, described by his wiles, properly, the methods of Satan. [The Greek word[1]] signifies, the art and order one observes in handling a point; we say such a one is methodical. Now because it shows ingenuity and acuteness of wit so to compose a discourse, therefore it is transferred to express the subtlety of Satan, in laying off his plots and stratagems, in his warlike preparations against the Christian. Indeed the expert soldier hath his order as well as the scholar; there is method in forming of an army, as well as framing an argument. The note which lies before us is—

Doctrine, That the devil is a very subtle enemy. The Christian is endangered most by his policy and craft. He is called the old serpent—the serpent subtle above other creatures; an old serpent above other serpents. Satan was too crafty for man in his perfection, much more now in his maimed estate, having never recovered that first crack he got in his understanding, by the fall of Adam. And as man hath lost, so Satan hath gained more and more experience; he lost his wisdom, indeed, as soon as he became a devil, but, ever since, he hath increased his craft; though he hath not wisdom enough to do himself good, yet [he hath] subtlety enough to do others hurt. God shows us where his strength lies, when he promiseth he will bruise the head of the serpent; his head crushed, and he dies presently. Now in handling this point of Satan’s subtlety, we shall consider him in his two Mal. designs, and therein show you his wiles and policies. His first Mal. design is to draw into sin. The second Mal. design is to accuse, vex, and trouble the saint for sin.

[Satan’s first Mal. design is to draw into sin.]

First. Let us consider the devil as a tempter to sin, and there he shows us his wily subtlety in three things. First. In choosing the most advantageous season for temptation. Second. In managing the temptations, laying them in such a method and form as shows his craft. Third. In pitching on fit instruments for his turn, to carry on his design.

[Satan's subtlety in choosing the most advantageous seasons for tempting.]

First. Satan shows his subtlety in choosing the most proper and advantageous seasons for tempting. 'To every thing there is a season,' Solomon saith, Ecclesiastes 3:1, that is, a nick of time, which taken, gives facility and speedy despatch to a business; and therefore the same wise man gives this reason why man miscarries so frequently, and is disappointed in his enterprises, 'because he knows not his time,' Ecclesiastes 9:12. He comes when the bird is flown. A hundred soldiers at one time may turn a battle, save an army, when thousands will not do [it] at another. Satan knows when to make his approaches, when (if at any time) he is most likely to be entertained. As Christ hath the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season of counsel and comfort, to a doubting dropping soul, so Satan knows his black heart, and hellish skill, in speaking words of seduction and temptation in season; and a word in season is a words on its wheels. I shall give you a view of his subtlety in special seasons, which he chooseth to tempt in. These special seasons are:

1. Season. When the Christian is newly converted. No sooner is this child of grace, the new creature, born, but this dragon pours a flood of temptation after it. He learned the Egyptians but some of his own craft, when he taught them that bloody and cruel baptism, which they exercised upon the Israelitish babes, in throwing them into the river as soon as they were born. The first cry of the new creature gives all the legions of hell an alarm. They are as much troubled at it as Herod and Jerusalem were when Christ was born; and now they sit in council to take away the life of this new-born king. The apostles met with opposition and persecution in their latter days when endued with larger portions of the Spirit, but with temptations from Satan in their former, when young converts; as you may observe in the several passages recorded of them. Satan knew grace within was but weak, and the supplies promised at the Spirit's coming not landed. And when is an enemy more like to carry the town than in such a low condition? And therefore he tries them all. Indeed the advantages are so many, that we may wonder how the young convert escapes with his life; knowledge [being] weak, and [he] so soon let him into an error, especially in divided times, when many ways are held forth one saying, Here is Christ, another There is Christ. And the Christian [is] ready to think every one means honestly that comes with good words, as a little child that hath lost his way to his father's house, is prone to follow any that offer their conduct [or] experience of what he knows little. And if Adam, whose knowledge [was] so perfect, yet was soon cheated—being assaulted before he was well warm in his new possessions—how much more advantage hath Satan of the new convert! In him he finds every grace in a great indisposition to make resistance, both from its own weakness, and the strength of contrary corruption, which commonly in such is unmortified. [This] makes it act with more difficulty and mixture, as in a fire newly kindled, where the smoke is more than the flame, or like beer newly tunned which runs thick. So that though there appear more strength of affection in such, that it works over into greater abundance of duty than in others, yet [it is] with more dregs of carnal passions, which Satan knows, and therefore chooseth to stir what he sees troubled already.

2. Season. When the Christian is beset with some great affliction, this is as blind lane or solitary place, fit for this thief to call for his purse in. An expert captain first labours to make a breach in the wall, and then falls on in storming the city. Satan first got power from God to weaken Job in his estate, children, health and other comforts he had, and now tempts him to impatience, and what not; he lets Christ fast forty days before he comes, and then he falls to his work; as an army stays

till a castle be pinched for provision within, and then sends a parley, never more likely to be embraced than in such a strait. A temptation comes strong when the way to relief seems to lie through the sin that Satan is wooing to; when one is poor and Satan comes, What! wilt starve rather than step over the hedge and steal for thy supply? this is enough to put flesh and blood to the stand.

3. Season. When the Christian is about some notable enterprise for God's glory, then Satan will lie like a serpent in the way, 'an adder in the path, that biteth his horse-heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.' Thus he stood at Joshua's right hand 'to resist him.' The right hand is the working hand, and his standing there implies the desire to hinder him in his enterprise. Indeed the devil was never friend to temple-work, and therefore that work is so long a doing. What a handsome excuse doth he help the Jews unto—The time is not come! God's time was come, but not the devil's, and therefore he helps them to this poor shift, Ezra 1:1-11; Ezra 2:1-70, Ezra 6:1-22, Ezra 8:1-35, perverting the sense of providence as if it were not time, because they were so poor; whereas they thrive no better because they went no sooner about the work, as God tells them plainly. Paul and Barnabas had a holy design in their thoughts, to [go] visit the brethren in every city, and strengthen their faith. The devil knew what a blow this might give to his kingdom; their visiting might hinder him in his circuit, and he stirs up an unhappy difference between these two holy men, who grow so hot that they part in this storm, Acts 15:36-39. There were two remarkable periods of Christ's life, his intrat and exit, his entrance into his public ministry at his baptism, and his finishing it at his passion, and at both we have the devil fiercely encountering him. The more public thy place, Christian, and the more eminent thy service for God, the more thou must look that the devil [will have] some more dangerous design or other against thee; and therefore if every private soldier needs armour against Satan's bullets of temptation, then the commanders and officers, who stand in the front of the battle, much more.

4. Season. When he hath the presence of some object to enforce his temptation. Thus he takes Eve when she is near the tree, and had it in her eye while he should make the motion, [so] that [by] assaulting two ports at once, it might be the harder for her to hinder the landing of his temptation; and if Eve's eye did so soon affect her heart with an inordinate desire, then much more now is it easy for him, by the presence of the object, to excite and actuate that lust which lies dormant in the heart. As Naomi sent her daughter to lie at the feet of Boaz, knowing well, if he endured her there, there were hope he might take her into his bed at last. If the Christian can let the object come so near, Satan will promise himself [that] his suit may in time be granted. Therefore it should be our care, if we would not yield to the sin, not to walk by, or sit at, the door of the occasion. Look not on that beauty with a wandering eye, by which thou wouldst not be taken prisoner. Parley not with that in thy thoughts, which thou meanest not to let into thy heart. Conversation begets affection: some by this have been brought to marry those, whom at first they thought they could not have liked.

5. Season. After great manifestations of God's love, then the tempter comes. Such is the weak constitution of grace, that it can neither well bear smiles or frowns from God without a snare; as one said of our English nation,[2] it cannot well bear liberty nor bondage in the height. So neither can the soul. If God smile and open himself a little familiar to us, then we are prone to grow high and wanton; if the frown, then we sink as much in our faith. Thus the one, like fair weather and warm gleams, brings up the weeds of corruption; and the other, like sharp frosts, nips and even

kills the flowers of grace. The Christian is in danger on both hands; therefore Satan takes the advantage, when the Christian is flush of comfort, even as a cheater, who strikes in with some young heir, when he hath newly received his rents, and never leaves till he hath eased him of his money. Thus Satan lies upon the catch, then to inveigle a saint into one sin or other, which he knows will soon leak out his joy. Had ever any a larger testimony from heaven than Peter? Matthew 16:17, where Christ pronounceth him blessed, and puts a singular honour upon him, making him the representative of all his saints. No doubt this favour to Peter stirred up the envious spirit the sooner to fall upon him. If Joseph's parti-coloured coat made the patriarchs to plot against him their brother, no wonder malice should prompt Satan to show his spite, where Christ had set such a mark of love and honour; and therefore we find him soon at Peter's elbow, making him his instrument to tempt his Master, who rebukes Peter with a 'get thee behind me, Satan.' He that seemed a rock even now, through Satan's policy is laid as a stone of offence for Christ to stumble at. So [with] David, when he had received such wonderful mercies, settled in his throne with the ruin of his enemies, yea, pardoned for his bloody sin, and now ready to lay down his head with peace in the dust, Satan chops in to cloud his clear evening, and tempts him to number the people; so ambitious is Satan then chiefly to throw the saint into the mire of sin, when his coat is cleanest.

6. Season. At the hour of death, when the saint is down and prostrate in his bodily strength, now this coward falls upon him. It is the last indeed he hath for the game; now or never; overcome him now and ever. As they say of the natural serpent[3], he is never seen at his length till dying; so this mystical serpent never strains his wits and wiles more, than when his time is short. The saint is even stepping into eternity, and now he treads upon his heel, which he cannot trip up so as to hinder his arrival in heaven, yet at least to bruise it, that he may go with more pain thither.

[Satan's subtlety in managing his temptations, where several stratagems used by him to deceive the Christian are laid down.]

Second. The second way wherein Satan shows his tempting subtlety, is in those stratagems he useth to deceive the Christian, managing his temptations, laying them in such a method and form, as shows his craft.

1. Stratagem. He hangs out false colours, and comes up to the Christian in the disguise of a friend, so that the gates are opened to him, and his motions received with applause, before either be discovered. Therefore he is said to 'transform himself into an angel of light,' 2 Corinthians 11:14. Of all plots it is most dangerous, when he appears in Samuel's mantle, and silvers his foul tongue with fair language. Thus in point of error he corrupts some in their judgement, by commending his notions for special gospel-truths, and like a cunning chapman[4] puts off his old ware (errors I mean that have lain long upon his hand), only turning them a little after the mode of the times, and they go for new light, under the skirt of Christian liberty. He conveys in libertinism, by crying up the Spirit. He decries and vilifies the Scripture, by magnifying faith. He labours to undermine repentance, and blow up good works. By bewailing the corruption of the church in its administrations, he draws unstable souls from it, and amuseth them, till at last they fall into a giddiness[5], and can see no church at all in being. And he prevails no less on the hearts and lives of men by this wile, than on their judgements. Under the notion of zeal, he kindles sometimes a dangerous flame of passion and wrath in the heart, which like a rash fire makes the Christian's

spirit boil over into unchristian desires of, and prayers for, revenge where he should forgive. Of this we have an instance of the disciples, Luke 9:54, where two holy men are desiring that ‘fire may come down from heaven.’ Little did they think from whence they had their coal that did so heat them, till Christ told them, ‘Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of,’ Luke 9:55. Sometimes he pretends pity and natural affection, which in some cases may be good counsel, and all the while he desires to promote cowardice and sinful self-love, whereby the Christian may be brought to fly from his colours, shrink from the truth, or decline some necessary duty of his calling. This wile of his, when he got Peter to be his spokesman, saying, Master, pity thyself, Christ soon spied, and stopped his mouth with that sharp rebuke, ‘Get thee behind me, Satan.’ O what need have we to study the Scriptures, our hearts, and Satan’s wiles, that we may not bid this enemy welcome, and all the while think it is Christ that is our guest!

2. Stratagem. Is to get intelligence of the saint’s affairs. This is one great wheel in the politician’s clock, to have spies in all places, by whom they are acquainted with the counsels and motions of their enemies, and [as] this gives them advantage to disappoint their designs, so also more safely to compass their own. It is no hard matter for him to play this game well, that sees his enemies’ hands. David knew how the squares went at court, Jonathan’s arrows carried him the news; and accordingly he removed his quarters, and was too hard for his great enemy Saul. Satan is the greatest intelligencer in the world; he makes it his business to inquire into the inclinations, thoughts, affections, purposes of the creature, that finding which humour abounds, he may apply himself accordingly,—[finding] which way the stream goes, that he may open the passage of temptation, and cut the channel to fall of the creature’s affections, and not force it against the torrent of nature. Now if we consider but the piercing apprehension of the angelic nature, how quick he is to take the scent which way the game goes, by a word dropped, the cast of an eye, or such a small matter—signal enough to give him the alarm; if we consider his experience in heart-anatomy, having inspected, and as it were dissected, so many in his long practice, whereby his knowledge is much perfected, as also his great diligence to add to both these, being as close a student as ever, considering the saints, and studying how he may do them a mischief, as we see in Job’s case, whom he had so observed, that he was able to give an answer ex tempore to God, [as to] what Job’s state and present posture was, and what might be the most probable means of obtaining his will of him; and besides all this, the correspondence that he hath with those in and about the Christian, from whom he learns much of his estate, as David [did] by Hushai in Absalom’s counsel;—all these considered, it is almost impossible for the creature to stir out of the closet of his heart, but it will be known whither he inclines. Some corrupt passion or other will bewray the soul to him, as they did [bewray] David to Saul, who told him where he might find him, in the wilderness of Engedi, 1 Samuel 24:4. Thus will these give intelligence to Satan, and say [to him], If thou wouldst surprise such a one, he is gone that way, you will have him in the wood of worldly employments, over head and ears in the desires of this life. See where another sits under a bower, delighting himself in this child, or that gift, endowment of mind, or the like; lay but the lime-twig[6] there, and you shall soon have him in it. Now Satan having thus intelligence, lets him alone to act his part. He sure cannot be at a loss himself, when his scholars, the Jesuits I mean, have such agility of mind, to wreathe and cast themselves into any form becoming the persons they would seduce. Is ambition the lust the heart favours? O the pleasing projects that he will put such upon! How easily, having first blown them up with vain hopes, doth he draw them into horrid sins. Thus Haman, that he may have a monopoly of his prince’s favour, is hurried into that bloody

plot, fatal at last to himself against the Jews. Is uncleanness the lust after which the creature's eye wanders? Now he will be the pander, to bring him and his minion together. Thus he, finding Amnon sick of this disease, sends Jonadab, a deep-pated fellow, 2 Samuel 13:3, to put this fine device into his head of feigning himself sick, whereby his sister fell into his snare.

3. Stratagem. In his gradual approaches to the soul. When he comes to tempt, he is modest, and asks but a little; he know that he may get that at many times, which he should be denied if he asked all at once. A few are let into a city, when an army coming in a body would be shut out; and therefore that he may beget no suspicion, he presents may be a few general propositions, which do not discover the depth of his plot. These like scouts go before, while his whole body lies hid as it were in some swamp at hand. Thus he wriggled into Eve's bosom, whom he doth not, at first dash, bid take and eat. No, he is more mannerly than do so. This would have been so hideous, that as the fish with some sudden noise, by a stone cast into the river, is scared from the bait, so she would have been affrighted from holding parley with such a one. No, he propounds a question which shall make way for this. Hath God said? art [thou] not mistaken? Could this be his meaning, whose bounty lets thee eat of the rest, to deny thee the best of all? Thus he digs about and loosens the root of her faith, and then the tree falls the easier the next gust of temptation. This is a dangerous policy indeed. Many have yielded to go a mile with Satan, that never intended to go two; but when once on the way, they have been allured farther and farther, till at last they know not how to leave his company.

Thus Satan leads poor creatures down into the depths of sin by winding stairs, that let them not see the bottom whither they are going. He first presents an object that occasions some thoughts; these set on fire the affections, and they fume up into the brain, and cloud the understanding, which being thus disabled, Satan now dares a little more declare himself, and boldly solicit the creature to that it even now have defied. Many who at this day lie in open profaneness, never thought they should have rolled so far from their profession; but Satan beguiled them, poor souls, with their modest beginnings. O Christian, give not place to Satan, no, not an inch, in his first motions. He that is a beggar and a modest one without doors, will command the house if let in. Yield at first, and thou givest away thy strength to resist him in the rest; when the hem is worn, the whole garment will ravel out, if it be not mended by timely repentance.

4. Stratagem. The fourth way, wherein Satan shows his subtlety in managing his temptations, is in his reserves. A wise captain hath ever some fresh troops at hand, to fall in at a pinch when others are worsted. Satan is seldom at a loss in this respect; when one temptation is beat back, he soon hath another to fill up the gap, and make good the line.

Thus he tempts Christ to diffidence and distrust, by bidding him turn stones into bread, as if it were now time to carve for himself, being so long neglected of his Father, as to fast forty days, and no supplies heard of. No sooner had Christ quenched this dart with these words, 'It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,' Matthew 4:4, but he hath another on the string, which he let fly to him, tempting him to presumption. 'Then the devil taketh him up and setteth him on a pinnacle,' and bids, 'Cast thyself down headlong; for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee,' &c., Matthew 4:5-6. As if he had said, If thou hast such confidence on God and his Word, as thou pretendest, show it by casting thyself down, for thou hast a word between thee and the ground, if thou darest trust God. And truly,

though Christ had his answer ready, and was prepared to receive his charge on the right hand and on the left, being so completely armed that no temptation could come amiss, yet note we, [that] Satan's temptations on Christ were like the serpents motion on a rock, of which Solomon speaks, Proverbs 30:19. They make no impression, no dint at all; but on us they are as a serpent on sand, or dust, that leaves a print, when not in the heart yet in the fancy—colours that which is next door to it, and so the object there is ready to slip in, if great care be not observed. Especially in this case when he doth thus change his hand, as when we have resisted one way, falls afresh in another, yea, plants his succeeding temptation upon our very resistance in the former.

Now it requires some readiness in our postures, and skill at all our weapons, to make our defence; like a disputant, when he is put out of his road, and hath a new question started, or argument unusual brought, now he is tried to purpose. And truly this is Satan's way when he tempts the Christian to neglect of [the] duties of God's worship (from his worldly occasions, the multitude of them, or necessity of following them); and this takes not, then he is on the other side, and is drawing the Christian to the neglect of his worldly calling, out of a seeming zeal to promote his other in the worship of God. Or first, he comes and labours to deaden the heart in duty, but the Christian too watchful for him there, then he is puffing of him up with an opinion of his enlargement in it, and ever he keep his sliest and most sublimated temptations for the last.

5. Stratagem. In his politic retreats. You shall have an enemy fly as [if] overcome, when it is on a design of overcoming. This was Joshua's wile, by which he caught the men of Ai in a trap, Joshua 8:1-35. We read not only of Satan's being cast out, but of the unclean spirit going out voluntarily, yet with a purpose to come again, and bring worse company with him, Matthew 12:43. Satan is not always beat back by the dint and power of conquering grace, but sometimes he draws off, and raiseth his own siege, the more handsomely to get the Christian out of his fastnesses and trenches, that so he may snap him on the plains, whom he cannot come at in his works and fortifications. Temptations send the saint to his castle, as the sight of the dog doth the coney to her burrow. Now the soul walks the rounds, stands upon its guard, dares not neglect duty, because the enemy is under its very walls, shutting in his temptations continually; but when Satan seems to give the soul over, and the Christian finds he is not haunted, with such motions as formerly, truly now he is prone to remit in his diligence, fail in his duty, and grow either unfrequent or formal therein; as the Romans, whose valour decayed for want of the Carthaginian troops to alarm them. Let Satan tempt or not tempt, assault or retreat, keep thou in order, stand in a fighting posture, let his flight strengthen thy faith, but not weaken thy care. The Parthians do their enemy most hurt in their flight, shooting their darts as they run, and so may Satan do thee, if thy seeming victory makes thee secure.

[Satan's subtlety in choosing fitting instruments for his purpose.]

Third. Satan shows his subtlety in pitching on fit instruments for his turn to carry on his designs. He, as the master-workman, cuts out the temptation, and gives it the shape, but sometime he hath his journeymen to make it up; he knows his work may be carried on better by others, when he appears not aboveboard himself. Indeed there is not such a suitableness between the angelical nature and man's, as there is between one man and another; and therefore he cannot make his approaches so familiarly with us, as man can do to man. And here, as in other things, he is God's ape. You know this very reason was given, why the Israelites desired God might not speak to

them, but Moses, and God liked the motion: ‘they have well said,’ saith God, ‘I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee,’ Deuteronomy 18:17-18. Thus Satan useth the ministry of men like ourselves, by which as he becomes more familiar, so he is less suspected, while Joab-like, he gets another to do his errand. Now it is not any [one that] will serve his turn for this employment; he is very choice in his instruments he pitcheth on. It is not every soldier [that] is fit for an embassage, to treat with an enemy, to betray a town, and the like. Satan considers who can do his work to his greatest advantage. And in this he is unlike God, who is not at all choice in his instruments, because he needs none, and is able to do as well with one as another; but Satan’s power being finite, he must patch up the defect of the lion’s skin with the fox’s. Now the persons Satan aims at for his instruments are chiefly of four sorts. 1. Persons of place and power. 2. Persons of parts and policy. 3. Persons of holiness, or at least reputed so. 4. Persons of relation and interest.

1. Instrument. Satan makes choice of persons of place and power. These are either in the commonwealth or church. If he can, he will secure the throne and the pulpit, as the two forts that command the whole line. (1.) Men of power in the commonwealth; it is his old trick to be tampering with such. A prince or a ruler may stand for a thousand; therefore saith Paul to Elymas, when he would have turned the deputy from the faith, ‘O full of all subtilty thou child of the devil!’ Acts 13:10. As if he had said, You have learned this of your father the devil—to haunt the courts of princes, wind into the favour of great ones. There is a double policy that Satan hath in gaining such to his side. (a) None have such advantage to draw others to their way. Corrupt the captain, and it is hard if he bring not off his troop with him. When the princes—men of renown in their tribes—stood up with Korah, presently a multitude are drawn into the conspiracy, Numbers 16:2, Numbers 16:19. Let Jeroboam set up idolatry, and Israel is soon in a snare. It is said [that] the people willingly walked after his commandment, Hosea 5:11. (b) Should the sin stay at court, and the infection go no farther, yet the sin of such a one, though a good man, may cost a whole kingdom dear. ‘Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel,’ 1 Chronicles 21:1. He owed Israel a spite, and he pays them home in their king’s sin, which dropped in a fearful plague upon their heads. (2.) Such as are in place and office in the church. No such way to infect the whole town, as to poison the cistern at which they draw their water. Who shall persuade Ahab that he may go to Ramoth-Gilead and fall? Satan can tell: ‘I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets,’ 1 Kings 22:22. How shall the profane be hardened in their sins? Let the preacher sew pillows under their elbows, and cry Peace, peace, and it is done. How may the worship of God come to be neglected? Let Hophni and Phinehas be but scandalous in their lives, and many both good and bad will ‘abhor the sacrifice of the Lord.’

2. Instrument. He employeth persons of parts and policy. If any hath more pregnancy of wit and depth of reason than other, he is the man Satan looks upon for his service, and so far does he prevail, that very few of his rank are found among Christ’s disciples, ‘Not many wise.’ Indeed, God will not have his kingdom, either in the heart or in the world, maintained by carnal policy, [for] it is a gospel command that we walk in godly simplicity[7]. Though the serpent can shrink up into his folds, and appear what he is not, yet it doth not become the saints to juggle or shuffle with God or men; and truly when any of them have made use of the serpent’s subtlety, it hath not followed their hand. Jacob got the blessing by a wile, but he might have had it cheaper with plain dealing. Abraham and Sarah both dissemble to Abimelech; God discovers their sin, and reproves them for

it by the mouth of a heathen. Asa, out of state-policy, joins league with Syria, yea, pawns the vessels of the sanctuary and all for help. And what comes of all this? ‘Herein thou hast done foolishly,’ saith God, ‘from henceforth thou shalt have wars.’ Sinful policy shall not long thrive in the saints’ hands well. But Satan will not out of his way; he inquires for the subtlest-pated men, a Balaam, Ahithophel, Haman, Sanballat, men admired for their counsel and deep plots; these are for his turn. A wicked cause needs a smooth orator; bad ware, a pleasing chapman. As in particular, the instruments he useth to seduce and corrupt the minds of men are commonly subtle-pated men, such ‘that if it were possible should deceive the very elect.’ This made the apostle so jealous of the Corinthians, whom he had espoused to Christ, lest, as Eve by the serpent, so their ‘minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.’ He must be a cunning devil indeed that can draw off the spouse’s love from he Beloved; yet there is such a witchery in Satan’s instruments, that many have been brought to fly on the face of those truths and ordinances, yea, [of] Christ himself, to whom they have seemed espoused formerly. Now in three particulars this sort of Satan’s instruments show their master’s subtlety.

(1.) In aspersing the good name of the sincere messengers of Christ—Satan’s old trick to raise his credit upon the ruined reputation of Christ’s faithful servants. Thus he taught Korah, Dathan, and Abiram to charge Moses and Aaron: ‘Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation is holy,’ Numbers 16:3. They would make the people believe that it was the pride of their heart to claim a monopoly to themselves, as if none but Aaron and his fraternity were holy enough to offer incense, and by this subtle practice they seduced for a while, in a manner, the whole congregation to their side. So the lying prophets, that were Satan’s knights of the post to Ahab, fell foul on good Micaiah. Our Saviour himself was no better handled by the Pharisees and their confederates; and Paul, the chief of the apostles, [had] his ministry undermined, and his reputation blasted, by false teachers, as if he had been some weak sorry preacher. ‘but his bodily presence is weak,’ say they, ‘and his speech contemptible,’ 2 Corinthians 10:10. And is this your admired man?

(2.) In covering their impostures and errors with choice notions and excellent truths. Arius himself, and other dangerous instruments of Satan, were too wise to stuff their discourses with nothing but heterodox matter. Precious truths dropped from them, with which they sprinkled their corrupt principles, yet with such art as should not easily be discerned. This, as one observes, our Saviour warns his disciples of, when he bids them ‘beware of the leaven of the Pharisees,’ that is, of their errors. But why leaven? [Just] for the secret mixture of it with the wholesome bread. You do not make your bread all of leaven, for none would then eat it, but crumble a little into a whole batch, which sours all. Thus Christ doth tell the disciples, that the Pharisees among many truths mix their errors; and therefore it behoves them to beware, lest with the truth the errors go down also. Again, leaven is very much like the dough, of the same grain with it, [and] only differs in age and sourness. Thus Christ intimates the resemblance of their errors to the truth, as it were, out of the Scriptures, but soured with their own false glosses. This indeed makes it easy for Christ’s sheep to be infected with the scab of error, because that weed which breeds the rot is so like the grass that nourisheth them.

(3.) Their subtlety appears in holding forth such principles as are indulgent to the flesh. This brings in whole shoals of silly souls into their net. The heart of man loves a life to shape a religion according to his own humour, and is easy to believe that to be a truth that favours his own inclination. Now there are three lusts that Satan’s instruments labour to gratify in their

doctrine—carnal reason, pride, and fleshly liberty.

(a) Carnal reason. This is the great idol which the more intelligent part of the world worship, making it the very standard of their faith, and from this bitter root have sprung those Arian and Socinian heresies. And truly he that will go no farther than reason will carry him, may hold out in the plain way of the moral law, but when he comes to the depths of the gospel, must either go back, or be content that faith should help reason over.

(b) Another lust that Satan cockers is pride. Man naturally would be a god to himself, though for clambering so high he got his fall; and whatever doctrine nourisheth a good opinion of man in his own eye, this is acceptable to him; and this hath spawned another fry of dangerous errors—the Pelagian and Semi-pelagian, which set nature upon its legs, and persuade man he got alone to Christ, or at least with a little external help, of a hand to lead, or argument to excite, without any creating work in the soul. O, we cannot conceive how glib such stuff goes down. If one workman should tell you your house is rotten, and must be pulled down, and all new materials prepared; and another should say, No such matter; such a beam is good, and such a spar may stand —a little cost will serve the turn: it were no wonder that you should listen to him that would put you to least cost and trouble. The faithful servants of Christ tell sinners from the Word, that man in his natural state is corrupt and rotten, that nothing of the old frame will serve, and there must needs be all new; but in comes an Arminian, and blows up the sinner's pride, and tells him he is not so weak or wicked as the other represents him. If thou wilt, thou mayest repent and believe; or, at least, by exerting thy natural abilities, oblige God to superadd what thou hast not. This is the workman that will please proud man best.

(c) Satan by his instruments nourisheth that desire of fleshly liberty, which is in man by nature, who is a son of Belial, without yoke; and if he must wear any, that will please best which hath the softest lining, and pincheth the flesh least; and therefore when the sincere teachers of the Word will not abate of the strictness of the command, but press sincere obedience to it, then come Satan's instruments and say, These are hard task-masters, who will not allow one play-day in a year to the Christian, but tie him to continual duty; we will show you an easier way to heaven. Come, saith the Papist, confess but once a year to the priest, pay him well for his pains, and be an obedient son of the church, and we will dispense with all the rest. Come, saith the Familist[8]Quoted from the Funk and Wagnalls online Encyclopedia —L. B. W., the gospel charter allows more liberty than these legal preachers tell you of. They bid you repent and believe, when Christ hath done all these to your hand. What have you left to do but to nourish the flesh? Something sure is in it, that impostors find such quick return for their ware, while truth hangs upon the log. And is it not this, that they are content to afford heaven cheaper to their disciples than Christ will to his? He that sells cheapest shall have most customers, though, at last, best will be best cheap; truth with self-denial [is] a better pennyworth, than error with all its flesh-pleasing.

3. Instrument. Satan makes choice of such as have a great name for holiness. None so good as a live bird to draw other birds into the net. But is it possible that such should do this work for the devil? Yes, such is the policy of Satan, and the frailty of the best, that the most holy men have been his instruments to seduce others. 'Abraham' he tempts his wife to lie, 'Say thou art my sister.' The old prophet leads the man of God out of his way, 1 Kings 13:11; the holiness of the man, and the reverence of his age, it is like, gave authority to his counsel. O, how should this make you

watchful, whose long travel and great progress in the ways of God, have gained you a name of eminency in the church, what you say, do, or hold, because you are file-leading men, and others look more on you than their way!

4. Instrument. Satan chooseth persons of relation and interest, such as by relation or affection have deep interest in the persons he would gain. Some will kiss the child for the nurse's sake, and like the present for the hand that brings it. It is like David would not have received that from Nabal, which he took from Abigail, and thanks her. Satan sent the apple by Eve's hand to Adam. Delilah doth more with Samson than all the Philistines' bands. Job's wife brings him the poison, 'Curse God and die.' Some think Satan spared her life, when he slew his children and servants—(though she was also within his commission)—as the most likely instrument, by reason of her relation and his affection, to lead him into temptation. Satan employs Peter, a disciple, to tempt Christ, at another time his friends and kinsfolk. Some martyrs have confessed, the hardest work they met withal, was to overcome the prayers and tears of their friends and relations. Paul himself could not get off his snare without heart-breaking. 'What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart?'Acts 21:13.

[Satan's subtlety as a tempter to sin briefly applied.]

Use First. Affect not sinful policy and subtlety, it makes you but like the devil. There is the wisdom of the serpent, which is commended, and that is his perfection as a creature, in which both the literal and the mystical excel, the one in an ingenious observing nature above the beast of the field, and the other in knowledge as an angel above men; but as the subtlety of the one and knowledge of the other is degenerate, and makes them more able to do mischief, the one of the bodies, the others to the souls of men, this kind of wisdom and subtlety is to be abhorred by us. The serpent's eye, as one saith, does well only in the dove's head.

1. Affect not subtlety in contriving any sin. Some are wise to do evil, Jeremiah 4:22. Masters of this craft, who can as they lie on their beds, cast their wicked designs into an artificial method, showing a kind of devilish wit therein, as the Egyptians who dealt wisely, as they thought, with the Israelites, and Jezebel, who had printed her bloody design in so fair a letter, that some might read her saint while she was playing the devil. This is the black art indeed, and make the soul as black as hell that practiseth it. It is not hard for any, though a fool, to learn. Be but wicked, and the devil will help thee to be witty. Come but a while to his school, and thou mayest soon be a cunning man. No sins speak a higher attainment in wickedness, than those which are of deliberate counsel and deep plottings. Creatures, as they go longer with their young, so their birth is more strong and perfect, as the elephant above all others. The longer a sin is a forming and forging within, and the oftener the head and heart meet about it, the completer the sin. Here are many litters of unformed sins in one, such, I mean, as are conceived and cast forth in the hurry of extemporary passion. Those sudden acts show weakness, these other deep wickedness.

2. Take heed of hiding sin when thou hast committed it. This is one of the devices that are in man's heart; and as much art and cunning is shown in this, as in any one part of the sinner's trade. What a trick had the patriarchs to blind their father's eye with a bloody coat? Joseph's mistress, to prevent a charge from Joseph, accuseth him for what she is guilty, like the robber who escaped by crying 'stop the thief.' God taught man to make coats to cover his naked body, but the devil learnt him to weave these coverings to hide the nakedness of his soul. The more subtle thou seemest in

concealing thy sin, the more egregiously thou playest the fool. None so shamed as the liar when found out, and that thou art sure to be. Thy covering is too short to hide thee from God's eye, and what God sees, if thou dost not put thyself to shame, he will tell all the world hereafter, however thou escapest in this life.

3. Take heed of subtlety and sinful policy, in compassing that which is lawful in itself; it is lawful to improve thy estate and husband it well for thy posterity but take not the devil's counsel, who will be putting thee upon some tricks in thy trade and sleights in thy dealing. Such may go for wise men for a while, but the prophet reads their destiny, 'At his end he shall be a fool,' Jeremiah 17:11. It is lawful to love our estate, life, liberty; but beware of sinful policy to save them. It is no wisdom to shuffle with God, by denying his truth, or shifting off our duty to keep correspondence with men. He is a weak fencer that lays his soul at open guard to be stabbed and wounded with guilt, while he is lifting up his hands to save a broken head. Our fear commonly meets us at that door by which we think to run from it. He that 'will save his life shall lose it.' As you love your peace, Christians, be plain-hearted with God and man, and keep the king's highway. Go the plain way of command to obtain thy desire, and not leap over hedge and ditch to come a little sooner to the journey's end; such commonly either meet with some stop that makes them come back with shame, or else put to venture their necks in some desperate leap. He is sure to come faster, if not sooner, home, that is willing to go a little about to keep God company. The historian's observation is worth the Christian's remembrance: 'Crafty counsels promise fair at first, but prove more difficult in the managing, and in the end do pay the undertaker home with desperate sorrow.'[9]

Use Second. Is Satan so subtle? O then, think not to be too cunning for the devil, he will be too hard for thee at last. Sin not with thoughts of an after-repentance; it is possible thou meanest this at present, but dost thou think, who sits down to play with this cheater, to draw out thy stock when thou pleasest? Alas, poor wretch! he has a thousand devices to carry thee on, and engage thee deeper, till he hath not left thee any tenderness in thy conscience. As some have been served at play, intending to venture only a shilling or two, yet have by the secret witchery in gaming, played the very clothes off their back before they had done,—O how many have thus sinned away all their principles, yea, profession itself, that they have not so much as this cloak left, but walk naked to their shame! [They are] like children, who, got into a boat, think to play near the shore, but are unawares by a violent gust carried down to the wide sea. O how know you that dally with Satan, but that at last you may (who begin modestly) be carried down to the broad sea of profaneness? Some men are so subtle to over-reach, and so cruel when they get men into their hands, that a man had better beg his bread than borrow of them. Such a merchant is Satan, cunning to insinuate, and get the creature into his books, and when he hath him on the hip, [there is] no more mercy to be had at his hand than the lamb may expect from the ravenous wolf.

Use Third. Study his wiles, and acquaint thyself with Satan's policy. Paul takes it for granted, that every saint doth in some measure understand them; 'We are not ignorant of his devices,' 2 Corinthians 2:11. He is but an ill fencer that knows and observes nothing of his enemy's play. Many particular stratagems I have laid down already which may help a little, and for thy direction in this study of, and inquiry into, Satan's wiles, take the threefold counsel.

1. Take God into thy counsel. Heaven overlooks hell. God at any time can tell thee what plots are hatching there against thee. Consider Satan as he is God's creature; so God cannot but know him.

He that makes the watch, knows every pin in it. He formed this crooked serpent, though not the crookedness of this serpent; and though Satan's way in tempting is as wonderful as the way of a serpent on a rock, yet God traceth him, yea, knows all his thoughts together. Hell itself is naked before him; and this destroyer hath no covering. Again, consider him as God's prisoner, who hath him fast in chains, and so the Lord, who is his keeper, must needs know whither his prisoner goes, who cannot stir without his leave. Lastly, consider him as his messenger, for so he is. An evil spirit from the Lord vexed Saul, and he that gives him his errand, is able to tell thee what it is. Go then and plough with God's heifer; improve thy interest with Christ, who knows what his Father knows, and is ready to reveal all that concerns thee to thee, John 15:15. It was he who described the devil coming against Peter and the rest of the apostles, and faithfully revealed it to them, before they thought of any such matter, Luke 22:1-71. Through Christ's hands passes all that is transacted in heaven hell. We live in days of great actions, deep counsels, and plots on all sides, and only a few that stand on the upper end of the world know these mysteries of state; all the rest know little more than pamphlet intelligence. Thus it is in regard of those plots which Satan in his infernal conclave is laying against the souls of men; they are but a few that know anything to purpose of Satan's designs against them; and those are the saints, from whom God cannot hide his own counsels of love, but sends his Spirit to reveal unto them here, what he hath prepared for them in heaven, 1 Corinthians 2:10, and therefore much less will he conceal any destructive plot of Satan from them.

2. Be intimately acquainted with thy own heart, and thou wilt the better know his design against thee, who takes his method of tempting from the inclination and posture of thy heart. As a general walks about the city, and views it well, and then raiseth his batteries where he hath the greatest advantage, so doth Satan compass and consider the Christian in every part before he tempts.

3. Be careful to read the word of God with observation. In it thou hast the history of the most remarkable battles that have been fought by the most eminent worthies in Christ's army of saints with this great warrior Satan. Here thou mayest see how Satan hath foiled them, and how they have recovered their lost ground. Here you have his cabinet■counsels opened. There is not a lust which you are in danger of, but you have it described; not a temptation which the Word doth not arm you against. It is reported that a certain Jew should have poisoned Luther, but was happily prevented by his picture which was sent to Luther, with a warning from a faithful friend that he should take heed of such a man when he saw him, by which he knew the murderer, and escaped his hands. The Word shows thee, O Christian, the face of those lusts which Satan employs to butcher thy precious soul.

'By them thy servant is warned,' saith David, Psalms 19:11.

[Satan's second Mal. design is to accuse, vex, and trouble the saint for sin.] The second Mal. design in which Satan appears such a subtle enemy is as a troubler and an accuser for sin, molesting the saint's peace, and disquieting the saint's spirit. As the Holy Spirit's work is not only to be a sanctifier, but also a comforter, whose fruits are righteousness and peace, so the evil spirit Satan is both a seducer unto sin, and an accuser for sin, a tempter and a troubler, and indeed in the same order. As the Holy Ghost is first a sanctifier, and then a comforter, so Satan [is] first a tempter, then a troubler. Joseph's mistress first tries to draw him to gratify her lust, [but] that string breaking, she hath another to trounce him and charge him, and, for a plea, she hath his coat to cover her malice; nor is it hard for Satan to pick some hole in the saint's coat, when he walks most

circumspectly. The proper seat of sin is the will, of comfort the conscience. Satan hath not absolute knowledge of or power over these, [they] being locked up from any other but God, and therefore what he doth, either in defiling temptations, or disquieting, is by wiles more than by open force; and he is not inferior in troubling, to himself in tempting. Satan hath, as the serpent, a way by himself. Other beasts [have] their motion direct, right on, but the serpent goes askew, as we say, winding and writhing its body; [so] that when you see a serpent creeping along, you can hardly discern which way its tends. Thus Satan in his vexing temptations hath many intricate policies, turning this way and that way, the better to conceal his design from the saint, which will appear in these following methods:

First Wile. He vexeth the Christian by laying his brats at the saint's door, and charging him with that which is his own creature. And here he hath such a notable art, that many dear saints of God are woefully hampered and dejected, as if they were the vilest blasphemers and veriest atheists in the world: whereas indeed the cup is of his own putting into the sack. But so slyly is it conveyed into the saint's bosom, that the Christian, though amazed and frighted at the sight of them, yet being jealous of his own heart, and unacquainted with Satan's tricks of this kind, cannot conceive how such notions should come there, if not bred in, and vomited out by his own naughty heart. So he bears the blame of the sin himself, because he cannot find the right father, mourning as one that is forlorn and cast off by God, or else, saith he, I should never have such vermin of hell creeping in my bosom. And here Satan hath the end he proposeth, for he is not so silly as to hope he should have welcome with such a horrid crew of blasphemous and atheistical thoughts in that soul, where he hath been denied when he came in an enticing way. No, but his design is by way of revenge, because the soul will not prostitute itself to his lust, otherwise therefore to haunt it and scare it with those imps of blasphemy. So he served Luther, to whom he appeared, and when repulsed by him, went away and left a noisome stench behind him in the room. Thus when the Christian hath worsted Satan in his more pleasing temptations, being maddened, he belcheth forth this stench of blasphemous motions to annoy and affright him, that from them the Christian may draw some sad conclusion or other, and indeed the Christian's sin lies commonly more in the conclusion which he draws from them—as that he is not a child of God—than in the motions themselves. All the counsel therefore I shall give thee in this case, is to do with these motions, as you use to serve those vagrants and rogues that come about the country, whom, though you cannot keep from passing through your town, yet you look they settle not there, but whip them and send them to their own home. Thus give these motions the law, in mourning for them, resisting of them, and they shall not be your charge. Yea, it is like you shall seldomer be troubled with such guests; but if once you come to entertain them, and be Satan's nurse to them, then the law of God will cast them upon you.

Second Wile. Another wile of Satan as a troubler, is in aggravating the saint's sins, against which he hath a notable declamatory faculty—not that he hates sin, but the saint. Now in this, his chief subtlety is so to lay his charge, that it may seem to be the act of the Holy Spirit. He knows an arrow out of God's quiver wounds deep; and therefore, when he accuseth, he comes in God's name. As suppose a child were conscious to himself of displeasing his father, and one that owes him a spite, to trouble him, should counterfeit a letter from his father, and cunningly convey it into the son's hand, who receives it as from his father. Therein he chargeth him with many heavy crimes, disowns him, and threatens he shall never come in his sight, or have penny portion from

him; [and] the poor son, conscious to himself of many undutiful carriages, and not knowing the plot, takes on heavily, and can neither eat nor sleep from grief. Here is a real trouble begot from a false and imaginary ground. Thus Satan observes how the squares go between God and his children. Such a saint he sees tardy in his duty, faulty in that service, and he knows the Christian is conscious of this, and that the Spirit of God will also show his distaste for these; both which [reasons] prompt Satan to draw a charge at length, raking up all the aggravations he can think of, and give it into the saint as sent from God. Thus he taught Job's friends to pick up those infirmities which dropped from him in his distress, and shoot them back in his face, as if indeed they had been sent from God to declare him an hypocrite, and denounce his wrath for the same. But how shall we know the false accusation of Satan from the rebukes of God and his Spirit?

1. If they cross any former act or work of the Spirit in thy soul, they are Satan's, not the Holy Spirit's. Now you shall observe Satan's scope in accusing the Christian, and aggravating his sin, is to unsaint him, and persuade him he is but an hypocrite. Oh, saith Satan, now thou hast shown what thou art. See what a foul spot is on thy coat. This is not the spot of a child. Whoever, that was a saint, committed such a sin after such a sort? All thy comforts and confidence which thou hast bragged of, were false, I warrant you. Thus you see Satan at one blow dasheth all in pieces. The whole fabric of grace which God hath been rearing up many years in the soul, must now at one puff of his malicious mouth be blown down, and all the sweet comforts with which the Holy Spirit hath sealed up God's love, must be defaced with this one blot, which Satan draws over the fair copy of the saint's evidence. Well, soul, for thy comfort know, if ever the Spirit of God hath begun sanctifying or comforting work, causing thee to hope in his mercy, he never is, will, can be the messenger to bring contrary news to thy soul; His language is not yea and nay, but yea and amen for ever. Indeed, when the saint plays the wanton, he can chide, yea, will frown and tell the soul roundly of its sin, as he did David by Nathan. 'Thou art the man' —this thou hast done. He paints out his sin with such bloody colours, as made David's heart melt, as it were, into so many drops of water. But that shall not serve his turn; he tells him what a rod is steeping for him, that shall smart to purpose—one of his own house, no other than his darling son, shall rise up against him. [This happens in order] that he may the more fully conceive how ill God took the sin of him, a child, a saint, when he shall know what it is to have his beloved child traitorously invade his crown, and unnaturally hunt for his precious life; yet not a word all this while is heard from Nathan teaching David to unsaint himself, and call in question the work of God in his soul. No, he had no such commission from God; he was sent to make him mourn for his sin, not from his sin to question his state which God had so oft put out of doubt.

2. When they asperse the riches of God's grace, and so charge the Christian, that withal they reflect upon the good name of God, they are not of the Holy Spirit but from Satan. When you find your sins so represented and aggravated to you, as exceeding either the mercy of God's nature, or the grace of his covenant[10], this comes from that foul liar. The Holy Spirit is Christ's spokesman to commend him to souls, and to woo sinners to embrace the grace of the gospel; and can such words drop from his sacred lips, as should break the match and sink Christ's esteem in the thoughts of the creature? You may know where this is mined. When you hear one commend another for a wise or good man, and at last come in with a but that dasheth all, you will easily think he is no friend to the man, but some sly enemy that by seeming to commend, desires to disgrace the more. Thus you find God represented to you as merciful and gracious, but not to such a great

sinner as you. to have power and strength, but not able to save thee; you may say, Avaunt, Satan, thy speech bewrayeth thee.

Third Wile. Another wile of Satan lies in cavilling at the Christian's duties and performances, by which he puts him to much toil and trouble. He is at church as soon as thou canst be, Christian, for thy heart; yea, he stands under thy closet-window, and hears what thou sayest to God in secret, all the while studying how he may commence a suit against thee from thy duty. [He is] like those who come to sermons to carp and catch at what the preacher saith, that they make him an offender for some word or other misplaced; or like a cunning opponent in the schools, while his adversary is busy in reading his position, he is studying to confute it. And truly Satan hath such an art as this, that he is able to take our duties in pieces, and so disfigure them that they shall appear formal, though never so zealous; hypocritical, though enriched with much sincerity. When thou hast done thy duty, Christian, then stands up this sophist to ravel out thy work; there, will he say, thou playedst the hypocrite, zealous, but serving thyself, here wandering, there nodding, a little further puffed up with pride. And what wages canst thou hope for at God's hands, now thou hast spoiled his work, and cut it all out into chips? Thus he makes many poor souls lead a weary life; nothing they do but he hath a fling at, that they know not whether [it be] best to pray or not, to hear or not; and when they have prayed and heard, whether it be to any purpose or not. Thus their souls hang in doubt, and their days pass in sorrow; while their enemy stands in a corner, and laughs at the cheat he hath put upon them; as one, who by putting a counterfeit spider into the dish, makes those that sit at table either out of conceit with the meat, that they dare not eat, or afraid of themselves if they have eaten, lest they should be poisoned with their meat.

Question. But you will say, What will you have us do in this case to withstand the cavils of Satan, in reference to our duties?

Answer 1. Let this make thee more accurate in all thou doest. It is the very end God aims at in suffering Satan thus to watch you, that you his children might be the more circumspect, because you have one [who] overlooks you, that will be sure to tell tales of you to God, and accuse thee to thy own self. Doth it not behove thee to write thy copy fair, when such a critic reads and scans it over? Doth it not concern thee to know thy heart well, to turn over the Scriptures diligently, that thou mayest know the state of thy soul-controversy in all the cases of conscience thereof, when thou hast such a subtle opponent to reply upon thee?

Answer 2. Let it make thee more humble. If Satan can charge thee with so much in thy best duties, O what then can thy God do! God suffers sometimes the infirmities of his people to be known by the wicked, who are ready to check and frump them for them, for the end of humbling his people. How much more low should these accusations of Satan, which are in a great part too true, lay us before God?

Answer 3. Observe the fallacy of Satan's argument, which discovered, will help thee to answer his cavil. The fallacy is double.

(1.) He will persuade thee that thy duty and thyself are hypocritical, proud, formal, &c., because something of these sins are to be found in thy duty. Now, Christian, learn to distinguish between pride in a duty, and a proud duty; hypocrisy in a person, and a hypocrite; wine in a man, and a man in wine. The best of saints have the stirrings of such corruptions in them and in their services.

These birds will light on an Abraham's sacrifice, but comfort thyself with this, that if thou findest a party within thy bosom pleading for God, and entering its protest against thee, thou and thy services are evangelically perfect. God beholds these as the weaknesses of thy sickly state here below, and pities thee, as thou wouldst do thy lame child. How odious is he to us that mocks one for natural defects, a blear eye, or a stammering tongue! such are these in thy new nature. Observable is that in Christ's prayer against Satan, 'And the Lord said unto Satan, Zechariah 3:2, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; is not this a brand plucked out of the fire,'. As if Christ had said, Lord, wilt thou suffer this envious spirit to twit thy poor child with, and charge him for, those infirmities that cleave to his perfect state? He is but new plucked out of the fire. No wonder there are some sparks unquenched, some corruptions unmortified, some disorders unreformed in his place and calling; and what Christ did for Joshua, he doth incessantly for all his saints, for apologizing for their infirmities with his Father.

(2.) His other fallacy is in arguing from the sin that is in our duty, to the non-acceptance of them. Will God, saith he, thinkest thou, take such broken groats at thy hand? Is he not a holy God? Now here, Christian, learn to distinguish and answer Satan. There is a double acceptance. There is an acceptance of a thing by way of payment of a debt, and there is an acceptance of a thing offered as a token of love and testimony of gratitude. He that will not accept of broken money, or half the sum for payment of a debt; the same man, if his friend sends him through but a bent sixpence, in token of his love, will take it kindly. It is true, Christian, the debt thou owest to God must be paid in good and lawful money, but for thy comfort, here Christ is thy paymaster. Send Satan to him, bid him bring his charge against Christ, who is ready at God's right hand to clear his accounts, and show his discharge for the whole debt. But now thy performances and obedience come under another notion, as tokens of thy love and thankfulness to God, and such is the gracious disposition of thy heavenly Father, that he accepts thy mite. Love refuseth nothing that love sends. It is not the weight or worth of the gift, but 'the desire of a man in his kindness,' Proverbs 19:22.

Fourth Wile. A fourth wile of Satan as a troubler, is to draw the saint into the depths of despair, under a specious pretence of not being humbled enough for sin. This we find singled out by the apostle for one of the devil's fetches. 'We are not ignorant,' saith he, 'of his devices,'[11] 2 Corinthians 2:11, his sophistical reasonings. Satan sets much by this sleight; no weapon [is] oftener in his hand. Where is the Christian that hath not met him at this door? Here Satan finds the Christian easy to be wrought on —the humours being stirred to his hand—while the Christian of his own accord complains of the hardness of his heart, and is very prone to believe any who comply with his musing thoughts; yea, thinks every flatters him that would persuade him otherwise. It is easier to dye that soul into black, which is of a sad colour already, than to make such a one take the lightsome tincture of joy and comfort.

Question. But how shall I answer this subtle enemy, when he perplexeth my spirit with not being humbled enough for sin, &c.?

Answer. I answer as to the former, Labour to spy the fallacy of his argument, and his mouth is soon stopped.

Argument 1. Satan argues thus. There ought to be a proportion between sin and sorrow. But there is no proportion between thy sins and thy sorrow. Therefore thou art not humbled enough. What a plausible argument is here at first blush? For the major, that there ought to be a proportion

between sin and sorrow, this Satan will show you scripture for. Manasseh was a great sinner, and an ordinary sorrow will not serve his turn; ‘He humbled himself greatly before the Lord,’ 2 Chronicles 33:12. Now, saith Satan, weigh thy sin the balance with thy sorrow; art thou as great a mourner as thou hast been a sinner? So many years thou hast waged war against the Almighty, making havoc of his laws,, loading his patience till it groaned again, raking in the sides of Christ with thy bloody dagger—while thou didst grieve his Spirit, and reject his grace—and dost [thou] think a little remorse, like a rolling cloud letting fall a few drops of sorrow, will be accepted? No, thou must steep in sorrow as thou hast soaked in sin. Now to show you the fallacy, we must distinguish of a twofold proportion of sorrow.

(1.) An exact proportion of sorrow to the inherent nature and demerit of sin.

(2.) There is a proportion to the law and rule of the gospel. Now the first is not a thing feasible, because the injury done in the least sin is infinite, because done to an infinite God. And if it could be feasible, yet according to the tenor of the first covenant it would not be acceptable, because it had no clause to give any hope for an after-game by repentance: but the other, which is a gospel sorrow, is indeed repentance unto life, both given by the Spirit of the gospel, and to be tried by the rule of the gospel. This is given for thy relief. As you see sometimes in the highway, where the waters are too deep for travellers, you have a foot-bridge or causey, by which they may escape the flood, and safely pass on; so that none but such as have not eyes, or are drunk, will venture to go through the waters, when they may avoid the danger. Thou art a dead man if thou think to answer thy sin with proportionable sorrow; thou wilt soon be above thy depth, and quackle[12] thyself with thy own tears, but never get over the least sin thou committedst. Go not on therefore as thou lovest thy life, but turn aside to this gospel path, and thou escapest the danger. O you tempted souls, when Satan saith you are not humbled enough, see where you may be relieved. I am a Roman, saith Paul, I appeal to Cæsar. I am a Christian, say, I appeal to Christ’s law. And what is the law of the gospel concerning this? Heart-sorrow is gospel sorrow: ‘they were pricked in their heart,’ Acts 2:37. And Peter, like an honest chirugeon[13], will not keep these bleeding patients longer in pain with their wounds open, but presently claps on the healing plaster of the gospel—‘Believe on the Lord Jesus.’ Now a prick to the heart is more than a wound to the conscience. The heart is the seat of life. Sin wounded there lies a dying. To do anything from the heart makes it acceptable, Ephesians 6:6; 2 Corinthians 5:11. Now, poor soul, hadst thou sat thus long in the devil’s stocks if thou hadst understood this aright? Doth thy heart clear or condemn thee, when in secret thou art bemoaning thy sin before God? If thy heart be false, I cannot help you, no, not the gospel itself; but if sincere, thou hast boldness with God, 1 John 3:21.

Argument 2. A second argument Satan useth, is this, He whose sorrow falls short of theirs that never truly repented, he is not humbled enough. But, soul, thy sorrow falls short of some that never truly repented; ergo. Well, the first proposition is true, but how will Satan prove his minor? Thus: Ahab, he took for his sin, and went in sackcloth. Judas, he made bitter complaint. O, says Satan, didst thou not know such a one that lay under terror of conscience, walking in a sad mournful condition so many months, and every one took him for the greatest convert [in] the country? And yet he at last fell foully, and proved an apostate. But thou never didst feel such smart, pass so many weary nights and days in mourning and bitter lamentation as he hath done, [and] therefore thou fallest short of one that fell short of repentance. And truly this is a sad stumbling-block to a soul in an hour of temptation. Like a ship sunk in the mouth of the harbour,

which is more dangerous to others than if it had perished in the open sea; there is less scandal by the sins of the wicked, who sink, as it were, in the broad sea of profaneness, than in those who are convinced of sin, troubled in conscience, and miscarry so near the harbour, within sight, as it were, of saving grace. Tempted souls can hardly get over these without dashing. Am I better than such a one that proved nought at last? Now to help thee a little to find out the fallacy of this argument, we must distinguish between the terrors that accompany sorrow, and the intrinsical nature of this grace. The first, which are accessory, may be separated from the other, as the raging of the sea, which is caused by the wind, from the sea when the wind is down. From this distinction take two conclusions.

(1.) One may fall short of an hypocrite in the terrors that sometimes accompany sorrow, and yet have the truth of this grace, which the other with all his terrors wants. Christians run into many mistakes, by judging rather according to that which is accessory, than that which is essential to the nature of duties and graces. Sometimes thou hearest one pray with a moving expression, while thou canst hardly get out a few broken words in duty, and thou art ready to accuse thyself and to admire him, as if the gilt of the key made it open the door the better. Thou seest another abound with joy which thou wantest, and art ready to conclude his grace more, and thine less; whereas thou mayest have more real grace, only thou wantest a light to show thee where it lies. Take heed of judging by accessories. Perhaps thou hast not heard so much of the rattling chains of hell, nor in thy conscience the outcries of the damned to make thy flesh tremble; but hast not seen that in a bleeding Christ which hath made thy heart melt and mourn, yea, loathe and hate thy lusts more than the devil himself? Truly, Christian, it is strange to hear a patient complain of his physician, when he finds his physic work effectually to the evacuating his distempered humours, and the restoring his health, merely because he was not so sick as some others with the working of it. Soul, thou hast more reason to be blessing God that the convictions of his Spirit wrought so kindly on thee, to effect that in thee without those errors which have cost others so dear.

(2.) This is so weak an argument, that contrariwise, the more the terrors are, the less the sorrow is for sin while they remain. These are indeed preparatory sometimes to sorrow; they go before this grace as austere John before meek Jesus. But as John went down when Christ went up, his increase was John’s decrease, so as truly godly sorrow goes up, these terrors go down. As the wind gathers the clouds, but those clouds seldom melt into a set rain, until the wind falls that gathered them; so these terrors raise the clouds of our sins in our consciences , but when these sins melt into godly sorrow, this lays the storm presently. Indeed, as the loud winds blow away the rain, so these terrors keep off the soul from this gospel sorrow. While the creature is making an outcry, ‘it is damned, it is damned,’ it is taken up so much with the fear of hell, that sin as sin, which is the proper object of godly sorrow, is little looked on or mourned for. A murderer condemned to die is so possessed with the fear of death and thought of the gallows, that there lies the slain body, it may be, before him, unlamented by him: but when his pardon is brought, then he can bestow his tears freely on his murdered friend. ‘They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn.’ Faith is the eye. This eye, beholding its sin piercing Christ, and Christ pardoning its sin, affects the heart. The heart affected sighs. These inward clouds melt, and run from the eye of faith with in tears; and all this is done when there is no tempest of terror upon the spirit, but a sweet serenity of love and peace; and therefore, Christian, see how Satan abuseth thee, when he would persuade thee thou art not humbled enough, because thy sorrow is not

attended with these legal terrors.

[Brief application of Satan's subtlety as a troubler and accuser for sin.]

Use First. Is Satan so subtle to trouble the saint's peace? This proves them to be the children of Satan, who show the same art and subtlety in vexing the spirits of the saints, as doth their infernal father; not to speak of bloody persecutors, who are the devil's slaughter-slaves to butcher the saints, but of those who more slyly trouble and molest the saint's peace.

1. Such as rake up the saint's old sins, which God hath forgiven and forgotten, merely to grieve their spirits and bespatter their names. These show their devilish malice indeed, who can take such pains to travel many years back, that they may find a handful of dirt to throw on the saint's face. Thus Shimei twitted David, 'Come out, thou bloody man,' 2 Samuel 16:7. When you that fear God meet with such reproaches, answer them as Beza did the Papists, who for want of other matter charged him for some wanton poems penned by him in his youth.[14]. These men, saith he, grudge me the pardoning mercy of God.

2. Such as watch for the saints' halting, and catch at every infirmity to make them odious, and themselves merry. It is a dreadful curse such bring upon themselves, though they think little of it; no less than Amalek's, the remembrance of whose name God threatened to blot out from under heaven, Deuteronomy 25:19. Why what had Amalek done to deserve this? They smote the hindermost, those that were feeble, and could not march with the rest. And was it so great a cruelty to do this? Much more to smite with the edge of a mocking tongue the feeble in grace.

3. Such who father their sins upon the saints. Thus Ahab calls the prophet the troubler of Israel, when it was himself and his father's house. What a grief was it, think you, to Moses' spirit, for the Israelites to lay the blood of those that died in the wilderness at his door? Whereas, God knows, he was their constant bail, when at any time God's hand is up to destroy them. And this was the charge which the best of God's servants in this crooked generation of ours lie under. We may thank them, say the profane, for all our late miseries in the nation; we were well enough till they would reform us. O for shame, blame not the good physic that was administered, but the corrupt body of the nation that could not bear it.

4. Such as will themselves sin, merely to trouble the saint's spirit. Thus Rabshakeh blasphemed, and when desired to speak in another language, he goes on the more to grieve them. Sometimes you shall have a profane wretch, knowing one to be conscientious, and cannot brook to hear the name of God taken in vain, or the ways of God flouted, will on purpose fall upon such discourse as shall grate his chaste ears and trouble his gracious spirit. Such a one strikes father and child in one blow; [he] thinks it not enough to dishonour God, except the saint stands by to see and hear the wrong done to his heavenly Father.

Use Second. This may afford matter of admiration and thankfulness to any of you, O ye saints who are not at this day under Satan's hatches. Is he so subtle to disquiet, and hast thou any peace in thy conscience? To whom art thou beholden for that serenity that is on thy spirit? To none but thy God, under whose wing thou sittest so warm and safe. Is there not combustible matter enough in thy conscience for his sparks to kindle? Perhaps thou hast not committed such bloody sins as others. That is not the reason for thy peace, for the least is big enough to damn, much more to trouble thee. Thou hast not grossly fallen, may be, since conversion, that is rare, if thou beest of

long standing, yet the ghosts of thy unregenerate sins might walk in thy conscience. Thou hast had many testimonies of God's favour, hast thou not? Who more than David? Psalms 77:1-20. Yet he [was] at a loss, sometimes learning to spell his evidences, as if he could never have read them. The sense of God's love comes and goes with the present taste. He that is in the dark, while there, sees not the more for former light. O bless God for that light which shines in at thy window; Satan is plotting to undermine thy comfort every day. This thief sees thy pleasant fruits as they hang, and his teeth water at them, but the wall is too high for him to climb; thy God keeps this serpent out of thy paradise. It is not the grace of God in thee, but the favour of God, as a shield about thee, [that] defends thee from the wicked one.

Use Third. Let Satan's subtlety to molest your peace, make thee, O Christian, more wise and wary. Thou hast no a fool to deal with, but one that hath wit enough to spill thy comfort and spoil thy joy, if not narrowly watched. This is the dainty bit he gapes for. It is not harder to keep the flies out of your cupboards in summer from tainting your provision, than Satan out of your consciences. Many a sweet meal hath he robbed the saints of, and sent them supperless to bed; take heed, therefore, that he roams not thine away also.

[Directions tending to entrench and fortify the Christian against the assaults of Satan, as a troubler and accuser.] Question. How shall I stand in a defensive posture, may the Christian say, against these wiles of Satan as a troubler?

Answer First. If thou wouldst be guarded from him as a troubler, take heed of him as a seducer. The haft of Satan's hatchet, with which he lies chopping at the root of the Christian's comfort, is commonly made of the Christian's wood. First he tempts to sin, and then for it. Satan is but a creature, and cannot work without tools; he can indeed make much of a little, but not anything of nothing, as we see in his assaulting of Christ, where he troubled himself to little purpose, because he came and found nothing in him, John 14:30. Though the devil throws the stone, yet it is the mud in us which royles our comforts. It is in vain for the Philistines to fall on Samson till his lock was cut. Take heed, therefore, of yielding to his enticing motions. These are the stumbling-blocks at which he hopes thou [wilt] break thy shins, bruise thy conscience; which once done, let him alone to spin out the cure. Indeed, a saint's flesh heals not so easily as others: drink not of the devil's wassel[15]; there is poison in the cup, his wine is a mocker; look not on it as it sparkles in the temptation. What thou drinkest down with sweetness, thou wilt be sure to bring up again as gall and wormwood. Above all sins, take heed of presumptuous ones; thou art not out of the danger of such. Sad stories we have of saints' falls, and what follows then? Psalms 19:13. Take him, jailor, saith God, deliver such a one unto Satan. And if a saint be the prisoner, and the devil the keeper, you may guess how he shall be used. O how he will tear and rend thy conscience! Though that dreadful ordinance is not used as it should be in the church, yet God's court sits, and if he excommunicate a soul from his presence, he falls presently into Satan's clutches. Well, if through his subtlety thou hast been overtaken, take heed thou art yet not in the devil's quarters. Shake the viper off thy hand; ply thee to thy chirurgeon. Green wounds cure best. If thou neglectest and the wind get to it, thy conscience will soon fester. Ahab, we read, was wounded in battle, and was loath to yield to it; it is said, he was held up in his chariot, but he died for it, 1 Kings 22:35. When a soul hath received a wound—committed a sin —Satan labours to bolster him up with flattering hopes, holds him up, as it were, in his chariot against God. What, yield for this! Afraid for a little scratch, and lose the spoil of thy future, pleasure for this? O take heed of listening to such counsel;

the sooner thou yieldest, the fairer quarter thou shalt have. Every step in this way gets thee further from thy peace. A rent garment is catched by every nail, and the rent made wider. Renew therefore thy repentance speedily, whereby this breach may be made up, and worse prevented, which else will befall thee.

Answer Second. Study that grand gospel truth of a soul's justification before God. Acquaint thyself with this in all its causes; the moving cause, the free mercy of God, being justified freely by his grace; the meritorious, which is the blood of Christ; and the instrumental, faith; with all the sweet privileges that flow from it, Romans 3:24. An effectual door once opened to let the soul into this truth, would not only spoil the pope's market, as Gardner said, but the devil's also. When Satan comes to disquiet the Christian's peace, for want of a right understanding here, he is soon worsted by his enemy; as the silly hare which might escape the dogs in some covert or burrow that is at hand, but trusting to her heels is by the print of her own feet and scent, which she leaves behind, followed, till at last, weary and spent, she falls into the mouth of them. In all that a Christian doth, there is a print of sinful infirmity, and a scent by which Satan is enabled to trace and pursue him over hedge and ditch; this grace and that duty, till the soul, not able to stand before the accusation of Satan, is ready to fall down in despair at his feet. Whereas, here is a hiding place whither the enemy durst not come, 'the clefts of the rock,' the hole 'of the stairs,' which this truth leads unto. When Satan chargeth thee for a sinner, perhaps thou interposest thy repentance and reformation, but soon art beaten out of those works, when thou art shown the sinful mixtures that are in them: whereas this truth would choke all his bullets, that thou believest on him who hath said, Not unto him that worketh, but unto him that believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is imputed for righteousness, Romans 4:5. Get therefore into this tower of the gospel covenant, and roll this truth (as she that stone on the head of Abimelech) on the head of Satan.

Answer Third. Be sure, Christian, thou keepest the plains. Take heed that Satan coop thee not up in some straits, where thou canst neither well fight nor fly. Such a trap the Egyptians hoped they had the Israelites in, when they cried, They are entangled, they are entangled. There are three kinds of straits wherein he labours to entrap the Christian —nice questions, obscure scriptures, and dark providences.

1. He labours to puzzle him with nice and scrupulous questions, on purpose to retard the work, and clog him in his notion, that meeting with such intricacies in his Christian course, which he cannot easily resolve, thereby he may be made either to give over, or go on heavily. Therefore we have particular charge not to trouble the weak heads of young converts with 'doubtful disputations,' Romans 14:1. Sometimes Satan will be asking the soul, How it knows its election. And where he finds one not so fully resolved, as to dare to own the same, he frames his argument against such a one's closing with Christ and the promise, as if it were presumption to assume that, which is the only portion of the elect, before we know ourselves of that number. Now, Christian, keep the plains and thou art safe. It is plain, we are not to make election a ground for our faith, but our faith and calling a medium or argument to prove our election. Election indeed is first in order of divine acting, God chooseth before we believe; yet faith is first in our acting. We must believe before we can know we are elected, yea, by believing we know it. The husbandman knows it is spring by the sprouting of the grass, though he hath no astrology to know the position of the heavens. Thou mayest know thou art elect, as surely by a work of grace in thee, as if thou hadst stood by God's elbow when he writ thy name in the book of life. It had been presumption for David

to have thought he should have been king, till Samuel anointed him, but then none at all. When thou believest first, and closest with Christ, then is the Spirit of God sent to anoint thee to the kingdom of heaven; this is that holy oil which is poured upon none but heirs of glory; and it is no presumption to read what God's gracious purpose was towards thee of old, when prints those his thoughts, and makes them legible in thy effectual calling. Here thou dost not go up to heaven, and pry into God's secrets, but heaven comes down to thee, and reveals them. Again, he will ask the Christian what was the time of his conversion. Art thou a Christian, will he say, and dost thou not know when thou commencedst? Now keep the plains, and content thyself with this, that thou seest the streams of grace, though the time of thy conversion be like the head of Nylus, not to be found. God oft betimes, before gross sins have deflowered the soul, and steals into the creature's bosom without much noise. In such a case Satan doth but abuse thee when he sends thee in this errand; you may know the sun is up, though you did not observe when it rose. Again, what will become of thee, saith Satan, if God should bring thee into such an affliction or trial, when thou must burn or turn, or when all thy outward estate shall be rent from thee, no meal in the barrel, no money in the purse? Darest thou have so good an opinion of thyself, as to think that thy faith will hold out in such an hour of temptation? If thou hast but half an eye, Christian, thou mayest see what Satan drives at. This is an ensnaring question; by the fear of future troubles he labours to bring thee into a neglect of thy duty, and indispose thee also for such a state whenever it falls. If a man hath much business to do on the morrow, it is his wisdom to discharge his mind thereof, when composing to sleep, lest the thoughts thereof break his rest, and make him the more unfit in the morning. The less rest the soul hath in God and his promise concerning future events, the less strength it will find to bear them when the pinch comes. When therefore thou art molested with such fears, pacify thy heart with these three plain conclusions.

(1.) Every event is the product of God's providence; not a sparrow, much less a saint, falls to the ground by poverty, sickness, persecution, &c., but the hand of God is in it.

(2.) God hath put in caution he 'will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,' Hebrews 13:5. He that enables thee in one condition, will in another. God learns his servants their whole trade. Grace is a universal principle. At the first moment of thy spiritual life, suffering grace was infused as well as praying grace.

(3.) God is wise to conceal the succours he intends in the several changes of thy life, that so he may draw thy heart into an entire dependence on his faithful promise. Thus to try the metal of Abraham's faith, he let him go on, till his hand was stretched forth, and then he comes to the rescue. Christ sends his disciples to sea, but stays behind himself, on a design to try their faith, and show his love. Comfort thyself therefore with this, though thou seest not thy God in the way, yet thou shalt find him in the end.

2. Satan perplexeth the tender consciences of doubting Christians, with obscure scriptures, whose sense lies too deep for their weak and distempered judgements readily to find out, and with these he hampers poor souls exceedingly. Indeed as melancholy men delight in melancholy walks, so doubting souls most frequent such places of Scripture in their musing thoughts, as increase their doubts. How many have I known that have looked so long on those difficult places, Hebrews 6:6; Hebrews 10:26, which pass the understanding, as a swift stream the eye, so that the sense is not perceived without great observation, till their heads have turned round, and they at last, not able to

untie the difficulties, have fallen down in despairing thoughts and words of their own condition, crying out, O they have sinned against knowledge of the truth, and therefore no mercy remains for them. [Now] if they have refreshed their understandings by looking off these places, whose engraving is too curious to be long pored on by a weak eye, they might have found that in other scriptures plainly expressed, which would have enabled them, as through a glass, more safely to have viewed these. Therefore, Christian, keep the plains; thou mayest be sure it is thine enemy that gives thee such stones to break thy teeth, when thy condition calls rather for bread and wine—such scriptures, I mean, as are most apt to nourish thy faith, and cheer thy drooping spirit. When thou meetest such plain scriptures which speak to thy case, go over where it is fordable, and do not venture beyond thy depth. Art thou afraid because thou hast sinned since the knowledge of truth, and [that] therefore no sacrifice remains for thee? See David and Peter's case, how it patterns thine, and [is] left upon record that their recovery may be a key in thine hand to open such places as these. Mayest thou not safely conclude from these, [that] this is not their meaning, that none can be saved the sin after knowledge? Indeed in both these places, it is neither meant of the falls of such as ever had true grace, nor of a falling away in some particular acts of sin, but of a total universal falling away from the faith, the doctrine as well as seeming practice of it. Now if the root of the matter were ever in thee, other scriptures will first comfort thee against those particular apostasies into which thou hast relapsed, by sweet promises inviting such to return, and [giving] precedents of saints, who have had peace spoken to them after such folly, and also they will satisfy thee against the other, by giving full security to thy faith, that thy little grace shall not die, being immortal, though not in its proper essence, because but a creature, yet by covenant, as it is a child of promise.

3. Dark providences. From these Satan disputes against God's love to, and grace in, a soul. First, he got a commission to plunder Job of his temporal estate, and bereave him of his children, and then labours to make him question his spiritual estate and sonship. His wife would have him entertain hard thoughts of God, saying, 'Curse God and die;' and his friends as hard thoughts of himself, as if he were an hypocrite; and both upon the same mistake, as if such an afflicted condition and a gracious state were inconsistent. Now, Christian, keep the plains, and neither from this, charge God foolishly for thine enemy, nor thyself as his. Read the saddest providence with the comment of the Word, and thou canst not make such a harsh interpretation. As God can make a straight line with a crooked stick, be righteous when he useth wicked instruments; so also gracious when he dispenseth harsh providences. Joseph kept his love, when he spake roughly to his brethren. I do not wonder that the wicked think they have God's blessing, because they are in the warm sun. Alas! they are strangers to God's counsels, void of his Spirit, and sensual, judging of God and his providence, by the report their present feeling makes of them like little children, who think every one loves them that gives them plums. But it is strange that a saint should be at a loss for his afflicted state, when he hath a key to decipher God's character. Christian, hath not God secretly instructed thee by his Spirit from the Word, how to read the shorthand of his providence? Dost not thou know that the saint's afflictions stand for blessings? Every son whom he loves he corrects; and prosperity in a wicked state, must it not be read a curse? Doth not God damn such to be rich, honourable, victorious in this world, as well as to be tormented in another world? God gives them more of these than they seem to desire sometimes, and all to bind them faster up in a deep sleep of security, as Jael served Sisera: he shall have milk though he asked but water, that she might nail him surer to the ground—milk having a property, as some write, to incline to sleep,

Jude 1:5.

Answer Fourth. Be careful to keep thy old receipts which thou hast had from God for the pardon of thy sins. There are some gaudy days, and jubilee-like festivals, when God comes forth clothed with the robes of his mercy, and holds forth the sceptre of his grace more familiarly to his children than ordinary, bearing witness to their faith, sincerity, &c., and then the firmament is clear, not a cloud to be seen to darken the Christian's comfort. Love and joy are the soul's repast and pastime, while this feast lasts. Now when God withdraws, and this cheer is taken off, Satan's work is how he may deface and wear off the remembrance of this testimony, which the soul so triumphs in for its spiritual standing, that he may not have it as an evidence when he shall bring about the suit again, and put the soul to produce his writings for his spiritual state, or renounce his claim. It behoves thee therefore to lay them safely; such a testimony may serve to nonsuit thy accuser many years hence; one affirmative from God's mouth for thy pardoned state, carries more weight, though of old date, than a thousand negatives from Satan's. David's songs of old spring in with a light to his soul in his midnight sorrows.

Question. But what counsel would you give me, saith the distressed soul, who cannot fasten on my former comforts, nor dare to vouch those evidences which once I thought true? I find indeed there have been some treaties of old between God and my soul; some hopes I have had, but these are now so defaced and interlined with backslidings, repentances, and falls again, that now I question all my evidences, whether true or counterfeit; what should one in this case do?

Answer First. Renew thy repentance, as if thou hadst never repented. Put forth fresh acts of faith, as if thou hadst never believed. This seriously done, will stop Satan's mouth with an unexpected answer. Let him object against thy former actions as hypocritical; what can he say against thy present repenting and believing? which, if true, sets thee beyond his shot. It will be harder for Satan to disprove the present workings of God's gracious Spirit, whilst the impression thereof are fresh, than to pick a hole in thy old deeds and evidences. Acts are transient, and as wicked men look at sins committed many years since as little or none, by reason of that breadth of time which interposeth; so the Christian upon the same account stands at great disadvantage, to take the true aspect of those acts of grace, which so long ago passed between God and him, though sometimes even these are of great use. As God can make a sinner possess the sins of his youth, as if they were newly acted, to his terror in his old age, so God can present the comforts and evidences which of old the saint received, with those very thoughts he had then of them, as if they were fresh and new.

Answer Second. And therefore, if yet he haunts thee with the fears of thy spiritual estate, ply thee to the throne of grace, and beg a new copy of thy old evidence, which thou hast lost. The original is in the pardon office in heaven, whereof Christ is master, [and] if thou beest a saint, thy name is upon record in that court. Make thy moan to God, hear what news from heaven, rather than listen to the tales which are brought by thine enemy from hell. Did such reason less with Satan, and pray over their fears more to God, they might sooner be resolved. Can you expect truth from a liar, and comfort from an enemy? Did he ever prophesy well of believers? Was not Job the devil's hypocrite, whom God vouched for a non-such in holiness, and proved him so at last? If he knew thou wert a saint, would he tell thee so? If an hypocrite, he would be as loath thou shouldst know it. Turn thy back therefore on him, and go to thy God; fear not, but sooner or later he will give his

hand to thy certificate. But look thou dost not rashly pass a censure on thyself, because a satisfactory answer is not presently sent at thy desire; the messenger may stay long, and bring good news at last.

Answer Third. Shun battle with thine enemy while [until] thou art in a fitter posture, and that thou mayest draw into thy trenches, and make an honourable retreat into those fastnesses and strengths which Christ hath provided for his sick and wounded soldiers. Now there are two places of advantage into which deserted souls may retire—the name of God, and the absolute promises of the gospel. These I may call the fair havens, which are then chiefly of use, when the storm is so great that the ship cannot live at sea. O, saith Satan, dost thou hope to see God? None but the pure in heart shall be blessed with that vision. Thinkest thou to have comfort? That is the portion of the mourners in spirit. Now, soul, though thou canst not say in the hurry of temptation [that] thou art the pure and the mourner in spirit, yet then say thou believest God is able to work these in thee; yea, hath promised such a mercy to poor sinners; it is his covenant [that] he will give a new heart, a clean heart, a soft heart; and here I wait, knowing, as there was nothing in the creature to move the great God to make such promises, so there can be nothing in the creature to hinder the Almighty his performance of them, where and when he pleaseth. This act of faith, accompanied with a longing desire after that grace thou canst not yet find, and an attendance on the means, though it will not fully satisfy all thy doubts, may be, yet will keep thy head above water, that thou despairest not; and such a shore thou needest in this case, or the house falls.

Answer Fourth. If yet Satan dogs thee, call in help, and keep not the devil's counsel. The very strength of some temptations lies in the concealing of them, and the very revealing of them to some faithful friend, like the opening and pricking of some imposthume[16], gives the soul present ease. Satan knows this too well; and therefore, as some thieves, when they come to rob a house, either gag them in it, or hold a pistol to their breast, frightening them with death, if they cry or speak; thus Satan, that he may more freely rifle the soul of its peace and comfort, overawes it so, that it dares not disclose his temptation. O, saith Satan, if thy brethren or friends know such a thing by thee, they will cast thee off; others will hoot at thee. Thus many a poor soul hath been kept long in its pangs by biting them in. Thou losest, Christian, a double help by keeping the devil's secret —the counsel and prayers of thy fellow-brethren. And what an invaluable loss is this!

BRANCH SECOND.

[The certainty of standing against all his wiles if we be thus armed.] The second branch of the apostle's argument follows, to excite them the more vigorously to their arms; and that is from the possibility yea, certainty of standing against this subtle enemy, if thus armed, 'That ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.' So that this gives the apostle's argument its due temperament; for he meant not to scare them into a cowardly flight, or sullen despair of victory, when he tells them that their enemy is so subtle and politic, but to excite them to a vigorous resistance, from the assured hope of strength to stand in battle, and victoriously after it; which two I perceive are comprehended in that phrase, standing against the wiles of Satan. Sometimes to stand implies a fighting posture, Galatians 6:14. sometimes a conquering posture: 'I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth,' Job 19:25. That earth which was the field where all the bloody battles were fought betwixt him and Satan, on it shall he stand, when not an enemy shall dare to show his head. So that taking both these in, the

observation is—

[Satan shall never vanquish a soul armed with true grace.]

Doctrine. Satan with all his wits and wiles, shall never vanquish a soul armed with true grace; nay, he that hath this armour of God on shall vanquish him. Look into the Word; you shall not find a saint but hath been in the list with him, sifted and winnowed more or less by this enemy, yet at last we find them all coming off with an honourable victory: as in David, Job, Peter, Paul, who were the hardest put to it of any upon record; and lest some should attribute their victory to the strength of their inherent grace above other of their weaker brethren, you have the glory of their victories appropriated to God, in whom the weak are as strong as the strongest. We shall give a double reason of this truth, why the Christian who seems to be so overmatched, is yet so unconquerable, 2 Corinthians 12:9; James 5:11.

First Reason. The curse that lies upon Satan and his cause. God's curse blasts wherever it comes. The Canaanites with their neighbour nations were bread for Israel, though people famous for war; and why? They were cursed nations. The Egyptians [were] a politic people; let us deal wisely, say they; yet being cursed of God, this lay like a thorn at their heart, and at last was their ruin. Yea, let the Israelites themselves, who carry the badge of God's covenant on their flesh, by their sins once become the people of God's curse, and they are trampled like dirt under the Assyrian's feet. This made Balak beg so hard for a curse upon Israel. Now there is an irrevocable curse cleaves to Satan from Genesis 3:14-15, 'And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed,' &c., which place, though partly meant of the literal serpent, yet chiefly of the devil and the wicked—his spiritual serpentine brood—as appears by the enmity pronounced against the serpent's seed and the woman's, Genesis 3:15[17], which clearly holds forth the feud between Christ with his seed, against the devil and his. Now there are two things in that curse which may comfort the saints. 1. The curse prostrates Satan under their feet: Upon thy belly shalt thou go; which is no more than is elsewhere promised, that God will subdue Satan under our feet. Now this prostrate condition of Satan assures believers that the devil shall never lift his head, that is, his wily policy, higher than the saint's heel. He may make thee limp, but cannot bereave thee of thy life; and this bruise which he give thee shall be rewarded with the breaking of his own head, that is, the utter ruin of him and his cause. 2. His food is here limited and appointed. Satan will not devour whom he will. The dust is his food; which seems to restrain his power to the wicked, who are of the earth earthy, mere dust; but for those who are of a heavenly extraction, their graces are reserved for Christ's food, Song of Solomon 7:13, and their soul's are surely not a morsel for the devil's tooth.

Second Reason. The second reason is taken from the wisdom of God, who as he undertakes the ordering of the Christian's way to heaven, Psalms 37:24, so especially this business of Satan's temptations. We find Christ was not led of the evil spirit into the wilderness to be tempted, but of the Holy Spirit, Matthew 4:1. Satan tempts not when he will, but when God pleaseth, and the same Holy Spirit which led Christ into the field, led him off with victory. And therefore we find him marching in the power of his Spirit, after he had repulsed Satan, into Galilee, Luke 4:14. When Satan tempts a saint, he is but God's messenger, 2 Corinthians 12:7. 'There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me.' So our translation. But rather as Beza, who will have it in [the nominative case[18]], the messenger Satan, implying that he was sent of

God to Paul; and indeed the errand he came about was too good and gracious to be his own, lest I should be exalted above measure. The devil never meant to do Paul such a good office, but God sends him to Paul, as David sent Uriah with letters to Joab; neither knew the contents of their message. The devil and his instruments, both are God's instruments, therefore the wicked are called his sword, his axe; now let God alone to wield the one and handle the other. He is but a bungler that hurts and hackles his own legs with his own axe; which God should do, if his children should be the worse for Satan's temptations. Let the devil choose his way, God is for him at every weapon. If he will try it by force of arms, and assault the saints by persecution, as the Lord of hosts he will oppose him. If by policy and subtilty, he is ready there also. The devil and his whole council are but fools to God. Nay, their wisdom, foolishness, cunning, and art, commend everything but sin. The more artificial the watch, the picture, &c., the better; but the more wit and art in sin, the worse, because it is employed against an all-wise God, that cannot be outwitted, and therefore in the end but pay the workmen in greater damnation. 'The foolishness of God is wiser than men;' yea, than the wisdom of men and devils, that is, the means and instruments which God opposeth Satan withal. What weaker than a sermon? Who sillier than the saints in the account of the wise world? Yet God is wiser in a weak sermon, than Satan in his deep plots, wherein the state heads of a whole conclave of profound cardinals are knocked together—wiser in his simple ones, than Satan in his Ahithophels and Sanballats. And truly God chooseth on purpose to defeat the policies of hell and earth by these, that he may put such to greater shame, 1 Corinthians 1:21. How is the great scholar ashamed to be baffled by a plain countryman's argument? Thus God calls forth Job to wrestle with Satan and his seconds—for such his three friends showed themselves in taking the devil's part—and sure he is not able to hold up the cudgels against the fencing-master, who is beaten by one of the scholars. God sits laughing while hell and earth sit plotting, Psalms 2:4; 'He disappointeth the devices of the crafty,' Job 5:12, he breaketh their studied thoughts and plots, as the words import, in one moment pulling down the labours of many years' policy. Indeed as great men keep wild beasts for game and sport, as the fox, the boar, &c., so doth God Satan and his instruments, to manifest his wisdom in the taking of them. It is observed, that the very hunting of some beasts affords not only pleasure to the hunter, but also more sweetness to the eater. Indeed God, by displaying of his wisdom in the pursuit of the saint's enemies, doth superadd a sweet relish to their deliverance at last. He brake the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gave him to be meat to his people. After he had hunted Pharaoh out of all his forms and burrows, now he breaks the very brains of all his plots, and serves him up to his people, with the garnishment of his wisdom and power about.

[How God doth outwit the devil in his tempting of saints to sin.] Question. But how doth God defeat Satan, and outwit his wiles in tempting his saints?

Answer. This God doth by accomplishing his own gracious ends for the good and comfort of his people out of those temptations from which Satan designs their ruin. This is the noblest kind of conquest, to beat back the devil's weapon to the wounding of his own head, yea, to cut it off with the devil's own sword. Thus God sets the devil to catch the devil, and lays, as it were, his own counsels under Satan's wings, and makes him hatch them. Thus the patriarchs helped to fulfil Joseph's dream, while they were thinking to rid their hands of him. To instance in a few particulars, [The ends Satan propounds.]

First Particular. Satan by his temptations aims at the defiling of the Christian's conscience, and disfiguring that beautiful face of God's image which is engraven with holiness in the Christian's bosom; he is an unclean spirit himself, and would have them such that he might glory in their shame; but God outwits him, for he turneth the temptations of Satan to sin, to purging them from sin; they are the black soap with which God washes his saints white.

1. God useth the temptations of Satan to one sin, as a preventive against another; so Paul's thorn in the flesh to prevent his pride. God sends Satan to assault Paul on that side where he is strong, that in the meantime he may fortify him where he is weak. Thus Satan is befooled, as sometimes we see an army sitting down before a town, where it wastes its strength to no purpose, and in the meantime gives the enemy an advantage to recruit; and all this by the counsel of some Hushai, that is a secret friend to the contrary side. God, who is the saint's true friend, sits in the devil's council, and overrules proceedings there to the saint's advantage. He suffers the devil to annoy the Christian with temptations to blasphemy, atheism, and with these, together with the troubles of spirit they produce, the soul is driven to duty, is humbled in the sense of these horrid apparitions in its imagination, and secured from abundance of formality and pride, which otherwise God saw invading him. As in a family, some business falls out, which keeps the master up later than ordinary, and by this the thief, who that night intended to rob him, is disappointed. Had not such a soul had his spirit of prayer and diligence kept awake by those afflicting temptations, it is likely that Satan might have come as a seducer, and taken him napping in security.

2. God purgeth out the very sin Satan tempts to, even by his tempting. Peter never had such a conquest over his self-confidence, never such an establishment of his faith as after his soul-fall in the high-priest's hall. He that was so well persuaded of himself before, as to say, 'Though all were offended with Christ, yet would not he,' how modest and humble was he in a few days become, when he durst not say he loved Christ more than his fellow-brethren, to whom before he had preferred himself! John 21:15. What an undaunted confessor of Christ and his gospel doth he prove before councils and rulers, who even now was dashed out of countenance by a silly maid, and all this the product of Satan's temptation sanctified unto him! Indeed a saint hath a discovery by his fall, what is the prevailing corruption in him, so that the temptation doth but stir the humour, which the soul having found out, hath the greater advantage to evacuate, by applying those means, and using those ingredients which do purge that malady [with a choice[19]]. Now the soul sure will call all out against this destroyer? Paul had not taken such pains to buffet his body, had he not found Satan knocking at that door.

3. God useth these temptations for the advancing the whole work of grace in the heart. One spot occasions the whole garment to be washed. David overcome with one sin, renews his repentance for all, Psalms 51:1-19. A good husband when he seeth it rain at one place, sends for the workman to look over all the house. This indeed differenceth a sincere heart from an hypocrite, whose repentance is partial, soft in one plot, and hard in another. Judas cries out of his treason, but not a word of his thievery and hypocrisy. The hole was no wider in his conscience than where the bullet went in; whereas true sorrow for one, breaks the heart into shivers for others also.

[How Satan is prevented in all.]

Second Particular. Satan by tempting one saint hath a mischievous design against others, either by encouraging then to sin by the example of such a one, or discouraging them in their holy course

by the scandal he hath given; but God here befools him.

1. By making the miscarriages of such, a seasonable caveat to others to look to their standing. Dost thou see a meek Moses provoked to anger; what watch and ward hast thou need keep over thy unruly heart! Though loud winds do some hurt by blowing down here a loose tile, and there a turret, which was falling before—yet the common good surmounts the private damage of some few, these being a broom in God's hands to sweep and cleanse the air. So, though some that are wicked are by God's righteous judgement for the same hardened into further abominations by the saints' falls, yet the good which sincere souls receive by having their formality and security in a further degree purged, doth abundantly countervail the other, who are but sent a little faster, whither they were going before.

2. God makes his saints' falls an argument for comfort to distressed consciences. This hath been, and is as a feather—when the passage seems so stopped that no comfort can be got down otherwise —to drop a little hope into the soul, to keep the creature alive from falling into utter despair. Some have been revived with this, when next door to hell in their own fears. David's sin was great, yet [he] found mercy. Peter fell foully, yet [is] now in heaven. Why sittest thou here, O my soul, under the hatches of despair? Up and call upon thy God for mercy, who hath pardoned the same to others.

3. God hath a design in suffering Satan to trounce some of his saints by temptation, to train them up in a fitness to succour their fellow-brethren in the like condition. He sends them hither to school —where they are under Satan's ferula and lash—that his cruel hand over them may make them study the Word and their own hearts, by which they get experience of Satan's policies till at last they commence masters in this art of comforting tempted souls. It is an art by itself, to speak a word in season to the weary soul. It is not serving out an apprenticeship to human arts [that] will furnish a man for this. Great doctors have proved very dunces here, knowing no more how to handle a wounded conscience than a rustic the chirurgeon's instrument in dissecting the body when an anatomy lecture is to be read. It is not the knowledge of the Scripture—though a man were as well acquainted with it, as the apothecary with his pots and glasses in his shop, and able to go directly to any promise on a sudden—[that] will suffice. No, not grace itself, except exercised with these buffetings and soul conflicts. Christ himself we find trained up at this school. 'He wakeneth mine ear, to hear as the learned,' Isaiah 50:4. Even as the tutor calls up his pupil to read to him. And what is the lecture which is read to Christ, that he may have the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season to the weary souls? 'The Lord hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned I away back; I gave my back to the smiters,' &c., Isaiah 50:5-6. His sufferings (which were all along mingled with temptations), were the lecture from which Christ came out so learned, to resolve and comfort distressed souls. So that the devil had better let Christ alone, yea, and his saints also, who do him but the greater disservice in comforting others. None will handle poor souls so gently as those who remember the smart of their own heart sorrows. None [are] so skilful in applying the comforts of the Word to wounded consciences, as those who have lain bleeding themselves; such know the symptoms of soul-troubles, and feel others' pains in their own bosoms, which some that know the Scriptures, for lack of experience do not, and therefore are like a novice physician, who perhaps can tell you every plant in the herbal, yet wanting the practical part, when a patient comes, knows not well how to make use of his skill. The saints' experiences help him to a sovereign treacle made of the scorpion's own flesh—which

they through Christ have slain—and that hath a virtue above all other to expel the venom of Satan's temptations from the heart.

[The gracious issue God puts to Satan's temptations.]

Third Particular. Satan, in tempting the saint to sin, labours to make a breech between God and the soul. He hates both, and therefore labours to divide these dear friends. If I can, thinks he, get such a one to sin, God will be angry, and when angry he will whip his child soundly; this will be some sport; and when God is correcting the saint, he will be questioning the love of God to him, and cool in his love to God. So though I should not keep him from heaven at last, yet he shall have little joy thither in the way. In this case God and the soul will be like man and wife fallen out, who neither of them look kindly one upon another. Now see how God befools Satan in both these.

1. God useth his saints' temptations, as his method by which he advanceth the communications of his love unto them. The devil thought he had got the goal when he got Adam to eat the forbidden fruit; he thought now he had man in the same predicament with himself, as unlikely ever to see the face of God, as those apostate spirits. But, alas! this was by God intended to usher in that great gospel-plot of saving man by Christ, who (as soon as this prologue of man's fall is done) is brought upon the stage in that grand promise of the gospel made to Adam, and, at God's command, undertakes the charge of recovering lost man out of Satan's clutches, and reinstating him in his primitive glory, with an access of more than ever man had at first, so that the meanest lily in Christ's field exceeds Adam in all his native royalty. And as Satan sped in his first temptation, so he is still on the losing hand. What got he by all his pains upon Job, but to let that holy man know at last how dearly God loved him? When he foiled Peter so shamefully, do we not find Christ owning Peter with as much love as ever? Peter must be the only disciple to whom by name the joyful news of the resurrection is sent. 'Go tell my disciples and Peter;' as if Christ had said, Be sure let his sad heart be comforted with this news, that he may know I am friends with him for all his late cowardice. But doth not this seem to countenance sin, and make Christians heedless whether they fall into temptation or no? If God do thus show his love to the saints after their falls and foils, why should we be so shy of sin, which ends so well at last? Two things will prevent the danger of such an inference.

(1.) We must distinguish between a soul who is foiled through his own infirmity, and his enemies' subtlety and power over-matching him; and another thorough a false heart doth voluntarily prostrate himself to the lust of Satan, Though a general will show little pity to a soldier that should traitorously throw down his arms, and run to the enemy, yet if another in fighting receives a wound and be worsted, it will be no dishonour for him to express his pity and love, no, though he should send him out of the field in his own coach, lay him in his own bed, and appoint him his own chirurgeon. God doth not encourage wickedness in his saints, but pities weakness. Even when the saints fall into a sin, in its nature presumptuous, they do not commit it so presumptuously as others; there is a part true to God in their bosoms, though over-voted. Moses spake unadvisedly, but the devil had his instruments to provoke him, quite against the good man's temper. David numbers the people, but see how the devil dogged and hunted him, till at last he got the better: 'Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel,' 1 Chronicles 21:1. How bravely did Job repel Satan's darts! No wonder if in such a shower someone should get between the joints of his armour! And for Peter, we know—good man!—with what a loyal heart, yea,

zealous, he went into the field, though when the enemy appeared his heart failed him.

(2.) Consider but the way how God communicates his love after his saints' falls, not in sinning, or for sinning, but in mourning and humbling their souls for their sins. Indeed did God smile on them while acting sinfully, this might strengthen their sin, as wine in a fever would the disease; but when the fit is off, the venom of the disease spent, and breathed out in a kindly humiliation, now the creature lies low. God's wine of comfort is a cordial to the drooping spirit, not fuel for sin. When David was led into temptation first, he must be clad in sackcloth and mourning, and then God takes it off, and puts on the garment of joy and praise, 1 Chronicles 21:10, 1 Chronicles 21:15. Job, though he expressed so much courage and patience, yet, bewraying some infirmities after he was baited long by so many fresh dogs, men and devils, he must cry Peccavi [I have sinned], and abhor himself in dust and ashes, before God will take him into his arms, Job 42:6. And the same way God takes with all his children. Now to his saints in such a posture, God may with safety to his honour and their good, give a larger draught of love than ordinary. Their fears and sorrows which their sin hath cost them, will serve instead of water to dash this strong wine of joy, and take away its headiness, that it neither fume up into pride, nor occasion them to reel backward into apostasy. But why doth God now communicate his love? (a) From his own pitiful nature; 'You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and full of tender mercy.' God loves not to rake in bleeding wounds; he knows a mourning soul is subject to be discouraged. A frown or an angry look from God, whom the saint so dearly loves, must needs go near the heart, therefore God declares himself at hand to revive such, Isaiah 57:15. And if he gives the reason: 'For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me,' Isaiah 57:16. Whose spirit is there meant? Not [that] of the presumptuous sinner; he goes on, and never blunks; but of the contrite and humble ones. As the father observes the disposition of his children; one commits a fault and goes on rebelliously, despising his father's anger; another, when offending him, lays it to heart, refuseth to eat, gets into some corner to lament the displeasure of his father; the father sees it, and his bowels yearn toward him. Indeed should he not put his child out of fear by discovering his love, the spirit of such a one would fail. It is not possible there should be a long breach between such a father and such a son, the one relenting over his sin, the other over his mourning son. (b) God doth thus, to pour the greater shame upon Satan, who is the great makebate[20] between God and the soul. How is the man ashamed that hath stirred up variance between husband and wife, father and son, to see the breach made up, and all set themselves against him! It went ill on Christ's side when Herod and Pilate were made friends; and can it go well with Satan to see all well between God and his children? If Esther be in favour, Haman her enemy shall have his face covered. Indeed, this covers Satan's face with shame, to see a poor saint, even now his prisoner, whom he had leave to rob and plunder, tempt and disquiet, now sitting in the sunshine of God's love, while he like a ravening lion takes on for the loss of his prey.

2. Satan's aim is to weaken the saint's faith on God, and cool his love to God, but [he is] befooled in both.

(1.) God turns their temptations, yea, their falls to the further establishment of their faith, which, like the tree, stands stronger for its shaking; or like the giant Anteus, who, in his wrestling with Hercules, is feigned to get strength by every fall to the ground. False faith, indeed, once foiled, seldom comes on again; but true faith riseth and fights more valiantly, as we see in Peter and

other Scripture examples. Temptation to faith, is like fire to gold, 1 Peter 1:7. The fire doth not only discover which is true gold, but makes the true gold more pure; it comes out, may be, less in bulk and weight, because severed from that soil and dross which embased it, but more in value and worth. When Satan is bound up, and the Christian walks under the shines of divine favour, and [the] encouragement of divine assistance, his faith may appear great, if compared with another under the withdrawings of God and buffetings of Satan, but this is not equal judging. As if to try who is the bigger of two men, we should measure one naked, and the other over his clothes; or in comparing two pieces of gold, [we] weighed one with the dross and dirt it contracts in the purse, with the purged from these in the fire. Faith before temptation hath much heterogeneal stuff that cleaves to it, and goes for faith; but when temptation comes these are discovered. Now the Christian feels corruption stir, which lay as dead before; now a cloud comes between the soul and the sweet face of God—the sense of which latter, and the little sense of the other bore up his faith before—but these bladders [being] pricked, he comes now to learn the true stroke in this heavenly art of swimming on the promise, having nothing else to bear him up but that. And a little of this carries more of the precious nature of faith in it, than all the other; yea, is, like Gideon's handful of men, stronger when all these accessories to faith are sent away, than when they were present. And here is all the devil gets; instead of destroying his faith which he aims at, he is the occasion of the refining of it, and thereby adding to its strength.

(2.) The love of tempted saints is enkindled to Christ by their temptations, and foils in their temptations. Possibly in the fit there may seem a damp upon their love, as when water is first sprinkled upon the fire, but when the conflict is a little over, and the Christian comes to himself, his love to Christ will break out like a vehement flame. (a) The shame and sorrow which a gracious soul must needs feel in his bosom for his sinful miscarriage while under the temptation, will provoke him to express his love to Christ above others; as is sweetly set forth in the spouse, who, when the cold fit of her distemper was off, and the temptation over, bestirs her to purpose; her lazy sickness is turned to love-sickness; she finds it as hard now to sit, as she did before to rise; she can rest in no place out of her Beloved's sight, but runs and asks every one she meets for him. And whence came all this vehemency of her zeal? All occasioned by her undutiful carriage to her husband; she parted so unkindly with him, that bethinking what she had done, away she goes to make her peace. If sins committed in unregeneracy have such a force upon a gracious soul, that the thought of them, though pardoned, will still break and melt the heart into sorrow (as we see in Magdalene), and prick on to show zeal for God above others (as in Paul), how much more will the sins of a saint, who, after sweet acquaintance with Jesus Christ, lifts up the heel against that bosom where he hath lain, affect, yea, dissolve the heart as into so many drops of water, and that sorrow provoke him to serve God at a higher rate than others? No child so dutiful in all the family as he who is returned from his rebellion. (b) Again, as his own shame, so the experience which such a one hath of Christ's love above all others will increase his love. Christ's love is to fuel ours[21]; as it gives its being, so it affords growth. It is both mother and nurse to our love. The more Christ puts forth his love, the more heat our love gets; and next to Christ's dying love, none greater than his succouring love in temptation. The mother never hath such advantage to show her affection to her child as when in distress, sick, poor or imprisoned; so neither hath Christ to his children as when tempted, yea, worsted by temptation. When his children lie in Satan's prison, bleeding under the wounds of their consciences, this is the season he takes to give an experiment of his tender heart in pitying, his faithfulness in praying for them, his mindfulness in sending succour to them, yea, his

dear love in visiting them by his comforting Spirit. Now when the soul hath got off some great temptation, and reads the whole history thereof together (wherein he finds what his own weakness was to resist Satan, nay his unfaithfulness in complying with Satan, which might have provoked Christ to leave him to the fury of Satan), now to see both his folly pardoned and ruin graciously prevented, and that by no other hand but Christ's coming unto his rescue (as Abishai to David, when that giant thought to have slain him, 2 Samuel 21:1-22.) This must needs exceedingly endear Christ to the soul. At the reading of such records the Christian cannot but inquire —Ahasuerus concerning Mordecai, who by discovering a treason had saved the king's life—What honour hath been done to his sweet Saviour for all this? And thus Jesus Christ, whom Satan thought to bring out of the soul's favour and liking, comes in the end to sit higher and surer in the saint's affections than ever.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. This affords a reason why God suffers his dear children to fall into temptation, because he is able to outshoot Satan in his own bow, and in the thing wherein he thinks to outwit the Christian to be above him. God will not only be admired by his saints in glory for his love in their salvation, but for his wisdom in the way to it. The love of God in saving them will be the sweet draught at the marriage-feast, and the rare wisdom of God in effecting this, as the curious workmanship with which the cup will be enamelled. Now wisdom appears most in untying knots and wading through difficulties. The more cross wards there are in a business, the more wisdom to fit a key to the lock, to make choice of such means as shall meet with the several turnings in the same. On purpose therefore doth God suffer such temptations to intervene, that his wisdom may be the more admired in opening all these, and leading his saints that way to glory, by which Satan thought to have brought them to hell. The Israelites are bid remember all the way that God led them in the wilderness for forty years, Deuteronomy 8:2. The history of these wars, Christian, will be pleasant to read in heaven, though bloody to fight on earth. Moses and Elias talked with Christ on Tabor—an emblem of the sweet communion which shall pass between Christ and his saints in glory,—and what was their talk, but of his death and sufferings? Luke 9:30. It seems a discourse of our sufferings and temptations is not too low a subject for that blissful state. Indeed this left out, would make a blemish in the fair face of heaven's glory. Could the damned forget he way they went into hell, how oft the Spirit of God was wooing, and how far they were overcome by the conviction of it; in a word, how many turns and returns there were in their journey forward and backward, what possibilities, yea, probabilities they had for heaven, when on earth; were but some hand so kind as to blot these tormenting passages out of their memories, it would ease them wonderfully. So, were it possible, glorified saints could forget the way wherein they went to glory, and the several dangers that intervened from Satan and their own backsliding hearts, they and their God too would be losers by it, I mean in regard to his manifestative glory. What is the glory wherein God appears at Zion's deliverance —those royal garments of salvation, that make so admired of men and angels—but the celebration of all his attributes, according to what every one hath done towards their salvation? Now wisdom being that which the creature chiefly glories in, and that which was chosen by Satan for his first bait, [when he] made Eve believe she should be like God in knowledge and wisdom, therefore God, to give Satan the more shameful fall, gives him leave to use his wits and wiles in tempting and troubling his children, in which lies his great advantage over the saints, that so the way to his own throne—where his wisdom shall at last, as

well as his mercy, sit in all its royalty—may be paved with the skulls, as I may so speak, of devils.

Use Second. This gives a strong cordial to our fainting faith, in the behalf of the church of Christ. If all the devil's wits and wiles will not serve him to overcome one single soldier in Christ's camp, much less shall he ever ruin the whole army. These are the days of great confusion in the Christian world, and the chief fear of a gracious heart is for the ark, lest that should fall into the enemies' hand; and when this palladium is taken, [lest] the city of God, his church, be trod under the feet of pride. I confess Satan seems to get ground daily; he hath strangely wriggled into the bosoms and principles of many, who, by the fame of their profession and zeal, had obtained, in the opinion of others, to be reckoned among the chief of Christ's worthies in their generation. He hath sadly corrupted the truths of Christ; brought a disesteem on ordinances, [so] that by this, and as a judgment for this, the womb of the gospel is become in a great measure barren, and her children which hang upon her breasts thrive not in love and holiness as of old, when the milk was not so much, nor that so spiritful. He hath had advantage by the divisions of the godly, to harden those that are wicked into a further disdain of religion; and by the bloody wars of late years, to boil up the wrath of the popish and profane crew to a higher pitch of rage and fury against Christ's little remnant than ever: so that if ever God should suffer the sword to fall into their hand, they are disciplined and fitted to play the bloody butchers on Christ's sheep above their forefathers. Neither are they so crest-fallen, but that they can hope for such a day, yea [they] take up some of those joys upon trust aforehand, to solace themselves, while the rest follow. And now, Christian, may be their confidence, together with the distracted state of Christ's affairs in the world, may discompose thy spirit, concerning the issue of these rolling providences that are over our heads; but be still, poor heart, and know that the contest is not between the church and Satan, but between Christ and him. These are the two champions. Stand now, O ye army of saints, still, by faith, to see the all-wise God wrestle with a subtle devil. If you live not to see the period of these great confusions, yet generations after you shall behold the Almighty smite off this Goliath's head with his own sword, and take this cunning hunter in the toil of his own policies; that faith which ascribes greatness and wisdom to God, will shrink up Satan's subtlety into a nigrum nihil—a thing of nothing. Unbelief fears Satan as a lion, faith treads on him as a worm[22]. Behold therefore thy God at work, and promise thyself that what he is about, is an excellent piece. None can drive him from his work. The pilot is beaten from the helm, and can do little in a storm, but lets the ship go adrift. The architect cannot work, when night draws the curtain, yea, is driven off the scaffold with a storm of rain. Such workmen are the wisest counsellors and mightest princes on earth. A pinch may come, when it is as vain to say, Help, O king; as, Help, O beggar. Man's wisdom may be levelled with folly, but God id never interrupted. All the plots of hell and commotions on earth, have not so much as shaken God's hand, to spoil one letter or line that he hath been drawing. The mysteriousness of his providence may hang a curtain before his work, that we cannot see what he is doing, but when darkness is about him, righteousness is the seat of his throne for ever. O, where is our faith, sirs? Let God be wise, and all men and devils fools. What though thou seest a Babel more likely to go up, than a Babylon to be pulled down; yet believe God is making his secret approaches, and will clap his ladders on a sudden to the walls thereof. Suppose truth were a prisoner with Joseph, and error the courtier, to have its head lift up by the favour of the times; yet dost [thou] not remember that the way to truth's preferment lies through the prison? Yea, what though the church were like Jonah in the whale's belly, swallowed up to the eye of reason by the fury of men, yet dost [thou] not remember [that] the whale had not power to digest the prophet? O

be not too quick to bury the church before she be dead. Stay while Christ tries his skill before you give it over; bring Christ by your prayers to its grave, to speak a resurrection word. Admirable hath the saints' faith been in such straits; as Joseph's, who pawned his bones that God would visit his brethren, willing them to lay him where he believed they should be brought; Jeremiah purchaseth a field of his uncle, and pays down the money for it, and this when the Chaldean army [was] quartered about Jerusalem, ready to take the city, and [to] carry him with the rest into Babylon. And all this by God's appointment, Jeremiah 32:6-8, that he might show the Jews by this, how undoubtedly he, in that sad juncture of time, did believe the performance of the promise for their return out of captivity. Indeed God counts himself exceedingly disparaged in the thoughts of his people, though at the lowest ebb of his church's affairs, if his naked word, and the single bond of his promise, will not be taken as sufficient security to their faith for its deliverance.

[1]µ,2@*,4"H J@Ø *4"$@8@L.

[2]Totam nee pati potest libertatem nec servitutem.

[3]Nunquam nisi moriens, producitur in longum.

[4]Chapman: a peddlar, hawker, archaic; a trader. —SDB

[5]Vertigo.

[6]Lime-twig: 1) a twig smeared with birdlime to snare birds. 2) any kind of snare. — SDB [7]Sine plicis—without folds.

[8]FAMILISTS, the Family of Love, followers of the Dutch merchant Hendrik Niclaes (c. 1502-c. 1580), who were communitarians in life-style and mystics in theology. The sect was established in 1540, in Emden, East Friesland. Members followed the pantheistic, antinomian teachings of Niclaes and were under his leadership. They professed Christian perfectionism influenced by Anabaptist teachings, but they renounced specific creeds, dogmas, and liturgies, calling for a mystical unity of believers inspired by divine love. Other groups sprang up where Niclaes traveled on business-in Amsterdam, Paris, London, and elsewhere. His books, especially Mirror of Justice (published anonymously), received considerable attention. In England, where the Familists were most strident, Queen Elizabeth I condemned their books in 1580 and sought to jail the believers. They persisted, however, and King James I claimed they were responsible for the rise of Puritanism . It has been thought that John Bunyan received inspiration for his Pilgrim's Progress (1678-84) from Niclaes's writings, many of which were reprinted in the Commonwealth period. By the time of the Restoration (1660), the Familists had all but disappeared.

[9]Consilia callida prima specie læta, tractatu dura eventu tristia.—Livius [10]Hic se aperit diabolus—Here the Evil One reveals himself.

[11]<@0µ"J".

[12]Quackle means to suffocate or choke.

[13]This is an archaic variant and form of the word surgeon. — SDB [14]Hi homunciones invident mihi gratiam Dei.

[15]Wassel is an English beverage used at Christmas, and made of apples, sugar, and ale.

[16]Imposthume is an archaic term meaning an abscess. — SDB [17] Citation was originally Isaiah 10:5 — SDB [18]in casu recto.

[19]Cum delectu.

[20]Makebate:—One that excites contentions and quarrels. — SDB [21]Ex iisdem nutrimur quibus constamus.

[22]Increduli timent diabolum quasi leonem, qui fide fortes despiciunt quasi vermiculum.—Bern.

Chapter 5

01.04 - The Nature of the War, and Character of the Assailants

Direction Second. The nature of the War, and character of the Assailants.

‘For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places’ (Ephesians 6:12). The Words are coupled to the precedent with the casual particle ‘for,’ which either refers to the two foregoing verses—and then they are a further reason, pressing the necessity of Christian fortitude in the tenth verse, and furniture in the eleventh—or else to the last words in the eleventh verse, where the apostle having descried the saints’ grand enemy to be Satan, and described him in one of his attributes—his wily subtlety—he in this further displays him in his proper colours, not to weaken the saints’ hands, but to waken their care, that seeing their enemy marching up in a full body, they might stand in better order to receive his charge. Here, by the way, we may observe the apostle’s simplicity and plain-dealing; he doth not undervalue the strength of the enemy, and represent him inconsiderable, as captains use to keep their soldiers together, by slighting the power of their adversary; no, he tells them the worst at first. If Satan had been granted to set out his own power he could have challenged no more than is here granted to him. See here, the difference between Christ dealing with his followers, and Satan with his. Satan dares not let sinners know who that God is they fight against; this were enough to breed a mutiny in the devil’s camp. Silly souls, they are drawn into the field by a false report of God and his ways, and are kept there together, with lies and fair tales; but Christ is not afraid to show his saints their enemy in all his power and principality, the weakness of God being stronger than the powers of hell. The words contain a lively description of a bloody and lasting war between the Christian and his implacable enemy. In them we may observe: FIRST, The Christian’s state in this life [is] set out by this word ‘wrestling.’ SECOND, The assailants that appear in arms against the Christian. They are described—First, Negatively, ‘not flesh and blood;’ or rather comparatively, not chiefly flesh and blood. Second, Positively, ‘but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.’

DIRECTION II.—FIRST GENERAL PART.

[The nature of the War is set out by this word Wrestling.] ‘For we wrestle,’ Ephesians 6:12. The Christian’s state in this life [is] set out by this word wrestling. The wrestling or conflicting state of a Christian in this life is rendered observable here by a threefold circumstance. First, The sharpness of the combat. Second, The universality of the combat. Third, the permanency of the combat.

First. The sharpness of the combat. The kind of combat which the Christian’s state is here set out by, is the phrase translated ‘we wrestle’[1], which though it be used sometimes for a wrestling of sport and recreation, yet [is used] here to set out the sharpness of the Christian’s encounter. There are two things in wrestling that render it a sharper combat than others.

First. It is a single combat. Wrestling is not properly fighting against a multitude, but when one enemy singles out another, and enters the list with him, each exerting their whole force and

strength against one another; as David and Goliath, when the whole armies stood as it were in a ring to behold the bloody issue of that duel. Now this is more fierce than to fight in an army, where though the battle be sharp and long, the soldier is not always engaged, but falls off when he has discharged, and takes breath a while; yea, possibly may escape without hurt or stroke, because there the enemy's aim is not at this or that man, but at the whole heap. In wrestling [however] one cannot escape so; he being the particular object of the enemy's fury, must needs be shaken and tried to purpose. Indeed the word 'wrestling' signifies such a strife as makes the body shake again[2]. Satan hath not only a general malice against the army of saints, but a spite against thee John, thee Joan; he will single thee out for his enemy. We find Jacob when alone, a man wrestled with him. As God delights to have private communion with his single saints, so the devil [delights] to try it hand to hand with the Christian when he gets him alone. As we lose much comfort when we do not apply the promise and providence of God to our particular persons and conditions—God loves me, pardons me, takes care of me. The water at the town-conduit doth me no good, if I want a pipe to empty it into my cistern; so it obstructs our care and watchfulness, when we conceive of Satan's wrath and fury as bent in general against the saints, and not against me in particular. O how careful would a soul be in duty, if, as going to church or closet, he had such a serious meditation as this: Now Satan is at my heels to hinder me in my work, if my God help me not!

Second. It is a close combat. Armies fight at some distance. Wrestlers grapple hand to hand. An arrow shot from afar may be seen and shunned, but when the enemy hath hold of one there is no declining, but either he must resist manfully, or fall shamefully at his enemy's foot. Satan comes close up, and gets within the Christian, takes his hold of his very flesh and corrupt nature, and by this shakes him.

Second. The universality of the combat. 'We wrestle' comprehends all. On purpose you may perceive the apostle changeth the pronoun ye in the former verse, into we in this, that he may include himself as well as them; as if he had said, The quarrel is with every saint. Satan neither fears to assault the minister, nor despiseth to wrestle with the meanest saint in the congregation. Great and small, minister and people, all must wrestle; not one part of Christ's army in the field, and the other at ease in their quarters, where no enemy comes. Here are enemies enough to engage all at once.

Third. The permanency or duration of this combat; and that lies in the tense we wrestle. Not, our wrestling was at first conversion, but now over, and we passed the pikes; not, we shall wrestle when sickness comes, and death comes; but our wrestling is; the enemy is ever in sight of us, yea, in fight with us. There is an evil of every day's temptation, which, like Paul's bonds, abides us wherever we be come. So that these particulars summed up will amount to this point.

[The Christian's life here is a continual wrestling with sin and Satan.]

Doctrine. The Christian's life is a continual wrestling. He is, as Jeremiah said of himself, born 'a man of strife.' Or what the prophet [said] to Asa, may be said to every Christian; 'From hence thou shalt have wars:' from thy spiritual birth to thy natural death; from the hour when thou first didst set thy face to heaven, till thou shalt set thy foot in heaven. Israel's march out of Egypt was, in gospel-sense, our taking the field against sin and Satan; and when had they peace?—not till they lodged their colours in Canaan. No condition wherein the Christian is, here below, is quiet. Is it prosperity or adversity? here is work for both hands, to keep pride and security down in the one,

faith and patience up in the other; no place which the Christian can call privileged ground. Lot in Sodom wrestled with the wicked inhabitants thereof; his righteous soul being vexed with their unclean conversation. And how fares he at Zoar? Do not his own daughters bring a spark of Sodom's fire into his own bed, whereby he is inflamed with lust? Some have thought if they were but in such a family, under such a ministry, out of such occasions, O then they should never be tempted as now they are! I confess change of air is a great help to weak nature, and these forenamed as vantage-ground against Satan; but thinkest thou to fly from Satan's presence thus? No, though thou shouldst take the wings of the morning he would fly after thee; these may make him change his method in tempting, but not lay down his designs; so long as his old friend is alive within, he will be knocking at thy door without. No duty can be performed without wrestling. The Christian needs his sword as much as his trowel. He wrestles with a body of flesh; [and] this to the Christian in duty is as the beast to the traveller, he cannot go his journey without it, and [has] much ado to go with it. If the flesh be kept high and lusty, then it is wanton and will not obey; if low, then it is weak and soon tires. Thus the Christian rids but little ground, because he must go his weak body's pace. He wrestles with a body of sin as well as of flesh; this mutters and murmurs when the soul is taking up any duty, so that he cannot do what he would. As Paul said, I would have come once and again, but Satan hindered me. I would have prayed, may the Christian say, at such a time, and meditated on the word I heard, the mercies I received at another [time], but this enemy hindered. It is true indeed, grace sways the sceptre in such a soul; yet, as school-boys taking their time when the master is abroad, do shut him out, and for a while lord it in misrule, though they are whipped for it afterwards, thus the unregenerate part takes advantage when grace is not on its watch to disturb its government, and shut it out from duty. Though this at last makes the soul more severe in mortifying, yet it costs some scuffle before it can recover its throne; and when it cannot shut from duty, yet is the Christian woefully yoked with it in duty. It cannot do what it doth as it would. Many a letter in its copy doth this enemy spoil, while he jogs him with impertinent thoughts. When the Christian is a praying, then Satan and the flesh are a prating; he cries, and they louder to put him out or drown his cry. Thus we see the Christian is assailed on every side by his enemy; and how can it be other, when the seeds of war are laid deep in the natures of both, which can never be rooted up till the devil cease to be a devil, sin to be sin, and the saint to be a saint? Though wolves may snarl at one another, yet are soon quiet again, because the quarrel is not in their nature; but the wolf and the lamb can never be made friends. Sin will lust against grace, and grace draw upon sin, whenever they meet.

[Reproof to such as are not true wrestlers.]

First. This may reprove such as wrestle; but against whom? against God, not against sin and Satan. These are bold men indeed, who dare try a fall with the Almighty; yet such there are, and a woe [is] pronounced against them, Isaiah 45:9 'Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker.' It is easy to tell which of these will be worsted. What can he do but break his shins that dasheth them against a rock? A goodly battle there is like to be, when thorns contest with fire, and stubble with flame. But where live those giants that dare enter the list with the great God? What are their names, that we may know them, and brand them for creatures above all other unworthy to live? Take heed, O thou who askest, that the wretched man whom thou seekest so to defy, be not found in thy own clothes itself. Judas was the traitor, though he would not answer to his name, but put it off with a 'Master, is it I?' And so mayest thou be the fighter against God. The heart is deceitful.

Even holy David, for all his anger, was so hot against the rich man, that took away the poor man's ewe-lamb, that he bound it with an oath, [that] the man should not live who had done it, yet proves at last to be himself the man, as the prophet told him, 2 Samuel 12:1-31. Now there are two ways wherein men wrestle against God. 1. When they wrestle against his Spirit, 2. When they wrestle against his providence.

1. When the wrestle against his Spirit. We read of the Spirit striving against the creature, 'My spirit shall not always strive with man,' Genesis 6:3, where the striving is not in anger and wrath to destroy them —that God could do without any stir or scuffle—but a loving strife and contest with man. The old world was running with such a career headlong into their ruin, [that] he sends his Spirit to interpose, and by his counsels and reproofs to offer, as it were, to stop them and reclaim them; as if one seeing another ready to offer violence on himself, should strive to get the knife out of his hand, with which he would do the mischief; or one that hath a purse of gold in his hand to give, should follow another by all manner of entreaties, striving with him to accept and take it. Such a kind of strife is this of the Spirit's with men. They are the lusts of men—those bloody instruments of death, with which sinners are mischieving themselves —that the Holy Spirit strives by his sweet counsels and entreaties to get out of our hands. They are Christ's grace and eternal life [that] he strives to make us accept at the hands of God's mercy; and for repulsing the Spirit thus striving with them, sinners are justly counted fighters against God. 'Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost,' Acts 7:51. Now there is a twofold striving of the Spirit, and so of our wrestling against it.

(1.) The Spirit strives in his messengers with sinners. They coming on his errand, and not their own, he voucheth the faithful counsels, reproofs, and exhortations which they give us as his own act. [What] Noah, that preacher of righteousness, said to the old world is called the preaching of the Spirit, 1 Peter 3:19. The pains that Moses, Aaron, and other servants of God took in instructing Israel, is called the instruction of the Spirit, Nehemiah 9:20; so that when the word, which God's ministers bring in his name, is rejected, the faithful counsels they give are thrown at sinners' heels and made light of; then do they strive with the Spirit, and wrestle against Christ as really, as if he visibly in his own person had been in the pulpit, and preached the same sermon to them. When God comes to reckon with sinners, it will prove so. Then God will rub up your memories, and mind you of his striving with you, and your unkind resisting him. They, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, shall know here hath been a prophet among them, Ezekiel 2:5. Now men soon forget whom and what they hear. Ask them what was pressed upon their consciences in such a sermon. They have forgot. What were the precious truths laid out in another? —and they are lost. And well were it for them if their memories were no better in another world; it would ease their torments more than a little. But then they shall know they had a prophet among them, and what a price they had with them in their hands, though it was in fools' keeping. They shall know what he was, and what he said, though a thousand years past, as fresh as if it were done but last night. The more zealous and compassionate, the more painful and powerful he was in his place, the greater shall their sin be found, to break from such holy violence offered to do them good. Surely God will have something for their sweat, yea, lives of his servants which were worn out in striving with such rebellious ones. May be yet, sinners, your firmament is clear, no cloud to be seen that portends a storm; but know, as you use to say, winter does not rot in the clouds; you shall have it at last. Every threatening which your faithful ministers have denounced against you out of the

Word, God is bound to make good. He confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers, Isaiah 44:26, and that in judgment against sinners, confirming the threatenings, as well as in mercy performing the promises, which they declare as the portion of his children. But it will be time enough to ask such on a sick-bed, or a dying hour, whether the words of the Lord delivered by their faithful preachers have not taken hold of them. Some have confessed with horror [that] they have; as the Jews—'Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, so hath he dealt with us,' Zechariah 1:6.

(2.) The Spirit strives with men more immediately, when he makes his inward approaches to the consciences of men, debating in their own bosoms the case with them. One while he shows them their sins in their bloody colours, and whither they shall surely bring them, if not looked to timely, which he doth so convincingly, that the creature smells sometimes the very fire and brimstone about him, and is at present in a temporary hell; another while he falls a parleying and treating with them, making gracious overtures to the sinner, if he will return at his reproof, presents the grace of the gospel, and opens a door of hope for his recovery, yea, falls a wooing and beseeching of him to throw down his rebellious arms, and come to Christ for life, whose heart is in a present disposition to receive and embrace the first motion the returning sinner makes for mercy. Now when the Spirit of God follows the sinner from place to place, and time to time, suggesting such motions, and renewing his old suit, and the creature shall fling out of the Spirit's hands, thus striving with him,[3] [the thing being unaccomplished], as far from renouncing his lusts, or taking any liking to Christ as ever. This is to resist the Spirit to his face, and it carries so much malignity in it, that even where it hath not been final, poor humbled souls [so] over-set with the horror of it, that they could not for a long time be persuaded but that it was the unpardonable sin. Take heed therefore, sinners, how you use the Spirit when he comes knocking at the door of your hearts. Open at his knock, and he will be your guest; you shall have his sweet company. Repulse him, and you have not a promise he will knock again. And if once he leave striving with thee, unhappy man, thou art lost for ever; thou liest like a ship cast up by the waves upon some high rock, where the tide [will] never come to fetch it off. Thou mayest come to the Word, converse with other ordinances, but in vain. It is the Spirit in them, which is both tide and wind, to set the soul afloat, and carry it on, or else it lies like a ship on dry ground which stirs not.

2. We wrestle against God when we wrestle with is providence; and that in two ways.

(1.) When we are discontented with his providential disposure of us. God's carving for us doth not please us so, but that we are objecting against his dealings towards us, at least muttering something with the fool in our hearts, which God hears as lightly as man our words. God counts then we begin to quarrel with him, when we do not acquiesce in, and say amen to his providence, whatever it is. He calls it a contending with the Almighty, Job 40:2, yea, a reproving of God. And he is a bold man sure that dare find fault with God, and article against heaven. God challengeth him, whoever he is, that doth this, to answer it at his peril. 'He that reproveth God, let him answer it,' Job 40:2 of the chapter forementioned. It was high time for Job to have done, when he hears what a sense God puts upon those unwary words which dropped from him in the anguish of his spirit and paroxysm of his sufferings. Contend with the Almighty? Reprove God? Good man, how blank he is, and cries out, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Let God but pardon what is past, and he shall hear such language no more. O, sirs, Take heed of this wrestling above all other. Contention is uncomfortable, with whomsoever it is we fall

out—Neighbours or friends, wife or husband, children or servants, but worst of all with God. If God cannot please thee, but thy heart riseth against him, what hopes are there of thy pleasing him, who will take nothing kindly from that man who is angry with him? And how can love to God be preserved in a discontented heart, that is always muttering against him? Love cannot think any evil of God, nor endure to hear any speak evil of him, but it must take God's part, as Jonathan David's, when Saul spake basely of him; and when it cannot be heard, will like him arise and be gone. When afflicted, love can allow thee to groan, but not to grumble. If thou wilt ease thy encumbered spirit into God's bosom by prayer, and humbly wrestle with God on thy knees, love is for thee, and will help thee to the best arguments thou canst use to God; but if thou wilt vent thy distempered passions, and show a mutinous spirit against God, this stabs it to the heart.

(2.) We wrestle against providence, when incorrigible under the various dispensations of God toward us. Providence has a voice if we had an ear. Mercies should draw, afflictions drive. Now when neither fair means nor foul do is good, but we are impenitent under both; this is to wrestle against God with both hands. Either of these have their peculiar aggravations: one is against love, and so disingenuous; the other is against the smart of his rod, and therein we slight his anger, and are cruel to ourselves in kicking against the pricks. Mercy should make us ashamed, wrath afraid to sin. He that is not ashamed, has not the spirit of a man. He that is not afraid when smitten, is worse than the beast who stands in awe of whip and spur. Sometimes mercy, especially these outward mercies, which have a pleasing relish to the carnal part in a Christian, hath proved a snare to the best of men, but then affliction useth to recover them. But when affliction makes men worse, and they harden themselves against God, to sin more and more while the rod is on them; what is like to reclaim them? Few are made better by prosperity, whom afflictions make worse. He that will sin, though he goes in pain, will much more, if that once be gone. But take heed of this contesting with God. There is nothing got by scuffling with God, but blows, or worse. If he say he will afflict thee no more, it is even the worst he can say; it is as much as if he should say he will be in thy debt till another world, and there pay thee altogether. But if he means thee mercy, thou shalt hear from him in some sharper affliction than ever. He hath wedges that can rive thee, wert thou a more knotty piece than thou art. Are there yet the treasures of wickedness, and the scant measure that is abominable? saith god to Israel. What! incorrigible, though the Lord's voice crieth unto the city, Micah 6:9, bidding you hear the rod, and him that hath appointed it? See what course God resolves on. Therefore will I make thee sick in smiting of thee, Micah 6:13. As if he had said, My other physic, I see, was too weak, it did not work or turn your stomach, but I will prepare a potion that shall make you sick at heart.

Second. It reproves those who seem to wrestle against sin, but not according to the word of command that Christ gives. There is a law in wrestling which must be observed. If a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned except he strive lawfully, 2 Timothy 2:5. He alludes to the Roman games, to which there were judges appointed to see that no foul play were offered contrary to the law of wrestling; the prize being denied to such though they did foil their adversary; which the apostle improves to make the Christian careful in his war, as being under a stricter law and discipline, that requires not only valour to fight, but obedience to fight by order and according to the word of command. Now few do this that go for great wrestlers.

1. Some while they wrestle against one sin, embrace another, and in this case it is not [that] the person wrestles against sin, but one sin wrestles against another, and it is no wonder to see

thieves fall out when they come to divide the spoil. Lusts are diverse, Titus 3:3, and it is hard to please many masters, especially when their commands are so contrary. When pride bids lay on in bravery, lavish out in entertainment, covetousness bids lay up; when malice bids revenge, carnal policy saith, Conceal thy wrath, though not forgive. When lust sends to his whores, hypocrisy pulls him back for shame of the world. Now is he God's champion that resist one sin at the command of another, it may be a worse?

2. Some wrestle, but they are pressed into the field, not volunteers. Their slavish fears scare them at present from their lust, so that the combat is rather betwixt their conscience and will, than them and your lust. Give me such a sin, saith will. No, saith conscience, it will scald; and throws it away. A man may love the wine, though he is loath to have his lips burned. Hypocrites themselves are afraid to burn. In such combats the will at last prevails, either by bribing the understanding to present the lust it desires in a more pleasing dress, that conscience may not be scared with such hideous apparitions of wrath; or by pacifying conscience with some promise of repentance for the future; or by forbearing some sin for the present, which it can best spare, thereby to gain the reputation of something like a reformation. Or if all this will not do, then, prompted by the fury of its lust, the will proclaims open war against conscience, sinning in the face of it, like some wild horse, [which] impatient of the spur which pricks him and bridle that curbs him, gets the bit between his teeth, and runs with full speed, till at last he easeth himself of his rider; and then where he sees fattest pasture, no hedge or ditch can withhold him, till in the end you find him starving in some pound for his trespass. Thus, many sin at such rate, that conscience can no longer hold the reins nor sit the saddle, but is thrown down and laid for dead; and then the wretches range where their lusts can have the fullest meal, till at last they pay for their stolen pleasures most dearly, when conscience comes to itself, pursues them, and takes them more surely by the throat than ever, never to let them go till it brings them before God's tribunal.

3. Others wrestle with sin, but they do not hate it, and therefore they are favourable to it, and seek not the life of sin as their deadly enemy. These wrestle in jest, and not in earnest; the wounds they give sin one day, are healed by the next. Let men resolve never so strongly against sin, yet will it creep again into their favour, till the love of sin be quenched in the heart; and this fire will never die of itself, the love of Christ must quench the love of sin, as Jerome [saith] excellently[4] [one love extinguishes another.] This heavenly fire will indeed put out the flame of hell; which he illustrates by Ahasuerus' carriage to Vashti his queen, who in the first chapter makes a decree in all haste that she comes no more before him; but when his passion is a little down, Esther 2:1, he begins to relent towards her; which his council perceiving, presently seek out for a beautiful virgin, on whom the king might place his love, and take into his royal bed; which done, we hear no more of Vashti. Then and not till then will the soul's decree stand against sin, when the soul hath taken Christ into his bosom.

[How the true wrestlers should manage their combat.]

Direction to the saints. Seeing your life is a continual wrestling here on earth, it is our wisdom to study how you may best manage the combat with your worst enemy; which that you may do, take these few directions.

First. Look thou goest not into the field without thy second. My meaning is, engage God by prayer to stand at thy back. God is in a league offensive and defensive with thee, but he looks to be

called. Did the Ephraimites take it ill, that Gideon called them not into the field, and may not God much more? as if thou meanedst to steal a victory before he should know it. Thou hast more valour than Moses, who would not stir without God, no, though he sent an angel for his lieutenant. Thou art wiser than Jacob, who to overcome Esau, now marching up, turns from him, and falls upon God; he knew if he could wrestle with God, he might trust God to deal with his brother. Engage God and the back-door is shut, no enemy can come behind thee, yea, thine enemy shall fall before thee. God turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness, saith David. Heaven saith amen to his prayer, and the wretch hangs himself.

Second. Be very careful of giving thine enemy hand-hold. Wrestlers strive to fasten upon some part or other, which gives them advantage more easily to throw their adversary; to prevent which, they used—1. To lay aside their garments; 2. To anoint their bodies.

1. Christian, labour to put off the old man which is most personal, that corruption which David calls his own iniquity, Psalms 18:23. This is the skirt which Satan lays hold of; observe what it is, and mortify it daily; then Satan will retreat with shame, when he sees the head of that enemy upon the wall, which should have betrayed thee into his hands.

2. The Roman wrestlers used to anoint their bodies. So do thou; bathe thy soul with the frequent meditations of Christ's love. Satan will find little welcome, where Christ's love dwells; love will kindle love, and that will be as a wall of fire to keep off Satan; it will make thee disdain the offer of a sin, and as oil, supple the joints, and make [thee] agile to offend thy enemy. Think how Christ wrestled in thy quarrel; sin, hell, and wrath had all come full mouth upon thee, had not he coped with them in the way. And canst thou find in thy heart to requite his love, by betraying his glory into the hands of sin, by cowardice or treachery. Say not thou lovest him, so long as thou canst lay those sins in thy bosom which plucked his heart out of his bosom. It were strange if a child should keep, and delight to use, no other knife, but that wherewith his father was stabbed.

Third. Improve the advantage, thou gettest at any time, wisely. Sometimes, the Christian hath his enemy on the hip, yea, on the ground, can set his foot on the very neck of his pride, and throw away his unbelief, as a thing absurd and unreasonable. Now, as a wise wrestler, fall with all thy weight upon thine enemy. Though man think it foul play to strike when his adversary is down, yet do not thou so compliment with sin, as to let it breathe or rise. Take heed thou beest not charged of God, as once Ahab, for letting go this enemy now in thy hands, whom God hath appointed to destruction. Learn a little wisdom of the serpent's brood, who, when they had Christ under their foot, never thought they had him sure enough, no, not when dead; and therefore both seal and watch his grave. Thus do thou, to hinder the resurrection of thy sin, seal it down with stronger purposes, solemn covenants, and watch it by a wakeful circumspect walking.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. [Consolation.] This is a ground of consolation to the weak Christian, who disputes against the truth of his grace, from the inward conflicts and fightings he hath with his lusts, and is ready to say like Gideon, in regard of outward enemies, 'If God be with me, why is all this befallen me?' Why do I find such strugglings in me, provoking me to sin, pulling me back from that which is good? Why dost [thou] ask? The answer is soon given; because thou art a wrestler, not a conqueror. Thou mistakest the state of a Christian in this life. When one is made a Christian, he is

not presently called to triumph over his slain enemies, but carried into the field to meet and fight them. The state of grace is the commencing of a war against sin, not the ending of it; rather than thou shalt not have an enemy to wrestle with, God himself will come in a disguise into the field, and appear to be thine enemy. thus when Jacob was alone, a man wrestled with him until breaking of the day; and therefore set thy heart at rest if this be thy scruple. Thy soul may rather take comfort in this, that thou art a wrestler. This struggling within thee, if upon the right ground, and to the right end, doth evidence there are two nations within thee, two contrary natures, the one from earth, earthly, and the other from heaven, heavenly; yea, for thy further comfort, know [that] though thy corrupt nature be the elder, yet it shall serve the younger.

Use Second. [Hope of triumph.] O how should this make the Christian long to be gone home, where there is none of this stir and scuffle! It is strange, that every hour seems not a day, and every day a year, till death sounds thy joyful retreat, and calls thee off the field—where the bullets fly so thick, and thou art fighting for thy life with thy deadly enemies—to come to court, where not swords, but palms are seen in the saints' hands; not drums, but harps; not groans of bleeding soldiers and wounded consciences, but sweet and ravishing music is heard of triumphing victors carolling the praises of God and the Lamb, through whom they have overcome. Well, Christians, while you are below, comfort yourselves with these things. There is a place of rest remaining for the people of God. You do not beat the air, but wrestle for a heaven that is yonder above the clouds; you have your worst first, the best will follow. You wrestle but to win a crown, and win to wear it, yea, wear, never to lose it, which once on, none shall ever take off, or put you to the hazard of battle more. Here we overcome to fight again; the battle of one temptation may be over, but the war remains. What peace can we have as long as devils can come abroad out of their holes, or anything of sinful nature remains in ourselves unmortified? [This nature] will even fight upon its knees, and strike with one arm while the other is cut off; but when death comes, the last stroke is struck. This good physician will perfectly cure thee of thy spiritual blindness and lameness,—as the martyr told his fellow at the stake, bloody Bonner would do their bodily. What is it, Christian, which takes away the joy of thy life, but the wrestlings and combats which this bosom-enemy puts thee to? Is not this the Peninnah that, vexing and disturbing thy spirit, hath kept thee off many a sweet meal, thou mightest have had in communion with God and his saints?—or if thou hast come, hath made thee cover the altar of God with thy tears and groans? And will it not be a happy hand that cuts the knot, and sets thee loose from thy deadness, hypocrisy, pride, and what not, wherewith thou wert yoked? It is life which is thy loss, and death which is thy gain. Be but willing to endure the rending of this vail of thy flesh, and thou art where thou wouldst be, out of the reach of sin, at rest in the bosom of thy God. And why should a short evil of pain affright thee more, than the deliverance from a continual torment of sin's evil ravish thee? Some you know have chosen to be cut, rather than to be ground daily with the stone, and yet, may be, their pain comes again; and canst thou not quietly think of dying, to be delivered from the torment of these sins, never to return more? And yet that is not the half that death doth for thee. Peace is sweet after war, ease after pain; but what tongue can express what joy, what glory must fill the creature at the first sight of God and that blessed company? None but one that dwells there can tell. Did we know more of that blissful state, we ministers should find it as hard a work to persuade Christians to be willing to live here so long, as now it is, to persuade them to be willing to die so soon.

DIRECTION II.—SECOND GENERAL PART.

[Character of the Assailants or Enemies with whom the Christian is to wrestle.] ‘Not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places,’ Ephesians 6:12. The assailants that appear in arms against the Christian, or the enemies with whom he is to wrestle, are described, First, Negatively, ‘not against flesh and blood,’ or rather comparatively, not chiefly against flesh and blood. Second, Positively, ‘but against principalities and powers,’ &c.

Division First.—The Assailants described negatively.

‘Not against flesh and blood.’

We are not to take the negative part of the description for a pure negation, as if we had no conflict with flesh and blood, but wholly and solely to engage against Satan; but by way of comparison, not only with flesh and blood, and in some sense not chiefly. It is usual in Scripture such manner of phrase: Call not thy friends to dinner, but the poor, Luke 14:12; that is, not only those, so as to neglect the poor. Now, what is meant here by flesh and blood? There is a double interpretation of the words.

[What is meant by flesh and blood.]

First. By flesh and blood may be meant our own bosom corruptions; that sin which is in our corrupt nature, so oft called flesh in the Scripture —‘the flesh lusteth against the Spirit;’ and sometimes flesh and blood, ‘Flesh and blood hath not revealed this;’ Matthew 16:17, that is, this confession thou hast made comes from above; thy fleshly corrupt mind could never have found out this supernatural truth, thy sinful will could never have embraced it. ‘Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,’ 1 Corinthians 15:50; that is, sinful mortal flesh; as it is expounded in the words following. I consulted not with flesh and blood, Galatians 1:16; that is, carnal reason. Now this bosom enemy may be called flesh, First. Partly from its derivation, and Second. Partly from its operation.

First. Partly from its derivation, because it is derived and propagated to us by natural generation. Thus Adam is said to beget a son in his own likeness, sinful as he was, as well as mortal and miserable; yea, the holiest saint on earth having flesh in him, derives this corrupt and sinful nature to his child, as the circumcised Jew begat an uncircumcised child; and the wheat cleansed and fanned, being sown, comes up with a husk. ‘That which is born of the flesh is flesh,’ John 3:6.

Second. It is called flesh, partly from the operations of this corrupt nature, which are fleshly and carnal. The reasonings of the corrupt mind [are] fleshly; therefore [it is] called the carnal mind, incapable indeed of the things of God, which it neither doth nor can perceive. as the sun doth hide the heavens which are above it from us, while it reveals things beneath[5], so carnal reason leaves the creature in the dark concerning spiritual truths, when it is most able to conceive and discourse of creature excellences, and carnal interests here below. What a childish question for so wise a man, did Nicodemus put to Christ! though Christ to help him did wrap his speech in a carnal phrase. If fleshly reason cannot understand spiritual truths when thus accommodated, and the notions of the gospel translated into its own language, what skill is it like to have of them, if put to read them in their original tongue? I mean, if this garment of carnal expression were taken off, and

spiritual truths in their naked hue presented to its view. The motions of the natural will are carnal, and therefore ‘they that are after the flesh,’ Romans 8:5, are said to ‘mind the things of the flesh.’ All its desires, delights, cares, fears, are in, and of, carnal things; it favours spiritual food no more than an angel fleshly. What we cannot relish we will hardly make our daily food[6]. Every creature hath its proper diet; the lion eats not grass, nor the horse flesh; what is food to the carnal heart, is poison to the gracious; and that which is pleasing to the gracious, is distasteful to the carnal.

Now according to this interpretation, the sense of the apostle is not as if the Christian had no combat with his corrupt nature, for in another place it is said, the Spirit lusts against the flesh, and the flesh against the Spirit—and this enemy is called the sin that besets the Christian round—but to aggravate his conflict with this enemy by the access of a foreign power, Satan, who strikes in with this domestic enemy. As if while a king is fighting with his own mutinous subjects, some outlandish troops should join with them; now he may be said, not to fight with his subjects, but with a foreign power. The Christian wrestles not with his naked corruptions, but with Satan in them. Were there no devil, yet we should have our hands full, in resisting the corruptions of our own hearts; but the access of this enemy makes the battle more terrible, because he heads them who is a captain so skilful and experienced. Our sin is the engine, Satan is the engineer; lust the bait, Satan the angler. When a soul is enticed by his own lust, he is said to be tempted, James 1:14, because Satan and our own lust concur to the completing the sin.

Use First. Let us make thee, Christian, ply the work of mortification close. It is no policy to let thy lusts have arms, which are sure to rise and declare against thee when thine enemy comes. Achish’s nobles did but wisely, in that they would not trust David in their army when to fight against Israel, lest in the battle he should be an adversary to them; and darest thou go to duty, or engage in any action, where Satan will appear against thee, and not endeavour to make sure of thy pride, unbelief, &c.,that they join not with thine enemy?

Use Second. Are Satan and thy own flesh against thee—not single corruption, but edged with his policy, and backed by his power? See then what need thou hast of more help than thy own grace. Take heed of grappling with him in the strength of thy naked grace; here thou hast two to one against thee. Satan was too hard for Adam, though he went so well appointed into the field, because left to himself; much more easily will he foil thee. Cling therefore about thy God for strength; get him with thee, and then, though a worm, thou shalt be able to deal with this serpent.

Second. Flesh and blood is interpreted as a periphrasis of man. ‘We wrestle not with flesh and blood,’ that is, not with man, who is here described by that part which chiefly distinguisheth him from the angelic nature. Touch me, saith Christ, and handle me, a spirit hath not flesh. Now, according to this interpretation, [observe these particulars]. First. How meanly the Spirit of God speaks of man. Second. Where he lays the stress of the saint’s battle; not in resisting flesh and blood, but principalities and powers. Where the apostle excludes not our combat with man, for the war is against the serpent and his seed; —as wide as the world is, it cannot peaceably hold the saints and wicked together. But his intent is to show what a complicated enemy—man’s wrath and Satan’s interwoven together—we have to deal with.

[How the Christian doth not wrestle with flesh and blood.]

First. How meanly doth the Spirit of God speak of man, calling him flesh and blood! Man hath a heaven-born soul, which makes him akin to angels, yea, to the God of them, who is the Father of spirits; but this is passed by in silence, as if God would not own that which is tainted with sin, and not the creature God at first made it; or because the soul, though of such noble extraction, yet being so immersed in sensuality, deserves no other name than flesh, which part of man levels him with the beast, and is here intended to express the weakness and frailty of man's nature. It is the phrase [by] which the Holy Ghost expresseth the weakness and impotency of a creature by. 'They are men, and their horses are flesh', Isaiah 31:3, that is, weak; as on the contrary, when he would set out the power and strength of a thing, he opposeth it to flesh—'Our weapons are not carnal, but mighty,' 2 Corinthians 10:4. And so in the text, not flesh and blood, but powers. As if he should say, 'Had you no other to fear but a weak sorry man, it were not worth the providing arms or ammunition; but you have enemies that neither are flesh, nor are resisted with flesh.' So that here we see what a weak creature man is, not only weaker than angels, as they are spirit and he flesh—put in some sense beneath the beasts, as the flesh of man is frailer than the flesh of beasts; therefore the Spirit of God compares man to the grass, which soon withers, and his goodliness to the flower of the field, Isaiah 40:6. Yea, he is called vanity. 'Men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie,' Psalms 62:9. Both alike vain; only the rich and the great man's vanity is covered with honour, wealth, &c., which are here called a lie, because they are not what they seem, and so worse than plain vanity, which is known to be so, and deceives not.

Use First. Is man but frail flesh? Let this humble thee, O man, in all thy excellency; flesh is but one remove from filth and corruption. Thy soul is the salt that keeps thee sweet, or else thou wouldst stink above ground. Is it thy beauty thou pridest in? Flesh is grass, but beauty is the vanity of this vanity. This goodliness is like the flower, which lasts not so long as the grass, appears in its mouth and is gone; yea, like the beauty of the flower, which fades while the flower stands. How soon will time's plough make furrows in thy face, yea, one fit of an ague so change thy countenance, as shall make thy doting lovers afraid to look on thee? Is it strength? Alas, it is an arm of flesh, which withers oft in the stretching forth. Ere long thy blood, which is now warm, will freeze in thy veins; thy spring crowned with May-buds will tread on December's heel; thy marrow dry in thy bones, thy sinews shrink, thy legs bow under the weight of thy body; thy eye-strings crack; thy tongue [be] not able to call for help; yea, thy heart with thy flesh shall fail. And now thou who art such a giant, take a turn of thou canst in thy chamber, yea, raise but thy head from thy pillow if thou art able, or call back thy breath, which is making haste to be gone out of thy nostrils, never to return more; and darest thou glory in that which so soon may be prostrate? Is it wisdom? The same grave that covers thy body, shall bury all that—the wisdom of thy flesh I mean—all thy thoughts shall perish, and [thy] goodly plots come to nothing. Indeed, if a Christian, thy thoughts as such shall ascend with thee, not one holy breathing of thy soul lost. Is it thy blood and birth? Whoever thou art, thou art base-born till born again; the same blood runs in thy veins with the beggar in the street, Acts 17:26. All nations there we find made of the same blood; in two things all are alike, we come in and go out of the world alike; as one is not made of finer earth, so not resolved into purer dust.

Use Second. Is man flesh? Trust not in man; 'cursed be he that makes flesh his arm!' not the mighty man; robes may hide and garnish, they cannot change flesh. Put not your trust in princes, Psalms 146:3; alas, they cannot keep their crowns on their own heads, their heads on their own shoulders; and lookest thou for that which they cannot give themselves? Not in wise men, whose

designs recoil oft upon themselves, that they cannot perform their enterprise[7]. Man's carnal wisdom intends one thing, but God turns the wheel and brings forth another. Trust not in holy men, they have flesh, and so their judgment [is] not infallible, yea, their way [is] sometimes doubtful. His mistake may lead thee aside, and though he returns, thou mayest go on and perish. Trust not in any man, in all man, no not in thyself, thou art flesh. He is a fool, saith the wise man, that trusts his heart. Not in the best thou art or doest; the garment of thy righteousness is spotted with the flesh; all is counted by St. Paul confidence in the flesh, besides our rejoicing in Christ, Php 3:3.

Use Third. Is man but flesh? Fear him not. This was David's resolve: 'I will not fear what flesh can do unto me,' Psalms 56:4. Thou needest not, thou oughtest not to fear. Thou needest not. What, not such a great man, not such a number of men, who have the keys of all the prisons at their girdle, who can kill or save alive! no, not these. Only look they be thy enemies for righteousness' sake. Take heed thou makest not the least child thine enemy by offering wrong to him; God will right the wicked even upon the saint. If he offends, he shall find no shelter under God's wing for his sin. This made Jerome complain that the Christians' sins made the arms of those barbarous nations which invaded Christendom victorious[8]. But if man's wrath finds thee in God's way, and his fury take fire at thy holiness, thou needest not fear, though thy life be the prey he hunts for. Flesh can only wound flesh; he may kill thee, but not hurt thee. Why shouldst thou fear to be stripped of that which thou hast resigned already to Christ? It is the first lesson thou learnest, if a Christian, to deny thyself, to take up thy cross, and follow thy Master; so that the enemy comes too late. Thou hast no life to lose, because thou hast given it already to Christ, nor can man take away that without God's leave. All thou hast is insured; and though God hath not promised thee immunity from suffering in this kind, yet he hath undertaken to bear thy loss, yea, to pay thee a hundredfold; and thou shalt not stay for it till another world. Again, thou oughtest not to fear flesh. Our Saviour Matthew 10:1-42, thrice in the compass of six verses, commands us not to fear man. If thy heart quail at him, how wilt thou behave thyself in the list against Satan, whose little finger is heavier than man's loins? The Romans had[9] weapons rebated or cudgels, which they were tried at before they came to the sharp. If thou canst not bear a bruise in thy flesh from man's cudgel and blunt weapon, what wilt thou do when thou shalt have Satan's sword in thy side? God counts himself reproached when his children fear a sorry man; therefore we are bid, Sanctify the Lord, and not to fear the fear. Now if thou wouldst not fear man who is but flesh, labour [to do these two things],

1. Mortify thy own flesh. Flesh only fears flesh; when the soul degenerates into carnal desires and delights, no wonder he falls into carnal fears. Have a care, Christian, thou bringest not thyself into bondage. Perhaps thy heart feeds on the applause of men, this will make thee afraid to be evil spoken of, as those who shuffled with Christ, John 12:42; owning him in private when they durst not confess him openly, for they loved the praise of men. David saith the mouth of the wicked is an open sepulchre; and in this grave hath many a saint's name been buried. But if this fleshly desire were mortified, thou wouldst not pass to be judged by man; and so of all carnal affections. Some meat you observe is aguish; if thou settest thy heart on anything that is carnal—wife, child, estate, &c.—these will incline thee to a base fear of man, who may be God's messenger to afflict thee in these.

2. Set faith against flesh. Faith fixeth the heart, and a fixed heart is not readily afraid. Physicians tell us we are never so subject to receive infection as when the spirits are low, and therefore the

antidotes they give are all cordials. When the spirit is low through unbelief, every threatening from man makes sad impression. Let thy faith take but a deep draught of the promises, and thy courage will rise.

Use Fourth. Is man but flesh? Comfort thyself, Christian, with this, that as thou art flesh, so thy heavenly Father knows it, and considers thee for it.

1. In point of affliction; Psalms 103:14, ‘He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.’ Not like some unskilful empiric, who hath but one receipt for all, strong or weak, young or old; but as a wise physician considers his patient, and then writes his bill. Men and devils are but God’s apothecaries, they make not our physic, but give what God prescribes. Balaam loved Balak’s fee well enough, but could not go an hair’s breadth beyond God’s commission. Indeed God is not so choice with the wicked; ‘Hath he smitten him, as he smote those that smote him?’ Isaiah 27:7. In a saint’s cup the poison of affliction is corrected, not so in the wicked’s; and therefore what is medicine to the one is ruin to the other.

2. In duty. He knows you are but flesh, and therefore pities and accepts thy weak service, yea, he makes apologies for thee. The spirit is willing, saith Christ, but the flesh is weak.

3. In temptations. He considers thou art flesh and, and proportions the temptations to so weak a nature. It is called[10] such a temptation as is common to man; a moderate temptation, as in the margin, fitted for so frail a creature. Whenever the Christian begins to faint under the weight of it, God makes as much haste to his succour, as a tender mother would to her swooning child; therefore he is said to be nigh, to revive such, lest their spirit should fail.

[How the Christian doth wrestle with flesh and blood.]

Second. Observe where he lays the stress of the saint’s battle; not in resisting flesh and blood, but principalities and powers; where the apostle excludes not our combat with man, for the war is against the serpent and his seed. As wide as the world is, it cannot peaceably hold the saints and wicked together. But his intent is to show what a complicated enemy, man’s wrath and Satan’s interwoven, we have to deal with. Observe therefore the conjuncture of the saint’s enemies. We have not to do with naked man, but with man led on by Satan; not with flesh and blood, but principalities and powers acting in them. There are two sorts of men the Christian wrestles with, good men and bad. Satan strikes in with both.

1. The Christian wrestles with good men. Many a sharp conflict there hath been betwixt saint and saint, scuffling in the dark through misunderstanding of the truth, and each other; Abraham and Lot at strife. Aaron and Miriam justled with Moses for the wall, till God interposed and ended the quarrel by his immediate stroke on Miriam. The apostles, even in the presence of their Master, were at high words, contesting who should be the greatest. Now in these civil wars among saints, Satan is the great kindle-coal, though little seen, because, like Ahab, he fights in a disguise, playing first on the one side, and on the other, aggravating every petty injury, and thereupon provoking to wrath and revenge; therefore the apostle, dehorting from anger, useth this argument, Give no place to the devil; as if he had said, Fall not out among yourselves, except you long for the devil’s company, who is the true soldier of fortune, as the common phrase, living by his sword, and therefore hastes thither where there is any hope of war. Gregory compares the saints in their sad differences to two cocks, which Satan the master of the pit sets on fighting, in hope, when killed, to

sup with them at night. Solomon saith, Proverbs 18:6, the mouth of the contentious man calls for strokes. Indeed we by our mutual strifes give the devil a staff to beat us with; he cannot well work without fire, and therefore blows up these coals of contention, which he useth at his forge, to heat our spirits into wrath, and then we are malleable, easily hammered as he pleaseth. Contention puts the soul into disorder, and[11] [amid arms laws are silent.] The law of grace acts not freely, when the spirit is in a commotion. Meek Moses provoked, speaks unadvisedly. Methinks this, if nothing else will, should sound a retreat to our unhappy differences—that this Joab hath a hand in them—he sets his evil spirit betwixt brethren, and what folly is it for us to bite and devour one another to make hell sport? We are prone to mistake our heat for zeal, whereas commonly in strifes between saints, it is a fire-ship sent in by Satan to break their unity and order; wherein while they stand, they are an Armada invincible, and Satan knows he hath no other way but this shatter to them. When the Christian's language, which should be one, begins to be confounded, they are then near a scattering; it is time for God to part his children when they cannot live in peace together.

2. The Christian wrestles with wicked men. Because you are not of the world, saith Christ, the world hates you. The saint's nature and life are antipodes to the world; fire and water, heaven and hell, may as soon be reconciled as they with it. The heretic is his enemy for truth's sake; the profane for holiness' [sake]; to both the Christian is an abomination, as the Israelite to the Egyptian. Hence come wars; the fire of persecution never goes out in the hearts of the wicked, who say in their hearts as they once with their lips[12], [Christians to the lions.] Now in all the saint's wars with the wicked, Satan is commander-in-chief; it is their father's work they do; his lusts they fulfil. The Sabeans plundered Job, but went on Satan's errand. The heretic broacheth corrupt doctrine, perverts the faith of many, but in that [he is] the minister of Satan, 2 Corinthians 11:15; they have their call, their wiles and wages from him. Persecutors [have] their work ascribed to hell. Is it a persecution of the tongue? It is hell sets it on fire. Is it of the hand? Still they are but the devil's instruments, Revelation 2:10. The devil shall cast some of you into prison.

Use First. Do you see any driving furiously against the truths or servants of Christ? O pity them, as the most miserable wretches in the world; fear not their power, admire not their parts; they are men possessed of, and acted by, the devil; they are his drudges and slaughter-slaves, as the martyr called them. Augustine, in his epistle to Lycinius, one of excellent parts but wicked, who once was his scholar, speaks thus pathetically to him: O how I would weep and mourn over thee, to see such a sparkling wit prostituted to the devil's service! If thou hadst found a golden chalice, thou wouldst have given it to the church; but God hath given thee a golden head, parts and wit, and in this propinas teipsum diabolo—thou drinkest thyself to the devil. When you see men of power and parts, using them against God that gave them, weep over them; better they had lived and died, the one slaves, the other fools, than do the devil such service with them.

Use Second. O ye saints, when reproached and persecuted, look farther than man, spend not your wrath upon him. Alas! they are but instruments in the devil's hand. Save your displeasure for Satan, who is thy chief enemy. These may be won to Christ's side, and so become thy friends at last. Now and then we see some running away from the devil's colours, and washing thy wounds with their tears, which they have made with their cruelty. It is a notable passage in Anselm, [in which he] compares the heretic and the persecutor to the horse, and the devil to the rider. Now, saith he, in battle, when the enemy comes riding up, the valiant soldier 'is[13] angry not with the

horse, but horseman; he labours to kill the man, that he may possess the horse for his use; thus must we do with the wicked, we are not to bend our wrath against them, but [against] Satan that rides them, and spurs them on, labouring by prayer for them as Christ did on the cross, to dismount the devil, that so these miserable souls hackneyed by him may be delivered from him.' It is more honour to take one soul alive out of the devil's clutches, than to leave many slain upon the field. Erasmus said of Augustine, that he begged the lives of those heretics, at the hands of the emperor's officers, who had been bloody persecutors of the orthodox:[14] Like a kind physician he desired their life, that if possible he might work a cure on them, and make them sound in the faith.

[1],FJ4< ºµ4< º B"80.

[2]quia corpus B"88,J"4.

[3]Re infecta.

[4]Unus amor extinguit alium.

[5]Obsignare superiora dum revelat inferiora.

[6]Omnis vita gustu ducitur.

[7] Amphora coepit Institui; currente rota, cur urceus exit?

— Horace, A.P. 22.

[8]Nostris peccatis fortes sunt barbari.

[9]Arma prœlusoria.

[10]B,4D"FµÎH ■<2B4<@H.

[11]Inter arma silent leges. — Cic. Mil. 4. 10.

[12]Christiani ad leones.

[13]Non irascitur equo, sed equiti, quantum potest agit ut equitem percutiat, equum possideat; sic contra malos homines agendum, non contra illos, sed illum qui illos instigat, ut dum diabolus vincitur, infelices quos ille possidet liberentur.

[14]Cupiebat amicus medicus supresse quos arte suâ sanaret.

Chapter 6

01.05 - The Assailants Described Positively

Division Second.—The Assailants described Positively.

‘But against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Ephesians 6:12 The apostle having shown what the saint’s enemies are not, flesh and blood, frail men, who cannot come but they are seen, who may be resisted by man’s power, or escaped by flight; now he describes the positively, ‘against principalities, against powers,’ &c. Some think [that] the apostle by these divers names and titles, intends to set forth the distinct orders, whereby the devils are subordinate one to another; so they make the devil, Ephesians 6:11, to be the head or monarch, and these, Ephesians 6:12, so many inferior orders, as among men there are princes, dukes, earls, &c., under an emperor. That there is an order among the devils cannot be denied. The Scripture speaks of a prince of devils, Matthew 9:34, and of the devil and his angels, who with him fell from their first station, called his angels, as it is probably conceived, because one above the rest (as the head of the faction), drew with him multitudes of others into his party, who with him sinned and fell. But that there should be so many distinct orders among them, as there are several branches in this description, is not probable; too weak a notion to be the foundation of a pulpit discourse. Therefore we shall take them as meant of the devil collectively—we wrestle not with flesh and blood, but [with] devils, who are principalities and powers, &c.—and not distributively, to make principalities one rank, powers another; for some of these branches cannot be meant of distinct orders, but promiscuously of all as spiritual wickedness; it being not proper to one to be spirits, or wicked, but common to all. first, Then, the devil or whole pack of them are here described by their government in this world—principalities. second, By their strength and puissance, called powers. third, In their kingdom or proper territories—rulers of the darkness of this world. fourth, By their nature in its substance and degeneracy—spiritual wickedness. fifth, By the ground of the war—in the heavenly places, or about heavenly things.

BRANCH FIRST.

[Against principalities.] The devil or whole pack of them are here described by their government in this world —principalities. The term principalities[1] is here used in the abstract for the concrete; that is, such as have a principality. So, Titus 3:1, we are bid to be subject to principalities and powers, that is, princes and rulers; so the Vulgate reads it. We wrestle against princes, which some will have to express the eminency of their nature above man’s; that as the state and spirit of princes is more raised above others—great men have great spirits—as Zebah and Zalmunna to Gideon, asking who they were they slew at Tabor; ‘As thou art,’ say they, ‘so were they, each one resembled the children of a king,’ that is, for majesty and presence beseeming a princely race; so they think, the eminent nature of angels here to be intended, who are as far above the highest prince, as he above the basest peasant. But because they are described by their nature in the fourth branch, I shall subscribe to their judgment, who take this for their principality or government, which the devil exerciseth in this lower world; and the note shall be, [What a principality Satan

hath.]

Doctrine. That Satan is a great prince. Christ himself styles him the 'prince of this world,' John 14:30. Princes have their thrones where they sit in state; Satan hath his—Thou dwellest where Satan hath his throne, Revelation 2:13; and that such a one, as no earthly princes may compare [with]. Few kings are enthroned in the hearts of their subjects; they rule their bodies and command their purses, but how oft in a day are they pulled out of their thrones by the wishes of their discontented subjects. But Satan hath the heart of all his subjects. Princes have their homage and peculiar honour done to them. Satan is served upon the knee of his subjects; the wicked are said to worship the devil, Revelation 13:4. No prince expects such worship as he; no less than religious worship will serve him. Jeroboam is said to ordain priests for devils, 2 Chronicles 11:15; and therefore he [Satan] is called not only the prince, but the god of this world, because he hath the worship of a god given him. Princes, such as are absolute, have a legislative power, nay, their own will is their law, as at this day in Turkey, where their laws are written in no other tables than in the proud sultan's breast. Thus Satan gives law to the poor sinner, who is bound and must obey, though the law be writ with his own blood, and the creature hath nothing but damnation for fulfilling the devil's lust. It is called a 'law of sin,' Romans 8:2, because it comes with authority. Princes have their ministers of state, whom they employ for the safety and enlargement of their territories; so Satan his, who propagates his cursed designs, [and] therefore we read of 'doctrines of devils,' 1 Timothy 4:1[2]. Princes have their[3] secrets of government, which none knows but a few favourites in whom they confide. Thus the devil hath his mysteries of iniquity, and depths of Satan we read of, which all his subjects know not of, Revelation 2:24; these are imparted to a few favourites, such as Elymas, whom Paul calls 'full of subtlety, and child of the devil;' such, whose consciences are so debauched, that they scruple not the most horrid sins; these are his white boys. I have read of a people in America that love meat best when it is rotten and stinks. The devil is of their diet. The more corrupt and rotten the creature is in sin, the better he pleaseth his tooth. Some are more the children of the devil than others. Christ had his beloved disciple; and Satan those that lie in his very bosom, and know what is in his heart. In a word, princes have their[4] tribute and custom; so Satan his. Indeed he doth not so much share with the sinner in all, but is owner of all he hath; so that the devil is the merchant, and the sinner but the broker to trade for him, who at last puts all his gains into the devil's purse. Time, strength, parts, yea, conscience and all, is spent to keep him in his throne.

[How Satan came to be such a prince.] Question 1. But how comes Satan to this principality?

Answer. Not lawfully, though he can show a fair claim. As,

1. He obtained it by conquest; as he won his crown, so he wears it by power and policy. But conquest is a cracked title. A thief is not the honester because able to force the traveller to deliver his purse; and a thief on the throne is no better than a private one on the road, or a pirate in a pinnace, as one boldly told Alexander. Neither doth that prove good with process of time which was evil at first. Satan indeed hath kept possession long, but a thief will be so as long as he keeps his stolen goods. He stole the heart of Adam from God at first, and doth no better to this day. Christ's conquest is good, because the ground of the war is righteous—to recover what was his own; while Satan cannot say of the meanest creature, 'It is my own.'

2. Satan may lay claim to his principality by election. It is true he came in by a wile, but now he is a prince elect, by the unanimous voice of corrupt nature. ‘Ye are of your father the devil,’ saith Christ, ‘and his lusts ye will do.’ But this also hath a flaw in it, for man by law of creation is God’s subject, and cannot give away God’s right; by sin he loseth his right in God as a protector, but God loseth not his right as a sovereign. Sin disabled man to keep God’s law, but it doth not enfranchise or disoblige him that he need not keep it.

3. Satan may claim a deed of gift from God himself, as he was bold to do to Christ himself upon this ground, persuading him to worship him as the prince of the world. He showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world, saying, ‘All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it,’ Luke 4:5-6. Here was a truth, though he spake more than the truth—as he cannot speak truth, but to gain credit to some lie at the end of it. God, indeed, hath delivered, in a sense, this world to him, but not in his sense to do what he will with it; nor by any approbatory act given him a patent to vouch him his viceroy: not Satan by the grace of God, but by permission of God, prince of this world.

Question 2. But why doth God permit this apostate creature to exercise such a principality over the world?

Answer 1. As a righteous act of vengeance on man, for revolting from the sweet government of his rightful Lord and Maker. It is the way God punisheth rebellion: ‘Because ye would not serve me in gladness, in the abundance of all things, therefore ye shall serve your enemies in hunger,’ &c. Satan is a king given in God’s wrath. Ham’s curse is man’s punishment; ‘a servant of servants.’ The devil is God’s slave, man the devil’s. Sin hath set the devil on the creature’s back; and now he hurries him without mercy, as he did the swine, till he be choked with flames, if mercy interpose not.

Answer 2. God permits this his principality, in order to the glorifying of his name in the recovery of his elect from the power of this great potentate. What a glorious name will God have when he hath finished this war, wherein, at first, he found all possessed by this enemy, and not a man of all the sons of Adam to offer himself as a volunteer in this service, till made willing by the day of his power! This, this will gain God a name above every name, not only of creatures, but of those by which himself was known to his creature. The workmanship of heaven and earth gave him the name of Creator; providence of Preserver; but this of Saviour. Herein he doth both the former; preserve his creature, which else had been lost; and create a new creature—I mean the babe of grace —which, through God, shall be able to beat the devil out of the field, who was able to drive Adam, though created in his full stature, out of paradise. And may not all the other works of God empty themselves as rivers into this sea, losing their names, or rather swelling into one of redemption? Had not Satan taken God’s elect prisoners, they would not have gone to heaven with such acclamations of triumph. There are three expressions of great joy in Scripture; the joy of a woman after her travail, the joy of harvest, and the joy of him that divideth the spoil. The exultation of all these is wrought upon a sad ground, many a pain and tear it costs the travailing woman, many a fear the husbandman, perils and wounds the soldier, before they come at their joy; but at last they are paid for all, the remembrance of their past sorrows feeding their present joys. Had Christ come and entered into affinity with our nature, and returned peaceably to heaven with his spouse, finding no resistance, though that would have been admirable love, and would have

afforded the joy of marriage, yet this way of carrying his saints to heaven will greaten the joy, as it adds to the nuptial song the triumph of a conqueror, who hath rescued his bride out of the hands of Satan, as he was leading her to the chambers of hell.

[How we may know whether we be under Satan as our prince, or not.]

First. Is Satan such a great prince? Try whose subject thou art. His empire is large; [there are] only a few privileged who are translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Even in Christ's own territories —[the] visible church I mean—where his name is professed and the sceptre of his gospel held forth, Satan hath his subjects. As Christ had his saints in Nero's court, so the devil his servants in the outward court of his visible church. Thou must therefore have something more to exempt thee from his government, than living within the pale, and giving an outward conformity to the ordinances of Christ; Satan will yield to this and be no loser. As a king lets his merchants trade to, yea, live in a foreign kingdom, and, while they are there, learn the language, and observe the customs of the place. This breaks not their allegiance; nor all that, thy loyalty to Satan. When a statute was made in Queen Elizabeth's reign, that all should come to church, the Papists sent to Rome to know the pope's pleasure. He returned then this answer, as it is said, 'Bid the Catholics in England give me their heart, and let the queen take the rest.' His subject thou art whom thou crownest in thy heart, and not whom thou flatterest with thy lips. But to bring the trial to an issue, know that thou belongest to one of these, and but to one; Christ and satan divide the whole world. Christ will bear no equal, and Satan no superior; and therefore, hold in with both thou canst not.

Now if thou sayest that Christ is thy prince, answer to these interrogatories.

1. How came he [Christ] into the throne? Satan had once the quiet possession of thy heart; thou wast by birth, as the rest of thy neighbours, Satan's vassal; yea, hast oft vouched him in the course of thy life to be thy liege lord; how then comes this great change? Satan, surely, would not of his own accord resign his crown and sceptre to Christ; and for thyself, thou wert neither willing to renounce, nor able to resist, his power. This then must only be the fruit of Christ's victorious arms, whom God hath exalted 'to be a Prince and a Saviour,' Acts 5:31. Speak therefore, Hath Christ come to thee, as once to Abraham to Lot, when prisoner to Chedorlaomer, rescuing thee out of Satan's hands, as he was leading thee in the chains of lust to hell? Didst thou ever hear a voice from heaven in the ministry of the word calling out to thee as once to Saul, so as to lay thee at God's foot, and make thee face about for heaven; to strike thee blind in thine own apprehension, who before hadst a good opinion of thy state; to tame and meeken thee; so as now thou art willing to be led by the hand of a child after Christ? Did ever Christ come to thee, as the angel to Peter in prison, rousing thee up, and not only causing the chains of darkness and stupidity to fall off thy mind and conscience, but make thee obedient also—that the iron gate of thy will hath opened to Christ before he left thee? Then thou hast something to say for thy freedom. But if in all this I be a barbarian, and the language I speak be strange, thou knowest no such work to have passed upon thy spirit, then thou art yet in the old prison. Can there be a change of government in a nation by a conqueror that invades it, and the subjects not hear of this? One king unthroned and another crowned in thy soul, and thou hear no scuffle all this while? The regenerating Spirit is compared to the wind, John 3:8. His first attempts on the soul mat be so secret that the creature knows not whence they come, or whither they tend; but, before he hath done, the sound will be heard throughout the soul, so as it cannot but see a great change in itself, and say, 'I that was

blind, now see; I that was hard as ice, now relent for sin; now my heart gives; I can melt and mourn for it. I that was well enough without a Christ, yea, did wonder what others saw in him, to make much ado for him, now have changed my note with the daughters of Jerusalem; and for, What is your Beloved? as I scornfully have asked; I have learned to ask where he is, that I might seek him with you.' O soul, canst thou say it thus with thee? Thou mayest know who has been here; no less than Christ, who, by his victorious Spirit, hath translated thee from Satan's power into his own sweet kingdom.

2. Whose law dost thou freely subject thyself unto? The laws of these princes are as contrary as their natures; the one a law of sin, Romans 8:2; the other a law of holiness, Romans 7:12; and therefore if sin hath not so far bereaved thee of thy wits, as not to know sin from holiness, thou mayest, except [thou] resolve to cheat thy own soul, soon be resolved. Confess therefore and give glory to God; to which of these laws doth thy soul set its seal? When Satan sends out his proclamation, and bids the sinner go, set thy foot upon such a command of God. Observe what is thy behaviour; dost thou yield thyself, as Paul phraseth it, Romans 6:16[5]; 'yield yourselves,' a metaphor from princes' servants or others, who are said to present themselves before their lord, as ready and at hand to do their pleasure; by which the apostle elegantly describes the forwardness of the sinner's heart to come to Satan's foot, when knocked or called. Now doth thy soul go out thus to meet thy lust, as Aaron his brother, glad to see its face in an occasion? Thou art not brought over to sin with much ado, but thou likest the command. Transgress at Gilgal, saith God, this liketh you well, Hosea 4:5[6]. As a courtier, who doth not only obey, but thank his prince that he will employ him. Needest thou be long in resolving whose thou art? Did ever any question, whether those were Jeroboam's subjects, who willingly followed his command? Hosea 5:11. Alas, for thee, thou art under the power of Satan, tied by a chain stronger than brass or iron; thou lovest thy lust. A saint may be for a time under a force; sold under sin, as the apostle bemoans; and therefore glad when deliverance comes; but thou sellest thyself to work iniquity. If Christ should come to take thee from thy lusts, thou wouldst whine after them, as Micah after his gods.

3. To whom goest thou for protection? As it belongs to the prince to protect his subjects, so princes expect their subjects should trust them with their safety. The very bramble bids, 'If in truth you anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow,' Judges 9:15. Now who hast thy confidence? Darest thou trust God with thy soul, and the affairs of it in well-doing? Good subjects follow their calling, commit state matters to the wisdom of their prince and his council. When wronged, they appeal to their prince in his laws for right; and when they do offend their prince, they submit to the penalty of the laws, and bear his displeasure patiently, till humbling themselves they recover his favour, and do not, in a discontent, fall into open rebellion. Thus a gracious soul follows his Christian calling, committing himself to God as a faithful Creator, to be ordered by his wise providence. If he meets with violence from any, he scorns to beg aid of the devil to help him, or be his own judge to right himself; no, he acquiesceth in the counsel and comfort the Word of God gives him. If himself offends, and so comes under the lash of God's correcting hand, he doth not then take up rebellious arms against God, and refuse to receive correction; but saith, 'Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?' whereas a naughty man dares not venture his estate, life, credit, or anything he hath, with God in well-doing; he thinks he shall be undone presently, if he sits still under the shadow of God's promise for protection; and therefore he runs from God as from under an old house that would fall

on his head, and lays the weight of his confidence in wicked policy, making lies his refuge. Like Israel, he trusts in perverseness; when God tells him, ‘In returning and rest he shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be his strength;’ he hath not faith to take God’s word for his security in ways of obedience. And when God comes to afflict him for any disloyal carriage, instead of accepting the punishment for his sin—and so to own him for his Sovereign Lord, that may righteously punish the faults of his disobedient subjects —his heart is filled with rage against God, and instead of waiting quietly and humbly, like a good subject till God upon his repentance receives him into his favour, his wretched heart, presenting God as an enemy to him, will not suffer any such gracious and amiable thoughts of God to dwell in his bosom, but bids him look for no good at his hand: ‘This evil is of the Lord; why should I wait on the Lord any longer?’ Whereas a gracious heart is most encouraged to wait from this very consideration that drives the other away: ‘Because it is the Lord afflicts.’

4. Whom dost thou sympathize with? He is thy prince, whose victories and losses thou layest to heart, whether in thy own bosom or abroad in the world. What saith thy soul, when God hedgeth up thy way, and keeps thee from that sin which Satan hath been soliciting for? If on Christ’s side thou wilt rejoice when thou art delivered out of a temptation, though it be by falling into an affliction. As David said of Abigail, so wilt thou here: Blessed be the ordinance, blessed be the providence which kept me from sinning against my God; but if otherwise thou wilt harbour a secret grudge against the word which stood in thy way, and be discontented, thy design took not. A naughty heart, like Amnon, pines while his lust hath vent. Again, what music doth the achievements of Christ in the world make in thy ear? When thou hearest [that] the gospel thrives, the blind see, the lame walk, the poor gospellized, doth thy spirit rejoice in that hour? If a saint, thou wilt, as God is thy Father, rejoice [that] thou hast more brethren born; as he is thy prince, that the multitude of his subjects increase. So when thou seest the plots of Christ’s enemies discovered, powers defeated, canst thou go forth with the saints to meet King Jesus, and ring him out of the field with praises? or do thy bells ring backward, and such news make thee haste, like Haman, mourning to thine house, there to empty thy spirit, swollen with rancour against his saints and truth? Or if thy policy can master thy passion, so far as to make fair weather in thy countenance, and suffer thee to join with the people of God in their acclamations of joy, yet then art thou a close mourner within, and likest the work no better than Haman his office, in holding Mordecai’s stirrup, who had rather have held the ladder. This speaks thee a certain enemy of Christ, how handsomely soever thou mayest carry it before men.

Second. Bless God, O ye saints, who upon the former trial, can say you are translated into the kingdom of Christ, and so delivered from the tyranny of this usurper. There are few but have some one gaudy day in a year, which they solemnize; some keep their birthday, others their marriage; some their manumission from a cruel service, others their deliverance from some imminent danger. Here is a mercy where all these meet. You may call it, as Adam did his wife, Evah, the mother of all the living; every mercy riseth up and calls this blessed. This is thy birth-day; thou wert before, but beganst to live when Christ began to live in thee. The father of the prodigal dated his son’s life from his return: ‘This my son was dead, and is alive.’ Is it thy marriage day: ‘I have married you to one husband, even Christ Jesus,’ saith Paul to the Corinthians. Perhaps thou hast enjoyed this thy husband’s sweet company many a day, and had a numerous offspring of joys and comforts by thy fellowship with him, the thought of which cannot but endear him to thee, and make

the day of thy espousals delightful to thy memory. It is thy manumission; then were thy indentures cancelled, wherein thou wert bound to sin and Satan. When the Son made thee free, thou becamest free indeed. Thou canst not say thou wast born free, for thy father was a slave; not that thou boughtest thy freedom with a sum. By grace ye are saved. Heaven is settled on thee in the promise, and thou not at charge so much as for the writing's drawing. All is done at Christ's cost, with whom God indented, and to whom he gave the promise of eternal life before the world began, as a free estate to settle upon every believing soul in the day they should come to Christ, and receive him for their Prince and Saviour; so that from the hour thou didst come under Christ's shadow, all the sweet fruit that grows on this tree of life is thine. With Christ, all that both worlds have, fall to thee; all is yours, because you are Christ's.

O Christian, look upon thyself now, and bless thy God to see what a change there is made to thy state, since that black and dismal time, when thou wert slave to the prince of darkness. How couldst thou like thy old scullion's work again, or think of returning to thy house of bondage, now thou knowest the privileges of Christ's kingdom? Great princes, who from baseness and beggary have ascended to kingdoms and empires—to add to the joy of their present honour—have delighted to speak often of their base birth, to go and see the mean cottages where they were first entertained, and had their birth and breeding and the like. And it is not unuseful for the Christian to look in at the grate, to see the smoky hole where once he lay, to view the chains wherewith he was laden, and so to compare Christ's court and the devil's prison—the felicity of the one and the horror of the other—together. But when we do our best to affect our hearts with this mercy, by all the enhancing aggravations we can find out, alas, how little a portion of it shall we know here? This is a nimium excellens—a surpassing excellence, which cannot be fully seen, unless it be by a glorified eye. How can it be fully known by us, where it cannot be fully enjoyed? Thou art translated into the kingdom of Christ, but thou art a great way from his court. That is kept in heaven, and that the Christian knows, but as we [know] far countries which we never saw only by map, or some rarities that are sent us as a taste of what grows there in abundance.

Third. This, Christian, calls for thy loyalty and faithful service to Christ, who hath saved thee from Satan's bondage. Say, O ye saints, to Christ, as they say to Gideon, 'Come thou and rule over us, for thou hast delivered us from the hand, not of Midian, but of Satan.' Who so able to defend thee from his wrath, as he who broke his power? who like to rule thee so tenderly, as he that could not brook another's tyranny over thee? In a word, who hath right to thee besides him, who ventured his life to redeem thee? —that being delivered from all thine enemies, thou mayest serve him without fear in holiness all the days of thy life. And were it not pity that Christ should take all this pains to lift up thy head from Satan's house of bondage, and give thee a place among those in his own house, who are admitted to minister unto him—which is the highest honour the nature of men or angels is capable of—and that thou shouldst after all this be found to have a hand in any treasonable practice against thy dear Saviour? Surely Christ may think he hath deserved better at your hands, if at none besides. Where shall a prince safely dwell, if not in the midst of his own courtiers? and those such were all taken from chains and prisons to be thus preferred, the more to oblige them in his service. Let devils and devilish men do their own work, but let not thy hand, O Christian, be upon thy dear Saviour. But this is too little, to bid thee not play the traitor. If thou hast any loyal blood running in thy veins, thy own heart will smite thee when thou rendest the least skirt of his holy law; thou canst as well carry burning coals in thy bosom, as hide any treason there

against thy dear Sovereign. No, it is some noble enterprise I would have thee think upon, how thou mayest advance the name of Christ higher in thy heart, and [in the] world too, as much as in thee lies. O how kindly did God take it, that David, when peaceably set in his throne, was casting about, not how he might entertain himself with those pleasures which usually corrupt and debauch the courts of princes in times of peace, but how he might show his zeal for God, in building a house for his worship that had reared a throne for him, 2 Samuel 7:1-29. And is there nothing, Christian, thou canst think on, wherein thou mayest be instrumental for God in thy generation? He is not a good subject, that is all for what he can get of his prince, but never thinks what he may do for him; nor he the true Christian, whose thoughts dwell more on his own happiness than on the honour of his God. If subjects might choose what life stands best for their own enjoyment, all would desire to live at court with their prince; but because the prince's honour is more to be valued than this, therefore, noble spirits, to do their prince service, can deny the delicacies of a court, to jeopard their lives in the field, and thank their prince too for the honour of their employment. Blessed Paul upon these terms was willing to have his day of coronation in glory prorogued[7], and he to stay as companion with his brethren in tribulation here, for the furtherance of the gospel. This, indeed, makes it worth the while to live[8], that we have by a fair opportunity—if hearts to husband it—in which we may give a proof of our real gratitude to our God, for his redeeming love in rescuing us out of the power of the prince of darkness, and translating us into the kingdom of his dear Son. And therefore, Christian, lose no time, but, what thou meanest to do for God, do it quickly.

Art thou a magistrate? now it will be soon seen on whose side thou art. If indeed thou hast renounced allegiance to Satan, and taken Christ for thy prince, declare thyself an enemy to all that bear the name of Satan, and march under his colours. Study well by commission, and when thou understandest the duty of thy place, fall to work zealously for God. Thou hast thy prince's sword put into thy hand. Be sure thou use it, and take heed how thou usest it, that when called to deliver it up, and thy account also, it may not be found rusty in the sheath through sloth and cowardice, besmeared with the blood of violence, not bent and gaped with partiality and injustice.

Art thou a minister of the gospel? Thy employment is high, an ambassador, and that not from some petty prince, but from the great God to his rebellious subjects; a calling so honourable, that the Son of God disdained not to come in extraordinary from heaven to perform it, called therefore the 'messenger of the covenant,' Malachi 3:1; yea, he had to this day stayed on earth in person about it, had he not been called to reside as our ambassador and advocate in heaven with the Father; and therefore in his bodily absence he hath intrusted thee, and a few more, to carry on the treaty with sinners, which, when on earth, himself began. And what can you do more acceptable to him, than to be faithful in it, as a business on which he hath set his heart so much? As ever you would see his sweet face with joy—you that are his ambassadors —attend to your work, and labour to bring this treaty of peace to a blessed issue between and those you are sent to. And then if sinners will not come off, and seal the articles of the gospel, you shall, as Abraham said to his servant, be clear of your oath. Though Israel be not gathered, yet you shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord. And let not the private Christian say he is a dry tree, and can do nothing for Christ his prince, because he may not bear the magistrate's fruit or minister's. Though thou hast not a commission to punish the sins of others with the sword of justice, yet thou mayest show thy zeal in mortifying thy own with the sword of the Spirit, and mourn for theirs also; though thou mayest not condemn them on the bench, yet thou mayest, yea, oughtest, by the power of a holy life, to

convince and judge them. Such a judge Lot was to the Sodomites. Though thou art not sent to preach and baptize, yet thou mayest be wonderfully helpful to them that are. The Christian's prayers whet [the] magistrates and ministers' sword also. O pray, Christian, and pray again, that Christ's territories may be enlarged. Never go to hear the Word but pray, Thy kingdom come. Loving princes take great content in the acclamations and good wishes of their subjects as they pass by. A vivat rex—long live the king—coming from a loyal breast, though poor, is more worth than a subsidy from those who deny their hearts while they part with their money. Thou servest a prince, Christian, who knows what all his subjects think of him, and he counts it his honour not to have a multitude feignedly submit to him, but to have a people that love him and cordially like his government, who, if they were to choose their king, and make their own laws they should live under every day, would desire no other than himself, nor any other laws than what they have already from his mouth. It was no doubt great content to David, that he had the hearts of his people, so as whatever the king did, pleased them all, 2 Samuel 3:36. And surely God took it as well, that what he did pleased David, for indeed David was content under the rule and disposure of God as the people were under his. Witness the calmness of his spirit in the greatest affliction that ever befell him: 'Behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him,' 2 Samuel 15:26. Loyal soul! he had rather live in exile, with the good-will of God, than have his throne, if God will not say it is good for him.

BRANCH SECOND.

[Against powers.]

Satan, in this second branch of the description, is set forth by his strength and puissance—called powers. This gives weight to the former. Were he a prince and not able to raise a force that might dread the saints, the swelling name of prince were contemptible; but he hath power answerable to his dignity, which in five particulars will appear. First. In his names. Second. His nature. Third. His number. Fourth. His order and unity. Fifth. The mighty works that are attributed to him. The great power Satan hath not only over the elementary and sensitive part of the world, but over the intellectual also —the souls of men.

First. He hath names of great power. [He is] called 'the strong man,' Luke 11:21; strong that he keeps his house in peace in defiance of all the sons of Adam, none on earth being able to cope with this giant. Christ must come from heaven to destroy him and his works, or the field is lost. He is called the roaring lion, which beast commands the whole forest. If he roars, all tremble; yea, in such a manner, as Pliny relates, that he goes amongst them, and they stand exanimated while he chooseth his prey without resistance; such a lion is Satan, who leads sinners captive at his will, 2 Timothy 2:26. He takes them alive, as the word is, as the fowler the bird, which, with a little scrap is enticed into the net; or as the conqueror his cowardly enemy, who has no heart to fight, but yields without contest. Such cowards the devil finds sinners [that] he no sooner appears in a motion, but they yield. They are but a very few noble spirits, and those are the children of the most High God, who dare valiantly oppose him, and in striving against sin resist to blood. He is called the 'great red dragon,' who with his tail, wicked men his instruments, sweeps down the third part of the stars of heaven; the 'prince of the power of the air,' because as a prince can muster his subjects, and draw them into the field for his service so the devil can raise[9] [the power of the air]. In a word, he is called 'the god of this world,' 2 Corinthians 4:4, because sinners give him a

god-like worship, fear him as the saints do God himself.

Second. The devil's nature shows his power; it is angelical. Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, Psalms 103:20. Strength is put for angels, Psalms 78:25. They did eat angels' food, the food of the mighty. In two things the power of angelical nature will appear; in its superiority, and in its spirituality.

1. Its superiority. Angels are the top of the creation; man himself is made a little lower than the angels. Now in the works of creation, the superior hath a power over the inferior; the beasts over the grass and herb, man over the beasts, and angels over man.

2. The spirituality of their nature. The weakness of man is from his flesh; his soul, made for great enterprises, but weighed down with a lump of flesh, is forced to row with a strength suitable to its weak partner. But now, the devils being angels have no such encumbrance, no fumes from a fleshly part to cloud their understanding, which is clear and piercing; no clog at their heel to retard their motion, which, for swiftness, is set out by the wind and flame of fire. Yea, being spiritual, they cannot be resisted with carnal force; fire and sword hurt not them. The angel which appeared to Manoah went up in the fire that consumed the sacrifice. Though such had been the dotage, and is at this day, of superstitious ones, that they think to charm the devil with their carnal exorcisms; hence the Romish relics, cross, holy water; yea, and [it existed] among the Jews themselves in corrupter times, who thought by their phylacteries and circumcision to scare away the devil, which made some of them expound that [passage] Song of Solomon 3:8, of circumcision: 'Every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.' By sword on the thigh, they expound circumcision, which they will vainly have given as a charm against evil spirits that affright them in the night. But alas, the devil cares for none of these, no, not for an ordinance of God, when by fleshly confidence we make it a spell; he hath been often bound with these fetters and chains, as is said of him in the gospel, and the chains have been plucked asunder by him, neither could any man thus tame him. He esteems, as Job saith of the leviathan, iron as straw and brass as rotten wood. It must be a stronger than the strong man [that] must bind him, and none [is] stronger but God, the Father of spirits. The devil lost, indeed, by his fall, much of his power in relation to that holy and happy estate in which he was created, but not his natural abilities; he is an angel still, and hath an angel's power.

Third. The number of devils adds to their power. What lighter than the sand? yet number makes it weighty. What creature less than lice? yet what plague greater to the Egyptians. How formidable must devils be, who are both for nature so mighty and for number such a multitude! There are devils enough to beleaguer the whole earth; not a place under heaven where Satan hath not his troops; not a person without some of these cursed spirits haunting and watching him wherever he goes; yea, for some special service, he can send a legion to keep garrison in one single person, as Mark 5:1-43; and, if so many can be spared to attend one, to what a number would the muster-roll of Satan's whole army amount, if known? And now tell me if we are not like to find our march difficult to heaven—if ever we mean to go thither —that are to pass through the very quarters of this multitude, who are scattered over the face of all the earth? When armies are disbanded, and the roads full of debauched soldiers, wandering up and down, it is dangerous travelling; we hear then of murderers and robberies from all quarters. These powers of hell are that party of angels, who for their mutiny and disobedience were cashiered heaven, and thrust out of

that glorious host; and, ever since, they have straggled here below, endeavouring to do mischief to the children of men, especially travelling in heaven's road.

Fourth. Their unity and order makes their number formidable. We cannot say there is love among them—that heavenly fire cannot live in a devil's bosom; yet there is unity and order as to this —they are all agreed in their design against God and man: so their unity and consent is knit together by the ligaments not of love, but of hatred and policy —hatred against God and his children, which they are filled with—and policy, which tells them that if they agree not in their design, their kingdom cannot stand. And how true they are to this wicked brotherhood, our Saviour gives a fair testimony, when he saith, Satan fights not against Satan. Did you ever hear of any mutiny in the devil's army? or that any of these apostate angels did freely yield up one soul to Christ? They are many, and yet but one spirit of wickedness in them all. My name, said the devils, not our name, is legion. The devil is called the leviathan. 'The Lord with his strong sword shall punish leviathan,' Isaiah 27:1, from their cleaving together, of %&- (lava), compact or joined together, used for the whale, whose strength lies in his scales, which are so knit, that he is, as it were, covered with armour. Thus these cursed spirits do accord in their machinations, and labour to bring their instruments into the same league with them; not contented with their bare obedience, but where they can obtain it do require an express oath of their servants to be true to them, as in witches.

Fifth. The mighty works that are attributed to these evil spirits in Scripture declare their power; and these either respect the elementary, sensible, or intellectual part of the world. The elementary: what dreadful effects this prince of the power of the air is able to produce on that, see in the word; he cannot indeed make the least breath of air, drop of water, or spark of fire, but he can, if let loose, as reverend Master Caryl saith on Job 1:1-22, go to God's storehouse, and make use of these in such a sort as no man can stand before him; he can hurl the sea into such a commotion that the depths shall boil like a pot, and disturb the air into storms and tempests, as if heaven and earth would meet. Job's children were buried in the ruins of their house by a puff of his mouth, yea, he can go to God's magazine (as the former author saith) and let off the great ordinance of heaven, causing such dreadful thunder and lightning as shall not only affright, but do real execution, and that in a more dreadful way than in the ordinary course of nature. If man's art can so sublimate nature, as we see in the invention of powder, that such hath a strange force; much more able is he to draw forth its power. Again, over the sensitive world his power is great; not only the beasts, as in the herd of swine, hurried by him into the deep; but over the bodies of men also, as in Job, whose sore boils were not the breakings out of a distempered nature, but the print of Satan's fangs on his flesh, doing that suddenly, which in nature would have required more time to gather and ripen; and [over] the demoniacs in the gospel, grievously vexed and tormented by him. But this the devil counts small game. His great spite is at the souls of men, which I call the intellectual world; his cruelty to the body is for the soul's sake. As Christ's pity to the bodies of men, when on earth, healing their diseases, was in a subserviency to the good of their souls, bribing them with those mercies suitable to their carnal desires, that they might more willingly receive mercies for their souls from that hand which was so kind to their bodies; as we give children something that pleaseth them, to persuade them to do something that pleaseth them not—go to the school, learn their book; so the devil, who is cruel as Christ as meek, and wisheth good neither to body nor soul, yet shows his cruelty to the body, but on a design against the soul

—knowing well that the soul is soon discomposed by the perturbation of the other—[for] the soul cannot but lightly hear, and so have its peace and rest broken by the groans and complaints of the body, under whose very roof it dwells; and then, it is not strange, if, as for want of sleep, the tongue talk idly, so the soul should break out into some sinful carriage, which is the bottom of the devil's plot on a saint. And as for other poor silly souls, he gains little less than a god-like fear and dread of them by that power he puts forth, through divine permission, in smiting their goods, beasts, and bodies, as among the Indians at this day. Yea, there are many among ourselves who plainly show what a throne Satan hath in their hearts upon this account; such, who, as if there were not a God in Israel, go for help and cure to his doctors —wizards I mean. And truly had Satan no other way to work his will on the souls of men, but by this vantage he takes from the body, yet, considering the degeneracy of man's state,—how low his soul is sunk beneath its primitive extraction; how the body, which was a lightsome house, is now become a prison to it; that which was its servant, is now become its master —it is no wonder he is able to do so much. But besides this, he hath, as a spirit, a nearer way of access to the soul, and as a superior spirit, yet more [power] over man, a lower creature. And, above all, having got within the soul by man's fall, he hath now far more power than before; so that, where he meets not resistance from God, he carries all before him; as in the wicked, whom he hath so at his devotion, that he is, in a sense, said to do that in them which God doth in the saints: God works effectually in them, Galatians 2:8; 1 Thessalonians 2:13. Satan worketh effectually in the children of disobedience, Ephesians 2:2, the word in the original being the same as in the former places[10], —he is in a manner as efficacious with them, as the Holy Spirit with the other. His delusions [are] 'strong,' 2 Thessalonians 2:11; they return not[11], [without accomplishing their object]. The Spirit enlightens; he 'blinds the minds of them which believe not,' 2 Corinthians 4:4. The Spirit fills the saints, Ephesians 5:18; 'Why hath Satan filled thine heart?' saith Peter to Ananias, Acts 5:3. The Spirit fills with knowledge and the fruits of righteousness; Satan fills with envy and all unrighteousness. The Holy Spirit fills with comfort; Satan, the wicked with terrors—as in Saul, vexed by an evil spirit, and Judas, into whom it is said he entered, and when he had satisfied his lust upon him (as Amnon on Tamar), shuts the door of mercy upon him, and makes him that was even now traitor to his Master, hangman to himself. And though saints be not the proper subjects of his power, yet they are the chief objects of his wrath; his foot stands on the wicked's back, but he wrestles with these, and when God steps aside, he is far above their match. He hath sent the strongest among them home, trembling and crying to their God, with the blood running about their consciences. He is mighty, both as a tempter to, and for, sin; knowing the state of the Christian's affairs so well, and able to throw his fire-balls so far into the inward senses, whether they be of lust or horror, and to blow up these with such unwearied solicitations, that—if they at first meet not with some suitable dispositions in the Christian, at which, as from some loose corns of powder, they may make fire, which is most ordinary—yet, in time, he may bring over the creature, by the length of the siege, and continued volleys of such motions, to listen to a parley with them, if not a yielding to them. Thus many times he even wearies out the soul with importunity.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. Let this, O man, make the plumes of thy pride fall, whoever thou art that gloriest in thy power. Hadst thou more than thou or any of the sons of Adam ever had, yet what were all that to the power of these angels? Is it the strength of thy body thou gloriest in? Alas, what is the strength

of frail flesh, to the force of their spiritual nature? Thou art no more to these, than a child to a giant, a worm to a man: they could tear up the mountains, and hurl the world into a confusion, if God would but suffer them. Is it the strength of thy parts above others? Dost thou not see what fools he makes of the wisest among men? winding them about as a sophist would do an idiot, making them believe light is dark, bitter is sweet, and sweet bitter. Were not the strength of his parts admirable, could he make a rational creature, as man is, so absurdly throw away his scarlet, and embrace dung? I mean, part with God and the glorious happiness he hath with him, in hope to mend himself by embracing sin. Yet this he did when man had his best wits about him in innocency. Is it the power of place and dignity got by war-like achievement? Grant thou wert able to subdue nations, and give laws to the whole world, yet even then, without grace from above, thou wouldst be his slave. And he himself, for all this his power, is a cursed spirit, the most miserable of all God's creatures, and the more as he hath so much power to do mischief. Had the devil lost all his angelical abilities when he fell, he had gained by his loss. Therefore tremble, O man, at any power thou hast, except thou usest it for God. Art [thou] strong in body; who hath thy strength? God, or thy lusts? Some are strong to drink, strong to sin; thy bands shall therefore be stronger, Isaiah 28:22. Hast thou power, by thy place, to do God and his church service, but no heart to lay it out for them, but rather against them? Thou and the devil shall be tried at the same bar. It seems thou meanest to go to hell for something, thou wilt carry thy full lading thither. No greater plague can befall a man, than power without grace. Such great ones in the world, while here, make a brave show, like chief commanders and field-officers at the head of their regiments—the common soldiers are poor creatures to them; but when the army is beaten, and all taken prisoners, then they fling off their scarf and feather, and would be glad to pass for the meanest in the army. Happy would devils be, [happy would] princes and great ones in the world be, if then they could appear in the habit of some poor sneaks to receive their sentence as such; but then their titles and dignity, and riches, shall be read, not for their honour, but further shame and damnation.

Use Second. It shows the folly of those that think it is such an easy matter to get to heaven. If the devil be so mighty, and heaven's way so full of them, then sure it will cost hot water before we display our banners upon the walls of that new Jerusalem. Yet it is plain that many think otherwise by the provision they make for their march. If you should see a man walking forth without a cloak, or with a very thin one, you will say, 'Surely he fears no foul weather;' or one riding a long journey alone and without arms, you will conclude he expects no thieves on the road. All, if you ask them, will tell you they are on the way to heaven; but how few care for the company of the saints? as if they needed not their fellowship in their journey! Most go naked, without so much as anything like armour, [and] have not enough to gain the name of professors at large; others, it may be, will show you some vain flighty hopes on the mercy of God, without any scripture bottom for the same, and with these content themselves, which will, like a rusty unsound pistol, fly in their own face when they come to use it; and is it any wrong to say [that] they meet with many rooks[12] and cheaters in their dealing, who, should they not look to themselves, would soon undo them. And are there none that thou needest fear will put a cheat on thy soul, and bereave thee of thy crown of glory if they can? Thou art blinder than the prophet's servant, if thou seest not more devils encompassing thee, than he saw men about Samaria. Thy worldly trade they will not hinder, nay, may be [will] help thee to sinful tricks in that, to hinder thee in this; but if once thou resolvest to seek out for Christ and his grace, they will oppose thee to thy face. They are under an oath, as Paul's enemies were, to take away the life of thy soul if they can; desperate creatures themselves, who know their doom

is irrecoverable, and sell their own lives they will as dear as they can. Now what folly is it to betray thy soul into their hands, when Christ stands by to be thy convoy? Out of him thou art a lost creature; thou canst not defend thyself alone against Satan, nor with Satan against God. Close with Christ, and thou art delivered from one of thy enemies, and him the most formidable, God, I mean; yea, he is become thy friend, who will stick close to thee in thy conflict with the other.

Use Third. To the saints; be not ye dismayed at this report which the Scripture makes of Satan's power. Let them fear him who fear not God. What are these mountains of power and pride, before thee, O Christian, who servest a God that can make a worm thrash a mountain? The greatest hurt he can do thee, is by nourishing this false fear of him in thy bosom. It is observed, Bernard saith, of some beasts in the forest[13], [that] though they are too hard for the lion in fight, yet [they] tremble when he roars. Thus the Christian, when he comes to the pinch indeed, is able through Christ to trample Satan under his feet, yet before the conflict, stands trembling at the thought of him. Labour therefore to get a right understanding of Satan's power, and then this lion will not appear so fierce, as you paint him in your melancholy fancy. Three considerations will relieve you when at any time you are beset with the fears of his power.

Consider 1. It is a derived power. He hath it not in himself, but by patent from another, and that no other but God. All powers are of him, whether on earth or in hell. (1.) This truth subscribed in faith, would first secure thee, Christian, that Satan's power shall never hurt thee. Would thy Father give him a sword to mischief thee his child? 'I have created the smith,' saith God, 'that bloweth the coals,' 'I have created the waster to destroy,' and therefore he assures them that no weapon formed against them shall prosper,' Isaiah 54:16-17. If God provides his enemies' arms, they shall, I warrant you, be such as will do them little service. When Pilate thought to scare Christ, with what he could do towards the saving or taking away of his life, he replies, that he could do nothing 'except it were given him from above,' John 19:11, as if he had said, 'Do your worst, I know who sealed your commission.' (2.) This considered, would meeken and quiet the soul, when troubled by Satan within, or his instruments without. It is Satan buffets, man persecutes me, but it is God who gives them both power. The Lord, saith David, bids him curse. The Lord, saith Job, hath given, and the Lord hath taken. This kept the king's peace in both their bosoms. O Christian, Look not on the jailor that whips thee; may be he is cruel, but read the warrant, [see] who wrote that, and at the bottom thou shalt find thy Father's hand.

Consider 2. [It is a limited power.] Satan's power is limited, and that two ways—he cannot do what he will, and he shall not do what he can.

(1.) He cannot do what he will. His desires are boundless, they walk not only to and fro here below, but in heaven itself, where he is pulling down his once fellow-angels, knocking down the carved work of that glorious temple, as with axes and hammers, yea, unthroning God and setting himself in his place.

(a) This fool saith in his heart, 'There is no God;' but he cannot do this, nor many other things, which his cankered malice stirs him up to wish; he is but a creature, and so hath the length of his tedder, to which he is staked, and cannot exceed. And if God be safe, then thou also, for thy life 'is hid with Christ in God.' 'If I live,' saith Christ, 'ye shall live also.' You are engraven on the table of his heart; if he plucks one away, he must the other also. (b) Again, as he cannot hurt the being of God, so he cannot pry into the bosom of God. He knows not man's, much less the thoughts of

God. The astrologers nor their master could bring back Nebuchadnezzar's dream. As men have their closets for their own privacy, where none can enter in but with their key; so God keeps the heart as his withdrawing room, shut to all besides himself; and therefore when he takes upon him to foretell events, if God teach him not his lesson, nor second causes help him, he is beside his book. So to save his credit [he] delivers them dubiously, that his text may bear a gloss suitable to the effect whatever it is. And when he is bold to tell the state of a person, there is no weight to be laid on his judgement. Job was an hypocrite in his mouth, but God proved him a liar. (c) Again, he cannot hinder those purposes and counsels of God he knows. He knew Christ was to come in the flesh, and did his worst, but could not hinder his landing, though there were many devices in his heart, yet the counsel of the Lord concerning him did stand, yea, was delivered by the midwifery of Satan suggesting , and his instruments executing his lust as they thought, but fulfilling God's counsel against themselves. (d) Satan cannot ravish thy will. He cannot command thee to sin against thy will, he can motum agere—make the soul go faster[14], that is on its way, as the wind carries the tide with more swiftness; but he cannot turn the stream of the heart contrary to its own course and tendency.

(2.) Satan's power is so limited that he cannot do what he can. God lets out so much of his wrath as shall praise him, and be as a stream to set his purpose of love to his saints on work, and then lets down the flood-gate by restraining the residue thereof. God ever takes him off before he can finish his work on a saint. He can, if God suffers him, rob the Christian of much of his joy, and disturb his peace by his cunning insinuations, but he is under command; he stands, like a dog, by the table, while the saints sit at his sweet feast of comfort, but dares not stir to roam[15] off their cheer; his Master's eye is on him. The want of this consideration loseth God his praise, and us our comfort—God having locked up our comfort in the performance of our duty. Did the Christian consider what Satan's power is, and who dams it up, this would always be a song of praise in his mouth. Hath Satan power to rob and burn, kill and slay, torment the body, distress the mind? whom may I thank that I am in any of these out of his hands? Doth Satan love me better than Job? or am I out of sight, or beside his walk? Is his courage cooled or his wrath appeased, that I escaped so well? No, none of these. His wrath is not against one, but all the saints; his eye is on thee, and his arm can reach thee; his spirit is not cowed, nor his stomach stayed with those millions he hath devoured, but [is] keen as ever; yea, sharper, because now he sees God ready to take away, and the end of the world drawing on so fast. It is thy God alone whom thou art beholden to for all this; his eye keepeth thee. when Satan finds this good man asleep, then he finds our God awake; therefore thou art not consumed, because he changeth not. Did his eye slumber or wander for one moment, there would need no other flood to drown thee, yea, the whole world, that what would come out of this dragon's mouth.

Consider 3. [It is a ministerial power.] Satan's power is ministerial, appointed by God for the service and benefit of the saints. It is true, as it is said of the proud Assyrian, 'he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so,' Isaiah 10:7; but it is in his heart to destroy those he tempts. But no matter what he thinks; as Luther comforted himself, when told what had passed at the diet at Nuremberg against the Protestants, that 'it was decreed one way there, but otherwise in heaven;' so for the saints' comfort, the thoughts which God thinks to them are peace, while Satan's are to ruin their graces, and destruction to their souls. And his counsel shall stand in spite of the devil. The very mittimus[16] which God makes, when he commits any of his saints to the devil's prison,

runs thus: ‘Deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus,’ 1 Corinthians 5:5; so that tempted saints may say, ‘We had perished if we had not perished to our own thinking.’ This leviathan, while he thinks to swallow them up, is but sent of God (as the whale to Jonah) to waft them safe to land. ‘Some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white,’ Daniel 11:35. This God intends when he lets his children fall into temptation. As we do with our linen, the spots they get at our feasts, are taken out by washing, rubbing, and laying them out to bleach. The saints’ spots are most got in peace, plenty, and prosperity, and they never recover their whiteness to such a degree as when they come from under Satan’s scouring. We do too little, not to fear Satan; we should comfort ourselves with the usefulness and subserviency of his temptations to our good. All things are yours who are Christ’s. He hath given life to be yours, hath given death also. He that hath given heaven for your inheritance—Paul and Cephas, his ministers and ordinances to help you thither—hath given the world with all the afflictions of it, yea, the prince of it too, with all his wrath and power, in order to the same end. This, indeed, is love and wisdom in a riddle, but you who have the Spirit of Christ can unfold it.

BRANCH THIRD.

[Against the rulers of the darkness of this world.]

These words contain the third branch in the description of our great enemy the devil; and they hold forth the proper seat of his empire, with a threefold boundary. He is not ‘Lord over all’—that is the incommunicable title of God—but a ruler of the darkness of this world, where the time, place, and subjects of his empire are stinted. First. The time when this prince hath his rule—in this world, that is, now, not hereafter. Second. The place where he rules—in this world, that is, here below, not in heaven. Third. The subjects or persons whom he rules, not all in this lower world neither; they are wrapped up in these words—the darkness of this world.

[The time when Satan rules.]

First. [Satan’s empire is bounded by time.] The time when he rules is in this world; that is, now, not hereafter. This word world may be taken in the text for that little spot of time which, like an inconsiderable parenthesis, is clapped in on either side with vast eternity, called sometimes the present world, Titus 2:12. On this stage of time this mock king acts the part of a prince; but when Christ comes to take down his scaffold at the end of this world, then he shall be degraded, his crown taken off, his sword broke over his head, and he hissed off with scorn and shame; yea, of a prince, become a close prisoner in hell. No more, then, shall he infest the saints, no, nor rule the wicked, but he with them, and they with him, shall lie under the immediate execution of God’s wrath. For this very end Christ hath his patent and commission, which he will not give up, till ‘he shall have put down all rule,’ 1 Corinthians 15:24. Then, and not till then, will he deliver up his economical kingdom to his Father, ‘when he shall have put down all rule;’ ‘for he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet,’ 1 Corinthians 15:25. Satan is cast already, his doom is past upon him, as Adam’s was upon his first sin, but full execution is stayed till the end of the world. The devil knows it; it is an article in his creed, which made him trembling ask Christ why he came to torment him before his time.

Use First. This brings ill news to the wicked. Your princes cannot long sit in his throne. Sinners at present have a merry time of it, if it would hold; they rejoice, while Christ's disciples weep and mourn; they rustle in their silks, while the saint goes in his rags. Princes are not more careful to oblige their courtiers with pensions and preferments, than the devil is to gratify his followers. He hath his rewards also: 'All this will I give thee.' 'Am not I able to promote thee?' saith Balak to Balaam. Oh, it is strange—and yet not strange, considering the degeneracy of man's nature—to see how Satan carries sinners after him with this golden hook. Let him but present such a bait as honour, pelf, or pleasure, and their hearts skip after it, as a dog would after a crust. He makes them sin for a morsel of bread. Oh the naughty heart of man loves the wages of unrighteousness, which the devil promiseth, so dearly, that it fears not the dreadful wages which the great God threatens. As sometimes see a spaniel so greedy of a bone, that he will leap into the very river for it, if you throw it thither, and by the time he comes with much ado thither, it is sunk, and he gets nothing but a mouthful of water for his pains—thus sinners will [go] after their desired pleasures, honours, and profits, swimming through the very threatenings of the Word to them. And sometimes they lose even what they gaped for there. Thus God kept Balaam, as Balak told him, 'from honour,' Numbers 24:11. But however they speed here, they are sure to lose themselves everlastingly without repentance. They that are resolved they will have these things, are the men that will fall into the devil's snare, and are led into those foolish and hurtful lusts, which will drown them in destruction and perdition, 1 Timothy 6:9. O poor sinners! were it not wisdom, before you truck[17] with the devil, to inquire what title he can give you to these goodly vanities? will he settle them as a free estate upon you? can he secure your bargain, and keep you from suits of law? or is he able to put two lives into the purchase, that when you die, you may not be left destitute in another world? Alas, poor wretches! you shall ere long see what a cheat he hath put on you, from whom you are like to have nought but caveat emptor —let the buyer look to that; yea, this great prince that is so brag to tell what he will give you, must down himself; and a sad prince must needs make a sad court. O what howling will there then be of Satan and his vassals together! O but, saith the sinner, the pleasures and honour sin and Satan offer are present, and that which Christ promiseth we must stay for. This, indeed, that which takes most. Demas, saith Paul, forsook me, 'having loved this present world,' 2 Timothy 4:10. It is present, indeed, sinners, for you cannot say it will be yours the next moment. Your present felicity is going, and the saints', though future, is coming, never to go; and who, for a gulp of pottage and sensual enjoyments at present, would part with a reversion of such a kingdom? Except thou art of his mind, who thought he had nothing but what he had swallowed down his throat, [thou wouldst not].

Hœc habeo quœ edi, quœ exacurata libido

Hausit[18]. This Cicero could say was more fit to be writ on an ox's grave than [on] a man's. Vile wretch, that thinkest it is not better to deal with God for time, than [with] the devil for ready pay. Tertullian wonders at the folly of the Roman's ambition, who would endure all manner of hardship in field and fight, for no other thing but to obtain at last the honour to be consul, which he calls[19] 'a joy that flies away at the year's end.' But O! what desperate madness is it of sinners then, not to endure a little hardship here, but [to] entail on themselves the eternal wrath of God hereafter, for the short feast and running banquet their lusts entertain them here withal; which often is not gaudium unius horœ—a joy that lasts an hour.

Use Second. Let this encourage thee, O Christian, in thy conflict with Satan—the skirmish may be sharp, but it cannot be long. Let him tempt thee, and his wicked instruments trounce[20] thee, it is but a little while, and thou shalt be rid of both their evil neighbourhoods. The cloud while it drops is rolling over thy head, and then comes fair weather, an eternal sunshine of glory. Canst thou not watch with Christ one hour or two? keep the field a few days? If thou yield thou art undone for ever. Persevere but while [until] the battle is over, and thine enemy shall never rally more. Bid faith look through the key-hole of the promise, and tell thee what it sees there laid up for him that overcomes; bid it listen and tell thee whether it cannot hear the shout of those crowned saints, as of those that are dividing the spoil, and receiving the reward of all their services and sufferings here on earth. And dost thou stand on the other side afraid to wet thy foot with those sufferings and temptations, which, like a little plash of water, run between thee and glory?

[The place where Satan rules.]

Second. [Satan's empire is confined to place.] The place where the devil rules is in this world, that is, here below, not in heaven. He is the ruler of this lower world, not of the heavenly. The highest the devil can go is the air; [he is] called the prince thereof, as being the utmost marches of his empire; he hath nothing to do with the upper world. Heaven fears no devil, and therefore its gates stand always open. Never durst this fiend look into that holy place since he was first expelled, but [he] rangeth to and fro here below as a vagabond creature, excommunicated the presence of God, doing what mischief he can to saints on their way to heaven. But is not this matter of great joy, that Satan hath no power there, where the saints' lies? What hast thou, Christian, which thou needest value, that is not there? Thy Christ is there, and if thou lovest him, thy heart also, which lives in the bosom of its Beloved. Thy friends and kindred in Christ are there, or expected, with whom thou shalt have a merry meeting in thy Father's house, notwithstanding the snare on Tabor, the plots of Satan which lie in the way. O friends, get a title to that kingdom, and you are above the flight of this kite. This made Job a happy man indeed, who, when the devil had plundered him to his skin, and worried him almost out of that too, could then even vouch Christ, in the face of death and devils, to be his Redeemer; whom he should with those eyes, that now stood full with brinish tears, behold, and that for himself as his own portion. It is sad with him indeed, who is robbed of all he is worth at once; but this can never be said of a saint. The devil took away Job's purse, as I may say, which put him into some straits, but he had a God in heaven that put him into stock again. Some spending-money thou hast at present in thy purse, in the activity of thy faith, the evidence of thy sonship, and comfort flowing from the same, enlargement in duty and the like. These Satan may for a time disturb, yea, deprive thee of, but he cannot come to the rolls, to blot thy name out of the book of life; he cannot null thy faith, make void thy relation, dry up thy comfort in the spring, though [he may] dam up the stream; nor [can he] hinder thee a happy issue of thy whole war with sin, though [he may] worst thee in a private skirmish; these all are kept in heaven, among God's own crown-jewels, who is said to keep us by his 'power through faith unto salvation.'

[The subjects over which Satan rules.]

Third. [The subjects of Satan's empire are stinted.] The third boundary of the devil's principality is in regard of his subjects, and they are described here to be the darkness of this world, that is, such who are in darkness. This word is used sometimes to express the desolate condition of a creature in some great distress, 'He that walketh in darkness, and hath no light,' Isaiah 50:10; sometimes to

express the nature of all sin; so, Ephesians 5:11, sin is called the ‘works of darkness;’ sometimes the particular sin of ignorance; [and is] often is set out by the darkness of the night, blindness of the eye. All these I conceive may be meant, but chiefly the latter; for though Satan makes a foul stir in the soul that is in the darkness of sorrow, whether it be from outward crosses or inward desertions; yet if the creature be not in the darkness of sin at the same time, though he may disturb his peace as an enemy, yet [he] cannot be said to rule as a prince. Sin only sets Satan in the throne. So that I shall take the words in the two latter interpretations. First. [I take them] for the darkness of sin in general. Second. For the darkness of ignorance in special. And the sense will be, that the devil’s rule is over those that are in a state of sin and ignorance, not over those who are sinful or ignorant. [Were it] so, he would take hold of saints as well as others; but [it is] over those who are in a state of sin, which is set out by the abstract, ‘rulers of the darkness,’ the more to express the fulness of the sin and ignorance that possesseth Satan’s slaves. The notes [or Doctrines] will be two. First. Every soul in a state of sin is under the rule of Satan. Second. Ignorance above other sins enslaves a soul to Satan; and therefore all sins are set out by that which chiefly expresseth this, namely, darkness.

[Souls in a state of sin are subject to Satan’s rules.]

Doctrine First. Every soul in a state of sin is under the rule of Satan; under which point these two things must be inquired. First. The reason why sin is set out by darkness. Second. How every one in such a state appears to be under the devil’s rule.

First. [The reason why sin is set out by darkness.]

1. Sin may be called darkness, because the spring and common cause of sin in man is darkness. The external cause [is] Satan, who is the great promoter of it; he is a cursed spirit, held in chains of darkness. The internal is the blindness and darkness of the soul. We may say when anyone sins, he doth he knows not what, as Christ said of his murderers. Did the creature know the true worth of the soul which he now sells for a song, the glorious amiable nature of God and his holy ways, the matchless love of God in Christ, the poisonful nature of sin, and all these, not by a sudden beam darted into the window at a sermon, and gone again like a flash of lightning, but by an abiding light, it would spoil the devil’s market. Poor creatures would not readily take this toad into their bosom. Sin goes in a disguise, and so is welcome.

2. It is darkness, because it brings darkness into the soul, and that naturally and judicially.

(1.) Sin bring darkness into the soul naturally. There is a noxious quality in sin offensive to the understanding, which is to the soul what the eye and palate are to the body; it discerns of things, and distinguisheth true from false, as the eye white from black; it trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meats. Now as there are some things bad for the sight, and others bad for the palate, vitiating it, so that it shall not know sweet from bitter; so here sin besots the creature and makes it injudicious, that he, who could see such a practice absurd and base in others before, when once he hath drunk off this enchanting cup himself—as one that hath foredone his understanding—is mad of it himself, not able to see the evil of it, or use his reason against it. Thus Saul, before he had debauched his conscience, thinks the witch worthy of death; but after he had trodden his conscience hard with other foul sins, goes to ask counsel of one himself.

(2.) Sin brings darkness into the soul judicially. Such have been threatened, whose ear God hath been trying to open and instruct, and have run out of God's school into the devil's, by rebelling against light, that they shall 'die without knowledge,' Job 36:10, Job 36:12. What! should the candle burn waste, when the creature hath more mind to play than work?

3. Sin may be called darkness, because it runs into darkness. Impostors bring in their damnable heresies privily, like those who sell bad ware. Loath to come to the market, where the standard tries all, [they] put it off in secret. So in moral wickedness, sinners like beasts go out in the night for their prey, loath to be seen, afraid to come where they should be found out. Nothing more terrible to sinners than [the] light of truth, because their deeds are evil, John 3:19. Felix was so nettled with what Paul spake, that he could not sit out the sermon, but flings away in haste, and adjourns the hearing of Paul till a convenient season, but he could never find one. The sun is not more troublesome in hot countries, than truth is to those who sit under the powerful preaching of it; and therefore as those seldom come abroad in the heat of the day, and when they must, have their devices over their heads to screen them from the sun, so sinners shun as much as may be the preaching of the Word; but if they must go, to keep in with their relations, or for other carnal advantages, they, if possible, will keep off the power of truth, either by sleeping the sermon away, or prating it away with any foolish imagination which Satan sends to bear them company and chat with them at such a time; or by choosing such a cool preacher to sit under, whose toothless discourse shall rather flatter than trouble, rather tickle their fancy than prick their consciences, and then their sore eyes can look upon the light. [They love truth flourishing, who do not love it when it is confuting[21].] They dare handle and look on the sword with delight when in a rich scabbard, who would run away to see it drawn.

4. Sin may be called darkness for its uncomfortableness, and that in a threefold respect.

(1.) Darkness is uncomfortable, as it shuts out of all employment. What could the Egyptians do under the plague of darkness but sit still? and this to an active spirit is trouble enough. Thus in a state of sin man is an unserviceable creature, he can do his God no service acceptably, spoils everything he takes in hand; like one running up and down in a shop when the windows are shut, he doth nothing right. It may be writ on the grave of every sinner, who lives and dies in that state, 'Here lies the man that never did God an hour's work in all his life.'

(2.) Darkness is uncomfortable in point of enjoyment. Be there never such rare pictures in the room, if dark, who the better? A soul in a state of sin may possess much, but he enjoys nothing; this is a sore evil, and little thought of. One thought of its state of enmity to God, would drop bitterness into every cup; all he hath smells of hellfire; and a man at a rich feast would enjoy it sure but little, if he smelt fire, ready to burn his house and himself in it.

(3.) Darkness is uncomfortable, as it fills with terrors. Fears in the night are most dreadful; a state of sin is a state of fear. Men that owe much, have no quiet, but when they are asleep, and not then neither, the cares and fears of the day sink so deep, as makes their rest troublesome and unquiet in the night. The wicked hath no peace, but when his conscience sleeps, and that sleeps but brokenly, awaking often with sick fits of terror; when he hath most prosperity, he is scared like a flock of birds in a corn-field, at every piece going off. He eats in fear, and drinks in fear; when afflicted, he expects worse behind, and knows not what this cloud may spread to, and where it may lay him, whether in hell or not, he knows not, and therefore trembles, as one in the dark, not

knowing but his next step may be into the pit.

5. Sin may be called darkness, because it leads to utter darkness. Utter darkness is darkness to the utmost. Sin in its full height, and wrath in its full heat together; both universal, both eternal. Here is some mixture, peace and trouble, pain and ease; sin and thoughts of repenting, sin and hopes of pardon; there the fire of wrath shall burn without slacking, and sin run parallel with torment; hell-birds are no changelings, their torment makes them sin, and their sin feeds their torment, both unquenchable, one being fuel to another.

Second. Let us see how it appears, that such as are under a state of sin, are under the rule of Satan. nners are called the children of the devil, 1 John 3:10; and who rules the child, but the father? They are slaves; who rules the slave, but the master? They are the very mansion-house of the devil; where hath a man command, but in his own house? ‘I will return into my house,’ Matthew 12:44. As if the devil had said, I have walked among the saints of God, to and fro, knocking at this door and that, and none will bid me welcome, I can find no rest; well, I know where I may be bold, I will even go to my own house, and there I am sure to rule the roost without control: and when he comes, he finds it empty, swept and garnished, that is all ready for his entertainment. Servants make the house trim and handsome against their master comes home, especially when he brings guests with him, as here the devil brings seven more.

Look to the sinner, there is nothing he is or hath, but the devil hath dominion over it; he rules the whole man, their minds blinding them. All the sinner’s apprehensions of things are shaped by Satan; he looks on sin with the devil’s spectacles, he reads the word with the devil’s comment, he sees nothing in its native colours, but is under a continual delusion. The very wisdom of a wicked man is said to be devilish, James 3:15, *"4µ@<4f*0H, or devil-like, because taught by the devil, and also such as the devil’s is, wise only to do evil. He commands their wills, though not to force them, yet effectually to draw them. His work, saith Christ, ye will do. You are resolved on your way, the devil hath got your hearts, and him you will obey; and therefore when Christ comes to recover his throne, he finds the soul in an uproar, as Ephesus at Paul’s sermon, crying him down, and Diana up. ‘We will not have this man to reign over us;’ ‘what is the Almighty that we should serve him?’ He rules over all their members; they are called weapons of unrighteousness, all at the devil’s service, as all the arms of a kingdom, to defend the prince against any that shall invade—the head to plot, the hand to act, the feet swift to carry the body up and down about his service; he rules over all he hath. Let God come in a poor member, and beseech him to lend him a penny, or bestow a morsel to refresh his craving bowels, and the covetous wretch his hand of charity is withered, and he cannot stretch it forth; but let Satan call, and his purse flies open and heart also. Nabal, that could not spare a few fragments for David and his followers, this churl could make a feast like a prince, to satiate his lust of gluttony and drunkenness. He commands their time; when God calls to duty, to pray, to hear, no time all the week to be spared for that; but if the sinner hears there is a merry-meeting, a knot of good fellows at the alehouse, all is thrown aside to wait on his lord and master. Calling left at six and sevens; yea, wife and children crying, may be starving; while the wretch is pouring out their very blood, in wasting their livelihood, at the foot of his lust. The sinner is ‘in bond of iniquity,’ and being bound he must obey. He is said to go after his lust, as the fool to the stocks, Proverbs 7:22. The pinioned malefactor can as soon untie his own arms and legs, and so run from his keeper, as he from his lusts. They are ‘servants,’ and their members ‘instruments of sin;’ even as the workman takes up his axe and it resists not, so doth

Satan dispose of them, except God saith nay.

[Application of this doctrine, ‘That the soul in a state of sin in under the rule of Satan.’]

See here the deplored condition of every one in a state of sin. He is under the rule of Satan and government of hell. What tongue can utter, what heart can conceive the misery of this state? It was a dismal day which Christ foretold, Matthew 24:1-51, when the ‘abomination of desolation’ should be seen standing in the holy place; then, saith Christ, let him that is in Judea flee into the mountains. But what was that to this? they were but men, though abominable, these devils. They did but stand in the material temple, and defile and deface that: but these display their banners in the souls of men, pollute that throne which is more glorious than the material heaven itself, made for God alone to sit in. They exercised their cruelties at furthest on the bodies of men, killing and torturing them; here the precious souls of men are destroyed. When David would curse to purpose the enemies of God, he prays that Satan may be at their right hand. It is strange that sinners should no more tremble at this, who, should they see but their swine, or a beast bewitched and possessed of the devil, run headlong into the sea, would cry out as half undone: and is not one soul more worth than all these? What a plague is it to have Satan possess thy heart and spirit, hurrying thee in the fury of thy lusts to perdition? O poor man! what a sad change thou hast made? Thou who wouldst not sit under the meek and peaceful government of God, thy rightful Lord, art paid for thy rebellion against him, in the cruelty of this tyrant, who writes all his laws in the blood of his subjects. And why will you sit any longer, O sinners, under the shadow of this bramble, from whom you can expect nothing but eternal fire to come at last and devour you? Behold, Christ is in the field, sent of God to recover his right and your liberty. His royal standard is pitched in the gospel, and proclamation made, that if any poor sinners, weary of the devil’s government, and heavy laden with the miserable chains of his spiritual bondage, so as these irons of his sins enter into his very soul to afflict it with the sense of them—shall thus come and repair to Christ—he shall have protection from God’s justice, the devil’s wrath and sin’s dominion; in a word, he shall have rest, and that glorious, Matthew 11:28.

Usually when a people have been ground with the oppression of some bloody tyrant, they are apt enough to long for a change, and to listen to any overture that gives them hope of liberty, though reached by the hand of a stranger, who may prove as bad as the other, yet bondage is so grievous, that people desire to change, as sick men their beds, though they find little ease thereby. Why then should deliverance be unwelcome to you sinners? —deliverance brought, not by a stranger whom you need fear what his design is upon you, but [by] near kinsman in blood, who cannot mean you ill, but he must first hate his own flesh; and whoever did that? To be sure not he, who though he took part of our flesh, that he might have the right of being our Redeemer, yet would have no kindred with us in the sinfulness of our nature, Hebrews 2:14-15. And it is sin that is cruel, yea, to our own flesh. What can you expect from him but pure mercy, who is himself pure? They are ‘the mercies of the wicked which are cruel,’ Proverbs 12:10. Believe it, sirs, Christ counts it his honour, that he is a king of a willing people, and not of slaves. He comes to make you free, not to bring you into bondage, to make you kings, not vassals. None give Christ an evil word, but those who never were his subjects. Inquire but of those who have tried both Satan’s service and Christ’s, they are best able to resolve you what they are. You see when a soul comes over from Satan’s quarters unto Christ, and has but once the experience of that sweetness which is in his service, there is no getting him back to his old drudgery; as they say of those who come out of the

north, which is cold and poor, they like the warm south so well, they seldom or never go back more. What more dreadful to a gracious soul, than to be delivered into the hands of Satan? or fall under the power of his lusts? It would choose rather to leap into a burning furnace, than be commanded by them. This is the great request a child of God makes, that he would rather whip him in his house, than turn him out of it to become a prey to Satan.

O sinners, did you know—which you cannot till you come over to Christ, and embrace him as your Lord and Saviour—what the privileges of Christ's servants are, and what gentle usage saints have at Christ's hands, you would say these are the only happy men in the world which stand continually before him. His laws are writ, not with his subjects' blood, as Satan's are, but with his own. All his commands are acts of grace, it is a favour to be employed about them. To you it is given to believe, yea, to suffer, Php 1:29. Such an honour the saint esteems it to do anything he commands, that they count God rewards them for one piece of service, if he enables them for another. 'This I had,' saith David, 'because I kept thy precepts,' Psalms 119:56; what was the great reward he got? 'I have remembered thy name, O Lord, in the night, and have kept thy law,' Psalms 119:55; then follows, 'This I had.' He got more strength and skill to keep the law for the future, by his obedience past, and was not well paid, think you, for his pains? There is 'fruit' even in 'holiness,' the Christian hath in hand, which he eats while he is at work, that may stay his stomach until his full reward comes, which is 'eternal life,' Romans 6:22. Jesus Christ is a prince that loves to see his people thrive and grow rich under his government. This is he whom sinners are afraid of, that when he sets open their prison, and bids them come forth, they choose rather to bore their ears to the devil's post, than enjoy this blessed liberty. It is no wonder that some of the saints have, indeed, 'when tortured, not accepted deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection,' Hebrews 11:35. But what a riddle is this, that forlorn souls bound with the chains of their lusts, and the irresistible decree of God for their damnation, if they believe not on the Lord Jesus, should, as they are driving to execution, refuse deliverance! This may set heaven and earth on wondering. Surely, dying in their sins, they cannot hope for a better resurrection than they have a death. I am afraid rather, that they do not firmly believe they shall have any resurrection, and then no wonder they make so light of Christ's offer, who think themselves safe, when once earthed in this burrow of the grave. But let sinners know, it is not the grave can hold them, when the day of assize comes, and the Judge calls for the prisoners to the bar. The grave was never intended to be a sanctuary to defend sinners from the hand of justice, but a close prison to secure them against the day of trial, that they may be forthcoming. Then sinners shall be digged out of their burrows, and dragged out of their holes, to answer their contempt of Christ and his grace. O how will you be astonished to see him become your judge, whom you now refuse to be your king! to hear that gospel witness against you for your damnation, which at the same time shall acquit others for their salvation! What think you to do, sinners, in that day? Wilt thou cry and scream for mercy at Christ's hands? Alas, when the sentence is passed, thy face will immediately be covered; condemned prisoners are not allowed to speak: tears then are unprofitable, when no place left for repentance, either in Christ's heart or [in] thine own. Or meanest thou to apply thyself to thy old lord, in whose service thou hast undone thy soul, and cry to him, as she to Ahab, Help, O king! Alas! thine eye shall see him in the same condemnation with thyself. Hadst thou not better now renounce the devil's rule, while thou mayest be received into Christ's government?—pour out thy tears and cry now for mercy and grace when they are to be had, than to save them for another world to no purpose?

[How one born a slave to sin may be translated into the kingdom of Christ.]

Question. But possibly thou wilt say, How may I, that am a home-born slave to sin, yea, who have lived so many years under his cursed rule, get out of his dominion and power, and be translated into the kingdom of Christ?

Answer. The difficulty of this great work lies not in prevailing with Christ to receive thee for his subject, who refuseth none that in truth of heart desire to come under his shadow. It doth not stand with his design to reject any such. Do physicians use to chide their patients away? lawyers their clients? or generals discourage those who fall off from the enemy and come to their side? surely no. When David was in the field, it is said, ‘Every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them,’ 1 Samuel 22:2. And so will Christ be to every one that is truly discontented with Satan’s government, and upon an inward dislike thereof repairs to him. But the main business will be to take thee off from thy engagements to thy lusts and Satan; till which be done, Christ will not own thee as a subject, but look on thee as a spy. It fares with sinners as with servants. There may be fallings out between them and their masters, and high words pass between them, that you would think they would take up their pack and be gone in all haste; but the fray is soon over, and by next morning all is forgot, and their servants are as hard at their work as ever. O how oft are sinners taking their leave of their lusts, and giving warning to their old masters, [that] will repent and reform, and what not; but in a few days they have repented of their repentance, and deformed their deformings, which shows they were drunk with some passion when they thought or spake this, and no wonder they reverse all when they come to their true temper. Now because Satan has many policies by which he useth to keep his hold of sinners, I shall discover some of them, which if thou canst withstand, it will be no hard matter to bring thee out of his power and rule.

[Policies of Satan which must be withstood if we would escape from his rule.]

First. Satan doth his utmost, that sinners may not have any serious thoughts of the miserable state they are in, while under his rule; or hear anything from others which might the least unsettle their minds from his service. Consideration, he knows, is the first step to repentance. He that doth not consider his ways what they are, and whither they lead him, is not like to change them in haste. Israel stirred not, while [until] Moses came and had some discourse with them about their woeful slavery, and the gracious thoughts of God towards them; and then they began to desire to be gone. Pharaoh soon bethought him what consequence might follow upon this, and cunningly labours to prevent by doubling their task: ‘Ye are idle, ye are idle: therefore ye say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the Lord. Go therefore now, and work,’ Exodus 5:17-18. As if he had said, ‘Have you so much spare time to think of gadding into the wilderness, and have you your seditious conventicles, Moses and you, to lay your plots together? I will break the knot: give them more work; scatter them all over the land to gather straw, that they may not meet to entice one another’s hearts from my service.’ Thus Satan is very jealous of the sinner, afraid that every Christian that speaks to him, or ordinance he hears, should inveigle him. By his good-will he should come at neither, no, nor have a thought of heaven or hell from one end of the week to the other; and that he may have as few as may be, he keeps him full-handed with work. The sinner grinds, and he is filling the hopper, that the mill may not stand still. He is with the sinner as soon as he wakes, and fills his wretched heart with some wicked thoughts, which as a morning draught may keep him

from the infection of any savour of good that may be breathed on him by others in the daytime. All the day long he watched him, as the master would do his man that he fears will run away. and at night he like a careful jailor locks him up again in his chamber with more bolts and fetters upon him, not suffering him to sleep as he lies on his bed till he hath done some mischief. Ah, poor wretch! Was ever slave so looked to? As long as the devil can keep thee thus, thou art his own sure enough. The prodigal came to himself, before he came to his father. He considered with himself what a starving condition he was in, his husks were poor meat, and yet he had not enough of them neither, and how easily he might mend his commons, if he had but grace to go home and humble himself to his father. Now and not till now he goes. Resolve thus, poor sinner, to sit down and consider what thy state is, and what it might be, if thou wouldst but change the bondage of Satan for the sweet government of Jesus Christ. First ask thy soul whether the devil can, after thou hast worn out thy miserable life here in this drudgery, prefer thee to a happy state in the other world, or so much as secure thee from a state of torment and woe? If he cannot, whether there not be one Jesus Christ who is able and willing to do it? and if so, whether it be not bloody cruelty to thy precious soul to stay any longer under the shadow of this bramble, when thou mayest make so blessed a change? A few of these thought abidingly laid home to thy soul, may—God striking in with them—shake the foundations of the devil's prison, and make thee haste as fast from him, as one out of a house on fire about his ears.

Second. Satan hath his instruments to oppose the messengers and overtures which God sends by them to bring the sinner out of Satan's rule. When Moses comes to deliver Israel out of Egyptian bondage, up start Jannes and Jambres to resist him. When Paul preacheth to the deputy, the devil hath his chaplain at court to hinder him—Elymas, one that was full of all subtlety and mischief. Some or other, to be sure, he will find, when God is parleying with a sinner, and persuading him to come over to Christ, that shall labour to clog the work. Either carnal friends —these he sends to plead his cause; or old companions in wickedness—these bestir them; one while [by] labouring to jeer him out of his new way, or, if that take not, by turning their old love into bitter wrath against him for playing the apostate and leaving him so. Or if yet he will not be stopped in his way, then he hath his daubing preachers, still like Job's messengers the last the worst, who with their soul-flattering, or rather murdering doctrine, shall go about to heal his wound 'slightly.' Now as ever you desire to get out of Satan's bondage, have a care of all these; harden thyself against the entreaties of carnal friends and relations. Resolve, that if thy children should hang about thy knees to keep thee from Christ, thou wilt throw them away; [resolve], if thy father and mother should lie prostrate at thy foot, rather than not go to Christ, to go over their very backs to him. Never can we part with their love upon such advantageous terms as these. And for thy brethren in iniquity, I hope thou dost not mean to stay while [i.e. until] thou hast their good-will; then even ask the devil's also. Heaven is but little worth if thou hast not a heart to despise a little shame, and bear a few frumps[22] from profane Ishmaels for thy hopes of it. Let them spit on thy face, Christ will wipe it off; let them laugh, so thou winnest. If they follow not thy example before they die, the shame will be their own; God himself shall spit it on their face before men and angels, and then kick them into hell. And lastly, escape but the snare of those flatterers, who use their tongues only to lick sinners' consciences whole with their soothing doctrine, and thou art fair for a Christ; ask not counsel of them; they may go about to give you ease, with which they sow up thy wounds, must be ripped open, or thou diest for it.

Third. Satan labours to while off the sinner with delays. Floating, flitting thoughts of repenting he fears not; he can give sinners leave to talk what they will do, so he can beg time, and by his art keep such thoughts from coming to a head, and ripening into a present resolution. Few are in hell but thought of repenting, but Satan so handled the matter, that they could never pitch upon the time in earnest when to do it. If ever thou meanest to get out of his clutches, fly out of his doors and run for thy life, wherever this warning finds thee; stay not, though in the midst of thy joys, with which thy lusts entertain thee. As the paper which came to Brentius—from that senator his dear friend—took him at supper with his wife and children, and bade him flee citò, citus, citissimè—[quickly, more quickly, as quickly as possible]—which he did, leaving his dear company and sweet cheer; so do thou, or else thou mayest repent thy stay when it is too late. A vision charged the wise men to go back another way, and not so much as see Herod, though he had charged them otherwise. O go not back, drunkard, to thy good fellows; adulterer, to thy queans[23]; covetous wretch, to thy usury and unlawful gain: turn another way and gratify not the devil a moment. The command saith, 'Now repent;' the imperative hath no future tense. God saith, 'To-day, while it is called to-day.' The devil saith, To-morrow. Which wilt thou obey, God or him? Thou sayest, thou meanest at last to do it, then why not now? Wilt thou stand with God a day or two, huckle with him for a penny? Heaven is not such a hard pennyworth, but thou mayest come up to his terms. And which is the morrow thou meanest? Thou hast but a day in thy life, for aught thou knowest, where then canst thou find a morrow for repentance? But shouldst thou have as many days to come as Methuselah lived, yet know, sin is hereditary, and such sort of diseases grow more upon us with our years. It is with long-accustomed sinners, as with those who have sat long under a government, they rather like to be as they are, though but ill on it, than think of a change; or like those who in a journey have gone out of their way all the day, will rather take any new way, over hedge and ditch, than think of going so far and back to be set right.

Fourth. Satan labours to compromise the business, and bring it to a composition between him and Christ. When conscience will not be pacified, then Satan for quiet's sake will yield to something, as Pharaoh with Moses; after much ado he is willing they should go. 'And Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness,' Exodus 8:28. But then comes this caution, 'Only you shall not go very far away.' Thus Satan will yield; the sinner may pray, and hear the word, and make a goodly profession, so he doth not go very far, but that he may have him again at night. If God hath the matins, he looks for the vigils, and thus he is content the day should be divided. Doth conscience press a reformation and change of the sinner's course? rather than fail, he will grant that also. Yet as Pharaoh, when he yielded they should go, he meant their little ones should stay behind as a pledge for those that went, Exodus 10:11; so Satan must have some one sin that must be spared, and no matter though it be a little one. Now if ever you would get out of the devil's rule, make no composition with him. Christ will be king or no king. Not a hoof must be left behind, or anything which may make an errand for thee afterwards to return. Take therefore thy everlasting farewell of every sin, as to the sincere and fixed purpose of thy heart, or thou dost nothing. Paul joins his faith and purpose together, 2 Timothy 3:10, not the one without the other. At the promulgation of the law in Sinai, God did, as it were, give Israel the oath of allegiance to him; then he told them what law he would rule them by, and they gave their consent; this was the espousal which God puts them in mind of, Jeremiah 2:1-37, in which they were solemnly married together, as king and subjects. Now mark, before God would do this, he will have them out of Egypt. They could not obey his laws and Pharaoh's idolatrous customs also, and therefore he will

have them out, before he solemnly espouseth them to be a nation peculiarly his. Thou must be a widow before Christ marry thee; he will not lie beside another's wife. O that it were come to this! then the match would soon be made between Christ and thee. Let me ask thee, poor soul, hast thou seriously considered who Christ is, and what his sweet government is? and couldst thou find in thy heart—out of an inward abhorrency of sin and Satan, and a liking to Christ—to renounce sin and Satan, and choose Christ for thy Lord? Doth thy soul say, as Rebekah, 'I will go,' if I could tell how to get to him. But alas, I am here a poor prisoner, I cannot shake off my fetters, and set myself at liberty to come unto Christ.' Well, poor soul, canst thou groan heartily under thy bondage? then for thy comfort know thy deliverance is at the door; he that heard the cry of Israel in Egypt, will hear thine also, yea, [will] come and save thee out of the hands of thy lusts. He will not act as some, who entangle thy affections by making love to thee, and then give over the suit and come at thee no more. If Christ has won thy heart, he will be true to thee, and be at all the cost to bring thee out of thy prison- house also, yea, take the pains to come for thee himself, and bring with him those wedding garments in which he will carry thee from thy prison to his Father's house with joy, where thou shalt live, not only as a subject under his law, but as a bride in the bosom of his love. And what can be added to thy happiness more? when thy prince is thy husband, and that such a prince to whom all other are vassals, even the Prince of the world himself; and yet so gracious, that his majesty hinders not his familiar converse with thee a poor creature, but adds to the condescent thereof; therefore God chooseth to mix names of greatness and relation together, the one to sweeten the other: 'Thy Maker is thine husband, thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called,' Isaiah 54:5. And to usher in those promises with titles of greatest dread and terror to the creature, that hold forth the greatest condescensions of love; how can God stoop lower than to come and dwell with a poor humble soul? which is more than if he had said, such a one should dwell with him; for a beggar to live at court is not so much as the king to dwell with him in this cottage. Yet this promise is ushered in with the most magnificent titles: 'Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit,' Isaiah 57:15; and why such titles, but to take away the fears which his saints are prone to take up from them? Will the high and lofty One, saith the humble soul, look on a poor worm? will the Holy God come near such an unclean creature? saith the contrite one. Isaiah himself cried he was undone at the sight of God, and this attribute proclaimed before him, Isaiah 6:1-13. Now God prefixeth these, that the creature may know his majesty and holiness, which seems so terrible to us, are no prejudice to his love; yea, so gracious a prince is thy husband, that he delights rather his saint should call him by names of love than state. 'Thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali. Hosea 2:16, that is, my husband, not my Lord.

[Souls in a state of ignorance are subject to Satan's rule.]

Doctrine Second. Ignorance above other sins enslaves a soul to Satan. A knowing man may be his slave, but an ignorant one can be no other. Knowledge doth not make the heart good, but it is impossible that without knowledge it should be good. There are some sins which an ignorant person cannot commit, there are more which he cannot but commit; knowledge is the key, Luke 11:52; Christ the door, John 10:1-42. Christ opens heaven. Knowledge opens Christ. In three particulars the point will appear more fully. First. Ignorance opens a door for sin to enter. Second. As ignorance lets sin in, so it locks it up in the soul, and the soul in it. Third. as it locks it up, so it

shuts all means of help out.

First. Ignorance opens the door for Satan to enter in with his troops of lusts. Where the watch is blind, the city is soon taken. An ignorant man sins, and like drunken Lot, he knows not when the tempter comes, nor when he goes; he is like a man that walks in his sleep, knows not where he is, nor what he does. ‘Father, forgive them,’ saith Christ, ‘they know not what they do.’ The apostle, 1 Corinthians 15:1-58, having reproved the sensuality of some, 1 Corinthians 15:32, who made the consideration of death, by which others are awed from sin, a provocative to sin, ‘Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die;’ he gives an account of this absurd reasoning: All have not the knowledge of God. An ignorant person is a man in shape, and a beast in heart. There is no knowledge in the land, saith the prophet, Hosea 4:1 and see what a regiment follows this blind captain, swearing, lying, killing, stealing, and what not. We read, 2 Timothy 3:6, of some ‘laden with sins;’ ‘silly women,’ and such who never ‘come to the knowledge of the truth.’ Here are trees full of bitter fruit, and what dung shall we find at the root, that makes them so fruitful, but ignorance?

Second. Ignorance, as it lets sin in, so it locks it up in the soul, and the soul in it. Such a one lies in Satan’s inner dungeon, where no light of conviction comes. Darkness inclines to sleep; a blind man and a drowsy conscience go together. When the storm arose, the mariners who were awake fell a praying to their god, but the sleeper fears nothing. Ignorance lays the soul asleep under the hatches of stupidity. God hath planted in the beast a natural fear of that which threatens to hurt it. Go to thrust a beast into a pit, and it hangs back; nature shows its abhorrency. Man being of a nobler nature, and subject to more dangers, God hath set a double guard on him; as [he has] a natural fear of danger, so also a natural shame that covers the face at the doing of any unworthy action. Now an ignorant man hath slipped from both these his keepers; he sins and blusheth not, because he knows not his guilt; he wants that magistrate within which should put him to shame. Neither is he afraid, because he knows not his danger; and therefore he plays with his sin, as the child with the waves, that, by and by, will swallow him up. Conscience is god’s alarm to call the sinner up. It doth not always ring in his ear that hath knowledge, being usually set by God to go off at some special hour, when God is speaking in an ordinance, or striking in a providence; but in an ignorant soul this is silent. The clock cannot go when the weights are taken off; conscience is only a witness to what it knows.

Third. Ignorance shuts out the means of recovery. Friends and ministers, yea, Christ himself stands without, and cannot help the creature. As such, threatenings and promises are of no use; he fears not the one, he desires not the other, because he knows neither. Heaven’s way cannot be found in the dark, and therefore the first thing God doth, is to spring in with a light, and let the creature know where he is, and what the way is to get out of his prison-house, without which all attempts to escape are in vain. There is some shimmering light in all. Non dantur purœ tenebrœ [absolute darkness is not given], I think, is good divinity as well as philosophy. And this night-light may discover many sins, produce inward prickings of conscience [for] them, yea, stir up the creature to step aside, rather than to drown in such broad waters. There are some sins so cruel and costly, that the most prostrate soul may in time be weary of their service for low ends; but what will all this come to, if the creature be not acquainted with Christ, the true way to God, faith and repentance, the only way to Christ? Such a one, after all this bustle, instead of making an escape from Satan, will run full into his mouth another way. There are some ways which at first seem right

to the traveller, yet wind about so insensibly, that when a man hath gone far, and thinks himself near home, he is carried back to the place from whence he set forth. This will befall every soul ignorant of Christ, and the way of life through him. After many years' travel, as they think, towards heaven by their good meanings, blind devotions, and reformation, when they shall expect to be within sight of heaven, they shall find themselves even where they were at first, as very slaves to Satan as ever.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. This speaks to you that are parents. See what need you have of instructing your children, and training them up betimes in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Till these chains of darkness be knocked off their minds, there is no possibility of getting them out of the devil's prison. He hath no such tame slave as the ignorant soul. Such a one goes before Satan—as the silly sheep before the butcher—and knows not who he is, nor whether he carries him. And can you see the devil driving your children to the shambles, and not labour to rescue them out of his hands? Bloody parents you are, that can thus harden your bowels against your own flesh. now the more to provoke you to your duty, take these considerations.

First. Your relation obligeth you to take care of their precious souls. It is the soul [that] is the child, rather than the body; and therefore in Scripture put for the whole man. Abraham and Lot went forth with all the souls they had gotten in Haran, Genesis 12:1-20; so, all the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, that is, all the persons. The body is but the sheath; and if one should leave his sword with you to be kept safely for him, would you throw away the blade, and only preserve the scabbard? And yet parents do commonly judge of their care and love to their children by their providing for the outward man, by their breeding, that teaching them how to live like men, as they say, when they are dead and gone, and [to] comport themselves to their civil place and rank in the world. These things, indeed, are commendable; but is not the most weighty business of all forgotten in the meantime, while no endeavour is used that they may live as Christians, and know how to carry themselves in duty to God and man as such? And can they do this without the knowledge of the holy rule they are to walk by? I am sure David knew no means effectual without this, and therefore propounds the question, 'Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?' and he resolves it in the next words, 'by taking heed thereto according to thy word,' Psalms 119:9. And how shall they compare their way and the Word together, if not instructed? Our children are not born with Bibles in their heads or hearts. And who ought to be the instructor, if not the parent, yea, who will do it with such natural affection? As I have heard sometimes a mother say in other respects, Who can take such pains with my child, and be so careful as myself, that am its mother? Bloody parents then they are who acquaint not their children with God or his Word. What do they but put them under a necessity of perishing, if God stir not up some to show more mercy than themselves to them? Is it any wonder to hear that ship to be sunk or dashed upon the rock, which was put to sea without card or compass? No more is it, they should engulf themselves in sin and perdition, that are thrust forth into the world—which is a sea of temptation—without the knowledge of God or their duty to him. In the fear of God think of it, parents. your children have souls, and these God sets you to watch over. It will be a poor account at the last day, if you can only say, Lord, here are my children, left them rich and wealthy. The rust of that silver you left them will witness your folly and sin, that you would do so much for that which rusts, and nothing for the enriching their minds with the knowledge of God, which would have endured for ever. Happy if you

had left them less money and more knowledge.

Second. Consider it hath ever been the saints' practice to instruct and teach their children the way of God. David we find dropping instruction into his son Solomon: 'Know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind,' 1 Chronicles 28:9. Though a king, he did not put it off to his chaplains, but whetted it on him with his own lips. Neither was his queen Bathsheba forgetful of her duty, her gracious counsel is upon record, Proverbs 31:1-31; and that she may do it with the more seriousness and solemnity, we find her stirring up her motherly bowels, to let her son see she fetched her words deep, even from her heart: 'What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows?' Proverbs 31:2. Indeed that counsel is most like to go to the heart which comes from thence. Parents know not what impression such melting expressions of their love mingled with their instructions, leave with their children. God bids draw forth our souls to the hungry, that is more than draw forth our purse, which may be done, and the heart hard and churlish. Thus we should draw forth our souls with our instructions. What need I tell of Timothy's mother and grandmother, who acquainted him with the Scripture from his youth? And truly, I think that man calls in question his own saintship, that takes no care to acquaint his child with God, and the way that leads to him. I have known some that, though profane themselves, have been very solicitous their children should have a good education; but never knew I saint that was regardless whether his child knew God or not.

Third. It is an act of great unrighteousness not to instruct our children. We read of some who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Among others, those parents do it that lock up the knowledge of these saving truths from their children, which God hath imparted to themselves. There is a double unrighteousness in it.

1. They are unrighteous to their children, who may lay as much claim to their care of instructing them, as to their labour and industry in laying up a temporal estate for them. If he should do unrighteously with his child, that should not endeavour to provide for his outward maintenance, or having gathered an estate, should lock it up, and deny his child necessaries, then much more he that lives in ignorance of God, whereby he renders himself incapable of providing for his child's soul, but most of all, he that having gathered a stock of knowledge, yet hides it from his child.

2. They are unrighteous to God.

(1.) In that they keep that talent in their own hands which was given to be paid out to their children. When God revealed himself to Abraham, he had respect to Abraham's children, and therefore we find God promising himself this at Abraham's hands, upon which he imparts his mind to him concerning his purpose of destroying Sodom, 'Shall I hide from Abraham,' saith God, 'that thing which I do? I know him that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord,' Genesis 18:17, Genesis 17:19. The church began at first in a family, and was preserved by the godly care of parents in instructing their children and household in the truths of God, whereby the knowledge of God was transmitted from generation to generation, and though the church is not confined to such strait limits, yet every private family is as a little nursery to the church. If the nursery be not carefully planted, the orchard will soon decay. O could you be willing, Christians, that your children, when you are laid in the dust, should be turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine, and prove a generation that do not know God? Atheism needs not be planted; you do enough to make your children such, if you do not endeavour

to plant religion in their minds. The very neglect of the gardener to sow and dress his garden, gives advantage enough to the weeds to come up. This is the difference between religion and atheism, Religion doth not grow without planting, but will die even where it is planted, without watering; atheism, irreligion, and profaneness are weeds [that] will grow without setting, but they will not die without plucking up. All care and means are little enough to stub them up. And therefore you that are parents, and do not teach your children, deal the more unrighteously with God, because you neglect the best season in their whole life for planting in them the knowledge of God, and plucking up the contrary weeds of atheism and irreligion. Young weeds come up with most ease. Simple ignorance in youth becomes wilful ignorance, yea, impudence in age; you will not instruct them when young, and they will scorn that their ministers should, when they are old.

(2.) You deal unrighteously with God, that train not up your children in the knowledge of God. Because your children, if you be Christian parents, are God's children, they stand in a federal relation to him, which the children of others do not; and shall God's children be nurtured with the devil's education? Ignorance is that which he blinds the minds of the children of disobedience withal. Shall God's children have no better breeding? The children of a Jew God made account were born to him, 'Thy sons and thy daughters whom thou hast born unto me,' Ezekiel 16:20. God had by the covenant which he made with that people, married them unto himself, and therefore as the wife bears her children to her husband, they are his children. So God calls the children of the Jews his, and complains of it as a horrible wickedness in them, that they should not bring them up as his, but offer them up to Moloch; they have 'slain my children,' saith God, Ezekiel 16:21. And are not the children of a Christian his children, as well as the Jews' were? Hath God altered or recalled the first covenant, and cut off the entail, and darest thou slay not only thy children, but the Lord's also? And is not ignorance that bloody knife that doth it? 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge,' Hosea 4:6. Do you not tremble to offer them, not to Moloch but [to] the devil, whom, before, you had given up to God, when you brought them to that solemn ordinance of baptism, and there desired before God and man that they might become covenant-servants to the Lord? and hast thou bound them to him, and never teach them, either who their Lord and Master is, or what their duty is as his servants? Of thy own mouth God will condemn thee.

Fourth. Consider, you who are parents, that by not instructing your children, you entitle yourselves to all the sins they shall commit to their death. We may sin by a proxy, and make another's fact our own. 'Thou hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon,' 2 Samuel 12:9. So thou mayest pierce Christ, and slay him over and over with the bloody sword of thy wicked children, if thou beest not the more careful to train them up in the fear of God. There might be something said for that heathen who, when the scholar abused him, fell upon the master and struck him. Indeed it is possible he might be in the most fault. When the child breaks the Sabbath, it is his sin, but more the father's, if he never taught him what the command of God was. And if the parent be accessory to the sin of the child, it will be hard for him to escape a partnership, yea, a precedency in the punishment. O what a sad greeting will such have of their children at the great day! will they not then accuse you to be the murderers of their precious souls, and lay their blood at your door, cursing you to your face that taught them no better? But, grant that, by the interposition of thy timely repentance, thou securest thy soul from the judgement of that day, yet God can scourge thee here for the neglect of thy duty to them. How oft do we see children become heavy crosses to such parents? It is just that they should not know their duty to thee, who didst not teach them their

duty to God. Or if thou shouldst not live so long as to see this, yet sure thou canst not but go in sorrow to thy grave, to leave children behind thee that are on their way to hell. Some think that Lot's lingering so long in Sodom, was his loathness to leave his sons-in-law behind him, to perish in the flames. No doubt, good man, it was very grievous to him, and this might make him stay pleading with them, till the angel pulled him away. And certainly nothing makes holy parents more loath to be gone out of this Sodomitical world, than a desire to see their children out of the reach of that fire, before they go, that God will rain upon the heads of sinners. You know not how soon the messenger may come to pluck you hence. Do your best while you are among them to win them home to God.

Use Second. To the ministers of the gospel. Let this stir up your bowels of compassion towards those many ignorant souls in your respective congregations, who know not the right hand from the left. This, this is the great destroyer of the country, which ministers should come forth against with all their care and strength. More are swept to hell with this plague of spiritual darkness than [with] any other. Where the light of knowledge and conviction is, there commonly is a sense and pain that accompanies the sinner when he doth evil, which forceth some, now and then, to inquire for a physician, and [to] come in the distress of their spirits to their minister or others for counsel. But the ignorant soul feels no such smart. If the minister stay till he sends for him to instruct him, he may sooner hear the bell go for him, than any messenger come for him. You must seek them out, and not expect they will come to you. These are a sort of people that are afraid more of their remedy than of their disease, and study more to hide their ignorance, than how they may have it cured, which should make us pity them the more, because they pity themselves so little. I confess, it is no small unhappiness to some of us, who have to do with a multitude, that we have neither time nor strength to make our addresses to every particular person in our congregations, and attend on them as their needs require, and yet cannot well satisfy our consciences otherwise. But let us look to it, that though we cannot do to the height of what we would, we be not found wanting in what we may. Let not the difficulty of our province make us like some, who when they see they have more work upon their hands than they can well despatch, grow sick of it, and sit down, out of a lazy despondency, and do just nothing. He that hath a great house running to ruin, and but a small purse—it is better for him to repair now a little, and then a little, than [to] let all fall down, because he cannot do it all at once. Many ministers may complain of their predecessors, that they left them their people more out of repair than their houses, and this makes the work great indeed; as the Jews did, who were to revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, before they could build the wall; yet it went up, because the people had a mind to work, Nehemiah 4:1-23. O if once our hearts were but filled with zeal for God, and compassion to our people's souls, we would up and be doing, though we could but lay a brick a day, and God would be with us. May be, you who find a people rude and sottishly ignorant, like stones in the quarry, and trees unfelled, shall not bring the work to such perfection in your days as you desire; yet as David did for Solomon, thou mayest, by thy pains in teaching and instructing them, prepare materials for another who shall rear the temple. It is very ordinary for one minister to enter into the labours of another, to reap those by a work of conversion, in whom a former minister hath cast the seed of knowledge and conviction. And when God comes to reckon with his workmen, the ploughman and the sower shall have his penny, as well as the harvest-man and reaper. O it is a blessed thing to be, as Job saith he was, 'eyes to the blind,' much more to blind souls. Such are the ministers God himself calls pastors after his own heart, that feed his people with knowledge and understanding, Jeremiah 3:15. But woe to

those that are accessory to their people's ignorance. Now a minister may be accessory to the ignorance of his people—

First. By his own ignorance. Knowledge is so fundamental to the work and calling of a minister, that he cannot be one without it. 'Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. Hosea 4:6. The want of knowledge in a minister can be such a defect, as cannot be supplied by anything else. Be he never so meek, patient, bountiful, unblamable, if he hath not skill to divide the word aright, he is not cut out for a minister. Everything is good, as it is good for the end it is appointed to. A knife, though it had a haft of diamonds, yet if it will not cut, it is no knife. A bell, if not sound, is no bell. The great work of a minister is to teach others, his lips are to preserve knowledge, he should be as conversant in the things of God as others in their particular trades. Ministers are called lights. If the light then be darkness, how great is the darkness of that people like to be? I know these stars in Christ's hands are not all of the same magnitude. There is a greater glory of gifts and graces shining in some than [in] others; yet so much light is necessary to every minister, as was in the star the wise men saw at Christ's birth, to be able out of the word to direct sinners the safe and true way to Christ and salvation. O sirs, it is a sad way of getting a living by killing of men, as some unskilful physicians do; but much more to get a temporal livelihood by ruining souls through our ignorance. He is a cruel man to the poor passengers, who will undertake to be pilot, when he never so much as learned his compass.

Second. By his negligence. It is all one if the nurse hath no milk in her breasts, or having [it], draws it not forth to her child. There is a woe to the idle shepherd, Zechariah 11:17; such as have mouths, but speak not; lips, but not to feed the people with knowledge. It shall be the people's sin, if they feed not when bread is before them, but woe to us if we give them not meat in due season. O sirs, what shall we say to our Lord that trusts us, if those abilities which he hath given us as market-money to buy bread for our people, be found wrapped up in a napkin of sloth? if that time wherein we should have been teaching and instructing them, shall appear to be wasted in our pleasures, or employed about our carnal profits. That servant shall have but a sad welcome of his master when he comes home, that shall be found out of the way with the key, and the family starving in meantime for want of provision.

Third. By his unedifying preaching; when he preacheth unsound doctrine, which doth not perfect the understanding, but corrupt it. Better he did leave them in simple ignorance, than colour their minds with a false dye; or when that he preacheth is frothy and flashy, no more fit to feed their souls, than husks the prodigal's belly, which, when they know, they are little the wiser for their soul's good. Or, when his discourses are so high flown, that the poor people stand gazing, as those who have lost the sight of their preacher, and at the end of the sermon cannot tell what he would have. Or, those who preach only truths that are for the higher form of professors, who have their senses well exercised; excellent, may be, for the building up three or four eminent saints in the congregation; but in the meantime, the weak ones in the family—who should indeed chiefly be thought on, because least able to guide themselves, or carve for themselves—these are forgotten. He, sure, is an unwise builder that makes a scaffold as high as Paul's steeple, when his work is at the bottom, and he is to lay the foundation, whereas the scaffold should rise as the building goes up. So Paul advanceth in his doctrine, as his hearers do in knowledge: 'Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection,' Hebrews 6:1. 'Let us;' it is well, in-

deed, when the people can keep pace with the preacher. To preach truths and notions above the hearer's capacity, is like a nurse that should go to feed the child with a spoon too big to go into its mouth. We may by such preaching please ourselves and some of higher attainments, but what shall poor ignorant ones do in the meantime? He is the faithful steward that considers both. The preacher is, as Paul saith of himself, a 'debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise,' Romans 1:14. [He is] to prepare truths suitable to the degree of his hearers. Let the wise have their portion, but let them be patient to see the weaker in the family served also.

Fourth. A minister may be accessory to the ignorance of his people, when through the scandal of his life he prejudiceth his doctrine; as a cook, who, by his nastiness, makes others afraid to eat what comes out of his foul fingers. Or he may be so, when, through his supercilious carriage, his poor people dare not come to him. He that will do any good in the minister's calling, must be as careful as the fisher, that he doth nothing to scare souls away from him, but all to allure and invite, that they may be toled[24] within the compass of his net.

Use Third. [To the ignorant.] Is the ignorant soul such a slave to Satan? Let this stir you up that are ignorant from your seats of sloth whereon, like the blind Egyptians, you sit in darkness, speedily come out of this darkness, or resolve to go down to utter darkness. The covering of Haman's face did tell him that he should not stay in the king's presence. If thou livest in ignorance, it shows thou art in God's black bill. He puts this cover before their eyes in wrath, whom he means to turn off into hell: 'If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost,' 2 Corinthians 4:3. In one place sinners are threatened, 'they shall die without knowledge,' Job 36:12; in another place, they shall die in their sins, John 8:21. He, indeed, that dies without knowledge, dies in his sins; and what more fearful doom can the great God pass upon a creature than this? Better die in a prison, die in a ditch, than die in one's sins. If thou die in thy sins, thou shalt rise in thy sins; as thou fallest asleep in the dust, so thou awakest in the morning of the resurrection; if an ignorant Christless wretch, as such thou shalt be arraigned and judged. That God whom sinners now bid depart from them will then be worth their acquaintance—themselves being judges—but alas! then he will throw their own words in their teeth, and bid them depart from him, he desires not the knowledge of them. O sinners, you shall see at last, God can better be without your company in heaven, than you could be without his knowledge on earth. Yet, yet it is day, draw your curtains, and behold Christ shining upon your face with gospel-light. Hear wisdom crying in the streets, and Christ piping in your window in the voice of his Spirit and messengers, 'How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you,' Proverbs 1:21-23. What can you say, sinners, for your sottish ignorance? Where is your cloak for this sin? The time hath been when the word of the Lord was precious, and there was no open vision, not a Bible to be found in town or country; when the tree of knowledge was forbidden fruit, and none might taste thereof without license from the pope. Happy he that could get a leaf or two of the Testament into a corner, afraid to tell the wife of his bosom! O how sweet were these waters, when they were forced to steal them! but you have the word, or may, in your houses; you have those that open them every Sabbath in your assemblies; many of you, at least, have the offers of your ministers, to take any pains with you in private, passionately beseeching you to pity your souls, and receive instruction; yea, it is the lamentation they generally take up, [that] you will not come unto them that

you may receive light. How long may a poor minister sit in his study, before any of the ignorant sort will come upon such an errand? Lawyers have their clients, and physicians their patients; these are sought after, and called up at midnight for counsel; but alas! the soul, which is more worth than raiment and body too, that is neglected, and the minister seldom thought on, till both these be sent away. Perhaps, when the physician gives them over for dead, then we must come and close up those eyes with comfort, which were never opened to see Christ in his truth, or be counted cruel, because we will not sprinkle them with this holy water, and anoint them for the kingdom of heaven, though they know not a step of the way which leads to it. Ah, poor wretches! what comfort would you have us speak to those, to whom God himself speaks terror? Is heaven ours to give to whom we please? or is it in our power to alter the laws of the Most High, and save those whom he condemns? Do you not remember the curse that is to fall upon his head 'that maketh the blind to wander out of the way?' Deuteronomy 27:18. What curse, then, would be our portion, if we should confirm such blind souls, that are quite out of the way to heaven, encouraging you to go on and expect to reach heaven at last, when, God knows, your feet stand in those paths that lead to eternal death? No, it is written, we cannot, and God will not reverse it; you may read your very names among those damned souls which Christ comes in flaming fire to take vengeance on, who, the apostle tells us, are such 'that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,' 2 Thessalonians 1:8. And therefore, in the fear of God, let this provoke you, of what age or sex, rank or condition soever in the world, to labour for the saving knowledge of God in Christ, whom to know is life eternal. Are you young? Inquire after God betimes, while your parts are fresh, and memory strong, before the throng of worldly cares divert you, or lusts of youth debauch you. The feet of those lusts which have buried millions of others in perdition, stand ready to carry you the same way, if preventing grace come not and deliver you out of their hands, by seasoning your minds with the knowledge of God. This morning's draught may prevent thy being infected with the ill savours thou mayest receive from the corrupt examples of others. Nay, how long thy stay may be in the world thou knowest not—see whether thou canst not find graves of thy length in the burial-place; and if thou shouldst die ignorant of God and his law, what would then become of thee? The small brush and the old logs, young sinners and those that are withered with age, meet and burn together; or if thou shouldst stay a while longer here, may be because thou wilt not learn now, God will not teach thee then; or if thou shouldst in thy old age get acquaintance with God, yet it is sad to be sowing thy seed, when thou shouldst be reaping thy sheaves; learning to know God, when thou mightest be comforting thyself from the old acquaintance thou hast enjoyed with him. Are you old and ignorant? Alas, poor creatures! your life in the socket, and this candle of the Lord not set up and lighted in your understanding! your body bowing to the dust, and nature tolling the passing bell, as it were, and you, like one going into the dark, know not whither death will lead you or leave you. It is like the infirmities of age make you wish your bones were even laid at rest in the grave; but if you should die in this condition, your poor souls would even wish they were here again with their old burdens on their back. Aches and diseases of old age are grievous, but damned souls would thank God if he would bless them with such a heaven as to lie in these pains, to escape the torments of the other. O bethink you before you go hence! The less time you have, the more diligence you must use to gain knowledge. We need not be earnest, one would think, to bid the poor prisoner learn his book, that cannot read, when he knows he shall be hanged if he read not his neck-verse. It is not, indeed, the bare knowing the truths of the gospel saves; but the gross ignorance of them, to be sure, will damn souls. Are you poor? It is not your poverty is your

sin or misery, but your ignorance where the true treasure lies. Were you God's poor, rich in knowledge and faith, you were happy—'Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished,' Ecclesiastes 4:13—yea, so happy, that did the princes of the world understand themselves aright, they would wish themselves in your clothes, how ragged soever they are, rather than be in their own robes. There are better making for you in heaven, which you shall put on, when theirs shall be pulled off to their shame. It will not then trouble you that you were, while in the world, poor; but it will torment them they were so rich and great, and so poor to God and beggarly in their souls. Are you rich? Labour for the knowledge of the Most High. Solomon had more of the world's treasure than a thousand of you have, and yet we find him hard at prayer, tugging with God for knowledge, 2 Chronicles 1:10. All these outward enjoyments are but vaginœ bonorum [the shells of blessings], as afflictions are vaginœ malorum [the shells of evils]. I am afraid that many men think themselves privileged by their worldly greatness from this duty, as if God were bound to save them because rich. Alas, sirs, there are not so many of you like to come there. I must confess, it would make one tremble to think what a small number those among the great ones that shall be saved, are summed up into, Not many great, not many rich. Why so few saved? Because so few have saving knowledge. O the atheism, the ignorance, the sottish barbarism that is to be found even in those that the world applaud, and even worship, because of their lands and estates, who yet are not able to give any account of their faith? A poor leather-coat Christian will shame and catechize a hundred of them. If heaven were to be purchased with house and lands, then these would carry it away from the poor disciples of Jesus Christ—they have their hundreds and thousands lying by them for a purchase always, but this money is not current in heaven's exchange. 'This is life eternal, to know thee, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.'

Question. But how may an ignorant soul attain to knowledge?

Answer First. Be deeply affected with thy ignorance. Some are blind, as Laodicea, and know it not, Revelation 3:17. As ignorance blinds the mind, so pride is a blind before their ignorance, that they know it not. These have such a high opinion of themselves that they take it ill that any should suspect them as such. These of all men are most out of the way to knowledge; they are too good to learn of man, as they think, and too bad to be taught of God. The gate into Christ's school is low, and these cannot stoop. The Master himself is so humble and lowly, that he will not teach a proud scholar. Therefore first become a fool in thine own eye. A wiser man than thyself hath confessed as much: 'I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy,' Proverbs 30:2-3. When thou art come to thyself to own and blush at the brutish ignorance of thy mind, thou art fit to be admitted into Christ's school. If they be ashamed, then show them the pattern of the house, Ezekiel 43:10.

Answer Second. Be faithful with that little knowledge thou hast. Art thou convinced this is a sin, and that is a duty? Follow the light close, you know not what this little may grow to. We use to set up our children with a little stock at first, and as they use it, so we add. The kingdom of God comes of small beginnings. God complains of Israel, they were brutish in their knowledge, Jeremiah 10:14. He doth not say, brutish in their ignorance; had they sinned because they did not know better, this would have excused à tanto [by so much], but they did that which was brutish and unreasonable, as their worshipping graven images, notwithstanding they knew to the contrary. That man shall not excel in knowledge who prostitutes it to sin: 'If they obey not, they shall perish

by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge,' Job 36:12. A candle pent up close in a dark lantern, sweals[25] out apace; and so doth light shut up in the conscience, and not suffered to come forth in the conversation. Those heathens that are charged for holding 'the truth in unrighteousness,' Romans 1:18, the next news you hear from them is, that they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened, Romans 8:21.

Answer Third. Ply the throne of grace. He is the best student in divinity that studies most upon his knees[26]. Knowledge is a divine gift; all light is from heaven. God is the Father of light, and prayer puts the soul under the pupilage of God. If anyone lack wisdom, let him ask it of God. This is more than naked knowledge; wisdom how to use it. Study may make one a great scholar in the Scriptures, but prayer makes a wise Christian, as it obtains sanctified knowledge, without which it is no perfect gift, but *äDÎ< –*TD@<—a gift and no gift. Pray then with an humble boldness. God gives it all to ask, and that •B8TH—candidly, liberally; not like proud man, who will rather put one to shame, who is weak for his ignorance, than take the pains to teach him. Thy petition is very pleasing to God. Remember how Solomon sped upon the like occasion, and promise thyself the same success. Christ's school is a free school; he denies none that come to him, so they will submit to the orders of the school; and though all have not an answer in the same degree of knowledge—it is not needful that all should be Solomons in knowledge, except all were to be Solomons in place; yet the meanest disciple that Christ sends forth, shall be furnished with saving knowledge enough to fir him for his admittance into heaven's academy. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and after bring me to glory.

Answer Fourth. Thou must bestow some time for thy diligent search after truth. Truth lies deep, and must be digged for. Since man was turned out of paradise, he can do nothing without labour except sin (this follows his hand indeed), but this treasure of knowledge calls for spade and mattock. We are bid 'search the Scriptures.' Again, it is said that 'many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased,' Daniel 12:4—a metaphor from merchants, who bestir themselves to get an estate, run to and fro, first in one land, then in another; wherever they hear of anything to be got, thither they post, though to the ends of the earth. Thus must the soul run from one duty to another, one while read, and anon meditate of what he hath read, then pray over his meditations, and ask counsel after all. What is the meaning of this, and how understand you that? [Not the school of Epicurus, but intercourse with him, made great men[27].] There is more light got sometimes by a short conference with the preacher, than by his whole sermon. Be sure thou compass all the means for knowledge within the walk of thy endeavour. In this thy search for knowledge observe three things.

1. The end thou proposest, that it be pure and holy; not merely to know, as some do, who labour for knowledge, as many for estates, and when they have got it, look on their notions, as they on their bags of money, but have not a heart to use their knowledge for their own or others' good; this is a sore evil. Speculative knowledge, like Rachel, is fair, but barren. Not to be known and admired by others for thy stature in knowledge above thy brethren, verily, it is too base an end to aim at, in seeking knowledge, especially such as is the knowledge of God in Christ. To see a heathen study for knowledge in philosophy, and then carry all his labour to this market, and think himself rewarded with obtaining the name for a wise man, is, though base, yet more tolerable; but for one that knows God, and what it is to enjoy him, for such a one to content himself with a blast or two of sorry man's vain breath, this is folly with a witness. Look thou fliest higher in thy end than so.

Labour for knowledge, that thou mayest fear God whom thou knowest. Thus David, ‘Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end,’ Psalms 119:33. The Word of God is called a light unto our feet, not to our tongues, merely to talk of, but [to our] feet to walk by. Endeavour for it, not that thou mayest spread thy own name, but celebrate God’s. As David promiseth, when he understands the precepts of God, then he will talk of his wondrous works, he will trumpet the fame of them, and thereby awaken others to inquire after God.

2. When thy end is right set, then thou must be constant in thy endeavour after it. The mysteries of Christ are not learned in a day. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord, Hosea 6:3. Some are in a good mood, may be, and they will look into the Bible, and read a chapter or two, and away they go for a week, and never practice it more, like some boys [who] if at school one day, truant all the week after; is it any wonder such thrive not in knowledge? It is a good speech of Bernard:[28] ‘The study of the word, and the reading of it differ as much as the friendship of such who every day converse lovingly together, doth from the acquaintance one hath with a stranger at an inn, or whom he salutes as he passeth by in the street.’ If you will get knowledge indeed, you must not only salute the word now and then, but walk with it, and enter into daily converse with it. The three men, who were indeed angels, that stood by Abraham, as he sat at his tent door, were reserved and strange, till Abraham invited them into his tent, and entertained them friendly, Genesis 18:2; and then Christ, who was one among them—as appears by the name Jehovah, given him in several verses, and also by what he promised he would do for Sarah, Genesis 18:10, not what God would do, which if a created angel, he would —begins to discover himself to Abraham, and [to] reveal his secrets to him. That soul above others shall be acquainted with the secrets of God in his word, that doth not slightly read the word, and as it were compliment with it, at his tent-door, but desires more intimacy with it, and therefore entertains it within his soul by frequent meditating of it. David compares the word for sweetness to the honey and the honey-comb. Indeed it is so full, that at first reading some sweetness will now and then drop from it, but he that doth not press it by meditation, leaves the most behind.

3. Be sure thou takest the right order and method. Arts and sciences have their rudiments, and also their more abstruse and deep notions, and sure the right end to begin at is first to learn the principles. He, we say, is not likely to make a good scholar in the university, that never was a good grammar-scholar. And they cannot be solid Christians, that are not instructed in the grounds of Christianity. The want of this is the cause why many are so unsteadfast. First of this way and then of that, blown like glasses into any shape, as false teachers please to breathe. Alas! they have no center to draw their lines from. Think it no disgrace you who have run into error, and lost yourselves in the labyrinths of deep points, which now are the great discourse of the weakest professors, to be set back to learn the first principles of the oracles of God better. Too many are, as Tertullian saith in another case,[29] more tender of their reputation than their salvation: who are more ashamed to be thought ignorant, than careful to have it cured.

Answer Fifth. If thou wouldst attain to divine knowledge, wait on the ministry of the word. As for those who neglect this, and come not where the word is preached, they do like that one should turn his back on the sun that he may see it. If thou wouldst know God, come where he hath appointed thee to learn. Indeed, where the means is not, God hath extraordinary ways, as a father, if [there is] no school in town, will teach his child at home, but if there be a public school, thither he sends him. God maketh manifest, saith Paul, the savour of his knowledge by us in every place, 2

Corinthians 2:14. Let men talk of the Spirit what they please. He will at last be found a quencher of the Spirit, that is, a despiser of prophecy; they both stand close together, 1 Thessalonians 5:19-20, Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesying. But it is not enough to sit under the means. Woeful experience teacheth us this. There are some no sun will tan, they keep their old complexion under the most shining and burning light of the word preached, as ignorant and profane as those that never saw gospel-day; and therefore if thou wilt receive any spiritual advantage by the word, take heed how thou hearest.

1. Look thou beest a wakeful hearer. Is it any wonder he should go away from the sermon no wiser than he came, that sleeps the greatest part of it away, or hears betwixt sleeping and waking? It must be in a dream sure, if God reveals anything to his mind to him. So indeed God did to the fathers of old, but it was not as they profanely slept under an ordinance. O take heed of such irreverence. He that composeth himself to sleep, as some do, at such a time, or he that is not humbled for it, and that deeply, both of them betray the base and low esteem they have of the ordinance. Surely thou thinkest but meanly of what is delivered, if it will not keep thee awake, yea, of God himself, whose message it is. See how thou art reproved by the awful carriage of a heathen, and that a king. Ehud did but say to Eglon, I have a message from God unto thee, and he arose out of his seat, Judges 3:20. And thou clappest down on thy seat to sleep. O how darest thou put such an affront upon the great God? How oft did you fall asleep at dinner, or telling your money? And is not the word of God worth more than these? I should wonder if such sermon-sleepers do dream of anything but hell-fire. It is dangerous, you know, to fall asleep with a candle burning by our side—some have been so burned in their beds; but more dangerous to sleep while the candle of the word is shining so near us. What if you should sink down dead like Eutychus? here is no Paul to raise you as he had; and that you shall not, where is your security?

2. Thou must be an attentive hearer. He that is awake, but wanders with his eye or heart, what doth he but sleep with his eyes open? It were as good the servant should be asleep in his bed, as when up, not to mind his master's business. When God intends a soul good by the word, he draws such a one to listen and hearken heedfully to what is delivered, as we see in Lydia, who, it is said, attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul; and those, Luke 19:48, 'The people were attentive to hear him.' They did hang on him, as you shall see bees on some sweet flower, or as young birds on the bills of their dams as they feed them, that is, the soul which shall get light and life by the word. Hear ye children, and attend to know understanding, Proverbs 4:1. Labour therefore in hearing the word to fix thy quicksilver mind, and set thyself to hear, as it is said Jehoshaphat did to pray; and that thou mayest, before thou goest, get thy heart into some deep sense of thy spiritual wants, especially of thy ignorance of the things of God, and thy deplored condition by reason of it: till the heart be touched, the mind will not be fixed. Therefore you may observe, it is said, God opened the heart of Lydia, that she attend, Acts 16:14. The mind goes of the will's errand; we spend our thoughts on what our hearts propose. If the heart hath no sense of its ignorance, or no desires after God, no wonder such a one listens not [to] what the preacher saith, his heart sends his mind another way. They sit before me as my people, saith God, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. They do not come out of such an intent or desire to hear for any good to their souls; then they would apply themselves wholly to the work. No, it is their covetousness that hath their hearts, and therefore as some idle servant, when he hath waited on his master [and] brought him to his pew, then he goes out to his good fellows at the alehouse, and

comes no more till sermon be almost done. So do the thoughts of most when they go to the ordinance; they slip out in the street, market, or shop; you may find them anywhere but about the duty before them, and all because these have their hearts more than God and his word.

3. Thou must be a retentive hearer. Without this the work will ever be to begin again. Truths to a forgetful hearer are as a seal set on water, the impression lasts no longer than the seal is on; the sermon once done, and all is undone. Be therefore very careful to fasten what thou hearest on thy memory, which that thou mayest do,

(1.) Receive the truth in the love of it. An affectionate hearer will not be a forgetful hearer. Love helps the memory. ‘Can a woman forget a child, or a maid her ornaments, or a bride her attire?’ No, they love them too well. Were the truths of God thus precious to thee, thou wouldst with David think of them day and night. Even when the Christian, through weakness of memory, cannot remember the very words he hears, to repeat them, yet then he keeps the power and savour of them in his spirit. As when sugar is dissolved in wine, you cannot see it, but you may taste it; when meat is eaten and digested it is not to be found as it was received, but the man is cheered and strengthened by it, more able to walk and work than before, by which you may know it is not lost; so you may taste the truths the Christian heard in his spirit [and] see them in his life. Perhaps if you ask him what the particulars were the minister had about faith, mortification, repentance, and the like, he cannot tell you; yet this you may find, his heart is more broken for sin, more enabled to rely on the promises, and now weaned from the world. As that good woman answered one, that coming from sermon, asked her what she remembered of the sermon; [she] said she could not recall much, but she heard that which should make her reform some things as soon as she came home.

(2.) Meditate on what thou hearest. By this David got more wisdom than his teachers. Observe what truth, what Scripture is cleared to thee in the sermon more than before, take some time in secret to converse with it, and make it thereby familiar to thy understanding. Meditation to the sermon in what the harrow is to the seed, it covers those truths, which else might have been picked or washed away. I am afraid there are many proofs turned down at a sermon, that are hardly turned up, and looked on any more, when the sermon is done; and if so, you make others believe you are greater traders for your souls, than you are indeed. It is as if one should come to a shop and lay by a great deal of rich ware, and when he hath done goes away, and never calls for it. O take heed of such doings. The hypocrite cheats himself worst at last.

(3.) Discharge thy memory of what is sinful. We wipe our table-book and deface what is there scribbled, before they can write anew. There is such a contrariety betwixt the truths of God, and all that is frothy and sinful, that one puts out the other. If you would retain the one, you must let the other go.

BRANCH FOURTH.

Against spiritual wickedness.

These words are the fourth branch in the description, spiritual wickedness, and our contest or combat with them as such [is] expressed by the adversative particle ‘against.’ In the Greek [it reads] BDÎH J■ B<,Lμ"J46■ JH B@<0D\"H, word for word, against the spirituals of wickedness, which is, say some, ‘against wicked spirits;’ that is true, but not all. I conceive, with many

interpreters, not only the spiritual nature of the devil, and the wickedness thereof, to be intended, but also, yea chiefly, the nature and kind of those sins which these wicked spirits do most usually and vigorously provoke the saints unto; and they are the spirituals of wickedness, not those gross fleshly sins, which the heard of beastly sinners, like swine, wallow in, but sin spiritualized, and this because it is not B<XLμ"J" but B<,Lμ"J46■, not spirits, but spirituals. The words present us with these three doctrinal conclusions. First. The devils are spirits. Second. the devils are spirits extremely wicked. Third. These wicked spirits do chiefly annoy the saints with, and provoke them to, spiritual wickednesses.

[The spirituality of the devil's nature.]

Doctrine First. The devils are spirits. Spirit is a word of various acceptation in Scripture. Amongst others, [it is] used often to set forth the essence and nature of angels, good and evil, both which are called spirits. the holy angles, 'Are they not all ministering spirits?' Hebrews 1:14. The evil 'And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him,' 1 Kings 22:21; that spirit was a devil. How oft is the devil called the unclean spirit, foul spirit, lying spirit, &c.! Sin did not alter their substance, for then, as one saith well, that nature and substance which transgressed could not be punished.

First. The devil is a spirit; that is, his essence is immaterial and simple, not compounded, as corporal beings are, of matter and form: 'Handle me and see,' saith Christ to his disciples, that thought they had seen a spirit, 'for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have,' Luke 24:39. If they were not thus immaterial, how could they enter into bodies and possess them, as the Scripture tells us they have [done], even a legion into one man? Luke 8:30. One body cannot thus enter into another.

Second. The devils are spiritual substances, not qualities, or evil motions, arising from us, as some have absurdly conceived. So the Sadducees, and others following them, deny any such being as angel, good or evil; but this is so fond a conceit, that to maintain it, we must both forfeit our reason and deny the Scriptures. There we find their creation related, Colossians 1:16; the fall of some from their first estate, Jude 1:6, and the standing of others, called the elect angels; the happiness of the one [class], who behold God's face, and their employment—sent out to attend on the saints, as servants on their master's heirs, Hebrews 1:14; the misery of the other, reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgement of the great day; and their present work, which is to do mischief to the souls and bodies of men, as far as they are permitted; all which show their subsistence plain enough. But so immersed is sorry man in flesh, that he will not easily believe what he sees not with his fleshly eyes. Upon the same account we may deny the being of God himself, being invisible.

Third. They are entire spiritual substances, which have, every one, proper existence. And thus they are distinguished from the souls of men, which are made to subsist in a human body, and together with it make one perfect man; so that the soul, though, when separated from the body, it doth exist, yet hath a tendency to union with its body again.

Fourth. They are, though entire spiritual substances, yet finite, being but creatures. God only is the uncreated, infinite, and absolutely simple Spirit, yea, Father of all other spirits. Now from this spiritual nature of the devil, we may further see, [What a dreadful enemy we have to grapple with.]

First. As spirits, they are of vast intellectual abilities. Sorry man, while in this dark prison of the body, hath not light enough to know what angelical perfections are. That they excel in knowledge all other creatures, we know because, as spirits, they come nearest by creation to the nature of God who made them. The heavens are not lift higher from the earth, than angels, by knowledge, from man while on earth. Man, by art, hath learned to take the height of the stars of heaven, but where is he that can tell how far in knowledge angels exceed man? It is true they have lost much of that knowledge they had, even all their knowledge as holy angels; what now they know of God hath lost its savour, and they have no power to use it for their own good. What Jude saith of wicked men, may be said of them: What they know naturally, in these things they corrupt themselves. They know the holiness of God, but love him not for it, as the elect angels do, and themselves by creation did. They know the evil of sin, and love it not the less; but though they are such fools for themselves, yet [they] have subtilty too much for all the saints on earth, if we had not a God to play our game for us.

Second. As spirits, they are invisible, and their approaches also. They come, and you see not your enemy. Indeed, this makes him so little feared by the ignorant world, whereas it is his greatest advantage, if rightly weighed. O, if men have an apparition of the devil, or hear a noise in the night, they cry, ‘The devil! the devil!’ and are ready to run out of their wits for fear; but they carry him in their hearts, and walk all the day long in his company, and fear him not. When thy proud heart is clambering up to the pinnacle of honour in thy ambitious thoughts, who sets thee there but the devil? When thy adulterous heart is big with all manner of uncleanness and filthiness, who but Satan hath been there, begetting these brats on thy whorish spirit? When thou art raging in thy passion, throwing burning coals of wrath and fury about with thy inflamed tongue, where was it set on fire, but of hell? When thou art hurried like the swine into the precipice, and even choked with thy own drunken vomit, who but the devil rides thee?

Third. As spirits, they are immortal. Of other enemies you may hear news at last, that ‘they are which sought thy life,’ as the angel told Joseph of Herod. Persecuting men walk a turn or two upon the stage, and are called off by death, and there is an end of all their plots; but devils die not, they will hunt thee to thy grave, and when thou diest they will meet thee in another world, to accuse and torment thee there also.

Fourth. As spirits, they are unwearied in their motions. When the fight is over among men, the conqueror must sit down and breathe, and so loseth the chase because not able to pursue it in time. Yea, some have given over their empires, as glutted with the blood of men, and weary of the work, when they cannot have their will as they desired. Thus Diocletian, because he saw he did but mow a meadow, that grew the thicker for cutting down—as Tertullian speaks of the Christians martyred—he throws away his sceptre in a pet. Charles V. did the like, some say, upon the same reason, because he could not root out the Lutherans. But the devil’s spirit is never cowed, nor he weary of doing mischief, though he hath never stood still since first began his walk to and fro the world. O what would become of us, if a God were not at our back, who is infinitely more the devil’s odds than he ours.

[The extreme wickedness of the devils.]

Doctrine Second. The devils are spirits extremely wicked; wicked in the abstract, as in the text, and called by way of eminency is sin, ‘the wicked one,’ Matthew 13:19. As God is called the Holy

One, because none [is] holy as the Lord; so the devil, the wicked one, because he is a none-such in sin. In a few particulars let us endeavour to take the height of the devil's sin, and rather that we may judge of the degrees of sins and [of] sinners among the sons of men: the nearer God in holiness, the more holy; the liker the devil, the more wicked.

Particular First. These apostate angels are the inventors of sin—the first that sounded the trumpet of rebellion against their Maker, and led the dance to all that sin which since hath filled the world. Now, what tongue can accent this sin to its full? for such a noble creature whom God hath set on the top, as it were, of all the creation, nearest to himself, [and] from whom God had kept nothing but his own royal diadem; for this peer and favourite of the court, without any cause or solicitation from any other, to make this bold and blasphemous attempt to snatch at God's own crown, this paints the devil blacker than the thoughts of men and angels can conceive. He is called 'the father of lies,' as those who found out any art are the father of it. Jubal 'the father of all such as handle the harp and organ,' he invented music. And this is a dreadful aggravation, because they sinned without a tempter. And though man is not in such a degree capable of this aggravation, yet some men sin after the very similitude of the devil's transgression in this respect; who, as St. Paul styles them, are 'inventors of evil things,' Romans 1:30. Indeed sin is an old trade, found out to our hand; but as in other trades and arts, some famous men arise, who add to the inventions of others, and make trades and arts, as it were, new; so, there ever are some infamous in their generation, that make old sins new by superadding to the wickedness of others. Uncleanness is an old sin from the beginning; but the Sodomites will be filthy in a new way, and therefore it carries their name to this day. Some invent new errors; others new oaths —such as are of their own coining—hot out of the mint; they scorn to swear after the old fashion. Others [invent] new devices of persecuting, as Julian, [who] had a way by himself different from all before him; and to the end of the world every age will exceed other in the degrees of sinning. Ishmael and the mockers of the old world were but children and bunglers to the scoffers and cruel mockers of the last time. Well, take heed of showing thy wit in inventing new sins, lest thou stir up God in inventing new punishments. 'Is not destruction to the wicked? and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity?' Job 31:3. Sodom sinned after a new mode, and God destroys them after a new way—sends hell from above upon them. Some have invented new opinions, monstrous errors, and God hath suited their monstrous errors with births as monstrous of their own body.

Particular Second. They were not only the inventors of sin, but are still the chief tempters to, and promoters of sin in the world. [They are] therefore called Ò B,4DV.T<, the tempter, and sin [is] called 'the work of the devil,' whoever commits it; as the house goes by the name of the master-workman, though he useth his servant's hands to build it. O take heed of soliciting others to sin. Thou takest the devil's office, as I may say, out of his hand. Let him do it himself if he will. Make not thyself so like him. To tempt another is worse than to sin thyself. It speaks sin to be of great growth in that man, that doth it knowingly and willingly. Herbs and flowers shed not their seed till ripe, creatures propagate not till of stature and age. What do these that tempt others, but diffuse their wicked opinions and practices, and, as it were, raise up seed to the devil, thereby to keep up the name of their infernal father in the world? This shows sin is mighty in them indeed. Many a man, though so cruel to his own soul as to be drunk or swear, yet will not like this in a child or servant. What are they then but devils incarnate, who teach their children the devil's catechism, to swear and lie, drink and drab[30]? If you meet such, be not afraid to call them, as Paul did

Elymas, when he would have perverted the deputy, children of the devil, full of all subtilty and mischief, and enemies of all righteousness. O do you not know what you do when you tempt? I will tell you. You do that which you cannot undo by your own repentance. Thou poisonest one with error, initiatest another in the devil's school—alehouse I mean; but afterwards may be, thou seest thy mistake, and recantest thy error, thy folly, and givest over thy drunken trade. Art thou sure now to rectify and convert them with thyself? Alas, poor creatures! this is out of thy power. They, may be, will say, as he—though he did it on a better account—that was solicited to turn back to Popery by him who had persuaded him to renounce the same: 'You have given me one turn, but shall not give me another.' And what a grief to thy spirit will it be, to see those going to hell on thy errand, and thou not able to call them back! Thou mayest cry out as Lamech, 'I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt.' Nay, when thou art asleep in thy grave, he whom thou seduced may have drawn in others, and thy name may be quoted to commend the opinion and practice to others; by which, as it is said, though in another sense, Abel being dead yet speaketh. Thou mayest, though dead, sin in those that are alive, generation after generation. A little spark kindled by the error of one, hath cost the pains of many ages to quench it, and when thought to be out, hath broken forth again.

Particular Third. They are not barely wicked, but maliciously wicked. The devil hath his name Ò B@<,DÎH, to denote his spiteful nature—his desire to vex and mischief others. When he draws souls to sin, it is not because he tastes any sweetness or finds any profit therein—he hath too much light to have any joy or peace in sin. He knows his doom, and trembles at the thought of it; and yet his spiteful nature makes him vehemently desire and incessantly endeavour the damnation of souls. As you shall see a mad dog run after a flock of sheep, kill one, then another, though when dead [he is] not able to eat of their flesh, but kills to kill; so Satan is carried out with a boundless rage against man, especially the saints, and would not, if he could, leave one of Christ's flock alive. Such is the height of his malice against God, whom he hates with a perfect hatred; and, because he cannot reach him with a direct blow, therefore he strikes him at the second-hand through his saints; that wicked arm which reacheth not to God, is extended against these excellent on the earth—well knowing the life of God is in a manner bound up in theirs. God cannot outlive his honour, and his honour speeds as his mercy is exalted or depressed; this being the attribute God means to honour in their salvation so highly, and therefore maligned above the rest by Satan. And this is the worst that can be said of these wicked spirits, that they maliciously spite God, and in God the glory of his mercy.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. This may help us conceive more fully what the desperate wickedness of man's nature is, which is so hard to be known, because it can never be seen at once—it being a fountain whose immensity consists not in the stream of actual sin—that is visible, and may seem little—but in the spring that incessantly feeds this. But here is a glass that will give us the shape of our hearts truly like themselves. Seest thou the monstrous pitch and height of wickedness that is in the devil? All this there is in the heart of every man. There is no less wickedness potentially in the tamest sinner on earth, than in the devils themselves, and that one day thou, whoever thou art, wilt show to purpose, if God prevent thee not by his renewing grace. Thou art not yet fledged, thy wings are not grown to make thee a flying dragon; but thou art of the same brood, the seed of this serpent is in thee, and the devil begets a child like himself. Thou yet standest in a soil not so proper for the

ripening of sin—which will not come to its fulness till transplanted unto hell. Thou who art here so maidenly and modest, as to blush at some sins out of shame, and [to] forbear the acting of others out of fear, when there thou shalt see thy case as desperate as the devil doth his, then thou wilt spit out thy blasphemies, with which thy nature is stuffed, with the same malice that he doth. The Indians have a conceit, that when they die they shall be transformed into the deformed likeness of the devil; therefore in their language they have the same word for a dead man and the devil. Sin makes the wicked like him before they come there, but indeed they will come to their countenance more fully there, when those flames shall wash off that paint which here hides their complexion. The saints in heaven shall be like angels, in their alacrity, love, and constancy to serve God; and the damned like the devils, in sin as well as punishment. This one consideration might be of excellent use to unbottom a sinner, and abase him, so as never to have high thought of himself. It is easy to run down a person whose life is wicked, and convince him of the evil of his actions, and make him confess what he doth is evil, but here is the thicket we lose him in. He will say, 'It is true, I am overseen[31], I do what I should not, God forgive me, but my heart is good.' Thy heart good, sinner? and so is the devil's. His nature is wicked, and thine [is] as bad as his. These pimples in thy face show the heat of thy corrupt nature within, and without gospel physic—the blood of Christ applied to thee—thou wilt die a leper. None but Christ can give thee a new heart, till which, thou wilt every day grow worse and worse. Sin is an hereditary disease that increaseth with age. A young sinner will be an old devil.

Use Second. Again, it would be of use to the saints; especially to those in whom God by his timely call forestalled the devil's market; as sometimes the Spirit of God takes sin in its quarters before it comes into the field, in the sins of youth. Now such a one not finding those daring sins committed by him that others have been left unto, may possibly not be so affected with his own sin or God's mercy. O let such a one behold here the wickedness of his heart in the glass of the devil's nature, and he will see himself as a great debtor to the mercy of God as Manasseh, or the worst of sinners—as in pardoning, so in preventing the same cursed nature with theirs, before it gave fire on God with those bloody sins which they committed. That thou didst not act such outrageous sins, thou art beholden to God's gracious surprise, and not to the goodness of thy nature, which hath the devil's stamp on it, [and] for which God might have crushed thee, as we do the brood of serpents before they sting, knowing what they will do in time. Who will say that Fawkes suffered unjustly, because the parliament was not blown up? It is enough that the materials for that massacre were provided, and he taken there with match and fire about him ready to lay the train. And canst thou say, when God first took hold on thee, that thou hadst not those weapons of rebellion about thee—a nature full charged with enmity against God, which in time would have made its own report of what for [the] present lay like unfired powder silent in thy bosom? O Christian, think of this, and be humbled for thy villanous nature, and say, blessed be God that sent his Spirit and grace so timely to stay thy hand—as Abigail to David—while thy nature meditated nothing but war against God and his laws.

Use Third. Again, are the devils so wickedly malicious against God himself? O sirs, take the right notion, of sin, and you will hate it. The reason why we are so easily persuaded to sin is, because we understand not the bottom of his design in drawing a creature to sin. It is with men in sinning as it is with armies in fighting. Captains beat their drums for volunteers, and promise all that list, pay and plunder; and this makes them come trowling in. But few consider what the ground of the war

is, against whom, or for what. Satan enticeth to sin, and gives golden promises [of] what they shall have in his service, with which silly souls are one. But how few ask their souls, Whom do I sin against? What is the devil's design in drawing me to sin? Shall I tell thee? Dost thou think it is thy pleasure or profit he desires in thy sinning? Alas, he means nothing less, he hath greater plots in his head than so. He hath, by his apostasy, proclaimed war against God, and he brings thee, by sinning, to espouse his quarrel, and to jeopard the life of thy soul in defence of his pride and lust; which that he may do, he cares no more for the damnation of thy soul, than the great Turk doth to see a company of his slaves cut off for the carrying on of his design in a siege. And darest thou venture to go into the field upon his quarrel against God? O earth, tremble thou at the presence of the Lord. This bloody Joab sets thee where never came any off alive. O stand not where God's bullets fly. Throw down thy arms, or thou art a dead man. Whatever others do, O ye saints, abhor the thoughts of sinning willingly; which when you do, you help the devil against God. And what more unnatural than for a child to be seen in arms against his father?

[Satan's plot to defile the Christian with Spiritual Wickedness.]

Doctrine Third. These wicked spirits do chiefly annoy the saints with, and provoke them to, spiritual wickedness. Sins may be called spiritual upon a double account; either, First. From the subject wherein they are acted; or Second. From the object about which they are conversant.

First Sort of Spiritual Sins, So called from the subject wherein they are acted.

First. Sins may be called spiritual, from the subject wherein they are acted. When the spirit or heart is the stage whereon sin is acted, this is a spiritual sin; such are all impure thoughts, vile affections and desires. Though the object be fleshly lust, yet [they] are spiritual sins, because they are purely acts of the soul and spirit, and break not forth unto the outward man.

[They are heart sins.]

Satan labours what he can to provoke the Christian to heart sins—to stir up and foment these inward motions of sin in the Christian's bosom. Hence it is, he can go about no duty, but these—his imps, I may call them—haunt him; one motion or other darts in to interrupt him, as Paul tells us of himself, 'When he would do good, evil was present with him.' If a Christian should turn back whenever these cross the way of him, he should never go on his journey to heaven. It is the chief game the devil hath left to play against the children of God—now his field-army is broken, and his commanding power taken away which he had over them—to come out of these his holds where he lies skulking, and fall upon their rear with these suggestions. He knows his credit now is not so great with the soul as when it was his slave. Then no drudgery work was so base that it would not do at his command; but now the soul is out of his bondage, and he must not think to command another's servant as his own. No, all he can do is to watch the fittest season—when the Christian least suspects—and then to present some sinful motion, handsomely dressed up, to the eye of the soul, that the Christian may, before he is aware, take this brat up and dandle it in his thoughts, till at last he makes it his own by embracing it; and this he knows will defile the soul; and, may be, this boy sent in at the window, may open the door to let in a greater thief. Or if he should not so prevail, yet the guilt of these heart sins, yea, their very neighbourhood will be a sad vexation to a gracious heart, whose nature is so pure that it abhors all filthiness—so that to be haunted with such notions, is as if a living man should be chained to a stinking carcase, that wherever he goes

he must draw that after him; and whose love is so dear to Christ, that it cannot bear the company of those thoughts without amazement and horror, which are so contrary and abusive to his beloved. This makes Satan so desirous to be ever raking in the unregenerate part, that as a dunghill stirred, it may offend them both with the noisome streams which arise from it.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. Let this be for trial of thy spiritual state. What entertainment finds Satan when he comes with these spirituals of wickedness, and solicits thee to dwell on them? Canst thou dispense with the filthiness of thy spirit, so thy hands be clean? or dost thou wrestle against these heart sins as well as others? I do not ask, whether such guests come within thy door—for the worst of sins may be found, in the motions of them, not only passing by the door of a Christian, but looking in also, as holy motions may be found stirring in the bosom of wicked men—but I ask thee, whether thou canst find in thy heart to lodge these guests and bid them welcome? It is like, thou wouldst not be seen to walk in the street with such company—not lead a whore by the hand through the town—not violently break open thy neighbour's house to murder or rob him; but canst thou not under thy own roof, in the withdrawing room of thy soul, let thy thoughts hold up an unclean lust, while thy heart commits speculative folly with it? Canst thou not draw thy neighbour into thy den, and there rend him limb from limb by thy malice, and thy heart not so much as cry Murder, murder? In a word, canst thou hide any one sin in the vance-roof[32] of thy heart, there to save the life of it when inquired after by the Word and Spirit, as Rahab hid the spies, and sent the king of Jericho's messengers to pursue them, as if they had been gone? Perhaps thou canst say, 'The adulterer, the murderer is not here,' thou hast sent these sins away long ago; and all this while thou hidest them in the love of thy soul. Know it, or thou shalt another day know it to thy cost, thou art stark nought. If there were a spark of the life of God or the love of Christ in thy bosom, though thou couldst not hinder such motions in thy soul, yet thou wouldst not conceal them, much less nourish them in thy bosom; when overpowered by them, thou wouldst call in help from heaven against these destroyers of thy soul.

Use Second. Show your loyalty, O ye saints, to God, by a vigorous resistance of, and wrestling against, these spirituals of wickedness.

1. Consider, Christian, heart sins are sins as well as any. 'The thought of foolishness is sin,' Proverbs 24:9. Mercury is poison in the water distilled, as well as in the gross body. Uncleanness, covetousness, murder are such in the heart as well as in the outward act; every point of hell, is hell.

2. Consider, Thy spirit is the seat of the Holy Spirit. He takes up the whole heart for his lodging, and it is time for him to be gone when he sees his house let over his head. Defile not thy spirit till thou art weary of his company.

3. Consider, There may be more wickedness in a sin of the heart than of the hand and outward man; for the aggravation of these is taken from the behaviour of the heart in the act. The more of the heart and spirit [that] is let out, the more malignity is let in to any sinful act. To backslide in heart, is more than to backslide. It is the comfort of a poor soul, when tempted and troubled for his relapses, that though his foot slides back, yet his heart turns not back, but faceth heaven and Christ at the same time; so to err in the heart is worse than to have an error in the head. Therefore

God aggravates Israel's sin with this, 'They do alway err in their heart,' Hebrews 3:10. Their hearts run them upon the error; they liked idolatry, and so were soon made to believe what pleased them best. As, on the contrary, the more of the heart and spirit is in any holy service, the more real goodness there is in it, though it fall short of others in the outward expression. The widow's two mites surpassed all the rest, Christ himself being judge; so in sin, though the internal acts of sin, in thoughts and affections, seem light upon man's balance, if compared with outward acts, yet these may be so circumstantiated that they may exceed the other in God's account. Peter lays the accent of Magus' sin on the wicked thought, which his words betrayed to be in his heart, 'Pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee,' Acts 8:22. Saul's sin in sparing Agag, and saving the best of the sheep and oxen, which he was commanded to destroy, was materially a far less sin than David's adultery and murder, yet it is made equal with a greater than both, even witchcraft itself, 1 Samuel 15:23; and whence received his sin such a dye, but from the wickedness of his heart, that was worse than David's when deepest in the temptation.

4. Consider, If Satan get into thy spirit and defile it, O how hard wilt thou find it to stay there? Thou hast already sipped of his broth, and now art more likely to be overcome at last to sit down and make thy full meal of that, which by tasting hath vitiated thy palate already. It were strange, if, while thou art musing, and thy heart hot with the thought of lust, the fire should not break forth at thy lips, or worse.

[Helps against this sort of Satan's temptations.] Question. But what help have we against this sort of Satan's temptations?

Answer. I suppose thee a Christian, that makest this question; and if thou dost it in the plainness of thy heart it proves thee one. Who, besides, will or can desire in earnest, to be eased of these guests? Even when a carnal heart prays for deliverance from them, he would be loath his prayer should be heard. 'Not yet, Lord,' the heart of such a one cries, as Austin confessed of himself. Sin is as truly the offspring of the soul, as children are of our bodies, and it finds as much favour in our eyes; yea more, for the sinner can slay a son to save a sin alive, Micah 6:7, and of all sins, none are made more on, than these heart sins.

1. Because they are the first-born of the sinful heart, and the chiefest strength of the soul is laid out upon them.

2. Because the heart hath more scope in them than in outward acts. The proud man is staked down oft to a short state, and cannot ruffle it in the world, and appear to others in that pomp he would; but within his own bosom he can set up a stage, and his own foolish heart present himself as a great a prince as he pleaseth. The malicious can kill, in his desires, as many in a few minutes, as the angel smote in a night of Sennacherib's host. Nero thus could slay all Rome on the block at once.

3. These sins stay with the soul when the others leave it. When the sinner hath crippled his body with drunkenness and filthiness, and proves miles emeritus —cannot follow the devil's camp longer in those ways —then these cursed lusts will entertain him with stories of his old pranks and pleasures. In a word, these inward lusts of the heart, have nothing but the conscience of a Deity to quell them. Other sins put the sinner to shame before men; and, as some that believed on Christ durst not confess him openly, because they loved the praise of men, so there are sinners who are

kept from vouching their lusts openly, for the same tenderness to their reputation. But here is no fear of that, if they can but forget that heaven sees them, or persuade themselves there is no danger from thence, the coast then is clear; they may be as wicked as they please. These make inward sins so hugged and embraced. If thou therefore canst find thy heart set against these, I may venture to call thee a Christian. And for thy help against them, improve the following.

First Help. Be earnest with God in prayer to move and order thy heart in its thoughts and desires. If the tongue be such an unruly thing that few can tame; O what is the heart, whence such a multitude of thoughts are flying forth as thick as bees from the hive, and sparks from the furnace! It is not in man, not in the holiest on earth to do this without divine assistance. Therefore we find David so often crying out in this respect, to order his steps in his word, to unite his heart to his fear, to incline his heart to his testimonies. As a servant, when the child he tends is troublesome and will not be ruled by him, who no sooner speaks but all is whist with him. No doubt holy David found his heart beyond his skill or power, that makes him so oft do his errand to God. Indeed, God hath promised thus much to his children, to order their steps for them, Psalms 37:22, only he looks they should bring their hearts to him for that end. ‘Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established,’ Proverbs 16:3, or ordered. Art thou setting thy face towards an ordinance, where thou art sure to meet Satan, who will be disturbing thee with worldly thoughts and may be worse? Let God know from thy mouth whither thou art going, and what thy fears are. Never doth the soul march in so goodly order, as when it puts itself under the conduct of God.

Second Help. Set a strong guard about thy outward senses. These are Satan’s landing places, especially the eye and ear. Take heed what thou importest at them. Vain discourse seldom passeth without leaving some tincture upon the heart; as unwholesome air inclines to putrefaction things sweet in themselves, so unsavory discourse to corrupt the mind that is pure. Look thou breathest therefore in a clean air. And for thy eye, let it not wander. Wanton objects cause wanton thoughts. Job knew his eye and his thoughts were like to go together, and therefore, to secure one, he covenants with the other, Job 31:1.

Third Help. Often reflect upon thyself in a day, and observe what company is with thy heart. A careful master will ever and anon will be looking into his workhouse, and seeing what his servants are doing, and a wise Christian should do the same. We may know by the noise in the school [that] the master is not there. Much of the misrule in our bosoms ariseth from the neglect of visiting our hearts. Now, when thou art parleying with thy soul, make this threefold inquiry.

1. Inquire, Whether that which thy heart is thinking on, be good or evil. If evil and wicked, such as are proud, unclean, distrustful thoughts, show thy abhorrency of them, and chide thy soul sharply for so much as holding a conference with them, of which nought can come but dishonour to God, and mischief to thy own soul; and stir up thy heart to mourn for the evil neighbourhood of them, and by this thou shalt give a testimony of faithfulness to God. When David mourned for Abner, ‘all Israel,’ it is said, ‘understood that day that it was not of the king to slay Abner.’ Thy mourning for them will show, that these thoughts are not so much of thee as of Satan.

2. Inquire, If thy thoughts be not broadly wicked, then inquire whether they be not empty, frothy, vain imaginations, that have no subserviency to the glory of God, thy own good or others’; and if so, leave not till thou hast made thyself apprehensive of Satan’s design on thee, in them. Though such are not for thy purpose, yet they are for his; they serve his turn to keep thee from better. All

the water is lost that runs beside the mill, and all thy thoughts are waste which help thee not to do God's work withal, in thy general or particular calling. The bee will not sit on a flower where no honey can be sucked, neither should the Christian. Why sittest thou here idle —thou shouldst say to thy soul—when thou hast so much to do for God and thy soul and so little time to despatch it in?

3. Inquire, If thou findest they are good for matter thy heart is busied about, then inquire whether they be good for time and manner, which being wanting they degenerate.

(1.) Are they good for the time or the season? That is good fruit which is brought forth in its season. Christ liked the work his mother would have put him upon as well as herself, John 2:4, but his time was not come. Good thoughts and meditations misplaced, are like some interpretations of Scripture—good truths but bad expositions; they fit not the place they are drawn from, nor these the time. To pray when we should hear, or be musing on the sermon when we should pray, is to rob God one way so as to pay him another.

(2.) Are they good for the manner? Thy heart may meditate a good matter, and spoil it in the doing. Thou art, may be, musing of thy sins, and affecting thy heart into a sense of them, but so, that while thou art stirring up thy sorrow, thou weakenest thy faith on the promise. That is thy sin. He is a bad chirurgeon that in opening a vein goes so deep that he cuts into an artery, and lames the arm, if [he does] not kill the man. Or thou art thinking of thy family, and providing for that; this thou oughtest to do, and wert worse than an infidel if thou neglectest; but, may be, these thoughts are so distracting and distrustful, as if there were no promise, no providence to relieve thee. God takes this ill, because it reflect upon his care of thee. O how near doth our duty here stand to our sin! So much care, is necessary ballast to the soul; a little more sinks it under the waves of unbelief. It is like some things [which are] very wholesome, but, one degree more of hot or cold would make them poison.

Second Sort of Spiritual Sins, So called from the object about which they are conversant.

Second. Sins may be called spiritual, from the object about which they are conversant; when that is spiritual and not carnal, such as idolatry, error, spiritual pride, unbelief, &c., both which Paul calls the filthiness of the spirit, and distinguisheth them from filthiness of the flesh, 2 Corinthians 7:1.

They are such as are not only acted in the spirit, but are conversant about spiritual objects proper to the soul's nature that is a spirit, and not laid out in carnal passions of fleshly lusts, in which the soul acts as but a pander for the body, and partakes of their delights only by way of sympathy; for as the soul feels the body's pains no other way than by sympathy, so neither doth it share in the pleasures of the flesh by any proper taste it hath of them, but only, from its near neighbourhood with the body, doth sympathize with its joy. But in spiritual wickednesses that corrupt the mind, the soul moves in its own sphere, with a delight proper to itself, and there are no less of these than the other. There is hardly a fleshly lust but hath some spiritual sin analogous to it, as they say there is no species of creatures on the land but may be patterned in the sea. Thus the heart of man can produce spiritual sins answering carnal lusts. For whoredom and uncleanness of the flesh, there is idolatry, called in Scripture spiritual adultery, from which the seat of Antichrist is called spiritual Sodom; for sensual drunkenness, there is a drunkenness of the mind, intoxicating the judgement with error, a drunkenness of the heart in cares and fears; for carnal pride in beauty, riches, honour,

there is a spiritual pride of gifts, graces, &c. Now Satan in an especial manner assaults the Christian with such as these, [but] it would require a larger discourse than I can allow, to run over the several kinds of them. I shall, of many, pick out two or three.

First Spiritual Wickedness—Error in Principle.

First. Satan labours to corrupt the mind with erroneous principles. He was at work at the very first plantation of the gospel, sowing his darnel as soon almost as Christ his wheat. This sprung up in pernicious errors even in the apostles' times, which made them take the weeding-hook into their hands, and, in all their epistles, labour to countermine Satan in his design. Now in this his endeavour to corrupt the minds of men, especially professors, with error, Satan hath a threefold design,

First Design. He doth this in despite to God, against whom he cannot vent his malice at a higher rate, than by corrupting his truth, which God hath so highly honoured, 'For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.' Psalms 138:2. Every creature bears the name of God, but in his word and truth therein contained it is writ at length, and therefore he is more choice of this than of all his other works; he cares not much what becomes of the world and all in it, so he keeps his word and saves his truth. Ere long we shall see the world on a light flame; 'The heavens and earth shall pass away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever.' When God will, ha can make more such worlds as this is, but he cannot make another truth, and therefore he will not lose one iota thereof. Satan, knowing this, sets all his wits on work to deface this truth, and disfigure it by unsound doctrine. The word is the glass in which we see God, and seeing him, are changed into his likeness by his Spirit. If this glass be cracked, then our conceptions we have of God will misrepresent him unto us, whereas the word in its native clearness sets him out in all his glory unto our eye.

Second Design. He endeavours to draw into this spiritual sin of error, as the most subtle and effectual means to weaken, if not destroy, the power of godliness in them. The apostle joins the spirit of power and a sound mind together, 2 Timothy 1:7. Indeed the power of holiness in practice depends much on the soundness of judgment. Godliness is the child of truth, and it must be nursed, if we will have it thrive, with no other milk than of its own mother. Therefore we are exhorted to 'desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow,' 1 Peter 2:2[33]; if this milk be but a little dashed with error, it is not so nutritive. All error, how innocent soever it may seem, like the ivy, draws away the strength of the soul's love from holiness. Hosea tells us whoredom and wine take away the heart, now error is spiritual adultery. Paul speaks of his espousing them to Christ. When a person receives an error, he takes a stranger into Christ's bed, and it is the nature of adulterous love to take away the wife's heart from her true husband, that she delights not in his company so much as [in that] of her adulterous lover. And do we not see it at this day fulfilled? Do not many show more zeal in contending for one error, than for many truths? How strangely are the hearts of many taken off from the ways of God, their love cooled to the ordinances and messengers of Christ!—and all this occasioned by some corrupt principle got into their bosoms, which controls Christ and his truth, as Hagar and her son did Sarah and her child. Indeed Christ will never enjoy true conjugal love from the soul, till, like Abraham, he turns these out of doors. Error is not so innocent a thing as many think it; it is as unwholesome food to the body—that poisons the spirits, and surfeits the whole body—which seldom passeth away without breaking out into sores. As the knowledge of Christ carries a soul above the pollutions of the world, so error entangles and

betrays it to those lusts, whose hands it had escaped.

Third Design. Satan in drawing a soul into this spiritual sin hath a design to disturb the peace of the church, which is rent and shattered when this fire-ship comes among them. ‘I hear,’ saith Paul, ‘that there be divisions among you, and I partly believe it, for there must also be heresies,’ 1 Corinthians 11:18-19 —implying that divisions are the natural issue of heresy. Error cannot well agree with error, except it be against the truth; then indeed, like Pilate and Herod, they are easily made friends; but when truth seems to be overcome, and the battle is over with that, then they fall out among themselves, and therefore it is no wonder if it be so troublesome a neighbour to truth. O sirs, what a sweet silence and peace was there among Christians a dozen years ago. Methinks the looking back to those blessed days in this respect—though they had also another way their troubles, yet not so uncomfortable, because that storm united, this scatters the saints’ spirits—is joyous, to remember in what unity and love Christians walked. The persecutors of those times might have said, as their predecessors did of the saints in primitive times, ‘See how they love one another,’ but now, alas, they may jeer and say, See how they that loved so dearly, are ready to pluck one another’s throats out.

[Use or Application.]

[A word of exhortation to all.] The application of this shall be only in a word of exhortation to all; especially you who bear the name of Christ by a more eminent profession of him. O beware of this soul-infection, this leprosy of the head. I hope you do not think it needless, for it is the disease of the times. This plague is begun, yea, spreads apace. [There is] not a flock, [not] a congregation hardly, that hath not this scab among them. Paul was a preacher the best of us all may write after, and he presseth this home upon the saints, yea, in the constant course of his preaching it made a piece of his sermon. He sets us preacher also upon this work; ‘Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock;—for I know this, that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter;—also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things,’ Acts 20:28-30; therefore watch. And then he presents his own example, that he hardly made a sermon for several years, but this was part of it, to warn every one night and day with tears. We need not prophesy what impostors may come upon the stage when we go off. There are too many at present above-board of this gang drawing disciples after them. And if it be our duty to warn you of them, surely it is yours to watch, lest you by any of them be led into temptation in this hour thereof, wherein Satan is let loose in so great a measure to deceive the nation. May you not as easily be soured with this leaven, as the disciples whom Christ bids beware? Are you privileged above those famous churches of Galatia and Corinth, many of which were bewitched with false teachers, and in a manner turned to another gospel? Is Satan grown orthodox, or have his instruments lost their cunning, who hunt for souls? In a word, is there not a sympathy between thy corrupt heart and error? Hast thou not a disposition, which, like the fomes of the earth, makes it natural for these weeds to grow in thy soil? Seest thou not many prostrated by this enemy, who sat upon the mountain of their faith, and thought it should never have been removed? Surely they would have taken it ill to have been told, ‘you are the men and women that will decry Sabbaths, which now ye count holy; you will turn Pelagians, who now defy the name; you will despise prophecy itself, who now seem so much to honour the prophets; you will throw family duties out of doors, who dare not now go out of doors till you have prayed there.’ Yet these, and more than these, are come to pass; and doth it not behove thee, Christian, to take heed lest thou fallest also? And that thou mayest

not,

1. Exhortation. Make it thy chief care to get a thorough change of thy heart. If once the root of the matter be in thee, and thou beest bottomed by a lively faith on Christ, thou art then safe, I do not say wholly free from all error; but this I am sure, free from engulfing thy soul in damning error. ‘They went out from us,’ saith St. John, ‘but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us,’ 1 John 2:19. As if he had said, They had some outward profession, and common work of the Spirit with us, which they have either lost or carried over to the devil’s quarters, but they never had the unction of the sanctifying Spirit. By this, ver. 20, he distinguisheth them, and comforts the sincere ones, who possibly might fear their own fall by their departure: ‘But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.’ It is one thing to know a truth, and another thing to know it by unction. An hypocrite may do the former, the saint only the latter. It is this unction which gives the soul the savour of the knowledge of Christ; those are the fit prey for impostors, who are enlightened, but not enlivened. O, it is good to have the heart established with grace! This, as an anchor, will keep us from being set adrift, and carried about with divers and strange doctrines, as the apostle teacheth us, Hebrews 13:9.

2. Exhortation. Ply the work of mortification. Crucify the flesh daily. Heresy, though a spiritual sin, [is] yet by the apostle reckoned among the deeds of the flesh, Galatians 5:20, because it is occasioned by fleshly motives, and nourished by carnal food and fleshly fuel. Never [have] any turned heretic, but flesh was at the bottom; either they served their belly or a lust of pride—it was the way to court, or secured their estates and saved their lives, as sometimes the reward of truth is fire and fagot. Some pad or other is in the straw when least seen; and therefore it is no wonder that heresies should end in the flesh, which in a manner sprang from it. The rheum in the head ascends in fumes from the stomach, and returns thither, or unto the lungs, which at last fret and ulcerate. Carnal affections first send up their fumes to the understanding, clouding that, yea, bribing it to receive such and such principles for truths; which [when] embraced, fall down into the life, corrupting that with the ulcer of profaneness. So that, Christian, if once thou canst take off thy engagements to the flesh, and become a free man, so as not to give thy vote to gratify thy carnal fears or hopes, thou wilt then be a sure friend to truth.

3. Exhortation. Wait conscionably on the ministry of the word. Satan commonly stops the ear from hearing sound doctrine, before he opens it to embrace corrupt. This is the method of souls [in] apostatizing from truth: ‘They shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables,’ 2 Timothy 4:3-4. Satan, like a cunning thief, draws the soul out of the road into some lane or corner, and there robs him of the truth. By rejecting of one ordinance, we deprive ourselves of the blessing of all others. Say not that thou prayest to be led into truth; God will not hear thy prayer if thou turnest thine ear from hearing the law. He that loves his child, when he sees him play the truant, will whip him to school. If God loves a soul, he will bring him back to the word with shame and sorrow.

4. Exhortation. When thou hearest any unusual doctrine, though never so pleasing, make not up the match hastily with it. Have some better testimony of it, before you open your heart to it. The apostle indeed bids us entertain strangers, for some have entertained angels unawares Hebrews 13:2; but he would not have us carried about with strange doctrine, Hebrews 13:9, [though] by this I am sure some have entertained devils. I confess, it is not enough to reject a doctrine, because

strange to us, but ground we have, to wait and inquire. Paul marvelled that the Galatians were so soon removed from him, who had called them unto the grace of Christ, unto another gospel. They might sure have stayed till they had acquainted Paul with it, and asked his judgement. What, no sooner an impostor come into the country, and open his pack, but buy all his ware at first sight! O friends, were it not more wisdom to pray such new notions over and over again, to search the Word, and our hearts by it, yea, not to trust our own hearts, but [to] call in counsel from others? If your minister have not such credit with you, get the most holy, humble, and established Christians you can find. Error is like fish, which must be eaten new or it will stink. When those dangerous errors sprung up first in New England, O how unsettled were the churches! what an outcry was made, as if some mine of gold had been discovered! But in a while, when those error came to their complexion, and it was perceived whither they were bound—to destroy churches, ordinances, and power of godliness—then such as feared God, who had stepped aside, returned back with shame and sorrow.

Second Spiritual Wickedness—Spiritual pride.

Second. The second spiritual wickedness which Satan provokes unto, especially the saint, is spiritual pride. This was the sin made him, of a blessed angel, a cursed devil; and as it was his personal sin, so he chiefly labours to derive it to the sons of man: and he so far prevailed on our first parents, that ever since, this sin hath and doth claim a kind of regency in the heart, making use of both bad and good to draw her chariot.

First. It maketh use of evil. Pride enters into the labours of other sins; they do but work to make her brave, as subjects to uphold the state and grandeur of their prince. Thus you shall see some drudge and droil, cheat, cozen, oppress; and what mean they? O it is to get an estate to maintain pride. Others fawn and flatter, lie, dissemble; and for what? to help pride up some mount of honour.

Second. It maketh use of that which is good. It can work with God’s own tools, his ordinances, by which the Holy Spirit advanceth his kingdom of grace in the hearts of his saints. These often are prostituted to pride. A man may be very zealous in prayer, and painful in preaching, and all the while pride is the master whom he serves, though in God’s livery. It can take sanctuary in the holiest actions, and hide itself under the skirt of virtue itself. Thus while a man is exercising his charity, pride may be the idol in secret for which he lavisheth out his gold so freely. It is hard starving this sin, because there is nothing almost but it can live on—nothing so base that a proud heart will not be lift up with, and nothing so sacred but it will profane; [it will] even dare to drink in the bowls of the sanctuary, nay, rather than starve, it will feed on the carcases of other sins. ‘That sin is with great difficulty avoided which springs from a victory of our vices.’[34] This minion pride will stir up the soul to resist, yea, in a manner kill, some sins, that she may boastingly show the head of them, and blow the creature up with the conceit of himself above others. As the Pharisee, who through pride bragged that he was not as the publican—so that pride, if not looked to, will have to do everywhere, and hath a large sphere it moves in. Nothing indeed (without divine assistance) the creature hath or doth, but will soon become a prey to this devourer. But I am not to handle it in this latitude.

Pride is either conversant about carnal objects, as pride of beauty, strength, riches, and such like, or about spiritual. The latter we shall speak a little to. I confess for the former, possibly a saint may

be catched in them—no sin [is] to be slighted—yet not so commonly, for ordinary pride is of those perfections which are suitable, if not proper, to the state and calling we are in. Thus the musician; he is proud of the skill he hath in his art, by which he excels others of his rank. The scholar, though he can play perhaps as well, yet is not proud of that, but looks on it as beneath him; no, he is proud of his learning and choice notions: and so of others.

Now the life of a Christian, as a Christian, is superior to the life of a man as a man; and therefore [he] doth not value himself by these which are beneath him, but in higher and more raised perfections, which suit a Christian's calling. As a natural man is proud of perfections suitable to his natural state, as honour, beauty; so the Christian is prone chiefly to be puffed up with perfections suitable to his life. I shall name three: First. Pride of gifts. Second. Pride of grace. Third. Pride of privileges. These are the things which Satan chiefly labours to entangle him in.

[First kind of spiritual pride—pride of gifts.]

First. By gifts, I mean those supernatural abilities, with which the Spirit of God doth enrich and endow the minds of men for edification of the body of Christ; of which gifts the apostle tells us there is great diversity, and all from the same Spirit, 1 Corinthians 12:4. There is not greater variety of colours and qualities of plants and flowers, with which the earth like a carpet of needle-work is variegated for the delight and service of man, than there is of gifts, natural and spiritual, in the minds of men, to render them useful to one another, both in civil societies and Christian fellowship. The Christian, as well as man, is intended to be a sociable creature, and for the better managing of this spiritual commonwealth among Christians, God doth wisely and graciously provide, and impart, gifts suitable to the place every one stands in [relative] to his brethren, as the vessels are larger or less in the body natural, according to the place therein. Now Satan labours what he can, to taint these gifts, and fly-blow them with pride in the Christian, that so he may spoil the Christian's trade and commerce, which is mutually maintained by the gifts and graces of one another. Pride of gifts hinders the Christian's trade—at least [its] thriving by their commerce, two ways. First. Pride of gifts is the cause why we do so little good with them to others. Second. Pride of gifts is the cause why we receive so little good from the gifts of others.

First. Pride of gifts is the cause why we do so little good with them to others, and that upon a threefold account.

1. Pride diverts a man from aiming at the end. So far as pride prevails, the man prays, preaches, &c., rather to thought good by others, than to do good to others; rather to enthrone himself, than Christ, in the opinions and hearts of his hearers. Pride carries the man aloft, to be admired for the height of his parts and notions, and will not suffer him to stoop so low as to speak of plain truths, or if he does, not plainly; he must have some fine lace, though on a plain stuff. Such a one may tickle the ear, but [is] very unlikely to do real good to the soul. Alas! it is not that he attends.

2. If this painted Jezebel of pride be perceived to look out at the window in any exercise, whether of preaching, prayer, or conference, it doth beget a disdain in the spirits of those that hear such a one, both good and bad. It is a sin very odious to a gracious heart, and oft-times makes the stomach go against the food, though good, through their abhorrency of that pride they see in the instrument. It is, indeed, their weakness, but woe to them that by their pride lead them into temptation! nay, those that are bad and may be in the same kind, like not that in another which

they favour in themselves, and so prejudiced [they] return as bad as they went.

3. Pride of gifts robs us of God's blessing in the use of them. The humble man may have Satan at his right hand to oppose him; but be sure the proud man shall find God himself there to resist him, whenever he goes about any duty. God proclaims so much, and would have the proud man know wherever he meets him [that] he will oppose him. He 'resisteth the proud.' Great gifts are beautiful as Rachel, but pride makes them also barren like her. Either we must lay self aside, or God will lay us aside.

Second. Pride of gifts is the cause why we receive so little good from the gifts of others. Pride fills the soul; and a full soul will take nothing from God, much less from man, to do it good. Such a one is very dainty; it is not every sermon, though wholesome food, not every prayer, though savoury, [that] will go down. He must have a choice dish. He thinks he hath better than this of his own. And is such a one like to get good? And truly we may see it, that as the plain ploughman, that can eat of any homely food if wholesome, hath more health, and is able to do more work in a day, than many enjoy or can do in their whole life, that are nice, squeamish, and courtly in their fare; so the humble Christian that can feed on plain truths, and ordinances which have not so much of the art of man to commend them to their palate, enjoy more of God, and can do more for God, than the nicer sort of professors, who are all to be served in a lordly dish of rare gifts. The church of Corinth was famous for gifts above other churches, 1 Corinthians 1:1-31, but not in grace; none [were] so charged for weakness in that, 1 Corinthians 3:2. He [Paul] calls them carnal babes in Christ, so weak as not able to digest man's meat. 'I have fed you,' saith Paul, 'with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.' Why? what is the matter? the reason lies, 'Ye are yet carnal: there is among you envying, and strife;' 1 Corinthians 3:3, 'One saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos,' 1 Corinthians 3:4. Pride makes them take parts, and make sides, one for this preacher, another for that, as they fancied one to excel another. And this is not the way to thrive. Pride destroys love, and love wanting edification is lost. The devil hath made foul work in the church by this engine. Zanchy tells of one in Geneva, who being desired to go hear Calvin, answered his friend, 'If Paul were to preach, I would leave Paul himself to hear Calvin[35].' And will pride in the gifts of another so far transport, even to the borders of blasphemy, what work will then pride make when the gifts are a man's own?

[Use or Application.]

Use 1. [To those that have mean gifts.] Doth Satan thus stir up saints to the spiritual pride of gifts? Here is a word to you that have mean gifts, yet truth of grace—be content with thy condition. Perhaps when thou hearest others, how enlargedly they pray, how able to discourse of the truths of God, and the like, thou art ready to go into a corner, and mourn to think how weak thy memory, how dull thy apprehension, how straitened thy spirit, hardly able, though in secret, to utter and express thy mind to God in prayer. O thou art ready to think those the happy men and women, and almost [to] murmur at thy condition. Well, canst thou not say, though I have no words, I hope I have faith? I cannot dispute for the truth, but I am willing to suffer for it. I cannot remember a sermon, but I never hear a word but I hate sin and love Christ more than ever. Lord, thou knowest I love thee. Truly, Christian, thou hast the better part; thou little thinkest what a mercy may be wrapt up even in the meanness of thy gifts, or what temptations their gifts expose them to, which God, for aught I know, may in mercy deny thee. Joseph's coat made him finer than his brethren, but this

caused all his trouble—this set the archers a shooting their arrows into his side. Thus, great gifts lift a saint up a little higher in the eyes of men, but it occasions many temptations which thou meetest not with that art kept low. What with envy from their brethren, malice from Satan, and pride in their own hearts, I dare say, none find so hard a work to go to heaven as such, [so] much ado to bear up against those waves and winds—while thou creepest along the shore under the wind to heaven. It is with such as with some great lord of little estate—a meaner man oft hath money in his purse, when he hath none, and can lend his lordship some at a need. Great gifts and parts are titles of honour among men, but many such may come and borrow grace and comfort of a mean-gifted brother, possibly, the preacher of his poor neighbour. O, poor Christians, do not murmur or envy them, but rather pity and pray for them, they need it more than others. His gifts are thine, thy grace is for thyself. Thou art like a merchant that hath his factor [who] goes to sea, but he hath his adventure without hazard brought home. Thou joinest with him in the prayer, hast the help of his gifts, but not the temptation of his pride.

Use 2. [To those that have great gifts.] Doth Satan labour thus to draw to pride of gifts? This speaks a word to you to whom God hath given more gifts than ordinary. Beware of pride, that is now your snare. Satan is at work; if possible he will turn your artillery against yourself. Thy safety lies in thy humility; if this lock be cut, the legions of hell are on thee. Remember whom thou wrestlest with—spiritual wickednesses—and their play is to lift up, that they may give the sorer fall. Now the more to stir up thy heart against it, I shall add some soul-humbling considerations on this pride of gifts.

1. Consideration. These spiritual gifts are not thine own; and wilt thou be proud of another's bounty? Is not God the founder, and can he not soon be the confounder of thy gifts? Thou that art proud of thy gourd, what wilt thou be when it is gone? Surely then thou wilt be peevish and angry, and truly thou takest the course to be stripped of them. Gifts come on other terms than grace. God gives grace as a freehold—it hath the promise of this and another world; but gifts come on liking. Though a father will not cast off his child, yet he may take away his fine coat and ornaments, if proud of them.

2. Consideration. Gifts are not merely for thyself. As the light of the sun is ministerial—it shines not for itself—so all thy gifts are for others —gifts for the edifying of the body. Suppose a man should leave a chest of money in your hands to be distributed to others, what folly is it in this man to put this into his own inventory, and applaud himself that he hath so much money? Poor soul, thou art but God's executor, and by that time thou hast paid all the legacies, thou wilt see little left for thee to brag and boast of.

3. Consideration. Know, Christian, thou shalt be accountable for these talents. Now, with what face can a proud soul look on God? Suppose one left an executor to pay legacies, and this man should pay them, not as legacies of another, but [as] gifts of his own. Christ at his ascension gave gifts that his children should receive. Thou hast some in thy hand. Now a proud soul gives out all, not as the legacy of Christ, but as his own; he assumes all to himself. O how abominable is this, to entitle ourselves to Christ's honour!

4. Consideration. Thy gifts commend thee not to God. Man may be taken with thy expression and notion in prayer; but these are all pared off when thy prayer comes before God. 'O woman,' saith Christ, 'great is thy faith!' not, compt[36] and flourishing thy language. It were good after our duties

to sort the ingredients of which they are made up—what grace contributed, and what gifts, and what pride—and when all the heterogeneal stuff is severed, you shall see in what a little compass the actings of grace in our duties will lie.

5. Consideration. Consider while thou art priding in thy gifts, thou art dwindling and withering in thy grace. Such are like corn that runs up much into straw, whose ear commonly is but light and thin. Grace is too much neglected where gifts are too highly prized; we are commanded to be clothed with humility. Our garments cover the shame of our bodies, humility the beauty of the soul. And as a tender body cannot live without clothes, so neither can grace without this clothing of humility. It kills the spirit of praise; when thou shouldst bless God, thou art applauding thyself. It destroys Christian love, and stabs our fellowship with the saints to the heart; a proud man hath not room enough to walk in company, because the gifts of others he thinks stand in his way. Pride so distempers the palate, that it can relish nothing that is drawn from another's vessel.

6. Consideration. It is the forerunner of some great sin, or some great affliction. God will not suffer such a weed as pride to grow in his garden without taking some course or other to root it up; may be he will let thee fall into some great sin, and that shall bring thee home with shame. God useth sometimes a thorn in the flesh, to prick the bladder of pride in the spirit; or at least some great affliction, the very end whereof is to 'hide pride from man,' Job 33:17,Job 33:19. As you do with your hot mettled horses—ride them over ploughed lands to tame them, and then you can sit safely on their back. If God's honour be in danger through thy pride, then expect a rod, and most likely the affliction shall be in that which shall be most grievous to thee, in the thing thou art proud of. Hezekiah boasted of his treasure. God sends the Chaldeans to plunder him. Jonah [is] fond of his gourd, and that is smitten. And if thy spirit be blown up with pride of gifts, thou art in danger of having them blasted, at least in the opinion of others whose breath of applause, possibly, was a means to overset thy unballasted spirit.

[Three doors whence this enemy comes forth.] Question. But how would you direct us against this?

Answer. Arguments you have had before; I shall only therefore point to two or three doors where your enemy comes forth upon you; and surely the very sight thereof, if thou beest loyal to Christ, will stir thee up to fall upon it.

First Door. This kind of pride discovers itself in dwelling upon the thoughts of our gifts, with a secret kind of content to see our own face, till at last we fall in love with it. We read of some whose eyes are full of the adulteress, and cannot cease from sin. A proud heart is full of himself; his own abilities cast their shadow before him. They are in his eye wherever he goes. The great subject and theme of his thoughts in what he is, and what he hath above others, applauding himself; as Bernard confesseth, that—when one would think he had little leisure for such thoughts—even in preaching; pride would be whispering in his ear, Bene fecisti Bernarde—O well done, Bernard. Now have a care, Christian, of chatting with such company. Run from such thoughts as from a bear. If the devil can get thee to stand on this pinnacle, while he presents thee with the glory of thy spiritual attainments and endowments, for thee to gaze on them thy weak head will soon turn round in pride; and therefore labour to keep the sense of thy own infirmities lively in thy soul, to divert the temptation. As those who are subject to some kind of fits carry about them things proper for the disease, that when the fit is coming—which is oft occasioned with a sweet perfume—they

may use them for their help; sweet scents are not more dangerous for them, than anything they may applaud thee is to thy soul. Have a care, therefore, not only of wearing such thoughts in thy bosom, but also of sitting by others that bring the sweet scent of thy perfections to thee by their flattery.

Second Door. This kind of pride appears in a forwardness to expose itself to view, 1 Samuel 17:28. David's brethren were mistaken in him indeed, but oft the pride and naughtiness of the heart breaks out at this door. Christ's carnal friends bid Christ show himself; pride loves to climb up, not as Zacchaeus, to see Christ, but to be seen himself. 'The fool,' Solomon tells us, 'hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself,' Proverbs 18:2. Pride would be somebody, and therefore comes abroad to court the multitude; whereas humility delights in privacy. As the leaves do cover and shade the fruits, that some hand may gently lift up them, before they can see the fruit; so should a humility and holy modesty conceal the perfections of the soul, till a hand of providence by some call invites them out. There is a pride in naked gifts, as well as in naked breasts and backs. Humility is a necessary veil to all other graces, and therefore, 1. Christian, look whenever thou comest forth to public duty, that thou hast a call. It is obedience to be ready to answer when God calls thee forth, but it is pride to run before God speaks. 2. When called, earnestly implore divine strength against this enemy. Shun not a duty for fear of pride—thou mayest show it in the very seeming to escape it—but go in the strength of God against it. There is more hope of overcoming it by obedience than [by] disobedience.

Third Door. This kind of pride discovers itself in envying the gifts of others, when they seem to blind our own that they are not so fair a prospect as we desire. This is a weed may grow too rank in a good soil. Aaron and Miriam could not bear Moses his honour, Numbers 12:1; that was the business, though they pick a quarrel with him about his wife, because an Ethiopian, as appears plainly, 'Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?' Numbers 12:2. They thought Moses went away with too much of the honour, and did repine that God should use him more than themselves. And it is observable, that the lusting for flesh broke out among the mixed multitude, and baser sort of people, Numbers 11:4-5; but this of pride and envy took fire in the bosoms of the most eminent for place and piety. O what need then have we, poor creatures, to watch our hearts when we see such precious servants of God led into temptation? 'The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy,' James 4:5. Our corrupt nature is ever putting on to this sin. It is as hard to keep our hearts and this sin asunder, as it is to keep two lovers from meeting together. Thatch is not more ready to be fired with every flash of lightning, than the heart to be kindled at every shining forth of any excelling gift or grace in another. It was of the first windows that corrupt nature looked out at—a sin that shed the first blood. Cain's envy hatched Abel's murder. Now if ever thou meanest to get the mastery of this sin,

1. Call in help from heaven. No sooner hath the apostle set forth how big and teeming full the heart of man is with envy, but he shows where a fountain of grace is, infinitely exceeding that of lust: 'The Spirit within us lusteth to envy, but he giveth more grace,' James 4:5-6. And therefore sit not down tamely under this sin: it is not unconquerable. God can give thee more grace than thou hast sin—more humility than thou hast pride. Be but so humble as cordially to beg this grace, and thou shalt not be so proud as wickedly to envy his gifts or grace in others.

2. Make this sin as black and ugly as thou canst possibly to thy thought, that when it is presented to thee, thou mayest abhor it the more. Indeed there needs no more than its own face—wouldst thou look wisely on it—to make thee out of love with it. For, (1.) This envying of others' gifts casts great contempt upon God, and that more ways than one.

(a) When thou enviest the gifts of thy brethren, thou takest upon thee, to teach God what he shall give and to whom; as if the great God should take counsel, or ask leave of thee, before he dispenseth his gifts. And darest thou stand to thy own envious thoughts with this interpretation? such a one thou findest Christ himself give, 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?' Matthew 20:15, as if Christ had said, What hath any to do with cavil, at my disposure of what is not theirs, but mine, to give?

(b) Thou malignest the goodness of God. It troubles thee, it seems, that God hath a heart to do good to any besides thyself; thine eye is evil, because he is good. Wouldst not thou have God be good? you might as well say, you would not have him God. He can as soon cease to be God as to be good.

(c) Thou art an enemy to the glory of God, as thou defacest that which should set it forth. Every gift is a ray of divine excellency; and as all the beams declare the glory of the sun, so all the gifts of God imparts declare the glory of God. Now envy labours to deface and sully the representations of God; it hath ever something to disparage the excellency of another withal. God showed Miriam her sin by her punishment. She went to bespatter Moses that shone so eminently with the gifts and graces of God, and God spits in her face, Numbers 12:1-16, yea, fills her all over with a noisome scab. Dost thou cordially wish well to the honour of God? why then hangest thou thy head, and dost not rather rejoice to see him glorified by the gifts of others? Could a heathen take it so well, when himself was passed by, and others chosen to places of honour and government, that he said he was glad his city could find so many more worthy than himself; and shall a Christian repine that any are found fit to honour God besides himself?

(2.) By this envying of others' gifts, thou wrongest thy brother, as thou sinnest against the law of love, which obligeth thee to rejoice in his good as thy own, yea, to prefer him in honour before thyself. Thou canst not love and envy the same person. Envy is as contrary to love, as the hectical feverish fire in the body is to the kindly heat of nature. 'Charity envieth not,' 1 Corinthians 13:4. How can it, when it lives where it loves? And when thou ceasest to love thy brother, thou beginnest to beginnest to hate and kill him; and dost not thou tremble to be found a murderer at last?

(3.) By this envying of others' gifts, thou consultest worst of all for thyself. God is out of thy reach. What thou spittest against heaven, thou art sure to have fall on thy own face at last; and thy brother whom thou enviest, God stands bound to defend against thy envy, because he is maligned for what he hath of God in him. Thus did God plead Joseph's cause against his envious brethren, and David's against wicked Saul. Thyself only hast real hurt.

(a) Thou deprivest thyself of what thou mightst reap from the gifts of others. That old saying is true, 'What thou hast is mine, and what I have thine, when envy is gone.'[37] Whereas now, like the leech—which they say draws out the worst blood—thou suckest nothing but what swells thy mind with discontent, and is after vomited out in strife and contention. O what a sad thing it is, that one

should go from a precious sermon, a sweet prayer, and bring nothing away but a grudge against the instrument God used; as we see in the Pharisees and others at Christ preaching!

(b) Thou robbest thyself of the joy of thy life. “He that is cruel troubleth his own flesh,’ Proverbs 11:17. The envious man doth it to purpose; he sticks the honour and esteem of others as thorns in his own heart; he cannot think of them without pain and anguish, and he must needs pine that is ever in pain.

(c) Thou throwest thyself into the mouth of temptation, thou needest give the devil no greater advantage; it is a stalk any sin almost will grow upon. What will not the patriarchs do to rid their hands of Joseph whom they envied? That very pride which made them disdain the thought of bowing to his sheaf, made them stoop far lower, even to debase themselves as low as hell, and be the devil’s instruments to sell their dear brother into slavery, which might have been worse for him—if God had not provided otherwise—than if they had slain him on the place. What an impotent mind, and cruel, did Saul show against David, when once envy had envenomed his heart! From that day [on] which he heard David preferred in the women’s songs above himself, he could never get that sound out of his head, but did ever after devote this innocent man to death in his thoughts, who had done him no other wrong, but in being an instrument to keep the crown on his head, by the hazard of his own life with Goliath. O it is a bloody sin! It is the womb wherein a whole litter of other sins are formed, Romans 1:29, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, &c.; and therefore, except you be resolved to bid the devil welcome and his whole train, resist him in this, that comes before to take up quarters for the rest.

[Second kind of spiritual pride—pride of grace.]

Second. Another way Satan assaults the Christian is through pride of grace. It is true, grace cannot be proud, yet it is possible a saint may be proud of his grace. There is nothing the Christian hath or doth, but this worm of pride will breed in it. The world we live in is corruptible, and all here is subject to purify, as things kept in a rafty muggish room[38] [are] subject to mould. It is not the nature of grace, but the salt of covenant, keeps and preserves the purity of it. In heaven indeed we shall be safe. But how can a saint be said to be proud of his grace? Then a soul is proud of his grace, when he trusts in his grace. Trust and confidence is an incommunicable flower of God’s crown as Sovereign Lord;—even among men it goes along with royalty. Set up a king, and as such he expects you should give him this, as the undoubted prerogative of his place, and therefore to seek protection from any other is, as it were, to set up another king. ‘If indeed you anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust under my shadow,’ Judges 9:15. Therefore when a soul puts his trust in anything beside God, he sets up a prince, a king, an idol, to which he gives God’s glory away. Now it doth not make the sin less, that it is the grace of God we crown, than if it were a lust we crowned. It is idolatry to worship a holy angel as well as a cursed devil, to make our grace a god as well as our belly our god; nay, rather it adds to it, because that is now used to rob him of his glory which should have brought him in the greatest revenue of glory. Certainly the more treasure you put into your servant’s hands, the greater wrong to you for him to run away with it. I doubt not but David could have borne it better to have seen a Philistine drive him from his throne than a son—an Absalom. But how can, or may, a saint be said to trust in his grace? First. By trusting on the strength of his grace. Second. By trusting on the worth of his grace, I conceive, cannot stand with grace: but there is an oblique kind of trust, or that which by interpretation may

savour of it. Satan is sly in his assaults.

[Pride of grace is to trust in the strength of our grace.]

First. A Christian may be proud of his grace, by trusting in the strength of his grace. To trust in the strength of grace is to be proud of grace. This is opposed to that poverty of spirit so commended by our Saviour, Matthew 5:1-48, by which a man lives in the continual sense of his spiritual beggary and nothingness, and so hath his recourse to Christ, as the poor to the rich man's door, knowing he hath nothing at home to maintain him. Such a one was Paul, not able to do anything of himself. He is not ashamed to let the world know that Christ carries his purse for him. 'Our sufficiency is of God;' yea, after many years trading, this holy man sees nothing he hath got. 'I count not myself to have apprehended,' Php 3:13. He is still pressing forward. Ask him how he lives, he will tell you who keeps house for him, 'I live, yet not I,' Galatians 2:20. Ask a beggar where he hath his meat, clothes, &c., he will say, 'I thank my good master.' Now Satan chiefly labours to puff the soul up with an overweening conceit of his own ability, as the readiest means to bring him into his snare. Satan knows it is God's method to give his children into his hands, when once they grow proud and self-confident. Hezekiah was left to a temptation, 'to try him,' 2 Chronicles 32:31. Why? God had tried him to purpose a little before in an affliction; what needs this? O, Hezekiah's heart was lift up after his affliction. It was time for God to let the tempter alone a little to foil him. Probably now Hezekiah had high thoughts of his grace—O he would never do as he had done before—and God will let him see what a weak creature he is. Peter makes a whip for his own back in that bravado, 'Though all should forsake thee, yet will not I.' Christ now in mere mercy must set Satan on him to lay him on his back, that seeing the weakness of his faith, he might be dismounted from the height of his pride. All that I shall say from this is, to entreat thee, Christian, to have a care of this kind of pride. You know what Joab said to David, when he perceived his heart lift up with the strength of his kingdom, and therefore would have the people numbered. 'Now the Lord thy God add unto the people, how many soever they be, an hundredfold, but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing?' 2 Samuel 24:3. The Lord add to the strength of thy grace an hundredfold, but why delightest thou in this? why shouldst thou be lift up? is it not grace? shall the groom be proud because he rides on his master's horse? or the mud-wall because the sun shines on it? Mayest thou not say of every dram of grace, as the young man of his hatchet, 'Alas, master, it is borrowed?' nay, not only borrowed, but thou canst not use it without his skill and strength that lends it thee. O beware of this; let not those vain thoughts lodge in thee, lest thou enter into temptation. It is a breach a whole troop of sins may enter at, yea, will, except speedily filled up.

1. It will make thee soon grow loose and negligent in thy duty. It is sense of insufficiency [that] keeps a soul at work, to pray and hear—as want in the house and hutch holds up the market; no man comes thither to buy what he hath at home. 'Up,' saith Jacob, 'go down to Egypt for corn, that we live and not die.' Thus saith the needy Christian, 'Up, soul, to thy God; thy faith is weak; thy patience almost spent; ply thee to the throne of grace; go with thy homer to the ordinances, and get some supplies.' Now a soul conceited of his store, hath another song, 'Soul, take thine ease, thou art richly laid in for many days. Let the doubting soul pray, thy faith is string; let the weak lie at the breast, thou art well grown up.' Nay, it is well if it goes not further—to a despising of ordinances, except they have some more courtly fare than ordinary. Such a pass were the Corinthians come to, 'Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us,' 1

Corinthians 4:8. I pray observe how he lays the accent on the particle now—now ye are rich, as if he had said, I knew the time [when] if Paul had come to town, and news spread abroad in the city that Paul was to preach, you would have flocked to hear him, and blessed God for the season; but then you were poor and empty, now ye are full, you have got to a higher attainment—Paul is a plain fellow now, he may carry his cheer to a hungry people if he will; we are well apaid [satisfied]. And when once the heart is come to this, it is easy to judge what will follow.

2. This trusting to the strength of grace will make the soul bold and venturous. The humble Christian is the wary Christian. He knows his weakness, and this makes him afraid. 'I have a weak head,' saith he, 'I may soon be disputed into an error and heresy, and therefore I dare not come where such stuff is broached, lest my weak head should be intoxicated.' The confident man will sip of every cup, he fears none, no, he is stablished in the truth—a whole team of heretics shall not draw him aside. 'I have a vain light heart,' saith the humble soul—'I dare not come among wicked debauched company, lest I should at last bring the naughty man home with me.' But one, trusting to the strength of his grace, dares to venture into the devil's quarters. Thus Peter [ventured] into the route of Christ's enemies, and how he came off, you know. There his faith had been slain on the place, had not Christ sounded a retreat, by the seasonable look of love he gave him. Indeed I have read of some bragging philosophers, who did not think it enough to be temperate, except they had the object of intemperance present, and therefore they would go into taverns and whore-houses, as if they meant to beat the devil on his own ground. But the Christian knows an enemy nearer than so—which they were ignorant of—and that he need not go over his own threshold to challenge the devil. He hath lust in his bosom, that will be hard enough for him all his days, without giving it the vantage-ground. Christian, I know no sin, but thou mayest be left to commit it, except one. It was a bold speech of him —and yet a good man, as I have heard—'If Clapham die of the plague, say Clapham had no faith;' and this made him boldly go among the infected. If a Christian, thou shalt not die of spiritual plagues—yet such may have the plague-sores of gross sins running on them for a time; and is not his sad enough? therefore walk humbly with thy God.

3. This high conceit of the strength of thy grace will make thee cruel and churlish to thy weak brethren in their infirmities—a sin that least becomes a saint. 'If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness,' Galatians 6:1. But how shall a soul get such a meek spirit? It follows—'Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.' What makes men hard to the poor? they think they shall never be so themselves. Why are many so sharp in their censures, but because they trust too much to their grace, as if they could never fall? O you are in the body, and the body of sin in you, therefore fear. Bernard used to say, when he heard any scandalous sin of a professor,[39] 'He fell to-day, I may stumble tomorrow.'

[Pride of grace is to trust in the worth of our grace.]

Second. The second way a Christian may be proud of his grace, is by trusting on the worth of his grace—resting on it for his acceptance with God. The Scripture calls inherent grace 'our own righteousness' —though God indeed be the efficient of it—and opposeth it to the righteousness of Christ, which alone is called 'the righteousness of God,' Romans 10:1-4. Now, to rest on any grace inherent, is to exalt our own righteousness above the righteousness of God; and what pride will this amount to? If this were so, then a saint when he comes to heaven might say, 'This is heaven

which I have built—my grace hath purchased;' and thus the God of heaven should become tenant to his creature in heaven. No, God hath cast the order of our salvation into another method —of grace, but not of grace in us, but grace to us. Inherent grace hath its place and office to accompany salvation, Hebrews 6:9, but not [to] procure it. This is Christ's work, not grace's. When Israel waited on the Lord at Mount Sinai they had their bounds. Not a man must come up besides Moses to treat with God; no, not touch the mount, lest they die. Thus all the graces of the Spirit wait on God, but none come up to challenge any acceptance of God besides faith, which is a grace that presents the soul not in its own garments. But you will say, 'What needs all this? where is the man that trusts in his grace?' Alas, where is the Christian that doth fully stand clear, and freely come off his own righteousness? He is a rare pilot, indeed, that can steer his faith in so direct a course, as not now and then knock upon this duty, and run on ground upon that grace. Abraham went in to Hagar, and the children of Abraham's faith are not perfectly dead to the law, and may be found sometimes in Hagar's arms. Witness the flux and reflux of our faith, according to the various aspect of our obedience. When this seems full, then our faith is at a spring-tide, and covers all the mountains of our fears; but let it seem to wane in any service or duty, then the Jordan of our faith flies back, and leaves the soul naked. The devil's spite is at Christ, and therefore, since he could not hinder his landing—which he endeavoured all he could—nor work his will on his person when he was come, he goes now, in a more refined way, to darken the glory of his sufferings, and the sufficiency of his righteousness, by blending ours with his. This doctrine of justification by faith hath had more works and batteries made against it, than any other in the Scripture. Indeed many other errors were but his sly approaches to get nearer to undermine this. And lastly, when he cannot hide this truth —which now shines in the church like the sun in its strength—then he labours to hinder the practical improvement of it, that we (if he can help it) shall not live up to our own principles—making us, at the same time that, in our judgment, we profess acceptance only through Christ, in our practice confute ourselves.

Now there is a double pride in the soul he makes use of for this end—the one I may call a mannerly pride, the other a self-applauding pride.

First. [There is] a mannerly pride, which comes forth in the habit and guise of humility, and that discovers itself, either at the soul's first coming to Christ, and keeps him from closing with the promise; or afterward in the daily course of a Christian's walking with God, which keeps him from comfortable living on Christ.

1. When a poor soul is staved off the promise by the sense of his own unworthiness and great unrighteousness. Tell him of a pardon, alas! he is so wrapped up with the thoughts of his own vileness, that you cannot fasten it upon him. What, will God ever take such a toad as he is into his bosom, discount so many great abominations at once, and receive him into his favour, that hath been so long in rebellious arms against him! He cannot believe it; no, though he hears what Christ hath done and suffered for sin, he refuseth to be comforted. Little doth the soul think what a bitter root such thoughts spring from. Thou thinkest thou doest well thus to declaim against thyself, and aggravate thy sins. Indeed, thou canst not paint them black enough, or entertain too low and base thoughts of thyself for them; but what wrong hath God and Christ done thee, that thou shouldst so unworthily reflect upon the mercy of the one, and merit of the other? Mayest thou not do this, and be tender of the good name of God also? Is there no way to show the sense of thy sin, except thou asperse thy Saviour? Canst thou not charge thyself, but thou must condemn God, and put Christ

and his blood to shame before Satan, who triumphs more in this than all thy other sins? In a word, though thou, like a wretch, hast undone thyself, and damned thy soul by thy sins, yet art thou not willing God should have the glory of pardoning them, and Christ the honour of procuring the same? or art thou like him in the gospel, who could not dig, and to beg was ashamed? Luke 16:3. Thou canst not earn heaven by thy own righteousness; and is thy spirit so stout that thou wilt not beg it for Christ's sake? yea, take it at God's hands, who, in the gospel, comes a begging to thee, and beseecheth thee to be reconciled to him? Ah, soul! who would ever have thought there could have lain such pride under such a modest veil? and yet none like it. It is horrible pride for a beggar to starve rather than take an alms at a rich man's hands—[for] a malefactor rather to choose his halter than a pardon from his gracious prince's hand; but here is one infinitely surpassing both—a soul pining and perishing in sin, and yet rejecting the mercy of God, and the helping hand of Christ to save him! Though Abigail did not think herself worthy to be David's wife, yet she thought David was worthy of her, and therefore she humbly accepted his offer, and makes haste to go with the messengers. That is the sweet frame of heart indeed—to lie low in the sense of your own vileness, yet to believe; to renounce all conceit of worthiness in ourselves, yet not therefore to renounce all hope of mercy, but the more speedily to make haste to Christ that woos us. All the pride and unmannerliness lies in making Christ stay for us, who bids his messengers invite poor sinners to come and tell them 'all things are ready.' But, may be thou wilt say still, it is not pride that keeps thee off, but thou canst not believe that ever God will entertain such as thou art. Truly thou mendest the matter but little with this. Either thou keepest some lust in thy heart, which thou wilt not part with, to obtain the benefit of the promise, and then thou art a notorious hypocrite, who under such an outcry for thy sins, canst drive a secret trade with hell at the same time; or if not so, thou dost discover the more pride in that thou darest stand out, when thou hast nothing to oppose against the many plain and clear promises of the gospel but thy peremptory unbelief. God bids the wicked forsake his ways, and turn to him, and he will abundantly pardon him; but thou sayest thou canst not believe this for thy own self. Now who speaks the truth? One of you two must be the liar; either thou must take it with shame to thyself, for what thou hast said against God and his promise—and that is thy best course; or thou must proudly, yea, blasphemously cast it upon God, as every unbeliever doth, 1 John 5:10. Nay, thou makest him foresworn, for God—to give poor sinners the greater security in flying for refuge to Christ, who is that 'hope set before them,' Hebrews 6:17-18—hath sworn they should have strong consolation. 'O happy we, for whose sake God puts himself under an oath: but O miserable we, who will not believe God, no, not when he swears!'[40]

2. When the soul hath shot the great gulf, and got into a state of peace and life by closing with Christ, yet this mannerly pride Satan makes use of in the Christian's daily course of duty and obedience, to disturb him and hinder his peace and comfort. O how uncheerfully, yea, joylessly do many precious souls pass their days! If you inquire what is the cause, you shall find [that] all their joy runs out at their crannies of their imperfect duties and weak graces. They cannot pray as they would, and walk as they desire, with evenness and constancy; they see how far short they fall of the holy rule in the Word, and the pattern which others more eminent in grace do set before them; and this, though it doth not make them throw the promises away, and quite renounce all hope in Christ, yet it begets many sad fears and suspicions, yea, makes them sit at the feast Christ hath provided, and not know whether they may eat or not. In a word, as it robs them of their joy, so [it robs] Christ of that glory he should receive from their rejoicing in him. I do not say, Christian, thou

oughtest not to mourn for those defects thou findest in thy graces and duties, nay, thou couldst not approve thyself to be sincere if thou didst not. A gracious heart—seeing how far short his renewed state, for the present, falls of man's primitive holiness by creation—cannot but weep and mourn—as the Jews [did] to behold the second temple; yet, Christian, even while the tears are in thy eyes for thy imperfect graces—for a soul riseth with his grave-clothes on—thou shouldst rejoice, yea, triumph over all these thy defects by faith in Christ, in whom thou art complete, Colossians 2:10, while imperfect in thyself. Christ's presence in the second temple—which the first had not—made it, though comparatively mean, more glorious than the first, Haggai 2:9. How much more doth his presence in this spiritual temple of a gracious heart, imputing his righteousness to cover all uncomeliness, make the soul glorious above man at first? This is a garment for which—as Christ saith of the lily—we neither spin nor toil; yet Adam in all his created royalty was not so clad, as the weakest believer is with this on his soul. Now, Christian, consider well what thou doest, while thou sittest languishing under the sense of thy own weaknesses, and refusest to rejoice in Christ, and live comfortably on the sweet privileges thou art interested in by thy marriage to him. Dost thou not bewray some of this spiritual pride working in thee? O, if thou couldst pray without wandering, walk without limping, believe without wavering, then thou couldst rejoice and walk cheerfully. It seems, soul, thou stayest to bring the ground of thy comfort with thee, and not to receive it purely from Christ. O how much better were it if thou wouldst say with David, 'Although my house' —my heart—'be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure; and this is all my desire, all my confidence. Christ I oppose to all my sins, Christ to all my wants; he is my all in all, and all above all.' Indeed, all those complaints of our wants and weaknesses, so far as they withdraw our hearts from relying cheerfully on Christ, they are but the language of pride hankering after the covenant of works. O it is hard to forget our mother-tongue, which is so natural to us; labour therefore to be sensible of it, [of] how grievous it is to the Spirit of Christ. What would a husband say, if his wife, instead of expressing her love to him, and delight in him, should day and night do nothing but weep and cry to think of her former husband that is dead? The law, as a covenant, and Christ, are compared to two husbands: 'Ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead,' Romans 7:4. Now thy sorrow for the defect of thy own righteousness, when it hinders thy rejoicing in Christ, is but a whining after thy other husband, and this Christ cannot take but unkindly—that thou art not well pleased to lie in the bosom of Christ, and have thy happiness from him as with your old husband the law.

Second. [There is] a self-applauding pride; when the heart is secretly lift up, so as to promise itself acceptation at God's hands, for any duty or act of obedience it performs, and doth not, when most assisted, go out of his own actings, to lay the weight of his expectation entirely upon Christ. Every such glance of the soul's eye is adulterous, yea, idolatrous. If thy heart, Christian, at any time be secretly enticed—as Job saith of another kind of idolatry—or thy mouth doth kiss thy hand, that is, dote so far on thy own duties and righteousness, as to give them this inward worship of thy confidence and trust, this is a great iniquity indeed; for in this thou deniest the God that is above, who hath determined thy faith to another object. Thou comest to open heaven's gate with the old key, when God hath set on a new lock. Dost thou not acknowledge that thy first entrance into thy justified state was of pure mercy? thou wert 'justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,' Romans 3:24. And whom art thou beholden to, now thou art reconciled, for thy further acceptance or duty or holy action? to thy duty, thy obedience, thyself, or Christ? The

same apostle will tell you, ‘By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand,’ Romans 5:2. If Christ should not lead thee in and all thou doest, thou art sure to find the door shut upon thee. There is no more place for desert now thou art gracious, than when thou wert graceless. ‘The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith,’ for ‘the just shall live by faith,’ Romans 1:17. We are not only made alive by Christ, but we live by Christ; faith sucks in continual pardoning, assisting, comforting mercy from him, as the lungs suck in the air. Heaven’s way is paved with grace and mercy to the end.

[Use or Application.]

Use. Be exhorted above all to watch against this play of Satan, beware thou restest not in thy own righteousness. Thou standest under a tottering wall; the very cracks thou seest in thy graces and duties, when best, bid thee stand off, except thou wouldst have them fall on thy head. The greatest step to heaven, is out of our own doors, over our own threshold. It hath cost many a man his life when his house on fire—a grippleness[41] to save some of the stuff —which, venturing among the flames to preserve, they have perished themselves. More have lost their souls by thinking to carry some of their own stuff with them to heaven—such a good work or duty —while [until] they, like lingering Lot, have been loath to leave in point of confidence—have themselves perished. O sirs, come out, come out, leave what is your own in the fire. Fly to Christ naked; he hath gold—not like thine, which will consume and be found drossy in the fire, but such as hath in the fiery trial passed in God’s righteous judgment for pure and full weight. You cannot be found in two places at once. Choose whether you will be found in your own righteousness or in Christ’s. Those who have had more to show than thyself, have thrown away all, and gone a begging to Christ. Read Paul’s inventory, Php 3:1-21—what he had, what he did —yet all dross and loss. Give him Christ, and take the rest who will. So Job, as holy a man as trod on earth—God himself being witness—yet saith, ‘Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul: I would despise my life,’ Job 9:21. He had acknowledged his imperfection before, now he makes a supposition—indeed, quod non est supponendum, which ought not to be made—‘If I were perfect, yet would I not know my own soul. I would not entertain any such thoughts as would puff me up into such confidence of my holiness, as to make it my plea with God.’ Like to our common phrase, we say, such a one hath excellent parts, but he knows it, that is, he is proud of it. Take heed of knowing thy own grace in this sense; thou canst not give a greater wound both to thy grace and comfort, than by thus priding thyself in it.

[Why the Christian should not rest on any inherent work of grace.]

First. Thy grace cannot thrive so long as thou thus restest upon it. A legal spirit is no friend to grace; nay, is a bitter enemy against it, as appeared by the Pharisees in Christ’s time. Grace comes not by the law, but by Christ; thou mayest stand long enough by it, before thou gettest any life of grace into thy soul, or further life into thy grace. If thou wouldst have this, thou must set thyself under Christ’s wings by faith. From his Spirit in the gospel alone comes this kindly natural heat to hatch thy soul to the life of holiness, and increase what thou hast; and thou canst not come under Christ’s wings, till thou comest from under the shadow of the other, by renouncing all expectation from thy own works and services. You know Reuben’s curse—that he should not excel, because he went up into his father’s bed. When other tribes increased, he stood at a little number. By trusting in thy own works thou dost worse by Christ, and shalt thou excel in grace?

Perhaps some of you have been long professors, and yet [have] come to little growth in love to God, humility, heavenly-mindedness, mortification; and it is worth the digging to see what lies at the root of your profession —whether there be not a legal principle that hath too much acted you. Have you not thought to carry all with God from your duties and services, and too much laid up your hopes in your own actings? Alas! this is as so much dead earth, which must be thrown out, and gospel principles laid in the room thereof. Try but this course, and see whether the spring of thy grace will not come on apace. David gives an account how he came to stand and flourish, when some that were rich and mighty, on a sudden withered and came to nothing. 'Lo,' saith he, 'this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches.' 'But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever,' Psalms 52:7-8. While others trust in the riches of their own righteousness and services, and make not Christ their strength, do thou renounce all, and trust in the mercy of God in Christ, and thou shalt be like a green olive when they fade and wither.

Second. Christian, you will not thrive in true comfort so long as you rest in any inherent work of grace, and do not stand clear of your own actings and righteousness. Gospel-comfort springs from a gospel-root, which is Christ. 'We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,' Php 3:3. Now a soul that rests on any holiness in himself, he grafts his comfort upon himself, not upon Christ; he sucks his own breast, not Christ's, and so makes Christ a dry nurse; and what comfort can grow on that dry tree? The Spirit is our comforter as well as our teacher and counsellor. Now as the Spirit, when he teacheth, comes not with any new or strange truth, but takes of Christ's own—what he finds in the Word; so where he comforts, he takes of Christ's own —his righteousness, not our own. Christ is the matter and ground of his comfort. All cordials are but Christ distilled, and made up in several promises; his acting, not ours; his suffering, not ours; his holiness, not ours. He doth not say, 'Soul, rejoice! thou art holy,' but 'Soul, triumph! Christ is righteous, and is the Lord thy righteousness;' not, 'Soul, thou prayest sweetly, fear not;' but, 'Thou hast an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;' so that the first step to the receiving of comfort from the Spirit, is to send away all comforts of our own. As in learning of the Spirit, he that will be taught by him, must first become a fool—that is, no way lean to his own understanding; so he that would be comforted, must first be emptied of all self-supports, must not lean on his own comforts. As a physician first bids his patient cast off all others he hath tampered with, asks what physic he hath had from them, takes off their plasters, throws away their physic, and goes about the work de novo—anew; so the Spirit, when he comes to comfort a poor soul, first persuades the soul to send away all its old physicians. O, saith the soul, I have been in the hand of such a duty, such a course of obedience, and have thought sure now I shall be well, and have comfort, now I do this duty, set upon such a holy course. Well, saith the Spirit, if you will have me do anything, these must all be dismissed in point of confidence. Now, and not till now, is the soul a subject fit to receive the Spirit's comforts. And therefore, friends, as you love your inward peace, beware what vessel you draw your comfort from. Grace is finite, and so cannot afford much. It is leaking, and so cannot hold long; thou drinkest in a riven dish, that hast thy comfort from thy grace. It is mixed, and so weak; and weak grace cannot give strong consolation—and such thou needest, especially in strong conflicts. Nay, lastly, thy comfort which thou drawest from it, is stolen—thou dost not come honestly by it; and stolen comforts will not thrive with thee. O, what folly is it for the child to play the thief, for that which he may have freely and more fully from his father, who gives and reproacheth not! That

comfort which thou wouldst filch out of thy own righteousness and duties, behold it is laid up for thee in Christ, from whose fulness thou mayest carry as much as thy faith can hold, and [there is] none to check thee, yea, the more thou improvest Christ for thy comfort, the more heartily welcome. We are bid to open our mouth wide, and he will fill it.

[Third kind of spiritual pride —pride of privileges.]

Third. Pride of privileges is the third kind of spiritual pride, with which these wicked spirits labour to blow up the Christian. To name three [of these privileges]: First. When God calls a person to some eminent place, or useth him to do some special piece of service. Second. When God honours a saint to suffer for his truth or cause. Third. When God flows in with more than ordinary manifestations of his love, and fills the soul with joy and comfort. These are privileges not equally dispensed to all; and therefore, where they are, Satan takes advantage of assaulting such with pride.

First Privilege. When God calls a person to some eminent place, or useth him to do some special piece of service. Indeed it requires a great measure of grace to keep the heart low, when the man stands high. The apostle, speaking how a minister of the gospel should be qualified, saith he must not be ‘a novice,’ or a young convert, ‘lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil,’ 1 Timothy 3:6; as if he had said, ‘This calling is honourable, if he be not well balanced with humility, a little gust from Satan will topple him into this sin.’ The seventy that Christ first sent out to preach the gospel, and [who] prevailed so miraculously over Satan—even these, while they trod on the serpent’s head, he turned again, and had like to have stung them with pride. This our Saviour perceived, when they returned in triumph, and told what great miracles they had wrought; and therefore he takes them off that glorying, lest it should degenerate into vainglory, and bids them ‘rejoice not that spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven,’ Luke 10:20. As if he had said, ‘It is not the honour of your calling, and success of your ministry [that] will save you. There shall be some cast to the devils, who shall then say, “Lord, Lord, in thy name we have cast out devils,” and therefore value not yourselves by that, but rather evidence to your souls, that you are mine elect ones, which will stand you more in stead at the great day than all this.’

Second Privilege. A second privilege is, when God honours a person to suffer for his truth. This is a great privilege. ‘Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake,’ Php 1:29. God doth not use to give worthless gifts to his saints, there is some preciousness in it, which a carnal eye cannot see. Faith, you will say, is a great gift, but perseverance greater —without which faith would be little worth—and perseverance in suffering is, above both, honourable. This made John Careless, our English martyr—who, though he died not at the stake, yet [died] in prison for Christ—say, ‘Such an honour it is, as angels are not permitted to have, therefore God forgive me mine unthankfulness.’ Now when Satan cannot scare a soul from prison, yet then he will labour to puff him up in prison; when he cannot make him pity himself, then he will flatter him till he prides in himself. Affliction from God, exposeth to impatience, affliction for God, to pride; and therefore, Christians, labour to fortify yourselves against this temptation of Satan. How soon you may be called to suffering work you know not—such clouds oft are not long arising. Now to keep thy heart humble when thou art honoured to suffer for the truth, consider,

1. Though thou dost not deserve those sufferings at man's hand, thou canst and mayst, in that regard, glory in thy innocency [that] thou sufferest not as an evildoer; yet thou canst not but confess it is a just affliction from God in regard of sin in thee, and this methinks should keep thee humble. The same suffering may be martyrdom in regard of man, and yet a fatherly chastening for sin in regard of God. None suffered without sin but Christ, and therefore none may glory in sufferings but he—Christ in his own, we in his. 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,' Galatians 6:14. This kept Mr. Bradford humble in his sufferings for the truth. None more rejoiced in them, and blessed God for them, yet none more humble under them, than he. And what kept him in this humble frame? Read his godly letters, and you shall find almost in all how he bemoans his sins, and the sins of the Protestants under the reign of king Edward, 'It was time,' saith he, 'for God to put his rod into the Papists' hands. We were grown so proud, formal, unfruitful, yea, to loathe and despise the means of grace, when we enjoyed the liberty thereof, and therefore God hath brought the wheel of persecution on us.' As he looked at the honour to make him thankful, so to sin to make him humble.

2. Consider who bears thee up, and carries thee through thy sufferings for Christ. Is it thy grace, or his, that is sufficient for such a work? thy spirit, or Christ's, by which thou speakest when called to bear witness for the truth? How comes it to pass [that] thou art a sufferer and not a persecutor? a confessor, and not a denier, yea, betrayer of Christ and his gospel? This thou owest for to God. He is not beholden to thee, that thou wilt part with estate, credit, or life itself for his sake—if thou hadst a thousand lives, thou wouldst owe them all to him; but thou art beholden to God exceedingly, that he will call for these in this way, which has such an honour and reward attending it. He might have suffered thee to live in thy lusts, and at last to suffer the loss of all these for them. O how many die at the gallows as martyrs in the devil's cause, for felonies, rapes and murders! Or, he might withdraw his grace, and leave thee to thy own cowardice and unbelief, and then thou wouldst soon show thyself in thy colours. The stoutest champions for Christ have been taught how weak they are if Christ steps aside. Some that have given great testimony of their faith and resolution in Christ's cause—even to come so near dying for his name as to give themselves to be bound to the stake, and [to the] fire to be kindled upon them—yet then their hearts have failed, as that holy man Mr. Benbridge, in our English martyrology, who thrust the faggots from him, and cried out, 'I recant, I recant.' Yet this man, when reinforced in his faith, and endued with power from above, was able, within the space of a week after that sad foil, to die at the stake cheerfully. 'He that once overcame death for us, is he that always overcomes death in us.'[42] And who should be thy song, but he that is thy strength? applaud not thyself, but bless him. It is one of God's names; he is called 'the glory of his people's strength,' Psalms 89:17. The more thou gloriest in God that gives thee strength to suffer for him, the less thou wilt boast of thyself. A thankful heart and a proud cannot dwell together in one bosom.

3. Consider what a foul blot pride gives to all thy sufferings; where it is not bewailed and resisted, it alters the case. The old saying is, that it is not the punishment but the cause [that] makes the martyr. We may safely say further, 'It is not barely the cause, but the sincere frame of the heart in suffering for a good cause, that makes a man a martyr in God's sight.' Though thou shouldst give thy body to be burned, if thou hast not the humble heart of a sufferer for Christ, thou turnest merchant for thyself. Thou deniest but one self, to set up another; runnest the hazard of thy estate and life, to gain some applause may be, and rear up a monument to thy honour in the opinions of

men. Thou doest no more, in this case, than a soldier, who for a name of valour will venture into the mouth of death and danger; only thou showest thy pride under a religious disguise; but that helps it not, but makes it the worse. If thou wilt in thy sufferings be a sacrifice acceptable to God, thou must not only be ready to offer up thy life for his truth, but [to] sacrifice thy pride also, or else thou mayst tumble out of one fire into another—suffer here from man as a seeming champion for the gospel, and in another world from God, for robbing him of his glory in thy sufferings.

Third Privilege. A third privilege is, when God flows in with more than ordinary manifestations of his love. Then the Christian is in danger of having his heart secretly lift up in pride. Indeed, the genuine and natural effect which such discoveries of divine love have on a gracious soul is to humble it. The sight of mercy increaseth the sense of sin, and that sense dissolves the soul kindly into sorrow, as we see in Magdalene. The heart which possibly was hard and frozen in the shade, will give and thaw in the sunshine of love, and so long is pride hid from the creature's eye. 'Then,' saith God, 'shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight,' &c., Ezekiel 36:31. And when shall this be, but when God would save them from all their uncleannesses? as appears, Ezekiel 36:25; yet notwithstanding this, there remain such dregs of corruption unpurged out of the best, that Satan finds it not impossible to make the manifestations of God's love an occasion of pride to the Christian. And truly God lets us see our proneness to this sin in the short stay he makes, when he comes with any greater discoveries of his love. The Comforter, it is true, abides for ever in the saint's bosom; but his joys, they come and are gone again quickly. They are as exceedings with which he feasts the believer, but the cloth is soon drawn; and why so, but because we cannot bear them for our everyday food? A short interview of heaven, and a vision of love now and then upon the mount of an ordinance, or affliction, cheers the spirits of drooping Christians, who —might they have leave to build their tabernacles there, and dwell under a constant shine of such manifestations—would be prone to forget themselves, and think they were lords of their own comforts. If holy Paul was in danger of falling into this distemper of pride from his short rapture—to prevent which, God saw it needful to let him bleed with a thorn in the flesh—would not our blood much more grow too rank, and we too crank and wanton, if we should feed long on such luscious food? And therefore, if ever, Christian, thou hadst need to watch, then is the time—when comforts abound, and God dandles thee most on the knee of his love—when his face shines with clearest manifestations; lest this sin of pride, as a thief in the candle, should swale[43] out thy joy. To prevent which, thou shouldst do well,

1. To look that thou measurest not thy grace by thy comfort, lest so thou beest led into a false opinion that thy grace is strong, because thy comforts are so. Satan will be ready to help forward such thought as a fir medium to lift thee up, and slacken thy care in duty for the future. Such discoveries do indeed bear witness to the truth of thy grace, but not to the degree and measure of it. The weak child may be, yea, is, oftener in the lap than the strong.

2. Do not so much applaud thyself in thy present comfort, as labour to improve it, for the glory of God. 'Arise and eat,' saith the angel to the prophet, 'because the journey is too great for thee.' The manifestations of God's love are to fit us for our work. It is one thing to rejoice in the light of our comfort, and another to go forth in the power of the Spirit comforting us—as giants refreshed with this wine—to run our race of duty and obedience with more strength and alacrity. He shows his pride that spends his time in telling his money merely to see how rich he is; but he his wisdom, that

lays out his money and trades with it. The boaster of his comforts will lose what he hath, when he that improves his comforts in a fuller trade of duty shall add more to what he hath.

3. Remember thou dependest on God for the continuance of thy comfort. They are not the smiles thou hadst yesterday [that] make thee joyous to-day, any more than the bread thou didst then eat can make thee strong without more. Thou needest new discoveries for new comforts. Let God hide his face, and thou wilt soon lose the sight, and forget the taste, of what thou even now hadst. It is beyond our skill or power to preserve those impressions of joy, and comfortable apprehensions of God's favour on our spirits, which sometimes we find; as God's presence brings those, so, when he goes, he carries them away with him, as the setting sun doth the day. We would laugh heartily at him who, when the sun shines in at his window, should think by shutting that to imprison the sunbeams in his chamber; and dost thou now show as much folly, who thinkest, because thou now hast comfort, thou therefore shalt never be in darkness of spirit more? The believer's comfort is like Israel's manna. It is not like the ordinary bread and provision we buy at market, and lock up in our cupboards where we can go to it when we will; no, it is rained, as that was, from heaven. Indeed, God provided for them after this sort to humble them: 'Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee,' Deuteronomy 8:16. It was not because [it was] such mean food, that God is said to humble them, for it was delicious food, therefore called 'angels' food,' Psalms 78:25, such as if angels did eat, might serve them; but the manner of the dispensing it—from hand to mouth, every day their portion, and no more. Thus God kept the key of their cupboard—they stood to his immediate allowance; and thus God communicates our spiritual comforts for the same end, to humble us. So much for this second sort of spiritual wickedness.

I had thought to have instanced in some others, as hypocrisy, unbelief, formality; but possibly the subject being general, what I have already said may be thought but a digression, and that too long. I shall therefore conclude this branch of spiritual wickedness, in a word to those who are yet in a natural and unsanctified state—which is to stir them up, from what I have said concerning Satan's assaulting believers with such temptations, to consider seriously how that Satan's chief design against them also lies in the same sins. It is your seared conscience, blind mind, and dedolent impenitent heart, will be your undoing, if you miscarry finally. Other sins, the devil knows, are preparatory to these, and therefore he draws thee into them to bring thee into these. Two ways they prepare a way to spiritual sins: First. As they naturally dispose the sinner to them; it is the nature of sin to blind the mind, stupify the conscience, harden the heart, as is implied, 'Lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin,' Hebrews 3:13. As the feet of travellers beat the highway hard, so does walking in carnal gross sins the heart. They benumb the conscience, so that in time the sinner loses his feeling, and can carry his lusts in his heart, as bedlams their pins in their very flesh, without pain and remorse. Secondly, As they do provoke God by a judiciary act to give them up to these sins, 'Give them obstinacy of heart,' Lamentations 3:65, so it is in your margin, 'thy curse unto them;' and when the devil hath got sinners at this pass, then he hath them under lock and key. They are the forerunners of damnation. If God leave thy heart hard and unbroken up, it is a sad sign he means not to sow the seed of grace there. O sinners, pray, as he, Acts 8:24, did request Peter for him, that none of these things may come upon you; which that they may not, take heed thou rejectest not the offers he makes to soften thee. God's hardening is a consequent of, and a punishment for, our hardening our own hearts. It is most true what Prosper

saith,[44] ‘A man may lose temporals against his will, but not spirituals.’ God will harden none, damn none, against their will.

BRANCH FIFTH.

‘In high places,’ or for heavenly things.

These words contain the last branch in the description of our grand enemy, which have in them some ambiguity—the adjective being only expressed in the original, ¦< J@ÃH ¦B@LD"<\@4H, that is, [the] heavenlies. The phrase being defective, our translators read it ‘in high’ or heavenly ‘places,’ as if the apostle intended to set out the advantage of place which this our enemy, by being above us, hath of us. Indeed this way most interpreters go, yet some both ancient and modern read the words, not ‘in heavenly places,’ but ‘in heavenly things,’ interpreting the apostle’s mind to set out the matter about which, or prize for which, we wrestle with principalities and powers to be heavenly things; z+< J@ÃH ¦B@LD"<\@4H, saith Occumenius, is as much as if the apostle had said,[45] ‘We wrestle not for small and trivial things, but for heavenly,’ yea, for heaven itself, and our adoption, as he goes on. The same way Chrysostom carries it—in heavenly things, that is, for the heavenly things of God;[46] and, after him, Musculus, and other modern writers. The reasons which are given for this interpretation are weighty.

Reason First. The word elsewhere indefinitely set down, is taken for things, not places, Hebrews 8:5, nay, one observes this word used almost twenty times in the New Testament, and never for any aerial place, but always for things truly heavenly and spiritual. The word, indeed, properly signifies super-celestial, and if applied to places, would signify that where the devil never came since his fall.

Reason Second. There seems no great argument to render Satan formidable by his being above us in place. It is some advantage, indeed, to men, to gain the hill, or be above their enemies in some place of strength, but none at all to spirits. But now take it of things, and then it adds weight to all the other branches of the description. We wrestle with principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness, and against all these, not for such toys and trifles as the earth affords, which are inconsiderable, whether to keep or lose, but for such as heaven holds forth, such an enemy and such a prize makes it a matter of our greatest care how to manage the combat. The word thus opened, the note will be this.

[The prize which believers wrestle for is heavenly.]

Doctrine. The chief prize for which we wrestle against Satan is heavenly. Or thus, Satan’s Mal. design is to spoil and plunder the Christian of all that is heavenly. Indeed, all the Christian hath, or desires as a Christian, is heavenly. The world is extrinsical, both to his being and happiness, it is a stranger to the Christian, and intermeddles not with his joy or grief. Heap all the riches and honours of the world upon a man, they will not make him a Christian; heap them on a Christian, they will not make him a better Christian. Again, take them all away—let every bird have his feather—when stripped and naked, he will still be a Christian, and may be a better Christian. It was a notable speech of Erasmus, if spoken in earnest, and his wit were not too quick for his conscience[47]—he said he desired wealth and honour no more than a feeble horse doth a heavy cloak-bag. And I think every Christian in his right temper would be of his mind. Satan should do the saint little hurt, if he did bend his forces only or chiefly against his outward enjoyments. Alas, the

Christian doth not value them, or himself by them; this were as if one should think to hurt a man by beating of his clothes when he hath put them off. So far as the Spirit of grace prevails in the heart of a saint, he hath put off the world in the desire of it and joy in it, so that these blows are not much felt; and therefore they are his heavenly treasures, which are the booty Satan waits for.

First. The Christian's nature is heavenly, born from above. As Christ is the Lord from heaven, so all his offspring are heavenly and holy. Now Satan's design is to debase and deflower this; it is the precious life of this new creature that he hunts for; he hath lost that beauty of holiness which once shone so gloriously on his angelical nature; and now, like a true apostate, he endeavours to ruin that in a Christian which he hath lost himself. The seeds of this war are sown in the Christian's nature. You are holy. That he cannot endure. Miles feri faciem, was Cæsar's speech, when to fight with the Roman citizens, he bade his soldiers 'strike at their face,' these citizens, said he, love their beauty; mar that and mar all. The soul is the face whereon God's image is stamped, holiness is the beauty of this face, which makes us indeed like God. This, Satan knows, God loves, and the saint is chary of, and therefore he labours to wound and disfigure this, that he may at once glory in the Christian's shame, and pour contempt upon God in breaking his image. And is it not worth engaging limb and life in battle against this enemy, who would rob us of that which makes us like God himself? Have you forgot the bloody articles of peace that Nahash offered to the men of Jabesh-Gilead? no peace to be had, except they would let him thrust out their right eyes, and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel. How was this entertained, read 1 Samuel 11:6. The face is not so deformed that hath lost its eye, as the soul is that loseth its holiness, and no peace is to be expected at Satan's hands, except he may deprive us of this. Methinks at the thought of this, the Spirit of the Lord should come upon the Christian, and his anger be kindled much more against this cursed spirit, than Saul's, and the men of Israel's was against Nahash.

Second. The Christian's trade is heavenly, The merchandise he deals for is the growth of that heavenly country. 'Our conversation is in heaven,' Php 3:20. Every man's conversation is suitable to his calling. He whose trade lies in the earth minds earthly things, and he whose trade is heavenly follows that close. Every man minds his own business, the apostle tells us. You may possibly find a tradesman out of his shop now and then, but he is as a fish out of the water, never in his element till he be in his calling again. Thus when the Christian is about the world, and the worldling about heavenly matters, both are men out of their way, not right girt, till they get into their employment again. Now this heavenly trade is that which Satan doth in an especial manner labour to stop. Could the Christian enjoy but a free trade with heaven a few years without molestation, he would soon grow a rich man, too rich indeed for earth. But what with losses sustained by the hands of this pirate Satan, and also the wrong he receives by the treachery of some, in his own bosom, that like unfaithful servants hold correspondence with this robber, he is kept but low in this life, and much of his gains are lost. Now the Christian's heavenly trade lies either within doors or abroad; he can be free in neither, Satan is at his heels in both.

1. Within doors. This I may call his home-trade, which is spent in secret, between God and his own soul. Here the Christian drives an unknown trade, he is at heaven, and home again richly laden in his thoughts and heavenly meditations before the world knows where he hath been. Every creature he sees is a text for his heart to raise some spiritual matter and observations from. Every sermon he hears cuts him out work to make up and enlarge upon when he gets alone. Every providence is as wind to his sails, and sets his heart a moving in some heavenly action or other

suitable to the occasion. One while he is wrapped up with joy in the consideration of mercy, another while melted into godly sorrow for the sense of his sins; sometimes exalting God in his praises, anon abusing himself before God for his own vileness. One while he is at the breast of the covenant, milking out the consolations of the promises; at another time working his heart into a holy awe, and fear of the threatenings. Thus the Christian walks aloft, while the base worldling is licking the dust below. One of these heavenly pearls which the Christian trades for, is more worth than the worldling gets with all his sweat and travail in his whole life. The Christian's feet stand where other men's heads are. He treads on the moon, and is clothed with the sun, he looks down on earthly men—as one from a high hill doth upon those that live in some fen or moor—and sees them buried in a fog of carnal pleasures and profits, while he breathes in a pure heavenly air, but yet not so high as to be free from all storms and tempests. Many a sad gust he hath from sin and Satan without. What else mean those sad complaints and groans, which come from the children of God—that their hearts are so dead and dull, their thoughts so roving and unfixed in duty, yea, many times so wicked and filthy, that they dare hardly tell what they are, for fear of staining their own lips, and offending the ears of others by naming them? Surely, the Christian finds it in his heart to will and desire he could meditate, pray, hear, and live after another sort than this, doth he not? yes, I durst be his surety he doth. But so long as there is a devil [who] tempts, and we continue within his walk, it will be thus, more or less. As fast as we labour to clear the spring of our hearts, he will be labouring to royle or stop it again; so that we have two works to do at once, to perform a duty, and watch him that opposeth us—trowel and sword both in our hands. They had need work hard indeed, who have others continually endeavouring to pull down, as they are labouring to rear up, the building.

2. Abroad. That part of the Christian's trade, which lies abroad, is heavenly also. Take a Christian in his relations, calling, neighbourhood; he is a heavenly trader in all. The great business of his life is to be doing or receiving some good. That company is not for him, that will neither give nor take this. What should a merchant be, where there is no buying or selling? Every one labours, as his calling is, to seat himself where trade is quickest, and he is likeliest to have most takings. The Christian, where he may choose, takes such in relations near to himself, husband, wife, servants, as may suit with his heavenly trade, and not such as will be a pull-back to him. He falls in with the holiest persons as his dearest acquaintance; if there be a saint in the town where he lives, he will find him out, and this will be the man he will consort with. And in his conversation with these and all else, his chief work is for heaven, his heavenly principle within inclines him to it. Now, this alarms hell. What! not contented to go to heaven himself, but by his holy example, gracious speeches, sweet counsels, seasonable reproofs, will he be trading with others, and labour to carry them along with him also? This brings the lion fell and mad out of his den. Such to be sure shall find the devil in their way to oppose them. I would have come, saith Paul, but Satan hindered me. He that will vouch God, and let it appear by the tenor of his conversation that he trades for him, shall have enemies enough, if the devil can help him to such.

Third. The Christian's hopes are all heavenly; he lots not upon anything the world hath to give him. Indeed he would think himself the most miserable man of all others, if here were all he could make of his religion. No, it is heaven and eternal life that he expects; and though he be so poor as not to be able to make a will of a groat, yet he counts himself a greater heir, than if he were child to the greatest prince on earth. This inheritance he sees by faith, and can rejoice in the hope of the glory

which it will bring him. The maskery and cheating glory of the great ones of this world moves him not to envy their fanciful pomp; but when on the dunghill himself, he can forget his own present sorrows, to pity them in all their bravery, knowing that within a few days the cross will be off his back, and the crowns off their heads together—their portion will be spent, when he shall be to receive all his. These things entertain him with such joy that they will not suffer him to acknowledge himself miserable, when others think him, and the devil tells him, he is such. This, this torments the very soul of the devil, to see the Christian under sail for heaven, filled with the sweet hope of his joyful entertainment when he comes there; and therefore he raiseth what storms and tempests he can, either to hinder his arrival in that blessed port —which he most desires, and doth not wholly despair of—or at least to make it a troublesome winter voyage, such as Paul's was, in which they suffered so much loss. And this indeed very often he obtains in such a degree, that by his violent impetuous temptations, beating long upon the Christian, he makes him throw over much precious lading of his joys and comforts; yea, sometimes he brings the soul through the stress of temptation to think of quitting the ship, while for the present all hope of being saved seems to be taken away. Thus you see what we wrestle with devils for. We come to the [Use or Application. A word of reproof to four sorts of persons.] Use First. This is a word of reproof to four sorts of persons.

1. Sort. Is a word of reproof to those that are so far from wrestling against Satan for this heavenly prize, that they resist the offer of it. Instead of taking heaven by force, they keep it off by force. How long hath the Lord been crying in our streets, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand? how long have gospel offers rung in our ears? and yet to this day many devil-deluded souls furiously drive on towards hell, and will not be persuaded back—who refuse to be called the children of God, and choose rather the devil's bondage, than the glorious liberty with which Christ would make them free; esteeming the pleasures of sin for a season greater treasures than the riches of heaven. It is storied of Cato, who was Cæsar's bitter enemy, that when he saw Cæsar prevail, rather than fall into his hand and stand to his mercy, he laid violent hands on himself, which Cæsar hearing of, passionately broke out into these words, 'O Cato, why didst thou grudge me the honour of saving thy life?'[48] And do not many walk as if they grudged Christ the honour of saving their souls? What other account can ye give, sinners, of rejecting his grace? Are not heaven and happiness things desirable, and to be preferred before sin and misery? Why then do you not embrace them? Or are they the worse because they come swimming to you in the blood of Christ? O how ill must Christ take it to be thus used, when he comes on such a gracious embassage! May he not say to thee, as once he did to those officers sent to attach him, 'Be ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves?' If he be a thief, it is only in this, that he would steal your sins from you, and leave heaven in the room. O, for the love of God, think what you do; it is eternal life you put away from you, in doing of which, you judge yourselves unworthy of it, Acts 13:46.

2. Sort. It reproves those who are Satan's instruments to rob souls of what is heavenly. Among thieves there are some ye call setters,[49] who inquire where a booty is to be had; which, when they have found, and know [that] such a one travels with a charge about him, then they employ some other to rob him, and are themselves not seen in the business. The devil is the grand setter, he observes the Christian how he walks—what place and company he frequents, what grace or heavenly treasure he carries in his bosom—which, when he hath done, he hath his instruments for

the purpose to execute his design. Thus he considered the admirable graces of Job, and casts about how he might best rob him of his heavenly treasure. And who but his wife and friends must do this for him?—well knowing that his tale would receive credit from their mouths. O friends, ask your consciences whether you have not done the devil some service of this kind in your days. Possibly you have a child or servant who once looked heavenward, but your brow-beating of them scared them back, and now, may be, they are as carnal as you would have them. Or possibly thy wife, before acquainted with thee, was full of life in the ways of God, but since she hath been transplanted into thy cold soil, what by thy frothy speeches and unsavoury conversation, at best thy worldliness and formality, she is now both decayed in her graces and a loser in her comforts. O man, what an indictment will be brought against thee for this at God's bar? You would come off better were it for robbing one of his money and jewels, than of his grace and comforts.

3. Sort. It reproves the woeful negligence [which] most show in labouring for this heavenly prize. None but would be glad their souls might be saved at last; but where is the man or woman that makes it appear by their vigorous endeavour that they mean in earnest? What warlike preparation do they make against Satan, who lies between them and home? where are their arms? where their skill to use them, their resolution to stand to them, and conscionable care to exercise themselves daily in the use of them? Alas, this is a rarity indeed, not to be found in every house where the profession of religion is hanged out at the door. If woulding and wishing will bring them to heaven, then they may come thither; but as for this wrestling and fighting, this making religion our business, they are as far from these as at last they are like to be from heaven. They are of his mind in Tully, who in a summer's day, as he lay lazing himself on the grass, would say, 'O that this were to work!'[50] that I would lie here and do my day labour. Thus many melt and waste their lives in sloth, and say in their hearts, 'O that this were the way to heaven!' but will use no means to furnish themselves with grace for such an enterprise. I have read of a great prince in Germany, invaded by a more potent enemy than himself, yet from his friends and allies, who flocked in to his help, he soon had a goodly army, but had no money, as he said, to pay them; but the truth is, he was loath to part with it, for which some in discontent went away, others did not vigorously attend his business, and so he was soon beaten out of his kingdom, and his coffers, when his palace was rifled, were found thracked[51] with treasure. Thus he was ruined, as some sick men die because unwilling to be at cost to pay the physician. It will add to the misery of damned souls, when they shall have leisure enough to consider what they have lost in losing God, to remember what means, offers, and talents they once had towards the obtaining of everlasting life, but had not a heart to use them.

4. Sort. It reproves those who make a great bustle and noise in religion, who are forward in profession—very busy to meddle with the strictest duties, as if heaven had monopolized their whole hearts; but like the eagle, when they tower highest, their prey is below, where their eye is also. Such a generation there ever was and will be—that mingle themselves with the saints of God—who pretend heaven, and have their outward garb faced and fringed, as it were, with heavenly speeches and duties, while their hearts are lined with hypocrisy—whereby they deceive others, but most of all themselves. Such may be the world's saints, but [they are] devils in Christ's account. 'Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil!' And truly of all devils, none so bad as the professing devil, the preaching, praying devil. O sirs, be plain-hearted. Religion is as tender as your eye, it will not be jested with. Remember the vengeance which fell on Belshazzar,

while he caroused in the bowls of the sanctuary. Religion and the duties of it are consecrated things, not made for thee to drink thy lusts out of. God hath remarkably appeared in discovering and confounding such as have prostituted sacred things to worldly ends. Jezebel fasts and prays, the better to devour Naboth's vineyard, but was devoured by it. Absalom was as sick till he had ravished his father's crown, as his brother Amnon, till he had done the like to his sister, and to hide his treason he puts on a religious cloak, and therefore begs leave to go and pay his vow in Hebron, when he had another game in chase; and did he not fall by the hand of his hypocrisy? Of all men their judgement is endorsed with most speed, who silver over worldly or wicked enterprises with heavenly semblances. Of this gang were those concerning whom the apostle saith, 'their damnation slumbereth not,' 2 Peter 2:3; and those to whom God saith, 'I the Lord will answer him by myself, and I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am the Lord,' Ezekiel 14:7-8.

[How the Christian might know whether heaven be the prize he chiefly desires.]

Use Second. Try whether they be heavenly things or earthly thou chiefly pursuest. Certainly, friends, we need not be so ignorant of our souls' state and affairs, did we oftener converse with our thoughts, and observe the haunts of our hearts. We soon can tell what dish pleaseth our palate best; and may you not tell whether heaven or earth be the most savoury meat to your souls? And if you should ask how you might know whether heaven be the prize you chiefly desire, I would put you only upon this double trial.

1. Trial. Art thou uniform in thy pursuit? Dost thou contend for heaven, and that which leads to heaven also? Earthly things God is pleased to retail —all have some, none have all; but in heavenly treasure he will not break the whole piece, and cut it into remnants. If thou wilt have heaven, thou must have Christ; if Christ, thou must like his service as well as his sacrifice. No holiness, no happiness. If God would cut off so much as would serve men's turns, he might have customers enough. Balaam himself likes one end of the piece, he would 'die like a righteous man,' though living like a wizard as he was. No, God will not deal with such pedling merchants; that man alone is for God, and God for him, who will come roundly up to God's offer, and take all off his hands. One fitly compares holiness and happiness to those two sisters, Leah and Rachel. Happiness, like Rachel, seems the fairer—even a carnal heart may fall in love with that; but holiness, like Leah, is the elder and beautiful also, though in this life it appears with some disadvantage—her eyes being bleared with tears of repentance, and her face furrowed with the works of mortification; but this is the law of that heavenly country, that the younger sister must not be bestowed before the elder. We cannot enjoy fair Rachel—heaven and happiness, except first we embrace tender-eyed Leah—holiness, with all her severe duties of repentance and mortification. Now, sirs, how like you this method? Art thou content to marry Christ and his grace; and then—serving a hard apprenticeship in temptations both of prosperity and adversity—enduring the heat of the one and the cold of the other—to wait till at last the other be given into thy bosom?

2. Trial. If, indeed, heaven and heavenly things be the prize thou wrestlest for, thou wilt discover a heavenly deportment of heart, even in earthly things. Wherever you meet a Christian, he is going to heaven. Heaven is at the bottom of his lowest actions. Now observe thy heart in three particulars, in getting, in using, and in keeping earthly things, whether it be after a heavenly

manner.

(1.) Particular. [Observe thy heart] in getting earthly things. If heaven be thy chief prize, then thou wilt be ruled by a heavenly law in the gathering of these. Take a carnal wretch, and what his heart is set on he will have, though it be by hook or crook. A lie fits Gehazi's mouth well enough, so he may fill his pockets by it. Jezebel dares [to] mock God, and murder an innocent man, for an acre or two of ground. Absalom, 'for the sake of governing,'[52] what will he not do? God's fence is too low to keep a graceless heart in bounds, when the game is before him; but a soul that hath heaven in its eye is ruled by heaven's law, and dares not step out of heaven's road to take up a crown, as we see in David's carriage towards Saul. Indeed, in so doing he should cross himself in his own grand design, which is the glory of God, and the happiness of his own soul in enjoying of him. Upon these very terms the servants of God have refused to be rich and great in the world, when either of these lay at stake. Moses threw his court-preferment at his heels, refusing 'to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.' Abraham scorned to be made rich by the king of Sodom, Genesis 14:23, that he might avoid the suspicion of covetousness and self-seeking; it shall not be said another day that he came to enrich himself with the spoil, more than to rescue his kinsmen. Nehemiah would not take the tax and tribute to maintain his state, when he knew they were a poor peeled people, 'because of the fear of the Lord.' Dost thou walk by this rule? wouldst thou gather no more estate or honour than thou mayest have with God's leave, and will stand with thy hopes of heaven?

(2.) Particular. [Observe thy heart] in using earthly things. Dost thou discover a heavenly spirit in using these things?

(a) The saint improves his earthly things for an heavenly end. Where layest up thy treasure? dost thou bestow it on thy voluptuous paunch, thy hawks and thy hounds, or lockest thou it up in the bosom of Christ's poor members? what use makest thou of thy honour and greatness, to strengthen the hands of the godly or the wicked? And so of all thy other temporal enjoyments—a gracious heart improves them for God. When a saint prays for these things, he hath an eye to some heavenly end. If David prays for life, it is not that he may live, but live and praise God, Psalms 119:175. When he was driven from his regal throne by the rebellious arms of Absalom, see what his desire was and hope, 'The king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation,' 2 Samuel 15:25. Mark, not 'show me my crown, my palace,' but 'the ark, the house of God.'

(b) A gracious heart pursues earthly things with a holy indifferency, saving the violence and zeal of his spirit for the things of heaven. He useth the former as if he used them not—with a kind of non-attendancy; his head and his heart is taken up with higher matters, how he may please God, thrive in his grace, enjoy more intimate communion with Christ in his ordinances; in all these he spreads all his sails, plies all his oars, strains every part and power. Thus we find David upon his full speed, 'My soul presseth hard after thee,' Psalms 63:1-11. And, before the ark, we find him dancing with all his might. Now a carnal heart is clean contrary, his zeal is for the world, and his indifferency in the things of God; he prays as if he did not pray, &c., he sweats in his shop, but chills and grows cold in his closet. O how hard to pulley him up to a duty of God's worship, or to get him out to an ordinance? No weather shall keep him from the market; [let it] rain, blow, or snow, he goes thither; but if the church-path be a little wet, or the air somewhat cold, it is apology

enough for him if his pew be empty. When he is about any worldly business, he is as earnest at it as the idolatrous smith in hammering of his image, who, the prophet saith, ‘worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh not, and is faint,’ Isaiah 44:12. So zealous is the muck-worm in his worldly employments, that he will pinch his carcase, and deny himself his repast in due season, to pursue that. The kitchen there will wait on the shop; but in the worship of God, it is enough to make him sick of the sermon, and angry with the preacher, if he be kept beyond his hour. Here the sermon must give place to the kitchen. So the man for his pleasures and carnal pastime; he tells no clock at his sports, and knows not how the day goes; when night comes he is angry that it takes him off. But at any heavenly work, O how is the man punished! time now hath leaden heels he thinks. All he does at a sermon is to tell the clock, and see how the glass runs. If men were not willing to deceive themselves, surely they might know which way their heart goes, by the swift motion, or the hard tugging, and slow pace it stirs, as well as they know in a boat, whether they row against the tide, or with it.

(c) The Christian useth these things with a holy fear, lest earth should rob heaven, and his outward enjoyments prejudice his heavenly interest. He eats in fear, works in fear, rejoiceth in his abundance with fear. As Job sanctified his children by offering a sacrifice, out of a fear lest they had sinned; so the Christian is continually sanctifying his earthly enjoyments by prayer, that so he may be delivered from the snare of them.

3. Particular. [Observe thy heart] in keeping of earthly things. The same heavenly law, which the Christian went by in getting, he observes in holding, them. As he dares not say he will be rich and honourable in the world, but if God will; so neither that he will hold what he hath. He only keeps them, until his heavenly Father calls for them, that at first gave them. If God will continue them to him, and entail them on his posterity too, he blesseth God; and so he desires to do also when he takes them away. Indeed, God’s meaning in the great things of the world, which sometimes he throws in upon the saints, is chiefly to give them the greater advantage of expressing their love to him, in denying them for his sake. God never intended by that strange providence, in bringing Moses to Pharaoh’s court, to settle him there in worldly pomp and grandeur. A carnal heart, indeed, would have expounded providence, and interpreted it as a fair occasion put into his hands by God, to have advanced himself into the throne—which some say he might in time have done—but as an opportunity to make his faith and self-denial more eminently conspicuous, in throwing all these at his heels, for which he hath so honourable a remembrance among the Lord’s worthies, Hebrews 11:24-25. And truly a gracious soul reckons he cannot make so much of his worldly interests any other way, as by offering them up for Christ’s sake. However that traitor thought Mary’s ointment might have been carried to a better market, yet no doubt that good woman herself was only troubled that she had not one more precious to pour on her dear Saviour’s head. This makes the Christian ever to hold the sacrificing knife at the throat of his worldly enjoyments, ready to offer them up when God calls. Overboard they shall go, rather than hazard a wreck to faith or a good conscience; he sought them in the last place, and therefore he will part with them in the first. Naboth will hazard the king’s anger—which at last cost him his life—rather than sell an acre or two of land which was his birthright. The Christian will expose all he hath in this world to preserve his hopes for another. Jacob, in his march towards Esau, sent his servants with his flocks before, and came himself with his wives behind; if he can save anything from his brother’s rage, it shall be what he loves best: if the Christian can save anything, it shall be

his soul, his interest in Christ and heaven, and then no matter if the rest go, even then he can say, not as Esau to Jacob, I have "9 (rÇv), a great deal, but as Jacob to him, I have -, (kÇl), all, all I want, all I desire, Genesis 33:9,Genesis 33:11; as David expresseth it, ‘This is all my salvation, and all my desire,’ 2 Samuel 23:5. Now try whether thy heart be tuned to this note: Does heaven give law to thy earthly enjoyments?—wouldst thou not keep thy honour, estate, no, not life itself, to prejudice thy heavenly nature and hopes? Which wouldst thou choose, if thou couldst not keep both—a whole skin or a sound conscience? It was a strange answer, if true, which the historian saith Henry V. gave to his father, who had usurped the crown, and now dying, sent for his son, to whom he said, ‘Fair son, take the crown (which stood on his pillow by his head), but God knows how I came by it.’ He answered, ‘I care not how you came by it; now I have it, I will keep it as long as my sword can defend it.’ He that keeps earth by wrong, cannot expect heaven by right.

[An exhortation to the pursuit of heaven and heavenly things.]

Use Third. Is heaven and all that is heavenly that Satan seeks to hinder us of? let this provoke us the more earnestly to contend for them. Had we to do with an enemy that came only to plunder us of earthly trifles, would honours, estates, and what this world affords us stay his stomach; it might suffer a debate, in a soul that hath hopes of heaven, whether it were worth fighting to keep this lumber; but Christ and heaven sure are too precious to part withal upon any terms. ‘Ask the kingdom for him also,’ said Solomon to Bathsheba, when she begged Abishag for Adonijah. What can the devil leave thee worth, if he deprive thee of these? and yet, I confess, I have heard of one that wished God would let him alone, and not take him from what he had here. Vile brute! the voice of a swine and not a man, that could choose to wallow in the dung and ordure of his carnal pleasures, and wish himself for ever shut up with his swill[53] in the hog’s coat of this dunghill earth, rather than leave these, to dwell in heaven’s palace, and be admitted to no meaner pleasures than what God himself with his saints enjoy. It were even just if God gave such brutes as these a swine’s face to their swinish hearts; but alas! how few then should we meet that would have the countenance of a man? the greatest part of the world—even all that are carnal and worldly —being of the same mind, though not so impudent, as that wretch, to speak what they think. The lives of men tell plain enough that they say in their hearts, it is good being here—that they wish they could build tabernacles on earth for all the mansions that are prepared in heaven. ‘The transgression of the wicked,’ saith in David’s heart, ‘that the fear of God was not before them,’ Psalms 36:1; and may not the worldliness of a muck-worm say in the heart of any rational man, that heaven and heavenly excellences are not before their eyes or thoughts? O what a deep silence is there concerning these in the conversations of men! Heaven is such stranger to the most, that very few are heard to inquire the way thither, or so much as ask the question in earnest, What shall they do to be saved? The most express no more desires of obtaining heaven, than those blessed souls now in heaven do of coming again to dwell on earth. Alas! their heads are full of other projects; they are either, as Israel, scattered over the face of the earth to gather straw, or busied in picking that straw they have gathered, labouring to get the world, or pleasing themselves with what they got. So that it is no more than needs to use some arguments to call men off the world to the pursuit of heaven, and what is heavenly.

First Argument. As for earthly things, it is not necessary that thou hast them. That is necessary which cannot be supplied per vicarium—with somewhat besides itself. Now there is no such earthly enjoyment but may be so supplied, as to make its room more desirable than its company.

In heaven there shall be light and no sun, a rich feast and yet no meat; glorious robes and yet no clothes, there shall want nothing, and yet none of this worldly glory [shall] be found there. Yea, even while we are here these may be recompensed; thou mayest be under infirmities of body, and yet better than if thou hadst health. ‘The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick, the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity,’ Isaiah 33:24. Thou mayest miss of worldly honour, and obtain, with those worthies of Christ, Hebrews 11:1-40, a good report by faith, and that is a name that is better than [that] of the great ones of the earth; thou mayest be poor in the world, and yet rich in grace, and ‘godliness with contentment is great gain;’ in a word, if thou partest with thy temporal life, and findest an eternal, what dost thou lose by the change? But heaven and heavenly things are such as cannot be recompensed with any other. Thou hast a heavenly soul in thy bosom; lose that, and where canst thou have another? There is but one heaven; miss that, and where can you take up your lodging but in hell? One Christ that can lead you thither; reject him, and ‘there remaineth no more sacrifice foe sins.’ O that men would think on these things. Go, sinner, to the world, and see what it can afford you in lieu of these. May be it will offer to entertain you with its pleasures and delights. O poor reward for the loss of Christ and heaven! Is this all thou canst get? Doth Satan rob thee of heaven and happiness, and only give thee posy to smell on as thou art going to thy execution? Will these quench hellfire, or so much as cool those flames thou art falling into? Who but those who have foredone their understandings, would take these toys and new nothings for Christ and heaven? While Satan is pleasing your fancies with these rattles and babbles, his hand is in your treasure, robbing you of that which is only necessary. It is more necessary to be saved, than to be; better not to be, than to have a being in hell.

Second Argument. Earthly things are such as it is a great uncertainty whether, with all our labour, we can have them or not. The world, though so many thousand years old, hath not learned the merchant such a method of trading, as from it he may infallibly conclude he shall at last get an estate by his trade, nor the courtier such rules of comporting himself to the humour of his prince as to assure him he shall rise. They are but few that carry away the prize in the world’s lottery; the greater number have only their labour for their pains, and a sorrowful remembrance left them of their egregious folly, to be led such a wild-goose chase after that which hath deceived them at last. But now for the heaven and the things of heaven, there is such a clear and certain rule laid down, that if we will but take the counsel of the Word we can neither mistake the way, nor in that way miscarry of the end. ‘And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God,’ Galatians 6:16. There are some indeed who run, and yet obtain not this prize; that seek, and find not; [that] knock, and find the door shut upon them; but it is because they do it either not in the right manner, or in the right season.

Some would have heaven, but if God save them he must save their sins also, for they do not mean to part with them; and how heaven can hold God and such company together, judge you. As they come in at one door, Christ and all those holy spirits with him would run out at the other. Ungrateful wretches, that will not come to this glorious feast, unless they may bring that with them which would disturb the joy of that blissful state, and offend all the guests that sit at the table with them, yea, drive God out of his own mansion-house. A second sort would have heaven, but—like him in Ruth 4:2-4, who had a mind to his kinsman Elimelech’s land, and would have paid for the purchase, but liked not to have it by marrying Ruth, and so missed of it—some seem very forward to have heaven and salvation, if their own righteousness could procure the same—all the good they

do, and duties they perform, they lay up for this purchase—but at last perish, because they close not with Christ, and take not heaven in his right. A third sort are content to have it by Christ, but their desires are so impotent and listless, that they put them upon no vigorous use of means to obtain him; and so, like the sluggard, they starve, because they will not pull their hands out of their bosom of sloth to reach their food that is before them. For the world they have mettle enough, and too much; they trudge far and near for that, and when they have run themselves out of breath, can stand and 'pant after the dust of the earth,' as the prophet phraseth it, Amos 2:7. But for Christ and obtaining interest in him, O how key-cold are they! There is a kind of cramp invades all the powers of their souls, when they should pray, hear, examine their hearts, draw out their affections in hungerings and thirstings after his grace and Spirit. It is strange to see how they [who] even now went full soop to the world, are suddenly becalmed—not a breath of wind stirring to any purpose in their souls after these things—and is it any wonder that Christ and heaven should be denied to them, that have no more mind to them?

Lastly. Some have zeal enough to have Christ and heaven, but it is when the Master of the house is risen, and hath shut to the door, and truly then they may stand long enough rapping, before any come to let them in. There is no gospel preached in another world. But as for thee, poor soul, who art persuaded to renounce thy lusts, to throw away the conceit of thy own righteousness, that thou mayest run with more speed to Christ, and art so possessed with the excellency of Christ, thy own present need of him, and [of] salvation by him, that thou pantest after him more than [after] life itself, in God's name go and speed, be of good comfort; he calls thee by name to come unto him, that thou mayest have rest for thy soul. There is an office in the Word where thou mayest have thy soul and its eternal happiness insured to thee. Those that come to him, as he will himself in no wise cast away, so [he will] not suffer any other to pluck them away. 'This day,' saith Christ to Zacchaeus, 'is salvation come to this house,' Luke 19:9. Salvation comes to thee, poor soul, that openest thy heart to receive Christ; thou hast eternal life already, as sure as if thou wert a glorified saint now walking in that heavenly city. O sirs, if there were a free trade proclaimed to the Indies, enough gold for all that went, and a certainty of making a safe voyage, who would stay at home? But alas, this can never be had. All this, and infinitely more, may be said for heaven; and yet how few leave their uncertain hopes of the world to trade for it? What account can be given for this, but the desperate atheism of men's hearts? They are not yet fully persuaded whether the Scripture speaks true or not; whether they may rely upon the discovery that God makes in his Word of this new found land, and those mines of spiritual treasure there to be had, as certain. God open the eyes of the unbelieving world, as he did the prophet's servants, that they may see these things in our hearts. By faith Moses saw him that was invisible.

Third Argument. Earthly things, when we have them, we are not sure of them. Like birds, they hop up and down, now on this hedge, and anon upon that; none can call them his own. [We may be] rich to-day, and poor to-morrow; in health when we lie down, and arrested with pangs of death before midnight; joyful parents, one while solacing ourselves with the hopes of our budding posterity, and may be, ere long, knocks one of Job's messengers at our door to tell us they are all dead; now in honour, but who knows whether we shall not live to see that buried in scorn and reproach? The Scripture compares the multitude of people to waters—the great ones of the world sit upon these waters. As the ship floats upon the waves, so do their honours upon the breath and favour of the multitude; and how long is he like to sit that is carried upon a wave? One while they

are mounted up to heaven, as David speaks of the ship, and then down again they fall into the deep. ‘We have ten parts in the king,’ say the men of Israel, 2 Samuel 19:43; and in the very next verse Sheba doth but sound a trumpet of sedition, saying, ‘We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse;’ and the wind is in another corner presently, for it is said, ‘Every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba.’ Thus was David cried up and down, and that almost in the same breath. Unhappy man he, that hath no surer portion than what this variable world will afford him. The time of mourning for the departure of all earthly enjoyments is at hand. We shall see them, as Eglon’s servants did their lord, fallen down dead before us, and weep because they are not. What folly then is it to dandle this vain world in our affections, whose joy, like the child’s laughter on the mother’s knee, is sure to end in a cry at last, and [to] neglect heaven and heavenly things, which endure forever? O remember Dives stirring up his pillow, and composing himself to rest! —how he was called up with the tidings of death before he was warm in this his bed of ease, which God had made for him in flames; from whence we hear him roaring in the anguish of his conscience. O soul! couldst thou get but an interest in the heavenly things we are speaking of, these would not thus slip from under thee. Heaven is a kingdom that cannot be shaken—Christ an abiding portion—his graces and comforts, sure waters that fail not, but spring up into eternal life. The quails that were food for the Israelites’ lust soon ceased, but the rock that was drink to their faith followed them. This rock is Christ. Make sure of him, and he will make sure of thee; he will follow thee to thy sick-bed, and lie in thy bosom, cheering thy heart with his sweet comforts, when worldly joys lie in cold upon thee, as David’s clothes on him, and [when] no warmth of comfort [is] to be got from them. When thy outward senses are locked up, that thou canst neither see the face of thy dear friends, nor hear the counsel and comfort they would give thee, then he will come, though these doors be shut, and say, ‘Peace be to thee, my dear child; fear not death or devils; I stay to receive thy last breath, and have here my angels waiting, that as soon as thy soul is breathed out of thy body, they may carry and lay it in my bosom of love, where I will nourish thee with those eternal joys that my blood hath purchased, and my love prepared for thee.’

Fourth Argument. Earthly things are empty and unsatisfying. We may have too much, but never enough of them. They oft breed loathing, but never content; and indeed how should they, being so disproportionate to the vast desires of these immortal spirits that dwell in our bosoms? A spirit hath not flesh and bones, neither can it be fed with such; and what hath the world, but a few bones covered over with some fleshly delights to give it? ‘The less is blessed of the greater,’ not the greater of the less. These things therefore being so far inferior to the nature of man, he must look higher if he will be blessed, even to God himself, who is the Father of spirits. God intended these things for our use, not enjoyment, and what folly is it to think we can squeeze that from them, which God never put in them? They are breasts, that, moderately drawn, yield good milk, sweet, refreshing; but, wring them too hard, and you will suck nothing but wind or blood from them. We lose what they have, by expecting to find what they have not. None find less sweetness and less and more dissatisfaction in these things, than those who strive most to please themselves with them. The cream of the creature floats atop, and he that is not content to fleet[54] it, but thinks by drinking a deeper draught to find yet more, goes further to speed worse, being sure by the disappointment he shall meet to pierce himself through with many sorrows. But all these fears might happily be escaped, if thou wouldst turn thy back on the creature, and face about for heaven. Labour to get Christ, and through him hopes of heaven, and thou takest the right road to content;

thou shalt see it before thee, and enjoy the prospect of it as thou goest, yea, find that every step thou drawest nearer and nearer to it. O what a sweet change wouldst thou find! As a sick man coming out of an impure unwholesome climate, where he never was well, [finds] when he gets into fresh air or his native soil, so also wilt thou find a cheering of thy spirits, and a reviving [of] thy soul with unspeakable content and peace. Having once closed with Christ,

1. The guilt of all thy sins is gone, and this spoiled all thy mirth before. All your dancing of a child, when some pin pricks it, will not make it quiet or merry; well, now, that pin is taken out which robbed thee of the joy of thy life.

2. Thy nature is renewed and sanctified. And when is a man at ease, if not when he is in health? and what is holiness, but the creature restored to his right temper, in which God created him?

3. Thou becomest a child of God, and that cannot but please thee well, I hope, to be a son or daughter to so great a King.

4. Thou hast a right to heaven's glory, whither thou shalt ere long be conducted to take and hold possession of that thy inheritance for ever, and who can tell what that is? Nicephorus tells us of one Agbarus, a great man, that—hearing so much of Christ's fame, by reason of the miracles he wrought —sent a painter to take his picture, and that the painter when he came was not able to do it, because of the radiancy and splendour which sat on Christ's face. Whether this be true or no, I leave it; but, to be sure, there is such a brightness on the face of Christ glorified, and that happiness which in heaven saints shall have with him, as forbids us that dwell in mortal flesh to conceive of it aright, much more to express [it]. It is best going thither to be informed, and then we shall confess [that] we on earth heard not half of what we there find, yea, that our present conceptions are no more like to that vision of glory we shall there have, than the sun in the painter's table is to the sun itself in the heavens. And if all this be so, why then do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not, yea, for that which keeps you from that which can satisfy? Earthly things are like some trash, which doth not only not nourish, but takes away the appetite from that which would. Heaven and heavenly things are not relished by a soul vitiated with these. Manna, though for deliciousness called angels' food, [is] yet but light bread to an Egyptian palate. But these spiritual things depend not [so] on thy opinion, O man, whoever thou art—as earthly things in a great measure do—that the value of them should rise or fall as the world's exchange doth, and as vain man is pleased to rate them. Think gold dirt, and it is so, for all the royal stamp on it. Count the swelling titles of worldly honour—that proud dust brags so in—vanity, and they are such; but have base thoughts of Christ, and he is not the worse. Slight heaven as much as you will, it will be heaven still. And when thou comest so far to thy wits, with the prodigal, as to know which is best fare, husks or bread, where best living, among hogs in the field or in thy Father's house, then thou wilt know how to judge of these heavenly things better. Till then, go and make the best market thou canst of the world, but look not to find this pearl of price—true satisfaction to thy soul —in any of the creature's shops; and were it not better to take it when thou mayest have it, than after thou hast wearied thyself in vain in following the creature, to come back with shame, and may be miss it here also, because thou wouldst not have it when it was offered?

[1]"DP"H [2]The text has 2 Corinthians 11:15. — SDB [3]arcana imperii.

[4]vectigalia.

[5]B"D4FJ"<,J, ,"LJTLH

[6]Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thy mother.

— Hosea 4:5

Note: — The above passage is the one cited by Rev. Gurnall. However, it can be plainly seen that it really has little, if anything to do with what he was referring to; and after a search of the book of Hosea, there doesn't appear to be any reference in Hosea containing the exact wording he has given here. I did locate, though, in Amos, the verses at the end of the following references that do contain "Gilgal" in the verse in Hosea.

— SDB

Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Beth-aven, nor swear, The Lord liveth.

— Hosea 4:15

All their wickedness is in Gilgal: for there I hated them: for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house, I will love them no more: all their princes are revolters.

— Hosea 9:15 Is there iniquity in Gilead? surely they are vanity: they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal; yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the fields.

— Hosea 12:11

4Come to Beth-el, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years: 5And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and declare the free offerings: for this pleaseth you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord God.

— Amos 4:1-13 [7]Prorogued — Means to defer, postpone.—SDB [8]operæ pretium vivere.

[9]posse cœli aerii.

[10],<,D(@L<J@H.

[11]re infecta.

[12]A rook—a swindling fellow, a defrauder.

[13]Plerusque superant leonem ferientem, quœ non sustinent rugientem.

[14]Diabolus non est jussor vitiorum sed incentor.

[15]Roam off, that is, snatch away.

[16]A mittimus is a command in writing given under the hand or seal of one in authority, as a justice of the peace, requiring the commitment of an offender to prison.

[17]Truck—to exchange goods, to barter.

[18]I have, what I have eaten, and whatever my satiated desire has drunk in.

[19]Unias anni volaticum gaudium.

[20]To trounce—to punish or beat severely.

[21]Florescentem amant veritatem, qui non redarguentem.

[22]i.e., Taunts or mockings.

[23]Queans: — a disreputable woman; specifically a prostitute. — SDB [24]To tole means to draw by degrees.

[25]Sweal, sometimes written swale, means to melt and run down, as the tallow of a candle; to melt away without feeding the flame.—Imperial Dictionary. Ed.

[26]Bene orasse est bene studuisse.

[27]Non schola Epicuri fecit magnos viros sed contubernium.

[28]Tantum distat studium à lectione, guantum amicitia ab hospitio socialis affectio à fortuita salutatione.

[29]Pudoris magìs memores quàm salutis.

[30]To drab, to associate with the fallen and debauched. —Ed.

[31]Overseen, mistaken, deceived.—Imperial Dictionary. Ed.

[32]Vance-roof, the garret.—Norfolk. Ed.

[33]–*@8@< (V8".

[34]Difficilè valdè vitatur peccatum, quod ex victoriâ vitiorum nascitur.

[35]Relicto Paulo Calvinum audirem.

[36]Compt (from the Latin comptus), means neat, spruce,—Imperial Dictionary.

[37]Tolle invidiam, mea tua sunt, et tua mea.

[38]A rafty muggish room, i.e., a damp close room.—Ed.

[39]Hodie illi cras mihi.

[40]O beatos, quorum causâ Deus jurat! O miserimos, si nec juranti credamus!—Tertullian de Pœnitentia.

[41]Grippleness: miserliness, avariciousness. From Webster’s New World Dict. — SDB [42]Qui pro nobis mortem semel vicit, semper in nobis vincit.

[43]To swale, otherwise written sweal, means to waste or melt away; as when a candle runs down without feeding the flame.

[44]Potest homo invitus amittere temporalia non nisi volens amittere spiritualia. — Prosper.

[45]{/µÃ< BV80 @b B,DÂ µ46Dä< J4<ä< V88t ßB,D JT< X< J@4H ,B@LD"<\T4H BDX(µ"JT<.

[46]In cœlestibus, id est, pro cœlestibus Dei.

—Chrysostom.

[47]Nihilo magìs ambio opes et dignatates, quàm elumbis equus gravis sarcinas.

[48]O Cato, cur invidisti mihi salutem tuam?

[49]Setter, from the dog used for searching out game.

—Ed.

[50]O utinam hic esset laborare!

[51]Thracked means properly, loaded, burdened, thence filled, packed, as here. — Ed.

[52]regnandi causa.

[53]Swill, large draughts of liquor; drink taken in excess.

—Ed.

[54]Fleet, to skim the surface; thence, to skim milk.

— Ed.

Chapter 7

01.06 - A Second Exhortation to Arm, and an Argument Urging the Exhortation

Direction Third. A Second Exhortation to Arm, and an Argument urging the Exhortation.

‘Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand’ — Ephesians 6:13 The Apostle in these words reassumes his former exhortation mentioned, Ephesians 6:11, and presseth it with a new force, from that more particular discovery which he gives of the enemy, Ephesians 6:12, where, like a faithful scout, he makes a full report of Satan’s great power and malice; and also discloseth what a dangerous design he hath upon the saints—no less than to despoil them of all that is heavenly —from all which he gives them a second alarm, and bids them ‘Arm! arm!’ ‘Wherefore take unto you,’ &c. In the words consider—FIRST. The exhortation with the inference, ‘wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God.’ SECOND. The argument with which he urgeth the exhortation, and that is double—First. ‘That you may be able to withstand in the evil day.’ Second. ‘Having done all, to stand.’ That is, both able to fight and able to conquer.

DIRECTION III.—FIRST GENERAL PART.

[The Exhortation with the Inference.] ‘Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God,’ — Ephesians 6:13 As for the first general, ‘the exhortation,’ we shall waive it as to the substance of it—it being the same with what we have handled, Ephesians 6:11; only there are two observables which we shall lightly touch—the one, from the repetition of the very same exhortation so soon, one verse only [being] interposed; the other from the verb the apostle useth here, which being not the same with Ephesians 6:11, affords a different note. There it is ‘put on;’[1] here it is, ‘take unto you.’[2] FIRST OBSERVABLE.

[Why the apostle renews so soon the same exhortation; also, what truths ministers ought to preach.]

Here observe the repetition of the same exhortation and that in so short a space. Sure it was not for want of matter, but rather out of abundance of zeal, that he harps the second time on the same string. Indeed he is a better workman, who drives one nail home with reiterated blows, than he which covets to enter many, but fastens none. Such preachers are not likely to reach the conscience, who hop from one truth to another, but dwell on none. Every hearer is not so quick as the preacher, to take a notion as it is first darted forth; neither can many carry away so much of that sermon which is made up all of varieties —where a point is no sooner named, but presently it pulls back its hand, and another makes a breach and comes forth; before the first hath been opened and hammered upon the conscience by a powerful application—as where the discourse is homogeneal, and some one necessary truth is cleared, insisted on, and urged home with blow upon blow. Here the whole matter of the discourse is akin, and one part remembered, brings the memory acquainted with the other; whereas in the former, one puts the other in a weak memory. Short hints and away may please a scholar, but [are] not so profitable for others. The one [way is]

more fit for the schools, the other for the pulpit. Were I to buy a garment in a shop, I should like him better that lays one good piece or two before me that are for my turn, which I may fully peruse, than him who takes down all his shop, and heaps piece upon piece, merely to show his store, till at last for variety I can look wishly[3] on none, they lie so one upon another. Again, as it is profitable thus to insist on truths, so it is not unbecoming a minister to preach the same truths again and again. Paul here goes over and over the same exhortation, Ephesians 6:11, Ephesians 6:13, and elsewhere tells us this is ‘not grievous’ to him, but to them ‘it is safe,’ to hear the same things over and over, Php 3:1. There are three sorts of truths must in our ministry be preached oft.

First Sort. Fundamental truths; or, as we call them, catechise-points, that contain truths necessary to be known and believed. The weight of the whole building lies on these ground-cells, more than on superstructory truths. In a kingdom there are some staple commodities and trades, without which the common weal could not subsist, as wool, corn, &c., in our country, and these ought to be encouraged above others, which though they be an ornament to the nation, yea, add to the riches of it, yet are not so necessary to the subsistence of it. Thus here. There is an excellent use of our other ministerial labours, as they tend to beautify and adorn, yea, enrich the Christian with the knowledge of spiritual mysteries, but that which is chiefly to be regarded is the constant faithful opening of those main truths of the gospel. These are the landmarks, and show us the bounds of truth; and as it is in towns that butt one upon another, if the inhabitants do not sometimes perambulate, and walk the bounds, to show the youth what they are, when the old studs are gone, the next generation may lose all their privileges by their encroaching neighbours, because not able to tell what is their own. There is no fundamental truth, but hath some evil neighbour, heresy I mean, butting on it; and the very reason why a spirit of error hath so encroached of late years upon truth is, because we have not walked the bounds with our people in acquainting them with, and establishing their judgments on, these fundamental points, so frequently and carefully as is requisite. And people are much in the fault, because they cast so much contempt upon this work, that they count a sermon on such points next to lost, and only child’s meat.

Second Sort. Those truths are oft to be preached, which ministers observe to be most undermined by Satan, or his instruments, in the judgments and lives of their people. The preacher must read and study his people as diligently as any book in his study, and, as he finds them, dispense like a faithful steward unto them. Paul takes notice that the Galatians had been in ill handling by false apostles, who had even bewitched them back to the law in that great point of justification, and see how he beats upon that one point. Our people complain, we are so much, so oft reproving the same error or sin, and the fault is their own, because they will not leave it. Who will blame the dog for continuing to bark, when the thief is all the while in the yard? Alas! alas! it is not once or twice rousing against sin will do it. When the people think the minister shows his laziness, because he preacheth the same things, he may then be exercising his patience in continuing to exhort and reprove those who oppose, waiting, if at last, God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. We are bid to lift up our voice like a trumpet, and would you have us cease while the battle lasts, or sound a retreat when it should be a battle?

Third Sort. Truths of daily use and practice. These are like bread and salt; whatever else is on, these must be on the board at every meal. Saint Peter was of this mind: ‘I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them,’ 2 Peter 1:12. He had, you may see, been speaking of such graces and duties, that they could not pass a day without the

exercise of them, and therefore will be ever their monitor, to stir up their pure minds about them. All is not well, when a man is weary of his ordinary food, and nothing will go down but rarities. The stomach is sickly, when a man delights rather to pick some sallet, than eat of solid meat; and how far this dainty age is gone in this spiritual disease, I think few are so far come to themselves, as yet to consider and lament. O sirs, be not weary, as in doing, so not in hearing those savoury truths preached you have daily use of, because you know them and have heard them often. Faith and repentance will be good doctrine to preach and hear to the end of the world; you may as well quarrel with God, because he hath made but one heaven, and one way to it, as with the preacher, for preaching these over and over. If thy heart were humble, and thy palate spiritual, old truths would be new to thee every time thou hearest them. In heaven the saints draw all their wine of joy, as I may so say, at one tap, and shall to all eternity, and yet it never tastes flat. God is that one object their souls are filled with, and never weary of; and can anything of God and his love be wearisome to thee in the hearing here? I am not all this while an advocate for any loiterer in our Lord's vineyard, for any slothful servant in the work of the gospel, who wraps up his talent in idleness, or buries it in the earth, where, may be, he is digging and playing the worldling all the week, and then hath nothing to set before his people on the Lord's-day, but one or two old mouldy loaves, which were kneaded many years before. This is not the good steward. Here are the old, but where are the new things which he should bring out of his treasure? If the minister labours not to increase his stock, he is the worst thief in the parish. It is wicked for a man trusted with the improving of orphans' estates, to let them lie dead by him; much more for a minister not to improve his gifts, which I may call the town-stock, given for the good of the souls of both rich and poor. If that preacher was wise, Ecclesiastes 12:9, who 'still taught the people knowledge,' that is, was ever going on, endeavouring to build them higher in knowledge, and that he might, did give 'good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs;' then surely he will be proved a foolish preacher at last, that wastes his time in sloth, or spends more of it in studying how to add to his estate out of his people's, than how to add to their gifts and graces, by a conscionable endeavour to increase his own.

SECOND OBSERVABLE.

[The best of saints subject to decline in their graces, and why we are to seek a recovery of them.] The second observable in the exhortation is taken from the verb which the apostle useth,[4] which signifies not only to take, but to take again, or recover a thing which we have lost, or reassume a thing which for the present we have left. Now the apostle—writing to the saints at Ephesus, who, at least many of them, were not now to put on this armour by a conversion—or the first work of faith, which no doubt had already passed upon many among them —he, in regard of them and believers to the end of the world, hath a further meaning; that is, that they would put on more close where this armour hangs loose, and [that] they would recover, where they had let fall any duty, or decayed in any grace. So that the note is,

Doctrine. That the Christian should have an especial care to repair his broken armour—to recover his decaying graces. This armour may be battered—I might show sad examples in the several pieces. Was not Jacob's girdle of truth and sincerity unbuckled, when he used that sinful policy to get the blessing? He was not the plain man then, but the supplanter, but he had as good have stayed God's time—he was paid home in his own kind. He puts a cheat on his father; and did not Laban put a cheat on him, giving Leah for Rachel? What say you to David's breast-plate of

righteousness in the matter of Uriah? was it not shot through, and that holy man fearfully wounded—who lays almost a year, for aught we read of him, before he came to himself, so far as to be thoroughly sensible of his sin, till Nathan, a faithful chirurgeon, was sent to search the wound, and clear it of the dead flesh which had grown over it? And Jonah, otherwise a holy prophet, when God would send him on an errand to Nineveh, he hath his shoes to seek, I mean that preparation and readiness with which his mind should have been shod, to have gone at the first call. Good Hezekiah, we find how near his helmet of hope was of being beaten off his head, who tells us himself what his thoughts were in the day of his distress, that he should 'not see the Lord in the land of the living,' expecting that God would never let go his hold, till like a lion he had broke his bones, and at last made an end of him. Even Abraham himself, famous for faith, had yet his fits of unbelief and distrustful qualms coming over his valiant heart. Now in this case the Christian's care should be to get his armour speedily repaired. A battered helmet is next to no helmet in point of present use. Grace in a decay is like a man pulled off his legs by sickness; if some means be not used to recover it, little service will be done by it, or comfort received from it. Therefore Christ gives this church of Ephesus, to whom Paul wrote this epistle, this counsel, 'to remember from whence she has fallen, to repent and do her first works.' How many does a declining Christian wrong at once?

First. He wrongs God, and that in a high degree, because reckons upon more honour to be paid him in, by his saints' grace, than by all other talents which his creatures have to trade with in the world. He can in some sense better bear the open sins of the world, than the decays of his saints' graces. They by abusing their talents, rob him but of his oil, flax, and wool; but the Christian, by the other, bereaves him of the glory which should be paid him from his faith, zeal, patience, self-denial, sincerity, and the rest. Suppose a master should trust one servant with his money, and another with his child to be looked to; would he not be more displeased to see his dear child hurt, or almost killed by the negligence of the one, than his money stolen by the carelessness of the other? Grace is the new creature—the birth of the Spirit; when this comes to any harm by the Christian's careless walking, it must needs go nearer the heart of God, than the wrong he hath from the world, who are trusted with nothing like this.

Second. He that declines in grace, and labours not to repair it, wrongs his brethren, who have a share in one another's grace. He wrongs his whole body that seeks not a cure for a wound in any member. We are bid to 'love one another,' 2 John 1:5; but how shall we show our love to one another? The very next words will direct us. 'And this is love, that we walk after his commandments,' 2 John 1:6. Indeed we show little love to our brethren by sinning, whereby we are sure either to ensnare them or grieve them; and how to let grace go down and sin not go up, is [a] riddle to any that know what they both are.

Third. The Christian wrongs himself in not endeavouring to repair his broken armour, and [to] recover his declining grace. By this he loses the evidence of his inheritance, at least so blots it that it cannot be so clearly perceived by him. A declining Christian must needs be a doubting Christian, because the common symptom of a hypocrite is to wear and waste, like a stake set in the ground, which rots, while true grace like the tree grows. Is not this the knot which the devil poseth many poor souls withal, and finds them work for many years to untie? If thou wert a Christian thou wouldst grow. Right saints go from strength to strength, and thou goest from strength to weakness. They go up the hill to Zion —every ordinance and providence is a step that bears him nearer

heaven—but thou goest down the hill, and art farther from thy salvation than when thou didst first believe, as thou thoughtest. And doth it stand with thy wisdom, Christian, to put a staff into the devil's hand, an argument into his mouth, to dispute against thy salvation with? If you held an estate by the life of a child, which upon the death of it should all go away from you, that child, I warrant you, should be well looked unto; his head should not ache, but you would post to the physician for counsel. I pray what is your evidence for that glorious estate you hope for? Is it not Christ within you? Is not this new creature—which may well be called Christ for its likeness to him—the young heir of heaven's glory? and when that is sick or weak, is it not time to use all means for its recovery? Whilst thus, thou canst neither live nor die comfortably. Not live! a man in a consumption has little joy of his life; he neither finds sweetness in his meat, nor delight in his work, as a healthful man doth. O how sweet is the promise to faith, when active and vigorous! how easy the yoke of the command to the Christian, when his conscience is not galled with guilt, nor his strength enfeebled by temptation! But the Christian in a declining condition, he tastes not the promise, every command is grievous, and every duty burdensome to him; he goes in pain like one whose foot is out of joint, though the way be never so pleasant. And he is as unfit to die as he is to live. Such a one can like no more to hear the news of death, than a tenant that wants his rent doth to hear the quarter day. This made David beg time of God. 'O spare me a little, that I may recover strength.'

Having shown you why the Christian should endeavour to recover his declining graces, it will be very requisite to give a word of counsel to the Christian.

First. A word of counsel to direct him how to judge of the declining state of grace, that he may not pass a false judgment upon himself therein.

Second. A word of counsel to direct him, when he finds grace to be in a declination, how he may recover it.

[A word of counsel, showing from what we may not, as also from what we may, judge our graces to be declining.]

First. A word of counsel to direct the Christian how to judge of the declining state of grace, that he may not pass a false judgment upon himself therein.

How may a Christian judge whether grace be declining in him or no? First. I shall resolve this negatively, and show by what he is not to judge his grace to decline. Second. I shall resolve it positively, and show by what he may certainly conclude a decay of grace.

First. I shall resolve this negatively, and show by what he is not to judge his grace to decline, and that in several particulars.

1. Christian, do not judge grace to be fallen weaker, because thy sense of corruption is grown stronger. This oft lies at the bottom of poor souls' complaints in this case. O they never felt pride, hypocrisy, and other corruptions, so haunt them as now. None knows how they are vexed with these and the like, besides themselves. Now let me ask thee who makest this sad moan, whether thou dost not think these corruptions were in thee before thou didst thus feel them? how oft hast thou prayed as formally, and not been troubled? how oft hast thou stood chatting with the same lusts, and thy soul hath not been laid low before the Lord with such abasement of thyself as now?

Deal faithfully between God and thy soul, and tell not a lie for God by bearing false witness against thyself. If it be thus, thou hast rather a comfortable sign of grace growing than decaying. Sin cannot be on the getting hand, if the sense of sin grow quick; this is the concomitant of a thriving soul. None [are] so full of complaints of their own hearts as such; the least sin goes now to their very souls, which makes them think viler of themselves than ever. But it is not the increase of sin in them, but the advance of their love to Christ, makes them judge so. When the sun shines with some power, and the year gets up, we observe, though we may have frosts and snow, yet they do not lie long, but are soon dissolved by the sun. O it is a sweet sign that the love of Christ shines with [such] a force upon thy soul, that no corruptions can lie long in thy bosom, but they melt into sorrow and bitter complaints. That is the decaying soul, where sin lies bound up and frozen, [where] little sense of or sorrow for it appears.

2. Take heed thou thinkest not grace decays, because thy comfort withdraws. The influence of the sun comes where the light of it is not to be found, yea, is mighty, as appears in those mines of gold and silver, which are concocted by the same. And so may the actings of grace be vigorous in thee, when least under the shines of his countenance. Did ever faith triumph more than in our Saviour, crying, ‘My God, my God?’ here faith was at its meridian, when it was midnight in respect of joy. Possibly thou comest from an ordinance, and bringest not home with thee those sheaves of comfort thou usest to do, and therefore concludest grace acted not in thee as formerly. Truly if thou hast nothing else to go by, thou mayest wrong the grace of God in thee exceedingly. Because thy comfort is extrinsical to thy duty—a boon which God may give or not, yea, doth give to the weak, and deny to the strong. The traveller may go as fast, and ride as much ground when the sun doth not shine, as when it doth—though indeed he goes not so merrily on his journey—nay, sometimes he makes the more haste. The warm sun makes him sometimes to lie down and loiter, but when dark and cold, he puts on with more speed. Some graces thrive best, like some flowers, in the shade, such as humility, dependence on God, &c.

3. Take heed thou dost not mistake, and think thy grace decays, when may be it is only thy temptations increase, and not thy grace that decreases. If you should hear a man say, because he cannot to-day run so fast, when a hundred weight is on his back, as he could yesterday without any such a burden, that therefore he was grown weaker, you would soon tell him where his mistake lies. Temptation lies not in the same heaviness alway upon the Christian’s shoulder. Observe, therefore, whether Satan is not more than ordinary let loose to assault thee—whether thy temptations come not with more force and violence than ever. Possibly, though thou dost not with the same facility overcome these, as thou hast done less, yet grace may act stronger in conflicting with the greater, than in overcoming the less. The same ship, that when lightly ballasted, and favoured with the wind, goes mounting, at another time deeply laden and going against wind and tide, may move with a slow pace, and yet they in the ship take more pains to make it sail thus, than they did when it went faster.

Second. I shall resolve it positively, and show by what he may certainly conclude that grace is declining; and that in a threefold respect. 1. In reference to temptations to sin. 2. In reference to the duties of God’s worship. 3. The frame of thy heart in worldly employments.

1. In reference to temptations to sin, and that is threefold.

(1.) When thou art not so wakeful to discover the encroachings of sin upon thee as formerly. At one time we find David's heart smote him when he but rent the skirt of Saul's garment; at another time, when his eye glanced on Bathsheba, he takes no such notice of the snare Satan had him in, and so is led from one sin to another, which plainly showed that grace in him was heavy-eyed, and his heart not in so holy a frame as it had been. If an enemy comes up to the gates, and the sentinel [does] not so much as give an alarm to the city of his approach, it shows he is off his guard, either fallen asleep or worse. If grace were awake, and thy conscience had not contracted some hardness, it would do its office.

(2.) When a temptation to sin is discovered, and thou findest thy heart shut up that thou dost not pray against it, or not with that zeal and holy indignation, as formerly upon such occasions, it is a bad sign, that lust hath got an advantage of thy grace, that thou canst not readily betake thyself to thy arms. Thy affections are bribed, and this makes thee so cold a suitor at the throne of grace for help against thine enemy.

(3.) When the arguments prevailing most with thee to resist temptations to sin, or to mourn for sins committed, are more carnal and less evangelical than formerly. May be thou rememberest when thy love to Christ would have spit fire on the face of Satan tempting thee to such a sin, but now that holy fire is so abated that if there were not some other carnal motives to make the vote full, it would hazard to be carried for it, rather than against it. And so in mourning for a sin, there is possibly now some slavish arguments, like an onion in the eye, which makes thee weep, rather than pure ingenuity arising from love to God whom thou hast offended; this speaks a sad decay, and the more mixture there is of such carnal arguments, either in the resisting of, or mourning for sin, the greater the declination of grace is. David's natural heat sure was much decayed, when he needed so many clothes to be laid on him, and yet he felt so little heat; the time was he would have sweat with fewer. I am afraid, many their love to Christ will be found, in these declining times, to have lost so much of its youthful vigor, that what would formerly have put them into a holy fury and burning zeal against some sins, such as Sabbath-breaking, pride of apparel, neglect of family duties, &c., hath now much ado to keep any heat at all in them against the same.

2. In reference to the duties of God's worship.

(1.) If thy heart doth not prompt thee with that forwardness and readiness as formerly to hold communion with God in any duty. Possibly thou knowest the time when thy heart echoed back to the motions of God's spirit bidding thee seek his face: 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek;' yea, thou didst long as much till a Sabbath, or a sermon-season came, as the carnal wretch doth till it be gone; but now thy pulse doth not beat so quick a march to the ordinances public or secret. Nature cannot but decay if appetite to food go away. A craving soul is the thriving soul; such a child that will not let his mother rest, but is frequently crying for the breast.

(2.) When thou declinest in thy care to perform duties in spiritual sort, and to preserve the sense of those more inward failings, which in duty none but thyself can check thee of. It is not frequency of duty, but spirituality in duty, [that] causeth thriving, and therefore neglect in this point soon brings grace into a consumptive posture. Possibly, soul, the time was thou wert not satisfied with praying, but thou didst watch thy heart strictly; as a man would every piece in a sum of money he pays, lest he should wrong his friend with any brass or uncurrent coin—thou wouldst have God not only have duty, but duty stamped with that faith which makes it current, have that zeal and sincerity which

makes it gospel-weight; but now thou art more careless and formal. O look to it, poor soul, thou wilt, if thou continue thus careless, melt in thy spiritual state apace. Such dealings will spoil thy trade with heaven. God will not take off these slightly duties at thy hands.

(3.) When a Christian gets little spiritual nourishment from communion with God, to what it hath done. The time had been, may be, thou couldst show what came of thy praying, hearing, and fasting, but now the case is altered. There is a double strength [which] communion with God imparts to a soul in a healthful disposition—strength to faith, and strength for our obedient walking. Dost thou hear and pray, and get no more strength to hold by a promise, no more power over, or brokenness of heart under, thy usual corruptions? What! come down the mount, and break the tables of God's law, as soon as thou art off the place! as deep in thy passion, as uneven in thy course as before! There is a sure decay of that inward heat, which should and would, if in its right temper, suck some nourishment from these.

3. The frame of thy heart in worldly employments.

(1.) When thy worldly occasions do not leave thee in so free and spiritual a disposition, to return to the presence of God as formerly. May be thou couldst have come from thy shop and family employments to thy closet, and find they have kept thee in frame, yea, may be delivered thee up in a better frame for those duties; but now it is otherwise, thou canst not so shake them off but they cleave to thy spirit, and give an earthly savour to thy praying and hearing. Thou hast reason to bewail it; when nature decays, men go more stooping; and it is a sign some such decay is in thee, that thou canst not, as thou usest, lift up thy heart from earthly to spiritual duties. They were intended as helps against temptation, and therefore when they prove snares to us there is a distemper on us. If we wax worse after sleep, the body is not right, because the nature of sleep is to refresh; if exercise indisposeth for work, the reason is our bodies. So here.

(2.) When thy diligence in thy particular calling is more selfish. Possibly thou hast wrought in thy shop, and set close at thy study, in obedience to the command chiefly. Thy carnal interests have swayed but little with thee, but now thou tradest more for thyself, and less for God. O have a care of this.

(3.) When thou canst not bear the disappointment of thy carnal ends in thy particular calling, as thou hast done. Thou workest and gettest little of the world, thou preachest and art not much esteemed, and thou knowest not well how to brook these. The time was thou couldst retire thyself into God, and make up all thou didst want elsewhere in him; but now thou art not so well satisfied with thy estate, rank, and condition. Thy heart is fingering for more of these than God allows thee, this shows declining. Children are harder to be pleased, and old men—whose decay of nature makes them more froward, and in a manner children a second time —than others. Labour therefore to recover thy decaying grace, and as this lock grows, so thy strength with it will, to acquiesce in the disposure of God's providence.

[Directions for the recovery of declining grace.]

Second. We come now to give a few directions to the Christian, to show him, when he finds grace to be in a declining state, he may recover it.

Inquire faithfully into the cause of thy declining. The Christian's armour decays two ways, either by violent battery, when the Christian is overcome by temptations to sin, or else by neglecting to furbish and scour it with the use of those means which are as oil, to keep it clean and bright. Now inquire, which of these have been the cause of thy decay. It is like, both concur.

Direction First. If thy grace be weakened by any blow given it by any sin committed by thee, there then lies a threefold duty upon thee towards the recovery of it.

1. Duty. Thou art to renew thy repentance. It is Christ's counsel, Revelation 2:5, to Ephesus, 'Repent and do the first works,' where it is not only commanded as a duty, but prescribed as a means for her recovery; as if he had said, 'Repent, that thou mayest do thy first works.' So, Hosea 14:2, the Lord sets backsliding Israel about this work, bidding her 'take with you words and turn to the Lord;' and Hosea 14:4, he then tells her he will take her in hand to recover her of her sins, 'I will heal their backslidings.' A repenting soul is under the promise of healing, and therefore, Christian, go and search thy heart, as thou wouldst thy house, if some thief or murderer lay hid in it to cut thy throat in the night, and when thou hast found the sin that has done thee the mischief, then labour to fill thy heart with shame for it, and indignation against it, and so go big with sorrow, and cast it forth before the Lord in a heart-breaking confession. Better thou do this, than Satan do thy errand to God for thee.

2. Duty. When thou hast renewed thy repentance, forget not, delay not then, to renew thy faith on the promise for pardon. Repentance, that is like purging physic to evacuate the peccant humour, but if faith come not presently with its restorative, the poor creature will never get heart, or recover his strength. A soul may die of a flux of sorrow as well as of sin. Faith hath an incarnating virtue, as they say of some strengthening meat; it feeds upon the promise, and that 'is perfect, converting'—or rather restoring —'the soul,' Psalms 19:7. Though thou wert pined to skin and bones, all thy strength wasted, yet faith would soon recruit thee, and enable every grace to perform its office cheerfully. Faith sucks peace from the promise, called 'peace in believing.' From peace flows joy, 'being justified by faith we have peace with God,' Romans 5:1; and, 'We rejoice in the hope of glory,' Romans 5:2; and joy affords strength, 'The joy of the Lord is our strength.'

3. Duty. Back both these with a daily endeavour to mortify those lusts which most prevail over thy grace. Weeds cannot thrive and the flowers also. When grace doth not act vigorously and freely, conclude [that] it is oppressed with some contrary lust, which weighs down its spirits, and makes them lumpish, even as superfluous humours do load the natural spirits in our bodies, [so] that we have little joy to stir or go about any business till they be evacuated. And therefore ply this work close; it is not a day's work or two in the year, like physic in the spring and fall; nothing more vain, than to make a bustle, as the Papists do at their Lent, or as some unsound professors among ourselves, who seem to bestir themselves before a sacrament or day of fasting, with a great noise of zeal, and then let those very lusts live peaceably in them all the year after. No, this is child-play to do and undo; thou must mortify daily thy lusts by the Spirit, Romans 8:13. Follow but this work conscionably, in thy Christian course, making it thy endeavour, as constantly as the labouring man goes out every day to work in the field where his calling lies, to watch thy heart, and use all means for the discovery of sin, and as it breaks forth to be humbled for it, and be chopping at the root of it with this axe of mortification, and thou shalt see by the blessing of God what a change for the better there will be in the constitution of thy grace. Thou who art now so poor, so pale, that thou art

afraid to see thy own face long in the glass of thy own conscience, shalt then reflect with joy upon thy own conscience, and dare to converse with thyself without those surprisals of horror and fear which before did appall thee. Thy grace, though it shall not be thy rejoicing, yet it will be thy evidence for Christ, in whom it is, and lead thee in with boldness to lay claim to him; while the loose Christian, whose grace is overgrown with lusts, for want of his weeding-hook, shall stand trembling at the door, questioning whether his grace be true or no, and from that doubt of his welcome.

Direction Second. If, upon enquiry, thou findest that thy armour decays, rather for want of scouring, than by any blow from sin presumptuously committed, as that is most common and ordinary—for rust will soon spoil the best armour, and negligence give grace its bane, as well as gross sins—then apply thyself to the use of those means which God hath appointed for the strengthening [of] grace. If the fire goes out by taking off the wood, what way [is there] to preserve it, but by laying it on again?

1. I shall sent thee to the Word of God; be more frequently conversant with it. David tells us where he renewed his spiritual life, and got his soul so oft into a heavenly heat, when grace in him began to chill. The Word, he tells us, quickened him. This was the sunny bank he sat under. The Word draws forth the Christian's grace, by presenting every one with an object suitable to act upon. This is of great power to rouse them up; as the coming in of a friend makes us, though sleepy before, shake off all drowsiness to enjoy his company. Affections are actuated when their object is before them. If we love a person, love is excited by sight of him, or anything that minds us of him; if we hate one, our blood riseth much more against him when before us. Now the Word brings the Christian graces and their object together. Here love may delight herself with the beholding Christ, who is set out to life there in all his love and loveliness. Here the Christian may see his sins in a glass that will not flatter him; and can there any godly sorrow be in the heart, any hatred of sin, and not come forth, whole the man is reading what they cost Christ for him?

2. From the word go to meditation. This is as bellows to the fires. That grace which lies choked and eaten up for want of exercise, will by this be cleared and break forth. While thou art musing this fire will burn, and thy heart grow hot within thee, according to the nature of the subject thy thoughts dwell upon. Resolve, therefore, Christian, to inclose time from all worldly suitors, wherein thou mayest every day, if possible, at least take a view of the most remarkable occurrences that have passed between God and thee.

(1.) Ask thy soul what takings it hath had that day, what mercies heaven hath sent into thee? and do not, when thou hast asked the question, like Pilate, go out, but stay till thy soul has made report of God's gracious dealings with thee. And, if thou beest wise to observe, and faithful to relate them, thy conscience must tell thee, that the cock was never turned, the breast of mercy never put up all the day, yea, while thou art viewing these fresh mercies, telling over this new coin, hot out of the mint of God's bounty, ancient mercies will come crowding in upon thee, and call for a place in thy thoughts, and tell thee what God hath done for thee months and years ago. And indeed old debts should not be paid last; give them, Christian, all a hearing one time or another, and thou shalt see how they will work upon thy ingenuous spirit. It is with the Christian in this case, as with some merchant's servant that keeps his master's cash; he tells his master he hath a great sum of his by him, and desires he would discharge him of it, and see how his accounts stand, but he can

never find him at leisure. There is a great treasure of mercy always in the Christian's hands, and conscience is oft calling the Christian to take the account, and see what God has done for him; but seldom it is he can find time to tell his mercies over. And is it any wonder that such should go behind-hand in their spiritual estate, who take no more notice of what the gracious dealings of God are with them? How can he be thankful that seldom thinks what he receives? or patient when God afflicts, that wants one of the most powerful arguments to pacify a mutinous spirit in trouble, and that is taken from the abundant good we receive at the hands of the Lord as well as a little evil? how can such a soul's love flame to God, that is kept at such a distance from the mercies of God, which are fuel to it? And the like might be said of all the other graces.

(2.) Reflect upon thyself, and bestow a few serious thoughts upon thy own behaviour—what it hath been towards God and man all along the day. Ask thy soul, as Elisha his servant, 'Whence comest thou, O my soul? where hast thou been? what hast thou done for God this day? and how?' And when thou goest about this, look that thou neither beest taken off from a thorough search, as Jacob was by Rachel's specious excuse, nor be found to cocker thyself, as Eli his sons, when thou shalt upon inquiry take thy heart tardy in any part of thy duty. Take heed what thou doest, for thou judgest for God, who receives the wrong by thy sin, and therefore will do himself justice if thou wilt not.

3. From meditation go to prayer. Indeed, a soul in meditation is on his way to prayer; that duty leads the Christian to this, and this brings help to that. When the Christian has done his utmost by meditation to excite his graces, and chase his spirit into some divine heat, he knows all this is but to lay the wood in order. The fire must come from above to kindle, and this must be fetched by prayer. They say stars have greatest influences when they are in conjunction with the sun; then sure the graces of a saint should never work more powerfully than in prayer, for then he is in the nearest conjunction and communion with God. That ordinance that hath such power with God, must needs have a mighty influence on ourselves. It will not let God rest, but raiseth him up to his people's succour, and is it any wonder if it be a means to rouse up and excite the Christian's grace? How oft do we see a dark cloud upon David's spirit at the beginning of his prayer, which by that time he is a little warm in his work, begins to clear up, and before his ends breaks forth into high actings of faith and acclamations of praise? Only here, Christian, take heed of formal praying, this is as baneful to grace as not praying. A plaster, though proper and of sovereign virtue, yet if it be laid on cold, may do more hurt than good.

4. To all the former, join fellowship and communion with the saints thou livest amongst. No wonder to hear a house is robbed that stands far from neighbours. He that walks in communion of saints travels in company, he dwells in a city where one house keeps up another, to which Jerusalem is compared. It is observable concerning the house in whose ruins Job's children were entombed, that a wind came from the wilderness and smote the four corners of it. It seems it stood alone. The devil knows what he does in hindering this great ordinance of communion of saints—in doing this he hinders the progress of grace, yea, brings that which Christians have into a declining, wasting state. The apostle couples those two duties close together, to 'hold fast' our 'profession,' and to 'consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works,' Hebrews 10:23-24. Indeed it is a dangerous step to apostasy, to forsake the communion of saints; hence it is said of Demas, he 'hath left us, and embraced the present world.' O what mischief has Satan done us in these few late years, in this one particular! what is become of this communion of saints? where are there two

or three to be found that can agree to walk together? Those that could formerly suffer together, cannot sit together at their Father's table, can hardly pray one with or one for another. The breath of one Christian is strange to another that once lay in his bosom. 'This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.'

DIRECTION III.—SECOND GENERAL PART.

[The Argument with which he urgeth the Exhortation.] 'That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand,' Ephesians 6:13.

We come to the argument with which the apostle urgeth the exhortation, and that is double. FIRST. The first hath respect to the hour of battle—'that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day.' SECOND. The second to the happy issue of the war, which will crown the Christian thus armed, and that is certain victory—'and having done all, to stand.'

First Argument—This hath respect to the Hour of Battle.

'That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day.'

But what is this evil day? Some take this evil day to comprehend the whole life of a Christian here below in this vale of tears, and then the argument runs thus:—Take to yourselves the whole armour of God, that you may be able to persevere to the end of your life, which you will find, as it were, one continued day of trouble and trial. Thus Jacob draws a black line over his whole life—'few and evil have the days of the years of my life been,' Genesis 47:9. What day shines so fair that overcasts not before night, yea, in which the Christian meets not with some shower or other, enough to deserve the name of an evil day? Every day hath its portion, yea, proportion. Sufficient is the evil of the day; we need not borrow and take up sorrows upon use of the morrow, to make up our present load. As we read of 'daily bread,' so [also] of a 'daily' cross, Luke 9:23, which we are bid to take, not to make. We need not make crosses for ourselves, as we are prone to do; God in his providence will provide one for us, and we are bid to take it up, but we hear nothing of laying it down, till cross and we lie down together. Our troubles and our lives are coetaneous; [they] live and die together here. When joy comes, sorrow is at its heel—staff and rod go together. Job himself, that good man, whose prosperity the devil so grudged, and set forth in all his bravery and pomp, Job 1:10, as if his sun had no shadow, hear what account he gives of this his most flourishing time, 'I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet;' Job 3:26. There were some troubles that broke his rest; when his bed was, to thinking, as soft as heart could wish, even then this good man tosses and tumbles from one side to the other, and is not quiet. If one should have come to Job and blessed him with his happy condition, and said, 'Surely, Job, thou couldst be content with what thou hast for thy portion, if thou mightest have all this settled on thee and thy heirs after thee;' he would have said, as once Luther, 'that God should not put him off with these.' Such is the saints' state in this bottom, that their very life here, and all the pompous entertainments of it, are their cross, because they detain them from their crown. We need nothing to make our life an evil day, more than our absence from our chief good, which cannot be recompensed by the world, nor enjoyed with it. Only this goodness there is in this evil, that it is short. Our life is but an 'evil day,' it will not last long. And sure it was mercy that God hath abridged so much of the term of man's life in these last days—days wherein so much of Christ and heaven are discovered, that it would have put the saints' patience hard to it, to have known so much of the

upper world's glory, and then be kept so long from it, as the fathers in the first age were. O comfort one another, Christians, with this: Though your life be evil with troubles, yet it is short—a few steps, and we are out of the rain. There is a great difference between a saint in regard of the evils he meets with, and the wicked, just as between two travellers riding contrary ways—both taken in the rain and wet—but of whom one rides from the rain, and so is soon out of the shower, but the other rides into the rainy corner—the farther he goes, the worse he is. The saint meets with troubles as well as the wicked, but he is soon out of the shower—when death comes he has fair weather; but the wicked, the farther he goes the worse—what he meets with here is but a few drops, the great storm is the last. The pouring out of God's wrath shall be in hell, where all the deeps of horror are opened, both from above of God's righteous fury, and from beneath of their own accusing and tormenting consciences.

Others take the phrase in a more restricted sense, to denote those particular seasons of our life wherein more especially we meet with afflictions and sufferings. Beza reads it tempore adverso—in the time of our adversity. Though our whole life be evil, if compared with heaven's blissful state; our clearest day, night, to that glorious morning; yet one part of our life, compared with another, may be called good, and the other evil. We have our vicissitudes here. The providences of God to his saints here, while on this low bottom of earth, are mixed and parti-coloured, as was signified by the 'speckled' horses, Zechariah 1:8, in Zechariah's vision—red and white, peace and war, joy and sorrow, checker our days. Earth is a middle place betwixt heaven and hell, and so is our state here; it partakes of both. We go up hill and down, till we get to our journey's end, yea, we find the deepest slough nearest our Father's house—death, I mean—into which all the other troubles of our life fall, as streams into some great river, and with which they all end, and are swallowed up. This being the comprehensive evil, I conceive it is meant here, being made remarkable by a double article, that day, that evil day;[5] not excluding those other days of tribulation which intervene. These are but so many petty deaths, every one snatching away a piece of our lives with them, or like pages sent before to usher in this king of terrors that comes behind. The phrase being opened, let us consider the strength of this first argument, with which the apostle reinforceth his exhortation of taking to ourselves the whole armour of God, and that consists in three weighty circumstances.

First. The nature and quality of this day of affliction, it is an evil day. Second. The unavoidableness of this evil day of affliction implied in the form of speech, 'that you may withstand in the evil day.' He shuts out all hope of escaping; as if he had said, You have no way to withstand, please not yourselves with thoughts of shunning battle, the evil day must come, be you armed or not armed. Third. The necessity of this armour, to withstand. As we cannot run from it, so [we cannot] bear up before it, and oppose the force which will be made against us, except clad with armour. These would afford several points, but for brevity we shall lay them together in one conclusion.

[The day of affliction and death is evil, and in what respects.]

Doctrine. It behoves every one to arm and prepare himself for the evil day of affliction and death, which unavoidably he must conflict with. The point hath three branches. First. The day of affliction and death is an evil day. Second. This evil day is unavoidable. Third. It behoves every one to provide for this evil day.

First Branch. The day of affliction, especially death, is an evil day. Here we must show how affliction is evil, and how not.

1. It is not morally or intrinsically evil; for, if it were evil in this sense, God could not be the author of it. His nature is so pure, that no such evil can come from him, any more than the sun's light can make night. But this evil of affliction he voucheth for his own act. 'Against this family do I devise an evil,' Micah 2:3, yea more, he so appropriates it to himself, that he will not have us think any can do us evil beside himself. It is the prerogative he glories in, that there is no evil in the city, but it is of his doing, Amos 3:6. And well it is for the saints that their crosses are all made in heaven; they would not else be so fitted to their backs as they are. But for the evil of sin, he disowns it, with a strict charge that we lay not this brat, which is begotten by Satan upon our impure hearts, at his door. 'Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man,' James 1:13.

2. If affliction were thus intrinsically evil, it could in no respect be the object of our desire, which sometimes it is, and may be. We are to choose affliction rather than sin, yea, the greatest affliction before the least sin. Moses chose affliction with the people of God, rather than the pleasures of sin for a season. We are bid rejoice when we fall into divers temptations, that is, afflictions. But in what respects then may the day of affliction be called evil?

(1.) As it is grievous to sense in Scripture, evil is oft put as contradistinguished to joy and comfort. 'We looked for peace, and behold not good.' A merry heart is called a good heart, a sad spirit an evil spirit, because nature hath an abhorrency to all that opposeth its joy, and this every affliction doth, more or less, Hebrews 12:11. No affliction, while present, is joyous, but grievous; it hath, like physic, an unpleasing farewell to the sense. Therefore Solomon, speaking of the evil days of sickness, expresseth them to be so distasteful to nature, that we shall say, 'We have no pleasure in them.' They take away the joy of our life. Natural joy is a true flower of the sun of prosperity, it opens and shuts with it. It is true indeed, the saints never have more joy than in their affliction, but this comes in on another score; they have a good God that sends it in, or else they would be as sadly on it as others. It is no more natural for comfort to spring from afflictions, than for grapes to grow on thorns, or manna in the wilderness. The Israelites might have looked long enough for such bread, if heaven had not miraculously rained it down. God chooseth this season to make the omnipotency of his love the more conspicuous. As Elijah, to add to the miracle, first causeth water in abundance to be poured upon the wood and sacrifice, so much as to fill the trench, and then brings fire from heaven by his prayer, to lick it up; thus God pours out the flood of affliction upon his children, and then kindles that inward joy in their bosoms which licks up all their sorrow; yea, he makes the very waters of affliction they float on, add a further sweetness tot he music of their spiritual joy, but still it is God that is good, and affliction that is evil.

(2.) The day of affliction is an evil day, as it is an unwelcome remembrancer of what sinful evils have passed in our lives. It revives the memory of old sins, which, it may be, were buried many years ago in the grave of forgetfulness. The night of affliction is the time when such ghosts use to walk in men's conscience's; and as the darkness of the night adds to the horror of any scareful object, so doth the state of affliction, which is itself uncomfortable, add to the terror of our sins, then remembered. Never did the patriarchs' sin look so ghastly on them, as when it recoiled upon them in their distress, Genesis 42:21. The sinner then hath more real apprehensions of wrath than

at another time; affliction approximates judgement, yea, it is interpreted by him as a pursuivant sent to call him presently before God, and therefore needs beget a woeful confusion and consternation in his spirit. O that men would think of this, how they could bear the sight of their sins, and a rehearsal sermon of all their ways, in that day! That is the blessed man indeed, who can with the prophet then look on them, and triumph over them. This indeed is a dark parable, as he calls it, as 'I will open my dark saying upon the harp; wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?' Psalms 49:4-5.

(3.) The day of affliction makes the discovery of much evil to be in the heart, which was not seen before. Affliction shakes and roils the creature; if any sediment be at the bottom, it will appear then. Sometimes it discovers the heart to be quite naught that before had been seeming good. These suds wash off the hypocrite's paint; natura vexata prodit seipsam —when corrupt nature is vexed it shows itself. And some afflictions do that to purpose. We read of such as are offended when persecution comes, they fall quite out with their profession, because it puts them to such cost and trouble; others in their distress, 'that curse their God,' Isaiah 8:21. It is impossible for a naughty heart to think well of an afflicting God. The hireling, if his master takes up a staff to beat him, throws down his work and runs away, and so doth a false heart serve God. Yea, even where the person is gracious, corruption is oft found to be stronger, and grace weaker, than they were thought to be. [In the case of] Peter, who set out so valiantly at first to walk on the sea, the wind doth but rise and he begins to sink; now he sees there was more unbelief in his heart than he before suspected. Sharp afflictions are to the soul as a driving rain to the house; we know not that there were such crannies and holes in the house, till we see it drop down here and there. Thus we perceive not how unmortified this corruption, nor how weak that grace is, till we are thus searched, and made more fully to know what is in our hearts by such trials. This is the reason why none have such humble thoughts of themselves, and such pitiful and forbearing thoughts towards others in their infirmities, as those who are most acquainted with afflictions. They meet with so many foils in their conflicts, as make them carry a low sail in respect of their own grace, and a tender respect to their brethren—more ready to pity than censure them in their weaknesses.

(4.) This is the season when the evil one, Satan, comes to tempt. What we find called the time of 'tribulation,' Matthew 13:21, we find in the same parable, Luke 8:13, called the time of 'temptation.' Indeed they both meet; seldom doth God afflict us, but Satan addeth temptation to our wilderness. 'But this is your hour,' saith Christ, 'and the power of darkness,' Luke 22:53. Christ's sufferings from man, and temptation from the devil, came together. Esau, who hated his brother for the blessing, said in his heart, 'The days of mourning for my father are at hand, then will I slay my brother Jacob,' Genesis 27:41. Times of affliction are the days of mourning; those Satan waits for to do us a mischief in.

(5.) The day of affliction oft hath an evil event and issue; and in this respect proves an evil day indeed. All is well, we say, that ends well; the product of afflictions on the Christian is good; the rod with which they are corrected yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and therefore they can call their afflictions good. That is a good instrument that lets out only the bad blood. 'It was good for me that I was afflicted,' saith David. I have read of a holy woman who used to compare her afflictions to her children. They both put her to great pain in the bearing; but as she knew not which of her children to have been without—for all the trouble in bringing forth —so neither which of her afflictions she could have missed, notwithstanding the sorrow they put her to in the enduring. But

to the wicked the issue is sad, (a.) In regard of sin; they leave them worse, more impenitent, hardened in sin, and outrageous in their wicked practices. every plague on Egypt added to the plague of hardness on Pharaoh's heart. He that for some while could beg prayers of Moses for himself, at last comes to that pass that he threatens to kill him if he come at him any more. O what a prodigious height do we see many come to in sin, after some great sickness or other judgment! Children do not more shoot up in their bodily stature after an ague, than they in their lusts after afflictions. O how greedy and ravenous are they after their prey, when once they get off their clog and chain from their heels! When physic works not kindly, it doth not only leave the disease uncured, but the poison of the physic stays in the body also. Many appear thus poisoned by their afflictions, by the breaking out of their lusts afterward. (b.) In regard of sorrow; every affliction on a wicked person produceth another, and that a greater than itself, the greatest comes the last, which shall rive him fit for the fire. The sinner is whipped from affliction to affliction, as the vagrant from constable to constable, till at last he comes to hell, his proper place and settled abode, where all sorrows will meet in one that is endless.

Second Branch. This evil day is unavoidable. We may as well stop the chariot of the sun, when posting to night, and chase away the shades of the evening, as escape this hour of darkness, that is coming upon us all. 'There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit, neither hath he power in the day of death, and there is no discharge in that war,' Ecclesiastes 8:8. Among men it is possible to get off when pressed for the wars, by pleading privilege of years, estate, weakness of body, protection from the prince, and the like; or if all these fail, possibly the sending another in our room, or a bribe given in the hand, may serve the turn. But in this war the press is so strict, that there is no dispensation. David could willingly have gone for his son—we hear him crying, 'Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son;' but he will not be taken, that young gallant must go himself. We must in our own person come into the field, and look death in the face. Some indeed we find so fond as to promise themselves immunity from this day, as if they had an insuring office in their breast. They say they have made a covenant with death, and with hell they are at an agreement. When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto them. And now, like debtors that have fee'd the sergeant, they walk abroad boldly, and fear no arrest. But God tells them as fast as they bind he will loose: 'Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand.' And how should it, if God will not set his seal to it? There is a divine law for this evil day, which came in force upon Adam's first sin, that laid the fatal knife to the throat of mankind, which hath opened a sluice to let out his heart-blood ever since. God, to prevent all escape, hath sown the seeds of death in our very constitution and nature, so that we can as soon run from ourselves, as run from death. We need no feller to come with a hand of violence, and hew us down. There is in the tree a worm which grows out of its own substance that will destroy it; so in us, those infirmities of nature that will bring us down to the dust. Our death was bred when our life was first conceived. And as a woman cannot hinder the hour of her travail—that follows in nature upon the other—so neither can man hinder the bringing forth of death with which his life is big. All the pains and aches man feels in his life are but so many singultus morientis naturœ—groans of a dying nature; they tell him his dissolution is at hand. Beest thou a prince sitting in all thy state and pomp, death dare enter thy palace, and come through all thy guards, to deliver the fatal message it hath from God to thee, yea, runs its dagger to thy heart. Wert thou compassed with a college of doctors consulting thy health, art and nature both must deliver thee up when that comes. Even when thy strength is firmest, and thou eatest thy

bread with a merry heart, that very food which nourisheth thy life gives thee withal an earnest of death, as it leaves those dregs in thee which will in time procure the same. O how unavoidable this day of death be, when that very staff knocks us down to the grave at last, which our life leans on and is preserved by! God owes a debt to the first Adam and to the second. To the first he owes the wages of sin, to the second the reward of his sufferings. The place for full payment of both is the other world, so that except death come to convey the man thither, the wicked, who are the posterity of the first Adam, will miss of that full pay for their sins, which the threatening makes due debt, and engageth God to perform. The godly also, who are the seed of Christ, these should not receive the whole purchase of his blood, which he would never have shed but upon the credit of that promise of eternal life which God gave him for them before the world began. This is the reason why God hath made this day so sure. In it he dischargeth both bonds.

Third Branch. It behoves every one to prepare, and effectually to provide for this evil day, which so unavoidably impends us: and this upon a twofold account. 1. In point of duty. 2. In point of wisdom.

1. In point of duty.

(1.) It is upon our allegiance to the great God, that we provide and arm ourselves against this day. Suppose a subject were trusted with one of his prince's castles, and that he should hear that a puissant enemy was coming to lay siege to this castle, and yet he takes no care to lay in arms and provision for his defence, and so it is lost. How could such a one be cleared of treason? doth he not basely betray the place, and with it his prince's honour into the enemy's hand? Our souls are this castle, which we are every one to keep for God. We have certain intelligence that Satan hath a design upon them, and the time when he intends to come with all his powers of darkness, to be that evil day. Now as we would be found true to our trust, we are obliged to stand upon our defence, and store ourselves with what may enable us to make a vigorous resistance.

(2.) We are obliged to provide for that day, as a suitable return for, and improvement of, the opportunities and means which God affords us for this very end. We cannot without shameful ingratitude to God, make waste of those helps god gives us in order to this great work. Every one would cry out upon him that should basely spend that money upon riot in prison, which was sent him to procure his deliverance out of prison. And do we not blush to bestow those talents upon our lusts and Satan, which God graciously indulgeth to deliver us from them, and his [Satan's] rage in a dying hour? What have we Bibles for, ministers and preaching for, if we mean not to furnish ourselves by them with armour for the evil day? In a word, what is the intent of God in lengthening out our days, and continuing us some while here in the land of the living? Was it that we might have time to revel, or rather ravel out upon the pleasure of this vain world? Doth he give us our precious time to be employed in catching such butterflies as these earthly honours and riches are? It cannot be. Masters, if wise, do not use to set their servants about such work as will not pay for the candle they burn in doing it. And truly nothing less than the glorifying of God, and saving our souls at last, can be worth the precious time we spend here. The great God hath a greater end than most think in this dispensation. If we would judge aright, we should take his own interpretation of his actions; and the apostle Peter bids us 'account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation,' 2 Peter 3:15, which place he quotes out of Paul, Romans 2:4, as to the sense, though not in the same form of words—'Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?' From both

places we are taught what is the mind of God, and the language he speaks to us in, by every moment's patience and inch of time that is granted to us. It is a space given for repentance. God sees [that] as we are, death and judgment could bring no good news to us. We are in no case to welcome the evil day, and therefore mercy stands up to plead for the poor creature in God's bosom, and begs a little time more may be added to its life, that by this indulgence it may be provoked to repent before he be called to the bar. Thus we come by every day, that is continually superadded to our time on earth. And doth not this lay a strong obligation on us to lay out every point of this time, unto the same end it is begged for?

Second. In point of wisdom. The wisdom of a man appears most eminently in two things. 1. In the matter of his choice and chief care. 2. In a due timing of this his choice and chief care.

1. A wise man makes choice of that for the subject of his chief care and endeavour, which is of greatest importance and consequence to him. Fools and children only are intent about toys and trifles. They are as busy and earnest in making of a house of dirt or cards, as Solomon was in making of his temple. Those poor baubles are as adequate to their foolish apprehensions, as great enterprises are to wise men. Now such is the importance of the evil day, especially that of death, that it proves a man a fool, or wise, as he comports himself to it. The end specifies every action, and gives it the name of good or evil, of wise or foolish. The evil day of death is, as the end of our days, so to be the end of all the actions of our life. Such will our life be found at last, as it hath been in order to this one day. If the several items of our life—counsels and projects that we have pursued —when they shall be then cast up, will amount to a blessed death, then we shall appear to be wise men indeed; but, if after all our goodly plots and policies for other things we be unprovided for that hour, we must be content to die fools at last, and [there is] no such fool as a dying fool. The Christian goes for the fool, in the world's account, while he lives; but when death comes, the wise world will then confess they miscalled him, and shall take it to themselves: 'We fools counted his life to be madness, and his end to be without honour. But how is he now numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints? therefore, we have erred from the way of truth,' Wis 5:4-5. The place is apocryphal, but sinners will find the matter of it canonical. It is true, indeed, saints are outwitted by the world in the things of the world, and no marvel; neither doth it impeach their wisdom, any more than it doth a scholar's to be excelled by the cobbler in his mean trade. Nature, when it intends higher excellences, is more careless in those things that are inferior, as we see in man, who, being made to excel the beasts in a rational soul, is himself excelled by some beast or other in all his senses. Thus the Christian may well be surpassed in matters of worldly commerce, because he hath a nobler object in his eye, that makes him converse with the things of the world in a kind of non-attendance. He is not much careful in these matters; if he can die well at last, and be justified for a wise man at the day of resurrection, all is well, Jude 1:15. He thinks it is not manners to be unwilling to stay so long for the clearing of his wisdom, as God can wait for the vindicating of his own glorious nature, which will not appear in its glory till that day, when he will convince the ungodly of their hard thoughts and speeches of him. Then they shall, till then they will not, be convinced.

2. A wise man labours duly to time and his care and endeavour, for the attaining of what he proposeth. It is the fool that comes when the market is done. As the evil day is of great concernment in respect of its event, so the placing of our care for it in the right season is of chief importance, and that sure must be before it comes. There are more doors than one at which the messenger

may enter that brings evil tidings to us, and at which he will knock we know not. We know not where we shall be arrested, whether at bed, or board, whether at home or in the field, whether among our friends that will counsel and comfort us, or among our enemies that will add weight to our sorrow by their cruelty. We know not when, whether by day or night, many of us [know] not whether in the morning, noon, or evening of our age. As he calls to work at all times of the day, so he doth to bed, may be while thou art praying or preaching, and it would be sad to go away profaning them, and the name of God in them; possibly when thou art about worse work. Death may strike thy quaffing-cup out of thy hand, while thou art sitting in the ale-house with thy jovial mates, or meet thee as thou art reeling home, and make some ditch thy grave, that as thou livedst like a beast, so thou shouldst die like a beast. In a word, we know not the kind of evil God will use as the instrument to stab us; whether some bloody hand of violence shall do it, or a disease out of our bowels and bodies; whether some acute disease, or some lingering sickness; whether such a sickness as shall slay the man while the body is alive—I mean, take the head and deprive us of our reason—or not; whether such noisome troubles as shall make our friends afraid to let us breathe on them, or themselves look on us; whether they shall be afflictions aggravated with Satan's temptations, and the terrors of our own affrighted consciences, or not. Who knows where, when, or what the evil day shall be? Therefore doth God conceal these, that we should provide for all. Cæsar would never let his soldiers know when or whither he meant to march. The knowing of these would torment us with distracting fear, the not knowing them should awaken us to a providing care. It is an ill time to caulk the ship when at sea, tumbling up and down in a storm; this should have been looked to when on her seat in the harbour. And as bad as it is, to begin to trim a soul for heaven when tossing upon a sick bed. Things that are done in a hurry are seldom done well. A man called out of his bed at midnight with a dismal fire on his house-top, cannot stand to dress himself in order, as at another time, but runs down with one stocking half on, may be, and the other not on at all. Those poor creatures, I am afraid, go in as ill a dress into another world, who begin to provide for it when, on a dying bed, conscience calls them up with a cry of hell-fire in their bosoms. But alas! they must go, though they have no time to put their armour on. And so they are put to repent at leisure in hell, of their shuffling up a repentance in haste here. We come to the application of the point.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. It reproves those that are so far from providing for the evil day, that they will not suffer any thoughts of that day to stay with them. They are as unwilling to be led into a discourse of this subject, as a child to carried into the dark, and there left. It is a death to them to think of death, or that which leads to it. As some foolishly think [that] they must needs die presently when they have made their will, so these think they hasten that sorrowful day by musing on it. The meditation of it is no more welcome to them, than the company of Moses was to Pharaoh. Therefore they say to it as he to Moses, 'Get thee from me, and let me see thy face no more.' The fear of it makes them to butcher and make away all those thoughts which conscience stirs up concerning it. And at last they get such a mastery of their consciences, that they arrive at a kind of atheism. It is as rare to have them think or speak of such matters, as to see a fly busy in winter. Nothing now but what is frolic and jocund is entertained by them. If any such thoughts come as prophesy mirth and carnal content, these, as right with their hearts, are taken up into the chariot to sit with them, but all other are commanded to go behind. Alas, poor-spirited wretches! something might be said for you, if this

evil day of death and judgement were such entia rationis—fictions of the imagination, as had no foundation or being but what our fancies give them. Such troubles there are in the world, which have all their evil from our thoughts. When we are disquieted with the scorns and reproaches of men, did we but not think of them, they were nothing. But thy banishing the thoughts of this evil day from thy mind, will be a poor short relief. Thou canst neither hinder its coming, nor take away its sting when it comes, by thy slighting it. Thou art like a passenger in a ship, asleep or awake thou art going thy voyage. Thou dost but like that silly bird, that puts her head into a reed, and then thinks see is safe from the fowler, because she sees him not. Thou art a fair mark for God's vengeance; he sees thee, and is taking his aim at thee, when thou seest not him. Yea, thou puttest thyself under an inevitable necessity of perishing, by not thinking of this day. The first step to our safety, is consideration of our danger.

Use Second. It reproves those who, if they think of the evil day, yet [do] so [only as so] far off, that it is to little purpose. They will be sure to set it at such a distance from them, as shall take away the force of the meditation, that it shall not strike them down in the deep sense and fear of it. That cannon which, if we stood at the mouth of it, would shatter limb from limb, will not so much as scare them that get out of its reach. The further we put the evil day, the weaker impression it makes on us. It is true, say sinners, it cannot be helped. We owe a debt to nature; it must be paid. Sickness will come, and death follow on that, and judgment brings up the rear of both. But, alas! they look not for these guests yet, they prophesy of these things a great while hence to come. Many a fair day they hope will intervene. Thus men are very kind to themselves. First, they wish it may be long before it comes, and then, because they would have it so, they are bold to promise themselves it shall be so; and when once they have made this promise, no wonder if they then live after the rate of their vain hopes, putting off the stating of their accounts, till the winter evening of old age, when they shall not have such allurements to gad abroad from the pleasures of this life. O then they will do great matters to fit them for the evil day. Bold man! who gave thee leave to cut out such large thongs of that time which is not thine but God's? Who makes the lease, the tenant or the landlord? or dost thou forget thou farmest thy life, and art not an owner? This is the device of Satan, to make you delay; whereas a present expectation of the evil day would not let you sit still unprepared. O why do you let your souls from their work, make them idle and rest from their burdens, by telling them of long life, while death chops in upon you unawares? O what shame will your whorish hearts be put to—that now say, your husband is gone afar off, you may fill yourselves with loves—if he should come before he is looked for, and find you in bed with lusts? And let me tell you, sudden destruction is threatened, especially to secure ones. Read that scripture where it is denounced against that sort of sinners, who please themselves with their Lord's delaying his coming, [declaring] that 'the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour he is not aware of,' Matthew 24:48,Matthew 24:50-51. Indeed God must go out of his ordinary road of dealing with sinners, if such escape a sudden ruin. One is bold to challenge any to show a precedent in Scripture of any that are branded for security, that some remarkable, yea, sudden judgement did not surprise. [In the case of those in] Sodom, how soon after a sunshine morning the heavens thicken, and bury them in a few hours, by a storm of fire, in their own ashes? Careless Laish is cut off before they almost think of it. Agag, when he saw the clouds of his fears break, and fair weather was in his countenance, they return immediately upon him, and shut him up in death, he is presently hewn in pieces. Amalek [is] slaughtered by David, before the triumph of their late victory was cold. Nebuchadnezzar is strutting himself in his palace with this

bravado in his mouth, ‘Is not this great Babylon that I have built?’ Daniel 4:30; and before he can get the words out of his throat, there is another voice falling from heaven, saying, ‘O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, the kingdom is departed from thee.’ And, ‘the same hour was the thing fulfilled,’ Daniel 4:32-33, and he sent to graze with the beasts. Dives blesses himself for many years, and within a few hours the pillow is plucked from under his head, and you hear no more of him till out of hell he roar; yea, a whole world, few persons excepted, [is] drowned, and they ‘knew not till the day the flood came and swept them all away,’ Matthew 24:39. And who art thou, O man, that promisest thyself an exemption, when kings, cities, a whole world, have been ruined after this sort?

Use Third. This reproves those who—much against their will, and by reason of an awakened conscience, that is ever pinching of them, and preaching on Paul’s text before Felix to them, till it makes them tremble as he did—think indeed often of this evil day; yet such is the power of lust in their hearts, that it makes them spur on, notwithstanding all the rebukes conscience gives them, and affrighting thoughts they have of the evil day, yet they continue in their old trade of sin desperately. These wretches are the objects of our saddest pity. The secure sinner, that has broke prison from his conscience, is like a strong-brained drunkard, he swallows down his sin, as the other doth his drink, with pleasure, and is not stirred at all. But here is a man that is stomach-sick, as I may say, his conscience is oft disgorging his sweet draughts, and yet he will sin, though with pain and anguish. O consider, poor wretches, what you do! Instead of arming yourselves against the evil day, you arm the evil day against yourselves; you are sticking the bed with pins and needles, on which you must ere long be laid; you are throwing billets into that fiery furnace, wherein at last you shall be cast; and all this in spite of your consciences, which yet God mercifully sets in your way, that the prickings of them may be a hedge of thorns, to keep thee from the pursuit of thy lusts. Know therefore, if thou wilt go on, that as thy conscience takes from the pleasure of thy sin at present, so it will add to the horror of thy torment hereafter.

Use Fourth. It reproves those who, though they are not so violent and outrageous in sin, [as] to make them stink above ground in the nostrils above others, yet rest in an unarmed condition. They do not fly to Christ for covering and shelter against the day of storm and tempest, and the reason is, they have a lie in their right hand, they feed on ashes, and a deceived heart carries them aside from seeking after Christ. It would make one tremble to see how confident many are with their false hopes and self-confidences. Daring to come up—as Korah with his censer, as undauntedly as Moses himself—even to the mouth of the grave, till on a sudden they are swallowed up with destruction, and sent to be undeceived in hell, who would not be beaten from their refuges of lies here. Whoever thou art, O man, and whatever thou hast to glory in, were it the most saint-like conversation that ever any lived on earth, yet if this be thy shelter against the evil day, thou will perish. No salvation when the flood comes, but Christ; yea, being in Christ, hanging on the outside of the ark by a specious profession, will not save. Methinks I see how those of the old world ran for their lives, some to this hill, and others to that high tree, and how the waves pursued them, till at last they were swept into the devouring flood. Such will your end be, that turn any other way for help than to Christ; yet the ark waits on you, yea, comes up close to your gate to take you in. Noah did not put forth his hand more willingly to take in the dove, than Christ doth to receive those who fly to him for refuge. O reject not your own mercies for lying vanity.

Use Fifth. Let it put thee upon the inquiry, whoever thou art, whether thou beest in a posture of defence for this evil day. Ask thy soul soberly and solemnly, ‘Art thou provided for this day, this evil day?’ how couldst thou part with what that will take away, and welcome what it will certainly bring? Death comes with a voider to carry away all thy carnal enjoyments, and to bring thee up a reckoning for them. O canst thou take thy leave of the one, and with peace and confidence read the other? Will it not affright thee to have thy health and strength turned into faintness and feebleness, thy sweet nights of rest into waking eyes and restless tossings up and down, thy voice that has so often chanted to the viol, to be now acquainted with no other tune but sighs and groans? O how canst thou look upon thy sweet and dear relations with thoughts of removing from them? yea, behold the instrument, as it were, whetting, that shall give the fatal stroke to sever soul and body? Think that thou wert now half dead in thy members that are most remote from the fountain of life, and death to have but a few moments’ journey before it arrive to thy heart, and so beat thy last breath out of thy body. Possibly the inevitable necessity of these do make thee to harden thyself against them. This might indeed, in some heathen, that is not resolved whether there be another world or no, help a little to blunt the edge of that terror, which otherwise would cut deeper in his amazed heart; but if thou believest another world, and that judgment which stands at death’s back, ready to allot thee thy unchangeable state in bliss or misery, surely thou canst not relieve thy awakened conscience with such a poor cordial. O therefore think what answer thou meanest to give unto the great God at thy appearing before him, when he shall ask thee, ‘What thou canst say, why the sentence of eternal damnation should not then be pronounced against thee?’ Truly we deal unfaithfully with our own souls, if we bring not our thoughts to this issue. If now you should ask how you should provide against the evil day, so that you may stand before that dreadful bar, and live so in the meantime that you might not be under a slavish bondage through the fearful expectation of it, take it in a few directions.

1. If ever you would have a blessed issue of this evil day, so as to stand in judgement before the great God, rest not till thou hast got into a covenant-relation with Christ. Dying David’s living comfort was drawn from the covenant God had made with him—this was all his desire, and all his salvation. How canst thou put thy head into the other world without horror, if thou hast not solid ground that Christ will own thee for his? Heaven hath its heirs, and so hath hell. The heirs of heaven are such as are in covenant with God. The foundation of it was laid in a covenant, and all the mansions there are prepared for a people in covenant with him: ‘Gather my saints together that have made a covenant with me.’ But how mayest thou get into this covenant-relation? First break thy covenant with sin. Thou art by nature a covenant-servant to sin and Satan. May be thou hast not expressly in words, and formally, as witches, sealed this covenant, yet virtually, as thou hast done the work of Satan, and been at the command of thy lusts, accepting the reward of unrighteousness—the pleasure and carnal advantages they have paid thee in for the same—therein thou hast declared thyself to be so. Now if ever thou wilt be taken into covenant with God, break this. A covenant with hell and heaven cannot stand together.

2. Betroth thyself to Christ. The covenant of grace is the jointure which God settles only upon Christ’s spouse. Rebekah had not the jewels and costly raiment till she was promised to become Isaac’s wife, Genesis 24:53. ‘All the promises of God are yea’ and ‘amen’ in Christ. If once thou receivest Christ, with him thou receivest them. He that owns the tree hath right to all the fruit that is on it. Now, that thou mayest not huddle up a marriage between Christ and thee, so as to be

disowned of Christ, and it prove a nullity at last, it behoves thee to look to it, that there be found in thee what Christ expects in every soul that he espouseth. First, therefore, consider whether thou canst heartily love the person of Christ. Look wishly on him again and again, as he is set forth in all his spiritual excellences. Are they such as thy heart can close with? Doth his holy nature, and all those heavenly graces with which he is beautified, render him desirable to thee? or couldst thou like him better if he were not so precise and exactly holy? Yea, is thy heart so inflamed with a desire of him, that thou canst love him with a conjugal love? A woman may love one as a friend, whom she cannot love so as to make him her husband. A friendly love may stand with a love of some other equal to it, yea, superior, but a conjugal love is such as will bear neither. Canst thou find in thy heart to forsake all other, and cleave to Christ? Does thy heart speak thee ready, and present thee willing, to go with thy sweet Jesus, though he carry thee from father, and father's house? Is thy confidence such, of his power to protect thee from all thy enemies—sin, wrath, and hell—that thou canst resolvedly put the life of thy soul into his hands, to be saved by the sole virtue of his blood, and [by the] strength of his omnipotent arm; and of his care to provide for thee for this life and the other, that thou canst acquiesce in what he promiseth to do for thee? In a word, if thou hast Christ, thou must not only love him, but for his sake all thy new kindred, which by thy marriage to him thou shalt be allied unto. How canst thou fadge[6] to call the saints thy brethren? canst thou love them heartily, and forget all the old grudges thou hast had against them? Some of them thou wilt find poor and persecuted, yet Christ is not ashamed to call them brethren, neither must thou. If thou findest thy heart now in such a disposition as suits these interrogatories, I dare not but pronounce Christ and thee husband and wife. Go, poor soul—if I may call so glorious a bride poor—go and comfort thyself with the expectation of the Bridegroom's coming for thee; and when the evil day approaches, and death itself draws nigh, look not now with terror upon it, but rather revive, with old Jacob, to see the chariot which shall carry thee over unto the embraces of thy Husband, whom thou hearest to be in so great honour and majesty in heaven, as may assure thee he is able to make thee welcome when thou comest there. Amongst the 'all things' which are ours by being Christ's, the apostle forgets not to name this to be one, 'Death is ours.' And well he did so, or else we should never have looked upon it as a gift, but rather as a judgment. Now soul, thou art out of any danger of hurt that the evil day can do thee. Yet there remains something for thee to do, that thou mayest walk in the comfortable expectation of the evil day. We see that gracious persons may for want of a holy care, fall into such distempers as may put a sting into their thoughts of the evil day. David, that at one time would not fear to 'walk in the valley of the shadow of death,' is so affrighted at another time when he is led towards it, that he cries, 'Spare me,' O Lord, 'that I may recover my strength, before I go hence,' Psalms 39:13. The child, though he loves his father, may do that which may make him afraid to go home. Now, Christian, if thou wouldst live in a comfortable expectation of the evil day,

(1.) Labour to die to this life, and the enjoyments of it, every day more and more. Death is not so strong to him whose natural strength has been wasted by long pining sickness, as it is to him that lies but a few days, and has strength of nature to make great resistance. Truly thus it is here. That Christian whose love to this life and the contents of it, hath been for many years consuming and dying, will with more facility part with them than he whose love is stronger to them. All Christians are not mortified in the same degree to the world. Paul tells us he died daily. He was ever sending more and more of his heart out of the world, so that by that time he came to die, all his affections were packed up and gone, which made him the more ready to follow:[7] 'I am ready to be offered

up,' 2 Timothy 4:6. If it be but a tooth to pull out, the faster it stands the more pain we have to draw it. O loosen the roots of thy affections from the world, and the tree will fall more easily.

(2.) Be careful to approve thyself with diligence and faithfulness to God in thy place and calling. The clearer thou standest in thy own thoughts concerning the uprightness of thy heart in the tenure of thy Christian course, the more composure thou wilt have when the evil day comes. 'I beseech thee, O Lord,' saith good Hezekiah, at the point of death as he thought, 'remember now, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight,' 2 Kings 20:3. This cannot be our confidence, but it will be a better companion than a scolding conscience. If the blood be bad, the spirits will be tainted also. The more our life has been corrupted with hypocrisy and unfaithfulness, the weaker our faith will be in a dying hour. There is a great difference between two children that come home at night, one from the field, where he hath been diligent and faithful about his father's work, and another that hath played the truant a great part of the day; the former comes in confidently to stand before his father, the other sneaks to bed and is afraid his father should see him, or ask him where he hath been. O sirs, look to your walking. These have been as trying times as ever came to England. It has required more care and courage to keep sincerity than formerly. And that is the reason why it is so rare to find Christians—especially those whose place and calling have been more in the wind of temptation—go off the stage with a plaudite—praise ye—of inward peace in their bosoms.

(3.) Familiarize the thoughts of the evil day to thy soul. Handle this serpent often. Walk daily in the serious meditations of it. Do not run from them because they are unpleasing to the flesh; that is the way to increase the terror of it. Do with your souls, when shy of and scared with the thoughts of affliction or death, as you used to do with your beast, that is given to bogle[8] and start as you ride on him. When he flies back and starts at a thing, you do not yield to his fear and go back, that will make him worse another time, but you ride him up close to that which he is afraid of, and in time you break him off that quality. The evil day is not such a scareful thing to thee that art a Christian, as that thou shouldst start for it. Bring up thy heart close to it. Show thy soul what Christ hath done to take the sting out of it, what the sweet promises are that are given on purpose to overcome the fear of it, and what thy hopes are thou shalt get by it. These will satisfy and compose thy spirit; whereas the shunning the thoughts of it will but increase thy fear, and bring thee more into bondage to it.

Second Argument.—This hath respect to the happy issue of the War.

'And having done all, to stand,' Ephesians 6:13

We come now to the second argument the apostle useth further to press the exhortation; and that is taken from the glorious victory which hovers over the heads of believers while in the fight, and shall surely crown them in the end. This is held forth in these words, and having done all, to stand. The phrase is short but full.

First. Observe, that heaven is not won with good words and a fair profession; having done all. The doing Christian is the man that shall stand, when the empty boaster of his faith shall fall. The great talkers of religion are oft the least doers. His religion is in vain whose profession brings not letter testimonial of a holy life. Sacrifice without obedience is sacrilege. Such rob God of that which he makes most account of. A great captain once smote one of his soldiers for railing at his enemy,

saying, that he called him not to rail on him, but to fight against him and kill him. It is not crying out upon the devil, and declaiming against sin in prayer or discourse, but fighting and mortifying it, that God looks chiefly upon. Such a one else doth but beat the air. There are no marks to be seen on his flesh and unmortified lusts that he hath fought. Paul was in earnest. He left a witness upon his body, made black and blue with strokes of mortification. It was not a little vapouring in sight of the Philistines that got David his wife, but shedding their blood; and is it so small a matter to be son of the King of heaven, that thou thinkest to obtain it without giving a real proof of thy zeal for God and hatred to sin? 'Not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work; this man,' saith the apostle, 'shall be blessed in his deed,' James 1:25. Mark! not by his deed, but in his deed. He shall meet blessedness in that way of obedience he walks in. The empty professor disappoints others, who seeing his leaves expect fruit, but find none, and at last he disappoints himself. He thinks to reach heaven, but shall miss of it. Tertullian speaks of some that think satìs Deum habere si corde et animo suspiciatur, licèt actu minus fiat—'God hath enough,' they think, 'if he be feared and reverenced in their hearts, though in their actions they show it not so much;' and therefore they can sin, and believe in God, and fear him never the worse. This, saith he, is to play the adulteress, and yet be chaste; to prepare poison for one's father, and yet be dutiful. But let such know, saith the same father, that if they sin and believe, God will pardon them with a contradiction also; he will forgive them, but they shall be turned into hell for all that. As ever you would stand at last, look you be found doing the work your Lord hath left you to make up, and trust not to lying words, as the prophet speaks, Jeremiah 7:1-34.

Second. Observe, that such is the mercy of God in Christ to his children, that he accepts their weak endeavours, joined with sincerity and perseverance in his service, as if they were full obedience; and therefore they are here said to have done all. O who would not serve such a Lord! You hear servants sometimes complain of their masters as being so rigid and strict that they can never please them, no, not when they do their utmost; but this cannot be charged upon God. Be but so faithful as to do thy best, and God is so gracious that he will pardon thy worst. David knew this gospel-indulgence when he said, 'Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments,' Psalms 119:6—when my eye is to all thy commandments. The traveller hath his eye on or towards the place he is going. Though he be yet short of it, there he would be, and is putting on all he can to reach it. So stands the saint's heart to all the commands of God; he presseth on to come nearer and nearer to full obedience. Such a soul shall never be put to shame. But woe to those that cover their sloth with the name of infirmity, yea, that spend their zeal and strength in the pursuit of the world or their lusts, and then think to make all up when charged therewith, that it is in their infirmity, and they can serve God no better. These do by God as those two did by their prince, Francis I. of France, who cut off their right hand one for another, and then made it an excuse they were lame, and so could not serve in his galleys, for which they were sent to the gallows. Thus many will be found at last to have disabled themselves, by refusing that help the Spirit hath offered to them, yea, wasted what they had given them, and so shall be rewarded for hypocrites as they are. God knows how to distinguish between the sincerity of a saint in the midst of his infirmities, and the shifts of a false heart. But we will waive these, and briefly speak to four points which lie clear in the words. first. Here is the necessity of perseverance —having done all. second. Here is the necessity of divine armour, to persevere till we have done all. Wherefore, else, bids he them take this armour for this end, if they could do it without? third. Here is the certainty of persevering and overcoming at last, if clad with this armour: else it were small

encouragement to bid them take that armour which would not surely defend them. fourth. Here is the blessed result of the saints' perseverance, propounded as that which will abundantly recompense all their pain and patience in the war—'having done all, to stand.' From these we have four distinct doctrines. First. He that will be Christ's soldier, must persevere. Second. There can be no perseverance without true grace in the heart. Third. Where true grace is, that soul shall persevere. Fourth. To stand at the end of this war, will abundantly recompense all our hazard and hardship endured in the war.

FIRST POINT OF DOCTRINE.

[The necessity of perseverance.] In the words we have necessity of perseverance —having done all. Doctrine. He that will Christ's soldier, must persevere to the end of his life in this war against Satan. This, having done all, comes in after our conflict with death. That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day; then follows, having done all. We have not done all till that pitched battle be fought. 'The last enemy is death.' The word[9] imports as much as to finish a business, and bring a matter to a full issue, so Php 2:12, where we translate it well, 'work out your salvation,' that is, perfect it. Be not Christians by halves, but go through with it; the thorough Christian is the true Christian. Not he that takes the field, but he that keeps the field; not he that sets out, but he that holds out in this holy war, deserves the name of a saint. There is not such a thing in this sense belonging to Christianity as an honourable retreat; not such a word of command in all Christ's military discipline, as fall back and lay down your arms; no, you must fall on, and stand to your arms till called off by death.

First. The necessity of perseverance, because we are all under a covenant and oath to do this. Formerly soldiers used to take an oath not to flinch from their colours, but faithful to cleave up to their leaders; this they called sacramentum militare—a military oath. Such an oath lies upon every Christian. It is so essential to the being of a saint, that they are described by this: 'Gather my saints together, those that have made a covenant with me,' Psalms 50:5. We are not Christians till we have subscribed this covenant, and that without any reservation. When we take upon us the profession of Christ's name, we list ourselves in his muster-roll, and by it do promise that we will live and die with him in opposition to all his enemies. 'Every nation will walk in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of our God;' and what is it to walk in the name of our God, but to fight under the banner of his gospel, wherein his name is displayed, by giving an eternal defiance to sin and Satan? If a captain had not such a tie on his shoulders, he might have them to seek when the day of battle comes. Therefore Christ tells us upon what terms he will enrol us among his disciples. 'If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' He will not entertain us, till we resign up ourselves freely to his disposal, that there may be no disputing with his commands afterwards, but as one under his authority, go and come at his word.

Second. Perseverance is necessary, because our enemy perseveres to oppose us. There is no truce in the devil's heart, no cessation of arms in our enemy's camp. If an enemy continue to assault a city, and they within cease to resist, it is easy to tell what will follow. The prophet that was sent to Bethel did his errand well, withstood Jeroboam's temptation, but in his way home was drawn aside by the old prophet, and at last slain by a lion. Thus many fly from one temptation, but not persevering, are vanquished by another; those that at one time escape his sword, at another time are slain by it. Joash was hopeful, when young, but it lasted not long. Yea, many precious

servants of God, not making such vigorous resistance in their last days as in their first, have fallen foully, as we see in Solomon, Asa, and others. Indeed, it is hard when a line is drawn to a great length, to keep it so straight that it slacken not, and to hold a thing long in our hand, and not to have a numbness grow in our fingers so as to remit of our strength; therefore we are bid so often to hold fast the profession of our faith. But when we see an enemy gaping to catch us when we fall, methinks this should quicken us the more to it.

Third. Perseverance is necessary, because the promise of life and glory is settled upon the persevering soul. The crown stands at the goal, he hath it that comes to the end of the race. 'To him that overcometh will I give,' not in prœlio, but in bello—not in a particular skirmish, but in the whole war. 'Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise,' Hebrews 10:36. There is a remarkable accent on that henceforth, which Paul mentions, 2 Timothy 4:7-8 'I have fought a good fight, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.' Why, was it not laid up before? yes, but having persevered and come near the goal, being within sight of home, ready to die, he takes now surer hold of the promise. Indeed, in this sense it is, that a gracious soul is nearer its salvation after every victory than it was before, because he approacheth nearer to the end of his race, which is the time promised for the receiving of the promised salvation, Romans 13:11. Then and not till then the garland drops upon his head.

[Use or Application.]

Here we may take up a sad lamentation, in respect of the many apostate professors of our days. Never was this spiritual falling sickness more rife. O how many are sick of it at present, and not a few fallen asleep by it? These times of war and confusion have not made so many broken merchants as broken professors. Where is the congregation that cannot show some who have out-lived their profession? [They are] not unlike the silk-worm, which, they say, after all her spinning, works herself out of her bottom, and becomes at last a common fly. Are there not many, whose forwardness in religion we have stood gazing on with admiration, as the disciples on the temple, ready to say one to another, as they to Christ, See what manner of stones these are! what polished gifts and shining graces are here! and now not one stone left upon another. O did you ever think, that they who went in so goodly array towards heaven in communion with you, would after that, face about, and running over to the devil's side, turn blasphemers, worldlings, and atheists, as some have done? O what a sad change is here! 'It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them, 2 Peter 2:21. Better never to have walked a step towards heaven, than to put such a scorn and reproach upon the ways of God. Such a one who hath known both what a service Satan's is, and what God's is, then to revolt from God to the devil, seems to have compared one with the other, and as a result of his mature thoughts, to pronounce the devil's which he chooseth, better than God's which he leaveth.[10] And how is it possible that any can sin upon a higher guilt, and go to hell under a greater load of wrath? These are they which God loathes. He that hates putting away, disdains much more to be himself thus put away. 'If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him,' Hebrews 10:38. The apostate is said to tread upon 'the Son of God,' Hebrews 10:29, as if he were no better than the dirt under his feet. Well, he shall have treading for treading, God himself will set his foot upon him, 'Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes,' Psalms 119:118; and who, think you, will be weary soonest? He that is under foot bears the weight of the whole man upon him. To be under the foot

of God, is to lie under the whole weight of God's wrath. O pity and pray for such forlorn souls. They are objects of the one, and subjects of the other; though they are fallen low, yet [they are] not into hell. Now and then we see a Eutychus raised, that hath fallen from such a height; and you that stand, take heed lest you fall.

SECOND POINT OR DOCTRINE.

[The necessity of divine armour that we may persevere.]

Here is the necessity of divine armour to persevere till we have done all. Wherefore else bids he them to take this armour for this end, if they could do it without?

Doctrine. There can be no perseverance without true grace in the heart. A soul void of divine armour cannot persevere. What this divine armour is, I have shown, and the apostle here doth, in the several pieces of it. The sanctifying graces of God's Spirit are this armour. One that hath not these wrought in him, will never hold out to pass all the stages of this Christian race, to fight all the battles that are to be fought before victory is to be had. Common gifts of the Spirit, such as illumination, conviction, sudden pangs, and flushing heats of affection, may carry out the creature for a while with a goodly appearance of zeal for God and forwardness in profession, but the strength these afford is soon spent. John's hearers, mentioned in John 5:35, got some light and heat by sitting under his burning ministry, but how long did it last? 'Ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.' They were very beautiful colours that were drawn on them, but [they were] not laid in oil, and therefore [were] soon washed off again. The foolish virgins made as great a blaze with their lamps, and did expect as good a day when Christ should come, as the wise virgins; but, alas, their lamps are out before he appeared, and as good never a whit, as never the better. The stony ground [was] more forward than the best soil. The seed comes up immediately, as if a crop should soon have been reaped, but a few nipping frosts turn its hue, and the day of harvest proves a day of desperate sorrow. All these instances, and many more in Scripture, do evince, that nothing short of solid grace, and a principle of divine life in the soul, will persevere. How forward soever formalists and flighty professors are to promise themselves hopes of reaching heaven, they will find it too long a step for their short-breathed souls to attain. The reasons are the following:

Reason First. Such want a principle of divine life to draw strength from Christ to persevere them in their course. That by which the gracious soul itself perseveres, is the continual supply it receives from Christ, as the arm and foot is kept alive in the body by those vital spirits which they receive from the heart. 'I live,' saith Paul, 'yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,' that is, I live but at Christ's cost. He holds, as my soul, so [also] my grace in life. Now the carnal person wanting this union, must needs waste and consume in time. He hath no root to stand on. A carcass, when once it begins to rot, never recovers; but every day grows worse, till it runs all into putrefaction. No salve or plaster will do it good. But where there is a principle of life, there when a member is wounded, nature sends supplies of spirits, and helps to work with the salve for a cure. There is the same difference between a gracious person and an ungracious. See them opposed in this respect: the righteous man 'falleth seven times' a day, and 'riseth,' but the wicked 'falleth into mischief,' Proverbs 24:16; that is, in falling, he falls farther, and hath no power to recover himself. When Cain sinned, see how he falls farther and farther like a stone down a hill, and never stays till he comes to the bottom of despair;—from envying his brother, to malice, from malice to murder, from murder to impudent lying and brazen-faced boldness to God himself, and from that to despair; so true is that, 'Evil men

shall wax worse and worse,' 2 Timothy 3:13. But now when a saint falls, he riseth, because when he falls he hath a principle of life to cry out to Christ, and such an interest in Christ as stirs him up to help. 'Lord, save me,' said Peter, when he began to sink, and presently Christ's hand is put forth; he chides him for his unbelief, but he helps him.

Reason Second. An unregenerate soul hath no assurance for the continuance of those common gifts of the Spirit he hath at present; they come on the same terms that temporal enjoyments do to such a one. A carnal person, when he hath his table most sumptuously spread, cannot show any word of promise under God's hand that he shall be provided for the next meal. God gives these things to the wicked, as we a crust or a night's lodging to a beggar in our barn. It is our bounty, such a one could not sue us for denying the same. So in the common gifts of the Spirit, God was not bound to give them, nor is he to continue them. Thou hast some knowledge of the things of God; thou mayest for all this die without knowledge at last. Thou art a sinner in chains—restraining grace keeps thee in, [but] this may be taken off, and thou let loose to thy lusts as freely as ever. And how can he persevere that in one day may from praying fall to cursing, from [having] a whining complaining conscience, come to have a seared conscience?

Reason Third. Every unregenerate man, when most busy with profession, hath those engagements lying upon him, that will necessarily, when put to it, take him off one time or other. One is engaged to the world, and when he can come to a good market for that, then he goes away. He cannot have both, and now he will make it appear which he loved best. Demas hath forsaken us, and embraced this present world. Another is a slave to his lust, and when this calls him he must go, in spite of profession, conscience, God and all. Herod feared John, and did many things; but love is stronger than fear, his love to Herodias overcomes his fear of John, and makes him cut off at once the head of John, and the hopeful buddings which appeared in the tenderness of his conscience, and begun reformation. One root of bitterness or other will spring up in such a one. If the complexion of the soul be profane, it will at last come to it, however for a while there may some religious colour appear in the man's face, from some other external cause. This shows us what is the root of all final apostasy, and that is a want of a thorough change of the heart. The apostate doth not lose the grace he had, but discovers he never had any; and it is no wonder to hear that he proves bankrupt, that was worse than nought when he first set up. Many take up their saintship upon trust, and trade in the duties of religion with the credit they have gained from others' opinion of them. They believe themselves to be Christians, because others hope them to be such, and so their great business is by a zeal in those exercises of religion that lie outmost, to keep up the credit which they have abroad, but do not look to get a stock of solid grace within, which should maintain them in their profession; and this proves their undoing at last. Let it therefore make us in the fear of God, to consider upon what score we take up our profession. Is there that within which bears proportion to our outward zeal? Have we laid a good bottom? Is not the superstructure top-heavy, jetting too far beyond the weak foundation? They say, trees shoot as much in the root underground as in the branches above, and so doth true grace. O remember what was the perishing of the seed in the stony ground. It lacked root; and why so but because it was stony? Be willing the plough should go deep enough to humble thee for sin, and rend thy heart from sin. The soul effectually brought out of the love of sin as sin, will never be thorough friends with it again. In a word, be serious to find out the great spring that sets all thy wheels on motion in thy religious trade. Do as men that would know how much they are worth, who set what they owe on one side,

and what stock they have on the other, and then when they have laid out enough to discharge all debts and engagements, what remains to themselves they may call their own. Thus do they consider what thou standest engaged to, thy worldly credit, profit, slavish fear of God, and selfish desire of happiness, and when thou hast allowed for all these, see then what remains of thy fear of God, love to God, &c. If nothing, thou art nought; if any, the less there be the weaker Christian thou art; and when thou comest to be tried in God's fire, thou wilt suffer loss of all other, which, as 'hay' and 'stubble' will be burned up.

THIRD POINT OR DOCTRINE.

[The certainty of persevering if clad with this armour.]

We have here the certainty of persevering and overcoming at last, if clad with this armour. Having done all, to stand, else it were small encouragement to bid them take that armour which would not surely defend them.

Doctrine. There can be no perseverance without true grace in the heart. Every soul clad with this armour of God shall stand and persevere; or thus, true grace can never be vanquished. The Christian is a born conqueror, the gates of hell shall not prevail against him. He that is 'born of God, overcometh the world,' 1 John 5:4. Mark from whence the victory is dated, even from his birth. There is victory sown in his new nature; even that seed of God, which will keep him from being swallowed up by sin or Satan. As Christ rose never to die more, so doth he raise souls from the grave of sin, never to come under the power of spiritual death more. These holy ones of God cannot 'see corruption.' Hence he that believes is said in the present tense to have eternal life. As 'the law that came four hundred years after,' could not make void the promise made to Abraham, so nothing that intervenes can hinder the accomplishing of that promise of eternal life, which was given and passed to Christ in their behalf before the foundation of the world. If a saint could in any way miscarry, and fall short of this eternal life, it must be from one of these three causes: Because God may forsake the Christian, and withdraw his grace and help from him; or because the believer may forsake God; or lastly, because Satan may pluck him out of the hands of God. Another cause I know not. Now none of these can be,

First. Because God can never forsake the Christian. Some unadvised speeches have dropped from tempted souls discovering some fears of God's casting them off, but they have been confuted, and have eaten their words with shame, as we see in Job and David. O what admirable security hath the great God given his children in this particular!

1. In promises he hath said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,' Hebrews 13:5. [There are] five negatives in that promise, as so many seals to ratify it to our faith. He assures us there never did or can so much as arise a repenting thought in his heart concerning the purposes of his love and special grace towards his children—'The gifts and calling of God are without repentance,' Romans 11:29. Even the believers' sins against him—their froward carriage —stirs not up thoughts of casting them off, but of reducing them—'For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal them,' Isaiah 57:17-18. The water of the saints' failings cast on the fire of God's love cannot quench it. Whom he loves, he loves to the end.

2. God, to give further weight and credit to our unbelieving and misgiving hearts, seals his promise with an oath. See Isaiah 54:8-10, ‘With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee.’ Yea, he goes on and tells them, ‘The mountains shall depart’—meaning at the end of the world, when the whole frame of the heavens and earth shall be dissolved—‘but his kindness shall not depart, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed.’ Now, lest any should think this was some charter belonging to the Jews alone, we find it, settled on every servant of God as his portion. ‘This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord,’ Isaiah 54:17. And surely God that is so careful to make his children’s inheritance sure to them, will con them little thanks, who busy their wits to invalid and weaken his conveyances, yea, disprove his will. If they had taken a bribe, they could not plead Satan’s cause better.

3. In the actual fulfilling of these promises —which he hath made to believers—to Christ their attorney. As God, before the world began, gave a promise of eternal life to Christ for them, so now hath he given actual possession of that glorious place to Christ, as their advocate and attorney, where that eternal life shall be enjoyed by them. For as he came upon our errand from heaven, so thither he returned again, to take and hold possession of that inheritance which God had of old promised, and he in one sum at his death had paid for. And now, what ground of fear can there be in the believer’s heart, concerning God’s love standing firm to him, when he sees the whole covenant performed already to Christ for him, whom God hath not only called to, sanctified for, and upheld in the great work he has to finish for us; but also justified in his resurrection and jail-delivery, and received him into heaven, there to sit on the right hand of the majesty on high, by which he hath not only possession for us, but full power to give it unto all believers?

Second. Because the believer can never forsake God on account of the provision made in the covenant. An occasion of fear to the believer that he shall not persevere, may be taken from himself. He has many sad fears and tremblings of heart, that he shall at last forsake God. The journey is long to heaven, and his grace is weak. ‘O,’ saith he, ‘is it not possible that this little grace should fail, and I fall short at last of glory?’ Now here there is such provision made in the covenant, as scatters this cloud also.

1. The Spirit of God is given on purpose to prevent this. Christ left his mother with John, but his saints with his Spirit, to tutor and keep them, that they should not lose themselves in their journey to heaven. O how sweet is that place—‘I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them,’ Ezekiel 36:27. He doth not say they shall have his Spirit if they will walk in his statutes; no, his Spirit shall cause them to do it. But may be thou art afraid thou mayest grieve him, and so he in anger leave thee, and thou perish for want of his help and counsel. Ans. The Spirit of God is indeed sensible of unkindness, and upon a saint’s sin may withdraw in regard of present assistance, but never in regard of his care; as a mother may let her froward child go alone till it get a knock, that may make it cry to be taken up again into her arms, but still her eye is on it that it shall not fall into mischief. The Spirit withdrew from Samson and he fell into the Philistines’ hands, and this makes him cry to God, and the Spirit puts forth his strength in him again. Thus here, indeed, the office of the Spirit is to abide for ever with the saints. ‘He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever,’ John 14:16.

2. It is one main business of Christ's intercession to obtain of God perseverance for our weak graces. 'I have prayed,' saith Christ to Peter, 'that thy faith fail not.' But was not that a particular privilege granted to him, which may be denied to another? Such fears and jealousies foolish children are ready to take up, and therefore Christ prevents them, by bidding Peter, in the very next words, 'When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren,' Luke 22:32, that is, when thou feelest the efficacy and force of my prayer for thy faith, carry this good news to them, that their hearts may be strengthened also. And what strengthening had it been to them, if Christ prayed not for them as well as Peter? Does Christ pray for us? yea, doth he not live to pray for us? O how can children of so many prayers, of such prayers, perish? The saints' prayers have a mighty power. Jacob wrestled and had power with God. This was his sword and bow—to allude to what he said of the parcel of ground he took from the Amorite—by which he got the victory and had power with God. This was the key with which Elijah opened and shut heaven. And if the weak prayers of saints, coming in his name, have such credit in heaven, that with them they can go in God's treasure, and carry away as much as their arms of faith can hold; O then, what prevalency has Christ's intercession, who is a Son, an obedient Son, that is come from finishing his great work on earth, and now prays his Father for nothing but what he hath bid him ask; yea, for nothing but what he is beforehand with him for, and all this to a Father that loves those he prays for as well as himself? Bid Satan avaunt! Say not thy weak faith shall perish, till thou hearest that Christ hath left praying, or meetest with a repulse.

Third. Because Satan cannot pluck the believer out of the hands of God. Let us see whether Satan be able to pluck the Christian away, and step betwixt him and home. I have had occasion to speak of this subject in another place; so the less here shall serve. Abundant provision is made against his assaults. The saint is wrapped up in the everlasting arms of almighty power, and what can a cursed devil do against God, who laid those chains on him which he cannot shake off. When is he able to pluck that dart of divine fury out of his own conscience which God hath fastened there, then let him think of such an enterprise as this. How can he overcome thee, that cannot tempt thee but in God's appointed time? And if God set Satan his time to assault the Christian whom he loves so dearly, surely it will be when he shall be repulsed with the greatest shame.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. Away then with that doctrine that saith, One may be a saint to-day and none to-morrow; now a Peter, anon a Judas. O what unsavoury stuff is this! A principle it is that at once crosseth the Mal. design of God in the gospel-covenant, reflects sadly on the honour of Christ, and wounds the saint's comfort to the heart.

1. It is derogatory to God's design in the gospel-covenant, which we find plainly to be this, that his children might be put into a state sure and safe from miscarrying at last, which by the first covenant man was not. See Romans 4:16, 'Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed.' God on purpose, because of the weakness of the first covenant, through the mutable nature of man, makes a new covenant of a far different constitution and frame, not of works, as that was but of faith; and why? the apostle tells us that it, 'might be sure to all the seed,' that not one soul, who by faith should be adopted into Abraham's family, and so become a child of the promise, should fail of inheriting the blessing of the promise, which is eternal life; called so, Titus 1:2, and all this because the promise is founded upon grace,

that is, God's immutable good pleasure in Christ, and not upon the variable and inconsistent obedience of man, as the first covenant was. But if a saint may finally fall, then is the promise no more sure in this covenant than it was in that, and so God should not have the end he propounds.

2. It reflects sadly on Christ's honour, both as he is intrusted with the saints' salvation, and also as he is interested in it. First. As he is intrusted with the saints' salvation. He tells us they are given him of his Father for this very end, that he should give them eternal life; yea, that power which he hath over all flesh, was given him to render him every way able to effect this one business, John 17:2. He accepts the charge, owns them as his sheep, knows them every one, and promiseth he 'will give them eternal life, they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand,' John 10:27-28. Now, how well do they consult with Christ's honour that say his sheep may die in a ditch of final apostasy notwithstanding all this? Secondly. As he is interested in the salvation of every saint. The life of his own glory is bound up in the eternal life of his saints. It is true, when Adam fell God did save his stake, but how can Christ, who is so nearly united to every believing soul? There was a league of friendship betwixt God and Adam; but no such union as here, where Christ and his saints make but one Christ, for which his church is called Christ. 'As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ,' 1 Corinthians 12:12. Christ and his members make one Christ. Now is it possible that a piece of Christ can be found at last burning in hell? can Christ be a cripple Christ? can this member drop off and that? It is as possible that all as any should. And how can Christ part with his mystical members and not with his glory? doth not every member add an ornament to the body, yea, an honour? The church is called the 'fulness of him,' Ephesians 1:23. O how dishonourable is it to Christ, that we should think he shall want any of his fulness! and how can the man be full and complete that wants a member?

3. It wounds the saints' comfort to the heart, and lays their joy a bleeding. Paul saith he did not[11] dash the generous wine of God's word with the water of man's conceits, 2 Corinthians 2:17. No, he gave them pure gospel. Truly, this principle of saints falling from grace gives a sad dash to the sweet wine of the promises. The soul-reviving comfort that sparkles in them, ariseth from the sure conveyance with which they are in Christ made over to believers, to have and to hold for ever. Hence [they are] called 'the sure mercies of David,' Acts 13:34—mercies that shall never fail. This, this is indeed wine that makes glad the heart of a saint. Though he may be whipped in the house when he sins, yet he shall not be turned out of doors; as God promised in the type to David's seed. 'Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail,' Psalms 89:33; and Psalms 89:36, 'his seed shall endure for ever.' Could anything separate the believer from the love of God in Christ, this would be as a hole at the bottom of his cup to leak out all his joy; he might then fear every temptation or affliction he meets would slay him, and so the wicked's curse would be the saint's portion. His life would ever hang in doubt before him, and the fearful expectation of his final miscarriage, which he sees may befall him, would eat up the joy of his present hope. Now, how contrary such a frame of heart is to the spirit of adoption, and [to the] full assurance of hope which the grace of the new covenant gives he that runs may read in the word.

Use Second. This truth prepares a sovereign cordial to restore the fainting spirits of weak believers, who are surprised with many fears concerning their persevering and holding out to the end of their warfare. Be of good cheer, poor soul, God hath given Christ the life of every soul within

the ark of his covenant. Your eternal safety is provided for. Whom he loves, he loves to the end, John 13:1. Hath he made thee 'willing in the day of his power' to march under his banner, and espouse his quarrel against sin and hell? The same power that overcame thy rebellious heart to himself, will overcome all thy enemies within and without for thee. Say not thou art a bruised reed, [for] with this [power] he will break Satan's head, and not cease till he hath brought forth judgment into complete victory in thy soul. He that can make a few wounded men rise up and take a strong city, can make a wounded spirit triumph over sin and devils, Jeremiah 37:10. The ark stood in the midst of Jordan, till the whole camp of Israel was safely got over into Canaan, Joshua 3:17, and so doth the covenant, which the ark did but typify. Yea, Christ, covenant and all, stand to secure the saints a safe passage to heaven. If but one believer drowns, the covenant must drown with him; Christ and the saint are put together as co-heirs of the same inheritance. 'If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ,' Romans 8:17. We cannot dispute against one, but we question the firmness of the other's title. When you hear [that] Christ is turned out of heaven, or that he is willing to sell his inheritance there; then, poor Christian, fear thy coming thither, and not till then. Co-heirs cannot sell the inheritance except both give up their right, which Christ will never do nor suffer thee.

Use Third. This truth calls for a word or two of caution. Though there is no fear of a saint's falling from grace, yet there is great danger of others falling from the top of this comfortable doctrine into a careless security and presumptuous boldness; and therefore a battlement is very necessary, that from it we may, with safety to our souls, stand and view the pleasant prospect this truth presents to our eye. That flower from which the bee sucks honey, the spider draws poison. That which is a restorative to the saint's grace, proves an incentive to the lust of a wicked man. What Paul said of the law we may truly of the gospel. Sin taking occasion from the grace of the gospel, and the sweet promises thereof, deceives the carnal heart, and works in him all manner of wickedness. Indeed sin seldom grows so rank anywhere as in those who water its roots with the grace of the gospel. Two ways this doctrine may be abused. 1. It may be into a neglect of duty. 2. Into a liberty to sin. Take heed of both.

1. Take heed of falling into a neglect of duty upon this score—if a Christian, thou canst not fall away from grace. Take for an attitude against this, three particulars.

(1.) There are other arguments to invite, yea, that will constrain thee to a constant vigorous performing of duty, though the fear of falling away should not come in, or else thou art not a Christian. What! nothing make the child diligent about his father's business but fear of being disinherited and turned out of doors! There is sure some better motive to duty in a saint's heart, or else religion is a melancholy work. Speak for yourselves, O ye saints! Is self-preservation all you pray for, and hear for? Should a messenger come from heaven and tell you heaven were yours, would this make you give over your spiritual trade, and not care whether you had any more acquaintance with God till you came thither? O how harsh doth this sound in your ears! There are such principles engraven in the Christian's bosom, that will not suffer a strangeness long to grow betwixt God and him. He is under the law of a new life, which carries him [as] naturally to desire communion with God, as the child doth to see the face of his dear father; and every duty is a mount wherein God presents himself to be seen and enjoyed by the Christian.

(2.) To neglect duty upon such a persuasion, is contrary to Christ's practice and counsel. (a) His practice. Though Christ never doubted of his Father's love, nor questioned the happy issue of all his temptations, agonies, and sufferings, yet he prays, and prays again most earnestly, Luke 22:44. (b) His counsel and command. He told Peter, that Satan had begged leave to have them to sift them, but withal he comforts him—who was to be hardest put to it—with this, 'But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.' Sure our Saviour by this provision made for him and the rest, means to save them a labour that they need not watch or pray. No such matter. After this, as you may see, ver. 40, he calls them up to duty—'pray that ye enter not into temptation.' Christ's praying for them was to strengthen their faith, when they should themselves pray for the same mercy; not to nourish their sloth that they needed not to pray, Christ's prayers in heaven for his saints are all heard already, but the return of them is reserved to be enclosed in the answer God sends to their own prayers. The Christian cannot in faith expect to receive the mercies Christ prays for in heaven, so long as he lives in the neglect of his duty on earth. They stand ready against he shall call for them by the prayer of faith, and if they be not worth sending this messenger to heaven, truly they are worth little.

(3.) Consider, that although the Christian may be secured from a total and final apostasy, yet he may fall sadly to the bruising of his conscience, [the] enfeebling [of] his grace, and the reproach of the gospel, which sure are enough to keep the Christian upon his watch, and the more, because, ordinarily, the saints' backslidings begin in their duties. As it is with tradesmen in the world —they first grow careless of their business, [are] often out of their shop, and then they go behind-hand in their estates—so here [Christians are] first remiss in a duty, and then fall into a decay of their graces and comforts, yea, sometimes into was that are scandalous. A stuff loseth its gloss before it wears; the Christian, the lustre of his grace in the lively exercise of duty, and then the strength of it.

2. Take heed of abusing this doctrine into a liberty to sin. Shall we sin, because grace abounds?—grow loose, because we have God fast bound in his promise? —God forbid! none but a devil would teach us this logic. It was a great height of sin those wretched Jews came to, who would quaff and carouse it while death looked in upon them at the windows: 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' They discovered their atheism therein. But what a prodigious stature in sin must that man be grown to, that can sin under the protection of the promise, and draw his encouragement to sin from the everlasting love of God? Let us eat and drink, for we are sure to live and be saved. Grace cannot dwell in that heart, which draws such a cursed conclusion from the premises of God's grace. The saints have not so learned Christ. The inference the apostle makes from the sweet privileges we enjoy in the covenant of grace, is not to wallow in sin, but having these promises, to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, 2 Corinthians 7:1. It is the nature of faith—the grace that trades with promises—to purify the heart. Now the more certain report faith brings of God's love from the promise to the soul, the more it purifies the heart, because love by which faith works, is thereby more inflamed to God, and if once this affection takes fire, the room becomes too hot to stay there.

FOURTH POINT OR DOCTRINE.

[The blessed result of the saints' perseverance.] In the words we have also the blessed result of the saints' perseverance propounded, as that which will abundantly recompense all their pain and

patience in the war. Having done all, to stand.

Doctrine. To stand at the end of this war will abundantly recompense all our hazard and hardship endured in the war against sin and Satan. In man's wars all do not get by them that fight in them. The gains of these are commonly put into a few pockets. The common soldiers endure most of the hardship, but go away with little of the profit. They fight to make a few that are great yet greater, and are many times themselves turned off at last, with what will hardly pay for the cure of their wounds, or keep them from starving in a poor hospital. But in this war there is none loseth, but he that runs away. A glorious reward there is for every faithful soldier in Christ's camp, and that is wrapt up in this phrase, 'having done all, to stand.' Now in this place, to stand imports three things, which laid together will clear the point.

First. To stand, in this place, is to stand conquerors. An army, when conquered, is said to fall before their enemy, and the conqueror to stand. Every Christian shall at the end of the war stand a conqueror over his vanquished lusts, and Satan that headed them. Many a sweet victory the Christian hath here over Satan. But, alas! the joy of these conquests is again interrupted with fresh alarms from his rallied enemy. One day he hath the better, and may be the next he is put to the hazard of another battle. Much ado he hath to keep what he hath got, yea, his very victories are such as send him bleeding out of the field. Though he repulses the temptation at last, yet the wounds his conscience gets in the fight do overcast the glory of the victory. It is seldom the Christian comes off without some sad complaint of the treachery of his own heart, which had like to have lost the day, and betrayed him into his enemy's hand. But for thy eternal comfort, know, poor Christian, there is a blessed day coming, which shall make a full and final decision of the quarrel betwixt thee and Satan. Thou shalt see this enemy's camp quite broken up—not a weapon left in his hand to lift up against thee. Thou shalt tread upon his high places, from which he hath made so many shots at thee. Thou shalt see them all dismantled and demolished, till there be not left standing any one corruption in thy bosom, for a devil to hide and harbour himself in. Satan, at whose approach thou hast so trembled, shall then be subdued under thy feet. He that hath so oft bid thee bow down, that he might go over thy soul and trample upon all thy glory, shall now have his neck laid to be trodden on by thee. Were there nothing else to be expected as the fruits of our watching and praying, weeping and mourning, severe duties of mortification and self-denial, with whatever else our Christian warfare puts us upon, but this, our labour sure would not be in vain in the Lord. Yea, blessed watching and praying, happy tears and wounds we meet with in this war. May they but at last end in a full and eternal victory over sin and Satan. Bondage is one of the worst of evils. The baser the enemy is, the more abhorred by noble spirits. Saul feared to fall into the hands of the uncircumcised Philistines and to be abused by their scorns and reproaches, more than a bloody death. Who baser than Satan? What viler tyrant than sin? Glorious then will the day be, wherein we shall praise God for delivering us out of the hands of all our sins, and from the hand of Satan. But [it will be] dismal to you, sinner, who, at the same wherein you shall see the saints stand with crowns of victory on their heads, must like fettered captives be dragged to hell's dungeon, there to have your ear bored unto an eternal bondage under your lusts. And what more miserable sentence can God himself pass upon you? Here sin is pleasure, there it will be your torment. Here [it is] a sweet bit that goes down glib, but there it will stick in your throats. Here you have suitable provision to entertain your lusts withal—palaces for pride to dwell and strut herself in; delicious fare for your wanton palates; houses and lands, with coffers of silver and gold, for

your covetous hearts, by their self-pleasing thoughts, to sit brooding upon—but you will find none of these there. Hell is a barren place. Nothing grows in that land of darkness to solace and recreate the sinners' minds. You shall have your lusts, but want the food they long for. O what a torment that must needs be, to have a soul sharp set, even to a ravenous hunger after sin, but chained up where it can come at nothing it would have to satisfy its lust! For a proud wretch, that would wish he might domineer over all the world, yea, over God himself if he would let him, to be kept down in such a dungeon as hell is, O how it will cut! For the malicious sinner, whose heart swells with rancour against God and his saints, that he could pluck them out of God's bosom, yea, God, out of his throne if he had power, to find his hands so manacled, that he can do nothing against them he so hates, O how this will torment! Speak, O you saints, whose partial victory over sin at present is so sweet to you, that you would choose a thousand deaths, sooner than return to your old bondage under your lusts! How glorious then is that day in your eye, when this shall be completed in a full and eternal conquest, never to have anything to do more with sin or Satan!

Second. To stand, is here to stand justified and acquitted at the great day of judgement. The phrase id frequent in Scripture, which sets out the solemn discharge they shall have then by standing in judgment. 'The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,' Psalms 1:5, that is, they shall not be justified. 'If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?' Psalms 130:3; that is, who shall be discharged? The great God, upon whose errand we come into the world, hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world by Jesus Christ. A solemn day it will be, when all that ever lived on earth, high and low, good and bad, shall meet in one assembly to make their personal appearance before Christ, and from his mouth to receive their eternal doom, who shall in his majestic robes of glory ascend the awful seat of judicature, attended with his illustrious train and guard of angels about him, as so many officers ready to execute and perform his pleasure according to the definitive sentence that he shall pronounce—either to conduct those blessed ones whom he shall justify into his glorious kingdom, or [to] bind them hand and foot to be cast into hell's unquenchable flames, whom he shall condemn. I do not wonder that Paul's sermon on this subject did not make an earthquake in Felix's conscience; but rather that any should be so far gone in a lethargy and dedolent numbness of conscience, as the thought of this day cannot recover them to their sense and feeling. O sirs, do not you vote them happy men and women that can speed well on this day? are not your thoughts inquiring who those blessed souls are which shall be acquitted by the lively voice of Christ the judge? You need not ascend to search the rolls of election in heaven. Here you may know they are such as fight the Lord's battles on earth against Satan, in the Lord's armour, and that to the end of their lives. These having done all, shall stand in judgement. And were it but at a man's bar—some court-martial where a soldier stood upon trial for his life, either to be condemned as a traitor to his prince, or cleared as faithful in his trust—O how such a one would listen to hear how it would go with him, and be overjoyed when the judge pronounces him innocent! Well may such be bid to fall down on their knees, thank God and the judge that have saved their lives. How much more ravishing will the sweet voice of Christ be in the saints' ears, when he shall in the face of men and angels make public declaration of their righteousness? O how confounded will Satan then be, who was their accuser to God and their own consciences also, ever threatening them with the terror of that day! How blank will the wicked world be, to see the dirt that they had thrown by their calumnies and lying reports on the saints' faces, wiped off with Christ's own hand, and those justified from Christ's mouth as sincere, whom they had called hypocrites! Will not this, O ye saints, be enough for all the scorn ye were laden

with from the world, and conflict you endured with the prince of the world! But this is not all. Therefore,

Third. To stand, doth here also—as the compliment of their reward—denote the saints' standing in heaven's glory. Princes, when they would reward any of their subjects that in their wars have done eminent service to the crown, as the utmost they can do for them, they prefer them to court, there to enjoy their princely favour, and [to] stand in some place of honourable service before them continually. Solomon sets it out as the greatest reward of faithful subjects, to 'stand before kings.' Heaven is the royal city where the great God keeps his court. The happiness of glorious angels is to stand there before God—'I an Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God,' Luke 1:19; that is, I am one of those heavenly spirits who wait on the great God, and stand before his face, as courtiers do about their prince. Now such honour shall every faithful soul have. 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge....I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by,' Zechariah 3:7. He alludes to the temple, which had rooms joining to it for the priests that waited on the Lord in his holy service there; or to courtiers, that have stately galleries and lodgings becoming their place at court allowed them in the king's palace they wait upon. Thus all the saints—whose representative Joshua was —shall, after they have kept the Lord's charge in a short life's-service on earth, be called up to stand before God in heaven, where with angels they shall have their galleries and mansions of glory also. O happy they who shall stand before the Lord in glory! The greatest peers of a realm—such as earls, marquises, and dukes are—count it greater honour to stand before their king, though bareheaded and oft upon the knee, than to live in the country, where all bow and stand bare to them; yea, let but their prince forbid them coming to court, and it is not their great estates, or respect they have where they live, will content them. It is better to wait in heaven than to reign on earth. It is sweet standing before the Lord here in an ordinance. One day in the worship of God is better than many elsewhere. O, what then is it to stand before God in glory! If the saints' spikenard sendeth forth so sweet a smell, while the king sits at his table here in a sermon or sacrament; O then what joy must needs flow from their near attendance on him, as he sits at his table in heaven, which when God first made, it was intended by him to be that chamber of presence in which he would present himself to be seen of, and enjoyed by, his saints in all his glory. I know nothing would have a more powerful, yea, universal operation, upon a saint's spirit, than the frequent and spiritual consideration of that blissful state in heaven, which shall at last crown all their sad conflicts here on earth. None like this sword, to cut the very sinews of temptation, and behead those lusts which defy and out-brave whole troops of other arguments. It is almost impossible to sin with lively thoughts and hopes of that glory. It is when the thoughts of heaven are long out of the Christian's sight, and he knows not what has become of his hopes to that glorious place, that he begins to set up some idol—as Israel the calf in the absence of Moses—which he may dance before. But heaven come in sight, and the Christian's heart will be well warmed with the thoughts of it, and you may as soon persuade a king to throw his royal diadem into a sink, and wallow with his robes in a kennel, as a saint to sin with the expectation of heaven's glory. Sin is a devil's work, not a saint's, who is a peer of heaven, and waits every hour for the writ that shall call him to stand with angels and glorified saints before the throne of God. This would cheer the Christian's heart, and confirm him when the fight is hottest, and the bullets fly thickest from men and devils, to think, it is heaven all this is for, where it is worth having a place, though we go through fire and water to it. 'It is before the Lord,' said David to scoffing Michal, 'which chose me before thy father, and all his house;.... therefore will I play before

the Lord, and I will yet be more vile than thus,' 2 Samuel 6:21-22.

Thus, Christian, wouldst thou throw off the vipers of reproaches, which from the fire of the wicked's malice fly upon thee. It is for God that I pray, hear, mortify my lust, deny myself of my carnal sports, profits, and pleasures, that God who hath passed by kings and princes to chose me a poor wretch to stand before him in glory; therefore I will be yet more vile than thus. O sirs, were there not another world to enjoy God in, yet should we not, while we have our being, serve our Maker? The heavens and the earth obey his law, that are capable of no reward for doing his will. 'Quench hell, burn heaven,' said a holy man, 'yet I will love and fear my God.' How much more when everlasting arms of mercy stand ready stretched to carry you as soon as the fight is over into the blissful presence of God? You have servants of your own so ingenuous and observant, that can follow you work hard abroad in all weathers; and may they but, when they come home weary and hungry at night, obtain a kind look from you, and some tender care over them, they are very thankful. 'Yea,' saith one, to shame the sluggish Christian, 'how many hundred miles will the poor spaniel run after his master in a journey, who gets nothing but a few crumbs, or a bone from his master's trencher?' In a word, which is more the devil's slaves; what will they not do and venture at his command, who hath not so much to give them as you to your dog, not a crust, not a drop of water to cool their tongue? and shall not the joy of heaven which is set before the Christian, into which he shall assuredly enter, make him run his race, endure a short scuffle of temptation and affliction? yea sure, and make him reckon also that these 'are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in him.'

Direction Fourth. The Position to be maintained in the Fight.

'Stand therefore' (Ephesians 6:14). The apostle had laid down in general, Ephesians 6:13, what armour the Christian soldier must use—armour of God. Now, lest any should stamp divinity upon what is human, and make bold to set God's name on their counterfeit ware, calling that armour of God which comes out of their private forge, as Papists, and many carnal Protestants also, do, who invent weapons to fight the devil with that never came into God's heart to appoint; he therefore comes more particularly to show what this whole armour of God is, describing it piece by piece, which together make up the complete suit, and every way furnish the Christian to take the field against this his enemy. We shall handle them in that order we find them here laid by the apostle. Only something would briefly be first said to the posture given us in charge, as that which we are to observe in the use of every piece, and [which is] therefore prefixed to all. The posture lies in these words—'stand therefore;' στ_τε, stand. This word is the same with the last in the precedent verse; but [is] neither in the same mood nor tense. There [it is] put for victory and triumph when the war is done; here for the Christian's posture in the fight, and in order to it. It is a military expression, a word of command that captains use upon different occasions to their soldiers, and so imports several duties that are required at the Christian's hands.

[The necessity of resisting Satan's temptations, with the danger of yielding to them.]

First. To stand, is opposed to a cowardly flight from, or treacherous yielding to, the enemy. When a captain sees his men beginning to shrink, and perceives some disposition in them to flee or yield, then he bids stand; that is, stand manfully to it, and make good your ground against the enemy, by a valiant receiving his charge, and repelling his force. The word taken thus, points at a suitable duty incumbent on the Christian, which take in this note—

Doctrine. Satan in his temptations is stoutly to be resisted, not in anywise to be yielded unto.

Reason First. The command is express for it: ‘Whom resist steadfast in the faith,’ 1 Peter 5:9. Set yourselves in battle against him, as the word imports, fight him whenever he comes. Soldiers must keep close to their commission, whatever comes on it. When Joab sent Uriah to stand in the forefront of the battle, in the face of death itself, he could not but see his danger, yet he disputes not the matter with his general; obey he must, though he loses his life upon the place. Cowardice and disobedience to the leader’s command are counted among the Turks the most damning sins; and shall they be thought peccadillos, little ones, by us that have Christ for our Captain to serve, and sin and the devil for enemies to fight? To resist some temptations may cost us dear: ‘Ye have not yet resisted unto blood,’ saith the apostle, ‘striving against sin,’ Hebrews 12:4, implying that it may come to that, and if it should, [that] it alters not the case, nor gives a dispensation to shift for ourselves by choosing to sin rather than to suffer. The Roman captain said it was necessary to sail, not to live; and shall a Christian be afraid of his duty, when it is attended with outward hazard? The soldier carries his prince’s honour into the field with him, and so doth the Christian his God’s, whenever he is called to contest with any temptation. Now it will be seen at what rate he values his honour. David’s subjects valued him worth ten thousand of their lives, and therefore would die every man of them, rather than hazard him. O, how unworthy is it then, to expose the name of God to reproach, rather than ourselves to a little scorn, temporal loss, or trouble! It was Pompey’s boast, that at a word or nod of his, he could make his soldiers creep up the steepest rock on their hands and knees, though they were knocked down as fast as they went up. Truly, God is not prodigal of the blood of his servants, yet sometimes he tries their loyalty in hard services, and sharp temptations, that he may from their faithfulness to him, and holy stoutness in their sufferings for him, triumph over Satan, who was so impudent as to tell God, that one of his choicest servants did but serve himself in serving him, ‘Doth Job fear God for nought?’—as if, when any sharp encounter came, he would turn head, and rather curse God than submit to him. And therefore, we find the Lord glorying over Satan, ‘Still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him,’ Job 2:3—as if the Lord had said, ‘What dost thou think now, Satan? hath not Job proved thee a loud liar? I have some servants, thou seest, that will serve me without a bribe, that will hold fast their integrity, when they can hold fast nothing else. Thou hast got away his estate, servants, and children, and yet he stands his ground, and thou hast not got thy will of him, nor his integrity from him.’

Reason Second. God furnisheth us with armour for this end, that we should stand it out valiantly, and not yield to Satan tempting. To deliver up a castle into an enemy’s hand, when it is well provided with ammunition to defend it, is shameful and unworthy of such a trust. This makes the Christian’s sin more dishonourable than another’s, because he is better appointed to make resistance. Take a graceless soul, when solicited, suppose, to a sin that promiseth carnal pleasure, or profit, it is no great wonder that he yields at first summons, and delivers himself up prisoner to Satan. The poor wretch, alas, hath no armour on to repel the motion. He tastes no sweetness in Christ. What marvel is it, if his hungry soul, for want of better food, falls on board upon the devil’s cheer?—that he, who hath no hope for another world, be made to shark and prole[12] to get some of this? The goat, we say, must browse where she is tied, and the sinner feed on earth and earthly things, to which he is staked down by his carnal heart; but the Christian hath a hope in his bosom of another guess-glory, than this peddling world can pretend to, yea, a faith that is able to entertain

him at present with some of heaven's joys—it being the nature of that grace to give existence to the good things of the promise. This helmet on and shield lift up, would keep off a whole shower of such arrows from hurting the Christian. God hath reason to take it the worse at his hands to yield, that might have stood, would he but have made use of those graces which God hath given him for his defence, or called in help from heaven to his succour. 'Hast thou eaten,' saith God to Adam, 'of the tree, whereof I commanded thee, that thou shouldest not eat?' Genesis 3:11. The accent lies on thou. It was not sure for hunger, thou hadst a whole paradise before thee; hast thou eaten that wert provided so well to have withstood him? Hast thou, may God say to the Christian, eaten of the devil's dainties, who hast a key to go to my cupboard? does thy heavenly Father keep so starved a house, that the devil's scraps will go down with thee?

Reason Third. The Christian's safety lies in resisting. All the armour here provided is to defend the Christian fighting, none to secure him flying. Stand, and the day is ours. Fly, or yield, and all is lost. Great captains, to make their soldiers more resolute, do sometimes cut off all hope of a safe retreat to them that run away. Thus the Norman conqueror, as soon as his men were set on English shore, sent away his ships in their sight, that they might resolve to fight or die. God takes away all thought of safety to the coward; not a piece to be found for the back in all God's armoury. Stand, and the bullets light all on your armour; flee, and they enter into your hearts. It is a terrible place, Hebrews 10:38, 'The just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.' He that stands to it believingly comes off with his life; but he that recoils, and runs from his colours, as the Greek word[13] imports, God will have no pleasure in him, except it be in the just execution of his wrath on him. And doth he not make a sad change, that from fighting against Satan, engageth God as an enemy against him? There is comfort in striving against sin and Satan, though to blood, but none to lie sweating under the fiery indignation of a revenging God. What Satan lays on, God can take off; but who can ease, if God lays on? What man would not rather die in the field fighting for his prince, than on a scaffold by the axe, for cowardice or treachery?

Reason Fourth. The enemy we have to do withal, is such as is only to be dealt with by resisting. God is an enemy that is overcome by yielding; the devil only by force of arms.

1. He is a cowardly enemy. Though he sets a bold face on it by tempting, he carries a fearful heart in his breast. The work is naught he goes about; and, as a thief is afraid of every light he sees, or noise he hears, in the house he would rob; so Satan is discouraged where he finds the soul waking, and in any posture to oppose him. He fears thee, Christian, more than thou needest him; 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know,' Acts 19:15; that is, I know them to my shame, they have both put me to flight, and if ye were such as they, I should fear you also. Believe it, soul, he trembles at thy faith. Put it forth in prayer to call for help to heaven against him, and exert it vigorously by rejecting the motions he makes, and thou shalt see him run. Did soldiers in a castle know that their enemies besieging them were in a distracted condition, and would certainly upon their sallying out, break up, and flee away, what metal and courage would this fill them withal? The Spirit of God—who knows well enough how squares go in the devil's camp—sends this intelligence unto every soul that is beleaguered by temptations, 'Resist the devil, and he will flee from you,' James 4:7. He cannot hurt us without our leave. The devil is not so good a drawer; but, when he finds it comes not—the soul yields not—his heart then fails him, at least for the present, as in Christ's combat, it is said he 'departed from him for a season.' When the devil continues long the same suit, it is to be

feared [that] that person, though he hath not fully promised him, yet hath not given him a peremptory denial. He is a suitor, that listens for something to drop from the creature that may encourage him to prosecute his motion. No way to be rid of him but to shut the door upon him, and deny all discourse with him; which prompts to the second character.

2. He is an encroaching enemy, and therefore to be resisted. ‘Let not the sun go down upon your wrath,’ saith the apostle, ‘neither give place to the devil,’ Ephesians 4:26-27. As soldiers, by cowardly leaving some outwork they are set to defend, give place to their enemy, who enters the same, and from thence doth more easily shoot into the city than he could before. Thus [by] yielding in one temptation we let the devil into our trench, and give him a fair advantage to do us the more mischief. The angry man while he is raging and raving, thinks, may be, no more, but to ease his passion by disgorging it in some bitter keen words, but alas while his fury and wrath is sallying out at the portal of his lips, the devil finding the door open, enters and hurries him farther than he dreamt of. We have not to do with a Hannibal —who, though a great swordsman, yet wanted the art of following and improving the advantages his victories gave him—but with a cunning devil that will easily lose no ground he gets. Our best way, therefore, is to give him no hand-hold, not so much as to come near the door where sin dwells, lest we be hooked in. If we mean not to be burned, let us not walk upon the coals of temptation;—if not to be tanned, let us not stand where the sun lies. They surely forget what an insinuating wriggling nature this serpent hath, that dare yield to him in something, and make us believe they will not in another—who will sit in the company of drunkards, frequent the places where the sin is committed, and yet pretend they mean not to be such?—that will prostitute their eyes to unchaste objects, and yet be chaste?—that will lend their ears to any corrupt doctrine of the times, and yet be sound in the faith? This is a strong delusion that such are under. If a man hath not power enough to resist Satan in the less, what reason hath he to think he shall in the greater. Thou hast not grace, it seems, to keep thee from throwing thyself into the whirl of temptation, and dost thou think that, when in it, thou shalt bear up against the stream of it? One would think it is easier when in the ship, to keep from falling overboard, than when in the sea, to get safely into the ship again.

3. He is an accusing enemy. And truly folly is in that man’s name, who knows what a tell-tale the devil is, and yet will, by yielding to his temptation, put an errand into his mouth, with which he may accuse him to God. Some foolishly report that witches cannot hurt till they receive an alms. But I am sure, so long as thou showest no kindness to the devil, he cannot hurt thee, because he cannot accuse thee. Take up therefore holy Job’s resolution, ‘My righteousness I hold fast,...my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live,’ Job 27:6. It is never sad indeed with the soul till the barking is within doors. Conscience, not the devil, is the bloodhound that pulls down the creature. O let not that reproach thee, and thou art well enough.

[The Christian’s duty, to stand in his own place, and the danger of straggling.]

Second. To stand, amounts to as much as, to stand every one in his rank and proper station, and here is opposed to all disorder, or straggling from our place. When a captain sees his soldiers march, or fight our of their rank and order, then he bids stand. Military discipline is so strict in this case, that it allows none to stir from their place without special warrant. It hath cost some their lives for fighting out of their place, though with great success. Manlius killed his own son, for no other fault. From hence the note is—

Doctrine. That it should be the care of every Christian, to stand orderly in the particular place wherein God hath set him. The devil's method is first to rout, and then to ruin. Order supposeth company, one that walks alone cannot go out of his rank. This place therefore and rank wherein the Christian is to stand, relates to some society or company in which he walks. The Christian may be considered as related to a threefold society —church, commonwealth, and family. In all there are several ranks and places. In the church, officers and private members; in the commonwealth, magistrates and people; in the family, masters and servants, parents and children, husband and wife. The welfare of these societies consisteth in the order that is kept—when every wheel moves in its place without clashing, when every one contributes by performing the duty of his place to the benefit of the whole society. But more distinctly, a person then stands orderly in his place when he doth these three things—

First. When he understands the peculiar duty of his place and relation; 'The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way,' Proverbs 14:8—his way, that is, the way in which he on particular is to walk. It will not profit a man to know the way to York, if going to London; yet how prone are we to study another's way and work [rather] than our own—the servant more what his master's duty is, not what his is to his master—the people what the minister in his place should do, rather than what is incumbent on themselves to such as are over them in the Lord. It is not knowing another's duty, no nor censuring the negligence of another, but doing our own [duty, that] will bring us safely and comfortably to our journey's end. And how can we do it except we know it? Solomon in no one thing gave a greater proof of his wisdom than in asking of God wisdom, to enable him for the duty of his place.

Second. When knowing the duty of our place, we conscientiously attend to it and lay out ourselves for God therein. When Paul charged Timothy in his place, that every Christian must do in his. He must 'meditate upon these things,' and 'give himself wholly' to the discharge of his duty, as a Christian, in such a place and calling—_ν το■τοις _σθι, be in them, let thy heart be on thy work, and thou wholly be taken up about it, 1 Timothy 4:15. The very power of godliness lies in this. Religion, if not made practicable in our several places and callings, becomes ridiculous and vanisheth into an empty notion that is next to nothing. Yet many there are that have nothing to prove themselves Christians, but a naked profession, of whom we may say as they do of the cinnamon tree, that the bark is worth more than all they have besides. Such the apostle speaks of, 'They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate,' Titus 1:16. What good works the apostle means, will appear in the next words, Titus 2:1-15, where, in opposition to these, he presseth those duties which Christians in their particular places and relations, as becometh holiness, ought to perform. A good Christian and a disobedient wife, a godly man and an unfaithful servant, or undutiful child is a contradiction that can never be reconciled. He that walks not uprightly in his house, is but a hypocrite at church. He that is not a Christian in his shop, is not in his closet a Christian, though upon his knees in prayer. Wound religion in one part, and it is felt in every part. If it declines one way, it cannot thrive in any other. All that miscarry in religion do not the same way miscarry. As it is in the regard of our natural life; some, it is observed, die upwards, some downwards. In one, the extreme parts, his feet, are first dead, and so [the malady] creeps up to the legs, and at last takes hold on the vitals; in another his superior parts are first invaded. Thus in profession. [With] some, their declining appears first in a negligence of duties about their peculiar callings, and the duties

they owe, by their place and relation, to man, though all this while they may seem very forward and zealous in the duties of worship to God, much in hearing, praying, and such like; while others falter first in these, and at the same time seem very strict in the other. Both are alike destructive to the soul; they both meet in the ruin of the power of godliness. He stands orderly that makes conscience of the whole duty that lies on him in his place to God or man.

Third. to stand orderly, it is requisite that we keep the bounds of our place and calling. The Israelites were commanded every man ‘to pitch by his own standard,’ Numbers 2:2. The Septuagint translates it κατα τ■γμα —according to order. God allows no stragglers from their station in his army of saints. ‘As the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk,’ 1 Corinthians 7:17. Our walk must be in that path which our call beats out. We are therefore commanded every one to ‘do his own business,’ 1 Thessalonians 4:11. That which is the commander’s business in the army, is not the private soldier’s; the magistrate’s [business] not the subjects’s; the minister’s is not the people’s. That which is justice in the ruler, is murder in another. They are _δια, our own things—[things] that come within the compass of our general or particular calling. Out of these, we are out of our diocese. O what a quiet world should we have, if every thing and person knew his own place! If the sea kept its own place, we should have no inundations; if men had theirs, we should neither have seen such floods of sin, nor miseries, as this unhappy age has been almost drowned with. But it must be a strong bank indeed, that can contain our fluid spirits within our own terms. Peter himself was sharply chidden for prying, out of curiosity, into that which concerned him not—‘What is that to thee?’ John 21:22. As if Christ had said, ‘Peter, meddle with thy own matters, this concerns not thee;’ which sharp rebuke, saith one, might possibly make Peter afterwards give so strict a charge against, and set so black a brand upon, this very sin, as you may find, 1 Peter 4:15, where he ranks the ‘busybody’ among murderers and thieves. Now to fix every one in his place, and persuade all to stand orderly there without breaking their rank, these five considerations, methinks, may carry some weight—among those especially with whom the word of God in the Scripture yet keeps its authority to conclude and determine their thoughts.

[Five Considerations to persuade all to stand.]

1. Consideration. Consider what thou doest out of thy place is not acceptable to God, because thou canst not do it in ‘faith,’ without which ‘it is impossible to please God;’ and it cannot be in faith, because thou hast no call. God will not thank thee for doing that which he did not set thee about. Possibly thou hast good intentions. So had Uzzah in staying the ark, yet how well God liked his zeal, see 2 Samuel 6:7. Saul himself could make a fair story of his sacrificing, but that served not his turn. It concerns us not only to ask ourselves what the thing is we do, but also who requireth this at our hands? To be sure, God will at last put us upon that question, and it will go ill with us if we cannot show our commission. So long must we needs neglect what is our duty, as we are busy about that which is not. The spouse confesseth this, ‘They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept,’ Song of Solomon 1:6. She could not mind their [vineyards] and her own too—our own iron will cool while we are beating another’s. And this must needs be displeasing to God—to leave the work God sets us about, to do to do what he never commanded. When a master calls a truantly scholar to account, that hath been missing some days from school, would this be a good plea for him to tell his master, that he was all the while in such a man’s shop at work with his tools? No, sure his business lay at school, not in that shop.

2. Consideration. By going out of our proper place and calling, we put ourselves from under God's protection. The promise is, he will 'keep us in all our ways,' Psalms 91:11. When we go out of our way, we go from under his wing. We have an excellent place for this, 'Let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God,' 1 Corinthians 7:24. Mark that phrase, abide with God. As we love to walk in God's company, we must abide in our place and calling. Every step from that is a departure from God; and better to stay at home, in a mean place and low calling, wherein we may enjoy God's sweet presence, than go to court and there live without him. It is likely you have heard of that holy bishop, that in a journey fell into an inn, and by some discourse with the host, finding him to be an atheist, or very atheistical, presently calls for his servant to bring him his horse, saying he would not lodge there, for God was not in that place. Truly when thou art in any place, or about any work to which thou art not called, we may safely say, 'God is not in that place or enterprise.' And what a bold adventure it is to stay there where you cannot expect his presence to assist or protect! 'As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place,' Proverbs 27:8. God took special care that the bird sitting over her eggs in her nest should not be hurt; Deuteronomy 22:6, but we find nothing to secure her if found abroad. In doing the duty of our place, we have heaven's word for our security; but upon our own peril be it if we wander. Then we are like Shimei out of his precincts, and lay ourselves open to some judgment or other. It is alike dangerous to do what we are not called to, and to neglect or leave undone the duty of our place. As the earth could not bear the usurpation by Korah and his company of what belonged not to them, but swallowed them up, so the sea could not but bear witness against Jonah the runaway prophet, disdaining to waft him that fled from the place and work that God called him to. Nay, heaven itself would not harbour the angels, when once they left their own place and office that their Maker had appointed; so these words 'left their own habitation,' Jude 1:6[14], I find most probably interpreted. The ruin of many souls breaks in upon them at this door. First they break their ranks, and then they are led farther into temptation. Absalom first looks over the hedge in his ambitious thoughts. A king he would be, and this wandering desire beyond his place, lets in those bloody sins, rebellion, incest, and murder, and these ripened him for, and at last delivered him up into, the hands of divine vengeance. The apostle joins order and steadfastness together,'I am with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith,' Colossians 2:5. If an army stands in close order, every one in his place attending his duty, content with his work, it is impregnable in a manner. How came many in our days to fall from their steadfastness, but by breaking their order?

3. Consideration. We shall never be charged for not doing another's work. 'Give an account of thy stewardship,' Luke 16:2, that is, what by thy place thou wert intrusted with. We may indeed be accessory to another's sin and miscarriage in his place. 'Be not partakers with them,' saith the apostle, Ephesians 5:7. There is a partnership, if not very watchful, that we have with other's sins, and therefore we may all say 'Amen' to that holy man's prayer, 'Lord, forgive me my other sins.' Merchants can trade in bottoms[15] that are not their own, and we may sin with other man's hands many ways; and one especially is, when we do not lend our brother that assistance in his work and duty, which our place and relation obligeth to. But it is not our sin that we do not supply another's negligence, by doing that which belongs not to our place. We are to pray for magistrates that they may rule in the fear of God, but if they do not, we may not step upon the bench and do his work for him. God requires no more than faithfulness in our place. We do not find fault with an apple-tree if it be laden with apples—which is the fruit of its own kind—though we can find no figs or grapes

growing on it. We expect these only from their proper root and stock. He is a fruitful tree in God's orchard that 'bringeth forth his fruit in his season,' Psalms 1:3.

4. Consideration. There is poor comfort in suffering for doing that which was not the work of our place and calling. Before we launch out into any undertaking, it behoves us to ask ourselves, and that seriously, what our tackling is, if a storm should overtake us in our voyage. It is folly to engage in that enterprise which will not bear us out, and pay the charge of all the loss and trouble it can put us to. Now no comfort or countenance from God can be expected from any suffering, except we can entitle him to the business we suffer for. 'For thy sake are we killed all the day long,' Psalms 44:22, saith the church. But if suffering finds us out of our calling and place, we cannot say, 'for thy sake' we are thus and thus afflicted, but 'for our own sakes;' and you know the proverb, 'self-do, self-have.' The apostle makes a vast difference between suffering 'as a busy-body,' and suffering 'as a Christian,' 1 Peter 4:15-16. It is to the latter he saith, 'Let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf.' As for the busy-body, he mates him with thieves and murderers, and those, I trow, have reason both to be ashamed and afraid. The carpenter that gets a cut or wound on his leg from his axe, as he is at work in his calling, may bear it more patiently and comfortably, than one that is wantonly meddling with his tools, and hath nothing to do with such work. When affliction or persecution overtakes the Christian travelling in the way God hath set him in, he may show the Bible, as that holy man suffering for Christ, did, and say, 'This hath made me poor, this hath brought me to prison,' that is, his faith on the truths and obedience to the commands in it; and therefore may confidently expect to suffer at God's cost, as the soldier [expects] to be kept and maintained by the prince in whose service he hath lost his limbs. But the other that runs out of his place and so meets with sufferings, he hath this to embitter them, that he can look for nothing from God but to be soundly chidden for his pains—as the child is served that gets some hurt while he is gadding abroad, and when he comes home at night with his battered face, meets with a whipping from his father in the bargain for being from home. This lay heavy on the spirit of that learned German Johannis Funccius, who of a minister of the gospel in his prince's court, turned minister of state to his prince, and was at last for some evil counsel at least so judged, condemned to die. Before he suffered he much lamented the leaving of his calling, and to warn others left this distich—

Disce meo exemplo mandato munere fungi, Et fuge ceu pestem πολυπραγμοσυνην. To keep thy place and calling learn of me;

Flee as the plague a meddler for to be.

5. Consideration. It is an erratic spirit that usually carries men out of their place and calling. I confess there is an heroicus impetus, an impulse which some of the servants of God have had from heaven, to do things extraordinary, as we read in Scripture of Moses, Gideon, Phinehas, and others. But it is dangerous to pretend to the like, and unlawful to expect such immediate commissions from heaven now, when he issueth them out in a more ordinary way, and gives rules for the same in his word. We may as well expect to be taught extraordinarily, without using the ordinary means, as to be called so. When I see any miraculously gifted, as the prophets and apostles, then I shall think the immediate calling they pretend to is authentic. To be sure we find in the word that extraordinary calling and extraordinary teaching go together. Well, let us see what that erratic spirit is which carries many out of their place and calling. It is not always the same.

(1.) Sometimes it is idleness. Men neglect what they should do, and then are easily persuaded to meddle with what they have nothing to do. The apostle intimates this plainly, ‘They learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busy-bodies, 1 Timothy 5:13. An idle person is a gadder. He hath his foot on the threshold—easily drawn from his own place—and as soon into another’s diocese. He is at leisure for to hear the devil’s chat. He that will not serve God in his own place, the devil, rather than he shall stand out, will send him off his errand, and get him to put his sickle into another’s corn.

(2.) It is pride and discontent that makes persons go out of their place. Some men are in this very unhappy. Their spirits are too big and haughty for the place God hath set them in. Their calling is may be mean and low, but their spirits high and towering, and whereas they should labour to bring their hearts to their condition, they project how they may bring their condition to their proud hearts. They think themselves very unhappy while they are shut up in such strait limits. Indeed the whole world is too narrow a walk for a proud heart, œstuat infœlix angusto limite mundi—it tosses unhappy within the narrow boundary of the world. The world was but a little ease to Alexander. Shall they be hid in a crowd, lie in an obscure corner, and die before they let the world know their worth? No, they cannot brook it, and therefore they must get on the stage, and put forth themselves one way or other. It was not the priest’s work that Korah and his accomplices were so in love with him, but the priest’s honour which attended the work. This they desired to share, and liked not to see others run away with it from them. Nor was it the zeal that Absalom had to do justice which made his teeth water so after his father’s crown, though this must silver over his ambition. These places of church and state are such fair flowers, that proud spirits in all ages have been ambitious to have them set in their own garden, though they never thrive so well as in their proper soil.

(3.) In a third it is unbelief. This made Uzzah stretch forth his hand unadvisedly to stay the ark that shook; which being but a Levite, he was not to touch, see Numbers 4:15. Alas! good man, it was his faith shook more dangerously than the ark. By fearing the fall of this, he fell to the ground himself. God needs not our sin to shoar[16] up his glory, truth, or church.

(4.) In some it is misinformed zeal. Many think they may do a thing, because they can do it. They can preach, and therefore they may. Wherefore else have they gifts? Certainly the gifts of the saints need not be lost, any of them, though be not be laid out in the minister’s work. The private Christian hath a large field wherein he may be serviceable to his brethren. He need not break the hedge which God hath set, and thereby occasion such disorder as we see to be the consequences of this. We read in the Jewish law, Exodus 22:1-31, that he who set a hedge on fire, and that fire burned the corn standing in a field, was to make restitution, though he only fired the hedge—may be not intending to hurt the corn; and the reason was, because his firing the hedge was an occasion of the corn’s being burned, though he meant it not. I dare not say, that every private Christian who hath in these times taken upon him the minister’s work, did intend to make such a combustion in the church, as hath been, and still sadly is, among us. God forbid I should think so. But, O that I could clear them from being accessory to it. In that they have fired the hedge which God hath set between the minister’s calling and people’s. If we will acknowledge the ministry a particular office in the church of Christ—and this I think the word will compel us to do—then we must also confess it is not any one’s work, though never so able, except called to the office. There are many in a kingdom to be found that could do the prince’s errand, it is like, as well as his

ambassador, but none takes the place but he that is sent, and can show his letters credential. Those that are not sent and commissionated by God's call for ministerial work, they may speak truths as well as they that are, yet of him that acts by virtue of his calling, we may say that he preacheth with authority, and not like those that can show no commission, but what the opinion themselves have of their own abilities gives them. Dost thou like the minister's work? why shouldst thou not desire the office, that thou mayest do the work acceptably? Thou dost find thyself gifted, as thou thinkest, for the work, but were not the church more fit to judge so, than thyself? and if thou shouldst be found so by them appointed for the trial, who would not give thee the right hand of fellowship? There are not so many labourers in Christ's field, but thy help, if able, would be accepted. But as thou now actest, thou bringest thyself into suspicion in the thoughts of sober Christians; as he would justly do, who comes into the field where his prince hath an army, and gives out he comes to do his sovereign service against the common enemy, yet stands by himself at the head of a troop he hath got together, and refuseth to take any commission from his prince's officers or join himself with them. I question whether the service such a one can perform—should he mean as he say, which is to be feared—would do so much good, as the distraction which this his carriage might cause in the army would do hurt.

[The Christian must stand and watch.]

Third. To stand, here, is opposed to sleep and sloth. Standing is a waking, watching posture. When the captain sees his soldiers lying secure upon the ground asleep, he bids 'Stand to your arms,' that is, stand and watch. In some cases it is death for a soldier to be found asleep, as when he is appointed to stand sentinel, or the like. Now to sleep, deserves death; because he is to keep awake that the whole army may sleep; and his sleep may cost them their lives. Therefore a great captain thought he gave that soldier but his due, whom he run through with his sword, because he found him asleep when he should have stood sentinel, excusing his severity with this, that he left him but as he found him, mortuum imveni et mortuum reliqui—I found him dead in sleep, and left him but asleep in death. Watchfulness is more needful for the Christian soldier than any other, because other soldiers fight with men that need sleep as well as themselves; but the Christian's grand enemy, Satan, is ever awake and walking his rounds, seeking whom he may surprise. And if Satan be always awake, it is dangerous for the Christian at any time to be spiritually asleep, that is secure and careless. The Christian is seldom worsted by this his enemy, but there is either treachery or negligence in the business. Either the unregenerate part betrays him, or grace is not wakeful to make a timely discovery of him, so as to prepare for the encounter. The enemy is upon him before he is thoroughly awake to draw his sword. The saint's sleeping time is Satan's tempting time. Every fly dares to creep on a sleeping lion. No temptation so weak, but is strong enough to foil a Christian that is napping in security. Samson asleep, and Delilah cuts his locks. Saul asleep, and his spear is taken away from his very side, and he never the wiser. Noah asleep, and his graceless son has a fit time to discover his father's nakedness. Eutychus asleep, nods, and falls from the third loft, and is taken up for dead. Thus the Christian asleep in security may soon be surprised, so as to lose much of his spiritual strength—'the joy of the Lord,' which is his 'strength;' be robbed of his spear, his armour—graces, I mean—at least in the present use of them, and his nakedness discovered by graceless men, to the shame of his profession. As, when bloody Joab could take notice of David's vainglory in numbering the people, was not David's grace asleep? Yea, the Christian may fall from a high loft of profession, so low into such scandalous practices,

that others may question whether there be any life of grace indeed in him. And therefore it behoves the Christian to stand wakefully. Sleep steals as insensibly on the soul, as it doth on the body. The wise virgins fell asleep as well as the foolish, though not so soundly. Take heed thou dost not indulge thyself in thy lazy distemper, but stir up thyself to action, as we bid one that is drowsy stand up or walk. Yield to it by idleness and sloth, and it will grow upon thee. Bestir thyself in this duty, and that, and it will over. David first awakes his tongue to sing, his hand to play on his harp, and then David's heart wakes also, Psalms 62:8. The lion, it is said, when he first wakes, lashes himself with his tail, thereby to stir and rouse up his courage, and then away he goes after his prey. We have enough to excite and provoke us to use all the care and diligence possible.

[Why the Christian is to stand and watch.]

First. The Christian's work is too curious to be done well between sleeping and waking, and too important to be done ill and slubbered[17] over no matter how. He had need be awake that walks upon the brim of a deep river, or the brow of a steep hill. The Christian's path is so narrow, and the danger is so great, that it calls for a nimble eye to discern and a steady eye to direct; but a sleepy eye can do neither. Look upon any duty or grace, and you will find it lie between Sylla and Carybdis —two extremes alike dangerous. Faith, the great work of God, cuts its way between the mountain of presumption and gulf of despair. Patience [is] a grace so necessary that we cannot be without it a day, except we would be all that while beside ourselves. This keeps us that we fall neither into the sleepy apoplexy of a blockish stupidity, which deprives the creature of its senses; nor into a raging fit of discontent, which hath sense enough, and too much, to feel the hand of God, but deprives the man of his reason, that he turns again upon God, and shoots back the Almighty's arrows on his very face in the fury of his froward spirit. The like we might say of the rest. No truth but hath some error next door to it. No duty can be performed without approaching very near the enemy's quarters, who soon takes the alarm, and comes out to oppose the Christian. And ought he not then to have always his heart on the watch?

Second. The trouble of watching is not comparable to the advantage it brings.

1. By this, thou frustratest the designs Satan hath upon thee. It is worth watching to keep the house from robbing, much more the heart from rifling by the devil. 'Watch, that ye enter not into temptation,' Matthew 26:41. He buys his sleep dear that pays his throat-cutting for it; yea, though the wound be not so deep but may be cured at last. Thy not watching one night may keep thee awake many a night upon a more uncomfortable occasion. And hadst thou not better wake with care, to keep thyself from a mischief, than afterward to have thine eyes held open, whether thou wilt or not, with pain and anguish of the wound given thee in thy sleep? You know how sadly David was bruised by a fall got in his spiritual slumber;—for what else was he when in the eventide he rose from his bed, and walked upon the roof of his house, like a man walking in his sleep? 2 Samuel 11:2-6. And how many restless nights this brought over this holy man's head you may perceive by his own mournful complaints of this sin, which is the foot and sad burden of several mournful psalms.

2. By thy watchfulness thou shalt best learn the evil of a sleepy state. One asleep is not sensible of his own snorting, how uncomely and troublesome to others it is, but he that is awake is apprehensive of both. The man asleep is not sensible if laid naked by some that would abuse him, but he that is awake observes, is ashamed, and covers himself. Thus while you are in a spiritual

sense awake, thou canst not but observe many uncomely passages in the lives of those professors who do not watch their hearts, which will fill thy heart with pity to them—to see how they are abused by Satan and their own passions, which like rude servants, take this their own time to play their pranks in, when they have made sure of their mistress—grace I mean now laid asleep—that should keep them in better rule. Yea, it will make the blood come into thy face for shame, to see how by their nakedness, profession itself is flouted at by those that pass by, and to see how it is with them. Well, what thou blushest to see, and pitiest to find in another, take heed it befall not thyself. If thou sufferest a spiritual slumber to grow upon thee, thou wilt be the man thyself that all this may come upon; and what not besides? Sleep levels all; the wise man is then no wiser than a fool to project for his safety; nor the strong man better than the weak to defend himself. If slumber falls once upon thine eye, it is night with thee, and thou art, though the best of saints, but as other men, so far as this sleep prevails on thee.

3. By thy watchfulness thou shalt invite such company in unto thee as will make the time short and sweet; and that is thy dear Saviour, whose sweet communication and discourse about the things of thy Father's kingdom, will make that thou shalt not grudge the ease sleepy Christians get, with the loss of such an heavenly entertainment as thou enjoyest. Who, that loves his soul better than his body, had not rather have David's songs, than David's sleep in the night? And who had not rather have Christ's comforting presence with a waking soul, than his absence with a sleepy slothful one? It is the watchful soul that Christ delights to be with, and open his heart unto. We do not choose that for the time of giving our friends a visit, when they are asleep in their beds. Nay, if we be with them and perceive they grow sleepy, we think it is time we leave them to their pillow; and verily Christ doth so too. Christ withdraws from the spouse till she be better awake, as a fitter to receive his loves. Put the sweetest wine into a sleepy man's hand and you are like to have it all spilled; yea, put a purse of gold into his hand, and the man will hardly remember in the morning what you gave him over night. Thus in the sleepy state of a soul, both the Christian loseth the benefit, and Christ the praise of his mercy; and therefore Christ will stay to give out his choice favours when the soul is more wakeful, that he may both do the creature good, and his creature may speak good of him for it.

[How the Christian is to stand and watch.] Question. But how must the Christian stand upon his watch?

Answer First. Watch constantly. 'The lamp' of God in the tabernacle was to 'burn always,' Exodus 27:20; Exodus 30:8; that is, always in the night, which sense is favoured by several other places. And I pray, what is our life in this world but a dark night of temptation? Take heed, Christian, that thy watch-candle go not out in any part of this darksome time, lest thy enemy come upon thee in that hour. He can find thee, but thou canst not resist him in the dark. If once thy eye be shut in a spiritual slumber, thou art a fair mark for his wrath; and know thou canst not be long off thy watch but the devil will hear on it. The devil knew the apostles' sleeping time, and then he desires leave to 'winnow' them, Luke 22:1-71. He saw they were in some disorder, the eye of their soul began 'to be heavy.' The thief riseth when honest men go to bed. The devil, I am sure, begins to tempt when saints cease to watch. When the staff is thrown away, then the wolf appears. When the soul puts her danger farthest off, and lies most secure, then it is nearest. Therefore labour to be constant in thy holy care; the want of this spoils all. Some you shall have, that after a great fall into a sin that hath bruised them sorely, will seem very careful for a time where they set their foot, how they walk,

and what company they come in; but as soon as the soreness of their consciences wears off, their watch is broken up, and they are as careless as ever; like one that is very careful to shut up his shop strongly, and may be sits up late to watch it also for two or three nights after it hath been robbed, but then minds it no more. Others in an affliction, or newly come out of the furnace, O how nice and scrupulous are they while the smell of fire is about them, and memory of their distress fresh! They are as tender of sinning, as one that comes out of a hot close room is of the air. They shrink at every breath of temptation stirring. But alas, how soon are they hardened to commit those sins without remorse, the bare motion of which, but a little before, did so trouble and afflict them? Josephus, in his Antiquities, tells us that the sons of Noah, for some years after the flood, dwelt on the tops of high mountains, not daring to take up their habitation in the lower ground for fear of being drowned by another flood; yet in process of time, seeing no flood came, they ventured down into the plain of Shinar, where their former fear, we see, ended in one of the boldest, proudest attempts against God, that the sun was ever witness to—the building I mean of a tower whose top should reach heaven, Genesis 11:2-4. They who at first were so maidenly and fearful, as not to venture down their hills for fear of drowning, now have a design to secure themselves against all future attempts from the God of heaven himself. Thus oft we see God's judgements leave such an impression on men's spirits, that for a while they stand aloof from their sins—as these on their hills—afraid to come down to them; but when they see fair weather continue, and no clouds gather towards another storm, then they can descend to their old wicked practices, and grow more bold and heaven-daring than ever. But if thou wilt be a Christian indeed, keep on thy watch still, remit not in thy care. Thou hast well run hitherto. O lie not down, like some lazy traveller, by the wayside to sleep, but reserve thy resting time till thou gettest home out of all danger. Thy God rested not till the last day's work in the creation was finished, neither do thou cease to wake or work till thou canst say thy salvation work is finished.

Answer Second. Watch universally.

1. Watch thy whole man. The honest watchman walks the rounds, and compasseth the whole town. He doth not limit his care to this house or that. So do thou watch over thy whole man. A pore in the body is a door wide enough to let in a disease if God command, and any one faculty of thy soul, or member of thy body to let in an enemy that may endanger thy spiritual welfare. Alas, how few set the watch round? some one faculty is not guarded, or member of the body not regarded. He that is scrupulous in one, you shall find him secure in another. May be thou settest a watch at the door of thy lips, that no impure communication offends the ears of men; but how is the Lord's watch kept at the temple door of thy heart? 2 Chronicles 23:6. Is not that defiled with lust? Thou, may be, keepest thy hand out of thy neighbour's purse, and thy foot from going on a thievish errand to thy neighbour's house; but does not thy envious heart grudge him what God allows him? When thou prayest, thou art very careful thy outward posture be reverent; but what eye hast thou on thy soul that it performs its part in the duty?

2. Watch in everything. If the apostle bids, 'in everything give thanks,' then it behoves us in everything to watch, that God may not lose his praise, which he doth in most for want of watching. No action so little, almost, but we may in it do God or the devil some service, and therefore none too little for our care to be bestowed on. He was a holy man indeed, of whom it was said, that 'he ate and drank eternal life.' The meaning is, he kept such a holy watch over himself in these things, that he was in heaven while doing them. There is no creature so little among all God's works but

his providence watcheth over it, even to a sparrow and a hair. Let there be no word or work of thine over which thou art not watchful. Thou shalt be judged by them even to thy idle words and thoughts, and wilt thou not have care of them?

Answer Third. Watch wisely. This thou shalt do if thou knowest where thou shouldst keep strictest watch, and that must be first in the weightiest duty of the command. ‘Tithing of cummin and anise’ must not be neglected; but take heed thou dost not neglect the weightiest things of the law, ‘judgment, mercy, and faith,’ making your preciseness in the less a blind for your horrible wickedness in the greater, Matthew 23:23.

1. Begin at the right end of your work, Christian, by placing your chief care about these Mal. duties to God and man, in his law and gospel, in his worship, and in thy daily course; which when thou hast done, neglect not the circumstantials. Should a master before he goes forth, charge his servant to look to his child, and trim his house up handsomely against he comes home, when he returns will he thank his servant for sweeping his house, and making it trim, if he finds his child through his negligence fallen into the fire, and by it killed or crippled? No sure, he left his child with him as his chief charge, to which the other should have yielded, if both could not be done. There hath been a great zeal of late among us about some circumstantials of worship; but who looks to the little child—the Mal. duties of Christianity, I mean? Was there ever less love, charity, self-denial, heavenly-mindedness, or the power of holiness in any of its several walks, than in this sad age of ours? Alas, these, like the child, are in great danger of perishing in the fire of contention and division, which a perverse zeal in less things hath kindled among us.

2. Be sure thou beest watchful more than ordinary over thyself, in those things where thou findest thyself weakest, and hast been oftenest foiled. The weakest part of the city needs the strongest guard, and in our bodies the tenderest part is most observed and kept warmest. And I should think it were strange, if thy fabric of grace stands so strong and even, that thou shouldst not soon perceive which side needs the shore most, by some inclination of it one way more than another. Thy body is not so firm, but thou findest this humour overabound, and that part craze faster than another; and so mayest thou in thy soul. Well, take counsel in the thing, and what thou findest weakest, watch more carefully. Is it thy head is weak—thy judgment I mean? watch thyself, and come not among those that drink no wine but that which thy weak parts cannot bear —seraphic notions and high-flown opinions—and do not think thyself much wronged to be forbidden their cup. Such strong wine is more heady than hearty, and they that trade most with it are not found of the healthiest tempers of their souls, no more than they that live most of strong water are for their bodies. Is thy impotency in thy passions? Indeed we are weak as they are strong and violent. Now watch over them as one that dwells in a thatched house would do of every spark that flies out of his chimney, lest it should light on it and set all on fire. O take heed what speeches come from thy mouth, or from any thou conversest with. This is the little instrument sets the whole course of nature on flame. When our neighbour’s house is on fire we cast water on our roof, or cover it with a wet sheet. When the flame breaks out at another’s mouth, now look thou throwest water on thy own hot spirit. Some cooling, wrath-quenching scriptures and arguments ever carry with thee for that purpose. And so in any other particular as thou findest thy weakness.

[1]. ενδυσασθε.

[2]. _ναλαμβ■νετε.

[3]. Wishly, an adverb of local usage, meaning with longing, wishfully.

[4]. _ναλαμβ■νετε.

[5]. _ν τ_ _μεπα τ_ πονηρα.

[6]. Fadge, an obsolete word, to agree; also, suit, fit.

[7]. σπ■νδομαι.

[8]. Bogle, To start with fright or amazement.—SDB.

[9]. κατεργαζεσθαι.

[10]. Comparationem videtur egisse qui utrumque cognoverit, et judicato pronunciâsse eum meliorem, cujus se rursus esse maluerit.

— Tertull. de Pœnit.

[11]. καπελευειν τον λ■γον τω_ θεο_.

[12]. Shark, to search, and prowl about; live by petty theft.

Prole, sometimes prolle, to search or prowl about for anything. — Ed.

[13]. _ποστε■ληται.

[14]. _πολ■πονται το _διων _ικητ■ριον.

[15]. Bottoms, vessels of burden.

[16]. Shoar, usually spelled shore, to prop up, support.

—Ed.

[17]. Slubbered, performed in a slipshod fashion.—SDB.

Chapter 8

01.07 - First Piece - The Christian's Spiritual Girdle

Direction Fifth. The Several Pieces of the Whole Armour of God First Piece—The Christian's Spiritual Girdle.

'Having your loins girt about with truth' (Ephesians 6:14). The apostle having ordered the Ephesians, and in them every Christian, the posture which they are to observe in fight with their enemy; he comes now to instance in the several pieces of that armour, which before he had commended to them only in the general. The first of which is the girdle of truth—'having your loins girt about with truth.' A twofold inquiry is here requisite. First, What he means by truth. Second, What by loins, and their being girt with truth. a brief explanation of the words.

First Inquiry. What is truth here? Some by truth understand Christ, who indeed elsewhere is called 'the truth.' Yet in this place I conceive it is not properly so understood, because the apostle instanceth in here several pieces and parts of armour, one distinct from another, and Christ cannot so well be said to be a single piece to defend this or that part, as the whole in whom we are complete, compared therefore, Romans 13:14, to the whole suit of armour, 'Put ye on the Lord Jesus;' that is, be clothed and harnessed with Christ as a soldier with his armour cap-à-pie. Some by truth mean truth of doctrine; others will have it truth of heart, sincerity. Those I think right that comprise both; and so I shall handle it. Both indeed are required to make the girdle complete. One will not do without the other. It is possible to find good meanings and a kind of sincerity without, yea against the truth. Many follow an error as they Absalom in the simplicity of their hearts. Such do ill while they mean well. Good intentions do not more make a good action, than a fair mark makes a good shot by an unskilful archer. God did not like Saul's zeal when he persecuted the Christian church, though he thought, no question, he did him good service therein. Neither is it enough to have the truth on our side, if we have not truth in our hearts. Jehu was a great stickler against idolatry, but kicked down all again by his hypocrisy. Both then are necessary; sincerity to propound a right end, and knowledge of the word of truth to direct us in the right way to that end.

Second Inquiry. What is meant here by loins that are to be girt with this girdle of truth? The loins must be like the girdle. This is spiritual, and therefore they must be so. Peter will help to interpret Paul; 'Gird up the loins of your mind,' 1 Peter 1:13. They are our spirits and minds which must wear this girdle, and very fitly may our spirits and minds be compared to the loins. The loins are the chief seat of bodily strength. Of behemoth it is said, 'His strength is in his loins,' Job 40:16. The loins are to the body as carina navi—the keel to the ship. The whole ship is knit to that, and sustained by it. And the body is knit to the loins; if the loins fail, the whole body sinks, hence to 'smite through the loins' is a phrase to express destruction and ruin, Deuteronomy 33:11; weak loins and a weak man. If we be but a little weary, nature directs us to lay our hands on our loins to sustain them, as our chief strength. Thus as the actings of our minds and spirits are in their faculties and powers, so we are weak or strong Christians. If the understanding be clear in its apprehensions of truth, and the will sincere, vigorous, and fixed in its purposes for that which is holy and good, then he is a strong Christian; but if the understanding be dark or uncertain in its

notions, as a distempered eye that cannot well discern its object—not able to bring its thoughts to an issue, which to close with, and the will be wavering and unsteady, like a needle that trembles between two lodestones—here the man is weak, and all he doth will be so. Feeble spirits cause an intermitting false pulse; so want of strength in the mind to know truth and want of resolution in the will to pursue that which he knows to be holy and good, causeth a man to falter in his course. The use therefore of these two, FIRST. Truth of doctrine for the mind, and SECOND. Truth of heart or sincerity for the will, is to unite and establish both these facilities. This they do when they are clasped and girt about the soul, as the girdle about the loins of the body. Though the loins be the strength of the body, yet they need an auxiliary to their strength from the girdle to keep those parts close, and unite their force; without which, men, when they would strain themselves, and put forth their strength in any work, find a trembling and looseness in their loins. Hence the 'shaking of the loins,' is a phrase to express weakness, Psalms 69:23. Thus our minds and spirits need this girdle to strengthen them in every work we do, or else we shall act nothing vigorously.

DIRECTION V.—FIRST GENERAL PART.

[Truth of Doctrine as a Girdle for the Mind.]

We shall begin with truth of doctrine, or truth of the word, called 'the word of truth,' Ephesians 1:13, because it is the word of God, who is God of truth. It behoves every Christian to be well girt with this truth. 'Resist the devil,' saith Peter, 'steadfast in the faith,' 1 Peter 5:9; that is, in the truth—faith being there put for the object of our faith, which is the truth of God, declared in the doctrine of the gospel. This is 'the faith which was once delivered to the saints,' Jude 1:3; that is, the truth delivered to them to be believed and held fast. And of what importance it is to be thus steadfast in the faith, the apostle Peter, in the following verse of the fore-mentioned place, shows, by his vehement and earnest praying for them, that God would 'stablish, strengthen, and settle them.' The heaping of words to the same purpose, implies the great danger they were in of being unsettled by Satan and his instruments, and the necessity of their standing firm and unshaken in the faith. Nothing is more frequently inculcated than this in the Epistles; and the more, because in those blustering times it was impossible to have kept the faith from being blown from them, without this girdle to hold it fast. Now, as there is a double design Satan hath to rob Christians of truth, so there is a twofold girding about with this truth necessary. first, Satan comes as a serpent in the persons of false teachers, and by them labours to put a cheat on us, and cozen[1] us with error for truth. To defend us against this design, it is necessary we be girt with truth in our understanding—that we have an established judgement in the truths of Christ. second, Satan comes sometimes as a lion in the persons of bloody persecutors, and labours to scare Christians from the truth with fire and faggot. Now to defend us against this, we need to have truth girt about us, so that with a holy resolution we may maintain our profession in the face of death and danger. to begin with the first.

FIRST GIRDING ABOUT.

[It is the Christian's duty to labour for an established judgment in the truth.]

Since Satan comes as a serpent in the persons of false teachers, and by them labours to put a cheat on us and cozen us with error for truth; to defend us against this design, it is necessary that we be girt with truth in our understanding—that we have an established judgment in the truths of

Christ. It should be the care of every Christian to get an established judgment in the truth. The Bereans are highly commended for the inquiry they made into the Scripture, to satisfy their judgements concerning the doctrine Paul preached. They did not believe hand over head, but their faith was the result of a judgement, upon diligent search, convinced by the scripture evidence, Acts 17:11. It is said there that 'they searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so.' They carried the preacher's doctrine to the written word, and compared it with that; and mark, 'therefore many of them believed,' Acts 17:12. As they did not believe before, so they durst not but believe now. I remember Tertullian, speaking of some heretics as to their manner of preaching, saith persuadendo docent, non docendo persuadent—they teach by persuading, and do not by teaching persuade, that is, they woo and entice the affections of their hearers, without convincing their judgement about what they preach. Indeed, it were a hard work for the adulterer to convince her he would prostitute, that the fact is lawful; no, he goes another way to work. First by some amorous insinuations he inveigles her affections, and they, once bewitched, the other is not much questioned—it being easy for the affections to make the judgment of their party. Well, though error, like a thief, comes thus in at the window; yet truth, like the true owner of the house, delights to enter at the right door of the understanding, from thence into the conscience, and so passeth into the will and affections. Indeed, he that hits upon truth, and takes up the profession of it, before he is brought into the acquaintance of its excellency and heavenly beauty by his understanding, cannot entertain it becoming to its heavenly birth and descent. It is as a prince that travels in a disguise, not known, therefore not honoured. Truth is loved and prized only of those that know it. And not to desire to know it, is to despise it, as much as knowing it, to reject it. It were not hard, sure, to cheat that man of truth, who knows not what he hath. Truth and error are all one to the ignorant man, so it hath but the name of truth. Leah and Rachel were both alike to Jacob in the dark. Indeed it is said, 'In the morning behold it was Leah,' Genesis 29:25. So in the morning, when it is day in the understanding, then the deceived person will see he hath had a false bride in his bosom; will cry out, Behold, it is an error which I took for a truth. You have, may be, heard of the covetous man, that hugged himself in the many bags of gold he had, but never opened them or used them. When the thief took away his gold, and left him his bags full of pebbles in the room, he was as happy as when he had his gold, for he looked not on the one or other. And verily an ignorant person is in a manner no better with truth than error on his side. Both are alike to him, day and night all one to a blind man. But to proceed, and give some more particular account.

[Why the Christian should labour for an established judgment in the truth.]

I shall content myself with three reasons. The first taken from the damning nature of false doctrine; the second from the subtlety of seducers to draw into false doctrine; and the third from the universal influence that an established judgment hath on the whole man, and whole course of a Christian.

Reason First. From the damning nature of false doctrines. They hunt for the precious life of souls, as well as any other sin. An imposthume in the head proves oft as deadly as one in the stomach. A corrupt judgment in foundation-truths kills as sure as a rotten heart. Indeed, it proceeds thence. Jezebel's children are threatened to be to be 'killed with death,' Revelation 2:23. And who are her children, but her disciples, that drink of her cup of fornication and embrace her corrupt doctrines? But sure this is not believed by some, who, though very strict in their lives, and seem as tender in matter of morality as Lot was of his guests, yet are very loose in their principles and judgements,

exposing them, as he his daughters, to be defiled with any corrupt doctrine that comes to their door. They would make us think, that here men played but at small game, and their souls were not at stake, as in other sins. As if there were not such a question to be asked at the great day—what opinions we held? and whether we were sound in the faith?—in a word, as if false doctrines were but an innocent thing, not like the wild gourd which brought death into the prophets' pot, 2 Kings 4:39, 40—turning wholesome food, with which it was mingled, into baneful poison—but rather like herb-john in the pot, that does neither much good nor hurt. Yea, there be some that speak out, and tell us a man may be saved in any religion, so he doth but follow his light. And are not these charitable men? Because they would have the company as few as may be that are damned, [they] make as many roads to heaven as the Scripture tells us are ways to hell? This is contrary to the teaching of Christ, who tells us of no other way but by him to life. 'I am the way, the truth, and the life,' John 14:6. It is point blank against St. John, who tells us of but one doctrine, and that the doctrine of Christ, and that he that holds not this to be marked out for a lost man. 'Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God,' 2 John 1:9-10. And how far, I pray, is that man off hell that hath not God? Him that hath not God before he dies, the devil shall have when he dies. Well, sirs, the time is coming, yea it hastens—what favour and kindness soever corrupt doctrines find here at man's hand—wherein the obstinate heretic shall receive the same law at Christ's hands with the impenitent drunkard. You may see them both under the same condemnation, as they stand pinioned together for hell, Galatians 5:20-21, 'I tell you now,' saith the apostle, 'as I have told you in time past, that they which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God.' And see, I pray, if you cannot find the heretic's name amongst them? Ignorance in fundamentals is damning, surely then error in fundamentals much more. If a pound weighs down the scale, there is no doubt then but a stone-weight will do it. If the less sin presseth down to hell, how can we rationally think that the greater should escape it? Error stands at a farther distance from, yea at a fuller contrariety to, truth than ignorance. Error is ignorance with a die on it. He that eats little or nothing must needs die, much more he that eats rank poison. The apostle doth not only tell us of 'pernicious ways,' and 'damnable heresies,' but he tells us they 'bring swift destruction' upon those that hold them, 2 Peter 2:1-2. I pray observe what an accent he lays on the destruction that comes by these corrupt doctrines, he calls it 'swift destruction.' All rivers find their way at last to the sea from whence they sprang, but some return with a swifter stream, and get sooner to it, than others. Would any make it a shorter voyage to hell than ordinary, let him throw himself but into this stream of corrupt doctrine, and he is not like to be long in going.

Reason Second. Because impostors are so subtle, it therefore behoves the Christian to establish and strengthen his judgment in the truths of Christ. They are a generation of men skilful to destroy the faith of others. There is an erudita nequitia in the world, as one calls it, a learned kind of wickedness, that some have to corrupt the minds of men. The Spirit of God sets them out to life, sometimes comparing them to merchants, who can set a gloss upon their false ware with fine words; they are said, 2 Peter 2:3, 'with feigned words' to 'make merchandise' of souls—sometimes to hucksters, that blend and dash their wine with water, 2 Corinthians 2:17—sometimes to cheating gamesters, that have a sleight of hand to cog the die, Ephesians 4:14—yea, to witches themselves: 'Who hath bewitched you?' saith the apostle, Galatians 3:1. Strange things have been done in our days on those that God has suffered them to practice their sorcery upon; and what counter-charm better than an established judgment? It is observable that in 2 Timothy 3:8, where the apostle compares the seducers of that present age to those sorcerers Jannes and Jambres,

that resisted Moses, and shows what kind of persons they were that fell into their snare —such as though ‘ever learning,’ yet never came ‘to the knowledge of the truth,’ 2 Timothy 3:7, he then turns to Timothy [with the words], ‘But thou hast fully known my doctrine,’ 2 Timothy 3:10. As if he had said, I am out of fear for thee;—thou art better grounded in the doctrine of the gospel, than to be thus cheated of it. Indeed, those whom seducers lie in wait for, are chiefly weak unsettled ones; for as Solomon saith, ‘In vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird,’ Proverbs 1:17. The devil chose rather to assault Eve than Adam, as the more likely of the two to be caught; and ever since he takes the same course. He labours to creep over where the hedge is lowest, and the resistance likely to be weakest.

Three characters you may observe among those who are most commonly seduced. 1. They are called ‘simple’ ones[2]—‘By good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple,’ Romans 16:18, such who mean well, but want wisdom to discern those who mean ill—in cautious ones, that dare pledge everybody, and drink of any one’s cup, and never suspect poisoning. 2. They are called ‘children’—‘Be no more children, tossed to and fro, with every wind of doctrine,’ Ephesians 4:14. Now children are very credulous, prone to believe every one that gives them a parcel of fair words. They think anything is good, if it be sweet. It is not hard to make them eat poison for sugar. They are not swayed by principles of their own, but by those of others. The child reads, construes, and parses his lesson as his master saith, and thinks it therefore right. Thus as poor creatures that have little knowledge of the word themselves, they are easily persuaded this or that way, even as those of whom they have a good opinion please to lead them. Let the doctrine be but sweet, and it goes down glib. They, like Isaac, bless their opinions by feeling, not by sight. Hence many poor creatures applaud themselves so much of the joy they have found since they were of this judgement and that way. Not being able to try the comfort and sweetness they feel by the truth of their way from the word, they are fain to believe the truth of it by their feeling, and so, poor creatures, they bless error for truth. 3. They are such as are ‘unstable’—‘beguiling unstable souls,’ 2 Peter 2:14, such as are not well grounded and principled. The truth they profess hath no anchor-hold in their understanding, and so they are at the mercy of the wind, soon set adrift, and carried down the stream of those opinions which are the favourites of the present time, and are most cried up—even as the dead fish with the current of the tide.

Reason Third. We are to endeavour after an established judgment in the truth, because of the universal influence it hath upon the whole man.

1. Upon the memory, which is helped much by the understanding. The more weight is laid on the seal, the deeper impression is made on the wax. The memory is that faculty which carries the images of things. It holds fast what we receive, and is that treasury where we lay up what we desire afterward to use and converse with. Now, the more clear and certain our knowledge of anything is, the deeper it sinks, and the surer it is held by the memory.

2. Upon the affections. Truth is as light, the more steady and fixed the glass of the understanding is, through which its beams are darted upon the affections, the sooner they take fire—‘Did not our hearts,’ saith the disciples, ‘burn within us, while he opened to us the Scriptures?’ Luke 24:32. They had heard Christ, no doubt, preach much of what he said then, before his passion; but never were they so satisfied and confirmed as now, when Scriptures and understanding were opened together, and this made their hearts ‘burn.’ The sun in the firmament sends his influence where he

doth not shed his beams, I mean into the bowels of the earth, but the Sun of righteousness imparts his influence only where his light comes. He spreads the beams of truth into the understanding, to enlighten that; and while the creature sits under these wings, a kindly heart-quickening heat is begotten in its bosom. Hence we find that even when the Spirit is promised as a comforter, he comes as a convincer, John 16:13—he comforts by teaching. And certainly, the reason why many poor trembling souls have so little heat of heavenly joy in their hearts, is because they have so little light to understand the nature and tenure of the gospel-covenant. The farther a soul stands from the light of truth, the father he must needs be from the heat of comfort.

3. An established judgment hath a powerful influence upon the life and conversation. The eye directs the foot. He walks very unsafely that sees not his way, and he uncomfortably that is not resolved whether right or wrong. That which moves must rest on something that doth not move. A man could not walk if the earth turned under his feet. Now the principles we have in our understanding are, as it were, the ground we go upon in all our actions; if they stagger and reel, much more will our life and practice. It is as impossible for a shaking hand to write a straight line, as for an unfixed judgement to have an even conversation. The apostle joins steadfastness and unmovableness with ‘abounding in the work of the Lord,’ 1 Corinthians 15:58. And if I mistake not, he means chiefly in that place, a steadfastness of judgment in the truth of the resurrection, which some had been shaking. It is not the many notions we have, but the establishment we have in the truth, that makes us strong Christians; as he is a strong man whose joints are well set together and knit—not he who is spun out at length, but not thickened suitable to his height. One saith well, ‘Men are what they see and judge; though some do not fill up their light, yet none go beyond it.’ A truth under dispute in the understanding is, as I may so say, stopped in the head; it cannot commence in the heart, or become practicable in the life. But when it passeth clearly there, and upon its commendation is embraced in the will and affections, then it is held fast, and hath powerful effects in the conversation. The gospel, it is said, came to the Thessalonians ‘in much assurance,’ i.e. evidence of its truth, 1 Thessalonians 1:5. And you see how prevalent and operative it was: ‘Ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost,’ 1 Thessalonians 1:6. They were assured that the doctrine was of God, and this carried them merrily through the saddest afflictions which attended the same.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. They were emboldened to reprove those that, instead of endeavouring to establish their judgments in the truth, make it their great study how to strengthen themselves in their errors. I am persuaded some men take more pains to furnish themselves with arguments to defend some one error they have taken up, than they do for the most saving truths in the Bible; yea, they could sooner die at a stake to defend one error they hold, than for all the truths they profess. Austin saith of himself when he was a Manichean, Non tu eras, sed error meus erat Deus meus—‘thou, O Lord, wast not, but my error was, my God.’ O it is hard to reduce a person deeply engaged in the defence of an error! How oft had the Pharisees their mouths stopped by our Saviour? yet few or none reclaimed. Their spirits were too proud to recant. What! they lay down the bucklers, come down from Moses’ chair, and confess [that] what they have taught the people for an oracle is now false! they will rather go on, and brave it out as well as they can, than come back with shame, though the shame was not to be ashamed of their error, but ashamed to confess it. The cynic answered smartly, who, coming out of a brothel-house, was asked, whether he was not ashamed

to be seen coming out of such a naughty house: No, he said, the shame was to go in, but honesty to come out. O sirs, it is bad enough to fall into an error, but worse to persist. The first shows thee a weak man—humanum est errare, to err is human; but the other makes thee too like the devil, who is to this day of the same mind he was at his first fall.

Use Second. It reproves those who labour to unsettle the judgements of others—to ungird this belt about the Christian loins. They come with the devil's question in their mouths, 'Yea, hath God said?' are you sure this is a truth? do not your ministers deceive you? labouring slyly to breed suspicions and jealousies in the hearts of Christians towards the truths they have received. Such were they that troubled the Galatians, whom Paul wished 'cut off' for their pains, Galatians 5:12. They laboured to puzzle them, by starting scruples in their minds concerning the doctrine of the gospel. This is a cunning way at last to draw them from the faith, and therefore they are called 'subverters of the faith of others,' 2 Timothy 2:14; Titus 1:11. The house must needs be in danger when the groundsels[3] are loosened. Can you think he means honestly that undermines the foundation of your house? This they do that would call in question the grand truths of the gospel. But this is a small fault in our loose age, or else so many seducers—whom I may call spiritual rogues and vagrants—would not be suffered to wander like gipsies up and down, bewitching poor simple souls to their perdition. O, it is sad that he who steals the worth of two or three shillings should hold up his hand at the bar for his life, yea, sometimes hang for it; and that those who rob poor souls of the treasure of saving truths, and subvert the faith of whole families, should be let to lift up their heads with impudence, glorying in their impunity. It is sad that blasphemy against God should not bear an action, where blasphemy against the king is indicted for treason. It is well that God loves his truth better than men, or else these would escape in both worlds. But God hath declared himself against them. There is a day when they who rob souls of truth shall be found, and condemned as greater felons than they who rob houses of Gold and silver. See how God lays their indictment, 'Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my words every one from his neighbour,' Jeremiah 23:30. He means the false prophets that enticed the people from those truths which the faithful servants of God had delivered to them. There will be none on the bench to plead the blasphemer's and seducer's cause when God shall sit as judge.

Use Third. This might well chastise the strange fickleness and unsettledness of judgment which many labour with in this unconstant age. Truths in many professors' minds are not as stars fixed in the heaven, but like meteors that dance in the air. They are not as characters engraven in marble, but writ in the dust, which every wind and idle breath of seducers deface. Many entertain opinions as some entertain suitors —not that they mean to marry them, but cast them off as soon as new ones come. Never was there a more giddy age than ours. What is said of fashion-mongers—that some men, should they see their pictures in that habit which they wore a few years past, would hardly know themselves in their present garb—is most true in regard of their opinions. Should many that have been great professors take a few of their religious principles a dozen years ago, and compare them with their present, they would be found not the same men. They have so chopped and changed that they seem to have altered their whole creed. And it is no wonder that so many are for a new baptism when they have forsaken their old faith. Not that the old which they renounce was false, or [that] the new which they espouse is true, but because they were either ignorant of the truth they first professed, or were insincere in their profession of it. And it is no wonder that the one should upon easy terms part with that which he first took up upon as weak

grounds as now he leaves it; or that the other, who did not love or improve the truth he professed, should be given up of God to change it for an error. If the heathen—who did not glorify God with the light of nature they had—were righteously given up to a reprobate injudicious mind to do that which was inconvenient and morally absurd, then they who dishonoured God with the revealed light of Scripture truth, much more deserve that they should be given up to that which is spiritually wicked, even to believe errors and lies for truth. A heavy curse, did we rightly judge of it, to wander and wilder[4] in a maze of error, and yet think they are walking in the way of truth.

Question. But some may say, How is it possible that ordinary professors should attain to this established judgement in the truth, when we see many of great parts and eminency much unsettled in their judgments?

Answer First. We must distinguish between persons. Of persons, there are many eminent for parts, whose parts want piety to establish them, and no wonder to see wanton wits unfixed in the truths of God. None sooner topple over into error than such as have not an honest heart to a nimble head. The richest soil without culture is most tainted with such weeds. They have been men of unsanctified parts that have been the leaders in the way of error, though the more simple and weak that are led by them. They are knowing men, which first disgorge and vomit error from their from their corrupt hearts, and ignorant ones that lick it up. And therefore despair not of an established judgement, so long as thou desirest to have an honest upright heart, and conscientiously usest the means. The promise is on thy side: ‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,’ and ‘a good understanding have they that do his commandments,’ Psalms 111:10.

Answer Second. We must distinguish between truths. Some are fundamental, others are superstructory. Now, though many eminent for piety as well as parts, are in the dark concerning some of the superstructory and more circumstantial—because mysteriously laid down in the word—yet there is a sweet harmony among the godly in fundamentals; and in those, poor souls, thou mayest come by a faithful use of means to be established. As for our bodies, God hath so provided, that things necessary to preserve their life are more common, and to be had at a cheaper rate, than things for delicacy and state. So also for our souls. If bread were as hard to come by as sweetmeats, or if water were as scarce as wine, the greatest part of men must needs famish. So if truths necessary to salvation were as hard to be understood and cleared from the Scriptures as some others, many poor weak-parted Christians would certainly perish without a miracle to help them. But the saving truths of the gospel lie plain, and run clear to all, but those who roil[5] the stream with their own corrupt minds.

[Directions for establishing the judgment in the truth.] But what counsel can you give me towards the establishing of my judgement in the truth of Christ?

First Direction. Let thy aim be sincere in embracing truths. A false naughty heart and unsound judgment, like ice and water, are produced mutually by one another. The reason of the fickleness of some men’s judgments proceeds from the guile of their hearts. A stable mind and a double heart seldom meet. That place speaks full to this, 1 Timothy 1:5, ‘The end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.’ Now mark what follows, 1 Timothy 1:6—‘from which some have swerved’—or as it is in the original, not aiming at—‘having turned aside unto vain jangling.’ They never aimed at the power of holiness in receiving truth, that by it they might advance in their love, faith, and other graces. And taking a wrong

end and aim, no wonder they turn out of the right way. A naughty heart can easily bribe the judgment to vote on its side. This shall be truth now, and no truth a month hence if it please. That is truth with many which serves their interest. They tie their judgments to their purse-strings, or preferments, &c., and such men are ready—with that weather-cock in Queen Mary's days—to sing a new song upon any change in their carnal concernments. When love receives a truth it is held fast, but if lust after any worldly interest be the cause, then it may be packed away again when the turn is served. Amnon was soon as sick of Tamar as ever he was for her. And have we not in our days seen some truths and ordinances kicked away with as much scorn and contempt as he did her, and by those that have been sufficiently fond of them a few years past, but who, it is to be feared, were never truly in love with them?

Second Direction. Attend on the ministry of the word. One great end of its appointment is to establish us in the truth: 'He gave some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints,' Ephesians 4:11-12; and mark, 'that henceforth we be no more children tossed to and fro,' &c., Ephesians 4:14. He that runs from his guide will soon be out of his way. It is no small testimony that God hath given to his faithful ministers in this present age, viz. that few leave them but the leprosy of error appears soon on their forehead. And in thy waiting on the ministry of the word, be sure thou attendest to the doctrinal part of the sermon, as well as to the application. The former is necessary to make thee a solid Christian, as the other to make thee a warm Christian. Indeed, hot affections without solid knowledge, are but like fire in the pan, when the piece is not charged. The Levites, we find, 'gave the sense of the law, and caused the people to understand the reading,' Nehemiah 8:7-8. Planting goes before watering, and so should teaching before exhorting. And the same method people should learn in, that we are to preach in.

Third Direction. Enslave not thy judgment to any person or party. There is a spiritual suretiship which hath undone many in their judgments and principles. Be not bound to, or for the judgment of any. Weigh truth, and tell gold thou mayest, after thy father; but thou must live by thy own faith, not another's. Labour to see truth with thine own eyes. That building stands weak which is held up by a shore, or some neighbour house it leans on, rather than on a foundation of its own. When these go, that will fall to the ground also. Let not authority from man, but evidence from the word, conclude thy judgment; that is but a shore, this is a foundation. Quote the Scripture rather than men for thy judgment. Not, so saith a learned man; but thus saith the holy Scripture. Yet, take heed of bending this direction too far the other way; which is done when we contemn the judgment of such whose piety and learning might command reverence. There is sure a mean to be found betwixt defying men, and deifying them. It is the admiring of persons that forms the traitor to truth, and makes many cry 'Hosanna' to error, and 'Crucify' to truth. Eusebius, out of Josephus, tells us of Herod's—that Herod whom we read of, Acts 12:23, as being eaten up of worms—coming upon the theatre gorgeously clad, and that while he was making an eloquent oration to the people, his silver robe, which he then wore, did, by the reflex of the sunbeams shining on it, so glister, as dazzled the eyes of the spectators; and this, saith he, occasioned some flatterers to cry out, 'The voice of God, and not of man.' And truly the glistering varnish which some men's parts and rhetoric put upon their discourses, does oft so blind the judgments of their admirers, that they are too prone to think all divine they speak, especially if they be such as God hath formerly used as instruments for any good to their souls. O it is hard then, as he said, amare hominem humaniter—to love and esteem man as a man, to reverence him such so, as not to be in danger of

loving their errors also. Augustine had been a means to convert Alypius from one error, and he confesseth this was an occasion why he was so easily by him led into another error—no less than Manicheism. Alypius thought he could not pervert him here that had converted him. Call therefore none father on earth; despise none, adore none.

Fourth Direction. Beware of curiosity. He is half gone into error that vainly covets novelties, and listens after every new-fangled opinion. We read of ‘itching ears,’ 2 Timothy 4:3. This itch commonly ends in a scab of error. Tamar lost her chastity by gadding. Castitas mentis est fides incorrupta—the chastity of the mind is its soundness in the faith. And this they are in danger to lose who will go into all companies, and lend an ear to all doctrines that are preached. First be a hearer, and then a disciple of them. Many indulge themselves so far in this curiosity of conversing with every sect and opinion, that at last they turn skeptics, and can settle upon nothing as truth. Augustine confesseth of himself, that he had gone through so many errors and delusions of the Manicheans—that at last he was afraid of truth itself, which heard Ambrose preach. Ut malum medicum expertus, etiam bono timeat se committere—as, saith he, one that hath had experience of an unskilful physician, is at last afraid to put himself in the hands of him that is skilful. O take heed that you, who will not hear anything, come not in the end that you will believe nothing.

Fifth Direction. Humbly beg and established judgment of God. No travellers lose their way sooner than they who think they know it so well that they need not ask it. And no professors are in danger of being drawn from the truth, as much as they who lean to their own understandings, and acknowledge not God in their way, by consulting with him daily. Mark pride—however it may seem to soar aloft in profession at present—and you shall find it at last laid in the ditch of error or profaneness. This is the bed God hath made for it, and it must lie there where God hath appointed its lodging. It is very necessary that such men should be left to be bewildered, and so put to shame, that, when their understanding returns to them—if God hath such a mercy in store for them—they may, with Nebuchadnezzar, ‘bless the Most High,’ and acknowledge him, at their return, whom they neglected so unworthily at their setting forth. O take heed therefore of pride, which will soon make thee a stranger at the throne of grace. Pride takes little delight in begging. It turns humble praying for truth into a busy stickling and ambitious disputing about truth (there is honour to be got here): and thus many, to get victory, have lost truth in the heat of the battle. Lay this deep in thy heart, that God, which gives an eye to see truth, must give a hand to hold it fast when we have it. Quœ habemus ab eo, tenere non possumus sine eo (Bern.)—what we have from God, we cannot keep without God. Keep therefore thy acquaintance with God, or else truth will not keep her acquaintance long with thee. God is light, thou art going into the dark, as soon as thou turnest thy back upon him. We stand at better advantage to find truth, and keep it also, when devoutly praying for it, than when fiercely wrangling and contending about it. Disputes roil the soul, and raise the dust of passion. Prayer sweetly composeth the mind, and lays the passions which disputes draw forth. And I am sure a man may see farther in a still clear day, than in a windy and cloudy one. When a person talks much, and rests little, we have great cause to fear his brain will not long hold; and truly, when a person shall be much in talking and disputing about truth without a humble spirit in prayer to be led into it, God may justly punish that man’s pride with a spiritual frenzy in his mind, that he shall not know error from truth.

Sixth Direction. Look thou takest not offense at the difference of judgments and opinions that are found amongst the professors of religion. It is a stone which the Papists throw, in these divided

times especially, before our feet. How know you, saith he, which is truth, when there are so many judgments and ways amongst you? Some have so stumbled at this, that they have quit the truth they once professed, and, by the storms of dissensions in matters of religion, have been, if not thrown upon the rock of atheism, yet driven to and fro in a fluctuation of mind, not willing to cast anchor anywhere in their judgment till they see this tempest over, and those that are scattered from one another by diversity of judgment, met together in a unity and joint consent of persuasions in matters of religion—a resolution, as one saith very well, as foolish and pernicious to the soul, if not more, than it would be to the body if a man should vow he would not eat till all the clocks in the city should strike twelve just together. The latter might sooner be expected than the former.

Seventh Direction. Rest not till thou feelest the efficacy of every truth thou holdest in thy judgement, upon thy heart. One faculty helps another. The more clear truth is in the understanding, the more abiding in the memory. And the more operative truth is on the will, the more fixed in the judgment. Let a thing be never so excellent, yet, if a man can make little or no use thereof, it is little worth to him, and may easily be got from him. Thus may rare libraries have been parted with, by rude soldiers, into whose hands they have fallen, for little more than their covers were worth, which by some, that could have improved them, would [have] been kept as the richest prize. And verily, it fares with truth according as they are into whose hands it falls. If it lights upon one that falls to work with it, and draws out the strength and sweetness of it, this man holds it so much the faster in his judgement, by how much more operative it is on his heart; but if it meets with one that finds no divine efficacy it hath, to humble, comfort, sanctify him, it may soon be turned out of doors, and put to seek for a new host. Such may, for a time, dance about that light which, a while after, themselves will blow out. When I hear of a man that once held original sin and the universal pollution of man's nature to be a truth, but now denies it, I cannot but fear, he did never lay it so close [to] his heart, as to abase and humble himself kindly for it; or that he grew weary of the work, and, by sloth and negligence, lost the efficacy of that truth in his heart, before he lost the truth itself in his judgment. I might instance in many other particulars, wherein professors in these rowling[6] times have slidden from their old principles. Singing of psalms hath been a duty owned and practised by many, who now have laid it down; and it were a question worth the asking them, Whether formerly they never enjoyed sweet communion with God in that duty as well as in others? whether their hearts did never dance and leap up to God with heavenly affections, while they sang with their lips? and verily I should think it strange to hear a godly person deny this. Well, if ever thou didst, Christian, meet with God at this door of the tabernacle—for I cannot yet think it other—let me ask thee again, whether the heart did not grow common, cold, and formal in they duty before thou durst cast it off? And if so—which I am ready to believe—I desire such in the fear of God to consider these four questions, 1 John 2:23-24.

1. Question. Whether they may not fear that they are in an error, and that this darkness is befallen their judgments as a punishment for their negligence and slightness of spirit in performing the duty when they did not question the lawfulness of it?

2. Question. Whether it were not better they should labour to recover the first liveliness of their affections in the duty—which would soon bring them again acquainted with that sweetness and joy they found of old in it—than to cast it off, upon so weak evidence as they who can say most, bring in against it?

3. Question. Whether such as neglect one duty, are likely to thrive by any other, and keep up the savour of them fresh in their souls?

4. Question. Whether, if God should suffer them to decline in their affections to any other ordinance—which [may] he forbid, if it be his will—it were not as easy for Satan to gather together arguments enough to make them scruple, and in time cast off that also as well as this? And that there is reason for such a question, these times will tell us; wherein every ordinance hath had its turn to be questioned, yea, disowned, some by one, some by another. One will not sing; another will not have his child baptized; a third will not have any water baptism, nor supper neither; a fourth bungs up his ear too from all hearing of the word, and would have us expect an immediate teaching. Thus when once ordinances and truths become dead to us through our miscarriage under them, we can be willing—how beautiful soever they were once in our eye—yea call, to have them buried out of our sight. These things sadly laid to heart, will give you reason to think, though this direction be placed last in order of my discourse, yet it should not find neither the last nor least place among all the other named, in your Christian care and practice.

SECOND GIRDING ABOUT.

[It is the Christian's duty to make a free and bold profession of the truth.]

Since Satan comes sometimes as a lion in the persons of bloody persecutors, and labours to scare Christians from the truth with fire and faggot; to defend us against this design, we need to have truth girt about us, so that with a holy resolution we may maintain our profession in the face of death and danger. The second way that truth is assaulted is by force and violence, the devil pierceth the fox's skin of seducers with the lion's skin of persecutors. The bloodiest tragedies in the world have been acted on the stage of the church; and the most inhuman massacres and butcheries committed on the harmless sheep of Christ. The first man that was slain in the world was a saint, and he for religion. And as Luther said, Cain will kill Abel unto the end of the world. The fire of persecution can never go out quite, so long as there remains a spark of hatred in the wicked's bosom on earth, or the devil in hell to blow it up. Therefore there is a second way of having truth girt about the Christian's loins, as necessary as the other, and that is in the profession of it. Many that could never be beaten from the truth by dint of argument, have been forced from it by the fire of persecution. It is not an orthodox judgment will enable a man to suffer for the truth at the stake. Then that poor Smith, in our English Martyrology, would not have sent such a dastardlike answer to his friend—ready to suffer for that truth which he himself had been a means to instruct him in—that indeed it was the truth, but he could not burn. Truth in the head, without holy courage, makes a man like the sword-fish, which Plutarch saith hath[7] a sword in the head, but no heart to use it. Then a person becomes unconquerable, when from heaven he is endued with a holy boldness to draw forth the sword of the Spirit, and own the naked truth, by a free profession of it in the face of death and danger. This, this is to have our 'loins girt about with truth.' So that the note from this second kind of girding with truth is,

Doctrine. That it is the saint's duty, and should be their care, not only to get an established judgment of the truth, but also to maintain a steadfast profession of the truth. This the apostle presseth: 'Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering,' Hebrews 10:23. He speaks it in opposition to those who in those hazardous times declined the assemblies of the saints for fear of persecution; he calls it a 'wavering,' and he that staggers is next door to apostasy. We must

not spread our sails of profession in a calm, and furl them up when the wind riseth. Pergamos is commended, Revelation 2:13, for her bold profession: ‘I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.’ It was a place where Satan sat in the magistrate’s seat, where it was grande satis picaculum mortem mereri, Christianum esse—matter enough to deserve death to be a Christian; yea, some blood was now shed before their eyes, and even in those days they denied not the truth. This God took kindly. It is a strict charge Paul gives Timothy, ‘But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness,’ &c., 1 Timothy 6:11. While others are proling[8] for the world, lay about thee for spiritual riches, pursue this with as hot a chase as they do the temporal. But what if this trade cannot be peaceably driven; must shop windows be then shut up, profession be laid aside, and he stay to be religious till more favourable times come about? No such matter. He bids him 1 Timothy 6:12, ‘fight the good fight of faith.’ Do not base ly quit thy profession, but lay life and all to stake to keep this; and that he might engage him beyond a retreat, see 1 Timothy 6:13, ‘I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things; and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, that thou keepest this commandment.’ As if he had said, ‘If ever you will see the face of Christ with comfort at the resurrection —who chose to lose his life, rather than deny or dissemble the truth—stand to it, and flinch not from your colours.’ Augustine in his Confess., lib. 8. ch.2., hath a notable story of one Victorinus, famous in Rome for rhetoric, which he taught the senators. This man in his old age was converted to Christianity, and came to Simplicianus, one eminent at that time for his piety, whispering in his ears softly these words, Ego sum Christianus—I am a Christian; but this holy man answered, non credo, nec deputabo te inter Christianos, nisi in ecclesia Christi te videro—I will not believe it or count thee so, till I see thee among the Christians in the church. At this he laughed, saying, ergone parietes faciunt Christianum?— do then those walls make a Christian? cannot I be except I openly profess it, and let the world know the same? This he said for fear, being yet a young convert though an old man; but a while after, when he was more confirmed in the faith, and seriously considered that if he should continue thus ashamed of Christ, he would be ashamed of him, when he cometh in the glory of his Father and the holy angels, he changed his note, and came to Simplicianus, saying, eamus in ecclesiam, Christianus volo fieri—let us go to the church, I will now in earnest be a Christian. And there though a private profession of his faith might have been accepted, he chose to do it openly, saying, that he had openly professed rhetoric, which was not a matter of salvation, and should he be afraid to own the word of God in the congregation of the faithful? God requires both the religion of the heart and mouth. ‘With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation,’ Romans 10:10. Confession of the mouth without faith in the heart is gross hypocrisy. To pretend faith without profession of the mouth, is both hypocrisy and cowardice.

Reason. I shall give but one reason of the point, and that is taken from the great trust which God puts in his saints concerning his truth. This is the great depositum—treasure, which God delivers to his saints, with a strict and solemn charge to keep against all that undermine or oppose it. Some things we trust God with, some things God trusts us with. The great thing which we put into God’s hand to be kept for us is our soul. ‘He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day,’ 2 Timothy 1:12. That which God trusts us chiefly with is his truth. It is therefore said to be ‘delivered’ to them, as a charge of money to a friend whom we confide in. ‘Contend for the faith

which was once delivered to the saints,' Jude 1:3. 'Unto them,' saith the apostle, speaking of the Jews, 'were committed the oracles of God,' Romans 3:2. They were concredited with that heavenly treasure. So Paul Exhorts Timothy to 'hold fast the form of sound words,' 2 Timothy 1:13, and this, he calls the 'good thing which was committed to him,' 2 Timothy 1:14. If he that is intrusted with the keeping of a king's crown and jewels, ought to look carefully to his charge that none be lost or stolen, much more the Christian that hath in his charge God's crown and treasure. Rob God of his truth, and what hath he left? The word of truth is that testimony which the great God gives of himself to man, Psalms 19:7; Isaiah 20:1-6; Hebrews 12:1; Revelation 11:3. The saints are his chosen witnesses above others, whom he calls forth to vouch his truth, by a free and holy profession thereof before men—called therefore the witnesses of God. He that maintains any error from the word, bears false witness against God. He that for fear or shame deserts the truth, or dissembles his profession, denies God his testimony; and who can express what a bloody sin this is, and what a high contempt of God it amounts? It were a horrid crime though but in a man's case. As when one is falsely accused in a court, [it would be that one able] to speak something that might clear the innocency of the man, should yet suffer him to be condemned, rather than hazard himself a little by speaking the truth in open court. O, what then is his sin, that when God himself in his truth stands at sorry man's bar, dares not speak for God when called in to declare himself, but lets truth suffer by an unjust sentence, that himself may not, at man's hands, for bearing witness to it!

Objection. But this may seem too heavy a burden to lay on the Christian's back. Must we lay all at stake, and hazard all that is dear to us, rather than deny or dissemble our profession of the truth? Sure Christ will have but few followers if he holds his servants to such hard terms.

Answer. Indeed it is hard to flesh and blood —one of the highest stiles to be gone over in our way to heaven—a carnal heart cannot hear it but he is offended presently, Matthew 13:21. Therefore such as are loath to lose heaven, and yet unwilling to venture thus much for it, have set their wits at work to find an easier way thither. Hence those heretics of old —Priscillianists[9] and others, whose chief religion was to save their own skin—made little of outward profession. They thought they might say and unsay, swear and forswear—according to their wretched principle, juro, perjuro, mentem injuratum gero—I swear and forswear, I bear a mind that is not bound by any oath—so in their heart they did but cleave to the truth. O what fools were the prophets, apostles, and other holy martyrs, that have sealed the truth with their blood, if their might have been such a fair way of escaping the storm of persecution. [Those must be] bold men, that to save a little trouble from man for truth's sake, durst invent such detestable blasphemies against the truth; yea, deface those characters which nature itself engraves upon the conscience. The same window that lets in the light of a deity, would, with it, let in this also, that we should walk in the name of this God. The every heathen know this: 'All people will walk every one in the name of his god,' Micah 4:5. Socrates, to blood, held [that] there was but one God; and in his apology for his life said, 'If they would give him his life on condition to keep this truth to himself, and not teach it to others, he would not accept it.' Behold here the powerful workings of a natural conscience! Have not they then improved the knowledge of the Scripture well in the meantime, that are so far outshot from nature's weak bow? Religion would soon vanish into an empty nothing, if, for fear of every one we meet, we must, like runaway soldiers, pluck off our colours and put our profession as it were in our pockets, lest it should be known to whom we belong. What doth God require by a free profession

of his truth, more than a master doth of his servant, when he bids him take his livery and follow him in the streets? Or, than a prince, [when he] calls his subjects into the field, to declare their loyalty by owning his quarrel against an invading enemy? And is it reasonable, what man requires of these—and only hard, when it comes from God's hands? Nay, it is not more, nor so much as we desire of God for ourselves. Who would not have God make profession of his love to us, and bear witness for us against Satan and our own sins, at that great day when men and angels shall be spectators? And shall we expect that from God which he owes us by no law, but of his own free promise, and deny him that which we are under so many bonds to pay? If it be but in some affliction, while we are here, how disconsolate are we if God's face be a little overcast, and he doth not own us in our distress? And is there no kindness to be shown to that God that knows your soul in adversity? When his truth is in an agony, may not Christ look that all his friends should sit up and watch with it? O it were shame with a witness that any such effeminate delicacy should be found among Christ's servants, that they cannot break a little of their worldly rest and enjoyments, to attend on him and his truth.

[Use or Application.]

Let this stir us up to get the girdle of truth closely girt to us, that we may be able to hold fast the profession of it, even in the face of death and danger, and not be offended when persecution ariseth. Blessed be God it is not yet come to that. We have the truth at a cheaper rate, but how soon the market may rise we know not. Truth is not always to be had at the same price. Buy it we must at any, but sell it upon no terms. And let me tell you, there hath [been], is, and will be, a spirit of persecution in the hearts of the wicked to the end of the world; and as Satan was considering Job before he laid his foul hands on him, so now, persecution is working in the spirits of the ungodly. There are engines of death continually preparing in the thoughts and desires of Satan and his instruments against the sincere professors of the truth. It is already resolved upon what they would do, might power and opportunity be given to put their malice in execution. Yea, we are half-way already towards a persecution. Satan comes first with a spirit of error and then of persecution. He first corrupts men's minds with error, and then enrageth their hearts with wrath against the professors of truth. It is impossible that error, being a brat of hell, should be peaceable. It would not then be like its father. That which is from beneath can neither be pure nor peaceable. And how far God hath suffered this sulphurous spirit of error to prevail, is so notorious, that no apology is broad enough to cover the nakedness of these unhappy times. It is therefore high time to have our girdle of truth on, yea, close girt about us in the profession of it. Not every one that now applauds truth, will follow it when once it comes to show them the way to prison. Not every one that preacheth for it, or disputes for it, will suffer for it. Arguments are harmless things—blunt weapons—they fetch no blood; but when we suffer, then we are called to try it with truth's enemies at sharps. This requires something more than a nimble tongue, a sharp wit, and a logical head. Where then will be the wise, the disputer, the men of parts and gifts? alas, they will, like cowardly soldiers, be wanting in the fight, though they could be as forward as the best at a muster or training, when no enemy was in the field—when to appear for truth was rather a matter of gain or applause than loss and hazard. No, God hath chosen the foolish to confound the wise in this piece of service—the humble Christian, by his faith, patience, and love to the truth, to shame men of high parts and no grace.

[Directions for the girding of truth close to us, in the profession of it.] But how may a soul get to be thus girt with truth in the profession of it? I answer, First. Labour to get a heart inflamed with a sincere love to the truth. Second. To a heart inflamed with the love of truth, labour to add a heart with the fear of that wrath which God hath in store for all that apostatize from the truth.

Direction First. Labour to get an heart inflamed with a sincere love to the truth. This only is able to match the enemies of truth. The worst they can do is bonds or death; and 'love is stronger than death.' It kills the very heart of death itself. It makes all easy. Commandments are grievous to love, nor doth it complain of sufferings. With what a light heart did Jacob, for the love of Rachel, endure the heat of the day and cold of the night! It is venturous. Jonathan threw a kingdom at his heels, and conflicted with the anger of an enraged father, for David's sake. Love never thinks itself a loser so long as it keeps its beloved; yea, it is ambitious of any hazardous enterprise, whereby it may sacrifice itself in the service of its beloved, as we see in David, who put his life in his hands for Michal. How much more so when our love is pitched upon so transcendent an object as Christ and his truth! Alas, they are but faint spirits which are breathed from a creature! weak beams that are shot from such sorry beauties! If these lay their loves under such a law that they cannot but obey, though with the greatest peril and hazard; what constraint then must a soul ravished with the love of Christ be under! This has made the saints leap out of their estates, relations, yea out of their bodies with joy, counting it not their loss to part with them, but to keep them with the least prejudice to the truth, Revelation 12:11. It is said there, 'they loved not their lives unto the death.' Mark, not to the loss of some of the comforts of their lives, but 'unto the death.' Life itself they counted an enemy when it would part them and truth. As a man doth not love his arm, or leg, when it hazards the rest, but bids cut it off; 'cannot we live,' say these noble spirits, 'but to the clouding of truth, and calling our love to it and Christ into question?—welcome then the worst of deaths.' This kept up David's courage when his life was laid for: 'The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: but I will consider thy testimonies,' Psalms 119:95. A carnal heart would have considered his estate, wife, and children, or at least his life, now in danger. But David's heart was on a better subject; he considered the testimonies of God, and so much sweetness pours in upon his soul while he is rowling them in his meditation, that he cannot hold. 'O how I love thy law!' Psalms 119:97. This made him set light by all the troubles he met with for his cleaving to the truth. It is a great mystery to the world, that men for an opinion, as they call it, should run such desperate hazard. Therefore Paul was thought by his judge to be out of his wits. And that question which Pilate asked Christ, seems rather to be slightingly, rather than seriously spoken, John 18:1-40. Our Saviour had told him, John 18:37, that the end why he was born, and came into the world, was, that he should 'bear witness to the truth.' Then Pilate, ver. 38, asks Christ, 'What is truth?' and presently flings away, as if he had said, Is this now a time to think of truth, when thy life is in danger? What is truth, that thou shouldst venture so much for it? But a gracious should may better ask in a holy scorn, What are riches and honours, what the fading pleasures of this cheating world, yea, what is life itself, that any or all these should be set in opposition to truth? O sirs, look what has your love that will command purse, credit, life and all. Amor meus pondus meum—every man goes where his love carries him. If the world has your love, on it you will spend your lives; if truth has your hearts, you will catch the blow that is made at it in your own breasts, rather than let it fall on it. Only be careful that your love to truth be sincere, or else it will leave you at the prison door, and make you part with truth when you should most appear for it. There are three sorts of pretenders to truth, whose love is not like to endure the fiery trial.

[Three sorts of pretenders to truth.]

First Sort. Such as embrace truth for carnal advantage. Sometimes truth pays well for her board in the world's own coin, and so long every one will invite her to his house. These do not love truth, but the jewel in her ear. Many are observed in Henry the Eighth's time to be very zealous against the abbeys, that loved their lands more than they hated their idolatry. Truth finds few that loves her gratis. And those few only will suffer with truth and for it; as for the other, when the worldly dowry that truth brought be once spent, you will find they are weary of their match. This kitchen-fire burns no longer than such gross fuel of profit, credit, and the like, does feed it. If you cannot love naked truth, you will not endure to be disgraced for truth; and what usage truth finds, that her followers must expect.

Second Sort. Such as commend truth, and cry it up highly, but who, if you mark them, do but compliment with it all this while. They keep at a distance, and do not suffer truth to come within them, so as to give law unto them; like one that entertains a suitor, speaks well of him, holds discourse with him, but will not hear of marrying him. It is one thing N48,Ã< —really to love, another 6"J"N48,Æ<—merely to kiss or caress. Bucholcerus would oft say, multi osculantur Christum, pauci vero amant—many kiss Christ, but few love him. True love to Christ is conjugal. When a soul delivers up itself, from an inward liking it hath to Christ as to her husband, to be ruled by his Spirit, and ordered by his word of truth, here is a soul that loves Christ and his truth. But where truth has no command, and bears no rule, there dwells no love to truth in that heart. She that is not obedient cannot be a loving wife, because love would constrain her to be so; and so would love in the soul enforce obedience to the truth it loves. Nay, he that doth not obey truth, is so far from loving it, that he is afraid of truth; will sooner prove a persecutor of truth, than a sufferer for truth. So true is that of Hierome, quem metuit, quis odit; quem odit, perisse cupit—whom we fear, we hate; whom we hate, we wish they were destroyed. Saul feared David, and that made him more industriously seek his ruin. Herod feared John, and that cost him his life. Slavish fear makes the naughty heart imprison truth in his conscience, because, if that had its liberty and authority in the soul, it would imprison, yea, execute every lust that rules the roost[10]; and he that imprisons truth in his own bosom, will hardly lie in prison himself as a witness for truth.

Third Sort. Such as have no zeal against truth's enemies. Love goes over armed with zeal; this is the dagger she draws against all the opposers of truth. Qui non zelat, non amat—he that is not zealous doth not love. Now right zeal acts like fire, ad ultimum sui posse—to its utmost power, yet ever keeping its place and sphere. If it be confined to the breast of a private Christian, whence it may not flame forth in punishing truth's enemies, then it burns inwardly the more for being pent up, and preys, like a fire in his bones, upon the Christian's own spirits, consuming them, yea, eating him up for grief to see truth trodden under foot of error or profaneness, and he not able to help it up. It is no joy to a zealous lover to outlive his beloved. Such there have been who could have chose rather to have leaped into their friends' grave, and lain down with them in the dust, than to pass here a disconsolate life without them. 'Let us go and die with him,' said Thomas, when Christ told them Lazarus was dead. And I am sure zealous lovers of truth count it as melancholy living in evil times, when that is fallen in the streets. The news of the ark's taking, frightened good Eli's soul out of his body, and this may charitably be thought to have given life to Elijah's wish, yea, solemn prayer for death, 'It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life,' 1 Kings 19:4. The holy man saw how things went among the great ones of those wicked times. Idolaters, they were courted, and

the faithful servants of God carted, as I may so say, yea, killed; and now this zealous prophet thinks it a good time to leave the world in, rather than live in torment any longer, to see the name, truth, and servants of God trampled on by those who should have shown most kindness to them. But if zeal hath any power put into her hands, wherein she may vindicate truth's cause, as when she is exalted into the magistrate's seat, then truth's enemies shall know and feel that she 'bears not the sword in vain.' The zealous magistrate as he will have an arm to relieve and defend truth —the Israelite, so a hand to smite blasphemy, error, and profaneness—the Egyptian—when any of them assault her. O how Moses laid about him—that meek man, who stood so mute in his own cause, Numbers 12:1-16—when the people had committed idolatry! His heart was so infired within him, that, as well as he loved them, he could neither open his mouth in a prayer for them to God, nor his ear to receive any petition from them, till he had given vent to his zeal in an act of justice upon the offenders. Now such, and such only, are the persons that are likely to suffer for the truth when so called upon, who will not let it suffer if they can help it. But as for neutral Gallio-like spirits, that can see truth and error scuffling, and not do their utmost to relieve truth—by interposing their power and authority, if a magistrate—by preaching the one up and the other down, if a minister—and by a free testimony to, fervent prayer for, and affectionate sympathizing with truth, as it fares ill or well, if a private Christian—I say, as for such—who stand in this case, as some spectators about two wrestlers, not caring much who hath the fall—these are not the men that can be expected to expose themselves to much suffering for truth. That magistrate who hath not zeal enough to stop the mouths of truth's enemies when he may, will he open his mouth in a free profession of it when death and danger face him? That minister who hath neither love nor courage enough to apologize for truth in the pulpit, can it be thought that he would stand to her defence at the stake? In a word, that private Christian whose heart is not wounded through truth's sides so as to sympathize with it, will he interpose himself betwixt truth and the blow that bloody persecutors make at it, and choose to receive it into his own body, though to death, rather than it should light on truth? If the fire of love within be out, or so little that it will not melt the man into sorrow for the wrongs done to truth by men of corrupt minds; where will the flame be found, that should enable him to burn to ashes, under the hand of bloody men? He will never endure the fire in his body, that hath no more care to keep that sacred fire burning in his soul. If he cannot shed tears, much less will he bleed for truth.

Question. If any now should ask, how they may get their hearts inflamed with this heavenly fire of love to truth? I answer,

1. Answer. Labour for an inward conformity of thy heart to truth. Likeness is the ground of love. A carnal heart cannot like truth, because it is not like to truth. Such a one may love truth as one did Alexander, regem non Alexandrum—the king, not the person that was king. Truth in its honour and dignity, when it can prefer him, but not naked truth itself. How is it possible an earthly soul should love truth that is heavenly?—an unholy heart, truth that is pure? O it is sad indeed, when men's tenets and principles in their understandings, do clash and fight with the principles of their hearts and affections —when men have orthodox judgments, and heterodox hearts! There must needs be little love to truth, because the judgment and will are so unequally yoked. Truth in the conscience reproving and threatening lust in the heart! and that again controlling truth in the conscience! Thus like a scolding couple, they may a while dwell together, but taking no content in one another, the wretch is easily persuaded to give truth a bill of divorce at last, and send her

away, as Ahasuerus did Vashti, that he may espouse other principles, which will suit better with his corrupt heart, and not cross him in the way he is in. This, this I am persuaded hath parted many and truth in these licentious days. They could not sin peaceably while they kept their judgements sound. Truth ever and anon would be chiding them, and therefore to match their judgements with their hearts, they have taken up principles suitable to their lusts. But soul, if truth hath had such a power upon thee to transform thee, by the renewing of thy mind, into its own likeness, that as the scion turns the stock into its own nature, so truth hath assimilated thee, and made thee bear fruit like itself, thou art the person that will never part with truth. Before thou canst do this, thou must part with that new nature, which, by it, the Spirit of God hath begot in thee. There is now such a near union betwixt thee and truth, or rather thee and Christ, as can never be broken. We see what a mighty power there goes along with God's ordinance of marriage—that two persons, who possibly a month before never knew one another, yet—their affections once knit by love, and their persons made one by marriage—they can now leave friends and parents for to enjoy each other. Such a mighty power, and much greater, goes along with this mystical marriage between the soul and Christ, the soul and truth;—that the same person who, before conversion, would not have ventured the loss of a penny for Christ or his truth, yet now, knit to Christ and his truth by a secret work of the Spirit, new-forming him into the likeness thereof, can bid adieu to the world, life, and all, for these. As that martyr told him that asked whether he did not love his wife and children, and was not loath to part with them, 'Yes,' saith he, 'I love them so dearly, that I would not part with any of them for all that the Duke of Brunswick—whose subject he was —is worth; but for Christ's sake and his truth, farewell to them all.'

2. Answer. Labour to get thy heart more and more infired with the love of God, and this will work in thee a dear love to his truth. Love observes what is precious and dear to its beloved, and loves it for his sake. David's love to Jonathan made him inquire for some of his race, that he might show kindness to, for his sake. Love to God will make the soul inquisitive to find out what is near and dear to God—that by showing kindness to it, he may express his love to him. Now upon a little search, we shall find that the great God sets a very high price upon the head of truth. 'For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name,' Psalms 138:2. That is God's name, by which he is known. Every creature hath God's name upon it—by it God is known—even to the least pile of grass. But to his word, and truth therein written, he hath given pre-eminence above all other things that bear his name. Take a few considerations whereby we may a little conceive of the high value God sets of truth.

(1.) God, when he vouchsafeth his word and truth to a people, makes account that he gives them one of the greatest mercies they can receive or he give; he calls them 'the great things' of his 'law,' Hosea 8:12. A people that enjoy his truth, are by Christ's own judgment 'lift up to heaven.' Whatever a people have at God's hands, without this, bears no more comparison with it than Hagar's loaf of bread and bottle—which was Ishmael's portion—would with Isaac's inheritance. God, that knows how to prize and rate his own gifts, saith of his word which he showeth to Jacob, and testimonies he gives to Israel, that 'he hath not dealt so with any nation,' Psalms 147:20; that is, not so richly and graciously. (2.) Consider God's especial care to preserve his truth. Whatever is lost, God looks to his truth. In shipwrecks at sea, and scare-fires at land, when men can save but little, they use to choose not lumber, and things of no worth, but what they esteem most precious. In all the great revolutions, changes, and overturning of kingdoms, and churches also,

God hath still preserved his truth. Thousands of saints' lives have been taken away, but that which the devil spites more than all the saints, yea, which alone he spites them for, is his truth. This lives and shall, to triumph over his malice. And sure, if truth were not very dear to God, he would not be at this cost to keep it with the blood of his saints; yea, which is more, the blood of his Son, whose errand into the world was by life and death 'to bear witness to the truth,' John 18:37. In a word, in that great and dismal conflagration of heaven and earth, when the elements shall melt for heat, and the world come to its fatal period, then truth shall not suffer the least loss, but 'the word of the Lord endureth for ever,' 1 Peter 1:24. (3.) Consider the severity of God to the enemies of truth. A dreadful curse is denounced against those that shall take away from it, or add to the least of it—that embase or clip this heavenly coin, Revelation 22:18. The one pulls upon him all the plagues that are written in the word of truth; from the other shall be taken away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things—that is, the good things of the promises—which are written in this book. All these speak at what a high rate God values truth; and no wonder, if we consider what truth is—that truth which shines forth from the written word. It is the extract of God's thoughts and counsels which from everlasting he took up, and had in his heart to effect. Nothing comes to pass but as an accomplishment of this his word. It is the most full and perfect representation that God himself could give of his own being and nature to the sons of men, that, by it, we might know him and love him. Great princes used to send their pictures by their ambassadors to those whom they woo for marriage. God is such an infinite perfection, that no hand can draw him forth to life but his own, and this he hath done exactly in his word; from which all his saints have come to be enamoured with him. He that abandons the truth of God, renounceth the God of truth. Though men cannot come to pull God out of his throne, yet they come as near this as it is possible, when they let out their wrath against the truth. In this they do, as it were, execute God in effigy. There is reason we see why God should so highly prize his truth, and that we that love him should cleave to it.

3. Answer. Be much in the meditation of the transcendent excellency of truth. 'The eye affects the heart;' this is the window at which love enters. Never any that had a spiritual eye to see truth in her native beauty, but had a heart to love her. This was the way that David's heart was ravished with the love of the word of truth: 'O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day,' Psalms 119:97. While his thoughts were on it, his love was drawn to it. David found a great difference betwixt meditating on the truth's of God's word, and other excellences which the world cries up so highly. When he goes to entertain himself with the thoughts of some perfection in the creature, he finds it but a jejune[11], dry subject compared with this. He soon tumbles over the book of the world's excellences, and can find no notion that deserves any long stay upon it; 'I have seen' saith he, 'an end of all perfections;' he is at the world's end presently, and in a few thoughts can see to the bottom of all the world's glory; but when he takes up the truths of God into his thoughts, now he meets with work enough for his admiration and sweet meditation—'Thy commandment is exceeding broad.' Great ships cannot sail in narrow rivers and shallow waters, neither can minds truly great with the knowledge of God and heaven, find room enough in the creature to turn and expatiate[12] themselves in. A gracious soul is soon aground and at a stand when upon these flats; but let it launch out into the meditation of God, his word, the mysterious truths of the gospel, and he finds a place of broad waters, sea-room enough to lose himself in. I might here show you the excellency of divine truths from many heads. As from the source and spring-head whence they flow, the God of truth; or from their opposite, that misshapen monster, error,&c. But I shall only

direct your meditation to a few enamouring properties which you shall find in these truths. You may meet a heap of them together in Psalms 19:7, and so on.

Truth is ‘pure;’ this made David love it, Psalms 119:140. It is not only pure, but makes the soul pure and holy that embraceth it. ‘Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth,’ John 17:17. It is the pure water that God washeth foul souls clean with. ‘I will sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean, from all your filthiness...will I cleanse you,’ Ezekiel 36:25. Foul puddle-water will as soon make the face, as error make the soul, clean.

Truth is ‘sure,’ and hath a firm bottom, Psalms 19:7. We may lay the whole weight of our souls upon it and yet it will not crack under us. Cleave to truth and it will stick to thee. It will go with thee to prison, banishment, yea, stake itself and bear thy charges wherever thou goest upon her errand. ‘Not one thing,’ saith Joshua, ‘hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof,’ Joshua 23:14. Whatever you find there promised count it money in your purse. ‘Fourscore years,’ said Polycarp, ‘I have served God, and found him to be a good master.’ But when men think by forsaking the truth to provide well for themselves, they are sure to meet with disappointments. Many have been flattered from truth with goodly promises, and then served no better than Judas was by the Jews, after he had betrayed his Master into their bloody hands, ‘look thou to that.’ Though persecutors love the treason, yet they hate the traitor. Yea, oft—to show their devilish malice—they, when some have got to wound their consciences by denying the truth, have most cruelly butchered them, and gloried in it, as a full revenge to destroy the soul and body together. Again,

Truth is ‘free,’ and makes the soul ‘free’ that cleaves to it. ‘The truth shall make you free,’ John 8:32. Christ tells the Jews of a bondage they were in, which that brag people never dreamed on. ‘Ye are of your father the devil, and his lusts you will do,’ John 8:44. Such slaves are all sinners. They must do what the devil will have them, and dare no more displease him, than a child his father with a rod in his hand. Some witches have confessed that they have been forced to send out their imps to do mischief to others that they might have ease themselves; for till they did send them abroad upon such an errand they were themselves tormented by them. And he who hath a lust sucking on him, finds as little rest if he be not always serving of it, and making provision for it. Can the world, think you, show such another slave as this poor wretch is? Well, though all the bolts that the devil hath—lusts I mean—were locked upon one sinner, and he shut up in the closet dungeon of all his prison, yet let but this poor slave begin to be acquainted with the truth of Christ, so as to open his heart to it, and close with it, and you shall soon hear that the foundations of the prison are shaken, its doors thrown open, and the chains fallen off the poor creature’s legs. Truth cannot itself be bound, nor will it dwell in a soul that lies bound in sin’s prison; and therefore when once truth and the soul are agreed, or rather Christ and the soul, who are brought together by ‘truth,’ then the poor creature may lift up his head with joy, for his redemption and jail-delivery from this spiritual bondage draws nigh; yea, the day is come, the key is in the lock already to let him out. It is impossible we should be acquainted with ‘truth as it is in Jesus’ and be mere strangers to this liberty that attends it, Ephesians 4:19-21. In a word, truth is victorious. It is great, and shall prevail at last. It is the great counsel of God, and though many fine plots and devices are found in the hearts of men—which show what they would do —yet the counsel of the Lord shall stand. All their eggs are addled when they have set longest on them. Alas! they want power to hatch what their

malice sits brooding on. Sometimes, I confess, the enemies to ‘truth’ get the militia of this lower world into their hands, and then truth seems to go to the ground, and those that witness to it are even slain; yet then it is more than their persecutors can do to get them laid underground in their grave, Revelation 11:9. Some that were never thought on, shall strike in on truth’s side, and forbid the burial. Persecutors need not be at cost for marble to write the memorial of their victories in, dust will serve well enough, for they are not like to last so long. ‘Three days and a half’ the witnesses may lie dead in the streets, and truth sit disconsolate by them; but within a while they are walking, and truth triumphing again. If persecutors could kill their successors, then their work might be thought to stand strong, needing not to fear another to pull down what they set up, and yet then their work would lie as open to heaven, and might be as easily hindered, as theirs at Babel. Who loves not to be on the winning side? Choose truth for thy side, and thou hast it. News may come that truth is sick, but never that it is dead. No, it is error is short lived. ‘A lying tongue is but for a moment;’ but truth’s age runs parallel with God’s eternity. It shall live to see their heads laid in the dust, and to walk over their graves, that were so busy to make one for her. Live, did I say? yea, reign in peace with those who now are willing to suffer with and for it. And wouldst thou not, Christian, be one among that goodly train of victors, who shall attend on Christ’s triumphant chariot into the heavenly city, there to take the crown, and sit down in thy throne with those that have kept the field, when Christ and his truth were militant here on earth? Thus, wouldst thou but in thy thoughts wipe away the tears and blood which now cover the face of suffering truth, and present it to thy eye as it shall look in glory, thou couldst not but cleave to it with a love ‘stronger than death.’

Direction Second. If yet there remains any qualm of fear on thy heart, from the wrath of bloody men threatening thee for thy profession of the truth, then to a heart inflamed with the love of truth, labour to add a heart filled with the fear of that wrath which God hath in store for all that apostatize from the truth. When you chance to burn your finger, you hold it to the fire, which being a greater fire draws out the other. Thus when thy thoughts are scorched and thy heart seared with the fire of man’s wrath, hold them awhile to hell-fire, which God hath prepared for the fearful, Revelation 21:8, and all that run away from truth’s colours, Hebrews 10:39, and thou wilt lose the sense of the one for fear of the other. Ignosce imperator, said the holy man, in carcerem Deus gehennam minatur—pardon me, O emperor, if I obey not thy command; thou threatenest a prison, but God a hell. Observable is that of David, ‘Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word,’ Psalms 119:161. He had no cause to fear them that had no cause to persecute him. One threatening out of the word—that sets the point of God’s wrath to his heart—scares him more than the worst that the greatest on earth can do to him. Man’s wrath, alas, when hottest, is but a temperate climate to the wrath of the living God. They who have felt both have testified as much. Man’s wrath cannot hinder the access of God’s love to the creature, which hath made the saints sing in the fire in spite of their enemies’ teeth. But the creature under God’s wrath, is like one shut up in a close oven—no crevice open to let any of the heat out, or any refreshing in to him.

DIRECTION V.—SECOND GENERAL PART.

[Truth of Heart or Sincerity as a Girdle for the Will.] ‘Having your loins girt about with truth.’

We come now to the second kind of truth—commended to the Christian under the notion of the soldier's girdle—and that is, truth of heart. Where it would be known, First. What I mean by truth of heart. Second. Why truth of heart is compared to a girdle.

First. What I mean by truth of heart. By truth of heart, I understand sincerity, so taken in Scripture, 'Let us draw near with a true heart,' that is, with a sincere heart, Hebrews 10:22. We have them oft conjoined, the one explaining the other: 'Fear the Lord, and serve him with sincerity and truth,' Joshua 24:14. We read of 'the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth,' 1 Corinthians 5:8. Hypocrisy is a lie with a fair cover over it. An insincere heart is a half heart. The inward frame and motion of the heart comports not with the profession and behaviour of the outward man, like a clock, whose wheels within go not as the hand points without.

Second. Why truth of heart is compared to a girdle. Sincerity, or truth of heart, may fitly be compared to a girdle, in regard of the twofold use and end for which a girdle, especially a soldier's belt, is worn.

First. The girdle is used as an ornament put on uppermost, to cover the joints of the armour, which would, if seen, cause some uncomeliness. Here—at the loins I mean—those pieces of armour for the defence of the lower parts of the body are fastened to the upper. Now because they cannot be so closely knit and clasped, but there will be some little gaping betwixt piece and piece, therefore they used to put over those parts a broad girdle, that covered all that uncomeliness. Now, sincerity doth the same for the Christian, that the girdle doth for the soldier. The saint's graces are not so close, nor his life so exact, but in the best there are found infirmities and defects, which are as so many gapings and clefts in his armour, but sincerity covers all, that he is neither put to shame for them, nor exposed to danger by them.

Second. The girdle was used for strength. By this his loins were staid, and united, and the soldier to fight or march. As a garment, the closer it sits, the warmer it is; so the belt, the closer it is girt, the more strength the loins feel. Hence God, threatening to enfeeble and weaken a person or people, saith 'their loins shall be loosened.' 'I will loose the loins of kings,' Isaiah 45:1; and, 'he weakeneth the strength of the mighty,' Job 12:21—Heb. 'he looseth the girdle of the strong.' Now sincerity may well be compared in this respect to the soldier's girdle. It is a grace that doth gird the soul with strength, and makes it mighty to do or suffer. Indeed it is the very strength of every grace. So much hypocrisy as is found cleaving to our graces, so much weakness. It is sincere faith, that is the strong faith; sincere love, that is the mighty love. Hypocrisy is to grace as the worm is to the oak—the rust to the iron—it weakens them, because it corrupts them. The metaphor thus opened affords these two doctrinal conclusions, in handling of which I shall comprise what I have to say further of this piece of armour. FIRST. That sincerity or truth of heart in all our ways covers all the Christian's uncomeliness. SECOND. That truth of heart or sincerity is of excellent use to strengthen the Christian in his whole course.

Division First.—Sincerity covers the Christian's Uncomeliness.

'Girt about with truth.'

Sincerity or truth of heart in all our ways covers all the Christian's uncomeliness. In handling this point, this is our method: First. We shall inquire, which is the truth and sincerity that covers the Christian's uncomeliness. Second. We shall inquire, what uncomelinesses they are that sincerity

covers. Third. How sincerity covers them. Fourth. Why sincerity doth this; or some account given for all this.

[What is the truth which covers the Christian's uncomeliness.]

First Inquiry. Which is that truth and sincerity that covers all uncomelinesses and deficiencies in the Christian. Here we must distinguish of a twofold sincerity, one moral, another evangelical.

[Moral truth and uprightness.]

First kind of sincerity. There is a moral truth, and uprightness, which we may call a field flower, because it may be found growing in the wild and waste of nature. It cannot be denied, but one that hath not a dram of sanctifying saving grace, may show some kind of uprightness and truth in his actions. God himself comes in as a witness for Abimelech, that what he did in taking Sarah, was in the uprightness of his heart: 'I know,' saith God, 'that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart,' Genesis 20:6, that is, thou didst mean honestly as to this particular business, and didst not intend any wrong to Abraham, whose wife she was unknown to thee. Joab, though a bloody man, yet dealt very uprightly and squarely with David concerning the rendition of Rabbah, when he had a fair advantage of stealing away the honour from his prince to himself. Many such instances may be given of men that have been great strangers to a work of grace on their hearts; but this is not the uprightness that we mean in the point laid down. It doth indeed render a person very lovely and amiable before men to be thus upright and honest in his dealings; but methinks I hear the Lord saying concerning such, as once he did to Samuel of Eliab, 'Look not on their countenance,' so as to think [that] these are they which he accepts. No, he hath refused them; 'for the Lord seeth not as man seeth,' God's eye looks deeper than man's, 1 Samuel 16:7. There are two great defects in this uprightness which God rejects it for.

1. Defect. It grow, not from a good root—a renewed heart. This is a hair on the moral man's pen, which blurs and blots his copy, when he writes fairest. It is like the leprosy to Naaman; that same 'but he was a leper,' took away the honour of his greatness at court, and [of his] prowess in the field. So here it stains the fairest actions of a mere moral man—'But he is a Christless, graceless person.' The uprightness of such does others more good in this world than themselves in another. They are by this moral honesty profitable to those that have civil commerce with them; but it doth not render themselves acceptable to God. Indeed, had not God left some authority in conscience to awe and keep men, that have no grace, within some bounds of honesty, this world would have been no more habitable for the saints, than the forest of wild beasts is now for man. And such is the uprightness of men void of sanctifying grace. They are rather rid by an overpowering light of conscience that scares them, than sweetly led by an inward principle inclining them to take complacency in that which is good. Abimelech himself—for whom, as we heard, God so apologized—is yet let to know that his honesty in that matter came rather from God's restraint upon him, than any real goodness in him. I also withheld thee from sinning against me; therefore suffered I thee not to touch her, Genesis 20:6.

2. Defect. This moral uprightness falls short of the chief end indispensably necessary to make a person upright indeed. This is 'the glory of God,' 1 Corinthians 10:31. 'Whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' The archer may lose his game by shooting short, as well as by shooting wide. The gross hypocrite shoots wide, the uprightest moralist shoots short. He may, and oft doth, take

his aim right as to the particular and immediate end of his action, but ever fails in regard of the ultimate end. Thus, a servant may be faithful to his master, scorn to wrong him of a farthing, yea, cordially seek his master's profit; and yet God may not be looked at or thought of in all this, and so all is worth nothing, because God, who is principally to be regarded, is left out of the story. Servants are commanded to do their 'service as to the Lord and not to men,' that is, not only, not chiefly to man, Ephesians 6:7. It is true, the master is to be looked at in the servant's duty, but in this way, only as it leads to the glory of God. He must not, when he hath desired to please his earthly master, sit down as at his journey's end, but pass on—as the eye doth through the air and clouds to the sun where it is terminated —to God, as the chief end why he is dutiful and faithful to man. Now no principle can lead the soul so high as to aim at God, but that which comes from God. See both these excellently couched together. 'That ye may be sincere,…being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God,' Php 1:10-11. Where you may observe: (1.) That the sincerity of the right stamp, is that which brings forth fruits of righteousness to the praise of God, that is, where the glory of God is the end of all our actions. (2.) That such fruit cannot be borne, but 'by Christ.' The soul must be planted into Christ, before it can be thus sincere, to bear fruits of righteousness to the praise of God. Hence these fruits of righteousness are said to be 'by Jesus Christ.' What men do by themselves, they do for themselves. They eat their own fruit, devour the praise of what they do. The Christian only that doth all by Christ, doth all for Christ. He hath his sap from Christ, into whom he is graffed, that makes him fruitful; and therefore he reserves all the fruit he bears for him. Thus we see how this mortal[13] uprightness is itself fundamentally defective, and therefore cannot be that girdle which hides and covers our other defects. Yet before I pass on to the other, I would leave a twofold caution for improvement of what hath been said concerning this uprightness. The one is to the sincere Christian, the other is to such as have no more than a moral uprightness.

[A twofold caution.]

1. Caution. To the sincere Christian. May there be found a kind of uprightness among men that are carnal and destitute of God's sanctifying grace? O then look you to it, in whose hearts dwells the Spirit of grace, that you be not put to shame by those that are graceless, which you must needs be when you are taken tardy in those things that they cannot be charged for. Many among them there are, that scorn to lie. Shall a saint be taken in an untruth? Their moral principles bind them over to the peace, and will not suffer them to wrong their neighbour; and can cheating, over-reaching oppression follow a saint's hand? Except your righteousness exceeds their best, you are not Christians. And can you let them exceed you in those things, which, when they are done, leave them short of Christ and heaven? It is time for the scholar to throw off his gown, and disclaim the name of an academic, when every school-boy is able to dunce and pose him; and for him also to lay aside his profession, and let the world know what he is, yea, what he never was, who can let a mere civil man, with his weak bow only backed with moral principles, outshoot him that pretends to Christ and his grace. I confess it sometimes so falls out, that a saint under a temptation may be outstripped by one that is carnal in a particular case; as a lackey, that is an excellent footman, may, from some prick or present lameness in his foot, be left behind by one that at another time should not be able to come near him. We have too many sorrowful examples of moral men's outstripping even a saint at a time, when under a temptation. A notable passage we meet with concerning Abimelech's speech to Sarah, after her dissembling and equivocating speech, that

Abraham was her brother. ‘And unto Sarah he said’—that is, Abimelech said to her—‘Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver; behold, he is to thee a covering of the eyes, unto all that are with thee, and with all other,’ Genesis 20:16. Now mark the words which follow. ‘Thus she was reproved.’ How? where lies the reproof. Here are none but good words, and money to boot also. He promiseth protection to her and Abraham—none should wrong him in wronging her—and tells her what he had freely given Abraham. Well, for all this, we shall find sharp reproof, though lapped up in these sweet words, and silvered over with his thousand pieces. First. She was reproved by the uprightness of Abimelech in that business wherein she had sinfully dissembled. That he who was a stranger to the true God and his worship, should be so square and honest, as to deliver her up untouched, when once he knew her to be another man’s wife, and not only so, but instead of falling into a passion of anger, and taking up thoughts of revenge against them, for putting this cheat upon him—which, having them under his power, had not been strange for a prince, to have done—for him to forget all this, and rather show such kindness and high bounty to them, this must needs send a sharp reproof home to Sarah’s heart. Especially it must, considering that he a heathen did all this; and she—one called to the knowledge of God, in covenant with God, and the wife of a prophet—was so poor-spirited, as, for fear of a danger which only her husband, and that without any great ground, surmised, to commit two sins at one clap—dissemble, and also hazard the loss of her chastity. The less of the two was worse than the thing they were so afraid of. These things, I say, laid together, amounted to such a reproof, as no doubt made her, and Abraham too, heartily ashamed before God and man. Again, Abimelech in calling Abraham her ‘brother,’ not her husband, did give her a smart rebuke, putting her in mind how with that word he had been deceived by them. Thus godly Sarah was reproved by a profane king. O Christians, take heed of putting words into the mouths of wicked men to reprove you withal! They cannot reprove you, but they reproach God. Christ is put to shame with you and by you. For the good name’s sake of Christ —which cannot but be dearer to you, if saints, than your lives—look to your walking, and especially to your civil converse with the men of the world. They know not what you do in your closet, care not what you are in the congregation, they judge you by what you are when they have to do with you. As they find you in your shop, bargains, promises, and such like, so they think of you and your profession. Labour therefore for this uprightness to man; by this you may win some, and judge others. Better vex the wicked world with strict walking, as Lot did the Sodomites, than set them on work to mock, and reproach thee and thy profession by any scandal, as David did by his sad fall. They that will not follow the light of thy holiness, will soon spy the thief in thy candle, and point at it.

2. Caution. The second word of caution is to those that are morally upright and no more. Take heed this uprightness proves not a snare to thee, and keeps thee from getting evangelical uprightness. I am sure it was so to the young man in the gospel. In all likelihood he might have been better, had he not been so good. His honesty and moral uprightness were his undoing, or rather his conceit of them, to castle himself in them. Better he had been a publican, driven to Christ in the sense of his sin, than a Pharisee kept from him with an opinion of his integrity. These, these are the weeds, with which, many, thinking to save themselves by them, keep themselves under water to their perdition. ‘There is more hope of a fool,’ Solomon tells us, ‘than of one wise in his own conceit;’ and of the greatest sinner, than of one conceited of his righteousness. If once the disease take the brain, the cure must needs be the more difficult. No offering Christ to one in this frenzy. Art thou one kept from these unrighteous ways wherein others walk? May be thou art

honest and upright in thy course, and scornest to be found false in any of thy dealings. Bless God for it; but take heed of blessing thyself in it. There is the danger. This is one way of being ‘righteous overmuch’—a dangerous pit, of which Solomon warns all that travel in heaven road, Ecclesiastes 7:16. There is undoing in this overdoing, as well as in any underdoing. For so it follows in the same verse, ‘why shouldst thou destroy thyself?’ Thou art not, proud man, so fair for heaven as thou flatterest thyself. A man upon the top of one hill may seem very nigh to the top of another, and yet can never come there, except he comes down from that where he is. The mount of thy civil righteousness and moral uprightness, on which thou standest so confidently, seems perhaps level in thy proud eye to God’s holy hill in heaven; yea, so nigh that thou thinkest to step over from one to the other with ease. But let me tell thee, it is too great a stride for thee to take. Thy safer way and nearer, were to come down from thy mountain of self-confidence—where Satan hath set thee on a design to break thy neck—and to go thy ordinary road, in which all that ever got heaven went. And that way is just by labouring to get an interest in Christ and his righteousness—which is provided on purpose for the creature to wrap up his naked soul in, and to place his faith on; and thus thy uprightness, which before was but of the same form with the heathen’s moral honesty, may commence, or rather be baptized Christian, and become evangelical grace. But let me tell thee this before I dismiss thee, that thou canst not lay hold of Christ’s righteousness till thou hast let fall the lie—thy own righteousness —which hitherto thou hast held so fast in thy right hand. When Christ called the ‘blind man’ to him, it is said that ‘He, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus,’ Mark 10:50. Do thou so, and then come and welcome.

[Evangelical truth and uprightness.]

Second kind of sincerity. We proceed to the second kind of truth of heart or uprightness, which I called an evangelical uprightness. This is a plant found growing only in Christ’s garden, or the inclosure of a gracious soul. It is by way of distinction from that I called moral, known by the name of a ‘godly sincerity,’ or the sincerity of God. Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, 2 Corinthians 1:12. Now in two respects this evangelical sincerity may be called godly sincerity. 1. Because it is of God. 2. Because it aims at God, and ends in God.

1. Because it is of God. It is his creature —begotten in the heart by his Spirit alone. Paul, in the place forementioned, 2 Corinthians 1:12, doth excellently derive its pedigree for us. What he calls walking in ‘godly sincerity’ in the first part of the verse, he calls ‘having our conversation by the grace of God’ in the latter part; yea, opposeth it to ‘walking with fleshly wisdom in the world’—the great wheel in the moral man’s clock. And what doth all this amount to, but to show that this sincerity is a babe of grace, and calls none on earth father? But this is not all. This ‘godly sincerity’ is not only of divine extraction—for so are common gifts that are supernatural—the hypocrite’s boon as well as the saint’s—but it is part of the new creature, which his sanctifying Spirit forms and works in the elect, and none besides. It is a covenant-grace. ‘I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you,’ Ezekiel 11:19. That ‘one heart,’ by which the hypocrite is so often descried in the word.

2. Because it aims at God, and ends in God. The highest project and ultimate end that a soul thus sincere is big with, is how it may please God. The disappointment such a godly sincere person

meets with from any other, troubles him no more than it would a merchant who speeds in the main end of his voyage to the Indies, and returns richly laden with the prize of gold and silver he went for, but only loseth his garter or shoe-string in the voyage. As the master's eye directs the servant's hand—if he can do his business to his master's mind, he hath his wish, though strangers who come into the shop like it not—thus 'godly sincerity' acquiesceth in the Lord's judgment of him. Such a one shoots not at small nor great, studies not to accommodate himself to any, to hit the humour of rich or poor; but singles out God in his thoughts from all others, as the chief object of his love, fear, faith, joy, &c.; he directs all his endeavours like a wise archer at this white, and when he can most approve himself to God, he counts he shoots best. Hear holy Paul speaking, not only his own private thoughts, but the common sense of all sincere believers: 'We labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him,' 2 Corinthians 5:9. The world's true man is he that will not wrong man. Though many go thus far, who can make bold with God, for all their demure carriage to man; some that would not steal the worth of a penny from their neighbour, yet play notorious thieves with God in greater matters than all the money their neighbour hath is worth. They can steal that time from God—the Sabbath-day I mean—to gratify their own occasions, which he hath inclosed for himself, and lays peculiar claim to, by such a title as will upon trial be found stronger, I trow, than we can show for the rest of the week to be ours. Others will not lie to man possibly in their dealing with him—and it were better living in the world, if there were more of this truth among us—but these very men, many of them, yea, all that are not more than morally upright, make nothing of lying to God, which they do in every prayer they make, promising to do what they never bestow a serious thought how they may perform. They say they will sanctify God's name, and yet throw dirt on the face of every attribute in it; they pray that the will of God may be done, and yet, while they know their sanctification is his will, they content themselves with their unholy hearts and natures, and think it enough to beautify the front of their lives—that part which faceth man, and stands to the street, as I may so say—with a few flourishes of civility and justness in their worldly dealings, though their inward man lies all in woeful ruins at the same time. But he is God's true man that desires to give unto God the things that are God's, as well as unto man the things that are man's—yea, who is first true to God and then to man for his sake. Good Joseph—when his brethren feared as strangers to him (for yet they knew no other) [that] they should receive some hard measure at his hands —mark what course he takes to free their troubled thoughts from all suspicion of any unrighteous dealing from him. 'This do,' saith he, 'and live; for I fear God.' Genesis 42:18—as if he had said, 'Expect nothing from me but what is square and upright, for I fear God. You possibly think because I am a great man, and you poor strangers where you have no friends to intercede for you, that my might should bear down your right; but you may save yourselves the trouble of such jealous thoughts concerning me, for I see one infinitely more above me, than I seem to be above you, and him I fear—which I could not do if I should be false to you.' The word 2 Corinthians 1:12, for sincerity is emphatical, ‚Æ846D\<‚4"—a metaphor from things tried by the light of the sun, as when you are buying cloth, or such like ware, you will carry it out of the dark shop and hold it up to the light, by which the least hole in it is discovered; or, as the eagle, say some, holds up her young against the sun, and judgeth them her own if able to look up wishly against it, or spurious if not able. Truly that is the godly sincere soul, which looks up to heaven and desires to be determined in his thoughts, judgment, affections, and practices, as they can stand before the light which shines from thence through the word—the great luminary into which God hath gathered all light for guiding souls, as the sun in the firmament is for directing our

bodies in their walking to and fro in the world. If these suit with the word, and can look on it without being put to shame by it, then on the sincere soul goes in his enterprise with courage; nothing shall stop him. But if any of these be found to shun the light of the word—as Adam would, if he could, the seeing of God—not being able to stand by its trial, then he is at his journey's end, and can be drawn forth by no arguments from the flesh; for it goes not on the flesh's errand but on God's, and he that sends him shall only stay him. Things are true or right as they agree with their first principles. When the counterpane agrees with the original writing, then it is true. Now the will of God is standard to all our wills, and he is the sincere man that labours to take the rule and measure of all his affections and actions from that. Hence David is called 'a man after God's own heart,' which is but a periphrasis of his sincerity, and is as much as if the Spirit of God had said he was an upright man—he carries on his heart the sculpture and image of God's heart, as it is engraved on the seal of the word. But enough for the present. This may serve to show what is evangelical uprightness.

[What uncomeliness sincerity covers.] Second Inquiry. What uncomeliness doth sincerity cover? I answer, all, especially what is sinful.

First kind of uncomeliness. There are several external temporal privileges, in which if any fall short —such excellency does this vain world put in them, more than their intrinsical worth calls for—they are exposed to some dishonour, if not contempt, in the thoughts of others. Now where sincere grace is, it affords a fair cover to them all, yea, puts more abundant honour on the person, in sight of God, angels, and men also if wise, than the other can occasion contempt.

1. Beauty. This is the great idol, which the whole world wonders after, as they after the beast, Revelation 13:1-18, which, if God denies, and confines the souls of some to a more uncomely house—body I mean —than others, this their mean bodily presence prejudiceth them in the esteem of others. Now grace, if it be but graced with sincerity, shines through the cloud that nature hath darkened the countenance withal. A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, Ecclesiastes 8:1. Who, that hath the use of his reason, would not prize and choose the vessel in the cellar full of generous wine, before a gilt tun that hangs up empty at the door for a sign? If sincere grace fills not the heart within, the beauty with which nature hath gilt the face without, makes the person but little worth. A beautiful person without true grace, is but a fair stinking weed—you know the best of such a one, if you look on him furthest off; whereas a sincere heart, without this outward beauty to commend it, is like some sweet flower not painted with such fine colours on the leaves—better in the hand than eye, to smell on than look on. The nearer you come to the sincere soul, the better you find him. Outward uncomeliness to true grace, is but as some old mean buildings you sometimes see stand before a goodly, stately house, which hide its glory only from the traveller that passeth by at some distance, but he that comes in sees its beauty, and admires it. Again,

2. A mean parentage and inglorious descent is much despised in the world. Well, how base soever the stock and ignoble the birth be, when grace unfeigned comes, it brings arms with it—it clarifies the blood, and makes the house illustrious. 'Since thou wast precious in my eye, thou hast been honourable,' Isaiah 43:4. Sincerity sets a mark of honour; if you see this star shining, though over a mean cottage, it tells thee a great prince dwells there, an heir of heaven. Sincerity brings the creature into alliance with a high family—no less than that of the high God; by which new alliance his own inglorious name is blotted out, and a new name given him. He bears the name of God, to

whom he is joined by a faith unfeigned; and who dares say that the God of heaven's child, or Christ's bride, are of an ignoble birth? Again,

3. A low purse, as well as a low parentage, exposeth to contempt, yea more. Some, by their purse, redeem themselves in time, as they think, from the scorn of their mean stock. The little spring from whence the water came, by the time it hath run some miles, and swelled into a broad river, is out of sight and not inquired much after. But poverty, that itself sounds reproach in the ears of this proud world. Well, though a man were poor, even to a proverb, yet if a vein of true godliness, sincere grace, be but to be found running in his heart, here is a rich mine, that will lift him up above all the world's contempt. Such a one may possibly say he hath no money in his house, but he cannot say that he hath no treasure —that he is not rich—and speak true. He sure is rich, that hath a key to God's treasury. The sincere soul is rich in God; what God hath is his, 'all is yours, for ye are Christ's.' Again,

4. In a word, to name no more, parts and endowments of the mind, these are applauded above all the former by some. And indeed these carry in them an excellency, that stands more level to man's noblest faculty—reason—than the other. These others are so far beneath its spiritual nature, that—as Gideon's soldier's, some of them, could not drink the water till they bowed down on their knees—so neither could man take any relish in these, did he not first debase himself far beneath the lofty stature of his reasonable soul. But knowledge, parts, and abilities of the mind, these seem to lift up man's head, and make him that he loseth none of his height; and therefore none so contemptible by the wise world, as those that are of weak parts and mean intellectual abilities. Well, now, let us see what cover sincerity hath for this nakedness of the mind, which seems the most shameful of all the rest. Where art thou, Christian, that I may tell thee—who sits lamenting, and bemoaning thy weak parts, and shallow understanding—what a happy man thou art, with thy honest sincere heart, beyond all compare with these, whose sparkling parts do so dazzle thine eyes, that thou canst not see thy own privilege above them? Their pearl is but in the head, and they may be toads for all that; but thine is in the heart. And it is the pearl of grace that is 'the pearl of great price.' Thy sincere heart sets thee higher in God's heart, than thy weak parts do lay thee low in their deceived opinion. And thou, without the abilities of mind that they have, shalt find the way to heaven; but they, for all their strong parts, shall be tumbled down to hell, because they have not thy sincerity. Thy mean gifts do not make thee incapable of heaven's glory, but their unsanctified gifts and endowments are sure to make them capable of more of hell's shame and misery. In a word, though here thy head be weak and parts low, yet, for thy comfort know, thou shalt have a better head given thee to thy sincere heart, when thou comest to heaven, but their knowing heads shall not meet with better hearts in hell, but be yoked eternally to their own wicked ones in torment. But enough of this.

Second kind of uncomeliness. I come to the second kind of uncomeliness which sincerity covers, and that is sinful. Now this sinful uncomeliness must needs be the worst, because it lights on the most beautiful part—the soul. If dirt thrown on the face be more uncomely than on another member—because the face is the fairest—then, no uncomeliness like that which crocks[14] and blacks the soul and spirit, because this is intended by God to be the prime seat of man's beauty. Now that which most stains and deforms the soul, must be that which most opposeth its chief perfection, which, in its primitive creation, was, and can still be, no other than the beauty of holiness drawn on it by the Holy Spirit's curious pencil. And what can that be but the soul-monster

which is called sin? This hath marred man's sweet countenance, that he is no more like the beauty God created, than dead Sarah's face was like that beauty which was a bait for the greatest princes, and made her husband go in fear of his life wherever he went. Nay, it is no more like the beauty God created, than the foul fiend, now a cursed devil in hell, is like to the holy angel he was in heaven. This wound which is given by sin to man's nature, Christ hath undertaken to cure by his grace in his elect. The cure is begun here, but not so perfected, that no scar and blemish remains; and this is the great uncomeliness which sincerity lays its finger on and covers. But here the question may be as follows.

[How sincerity covers the saint's uncomeliness.]

Third Inquiry. How doth sincerity cover the saint's sinful uncomeliness? I shall answer to this —First. Negatively, and show how it doth not. Second. Affirmatively—how it doth.

First. Negatively—how sincerity doth not cover them, and that in several particulars.

1. Sincerity doth not so cover the saint's failings, as to take away their sinful nature. Wandering thoughts are sin in a saint, as well as in another. A weed will be a weed wherever it grows, though in a garden among choicest flowers. They mistake then, who, because the saint's sins are covered, deny them to be sins.

2. It doth not cover them so, as to give us the least ground to think that God doth allow the Christian to commit the least sin more than others. Indeed, it is inconsistent with God's holiness to give, and with a saint's sincerity to pretend such a dispensation to be given them. A father may, out of his love and indulgence and love to his child, pass by a failing in his waiting on him, as if he spills the wine, or breaks the glass he is bringing to him, but sure he will not allow him to throw it down carelessly or willingly. Though a man may be easily entreated to forgive his friend, that wounded him unawares, when he meant him no hurt, yet he will not beforehand give him leave to do it.

3. It doth not cover them so, as that God should not see them, which is not only derogatory to his omniscience, but to his mercy also, for he cannot pardon what he doth not first see to be sin. God doth not only see the sins of his children, but their failings are more distasteful to him than others', because the persons in which they are found are so dear, and stand so near to him. A dunghill in a prince's chamber would be more offensive to him, than one far off from his court. The Christian's bosom is God's court, throne, temple; there he hath taken up his rest forever. Sin there must needs be very unsavoury to his nostrils.

4. It doth not so cover them, as that the saints need not confess them—be humbled under them, or sue out a pardon for them. A penny is as due debt as a pound, and therefore to be acknowledged. Indeed, that which is a sin of infirmity in the committing, becomes a sin of presumption by hiding of it, and hardening in it. Job held fast his integrity throughout his sad conflict, yet those failings which escaped him in the paroxysm of his afflictions brought him upon his knees: 'I abhor myself,' saith he, 'and repent in dust and ashes,' Job 42:6.

5. It doth not so cover them, as if our sincerity did the least merit and deserve that God should for it cover our other failings and infirmities. Were there such a thing as obedience absolutely complete, it could not merit pardon for past sins; much less can an imperfect obedience, as sincerity is in a strict sense, deserve it for present failings. Obedience legally perfect is no more than, as

creatures, we owe to the law of God; and how could that pay the debt of sin, which of itself was due debt, before any sin was committed? Much less can evangelical obedience —which is sincerity—do it; that falls short by far of that obedience we do owe. If he that owes twenty pounds merits nothing when he pays the whole sum, then surely he doth not, that of the twenty pounds he owes pays but twenty pence. Indeed, creditors may take what they please, and if they will say half satisfies them, it is discharge enough to the debtor. But where did ever God say he would thus compound with his creature? God stands as strictly upon it in the gospel-covenant to have the whole debt paid, as he did in the first of works. There was required a full righteousness in keeping, or a full curse for breaking of the law. So there is in the evangelical; only here the wards of the lock are changed. God required this at the creature's hand in the first covenant to be personally performed or endured; but in the gospel-covenant he is content to take both at the hands of Christ our surety, and impute these to the sincere soul that unfeignedly believes on him, and gives up himself to him.

Second. Positively—how sincerity doth cover the saint's uncomelinesses.

1. Sincerity is that property to which pardoning mercy is annexed. True, indeed, it is Christ that covers all our sins and failings, but it is only the sincere soul over which he will cast his skirt. 'Blessed is he...whose sin is covered; blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity,' Psalms 32:2. None will doubt this; but which is the man? the next words tell us his name—'and in whose spirit there is no guile.' Christ's righteousness is the garment that covers the nakedness and shame of our unrighteousness, faith the grace that puts this garment on. But what faith? none but the 'faith unfeigned,' as Paul calls it, 2 Timothy 1:5. 'Here is water,' saith the eunuch, 'what doth hinder me to be baptized?' Acts 8:36. Now mark Philip's answer, Acts 8:37, 'If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest;' as if he had said, Nothing but a hypocritical heart can hinder thee. It is the false heart only that finds the door of mercy shut. He that promiseth to cover the sincere soul's failings, threatens to uncover the hypocrite's impiety. 'He that perverteth his ways shall be known,' that is, to his shame, Proverbs 10:9.

[1] 2. Where sincerity is, God approves of that soul, as a holy righteous person, notwithstanding that mixture of sin which is found in him. As God doth not like the saint's sin, for his sincerity, so he doth not unsaint him for that. God will set his hand to Lot's testimonial that he is a righteous man. Though many sins are recorded in the Scripture which he fell into —and foul ones too—yet Job is regarded perfect, because the frame of his heart was sincere, the tenure of his life holy; and he was rather surprised by his sins as temptations, than they entertained by him upon choice. Though sincerity doth not blind God's eye that he should no see the saint's sin, yet it makes him see it with a pitiful eye, and not a wrathful; as a husband knowing his wife faithful to him in the main, pities her in other weaknesses, and for all them accounts her a good wife. 'In all this,' saith God, 'Job sinned not.' And at the very close of his combat, God brings him out of the field with his honourable testimony to his friends that had taken so much pains to bring his godliness in question; that his servant Job had 'spoken right of him.' Truly God said more of Job than he durst of himself. He freely confesseth his unadvised froward speeches, and cries out, 'I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' God saw Job's sins attended with sincerity, and therefore judged him perfect and righteous. Job saw his sincerity dashed with many sad failings, and this made him, in the close of all, rather confess his sins with shame, than glory in his grace.

God’s mercy is larger to his children, than their charity is many times to themselves and their brethren. (1.) To themselves. Do you think the prodigal —the emblem of a convert—durst have asked the robe, or desired his father to at such cost for his entertainment, as his father freely bestowed on him? No sure, a room in the kitchen, we see, was as high as he durst ask. To be among the meanest servants of the house—poor soul! he could not conceive he should have such a meeting with his father at first sight. A robe! he might rather look for a rope, at least a rod. A feast at his father’s table! O, unlooked for welcome! I doubt not but if any had met him on his way, and told him that his father was resolved as soon as he came home, not to let him see his face, but presently pack him to bridewell, there to whipped and fed with bread and water for many months, and then perhaps he would at last look on him and take him home—I doubt not but, in his starving condition, this would have been good news to him. But as God hath strange punishments for the wicked, so he hath strange expressions of love and mercy for sincere souls. He loves to outdo their highest expectations, kiss, robe, feast, all in one day, and that the first day of his return, when the memory of his outrageous wickednesses were fresh, and the stinking scent of the swill and swine from which he was but newly come hardly gone! What a great favourite is sincerity with the God of heaven! (2.) Again, God’s mercy is larger to his children, than their charity is towards one another. Those whom we are ready to unsaint for their failings that appear in their lives, God owns for his perfect ones, because of their sincerity. We find Asa’s failings expressed, and his perfection vouched by God together, as I may say, in a breath, 2 Chronicles 15:17. It was well that God cleared that good man, for had but the naked story of his life, as it stands in the Scripture, been recorded, without any express testimony, of God’s approving him, his godliness would have hazarded a coming under dispute in the opinion of good men; yea, many more with him—concerning whom we are now put out of doubt, because we find them canonized for saints by God himself—would have been cast, if a jury of men, and those holy men too, had gone upon them. Elijah himself, because he saw none have such zeal for God and his worship, as to wear their colours openly in a free profession, and hang out a flag of defiance against the idolatry of the times, by a stout opposing it as he did—which might be their sin—makes a sad moan to God, as if the apostasy had been so general, that the whole species of the godly had been preserved in his single person. But God brings the holy man better news, ‘I have left seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed down to Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him,’ 1 Kings 19:18. As if God had said, ‘Comfort thyself, Elijah. Though my number be not great, yet neither is there such a dearth of saints as thou fearest in this ungodly age. It is true their faith is weak, they dare not justle with the sins of the age as thou dost, for which thou shalt not lose thy reward; yet those night-disciples, that for fear carry their light in a dark lantern—having some sincerity, which keeps them from polluting themselves with these idolatries —must not, shall not be disowned by me.’ Yea, God who bids us be most tender of his lambs, is much more tender of them himself. Observable is that place, 1 John 2:12-14. There are three ranks of saints, ‘fathers,’ ‘young men,’ ‘little children.’ and the Spirit of God chiefly shows his tender care of them; as by mentioning them first, 1 John 2:12, so by leaving the sweet promise of pardoning mercy in their lap and bosom, rather than in either of the other. ‘I write unto you, little children, for your sins are forgiven you for my name’s sake.’ But are not the fathers’ sins, and young men’s also forgiven? Yes, who doubts it? But he doth not so particularly apply it to them, as to these; because these, from the sense of their own failings —out of which the other were more grown—were more prone to dispute against this promise in their own bosoms. Yea, he doth not only in plain terms tell them

their sins are forgiven, but meets with the secret objection which comes forth from trembling hearts in opposition to this good news, taken from their own vileness and unworthiness, and stoops its mouth with this, “forgiven for my name’s sake’—a greater name than the name of their biggest sin, which discourageth them from believing.

3. Sincerity keeps up the soul’s credit at the throne of grace, so that no sinful infirmity can hinder its welcome with God. It is the regarding of iniquity in the heart, not the having of it, [that] stops God’s ear from hearing our prayer. This is a temptation not a few have found some work to get over—whether such as they who see so many sinful failings in themselves, may take the boldness to pray, or, without presuming to expect audience, when they have prayed; and it sometimes prevails so far, that because they cannot pray as they would, therefore they forbear what they should—much like some poor people that keep from the congregation because they have not such clothes to come in as they desire. To meet with such as are turning away from duty upon this fear, the promises—which are our only ground for prayer, and chief plea in prayer—are accommodated, and fitted to the lowest degree of grace; so that, as a picture well drawn faceth all in the room alike that look on it, so the promises of the gospel-covenant smile upon all that sincerely look to God in Christ. It is not said, ‘If you have faith like a cedar,’ but ‘if you have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove,’ Matthew 17:20. Neither is justifying faith beneath miraculous faith in its own sphere of activity. The least faith on Christ, if sincere, as truly removes the mountainous guilt of sin from the soul, as the strongest. Hence all the saints are said to have ‘like precious faith,’ 2 Peter 1:1. Sarah’s faith, which in Genesis we can hardly see—as the story presents her —wherein it appeared, obtains an honourable mention, Hebrews 11:11, where God owns her for a believer as well as Abraham with his stronger faith. What love is it the promise entails the favours of God upon? Is it not, “grace be with them that love our Lord Jesus’ {not} with a seraphim’s love, but with a sincere love, Ephesians 6:24. It is not ‘Blessed they who are holy to such a measure;’—this would have fitted but some saints. The greatest part would have gone away and said, ‘There is nothing for me, I am not so holy.’ But that no saint might lose his portion, it is, ‘Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness;’ and this takes in all the children of God, even to the least babe that is newly born this day to Christ. The new convert hungers after holiness and that sincerely. And wherefore all this care so to lay the promises, but to show that when we go to make use of any promise at the throne of grace, we should not question our welcome, for any of our infirmities, if so be, this stamp of sincerity is upon our hearts? Indeed, if sincerity did not thus much for the saint, there could not be a prayer accepted of God, at the hands of any saint that ever was or shall be on earth to the end of the world, because there never was nor shall be such a saint dwelling in flesh here below, in whom eminent failings may not be found. The apostle would have us know that Elijah, who did as great wonders in heaven and earth too by prayer, as who greatest? yet this man —God could soon have picked a hole in his coat. Indeed, lest we attribute the prevalency of his prayers to the dignity of his person, and some eminency which he had by himself in grace above others, the Spirit of God tells us, he was of the same make with his poor brethren. ‘Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed,’ &c., James 5:17-18. A weak hand with a sincere heart is able to turn the key in prayer.

[Why sincerity covers the saint’s uncomelinesses.] Fourth Inquiry. Now follows the fourth query. Whence is it that sincerity thus covers the saint’s uncomelinesses.

Reason First. It flows from the grace of the gospel-covenant, that relaxeth the rigour of the law, which called for complete obedience; by resolving all that into this of sincerity and truth of heart. Thus God, when entering into covenant with Abraham, expresseth himself, 'I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect' or sincere, Genesis 17:1. As if God had said to him, 'Abraham, see here what I expect at thy hands,' and what thou mayest expect at mine. I look that thou shouldst 'set me before thee,' whom in thy whole course and walking thou wilt sincerely endeavour to please and approve thyself to, and at my hands thou mayest promise thyself what an 'Almighty God can do,' both in protecting thee in thy obedience, and pardoning of thee, where thou fallest short of perfect obedience.' Walk but in the truth of thy heart before me, and in Christ I will accept thee and thy sincere endeavour, as kindly as I would have done Adam, if he had kept his place in innocency, and never sinned. Indeed, a sincere heart by virtue of this covenant might—I mean the covenant would bear him out and defend him in it, relying on Christ —converse with God, and walk before him with as much freedom, and more familiarity, by reason of a nearer relation it hath, than ever Adam did, when god and he were best friends. 'If our heart condemn us not, then,' saith the apostle, 'we have confidence towards God,' 1 John 3:21; B"ÖÕ0F\"< §P@µ,<—we have a boldness of face. And it is not the presence of sin in us, as the covenant now stands, that conscience can, or, if rightly informed concerning the tenure of it, will condemn us for. Paul's conscience cleared him, yea, afforded matter of rejoicing, and holy glorying, at the same time he found sin stirring in him. No, conscience is set by God to judge for him in the private court of our own bosoms, and it is bound up by a law, what sentence to give for, or against, and that is the same, by which Christ himself will acquit or condemn the world at the last day. Now when we go upon the trial for our lives, before Christ's bar, the great inquest will be, whether we have been sincere or not; and as Christ will not then condemn the sincere soul, though a thousand sins could be objected against it, so neither can our hearts condemn us. But here it may be asked, how comes God so favourable in the covenant of the gospel, to accept an obedience so imperfect at his saints' hands, who was so strict with Adam in the first, that the least failing, though but once escaping him, was to be accounted unpardonable? The resolution of this question takes in these two particulars.

1. In the covenant God made with mankind in Adam, there was no sponsor or surety to stand bound to God for man's performance of his part in the covenant, which was perfect obedience, and therefore God could do no other but stand strictly with him; because he had none else from whom he might recover his glory, and thereby pay himself for the wrong man's default might do him; but in the gospel-covenant there is a surety—Christ the righteous —who stands responsible to God for all the defaults and failings which occur in the Christian's course. The Lord Jesus doth not only take upon him to discharge the vast sums of those sins, which he finds them charged with before conversion; but for all those dribbling debts, which afterward, through their infirmity, they contract. 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins,' 1 John 2:1-2, so that God may without impeachment to his justice cross the saints' debts, which he is paid for by their surety. It is mercy indeed to the saints, but justice to Christ, that he should. O happy conjunction where mercy and justice thus conspire and kiss each other!

2. God did, and well might, require full and perfect obedience of man in the first covenant, because he was in a perfect state, of full power and ability to perform it, so that God looked to reap no more

than he had planted. But in the gospel-covenant God doth not at first infuse into the believer full grace, but true grace; and accordingly he expects not full obedience, but sincere. He considers our frame, and every believer is, if I may so say, rated in God's books as the stock of grace is, which God gives to set up withal at first.

Reason Second. The second reason may be taken from the great love he bears, and liking he takes, to this disposition of heart; upon which follows this act of grace, to cover their failings where he spies it. It is the nature of love to cover infirmities, even to a multitude. Esther transgressed the law, by coming into Ahasuerus' presence before she was sent for; but love soon erected a pardon-office in the king's breast, to forgive her that fault; and truly she did not find so much favour in the eyes of that great monarch, as the sincere soul doth in the eyes of the great God. He did not more delight in Esther's beauty, than God doth in this; 'such as are upright in their way are his delight,' Proverbs 11:20. His soul closeth with that man as one that suits with the disposition of his own holy nature—one whose heart is right with his heart. And so, with infinite content to see a ray of his own excellency sparkle in his creature, he delights in him, and takes him by the hand, to lift him up into the bosom of his love, a better chariot, I trow, than that which Jehu preferred Jehonadab to, for his faithfulness to him. You seldom find any spoken of as upright in the Scripture, that are passed over with a plain naked inscription of their uprightness; but some circumstance there is, which, like the costly work and curious engraving about some tombs, tell the passenger, they are no ordinary men that lie there. God, speaking of Job's uprightness, represents him as a nonesuch in his age. 'None like him in the earth, a perfect man, and upright.' Mention was before made of his vast estate, and in that also he was a nonesuch. But when God comes to glory over Satan, by telling what a servant he had to wait on him, he doth not count this worth the telling the devil of. He sayeth not, 'Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none so rich?' but, 'none so upright,' Job 1:8. When God speaks to Caleb's uprightness, see to what a height he exalts him. But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land, &c, Numbers 14:24. As if God had said, Here is a man I do not count myself disparaged to own him for my servant and special favourite; he is one that carries more worth in him than the whole multitude of murmuring Israelites besides. He had 'another spirit'—that is, for excellency and nobleness, far above the rest. And wherein did this appear? The next words resolve us, 'He hath followed me fully.' Now that which gained him this great honour from God's own mouth, we shall find to be his sincerity, and especially in that business when he went to search the land of Canaan. Joshua 14:7, compare with Joshua 14:9. He had great temptations to tell another tale. The Israelites were so sick of their enterprise, that he would be the welcomest messenger that brought the worst news, from which they might have some colour for their murmuring against Moses, who had brought them into such straits; and of twelve that were sent, there were ten that suited their answer to this discontented humour of the people; so that by making a contrary report to theirs, he did not only come under suspicion of a liar, but hazard his life among an enraged people. Yet such was the courage of this holy man, faithfulness to his trust, and trust in his God, that he saith himself, Joshua 14:7, he 'brought him'—that is, Moses, who had sent him—'word again, as it was in his heart,' that is, he did not for fear or favour accommodate himself, but what in his conscience he thought true, that he spake; and this, because it was an eminent proof of his sincerity, is called by Moses, Joshua 4:9, following God fully;' for which the Lord erects such a pillar of remembrance over his head, that shall stand as long as Scripture itself. To gove but one instance more, and that is of Nathaniel, at first sight of whom, Christ cannot

forbear, but lets all about him know how highly he was in his favour. ‘Behold,’ saith he of him, ‘an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile,’ John 1:47. Christ’s heart, like the babe in Elizabeth’s womb when Mary saluted her—seemed thus to leap at the coming of Nathaniel, yea, comes forth in this expression, not to flatter him into an over-weening conceit of himself—Christ knew what an humble soul he spake to—but to bear witness to his own grace in him, especially this of sincerity—that knowing what a high price and value heaven sets upon the head of this grace, they might, like wise merchants, store themselves with it more abundantly. His simplicity of heart made him ‘an Israelite indeed.’ Many goodly shows and pompous outsides were to be seen among the Pharisees, but they were a company of base projectors and designers. Even when some of them came to Christ, extolling him for his sincerity, ‘Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth,’ Matthew 22:16, then did they play the hypocrites, and had a plot to decoy him by his glozing[15] speech into danger; as you may perceive, Matthew 22:15—they came that ‘they might entangle him.’ But good Nathaniel had no plot in his head in his coming, but to find the Messias he looked for, and eternal life by him, and therefore, though he was for the present wrapped up in that common error of the times, that no prophet could come out of Galilee, John 7:52—much less so a great one as the Messias, out of such an obscure place in Galilee as Nazareth—yet Christ, seeing the honesty and uprightness of his heart, doth not suffer his ignorance and error to prejudice him in his thoughts of him.

[Two effects inseparable from sincerity.]

Now to give some account of why this grace of sincerity is so taking with and delightful to God, that it even captivates him in love to the soul where he finds it, there are two things which are the inseparable companions of sincerity, yea, effects flowing from it, that are very taking to draw love both from God and man.

First. Effect. Sincerity makes the soul willing. When it is clogged with so many infirmities, as to disable it from the full performance of its duty, yet then the soul stands on tip-toe to be gone after it, as the hawk upon the hand, as soon as ever it sees her game, launcheth forth, and would be upon the wing after it, though possibly held by its sheath to the fist. Thus the sincere soul is inwardly pricked and provoked by a strong desire after its duty, though kept back by infirmities. A perfect heart and a willing mind are joined together. It is David’s counsel to his son Solomon, to ‘serve God with a perfect heart and a willing mind,’ 1 Chronicles 28:9. A false heart is a shifting heart—puts off its work so long as it dares. And it is little thanks to set about work when the rod is taken down. Yet hypocrites are like tops that go no longer than they are whipped, but the sincere soul is ready and forward, it doth not want will to do a duty when it wants skill and strength how to do it. ‘The Levites’ are said to be ‘more upright in heart to sanctify themselves, than the priests’ were, 2 Chronicles 29:34. How appeared that? In this, that they were more forward and willing to the work. No sooner did the word come out of the good king’s mouth, concerning a reformation, 2 Chronicles 29:10, than presently the Levites arose to ‘sanctify themselves.’ But some of the priests had not such a mind to the business, and therefore were not so soon ready, 2 Chronicles 29:34, showing more policy than piety therein—as if they would stay, and see first how the times would prove before they would engage. Reformation work is but an icy path, which cowardly spirits love to have well beaten by others, before they dare come on it. But sincerity is of better metal. Like the true traveller, that no weather shall keep from going his journey when set, the upright man looks not at the clouds, stands not thinking this or that to discourage him, but takes his warrant from the

word of God, and having that, nothing but a countermand from the same God that sets him a work shall turn him back. His heart is uniform to the will of God. If God saith, ‘Seek my face,’ it rebounds and echos back again, ‘Thy face will I seek,’ yea, Lord; as if David had said with a good will, Thy word is press money enough to carry me from this duty to that whither thou pleasest. May be when the sincere soul is about a duty, he doth it weakly; yet this very willingness of the heart is wonderful pleasing to God. How doth it affect and take the father, when he bids his little child go and bring him such a thing, that may be as much as he can well lift, to see him not stand and shrug at the command as hard, but run to it, and put forth his whole strength about it; though at last may be he cannot do it, yet the willingness of the child pleaseth him, so that his weakness rather stirs up the father to pity and help him, than provokes him to chide him. Christ throws this covering over his disciples’ infirmities—‘The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.’ O! this obedience that, like the dropping honey, comes without squeezing, though but little of it, tastes but sweetly on God’s palate, and such is sincere obedience.

Second Effect. Sincerity makes the soul very open and free to God. Though the sincere soul hath many infirmities, yet it desires to cloak and hide none of this from God, no, if it could, it would not, and this is that which delights God exceedingly. To be sure he will cover what such a soul uncovers. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive, 1 John 1:9. It was a high piece of ingenuity and clemency in Augustus, that having promised by proclamation a great sum of money to any that should bring him the head of a famous pirate, did yet, when the pirate, who had heard of this, brought it himself to him and laid it at his foot, not only pardon him for his former offences against him, but rewarded him for his great confidence in his mercy. Truly thus doth God. Though his wrath be revealed against all sin and unrighteousness, yet when the soul itself comes freely and humbles itself before him, he cannot stretch forth his arm to strike that soul which gives such glory to his mercy; and this the sincere heart doth. Indeed, the hypocrite when he has sinned, hides it, as Achan his ‘wedge of gold.’ He sits brooding on his lust, as Rachel on her father’s idols. It is as hard getting a hen off her nest, as such a one to come off his lusts, and disclose them freely to God. If God himself find him not out, he will not bewray himself. I cannot set out the different disposition of the sincere and false heart in this matter better, than by the like in a mercenary servant and a child. When a servant—except it be one of a thousand —breaks a glass or spoils any of his master’s goods, all his care is to hide it from his master, and therefore he throws the pieces of it away into some dark hole or other, where he thinks they shall never be found, and now he is not troubled for the wrong he hath done his master, but glad he hath handled the matter so as not to be discovered. Thus the hypocrite would count himself a happy man, could he but lay his sin out of God’s sight. It is not the treason he dislikes, but fears to be known that he is the traitor; and therefore, though it be as unfeasible to blind the eye of the Almighty, as with our hand to cover the face of the sun, that it should not shine, yet the hypocrite will attempt it. We find a woe pronounced against such, ‘Woe unto them that dig deep to hide their counsel from the Lord,’ Isaiah 29:15. This is a sort of sinners whose care is not to make their peace when they have offended, but to hold their peace, and stand demurely before God, as Gehazi before his master, as if they had been nowhere but where they should be. These are they whom God will put to shame to purpose. The Jews were far gone in this hypocrisy, when they justified themselves as a holy people, and put God so hard to it as to make him prove his charge, rather than confess what was too true and apparent. This God upbraids them for, ‘How canst thou say, I am not polluted? I have not gone after Baalim? see thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done,’ Jeremiah 2:23. Hast

thou such a whorish forehead to justify thyself, and hypocritical heart to draw a fair cover over so foul practices? would you yet pass for saints, and be thought a people unpolluted? Now mark, it is not long but this hypocritical people that thus hid their sin hath shame enough, ‘As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so,’ saith the prophet, ‘is the house of Israel ashamed,’ Jeremiah 2:26; that is, as the thief, who at first is so insolent as to deny the fact he is accused of, yet when upon the search the stolen goods are found about him, and he brought to justice for it, then he is put to double shame, for his theft, and impudence also in justifying himself. So it is with this people, and with all hypocrites; though while in peace and at ease they be brag and bold, yea, seem to scorn to be thought what they indeed are; yet there is a time coming—which is called ‘their month wherein they shall be found,’ Jeremiah 2:24—when God’s hue and cry will overtake them, his terrors ransack their consciences, and bring forth what they so stiffly denied, making it appear to themselves, and others also, what juggling and deceit they have used to shift off their sin. It is easy to think what shame will cover their faces and weigh down their heads while this is doing. God loves to befool those who think they play their game so wisely; because, with Ahab, they fight against God in a disguise, and will not be known to be the men. But the sincere soul takes another course, and speeds better. As a child when he hath committed a fault doth not stay till others go and tell his father what the matter is, nor till his father makes it appear by his frowning countenance that it is come to his ear; but freely, and of his own accord, goes presently to his father—being prompted by no other thing than the love he bears to his dear father, and the sorrow which his heart grows every moment he stays bigger and bigger withal for his offence—and easeth his aching heart by a free and full confession of his fault at his father’s foot; and this with such plain■heartedness—giving his offence the weight of every aggravating circumstance —that if the devil himself should come after him to glean up what he hath left, he should hardly find wherewithal to make it appear blacker;—Thus doth the sincere soul confess to God, adding to his simplicity in confession of his sin such a flow of sorrow, that God, seeing his dear child in such danger of being carried down too far towards despair—if good news from him come not speedily to stay him—cannot but tune his voice rather into a strain of comforting him in his mourning than of chiding for his sin.

FIRST USE OR APPLICATION.

[The odious nature of hypocrisy and its hatefulness to God.]

Use First. Doth sincerity cover all defects? Then hypocrisy uncovers the soul, and strips it naked to its shame before God, when set forth with the richest embroidery of other excellencies. This is such a scab as frets into the choicest perfections, and alters the complexion of the soul; in God’s eye, more than leprosy or pox can do the fairest face in ours. It is observable, the different character that is given of those two kings of Judah, Asa and Amaziah. Of the first, ‘But the high places were not removed: nevertheless Asa’s heart was perfect with the Lord all his days,’ 1 Kings 15:14. He passeth current for a gracious person, and that with a non obstante—‘nevertheless his heart was perfect.’ Sincerity like true gold hath grains allowed for its lightness. His infirmities are not mentioned to stain his honour, and prejudice him in the opinion of any; but rather, as the wart or mole which the curious limner expresseth on purpose, the more to set forth the beauty of the other parts, so his failing are recorded to cast a greater lustre upon his sincerity; which could, notwithstanding these sins gain him such a testimony from God’s own mouth. But of Amaziah, ‘He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart,’ 2 Chronicles 25:2.

The matter of his actions was good, but the scope and drift of his heart in them was naughty, and this but makes a foul blot upon all, and turns his right into wrong. Wherein his hypocrisy appeared is expressed, ‘He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, yet not like David his father: he did according to all things as Joash his father did,’ 2 Kings 14:3. He did for a while what David did, as to the matter, but imitated Joash as to the manner, whose goodness was calculated to please man rather than God, as appeared upon the death of his good uncle Jehoiada. Him did Amaziah write after, and not after David in his uprightness. Thus we see that Asa’s uprightness commends him in the midst of many failings, but hypocrisy condemns Amaziah doing that which was right. Sincerity! it is the life of all our graces, and puts life into all our duties, and, as life makes beautiful and keeps the body sweet, so sincerity the soul and all it doth. A prayer breathed from a sincere heart! it is heaven’s delight. Take away sincerity, and God saith of prayer as Abraham of Sarah —whom living he loved dearly, and laid in his bosom—‘Bury the dead out of my sight;’ he hides his eyes, stops his nostril, as when some poisonous carrion is before us. ‘Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto me;...the calling of assemblies I cannot away with;...your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble to me, I am weary to bear them,’ Isaiah 1:13-14. What stinking thing is this that God cries so out upon? it is nothing but hypocrisy. Surely, friends, that must needs be very loathsome, which makes God speak so coarsely of his own ordinances, yea, make them a nehushtan—prayer no prayer, but a mere idol to be broken in pieces; faith no faith, but a fancy and a delusion; repentance no repentance, but a loud lie. ‘They returned and enquired early after God,’ Psalms 78:34; see how the Spirit of God glosseth upon this: ‘Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him,’ Psalms 78:36-37. It smoked God out of his own house, and made him out of love with that place whereof he had said, it should be his ‘resting-place for ever.’ It brought the wrath of God upon that unhappy people to the uttermost. Mark how the commission runs which God gave the Assyrian, who was the bloody executioner of his wrath upon them. ‘O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets,’ Isaiah 10:5-6; see Jeremiah 7:10-13. There needs not the coroner to be sent for, or a jury go upon this miserable people, to find out how they came to their dismal end; they were a ‘hypocritical nation.’ That was it they died of. God had rather see ‘the abomination of desolation’ standing in his temple making havoc of all, than the abomination of dissimulation mocking him to his face, while they worship him with their lips, and their lusts with their hearts. Of the two it is more tolerable in God’s account to see a Belshazzar, that never had a name of being his servant, to quaff and carouse it to his gods profanely in the bowels of the sanctuary, than for a people that would pass for his servants to pollute them in his own worship by their cursed hypocrisy. If God be dishonoured, woe to that man of all that doth it under a show of honouring him. God singles out the hypocrite as that sort of sinner whom he would deal with hand to hand, and set himself even in this life to bear witness against in a more extraordinary manner than others. The thief, murderer, and other the like sinners, provision is made by God that the magistrate should meet with them, they come under his cognizance; but the hypocrite, he is one that sins more secretly, God alone is able to find him out, and he hath undertaken it, ‘For every one of the house of Israel....which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, cometh to a prophet to inquire of him concerning me,’ Ezekiel 14:7. [This forms] an excellent description of a hypocrite; he is one that denies God his

heart—reserving it for his idols, his lusts—yet is as forward as any to inquire after God in his ordinances. [He continues] 'I the Lord will answer him by myself.' And how will he answer him? 'And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am the Lord,' Ezekiel 14:8; that is, my judgments shall be so remarkable on him, that he shall be a spectacle of my wrath for others to see and speak of. Thus God pays the hypocrite often in this life, as Ananias and Sapphira, who died by the hand of God with a lie sticking in their throats; and Judas, who purchased nothing by his hypocritical trade but a halter to hang himself withal. His playing the hypocrite with Christ ended in his playing the devil upon himself, when he became his own executioner. But if the hypocrite at any time steals out of the world before his vizard[16] falls off, and the wrath of God falls on him, it will meet him sure enough in hell, and it will be poor comfort to him there to think how he hath cheated his neighbours in arriving at hell, whom they so confidently thought under sail for heaven. The good opinion which he hath left of himself in those that are on earth will cool no flames for him in hell, where lodgings are taken up, and bespoken for the hypocrite, as the chief guest expected in that infernal court. All other sinners seem but as younger brethren in damnation to the hypocrite, under whom, as the great heir, they receive every one their portion of wrath bequeathed to them by the justice of God. [In] Matthew 24:51, the evil servant is threatened by his master that he will 'cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites.'

Question. But why should God be so angry with the hypocrite? He seems a tame creature to other sinners, that like wild beasts rage and raven, not fearing to open their mouth like so many wolves against heaven, as if they would tear God out of his throne by their blasphemies and horrid impieties. The hypocrite is not thus woaded[17] with impudency to sin at noon-day, and spread his tent with Absalom on the house-top. If he be naughty, it is in a corner. His maiden-blush modesty will not suffer him to declare his sin, and be seen in the company of it abroad. Nay, he denies himself of many sins which others maintain, and walks in the exercise of many duties which the atheistical spirits of the world deride and scorn. Why then should the hypocrite, that lives like a saint to others, be more distasteful to him?

Answer. Indeed, the hypocrite at first blush may be taken for a kind of saint by such as see only his outside, as he passeth by in his holiday dress, which he is beholden to for all the reputation he hath in the thoughts of others, and therefore is fitly by one called 'the stranger's saint,' but a devil to those that know him better. He is like some cunning cripple, that is fain to borrow help from art to hide the defects of nature, such as false hair to cover his baldness, an artificial eye to blind his blindness from others' sight, and the like for other parts. Here is much ado made to commend him for some beautiful person to others, but what a monster would he appear should one but see him through the key■hole as he is in his bed-chamber, where all these are laid aside? Truly such a one, and far more scareful, would the hypocrite be found, when out of his acting robes, which he makes use of only when he comes forth upon the stage to play the part of a saint before others. It were enough to affright us only to see the hypocrite uncased; what then will it be to himself, when he shall be laid open before men and angels! So odious this generation is to God, that it is not safe standing near them. Moses, that knew Korah, Dathan, and Abiram better than the people—who, taken with their seeming zeal, flocked after them in throngs—commands them to depart from the tents of those wicked men, except they had a mind to be consumed with them. Such horrid hypocrisy he expected vengeance would soon overtake. But that it may appear to be a sin

‘exceeding sinful,’ I shall give a few aggravations of it, in which so many reasons will be wrapped up why it is so odious to God.

[A few aggravations of hypocrisy.]

First Aggravation. Hypocrisy is a sin that offers violence to the very light of nature. That light which convinceth us there is a God, tells us he is to be served, and that in truth also, or all is to no purpose. A lie is a sin that would fly on the face of a heathen; and hypocrisy is the loudest lie, because it is given to God himself. So Peter told that dissembling wretch, ‘Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God,’ Acts 5:3-4.

Second Aggravation. Hypocrisy cannot so properly be said to be one single sin, as the sinfulness of other sins. It is among sins, as sincerity among graces. Now that is not one grace but an ornament, that beautifies and graces all other graces. The preciousness of faith is, that it is ‘unfeigned,’ and of love to be ‘without dissimulation.’ Thus the odiousness of sins is, when they are committed in hypocrisy. David aggravates the sin of those jeering companions—who made their table talk, and could not taste their cheer except seasoned with some salt jest quibbled out at him—with this, that they were ‘hypocritical mockers,’ Psalms 35:16. They did it slyly, and wrapped up their scoffs, it is like, in such language as might make some who did not well observe them think that they applauded him. There is a way of commending which some have learned to use, when they mean to cast the greatest scorn upon those they hate bitterly; and these ‘hypocritical mockers’ deserve the chair to be given them from all others scorners. Fevers are counted malignant according to the degree of putrefaction that is in them. Hypocrisy is the very putrefaction and rottenness of the heart. The more of this putrid stuff there is in any sin, the more malignant it is. David speaks of ‘the iniquity of his sin,’ ‘I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin,’ Psalms 32:5. This sin seems very probably to have been his adultery with Bathsheba, and murder of Uriah, by his long ‘keeping silence,’ Psalms 32:3; by the pardon he had immediately given in upon confessing, Psalms 32:5, which we know Nathan delivered to him; and by his further purpose to continue confessing of it, which appeared by the mournful Psalms 51:1-19, that followed upon his discourse with Nathan. Now David, to make the pardoning mercy of God more illustrious, saith he did not only forgive his sin, but the iniquity of his sin. And what was that? Surely the worst that can be said of that his complicated sin is, that there was so much hypocrisy in it. He woefully juggled with God and man in it. This, I do not doubt to say, was ‘the iniquity of his sin,’ and put a colour deeper on it than the blood which he shed. And the rather I lay the accent there, because God himself, when he would set out the heinousness of this sin, seems to do it rather from the hypocrisy in the fact, than the fact itself, as appears by the testimony given this holy man: ‘David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite,’ 1 Kings 15:5. Were there not other wry steps that David took besides this? doth the Spirit of God, by excepting this, declare his approbation of all that else he ever did? No, sure. The Spirit of God records other sins that escaped this eminent servant of the Lord; but all those are drowned here, and this mentioned as the only stain of his life. But why? Surely because there appeared less sincerity, yea more hypocrisy, in this one sin than in all his other put together. Though David in them was wrong as to the matter of his actions, yet his heart was more right in the manner of committing them. But here his sincerity was sadly wounded, though not to the total destruction of the habit, yet to lay it in

a long swoon, as to any actings thereof. And truly the wound went very deep when that grace was stabbed in which did run the life-blood of all the rest. We see then that God had reason—though his mercy prompted him, yea, his covenant obliged him, not to let his child die of this wound, I mean finally miscarry of this sin, either through want of repentance on the one hand, or pardoning mercy on the other—so to heal it that a scar might remain upon the place, a mark upon the sin, whereby others might know how odious hypocrisy is to God.

Third Aggravation. Those considerations which may seem at first to lessen and pare off something from the heinousness of the hypocrite's sin, viz. that he walks in a religious habit, hath a form of piety which others want, and performs duties that others neglect—these and the like are so far from taking from, that they add a further weight of aggravation to it. Let us consider the hypocrite in a twofold respect, and this will appear, either in the things he trades about; or secondly, in the things he lays claim to; these are both high and sacred, and a sin in these can be no ordinary sin. The things he trades in are duties of God's worship. The things he lays claim to are relation to God, interest in Christ, consolations of the Spirit, and the like. These are things of high price—a miscarriage about these must be somewhat suitable to their high nature. As is the wool so is the thread and the cloth, coarse or fine. The profane person pretends not to these. He cannot spin so fine a thread, because the work he deals in is coarser. All his impieties will not have so high a price of wrath set upon them which he, being ignorant of God, and a stranger to the ways of God, hath committed, as the hypocrite's impieties will.

[The things the hypocrite trades in and lays claim to.]

First. The hypocrite trades in the duties of God's worship. Judas sits down with the rest of the apostles at the passover, and bids himself welcome as confidently as if he were the best guest—the holiest of all the company. The proud Pharisee gets to the temple as soon as the broken■hearted publican. But what work doth the hypocrite make with these things that would be known indeed. Sad work, the Lord knows, or else God would not so abominate them as to think he hears a dog bark, or a wolf howl all the while they are praying. We think David had a curious hand at the harp that could pacify the evil raging spirit of melancholy Saul. But what a harsh unhappy stroke have they in the duties of God's worship, that are able to make the sweet meek Spirit of God angry, yea, break out into fury against them? And no wonder, if we consider but these two things.

1. The hypocrite does no less than mock God in all his duties. And of all things God can least bear that. God is not mocked. Christ preached this doctrine when he cursed the fig-tree, which did, by her green leaves, mock the passenger, making him come for fruit, and go ashamed without any. Had it wanted leaves as well as fruit, it had escaped that curse. Every lie is a mocking of him to whom it is told, because such a one goes to cheat him, and thereby puts the fool upon him. Why hast thou 'mocked me,' said Delilah to Samson, 'and told me lies?' Judges 16:10, as if she had said—as is usual upon the like with us —Do you make a fool of me? I leave it to the hypocrite to think seriously what he is going to make of God, when he puts up his hypocritical services. God's command was none should appear before him empty. This the hypocrite doth; and therefore mocks God. He comes indeed full-mouth, but empty-hearted. As to the formality of a duty, he oft exceeds the sincere Christian. He, if any, may truly be called a 'master of ceremonies,' because all that he entertains God with in duty, lies in the courtship of tongue and knee. How abhorrent this is

to God may easily be judged by the disdain which even a wise man would express to be so served. Better to pretend no kindness, than, pretending, to intend none. It is the heart God looks at in duty. If the wine be good, he can drink it out of a wooden cup. But let the cup be never so gilded, and no wine in it, he makes account that man mocks him that would put it into his hand. It was Christ's charge against Sardis, 'I have not found thy works perfect before God,' Revelation 3:2. I have not found them full[18] 'before God,' as the original hath it. Sincerity fills our duty and all our actions. And mark that phrase before God, which implies that this church retained such an outward form of devotion as might keep up her credit before men. She had 'a name to live,' but her works were not full before God. He pierced them deeper than man's probe could go, and judgeth her by what he found her within.

2. The hypocrite performs the duties of God's worship on some base design or other. This makes him but yet more abominable to God, who disdains to have his holy ordinances prostituted to serve the hypocrite's lust—used only as a stream to turn about his mill, and handsomely effect his carnal projects. When Absalom had formed his plot within his own unnatural bosom, and was as big with his treason as ever cockatrice was with her poisonous egg; to Hebron he goes in all haste, and that forsooth, to pay an old vow which in the time of his affliction he had made to the Lord, 2 Samuel 15:7-8. Who would not think the man was grown honest, when he begins to think of paying his old debts? But the wretch meant nothing less. His errand thither was to lay his treason under the warm wing of religion, that the reputation he should gain thereby might help the sooner to help to hatch it. And I wish, as Absalom died without a son to keep his name in remembrance, that so none had been left behind to inherit his cursed hypocrisy, that the world might have grown into a happy ignorance of so monstrous a sin. But alas, this is but a vain wish. Vivit imo in templum venit—this kind of hypocrisy yet lives, yea comes as boldly to out-face God in his worship as ever. Many make no better use of the exercise of it, than some do of their sedans, to carry them unseen to the enjoyment of their lust. And is it any wonder that God, who hath appointed his ordinances for such high and holy ends, should abhor the hypocrite, who thus debaseth them in the service of the devil? Did you invite some to a costly feast at your house, who instead of feeding on the dainties you have provided for them, should take and throw all to their dogs under the table; how would you like your guests? The hypocrite is he that casts God's holy things to the dogs. God invites us to his ordinances, as to a rich feast, where he is ready to entertain us in sweet communion with himself. What horrid impiety is it then that the hypocrite commits, who, when he is set at God's table, feeds not of these dainties himself, but throws all to his lusts—some to his pride, and some to his covetousness, propounding to himself no other end in coming to them than to make provision for these lusts. They act as Hamor, and Shechem his son, who, when they would persuade the people of their city to submit to circumcision, used this as a great argument to move them, that they should grow rich by the hand. 'If every male among us be circumcised, as they are circumcised, shall not their cattle and their substance and every beast of theirs be ours?' Genesis 34:22-23. A goodly argument, was it not, in a business of such a high nature as coming under a solemn ordinance? They rather speak as if they were going to a horse-market or a cow-fair, than a religious duty. Truly, though most hypocrites have more wit than thus to print their thoughts, and let the world read what is writ in their hearts, yet as Queen Mary said of Callis—'If she were ripped up it would be found in her heart,'—so some low things, as vainglory, worldly profit, &c., would be found engraven in the breast of all hypocrites, as that which they most aim at in the duties of religion.

Second. Consider the hypocrite in the things he lays claim to; and they are no small privileges —relation to God and interest in Christ. Who more forward to saint himself, to pretend to the grace and comforts of the Spirit, than the hypocrite? We see this in the Pharisees, whose great design was to get a name, and that, not such as the great ones of the earth have for prowess—worldly majesty and the like —but for sanctity and holiness. And they had it, if it would do them any good. 'Verily,' saith Christ, 'they have their reward,' Matthew 6:2. They would be thought for great saints; and so they were by the multitude, who did so applaud them for their holiness which faced their outside, that they had a proverb, 'If but two could be saved, one of the two should be a Pharisee.' We read of some that profess they know God, but in works they deny him, Titus 1:16. They boldly brag of their acquaintance with God, and would be thought great favourites of his, though their lives are antipodes to heaven. So, Revelation 3:9, we meet with some that say they are Jews, and are not, but lie. They dwell sure by ill neighbours. None would say so much for them but themselves. The hypocrite is so ambitious to pass for a saint, that he commonly is a great censurer of the true graces of others, as too much hindering the prospect of his own; like Herod, who, as Eusebius writes, being troubled at the baseness of his own birth, burned the Jews' ancient genealogies, the better to defend his own pretended noble ascent. Who now is able to give a full accent to this high-climbing sin of the hypocrite? It is a sin that highly reproacheth God, to have such a vile wretch claim kindred with him. Christ indeed is not 'ashamed to call' the poorest saints 'brethren,' but he disdains to have his name seen upon a rotten-hearted hypocrite, as princes to have their effigies stamped on base metals. What scorn was put upon that mock-prince, Perkin Warbeck, who, having got some fragments of courtship and tutored how to act his part, was presented to the world as son to Edward the Fourth of this nation, but [who], when he had aped a while the state of a prince, was taken, and with his base ignoble pedigree, writ in great letters, pinned at his back, sent about, that wherever he came he might carry his shame with him, till in the end he was sent to act the last part of his play at the gallows. But what is all this to the hypocrite's portion? who for abusing others here, with a seeming sanctity, as if indeed he was of heavenly extraction—a child of God—shall be brought at the great day, to be hissed and hooted at by men and angels, and after he had been put to this open shame to be thrown deepest into hell. Of all sinners the hypocrite doth most mischief in this world, and therefore shall have most torment in the other. There is a double mischief which none stand at like advantage to do as the hypocrite by his seeming saintship. The one he doth while his credit holds, and he passeth for a child of God in the opinion of his neighbours; the other when his reputation is cracked, and he discovered to be what he is—a hypocrite. The mischief he doth when his mask is on, is as a deceiver. Machiavelli knew what he did in commending to princes a semblance of religion, though he forbade any more. It hath been found to be the most taking bait to decoy people into their snare, who come in apace when religion is the flag that is set up. Ehud could not have thought on a surer key to open all doors, and procure him admittance into king Eglon's presence, than to give out he had a message from the Lord to him. This raised such an expectation, and bred such confidence, that room is made for him. Presently all depart and he is left alone with the king. Yea, the king will rise to hear this message that comes from the Lord, and so gives him a greater advantage to run him into the bowels. Had some in our days pretended highly to saintship, I doubt not but they would have found the door shut, where now they have too much welcome, and find it easy to procure belief to their errors. Even the elect are in some danger, when one cried up for a saint is the messenger that brings the error to town, and that under the notion of a message from God.

I confess the hypocrite acts his part so handsomely, that he may do some good accidently. His glistering profession, heavenly discourse, excellent gifts in prayer or preaching, may affect much the sincere soul, and be an occasion of real good to his soul. As the stage-player, though his tears be counterfeit, may stir up by his seeming passion real sorrow in his spectators, so as to make them weep in earnest; thus the hypocrite, acting his part with false affections, may be a means to draw forth and excite the Christian's true graces. But then is such a Christian much more in danger to be ensnared by his error, because he will not be readily suspicious of anything that he brings, whom he hath found really helpful to his grace or comfort; and thus the good the hypocrite doth makes him but able to do the greater hurt in the end. Sisera had better have gone without Jael's butter and milk, than by them to be laid asleep against she came with her nail; and it had been far happier for many on our days not to have tasted of the gifts and seeming graces of some, than to have been so taken with this sweet wine, as to drink themselves drunk into an admiration of their persons, which hath laid them asleep, and thereby given them whom they have applauded so much, but advantage the more easily to fasten their nail to their heads—errors I mean, to their judgments. The other mischief the hypocrite doth is when discovered, and that is as he is a scandal to the ways of God, and the servants of God. It is said of Samson, 'The dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life,' Judges 16:30. Truly the hypocrite doth more hurt when he is discovered—which is the death of his profession —than when he seemed to be alive. The wicked world that are not long seeking a staff to beat the saints with, have now one put into their hand by the hypocrite. O how they can run division upon this harsh note, and besmear the face of all professors with the dirt they see upon the false brother's coat, as if they could take the length of all their feet by the measure of one hypocrite. Hence comes such base language as this: 'They are all of a pack, not one better than another.' Indeed, this is very absurd reasoning. [It is] as if one should say that no coin were current and right silver, because now and then a brass shilling is found amongst the rest. But this language fits the mouth of the ungodly world. And woe be to the man that makes these arrows for them by his hypocrisy, which they shoot against saints; better he had been thrown with a millstone about his neck into the sea, than have lived to give such an occasion for the enemy to blaspheme.

SECOND USE OR APPLICATION [Exhortation to all to see to it whether they be sincere or not.]

Use Second. Doth sincerity cover all a saint's infirmities? This shows how it behoves every one to try his ways and search narrowly his heart, whether he be sincere or hypocritical.

First Argument. It behoves thee to search thy heart so, because all depends on it—even all thou art worth in another world. It is thy making or marring for ever: 'Do good, O Lord....to them that are upright in their hearts; as for such as turn aside to crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity,' Psalms 125:4-5. That the end the hypocrite is sure to come to. He would indeed then fain pass for a saint, and crowd in among the godly, but God 'shall lead them forth with workers of iniquity'—company that better befits him. It is sincerity that shall carry it in that day. 'I will come,' saith Paul, 'to you shortly,...and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power; for the kingdom of God is not in word but in power. What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love?' 1 Corinthians 4:19. Oh friends! not Paul, but Christ, will shortly come unto us, and he will know, not the speech and soothing language of such as are puffed up with an empty name of profession, but will know the power, gauge the heart, and see what is in it. Now, will ye that he come with a rod, or in love, to judge you—as hypocrites, or to give

you the euge[19] of a faithful servant? Doth he not spend his time ill, that takes pains in his trade, and lays out all his stock upon such a commodity which, when he opens his stall, will be seized for false ware, and he clapped up for abusing the country? All that ever the hypocrite did, will in the great day of Christ be found counterfeit, and be sure to be laid by the heels in hell for going about to cheat God and man. Every man's works shall then be manifest, that day shall declare it. Even the sincere Christian where he hath tampered with hypocrisy shall lose that of his work; but the hypocrite, with his work, his soul also.

Second Argument. It behoves thee thus to try thy ways when you consider how hypocrisy lies close in the heart. If thou beest not very careful, thou mayest easily pass a false judgement on thyself. They who were sent to search the cellar under the parliament, at first saw nothing but coals and winter provision; but, upon a review, when they came to throw away that stuff they found all [to be] but provision for the devil's kitchen; then the mystery of iniquity was uncased, and the barrels of powder appeared. How many are there, that from some duties of piety they perform, some seeming zeal they express in profession, presently cry omnia benè—all things are well, and are so kind to themselves as to vote themselves good Christians, who, did they but take the pains to throw these aside, might find a foul hypocrite at the bottom of them all. Hypocrisy often takes up her lodging next door to sincerity, and so she passes unfound—the soul not suspecting hell can be so near heaven. And as hypocrisy, so sincerity, is hard to be discovered. This grace often lies low in the heart, hid with infirmities, like the sweet violet in some valley, or near some brook, hid with thorns and nettles, so that there requires both care and wisdom, that we neither let the weed of hypocrisy stand nor pluck up the herb of grace in its stead.

Third Argument. It behoves thee to search thy heart thus, because the exercise is feasible. I do not set you about an endless work. The heart of man I confess is as a ruffled skein of silk not easily unsnarled; yet with a faithful use of the means, it may be disentangled, and wound up on the right bottom of sincerity or hypocrisy. Job, when Satan and his cruel friends laboured to royle his spirit most, and muddy the stream of his former course and condition, by throwing their objections as so many stones into it; yet he could see this precious gem at the bottom sparkling most brightly. Yea, Hezekiah, in the very brim of the grave, recreates his spirit with it. Indeed, friends, this is a soul's encouragement, that it shall not want God's help in this search, if it goes about it with honest desires. A justice will not only give his warrant to search a suspicious house, but, if need be, will command others to be aiding to him in the business. Now word, ministers, Spirit, all thou shalt have for thy assistance in this work; only have a care thou dost not mock God in the business. That soul deserves to be damned to this sin, who, in the search for hypocrisy, plays the hypocrite, like a naughty, dishonest constable that willingly overlooks him whom he searcheth for, and then says he cannot find him. Now, for the fuller satisfaction in this point, and help in the trial; it is that which both good and bad are mistaken in—the carnal wretch flattering himself his heart is good and honest; the sincere soul kept under fear of being a hypocrite, and Satan abusing them both. I shall therefore, First. lay down the grounds with which a hypocrite shores up his rotten house, and will show the falsities of them. Second. I will lay down the grounds of the weak Christian's fear for his being a hypocrite, and the weakness of them. Third. I will lay down such positive discoveries of sincerity as no hypocrite ever did or can reach to.

[The grounds of a hypocrite's profession and their falsities.]

First. I shall lay down the grounds with which a hypocrite shores up his rotten house, and will show the falsities of them. The hypocrite will stand upon his defence, his heart is sincere. Well how will he prove it?

1. False Ground. The hypocrite will say ‘Sure I am no hypocrite, for I cannot endure it in another.’

Answer. This is not enough to clear thee from being a hypocrite, except thou canst show thou dost this from a holy ground. Jehu, that asked Jehonadab whether his heart was right, carried at that same time a false one in his own breast. It is very ordinary for a man to decry that in another, and smartly to declaim against it, which he all the while harbours himself. How severe was Judah against Tamar? He commands, in all haste, to burn her, Genesis 38:24. Who would not have thought this man to be chaste? Yet he was the very person that had defiled her. There may be a great cheat in this piece of zeal. Sometimes the very place a man is in, may carry him—as the primum mobile[20] [i.e. the first cause of motion] does the stars—in a motion which his own genius and liking would never lead him to. Thus many that are magistrates give the law to drunkards, and swearers, merely to keep the decorum of their place, and shun the clamour that would arise from their neglect, who can possibly do both, when they meet with place and company fit for their purpose. Some [there are whose] zeal against another’s sin is kindled at the disgrace which reflects upon them by it in the eye of the world; and this falls out when the sin is public, and the person that committed it stands related. This is conceived to be Judah’s case, who was willing his daughter should be taken out of the way, that the blot which she had brought on his family might with her be out of sight. Some again find it a thriving trade, and make this advantage of inveighing against others’ faults, to hide their own the better, that they may carry on their own designs with less suspicion. Absalom asperseth[21] his father’s government, as a stirrup to help himself into the saddle. Jehu loved the crown more than he hated Jezebel’s whoredoms, for all his loud cry against them. In a word—for it is impossible to hit all—there may be much of revenge in it, and the person is rather shot at than his sin. This was observed of Antony’s zeal against Augustus, odit tyrannum amavit tyranidem—he hated the tyrant, but loved well enough the tyranny.

2. False Ground. The hypocrite saith, ‘I am bold and fearless in dangers; sure I am no hypocrite;’ but it is ‘the righteous’ that ‘is bold as a lion.’

Answer. The better way, sure, were to try thy boldness by thy sincerity, than to conclude thy sincerity by thy boldness. Truly confidence, and a spirit undaunted at death and danger, are glorious things, when the Spirit and Word of Christ stand by to vouch them—when the creature can give some account of the hope that is in him, as Paul, who shows how he came by it. This [is] Christian, not Roman courage, Romans 5:1-4. Many rooms one passeth before coming to this, which indeed joins upon heaven itself. Faith is the key which lets him into all. First, it opens the door of justification, and lets it into a state of peace and reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ, ‘being justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,’ Romans 5:1. Through this he passeth on to another room—the presence-chamber of God’s favour—and is admitted nigh unto him, as a traitor once pardoned is; ‘by whom also we have access by him into this grace wherein we stand,’ Romans 5:2; that is, we have not only our sins pardoned, and our persons reconciled to God by faith in Christ, but now under Christ’s wing, we are brought to court as it were, and stand in his grace as favourites before their prince. This room opens into a third room—and ‘rejoice in the hope of glory.’ We do not only at present enjoy the grace and favour of

God and communion with him here, but have from this a hope firmly planted in our hearts for heaven's glory hereafter. Now he is brought to the most inward room of all, which none can come at but he that goes through all the former, Romans 5:3. 'And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also.' If thou hast not entered at these doors, thou art a thief and a robber; thou gettest thy confidence too quickly to have it brought to thy hand by God. If God means thee well for eternity, he will make thee smart for this thy boldness, as he did Jacob for stealing his father's blessing; and therefore content not thyself with a bare boldness and confidence in dangers, but inquire whether it hath a Scripture bottom and basis to stand on, or whether the pillars supporting it, be not ignorance in thy mind, and stupidity in thy conscience. If the latter, thou art in a sad condition. Thy boldness will last no longer than thou seest it doth in one that is drunk; who, when he is wine-sprung, thinks, as they say, he can skip over the moon, and ventures to go without fear upon precipices and pitfalls, [but,] when sober, trembles to see what he did in his drunken fit. Nabal that feared nothing when drunk—his heart dies within him and became as stone, at the story Abigail told him in the morning, when the wine was gone out of him, 1 Samuel 25:37. Therefore, as he [who,] when his cause miscarried through the sleepiness of the judge on the bench, 'appealed from the judge asleep to the judge awake;' so do I here with you, that through the present stupidity of conscience are bold and fearless of death, and from this plead your uprightness. I appeal from your conscience asleep, to the sentence it will give when it shall be awake; which I wish may be in this world, that you may see your mistake where you may amend it.

3. False Ground. 'Sure,' saith another, 'I am not a hypocrite; for I perform secret duties in my closet. The hypocrite is nobody, except on the stage. That is the brand of the hypocrite—he courts the world for its applause, and therefore does all abroad.'

Answer. Though the total neglect of secret duties in religion speaks a person to be a hypocrite, yet the performing of duties in secret will not demonstrate thee a sincere person. Hypocrisy is in this like the frogs brought on Egypt. No place was free of them, no, not their bed-chambers. They crept into their most inward rooms. And so doth hypocrisy into closet duties, as well as public. Indeed, though the place be secret where such duties are performed, yet the matter may be so handled, and is by some hypocrites, that they are not secret in their closets; like the hen that goes into a secret place to lay her egg, but by her cackling, tells all the house where she is, and what she is doing. But where this is not, it is not enough; for we must not think but some hypocrites may and do spin a thread finer than other. In all arts there are some exceed others, and so in this trade of hypocrisy. The gross hypocrite whose drift is to deceive others, his religion commonly is all without doors; but there is a hypocrite that labours to keep a fair quarter with himself, and is very desirous to make conscience on his side, to procure which, he will go to the utmost link of his chain, and do anything that may not separate him and his beloved lusts. Now secret prayer and other duties may be so performed, as that they shall not more prejudice a man's lusts than any other. It is not the sword, though very sharp, that kills, but the force that it is thrust withal. Indeed, there are some secret duties, as examination of our hearts, trying of our ways, and serious meditation of the threatenings of the word against such sins as we find in our own bosoms, which with close application of them to ourselves would put sin hard to it. But the hypocrite can lay this sword so easily and favourably on, that his lusts shall not cry 'Oh!' at it, therefore still there needs a melius inquirendum—a further search before thou canst come off.

4. False Ground. ‘Sure I am not a hypocrite, for I do not only pray, and that in secret too, against my sins, but I also fight against them, yea, and that to good purpose, for I can show you the spoils of my victories, that I have got over some of them. There was a time I could not by the ale-house, but my lust bade me stand, and pulled me in; but now I thank God, I have got such a mastery of my drunken lust, that I can pass by without looking in.’

Answer. It is good when thou dost say, and I wish all thy drunken neighbours could speak as much, that—when the magistrate will not, or cannot, spoil that drunken trade—they that keep those shops for the devil, might even shut up their windows for want of customers; but is it not pity that what is good should be marred in the doing? Yet it is too common, and may be thy case.

1. Let me ask thee, how long it hath been thus with thee? Lusts, as to the actings I mean, are like agues, the fit is not always on, and yet the man not rid of his disease. And some men’s lusts, like some agues, have not such quick returns as others. The river does not move always one way. Now it is coming, anon, falling water; and, though it doth not rise when it falls, yet it hath not lost its other motion. Now the tide of lust is up, and anon it is down, and the man recoils and seems to run from it; but it returns again upon him. Who would have thought it to have seen Pharaoh in his mad fit again, that should have been with him in his good mood, when he bid Moses and the people go? But alas! the man was not altered. Thus, may be, when a strong occasion comes, this, like an easterly wind to some of our ports, will bring in the tide of thy lust so strongly, that thy soul that seemed as clear of thy lust as the naked sands are of water, will be in a few moments covered, and as deep under their waves as ever. But the longer the banks have held, the better; yet, shouldst thou never more be drunk as to the outward fulfilling of the lust, would this not be enough to clear thee from being a hypocrite? Therefore,

2. Let me ask thee what was the great motive to take thee off? That which keeps thee from the ale-house now, may be as bad, in some sense, as that which heretofore drew thee to it. It is ordinary for one lust but to spoil another’s market. He that should save his money from guzzling it down his throat, to lay in more finery on his back, what doth this man, but rob one lust to sacrifice it to another? Whether was it God or man, God or thy purse, God or thy pride, God or thy reputation, that knocked thee off? If any but God prevailed with thee, hypocrite is a name will better now become thee than when in the ale■house. Again, if God, what apprehension of God were they that did it? Some, the wrath of God for some particular sin hath so shaked them, that, as one scared with an apparition in a room, cares not for lying there any more, so they dare not, at least for a long time, be acquainted with that practice again. And as it is not the room but the apparition, that the one dislikes, so it is not the sin, but the wrath of God that haunts it, which the other flees from. In a word, may be thou hast laid down this sinful practice; but didst thou hate it and love God, and so leave it? Thou art become strange to one; have you not got acquaintance with another the room of it? Thou hast laid down the commission of an evil; but hast thou taken up thy known duty? He is a bad husbandman that drains his ground, and then neither sows nor plants it. It is all one if it had been under water, as drained and not improved. What if thou cease to do evil, if it were possible, and thou learnest not to do well? It is not thy fields being clear of weeds, but fruitful in corn, that pays thy rent and brings thee in thy profit; nor thy not being drunk, unclean, or [guilty of] any other sin, but thy being holy, gracious, thy having faith unfeigned, pure love, and the other graces, which will prove thee sound, and bring in evidence for thy interest in Christ, and through him, in heaven.

[The grounds on which a weak Christian argues against his own uprightness, and their falsity.]

Second. I will lay down the grounds of the weak Christian's fear for his being a hypocrite, and the weakness of them; in other words, the false grounds from which sincere souls do many times go about to prove themselves hypocrites, yea, for a while conclude they are such.

1. False Ground. 'Sure I am a hypocrite,' saith the poor soul, 'or else I should not be as I am. God would not thus follow me on with one blow after another, and suffer Satan also to use me as he doth.' This was the grand battery Job's friends had against his sincerity, and sometimes Satan so far prevails as to make the sincere soul set it against his own breast, saying, much like him, 'If God be with us, why is all this befallen us?'—if God be in us by his grace, why appears he against us?

Answer. This fire into which God casts thee, proves thou hast dross, and if, because thou art held long in the furnace, thou shouldst say thou hadst much dross, I would not oppose; but how thou shouldst spell 'hypocrite' out of thy afflictions and troubles, I marvel. The wicked indeed make much use of this argument to clap 'hypocrite' on them; but the Christian, methinks, should not use it against himself. Though the barbarians presently gave their verdict upon sight of the viper on Paul's hand, that he was 'a murderer,' yet Paul thought not worse of himself for it. Christian, give but the same counsel to thyself, when in affliction and temptation, that thou usest to do to thy fellow-brethren in the same condition, and thou wilt get out of this snare. Darest thou think thy neighbour a hypocrite merely from the hand of God upon him? No, I warrant thee, thou rather pitiest him, and helpest him to answer the doubts that arise in his spirit from this very argument. It would make one smile to see how handsomely and roundly a Christian can untie the knots and scruples of another, who afterward, when brought into the like condition, is gravelled[22] with the same himself. He that helped his friend over the stile is now unable to stride it himself. God so orders things that we should need one another. She that is midwife to others cannot well do that office to herself; nor he that is the messenger to bring peace to the spirit of another, able to speak it to his own. The case is clear, Christian. Affliction cannot prove thee a hypocrite, which wert thou without altogether, thou mightest safer think thou wert a bastard. The case, I say, is clear, but thy eyes are held for some further end God hath to bring about by thy affliction. But may be thou wilt say, it is not simply the affliction makes thee think thus of thyself; but because thou art so long afflicted, and in the dark also, as to any sense of God's love in thy soul. Thou hast no smiles from God's sweet countenance to alleviate thy affliction, and if all were right, and thou a sincere child of God, would thy heavenly Father let thee lie groaning, and never look upon thee to lighten thy affliction with his sweet presence? As to the first of these—the length of thy affliction. I know no standard God hath set for to measure the length of his saints' crosses by, and it becomes not us to make one ourselves. This we do, when we thus limit his chastisements to time, that if they exceed the day we have writ down in our own thoughts—which is like to be short enough, if our hasty hearts may appoint—then we are hypocrites. For the other; thou must know that God can, without any impeachment to his love, hide it for a while. And truly he may take it very ill that his children, who have security given them for his loving them—besides the sensible manifestation of it to their souls—should call this in question, for not coming to visit them, and take them up in his arms when they would have him. In a word, may be thy affliction comes in the nature of purging physic. God may intend to evacuate some corruption by it, which endangers thy spiritual health and hinder thy thriving in godliness. Now the manifestation of his love God may reserve, as physicians do their cordials, to be given when the physic is over.

2. False Ground. ‘I fear I am a hypocrite,’ saith the tempted soul; ‘why else are there such decays and declensions to be found in me? It is the character of the upright that he goes from strength to strength, but I go backward from strength to weakness.’ Some Christians—they are like those that we call close men in the world—if they lose anything in their trade, and all goes not as they would have it, we are sure to hear of that over and over again. They speak of their losses in every company; but when they make a good market, and gains come in apace, they keep this to themselves—not forward to speak of them. If Christians would be ingenuous, they should tell what they get as [well as] what they lose. But to take it for granted that thou dost find a decay, and to direct our answer to it.

Answer 1. I grant it as true that the sincere soul grows stronger and stronger—but how?—even as the tree grows higher and bigger, which we know meets with a fall of the leaf, and winter, that for a while intermits its growth. Thus the sincere soul may be put to a present stand by some temptation—as Peter, who was far from growing stronger when he fell from professing to denying Christ, from denying to swearing and cursing if he knew him. Yet as the tree, when spring comes, revives and gains more in the summer than it loseth in the winter, so doth the sincere soul. Just as we see in Peter, whose grace that squatted in for a while came forth with such a force, shaking temptations, that no cruelty from men could drive it in ever after; [so will the sincere soul ever] end in settlement, according to the apostle’s prayer, ‘The God of all grace,...after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you,’ 1 Peter 5:10.

Answer 2. There is a great difference between the decay of a sincere soul and of a hypocrite. The hypocrite declines out of an inward dislike of the ways of God. Hence they are called ‘backsliders in heart,’ Proverbs 14:14. So long as they served his lust, and contributed any help to the obtaining his worldly interest, so long he had a seeming zeal; but the argument taken away, he begins to remit by degrees, till he comes to be key-cold, yea, as heartily sick of his profession as Ammon of Tamar. When the hypocrite begins to fall, he goes apace. Like a stone down the hill he knows no ground but the bottom. Now speak freely, poor soul. Darest thou say there is an inward dislike to the ways of God. May be thou dost pray not with that heat and fervency which thou hast; but is it because thou dost not like the duty as formerly? Thou dost not hear the word with such joy; but dost thou not therefore hear it with more sorrow? In a word, canst thou not say with the spouse, when thou sleepest thy ‘heart waketh,’ Song of Solomon 5:2; that is, thou art not pleased with thy present declining state, but heartily wishest thou wert out of it—as one that hath a great desire to rise and be at his work—his heart is awake—but is not able at present to shake off that sleep which binds him down. This will clear thee from being a hypocrite.

3. False Ground. ‘I fear,’ saith the poor soul, ‘I am a hypocrite, because I have such a divided heart in the duties I perform. I cannot, for my life, enjoy any privacy with God in duty, but some base lust will be crowding into my thoughts when I am at prayer, hearing of the word, or meditating. Now I am lift up with a self-applauding thought, anon cast down to the earth with a worldly thought. What with one and another, little respite have I from such a company. And do such vermin breed anywhere but in the dunghill of a false hypocritical heart?’

Answer. Woe were it to the best of saints, if the mere rising and stirring of such thoughts as these, or worse than these, did prove the heart unsound; take heed thou concludest not thy state therefore, from the presence of these in thee, but from the comportment and behaviour of thy heart

towards them. Answer therefore to these few interrogatories, and possibly thou mayest see thy sincerity through the mist these have raised in the soul.

(1.) Interrogatory. What friendly welcome have such thoughts with thee, when they present themselves to thee in duty? Are these the guests thou hast expected and trimmed thy room for? Didst thou go to duty to meet those friends, or do they unmannerly break in upon thee, and forcibly carry thee—as Christ foretold of Peter in another case—whither thou wouldst not? If so, why shouldst thou bring thy sincerity into dispute? Dost thou not know the devil is a bold intruder, and dares come where he knows there is none will bid him sit down? And that soul alone he can call his own house, where he finds rest, Luke 11:24. Suppose in your family, as you are kneeling down to prayer, a company of roisters should stand under your window, and all the while you are praying, they should be roaring and hallooing, this could not but much disturb you; but would you from the disturbance they make, fall to question your sincerity in the duty? Truly, it is all one whether the disturbance be in the room, or in the bosom, so the soul likes the one no more than he doth the other.

(2.) Interrogatory. Dost thou sit contented with this company, or use all the means thou canst to get rid of them, as soon as may be? Sincerity cannot sit still to see such doings in the soul; but, as a faithful servant when thieves break into his master's house, though [so] overpowered with their strength and multitude, that he cannot with his own hands thrust them out of doors, yet he will send out secretly for help, and raise the town upon them. Prayer is the sincere soul's messenger. It posts to heaven with full speed in this case; counting itself to be no other than in the belly of hell with Jonah, while it is yoked with such thoughts, and as glad when aid comes to rescue him out of their hands, as Lot was when Abraham recovered him from the kings that had carried him away prisoner.

Objection. But may be thou wilt say, though thou darest not deny that thy cry is sent to heaven against them, yet thou hearest no news of thy prayer, but continuest still pestered with them as before, which increaseth thy fear that thy heart is naught, or else thy prayer would have been answered, and thou delivered from these inmates.

Answer. Paul might as well have said so when he besought the Lord thrice, but could not have thorn in the flesh plucked out, 2 Corinthians 12:8. He doth not by this show thee to be a hypocrite, but gives thee a fair advantage of proving thyself sincere—not much unlike his dealing with the Israelites, before whom he did not, as they expected, hastily drive out the nations, but left them as thorns in their sides. And why? Hear the reason from God's own mouth, 'That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not,' Judges 2:22. Thus God leaves these corruptions in thee, to prove whether thou wilt at last fall in and be friends with them, or maintain the conflict with them, and continue praying against them; by which perseverance thou wilt prove thyself to be indeed upright. A false heart will never do this. He is soon answered that doth not cordially desire the thing he asks. The hypocrite, when he prays against his corruption, goes of his conscience's errand, not his will's; just as a servant that doth not like the message his master sends him about, but dares not displease him, and therefore goes, and may be knocks at the man's door whither he is sent, yet very faintly—loath he should hear him. All that he doth is that he may but bring a fair tale to his master, by saying he was there. Even so prays the hypocrite, only to stop the mouth of his conscience with his flam[23], that

he hath prayed against his lust. Glad he is when it is over, and more glad that he returns re infectâ—the matter being unaccomplished. Observe therefore the behaviour of thy heart in prayer, and judge thyself sincere, or not sincere, by that, not by the present success it hath. God can take it kindly that thou askest what at present he thinks it better to deny than give. Thou wouldst have all thy corruptions knocked down at one blow, and thy heart in a posture to do the work of thy God, without any stop or rub from lust within, or the devil without; wouldst thou not? God highly approves of your zeal, as he did of David's, who had a mind to build him a temple; but as he thought not fit that the house should in David's time be reared—reserving it for the peaceful reign of Solomon—so neither doth he, that this thy request should be granted in this life, having reserved this immunity as an especial part of the charter of the city that is above, which none but glorified saints, who are inhabitants there, enjoy. He hath indeed taught us to pray, let thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; but we must expect the full answer to it when we come there. But learn therefore, poor soul, to take this denial as David did his. Because God would not let him build the house in his days, he did not therefore question the love and favour of God, neither did he desist from preparing materials for it, but did what he might towards it, though he might not what he would. Far be it from thee also, that thou shouldst for this either cast away thy confidence on God, or lay aside thy endeavour for God, in mortifying thy corruptions, and adding to the store thou hast at present of his graces, which, though now imperfect and unpolished, he will make use of in the heavenly building which he intends thee for, where all the broken pieces, as I may so say, of our weak graces shall be so improved by the power and wisdom of God, that they shall make up one glorious structure of perfect holiness, more to be admired by angels in heaven, for the rare workmanship of it, than Solomon's temple was on earth by men when in its full glory.

4. False Ground. 'Oh but,' saith the tempted soul, 'I have sometimes inward checks from my own conscience that this duty I did hypocritically, and that, in that action, much falseness of heart discovered itself. And if my heart condemn me, how can it be otherwise but I must needs be a hypocrite?'

Answer. I shall help to resolve this by laying down two distinctions, and applying them to the case in hand. (1.) We must distinguish between conscience proceeding by a right rule in its judgment, and conscience proceeding by a false rule. (2.) We must distinguish between a conscience that goes by a right rule, and is also rightly informed how to use it; and a conscience that judgeth by a right rule, but is not rightly informed in its use. To apply the first—

(1.) We must distinguish between conscience proceeding by a right rule in its judgment, and conscience proceeding by a false rule. Then conscience proceeds by a right rule, when it grounds its charge upon the word of God; for, being but an under officer, it is bound up to a law by which it must proceed. And that can be no other than what God appoints it, who gives it commission, and puts it in office. And that is the word of God, and that only. So that we are to give credit to our conscience's commanding or forbidding, condemning or acquitting us, when it can show its warrant from the word of God for these; otherwise, as subjects that are wronged in an inferior court and cannot have justice there, may appeal higher, so may and ought we, from conscience, to the word of God. And you must know conscience is a faculty that is corrupted as much as any other by nature, and is very oft made use of by Satan to deceive both good and bad, godly and ungodly. Many that now {know?} their consciences, they say, speak peace to them, will be found merely cheated and gulled when the books shall be opened. No such discharge will then be found entered

in the book of the word, as conscience hath put into their hand. And many gracious souls, who passed their days in a continual fear of their spiritual state, and were kept chained in the dark dungeon of a troublesome conscience, shall then be acquitted, and have their action against Satan for false imprisonment, and abusing their consciences to the disturbing their peace. And now let me ask thee, poor soul, who sayest thy conscience checks thee for a hypocrite, art thou a convicted hypocrite by the word? Doth conscience show thee a word rom Christ's law that proves thee so? or rather, doth not Satan abuse thy own fearfulness, and play upon the tenderness of thy spirit, which is so deeply possessed with the sense of thy sins, that thou art ready to believe any motion in thee that tells any evil of thee? I am sure it is oft so. The fears and checks which some poor souls have in their bosoms, are like those reports that are now and then raised of some great news, by such as have a mind to abuse the country. A talk and murmur you shall have in every one's mouth of it, but go about to follow it to the spring-head, and you can find no ground of it, or author of credit that will vouch it. Thus here: —a bruit[24] there is in the tempted Christian's bosom, and a noise heard as it were continually whispering in his ears, 'I am a hypocrite, my heart is naught; all I do is dissembling;' but when the poor creature, in earnest, sets upon the search to find out the business—calls his soul to the bar, and falls to examine it upon those interrogatories which the word propounds for trial of our sincerity—he can fasten this charge from none of them all upon himself, and at last comes to find it but a false alarm of hell, given out to put him to some trouble and affrightment for the present, though not [to] hurt him in the end. [It is] like the politician's lie, which, though it be found false at last, yet doth them some service the time it is believed for true. As one serious question, such as this, seriously put to a gross hypocrite. is able to make him speechless, viz. —What promise in all the Bible hast thou on thy side for thy salvation?—so it is enough to deliver the troubled soul from his fears of being a hypocrite, if he would but, as David, ask his soul a Scripture reason for his disquietments—'Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?' The sincere soul hath firm ground for his faith at bottom, however a little dirt is cast by Satan over it, to make him afraid of venturing to set his foot on it. But we must also distinguish,

(2.) We must distinguish between a conscience rightly informed, and a conscience misinformed. A conscience may be regular, so as to choose the right rule, but not rightly informed how to use this rule in his particular case. Indeed, in the saint's trouble of spirit, conscience is full of Scripture, sometimes, on which it grounds its verdict, but very ill interpreted; 'O,' saith the poor soul, 'this place is against me:'—'Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile,' Psalms 32:2. 'Here,' saith he, 'is a description of a sincere soul, to be one in whose spirit there is no guile. But I find much guile in me. Therefore I am not the sincere one.' Now this is a very weak, yea, false inference. By a spirit without guile, is not meant a person that hath not the least deceitfulness and hypocrisy remaining in his heart. This is such a one, as none, since the fall, but Christ himself, was ever found, walking in mortal flesh. To be without sin, and to be without guile, in this strict sense, are the same;—a prerogative here on earth peculiar to the Lord Christ; 'who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth,' 1 Peter 2:22. And therefore, when we meet with the same phrase attributed to the saints —as to Levi, 'Iniquity was not found in his lips,' Malachi 2:6, and to Nathanael, 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile,' John 1:47—we must sense it in an inferior way, that may suit with their imperfect state here below, and not put that which only was Christ's crown on earth, and is the glorified saint's robe in heaven, to wear on the weak Christian while militant on earth—not only with a devil without, but a body of sin

within him. Wipe thine eyes again, poor soul, and then, if thou readest such places wherein the Spirit of God speaks so highly and hyperbolically of his saints' grace, thou shalt find he doth not assert the perfection of their grace as free from all mixture of sin; but rather, to comfort poor drooping souls and cross their misgiving hearts—which from the presence of hypocrisy are ready to overlook their sincerity as none at all—he expresseth his high esteem of their little grace by speaking of it as if it were perfect, and their hypocrisy as none at all. O Christian, thy God would have thee know that thou dost not more overlook thy little grace for fear of the hypocrisy thou findest mingled with it, than he doth thy great corruptions, for the dear love he bears to the little, yet true grace he sees amidst them. Abraham loved and owned his kinsman Lot when a prisoner carried away by those heathen kings. So does thy God [love and own] thy grace, [as] near in blood to him, when it is sadly yoked by the enemy in thy own bosom; and, for thy comfort know, when the book shall be opened, the word too, and also the judgment of thy own conscience in the great day of Christ. Christ will be the interpreter of both. Not the sense which thou hast in the distemper of thy troubled soul, when thou readest both with Satan's gloss put upon them, shall stand; but what Christ shall say. And to be sure he hath already declared himself so great a friend to weak grace, when on earth, by his loving converse with his disciples, and [the] free testimony he gave to his grace in them—when God knows they were but raw and weak Christians, both as to their knowledge and practice —that, poor soul, thou needst not fear he will then and there condemn, what here he commended and so dearly embraced. Yea, he that took most care for his little lambs how they might be used gently, when he was to go from them to heaven, will not be unkind himself to them, at his return, I warrant thee.

[Four characters of truth of heart or sincerity.]

Third. I will lay down such positive discoveries of sincerity as no hypocrite ever did or can reach to. Having broken the flattering glasses wherein hypocrites use to look, till they fall in love with their own painted faces, and conceit themselves sincere; as also those which disfigure the sweet countenance and natural beauty of the sincere soul, so as to make it bring the grace of God which shines on it into question; I now proceed to draw a few lineaments, and lay down some undoubted characters of this truth of heart, and godly sincerity, whereby we may have the better advantage of stating to everyone his own condition.

1. Character. A sincere heart is a new heart. Hypocrisy is called 'the old leaven;' 'purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump,' 1 Corinthians 5:7. Dough once soured with leaven, will never lose the taste of it. Neither will corrupt nature cease to be hypocritical, till it cease to be corrupt nature. Either the heart must be made new, or it will have its old quality. There may be some art used to conceal it, and take away its unsavouriness from others, for a while, as flowers and perfumes cast about a rotten carcass may do its scent; yet both the rotten carcass and the corrupt heart remain the same. They say of the peacock, that roast him as much as you will, yet his flesh, when cold, will be raw again. Truly, thus let a carnal heart do what it please—force upon itself never such a high strain of seeming piety, so that it appears fire-hot with zeal, yet stay a little, and it will come to its old complexion, and discover itself to be but what it was, naught and false. 'One heart,' and a 'new heart,' both are covenant mercies, yea, so promised, that the 'new' is promised in order to the making of the heart 'one:' 'And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart,' &c. Ezekiel 11:19. God promiseth he will give them one spirit, that is a sincere spirit to God and man; contrary to a divided heart, a heart and a

heart, the mark of hypocrisy. But how will he give it? He tell them, ‘I will give you a new spirit,’ and how will he do that? ‘I will take away the heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh;’ upon which words one very well thus glosseth, ‘I will give you one heart; which that I may so do, I will cast it anew; and that I may do this also, I will melt and soften it; as one that having many pieces of old silver, or plate lying by him, which he intends to put into one bowl, first resolves to cast it anew, and to that end throws it into the fire to melt, and so at last shuts up all in one piece.’ Indeed, by nature man’s heart is a very divided and broken thing, scattered and parcelled out, a piece to this creature, and a piece to that lust. One while, this vanity hires him, as Leah did Jacob of Rachel; anon, when he hath done some drudgery for that, he lets himself out to another. Thus divided is man and his affections. Now, the elect —whom God hath decreed to be vessels of honour, consecrated for his holy use and service—he throws into the fire of his word, that, being there softened and melted, he may by his transforming Spirit cast them anew, as it were, into a holy oneness; so that he who was before divided from God, and lost among the creatures and his lusts, that shared him among them, hath now his heart gathered in from them all to God. It looks with a single eye on God and acts for him in all it doth. If therefore thou wouldst know whether thy heart be sincere, inquire whether it be thus made new.

Hath God thrown thee into his furnace? did ever his word, like fire, take hold upon thee, so as to soften thy hard heart and melt thy drossy spirit, [so] that thou now seest that desperate hypocrisy. pride, unbelief, and the like, which before lay hid like dross in the metal, before the fire finds it out? and not only seest it [hypocrisy, &c.], but seest it sever and separate from thy soul, [in such a way] that thou who before didst bless thyself as in a good condition, now bewailest thy folly for it, heartily confessing what an unsavoury creature thou wert to God in all thou didst. The things which appeared so gaudy and fair in thy eye—thy civil righteousness, keeping thy church, slubbering over a few duties in thy family—that for them thou thoughtest heaven was, as it were, in mortgage to thee; dost now lament to think how thou didst mock God with these hypocritical pageants abroad, while thy lusts were entertained within doors in thy bosom, there sucking the heart-blood of thy dearest affections? In a word, canst thou say that thou art not only melted into sorrow for these, but that thou findest thy heart, which was so divided and distracted betwixt lusts and creatures now united to fear the name of God? Hast thou but one design—that, above all, thou pursuest, and that, viz. to approve thyself to God, though with the displeasing of all beside? one love—how thou mayest love Christ, and be beloved of him. If the streams of thy affections be thus, by the mighty power of God renewing thee, gathered into this one channel, and with a sweet violence running this way, then blessed art thou of the Lord. Thou art the sincere soul in his account, though much corruption be found in thee still, that is royling thy stream, and endeavouring to stop the free course of thy soul God-wards. This may put thee to some trouble. As the mountains and rocks do the river water running to the sea, causing some windings and turnings in its course, which else would go the nearest way, even in a direct line to it; so thy remaining corruptions may now and then put thee out of thy way of obedience. But sincerity will, like the water, go on its journey for all this, and never leave till it bring thee, though with some compass, to thy God, whom thou hast so imprinted in thy heart, as that he can never be forgot by thee. But if thou never hadst the hypocrisy of thy heart thus discovered and made hateful to thee, nor a new principle put into thy bosom, to turn the tide of thy soul contrary to the natural fall of thy affections; only thou, from the good opinion which thou hast of thyself—because of some petty flourishes thou makest in profession—takest it for granted thou art sincere, and thy heart true; I

dare pronounce thee an unclean hypocrite. The world may saint thee, possibly, but thou wilt never, as thou art, be so in God's account. When thou has tricked and spruced up thyself never so finely, into the fashion of a Christian, still thou wilt have but a saint's face, and a hypocrite's heart. It is no matter what is the sign, though an angel, that hangs without, if the devil and sin dwell within. New trimmings on an old garment will not make it new, they only give it a new look. And truly it is no good husbandry to bestow a great deal of cost in fining up an old suit that will drop in a while to tatters and rags, when a little more might purchase a new one that is lasting. And is it not better to labour to get a new heart, that all thou doest may be accepted and thou saved, than to loose all the pains thou takest in religion, and thyself also, for want of it?

2. Character. A sincere heart is a plain heart, a simple heart, sine plicis—a heart without folds. The hypocrite is of the serpent's brood. He can, as the serpent, shrink up, or let himself out for his advantage—unwilling to expose himself much to the knowledge of others. And he has reason to do so. For he knows he hath most credit where he is least known. The hypocrite is one that 'seeks deep to hide his counsel,' Isaiah 29:15; 'their heart is deep,' Psalms 64:6; their meaning and intent of heart lies nobody knows how far distant from their words. A sincere heart is like a clear stream in a brook; you may see to the bottom of his plots in his words, and take the measure of his heart by his tongue. I have heard say that diseases of the heart are seen in spots of the tongue, but the hypocrite can show a clear tongue and yet have a foul heart. He that made that proverb, loquere ut te videam—speak that I may see you, did not think of the hypocrite, who will speak that you shall not see him. The thickest clouds that he hath to wrap up his villany in, are his religious tongue and sandy profession. Wouldst thou know whether thou hast a true heart in thy bosom? look if thou hast a plain-dealing heart. See them joined, 2 Corinthians 1:12, for Paul and the rest of the faithful messengers of Christ, had their conversation among the Corinthians 'in simplicity and godly sincerity.' They had no close box in the cabinet of their hearts, in which they cunningly kept anything concealed from them of their designs, as the false apostles did. Now this plain dealing of the sincere heart appears in these three particulars.

(1.) Particular. A sincere heart deals plainly with itself, and that in two things chiefly.

(a) In searching and ransacking its own self. This it doth to its utmost skill and power. It will not be put off with pretenses, or such a mannerly excuse as Rachel gave Laban, when at the same time she sat brooding on his idols. No, an account it will have of the soul, and that such a one as may enable it to give a good account to God, upon whose warrant it does its office. O the fear which such a one shows lest any lust should escape its eye, and lie hid, as Saul in the stuff; or that any, the least grace of God, should be trodden on regardlessly by belying ir denying it! When David found his thoughts of God, which used to recreate him, and be his most pleasing company, occasion some trouble in his spirit—'I remembered God, and was troubled,' Psalms 77:3—this holy man, wondering what the matter should be, do but see what a privy search he makes. He hunts backwards and forwards, what God's former dealings had been, and 'communes with his heart, and makes diligent search' there, ver. 6; never gives over till he brings it to an issue; and finding the disturber of his peace to be in himself, he is not so tender of his reputation as to think of smothering the business or smoothing it over, but attacks the thief, indicts his sin, and confesseth the fact, to the justifying of God, whom before he had hard thoughts of. 'And I said, This is my infirmity,' Psalms 77:10; as if he had said, 'Lord, now I see the Jonas that caused the storm in my bosom, and made me uncomfortable in my affliction all this while; it is this unbelief of mine that

bowed me down to attend so to the sorrow and sense of my present affliction, that it would not suffer me to look up to former experiences, and so, while I forgat them, I thought unworthily of thee.' Here was an honest plain-dealing soul indeed. What akin art thou, O man, to holy David? is this thy way in of searching thy soul? dost thou do it in earnest, as if thou wert searching for a murderer hid in thy house; as willing to find out thy sin, as ever Papist in Queen Mary's days was to find Protestants—to discover whom they would run their swords and forks into beds and hay-mows[25], lest they should be there? Or, when thou goest about this work, art thou loath to look too far, lest thou shouldst see what thou wouldst willingly overlook? or afraid to stay too long, lest conscience should make an unpleasing report to thee? Tertullian said of the heathen persecutors, noluerunt audire, quod auditum damnare non possint—they would not let the Christians be heard, because they could not then easily have had the face to condemn them, their cause would have appeared so just. The contrary here is true. The hypocrite dares not put his state upon a fair trial, because then he could not handsomely escape condemning himself. But the sincere soul is so zealous to know its true state, that when he hath done his utmost himself to find it out, and his conscience upon this privy search clears him, yet he contents not himself here; but jealous lest self-love might blind his eyes, and occasion too favourable a report from his conscience, he calls in help from heaven, and puts himself upon God's review. 'Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? Psalms 139:21. His own conscience answers to it: 'I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies,' Psalms 139:22. Yet David, not wholly satisfied with his own single testimony, calls out to God, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart;...see if there be any wicked way in me,' Psalms 139:23-24. And wise physicians will not trust their own judgments about the state of their own health; nor sincere Christians themselves about their souls' welfare. It is God that they attend to. His judgment alone concludes and determines them. When they have prayed and opened their case to him, with David, they listen what he will say. Therefore you shall find them putting themselves under the most searching ministry, from which they never come more pleased than when their consciences are stripped naked, and their hearts exposed to their view; as the woman of Samaria, who commended the sermon, and Christ that preached it, for this unto her neighbours, that he had told her all that ever she had done, John 4:29. Whereas a false heart like not to hear of that ear. He thinks the preacher commits a trespass when he comes upon his ground, and comes up close to his conscience; as if he could, he would have an action against him for it. This stuck in Herod's stomach, that John should lay his finger on his sore place. Though he feared him, being conscious, yet he never loved him, and therefore was soon persuaded to cut off his head, which had so bold a tongue in it, that durst reprove his incestuous bed.

(b) The true heart shows its plain-dealing with itself, as in searching, so in judging itself, when once testimony comes in clear against it, and conscience tells it, 'Soul, in this duty thou betrayedst pride, in that affection, frowardness and impatience.' Such a one is not long before it proceeds to judgment, and this it doth with so much vehemency and severity, that it plainly appears zeal for God—whom he hath dishonoured—makes him forget all self-pity. He lays about him in humbling and abasing himself, as the sons of Levi in executing justice on their brethren who knew 'neither brother nor sister' in that act. Truly such an heroic act is this of the sincere soul judging itself. He is so transported and clothed with a holy fury against his sin, that he is deaf to the cry of flesh and blood, which would move him to think of a more favourable sentence. 'I have sinned,' saith David, 'against the Lord,' 2 Samuel 12:13; in another place, 'I have sinned greatly, and done very

foolishly,' 2 Samuel 24:1-25; in a third, he, as unworthy of a man's name, takes beast to himself—'so foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee,' Psalms 73:22. But with a false heart—if conscience checks him for this or that, and he perceives by this inward murmur in his bosom which way the cause will go, if he proceeds fairly on to put himself upon the trial—the court is sure to be broken up, and all put off to another hearing, which is like to be at leisure; so that, as witnesses, with delays and many put-offs, grow at last weary of the work, and will rather stay at home than make their appearance to little purpose, so conscience ceaseth to give evidence where it cannot be heard, can have no judgment against the offender.

(2.) Particular. A true heart is plain as with itself so with God also. Several ways this might appear. Take one for all; and that is in his petitions and requests at the throne of grace. The hypocrite in prayer juggles, he asks what he would not thank God to give him. There is a mystery of iniquity in his praying against iniquity. Now this will appear in two particulars, whether we be plain-hearted or not.

(a) Observe whether thou beest deeply afflicted in spirit when thy request is not answered, or regardest not what success it hath. Suppose it be a sin thou prayest against, or some grace thou prayest for; what is thy temper all the while thy messenger stays, especially if it be long? Thou prayest, and corruption abates not, grace grows not. Now thy hypocrisy or sincerity will appear. If thou art sincere, every moment will be an hour, every hour a day, a day a year, till thou hearest some news from heaven. 'Hope deferred' will make 'the heart sick.' Doth not the sick man that sends for the physician think long for his coming? O he is afraid his messenger should miss of him, or that he will not come with him, or that he shall die before he bring his physic. A thousand fears disturb him, and make him passionately wish he were there. Thus the sincere soul passeth those hours with a sad heart that it lives without a return of its request. 'I am a woman,' said Hannah to Eli, 'of a sorrowful spirit,' 1 Samuel 1:15. And why so? Alas, she had from year to year prayed to God, and no answer was yet come. Thus saith the soul, 'I am one of a bitter spirit, I have prayed for a soft heart, a believing heart, many a day and month; but it is not come. I am afraid I was not sincere in the business. Could my request so long have hung in the clouds else?' Such a soul is full of fear and troubles—like a merchant that hath a rich ship at sea, who cannot sleep on land till he sees her, or hears of her. But if, when thou hast sent up thy prayer, thou canst cast off the care and thoughts of the business, as if praying were only like children's scribbling over pieces of paper—which when they have done, they lay aside and think no more of them—if thou canst take denials at God's hands for such things as these, and blank no more than a cold suitor doth when he hears not from her whom he never really loved—it breaks not thy rest, embitters not thy joy—if so, a false heart set thee on work. And take heed that, instead of answering thy prayer, God doth not answer the secret desire of thy heart, which should he do, thou art undone for ever.

(b) Observe whether thou usest the means to obtain that which thou prayest God to give. A false heart sits still itself, while it sets God on work; like him that, when his cart was set in a slough, cried, Jupiter, help! but would not put his own shoulder to the wheel. If corruptions may be mortified and killed for him, as Goliath was for the Israelites—he like them looking on, and not put to strike stroke—so it is; but for any encounter with them, or putting himself to the trouble of using any means to obtain the victory, he is so eaten up with sloth and cowardice, that it is as grievous he thinks, as to sit still in slavery and bondage to them. But a sincere soul is conscientiously laborious. 'Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens,' Lamentations 3:41.

That is, saith Bernard, oremus et laboremus—let us pray and use the endeavour. The hypocrite's tongue wags, but the sincere soul's feet walk, and his hands work.

(3.) Particular. The sincere soul discovers its plainness and simplicity to men. 'We have had our conversation' among you, saith Paul to the Corinthians, 'in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom.' The Christian is one that cannot subject his heart to his head—his conscience to his policy. He commits himself to God in well-doing, and fears not others, if he be not conscious to himself; and therefore he dares not make a hole in his conscience to keep his skin whole, but freely and openly voucheth God without dissembling his profession; while the hypocrite shifts his sails, and puts forth such colours as his policy and worldly interest adviseth. If the coast be clear, and no danger at hand, he will appear religious as any; but no sooner he makes discovery of any hazard it may put him to, but he tacks about, and shapes another course, making no bones of juggling with God and man. He counts that his right road which leads to his temporal safety. But quite contrary is the upright, 'The highway of the upright is to depart from evil,' Proverbs 16:17. This is the road that this true traveller jogs on in, and if he be at any time seen out of it, it is upon no other account, than a man that hath unwillingly lost his way—never quiet till he hath strike into it again.

3. Character. The sincere, true-hearted Christian is uniform. As truth in the doctrine differs, from its opposite, that it is one, error diverse—there is no harmony among errors, as among truths—so truth of heart, or sincerity, is known from hypocrisy by the same character. Indeed, truth in the heart is but the copy and transcript of the other. They agree, as the face in the glass doth with the face in the man that looks in it, or as the image in the wax with the sculpture in the seal from which it is derived. Therefore, if truth in the word be uniform and harmonious, then truth in the heart, which is nothing but the impression of that there, must also be so. A sincere Christian in the tenure of his course is like himself, vir unius coloris—a man of one colour; not like your changeable stuffs, so dyed that you may, by waving of them divers ways, see divers colours. There is a threefold uniformity in the sincere Christian's obedience. He is uniform, quoad objectum, subjectum, et circumstantias obedientiœ—as to the object, subject, and several circumstances that accompany his obedience.

(1.) The sincere Christian is uniform quoad objectum—as to the object. The hypocrite indeed is in with one duty and out with another. Like a globous body, he toucheth the law of God in one point—some particular command he seems zealous for—but meets not in the rest; whereas the sincere heart lies close to the whole law of God in his desire and endeavour. The upright man's foot is said to 'stand in an even place,' Psalms 26:12, he walks not haltingly and uncomelily, as those who go in unequal ways, which are hobbling and up and down; or [as] those whose feet and legs 'are not even'—as Solomon saith, the legs of the lame are not even,' and so cannot stand 'in an even place,' because one is long and the other short. The sincere man's feet are even, and [his] legs of a length, as I may say;—his care alike conscientious to the whole will of God. The hypocrite, like the badger, hath one foot shorter than another; or, like a foundered horse, he doth not stand, as we say, right of all four—one foot, at least, you shall perceive he favours, loath to put it down. The Pharisees pretended much zeal to the first table. They prayed and fasted in an extraordinary manner, but they prayed for their prey, and, when they had fasted all day, they sup at the cost of a poor widow whose 'house' they mean to 'devour.' A sad fast, that ends in oppression, and only serves to get them a ravenous appetite, to swallow others' estates under a

pretence of devotion! The moralist is very punctual in his dealings with men, but very thievish in his carriage to God. Though he will not wrong his neighbour of a farthing, [he] sticks not to rob God of greater matters. His love, fear, faith are due debt to God, but he makes no conscience of paying them. It is ordinary in Scripture to describe a saint—a godly person—by a particular duty, a single grace. Sometimes his character is 'he that feareth an oath,' Ecclesiastes 9:2; sometimes, 'one that loves the brethren,' 1 John 3:14; and so of the rest. And why? but because, wherever one duty is conscientiously performed, the heart stands ready for any other. As God hath enacted all his commands with the same authority —wherefore, it is said, Exodus 20:1, 'God spake all these words,' one as well as the other—so God infuseth all grace together, and writes not one particular law in the heart of his children, but the whole law, which is a universal principle, inclining the soul impartially to all, so that if thou likest not all, thou art sincere in none.

(2.) The sincere Christian is uniform quoad subjectum—as to the subject. The whole man, so far as renewed, moves one way. All the powers and faculties of the soul join forces, and have a sweet accord together. When the understanding makes discovery of a truth, then conscience improves her utmost authority on the will, commanding it, in the name of God, whose officer it is, to entertain it; the will, so soon as conscience knocks, opens herself, and lets it in; the affections, like dutiful handmaids, seeing it a welcome guest to the will—their mistress—express their readiness to wait on it, as becomes them in their places. But in the hypocrite it is not so. There one faculty fights against another. Never are they all found to conspire and meet in a friendly vote. When there is light in the understanding, the man knows this truth and that duty; then, oft, conscience is bribed for executing its office—it doth not so much as check him for the neglect of it. Truth stands as it were before the soul, and conscience will not so much as befriend it as to knock, and rouse up the soul to let it in. If conscience be overcome to plead its cause, and shows some activity in pressing for entertainment, it is sure, either to have a churlish denial, with a frown, for its pains—in being so busy to bring such an unwelcome guest with it—as the froward wife doth by her husband, when he brings home with him one she doth not like; or else only a feigned entertainment, the more subtlely to hide the secret enmity it hath against it.

(3.) The sincere soul is uniform quoad circumstantias obedientiœ—as to the circumstances of his obedience and holy walking such as are time, place, and company and manner. He is uniform as to time. His religion is not like a holiday suit—put on only at set times; but come to him when you will, you shall find him clad alike, holy on the Lord's day, and holy on the week-day too. 'Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times,' Psalms 106:3. It is a sign it is not a man's complexion, when the colour he hath while he sits by a fire dies away soon after. There are some, if you would see their goodness and be acquainted with their godliness, you must hit the right time, or else you will find none. [They are] like some flowers that are seen but some months in the year; or like some physicians that they call forenoon men—they that would speak with them to any purpose, must come in the morning, because, commonly, they are drunk in the afternoon. Thus, may be, in the morning, you may take the hypocrite on his knees in a saint's posture, but, when that fit is over, you shall see little of God in all his course till night brings him again, of course, to the like duty. The watch is naught that goes only at first winding up, and stands all the day after; and so is the heart, sure, that desires not always to keep in spiritual motion. I confess there may be a great difference in the standing of two watches. In one the difference may arise from the very watch itself, because it hath not the right make—and it will ever be so, till the

work is altered; another, possibly, is true work, only some dust clogs the wheels, or [a] fall hath a little battered it, which removed, it will go well again. And there is as great difference between the sincere soul and the hypocrite in this case. The sincere soul may be interrupted in its spiritual motion and Christian course, but it is from some temptation that at present clogs him. But he hath a new nature, which inclines to a constant motion in holiness, and doth, upon the removing the present impediment, return to its natural exercise of godliness. The hypocrite, however, fails in the very constitution and frame of his spirit; he hath not a principle of grace in him to keep him moving.

Again, the sincere Christian is uniform as to place and company. Wherever he goes he carries his rule with him, which squares him. Within doors, amidst his nearest relations, David's resolve is his, 'He will walk within his house with a perfect heart,' Psalms 101:2. Follow him abroad; he carries his conscience with him, and doth not bid it—as Abraham his servants, when ascending the mount—to stay behind till he comes back. The Romans had a law that every one should, wherever he went, wear a badge of his trade in his hat or outward vestment, that he might be known. The sincere Christian never willingly lays aside the badge of his holy profession. No place nor company turns him out of the way that is called holy. Indeed his conscience doth not make him foredo his prudence. He knows how to distinguish between place and place, company and company; and therefore when cast among boisterous sinners, and scornful ones, he doth not betray religion to scorn, by throwing its pearls before such as would trample on them, and rend him. Yet he is very careful lest his prudence should put his uprightness to any hazard. 'I will behave myself wisely,' saith David, Psalms 101:2, 'in a perfect way;' that is, I will show myself as wise as I can, so I may also be upright. Truly, that place and company is like the torrid zone, uninhabitable to the gracious soul, where profaneness is so hot, that sincerity cannot look out, and show itself by seasonable counsel, and reproof, with safety to the saint; and therefore, they that have neither so much zeal as to protest against the sins of such, nor so much care of themselves as to withdraw from thence, where they can only receive evil and do no good, have just cause to call their sincerity into question.

4. Character. The sincere Christian is progressive—never at his journey's end till he gets to heaven. This keeps him always in motion, advancing in his desires and endeavours forward; he is thankful for little grace, but not content with great measures of grace. 'When I awake,' saith David, 'I shall be satisfied with thy likeness,' Psalms 17:15. He had many a sweet entertainment at the house of God in his ordinances. The Spirit of God was the messenger that brought him many a covered dish from God's table—inward consolations, which the world knew not of. Yet David has not enough. It is heaven alone that can give him his full draught. They say the Gauls, when they first tasted of the wines of Italy, were so taken with their lusciousness and sweetness, that they could not be content to trade thither for this wine, but resolved to conquer the land where they grew. Thus the sincere soul thinks it not enough to receive a little, now and then, of grace and comfort, from heaven, by trading and holding commerce at a distance with God in his ordinances here below; but projects and meditates a conquest of that holy land, and blessed place, that he may drink the wine of that kingdom in that kingdom. This raiseth the soul to high and noble enterprises —how it may attain to further degrees of graces, every day more than another, and so climb nearer and nearer heaven. He that aims at the sky, shoots higher than he that means only to hit a tree. 'I press,' saith Paul, 'toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,' Php 3:14. Others admired Paul's attainments—O that they had Paul's grace, and then they

should be happy!—but he would count himself very unhappy if he might have no more. He professeth he hath not apprehended what he runs for. The prize stands not in the mid■way, but at the end of the race; and therefore he puts on with full speed, yea, makes it the trial of uprightness in all. ‘Let us therefore, as many as be perfect’—that is sincere—‘be thus minded,’ Php 3:15. It is the hypocrite that stints himself in the things of God. A little knowledge he would have, that may help him to discourse of religion among the religious; and for more, he leaves it, as more fitting for the preacher than himself. Some outward formalities he likes, and makes use of in profession—as attendance on public ordinances—and sins which would make him stink among his neighbours he forbears; but as for pressing into more inward and nearer communion with God in ordinances, labouring to get his heart more spiritual, the whole body of sin more and more mortified, this was never his design: like some slighty tradesman, that never durst look so high as to think of being rich, but thinks it well enough if he can but hold his shop-doors open, and keep himself out of jail, though with a thousand shifting tricks.

Having laid down characters of the sincere heart, it will be necessary to make some improvement of them, as the report shall be that conscience makes in your bosoms, upon putting yourselves to the trial of your spiritual states by the same. Now the report that conscience makes, after examination of yourselves by those notes [or doctrines] prefixed, will amount to one of these three inferences. Either, First. Conscience will after examination condemn you as hypocrites: or, Second. It will, upon diligent inquiry, give fair testimony as to your sincerity; or, Third. It will, upon inquiry, bring you in as ignorant, and leave you doubting souls, who are indeed sincere, but dare not be persuaded to think yourselves so. That I may therefore find thee, reader, at one door, if I miss thee at another, I shall speak severally to all three.

[Directions to those who, upon trial, are found insincere and false-hearted.]

First Sort. I come first to those who upon the trial are cast—whose consciences, after examination, condemn as hypocrites. Evidence comes in so clear and strong against them, that their conscience cannot hold, but tells them plainly, ‘if these be the marks of sincerity, then they are hypocrites.’ The improvement I would make of this trial for your sakes, is to give a word of counsel—what in this case you are to do that you may become sincere.

1. Direction. Get thy heart deeply affected with thy present dismal state. No hope of cure till thou beest chased into some sense and feeling of thy deplored condition. Physic cannot be given so long as the patient is asleep; and it is the nature of this disease to make the soul heavy-eyed, and dispose it to a kind of slumber of conscience, by reason of the flattering thoughts the hypocrite hath of himself, from some formalities he performs above others in religion, which fume up from his deceived heart, like so many pleasing vapours from the stomach to the head, and bind up his spiritual senses into a kind of stupidity, yea, cause many pleasing dreams to entertain him with vain hopes and false joys, which vanish as soon as he wakes and comes to himself. The Pharisees, the most notorious hypocrites of their age, how fast asleep were they in pride and carnal confidence, despising all the world in comparison of themselves —not afraid to commend themselves to God, yea, prefer themselves before others: ‘God, I thank thee, that I am not like this publican’—as if they would tell God, they did look to find some more respect from him than others, so far beneath them, had at his hand! Therefore Christ, in his dealing with this proud generation of men, useth an unusual strain of speech. His voice, which to others was till and soft, is heard like

thunder breaking out of the clouds, when he speaks to them. How many dreadful claps have we almost together in the same chapter fall on their heads, out of the mouth of our meek and sweet Saviour. ‘Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees,’ Matthew 23:1-39. No less than eight woes doth Christ discharge upon them, as so many case-shot together, that by multiplying the woes, he might show not only the certainty of the hypocrite’s damnation, but precedency also; and yet how many of that rank do we read of to be awakened and converted by these rousing sermons? Some few there were indeed, that the disease might not appear incurable; but very few, that we may tremble the more of falling into it, or letting it grow upon us.

Peter learned of his master how to handle the hypocrite. Having to do with one far gone in this disease, Simon Magus, he steeps his words, as it were, in vinegar and gall. ‘Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God,’ Acts 8:21. There he lays the weight of his charge, that he carried a hypocritical heart in his bosom, which was a thousand times worse than his simoniacal fact, though that was foul enough. It was not barely that fact, but, proceeding from a heart inwardly rotten and false—which God gave Peter an extraordinary spirit to discern—that proved him to be ‘in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity;’ only in this better on it than the damned souls in hell, that they were in the fire, he in the bond of iniquity, like a faggot bound up, fit for it, but not cast in; they past hope, and he with so much left as might amount to a ‘perhaps if the thought of his heart might be forgiven.’ To give but one instance more, and that of a whole church, hypocritical Laodicea. The Spirit of God takes her up more sharply than all the rest, which, though he charged with some particular miscarriages, yet he finds something among them he own and commends; but in her, because she was conceited already as this leaven of hypocrisy naturally puffs up, he mentions nothing that was good in her, lest it should feed that humour that did so abound already, and take away the smartness of the reproof, which was the only probable means left of recovering her. All that inclines to sleep is deadly to a lethargic; and all that is soothing and cockering[26], dangerous to hypocrites. Some say the surest way to cure a lethargy, is to turn it into a fever. To be sure, the safest way to deal with the hypocrite, is to bring him from his false peace to a deep sense of his true misery. Let this then be thy first work. Aggravate thy sin and put thy soul into mourning for it. When a person who was, but the priest—who was to judge in cases of leprosy—pronounced unclean, the leper thus convicted was to rend his clothes, go bare-headed, and put a covering upon his upper lip—all ceremonies used by mourners—and to cry ‘Unclean, unclean,’ Leviticus 13:45. Thus do thou, as a true mourner, sit down and lament this plague of thy heart. Cry out bitterly, ‘Unclean, unclean I am,’ Eze. 15:17[27]. Thou art not fit, by reason of thy hypocritical heart, to come near God or his saints, but to be, like the leper, separate from both. If thou hadst such a loathsome disease reigning on thee as did pollute the very seat thou sittest on, bed thou liest in, and as would drop such filthiness on everything thou comest near—even into the meat thou eatest, and cup thou drinkest from—that should make all abandon thy nasty company; how great would thy sorrow be, as thou didst sit desolate and musing alone of thy doleful condition! Such a state thy hypocrisy puts thee into. A plague it is, more offensive to God than such a disease could make thee to men. It runs like a filthy sore through all the duties and goodly coverings that you can put over it, and defiles them and thee so, that God will take an offering out of the devil’s hand as soon as out of thine, while thou continuest a hypocrite. Further, did the saints of God, with whom thou hast, may be, so much credit as to be admitted to join with them at present, know thee, they would make as much from thee, as from him on whom they should see the plague-tokens. But shouldst not thy disease be known till thou art dead, and so

keep thy reputation with them, yea, possibly by them be thought, when thou diest, a saint—will this give thee any content in hell, that they are speaking well of thee on earth? ‘O poor Aristotle,’ said one, ‘thou art praised where thou art not, and burned where thou art!’ He meant it was poor comfort to that great heathen philosopher to be admired by men of learning, that have kept up his fame from generation to generation, if he all the while be miserable in the other world. So here, O poor hypocrite, that art ranked among saints on earth, but punished among devils in hell.

2. Direction. When thy heart is deeply affected with the sin and misery of thy hypocritical heart, thou must be convinced of thy insufficiency to make a cure on thyself. Hypocrisy is like a fistula sore. It may seem a little matter by the small orifice it hath; but is therefore one of the hardest among wounds to be cured, because it is so hard to find the bottom of it. O take heed thy heart doth not put a cheat upon thyself. It will be very forward to promise it will lie no more, be false and hypocritical no more; but, take counsel of a wise man, who bids thee not rely on what it saith: ‘He is a fool that trusts his own heart.’ O how many die, because loath to be at pains and cost to go to a skilful physician at first. Take heed of self-resolutions and self-reformations. Sin is like the king’s-evil[28]; God, not ourselves can cure it. He that will be tinkering with his own heart, and not seek out to heaven for help, will in the end find [that] where he mends one hole, he will make two worse; where he reforms one sin, he will fall into the hands of many more dangerous.

3. Direction. Betake thyself to Christ, as the physician on whose skill and faithfulness thou wilt rely entirely for cure. Si pereundum inter peritissimos—if thou perish, resolve to perish at his door. But for thy comfort, know that never any whom he undertook miscarried under his hand; nor ever refused he to undertake the cure of any that came to him on such an errand. He blamed those hypocrites, John 5:40,John 5:43, because they were ready to throw away their lives, by trusting any empiric who should come in his own name without any approbation or authority from God for the work, but ‘would not come to him that they might have life,’ thought he came in his Father’s name, and had his seal and license to practise his skill on poor souls for their recovery. And he that blamed those for not coming, will not, cannot, be angry with thee who comest. It is his calling; and men do use to thrust customers out, but invite them into their shops. When Christ was on earth, he gave this reason why he conversed so much with publicans and sinners, and so little among the Pharisees, because there was more work for him, Matthew 9:11-12. Men set up where they think trade will be quickest. Christ came to be a physician to sick souls. Pharisees were so well in their own conceit, that Christ saw he should have little to do among them, and so he applied himself to those who were more sensible of their sickness. If thou, poor soul, beest but come to thyself so far, as to groan under thy cursed hypocrisy, and directest these thy groans in a prayer to heaven for Christ’s help, thou shalt have thy physician soon with thee, never fear it. He hath not, since he ascended, laid down his calling, but still follows his practice as close as ever. We find him sending his advice from heaven in that excellent receipt to Laodicea—what she should do for her recovery out of this very disease of hypocrisy—‘I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed,’ &c., Revelation 3:18; as if he had said, ’Laodicea, thou tradest in false ware, deceiving thyself and others with appearances for realities, counterfeit graces for true; thy gold is dross, thy garments rotten rags, which do not hide but discover thy shame. Come to me, and thou shalt have that which is for thy turn, and better, cheap also.’ For though here is mention of buying, no more is meant than to come with a buyer’s spirit, valuing Christ and his grace so high, that if they were to be bought, though with all

the money in thy purse, yea blood in thy veins, thou wouldst have them; and not go home and say thou wert hardly used neither. It is the thirsty soul that shall be satisfied, only look thy thirst be right and deep.

(1.) Look that thy thirst be right, a heart■thirst and not simply a conscience■thirst. It is a very different heat that causeth the one and the other. Hell-fire may inflame the conscience, so as to make the guilty sinner thirst for Christ's blood to quench the torment which the wrath of God hath kindled in his bosom! But it is heaven■fire, and only that, which begets a kindly heat in the heart, that breaks out in longings of soul for Christ and his Spirit with sweet cooling dews of grace to slack and extinguish the fire of lust and sin.

(2.) Look that thy thirst be deep. Physicians tell us of a thirst which comes from the dryness of the throat, and not any great inward heat of the stomach; and this thirst may be quenched with a gargle in the mouth, which is spit out again, and goes not down. And truly there is something like this in many that sit under the preaching of the gospel. Some light touches are now and then found upon the spirits of men and women, occasioned by some spark that falls on their affections in hearing the word, whereby they on a sudden express some desires after Christ and his grace in such a way that you would think they would in all haste for heaven; but, being flighty flashes and weak velleities[29], rather than strong volitions and deep desires, their heat is soon over and their thirst quenched; with a little present sweetness they taste, while they are hearing a sermon of Christ—which they spit out again as soon as they are gone home almost—as well as may be, though they never enjoy more of him. Labour therefore for such a deep sense of thy own wretchedness by reason of thy hypocrisy, and of Christ's excellency by reason of that fulness of grace in him which makes him able to cure thee of thy distemper; that, as a man thoroughly athirst can be content with nothing but drink, and not a little of that neither, but a full satisfying draught, whatever it costs him, so thou mayest not be bribed with anything besides Christ and his sanctifying grace—not with gifts, professions, or pardon itself, if it could be severed from grace; no, not with a little sprinkling of grace; but mayest long for whole floods, wherewith thou mayest be fully purged and freed of thy cursed lust which now so sadly oppresseth thee. This frame of spirit would put thee under the promise—heaven's security—that thou shalt not lose thy longing. If thou shouldst ask silver and gold, and seek any worldly enjoyment at this rate, thou mightst spend thy breath and pains in vain. God might let thee roar, like Dives, in hell, in the midst of those flames which thy covetous lust hath kindled, without affording a drop of that, to cool thy tongue, which thou so violently pantest after. But if Christ and his grace be the things thou wouldst have, yea must have, truly then thou shalt have them. 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled,' Matthew 5:6.

[Exhortation to those who upon trial are found sincere, to wear the girdle of truth close around, with directions for its daily exercise.]

Second Sort. I come to the second sort, such, I mean, whose consciences, upon diligent inquiry, give a fair testimony for their sincerity, that their hearts are true and upright. That which I have by way of counsel to leave with them is, to gird this belt which they have about them, close in the exercise and daily practice of it. Gird this belt, I say, close to thee, that is, be very careful to walk in the daily practice and exercise of thy uprightness. Think every morning thou art not dressed till this girdle be put on. The proverb is true here, 'Ungirt, unblessed.' Thou art no company for God, that

day in which thou art insincere. If Abraham will walk with God, he must be upright; and canst thou live a day without his company? Rachel paid dear for her mandrakes to part with her husband for them. A worse bargain that soul makes, that to purchase some worldly advantage, pawns its sincerity, which gone, God is sure to follow after. And as thou canst not walk with God, so thou canst not expect any blessing from God. The promises, like a box of precious ointment, are kept to be broken over the head of the upright: 'Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?' Micah 2:7. And sure it is ill walking in that way where there is found no word from God to bid us good speed. Some are so superstitious, that if a hare crosseth them, they will turn back, and go no farther that day. But a bold man is he that dares go on when the word of God lies cross his way. Where the word doth not bless, it curseth; where it promiseth not, it threatens. A soul is in its uprightness, approving itself to God, is safe. [It is] like a traveller going about his lawful business betwixt sun and sun; if any harm, or loss comes to such a soul, God will bear him out. The promise is on his side, and by pleading it he may recover his loss at God's hands, who stands bound to keep him harmless. See to this purpose Psalms 84:11. But they are directions, not motives, I am in this place to give.

1. Direction. If thou wouldst walk in the exercise of thy sincerity, walk in the view of God. That of Luther is most true, omnia præcepta sunt in primo tanquam capite—all the commands are wrapped up in the first. For, saith he, all sin is a contempt of God; and so we cannot break any other commands, but we break the first. 'We think amiss of God before we do amiss against God.' This God commended to Abraham instar omnium—of sovereign use to preserve his sincerity, 'Walk before me, and be thou upright,' Genesis 17:1. This kept the girdle of Moses strait and close to his loins—that he was neither bribed with the treasures of Egypt, nor brow-beaten out of his sincerity with the anger of so great a king—'for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible,' Hebrews 11:27. He had a greater than Pharaoh in his eye, and this kept him right.

(1.) Walk, Christian, in the view of God's omniscience. This is a girding consideration. Say to thy soul, cave videt Deus—take heed, God seeth. It is under the rose, as the common phrase is, that treason is spoken, when subjects think they are far enough from their king's hearing; but did such know the prince to be under the window, or behind the hangings, their discourse would be more loyal. This made David so upright in his walking, 'I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: for all my ways are before thee,' Psalms 119:168. If Alexander's empty chair, which his captains, when they met in counsel, set before them, did awe them so, as to keep them in good order; what would it, for to set God looking on us in our eye? The Jews covered Christ's face, and then buffeted him. So does the hypocrite. He first saith in his heart, 'God sees not,' or at least he forgets that he sees; and then makes bold to sin against him, Mark 14:60. He is like that foolish bird which runs her head among the reeds, and thinks herself safe from the fowler;—as if, because she did not see him, therefore he could not see her. Te mihi abscondam, non me tibi. Aug.—I may hide thee from my eye, but not myself from thine. Thou mayest, poor creature, hide God by thy ignorance and atheism, so that thou shalt not see him, but thou canst not so hide thyself as that he shall not see thee. 'All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Hebrews 4:13. O remember thou hast to do with God in all thou doest, whether thou beest in shop or closet, church or market; and he will have to do with thee, for he sees thee round, and can tell from whence thou comest, when, like Gehazi before his master, thou enterest into his presence, and standest demurely before him in worship, as if thou hadst been nowhere. Then he

can tell thee thy thoughts, and without any labour of pumping them out by thy confession, set them in order before thee; yea, thy thoughts that are gone from thee, like Nebuchadnezzar's dream from him, and thou hast forgot what they were at such a time, and in such a place, forty, fifty years ago, God hath them all in the light of his countenance, as atoms are in the beams of the sun, and he can, yea will, give thee a sight of them that they shall walk in thy conscience to thy horror, as John Baptist's ghost did Herod's.

(2.) Walk in the view of God's providence, and care over thee. When God bids Abraham be upright, he strengthens his faith on him, 'I am God Almighty, walk before me and be thou perfect;' as if he had said, 'Act thou for me, and I will take care for thee.' When once we begin to call his care into question towards us, then will our sincerity falter in our walking before him. Hypocrisy lies hid in distrust and jealousy, as in its cause. If the soul dare not rely on God, it cannot be long true to God. Abraham was jealous of Abimelech, therefore he dissembled with him. Thus do we with God. We doubt God's care, and then live by our wit, and carve for ourselves. 'Up, make us gods,' they say, 'we know not what is become of Moses.' The unbelieving Jews, flat against the command of God, keep manna while [i.e. until] the morrow, Exodus 16:19. And why? but because they had not faith to trust him for another meal. This is the old weapon the devil hath ever used to beat the Christian out of his sincerity with. 'Curse God and die,' said he to Job by his wife. As if she had said, What! wilt [thou] yet hold the castle of thy sincerity for God? Captains think they may yield when no relief comes to them, and subjects account [that] if the prince protect them not, they are not bound to serve him. Thou hast lain thus long in an afflicted state, besieged close with sorrows on every hand, and no news to this day comes from heaven of any care that God takes for thee; therefore 'curse God, and die.' Yea, Christ had him using the same engine to draw him off his faithfulness to his Father, when he bade him turn stone into bread. We see, therefore, of what importance it is to strengthen our faith on the care and providence of God, for our provision and protection, which is the cause why God hath made such abundant provision to shut all doubting and fear of this out of the hearts of his people. The promises are so fitly placed, that as safe harbours, upon what coast soever we are sailing—condition we are in—if any storm arise at sea, or enemy chase us, we may put into some one or other of them, and be safe; though this one were enough to serve our turn, could we find no more: 'For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them,' or strongly to hold with them, 'whose heart is perfect toward him,' 2 Chronicles 16:9. God doth not set others to watch, but his own eyes keep sentinel. Now to watch with the child, like the own mother, there is the immediacy of his providence. We may say of sincere souls, what is said of Canaan, Deuteronomy 11:12, 'It is a land,' so they are a people, 'which the Lord thy God careth for; the eyes of the Lord thy God are always on them.' Again, 'his eyes run to and fro;' there is the vigilancy of his providence. No danger, no temptation, finds him napping; but, as a faithful watchman is ever walking up and down, so the eyes of God 'run to and fro.' 'He that keepeth Israel'—the sincere soul which is the 'Israelite indeed'—shall neither slumber nor sleep,' Psalms 121:4. That is, not little or much—not slumber by day, or sleep by night. Two words are there used; one that signifies the short sleep used in the heat of the day; the other for the more sound sleep of the night.

(3.) Throughout the whole earth, there is the universality and extent of God's care. It is an encompassing providence; it walks the rounds—not any one sincere soul left out the line of his care. He has the number of them to a man, and all are alike cared for. We disfigure the beautiful face of

God’s providence, when we fancy him to have a cast of his eye, and care, to one more than another.

(4.) To show himself strong in the behalf of them, there is the efficacy of his care and providence. His eyes do not ‘run to and fro’ to espy dangers, and only tell us what they are; as the sentinel wakes the city when any enemy comes, but cannot defend them from their fury. A child may do this, yea, the geese did this for Rome’s capitol. But God watcheth not to tell us our dangers, but to save us from them. The saints must needs be a ‘happy people,’ because a ‘people saved by the Lord,’ Deuteronomy 33:29. God doth not only see with his eyes, but also fights with his eyes. He gave such a look to the Egyptians, as turned the sea on them to their destruction.

2. Direction. If thou wouldst walk in the exercise of thy sincerity, labour to act from love, and not fear. O, slavish fear and sincerity cannot agree. If one be in the increase, the other is always in the wane. See them opposed, 2 Timothy 1:7, ‘For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind,’ that is, sincere, where he implies that fear is weak, and impotent—easily scared from God, his truth, and service; and not so only, but unsound also—not trusting such a one with any great matter. The slave though he works hard, because indeed he dares no other, yet is soon drawn into a conspiracy against his master, because he hates him while he fears him. We see this not only among the Turks—against whom those Christians used as absolute slaves by them in their galleys do, when they have advantage in sight, often purchase their own liberty by cutting the throats of their tyrant masters—but also in kingdoms, where subjects rather fear than love their princes. How ready they are to invite another into the throne, or welcome any that should court them! Thus fast and loose will he be with God, that is pricked on with the sword’s point of his wrath, and not drawn with the cords of his love. Israel is an example beyond parallel for this, ‘When he slew them, then they sought him;...nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues; for their heart was not right with him,’ Psalms 78:34,Psalms 78:36. They feared God, and loved their lusts, and therefore they betrayed his glory at every turn into their hands; as Herod did the head of John, whom he feared, into her hands whom he loved. And truly there is too much of this slavish fear to be found in the saints’ bosoms, or else the whip should not be so often in God’s hand. We find God checking his people for this, and make their servile spirit the reason of his severity towards them. ‘Is Israel a servant? is he a homeborn slave? why is he spoiled?’ Jeremiah 2:14. As if God had said, What is the reason I must use thee, who art my dear child, as coarsely as if thou wert a servant, a slave, laying on blow after blow upon thy back with such heavy judgments? wouldst thou know, read Jeremiah 2:17. ‘Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way?’ Thou mayest thank thyself for this my unusual dealing with thee. If the child will forget his own ingenuity, and nothing but blows will work with him, then the father must deal with his child according to his servile spirit. When God led Israel by the way, as a father his child, lovingly, he flung from him; and if they would not lead by love, then no wonder he makes them drive by fear. O Christian, act more by love, and thou wilt save God’s putting thee into fear with his whip. Love will keep thee close and true to him. The very character of love is, it ‘seeketh not her own, 1 Corinthians 13:5; and what is it to be sincere, but when the Christian seeks Christ’s interests, and not his own? Jonathan loved David dearly. This made him incur his father’s wrath, trample on the hopes of a kingdom which he had for him and his posterity, rather than be false to his friend. Lot delivers up his daughters to the lust of the Sodomites, rather than

his guests. Samson could not conceal that great secret, wherein his strength lay, from Delilah whom he loved, though it was as much as his life was worth to blab it to her. Love is the great conqueror of the world. Thus will thy soul be inflamed with love to Christ—set all thy worldly interest adrift, rather than put his honour to the least hazard. Abraham did not more willingly put his sacrificing knife to the ram's throat to save his dear Isaac's life, than thou wilt be to sacrifice thy life to keep thy sincerity alive. Love is compared to fire; the nature of which is to assimilate to itself all that comes near it, or to consume them. It turns all into fire or ashes. Nothing that is heterogeneous can long dwell with its own simple pure nature. Thus love to Christ will not suffer the near neighbourhood of anything in its bosom that is derogatory to Christ. Either it will reduce, or abandon it, be it pleasure, profit, or whatever else. Abraham, who loved Hagar and Ishmael in their due place, when the one began to justle with her mistress, and the other to jeer and mock at Isaac, he packs them both out of doors. Love to Christ will not suffer thee to side with anything against Christ, but take his part with him against any that oppose him, and so long thy sincerity is out of danger.

3. Direction. If thou wouldst walk in the exercise of thy sincerity, meditate often on the simplicity and sincerity of God's heart to his saints. What more powerful consideration can be thought on to make us true to God, than the faithfulness and truth of God to us? Absalom, though as vile a dissembler as lived, yet, when Hushai came out to him, he suspected him. 'And Absalom said to Hushai, Is this thy kindness to thy friend? why wentest thou not with thy friend?' 2 Samuel 16:17. His own conscience told him it was horrible baseness for him, that had found David such a true friend now to join in rebellious arms against him; and though Absalom that said this did offer greater violence to this law of love, yet he questioned, it seems, whether any durst be so wicked besides himself. When therefore, Christian, thou findest thy heart warping into any insincere practice, lay it under this consideration, and if anything of God and his grace be in thee, it will unbend thee and bring thee to rights again. Ask thy soul, 'Is this thy kindness to thy friend;' such a friend God hath been, is, and surely will be to thee for ever? God, when his people sin, to put them to the blush, asks them whether he gives them cause for their unkind and undutiful carriages to him, 'Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me,' Jeremiah 2:5. So Moses, intending to pay Israel home, before he goes up and dies on Nebo, for all their hypocrisy, murmuring, and horrible rebellions against God, all along from first setting out of Egypt to that day, he brings in their charge, and draws out the several indictments, that they were guilty of. Now to add the greater weight to every one, he, in the forefront of all his speech, shows what a God he is that they have done all this against. He makes way to the declaiming against their sins, by the proclaiming of the glory of God against whom they were committed. 'I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God,' Deuteronomy 32:3. And very observable it is, what of God's name he publisheth, the more to aggravate their sins, and help them to conceive of their heinous nature. 'He is the Rock, his work is perfect;...a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.' ver. 4. He chooseth to instance in the truth and sincerity of God's heart to them, in all his dispensations, as that which might make them most ashamed of their doings. Now because this one consideration may be of such use to hedge in the heart, and keep it close to God in sincerity, I shall show wherein the truth and sincerity of God's love appears to his saints, every one of the particulars of which will furnish us with a strong argument to be sincere and upright with God.

(1.) The sincerity of God's heat appears in the principle he acts from, and in the end he aims at, in all his dispensations. Love is the principle he constantly acts from, and their good the end he propounds. The fire of love never goes out of his heart, nor their good out of his eye. When he frowns with his brow, chides with his lips, and strikes with his hand, even then his heart burns with love, and his thoughts meditate peace to them. Famous is that place for this purpose: 'I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good, for I will set mine eyes upon them for good,' Jeremiah 24:5. And this was one of the sharpest judgments God ever brought upon his people, and yet in this he is designing mercy, and projecting how to do them good. So in the wilderness, when they cried out upon Moses for bringing them thither to kill them, they were more afraid than hurt. God wished them better than they dreamed of. His intent was to humble them, that he might do them good in the latter end. So sincere is God to his people, that he gives his own glory in hostage to them for their security. His own robes of glory are locked up in their prosperity and salvation. He will not, indeed he cannot, present himself in all his magnificence and royalty till he hath made up his intended thought of mercy to his people. He is pleased to prorogue[30] the time of his appearing in all his glory to the world, till he hath actually accomplished their deliverance, that he and they may come forth together in their glory on the same day. 'When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory,' Psalms 102:16. The sun is ever glorious in the most cloudy day, but it appears not so till it hath scattered the clouds that muffle it up from the sight of the lower world. God is glorious when the world sees him not, but his declarative glory then appears when the glory of his mercy, truth, and faithfulness break forth in his people's salvation. Now what shame must this cover thy face with, O Christian, if thou shouldst not sincerely aim at thy God's glory, and your happiness in one bottom[31], that he cannot now lose the one and save the other.

(2.) The truth and sincerity of God to his people appears in the openness and plainness of his heart to them. A friend that is close and reserved, deservedly comes under a cloud in the thoughts of his friend; but he who carries, as it were, a window of crystal in his breast, through which his friend may read what thoughts are written in his very heart, delivers himself from the least suspicion of unfaithfulness. Truly thus open■hearted is God to his saints. 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.' He gives us in his key that will let us into his very heart, and acquaint us what his thoughts are, yea were, towards us, before a stone was laid in the world's foundation; and this is no other than his Spirit, one who knows 'the deep things of God,' 1 Corinthians 2:10, for he was at the council-table in heaven, where all was transacted. This his Spirit he employed to put forth, and publish in the Scripture indited by him, the substance of those counsels of love which had passed between the Trinity of persons for our salvation; and that nothing may be wanting for our satisfaction, he hath appointed the same Holy Spirit to abide in his saints, that as Christ in heaven presents our desires to him, so he may interpret his mind out of his word to us; which word answers the heart of God, 'as face answers face in the glass.' There is nothing desirable in a true friend, as to this openness of heart, but God performs in a transcendent manner to his people. If any danger hangs over their heads, he cannot conceal it. 'By them,' saith David, 'is thy servant warned,' speaking of the word of God. One messenger or other God will send to give his saints the alarm, whether their danger be from sin within, or enemies without. Hezekiah was in danger of inward pride. God sends him a temptation to let him 'know what was in his heart,' that he might, by falling once, be kept from falling again. Satan had a project against Peter; Christ gives him notice of it, Luke 22:31. If any of his children by sin displease him, he doth not, as false friends use, dis-

semble the displeasure he conceives, and carry it fair outwardly with them, while he keeps a secret grudge against them inwardly; no, he tells them roundly of it, and corrects them soundly for it, but entertains no ill will against them. And when he leads his people into an afflicted state, he loves them so, that he cannot leave them altogether in the dark, concerning the thoughts of love he hath to them in delivering them; but, to comfort them in the prison, doth open his heart beforehand to them, as we see in the greatest calamities that have befallen the Jewish church in Egypt and Babylon, as also the gospel-church under Antichrist. The promises for the deliverance out of all these were expressed before the sufferings came. When Christ was on earth, how free and open was he to his disciples, both in telling them what calamities should betide them, and the blessed issue of them all, when he should come again to them! And why? but to confirm them in the persuasion of the sincerity of his heart towards them, as those words import, 'If it were not so, I would have told you,' John 14:2; as if he had said, 'It would not have consisted with the sincere love I bear to you to hide anything that is fit for you to know, from you, or to make them otherwise than they are.' And when he doth conceal any truths from them for the present, see his candour and sincerity, opening the reason of his veiling them to be, not that he grudged them the communication of them, but because they could not at present bear them. Now, Christian, improve all this to make thee more plain-hearted with God. Is he so free and open to thee, and wilt thou be reserved to him? Doth thy God unbosom his mind to thee, and wilt not thou pour out all thy soul to him? Darest thou not trust him with thy secrets, that makes thee privy to his councils of love and mercy? In a word, darest thou for shame go about to harbour, and hide from him, any traitorous lust in thy soul, whose love will not suffer him to conceal any danger from thee? God, who is so exact and true to the law of friendship with his people, expects the like ingenuity from them.

(3.) The sincerity of God's heart and affection to his people appears in the unmovableness of his love. As there is 'no shadow of turning' in the being of God, so not in the love of God to his people. There is no vertical point—his love stands still. Like the sun in Gibeah, it goes not down nor declines, but continues in its full strength; 'with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer,' Isaiah 54:8. Sorry man repents of his love. The hottest affection cools in his bosom. Love in the creature is like fire on the hearth, now blazing, anon blinking, and going out; but in God it is like fire in the element, that never fails. In the creature it is like water in a river, that falls and riseth; but in God, like water in the sea, that is always full, and knows no ebbing or flowing. Nothing can take off his love where he hath placed it; it can neither be corrupted nor conquered. Attempts are made both ways, but in vain.

(a) His love cannot be corrupted. There have been such that have dared to tempt God, and court, yea bribe, 'the Holy One of Israel' to desert and come off from his people. Thus Balaam went to win God over to Balak's side against Israel; which to obtain, he spared no cost, but built altar after altar, and heaped sacrifice upon sacrifice, yea, what would they not have done to have gained but a word or two out of God's mouth against his people? But he kept true to them; yea, left a brand of his displeasure upon that nation for hiring Balaam, and sending him on such an errand to God, Deuteronomy 23:4. This passage we find of God minding his people, to continue in them a persuasion of his sincere steadfast love to them; 'O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal,' Micah 6:5. And why should they remember this? 'That ye may know the righteousness of the Lord;' that is, that you may know how true and faithful a God I have been to you. Sometimes he makes use of

it to provoke them to be sincere to him, as he, in that, proved himself to them, Joshua 24:9; he tells them how Balak sent Balaam to set God a cursing them, but saith the Lord, 'I would not hearken unto him,' but made him that came to curse you, with his own lips entail a blessing on you and yours. And why is this story mentioned? see Joshua 24:14, 'Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth'—a most natural and reasonable inference from the premises of God's truth and faithfulness. O Christian! wouldst thou have thy love to God made incorruptible, embalm it often in thy thoughts, with the sweet spices of God's sincere love to thee, which is immortal, and cannot see corruption. Believe God is true to thee, and be false to him if thou darest. It is a solecism and barbarism in love to return falseness for faithfulness.

(b) The love of God to his saints cannot be conquered. That which puts it hardest to it, is not the power of his people's enemies, whether men or devils, but his people's sins. God makes nothing of their whole power and wrath, when combined together; but truly, the sins of his people, these put omnipotency itself to the trial. We never hear God groaning under, or complaining of, the power of his enemies, but often sadly of his people's sins and unkindnesses. These load him; these break his heart, and make him cry out as if he were at a stand in his thoughts, to use a human expression, and found it not easy what to do, whether to love them, or leave them—vote for their life or death. Well, whatever expressions God useth to make his people more deeply resent their unkindnesses shown to him, yet God is not at a loss what to do in this case. His love determines his thoughts in favour of his covenant people, when their carriage least deserves it, Hosea 11:9. The devil thought he had enough against Joshua, when he could find some filth on his garment, to carry this in a tale, and tell God what a dirty case his child was in, Zechariah 3:6. He made just account to have set God against him, but he was mistaken; for instead of provoking him to wrath, it moved him to pity—instead of falling out with him, he find Christ praying for him. Now improve this in a meditation, Christian. Is the love of God so unconquerable that thy very sins cannot break or cut the knot of that covenant which ties thee to him? and does not it shame thee that thou shouldst be so fast and loose with him? Thou shouldst labour to have the very image of thy heavenly Father's love more clearly stamped on the face of thy love to him. As nothing can conquer his love to thee, so neither let anything prejudice thy love to him. Say to thy soul, 'Shall not I cleave close to God, when he hides his face from me, who hath not cast me off when I have sinfully turned my back on him? Shall not I give testimony to his truth and name—though others desert the one and reproach the other—who hath kept love burning in his heart to me, when I have been dishonouring him? What! God yet on my side, and gracious to me, after such backslidings as these; and shall I again grieve his Spirit, and put his love to shame with more undutifulness? God forbid! this were to do my utmost to make God accessory to my sin, by making his love fuel for it.'

4. Direction. If thou wouldst walk in the exercise of thy sincerity, beware of presumptuous sins. These give the deepest wound to uprightness, yea they are inconsistent with it: 'Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright,' Psalms 19:13. One single act of presumption is inconsistent with the actual exercise of uprightness, as we see in David, who, by that one foul sin of murder, lost the present use of uprightness, and was in that particular too like one of the fools in Israel, and therefore stands as the only exception to the general testimony which God gave unto his uprightness. 'Because David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite,' 1 Kings 15:5.

That is, there was not such presumption in any other sin committed by him, and therefore they are here discounted, as to this, that they did nor make such a breach on his uprightness as this one sin did. And as one act of a sin which is presumptuous is inconsistent with actual uprightness, so habitual uprightness is very hardly consistent with habitual presumption. If one act of a presumptuous sin, and, as I may so say, one sip of this poisonous cup, doth so sadly infect the spirits of a gracious person, and change his complexion, that he is not like himself, how deadly must its needs be to all uprightness, to drink from day to day in it? And therefore, as 'But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat,' Daniel 1:8, so do thou daily put thyself under some such holy bond, that thou wilt not defile thyself with any presumptuous sin; for indeed, this is properly 'the king's meat'—I mean the devil's—that prince of darkness, who can himself commit none but presumptuous sins, and chiefly labours to defile souls by eating of this dish. Say, as Austin in another case, 'Errare possum, hæreticus esse nolo—I may err, but I am resolved not to be a heretic. I may have many failings, but by the grace of God, I will labour that I be not a presumptuous sinner.' And if thou wouldst not be in a presumptuous sin, take heed thou makest not light of less infirmities. When David's heart smote him for rending the skirt of Saul, he stopped and made a happy retreat. His tender conscience giving him a privy check for rending his skirt, and would not suffer him to cut his throat, and take away his life, which was better than raiment. But at another time, when his conscience was more heavy-eyed, and did not do this friendly office to him, but let him shoot his amorous glances after Bathsheba, without giving him any alarm of his danger, the good man, like one whose senses are gone, and head dizzy at the first trip upon a steep hill—could not recover himself, but tumbled from one sin to another, till at last he fell into the deep pit of murder. When the river is frozen, a man will venture to walk, and run, where he durst not set his foot if the ice were but melted or broken. O when the heart of a godly man himself is so hardened that he can stand on an infirmity, though never so little, and his conscience not crack, under him, how far may he go! I tremble to think what sin he may fall into.

5. Direction. If thou wouldst walk in the exercise of thy sincerity, get above the love and fear of the world. The Christian's sincerity is not eclipsed without the interposition of the earth betwixt God and his soul.

(1.) Get above the love of the world. This is a fit root for hypocrisy to grow upon. If the heart be violently set upon anything the world hath, and it comes to vote peremptorily for having it—I must be worth so much a year, have such honour—and the creature begins, with Ahab, to be sick with longing after them, then the man is in great danger to take the first ill counsel that Satan or the flesh gives him for attaining his ends, though prejudicial to his uprightness. Hunters mind not the way they go in—over hedge and ditch they leap—so they may have the hare. It is a wonder, I confess, that any saint should have so strong a scent after the creature, that hath the savour of Christ's ointments poured into his bosom. One would think the sweet perfume, which comes so hot from those beds of spices, the promises, should spoil the Christian's hunting game after the creature, and one scent should hinder the taking in the other. The purer sweetnesses—that breath from Christ and heaven in them—should so fill the Christian's senses, that the other enjoyments, being of a more gross and earthly savour, could find no pleasing resentment in his nostrils; which indeed is most true and certain so long as the Christian hath his spiritual senses open, and in exercise, but alas! as upon some cold in the body, the head is stopped, and the senses bound up

from doing their office, so through the Christian's negligence, a spiritual distemper is easily got, whereby those senses, graces I mean, which should judge of things, are sadly obstructed. And now when the Christian is not in temper for enjoying these purer sweetnesses, the devil hath a fair advantage of starting some creature-enjoyment, and presenting it before the Christian, which the flesh soon scents and carries the poor Christian after, till grace comes a little to its temper, and then he gives over the chase with shame and sorrow.

(2.) Get above the fear of the world. The fear of man brings a snare. A coward will run into any hole, though never so dishonourable, so he may save himself from what he fears; and when the holiest are under the power of this temptation, they are too like other men. Abraham in a pang of fear dissembles with Abimelech. Yea, Peter, when not his life, but his reputation seemed to be in a little danger, did not 'walk uprightly[32], according to the truth of the gospel.' He did not foot it right as became so holy a man to do, but took one step forward, and another back again, as if he had not liked his way; now he will eat with the Gentiles, and anon he withdraws. Now what made him dissemble, and his feet thus double in his going? nothing but a qualm of fear came over his heart, as you may see, Galatians 2:12, compared with Galatians 2:14: 'Fearing them which were of the circumcision,' he dissembled, and drew others into a party with him.

6. Direction. If thou wouldst walk in the exercise of thy sincerity, keep a strict eye over thy own heart in thy daily walking. Hypocrisy is a weed with which the best soil is so tainted that it needs daily care and dressing to keep it under. He that rides on a stumbling horse had need have his eye on his way, and his hand on his bridle. Such is thy heart, Christian. Yea, it oft stumbles in the fairest way, when thou least fearest it; look to it therefore, and keep a strict rein over it, $/;/*-1/—'above all keeping keep thy heart,' Proverbs 4:23. The servant keeps his way when he travels in his master's company; but when sent of an errand alone, then he hath his vagaries. Many a wry step, and extravagancy in thy daily walking, may be prevented, didst thou walk in company with thyself, I mean observe thyself and way. In this sense, most in the world are besides themselves, strangers to their own walking, as much as to their own faces. Every one that lives with them knows them better than themselves, which is a horrible shame. And let not so vain an opinion find place with thee, that, because sincere, thou needest not keep so strict an eye over thy heart; as if thy heart which is gracious, could not play false with God and thee too. Doth not Solomon brand him on the forehead for a fool 'that trusteth his own heart?' If thou beest, as thou sayest, sincere, I cannot believe should so far prevail with thee. They are the ignorant and profane whose hearts are stark naught, that cry them up for good. But it is one part of the goodness of a heart made truly good by grace, to see more into, and complain more of, its own naughtiness. Bring thy heart therefore often upon the review, and take its accounts solemnly. He takes the way to make his servant a thief that doth not ask him now and then what money he hath in his hand. I read indeed of some in good Jehoiada's days that were trusted with the money for the repair of the temple, with whom they did not so much as reckon how they laid it out; 'for they dealt faithfully,' 2 Kings 12:15. But thou hadst not best to do so with thy heart, lest it set thee on score with God, and thy own conscience, more than thou wilt get wiped out in haste. Many talents God puts into thy hand—health, liberty, Sabbaths, ordinances, communion of saints, and the like, for the repair of thy spiritual temple—the work of grace in thee. Ask now thy soul, how every one of these are laid out; may be thou wilt find some of this money spent, and the work never a whit more forward. It stands thee in hand to look to it, for God will have an account, though thou art so favourable to thy

deceitful heart to call for none. We have done with the second sort of persons—those who, upon search, find their consciences bearing witness for their uprightness.

[Counsel and comfort to those who, upon trial, are found sincere, but still are drooping doubting souls.]

Third Sort. We come now to the third sort which yet remains to be spoken to, and they are doubting souls, who are indeed sincere, but dare not be persuaded to think so well of themselves. They come from the trial which they were desired to put themselves upon, and which brings them in ignorant, not knowing whether they be sincere or no. Now to these I would give these few words of counsel, and the Lord give his blessing with them.

1. Counsel. Take heed Satan doth not draw you to conclude you are hypocrites because you are without the present evidence of your sincerity. To say so were to offend against the generation of God's dear children, many of whom must, if this were a true inference from such premises, pass the same sentence upon themselves. For such precious souls there are, from whose eyes the truth of their grace and sincerity of their hearts is at this day hid, and yet are not without either. The patriarchs had their money all day bound up in their sacks as they travelled, though they did not know this, till they came to their inn and opened them. Thus there is a treasure of sincerity hid in many a soul, but the time to open the sack, and let the soul know its riches, is not come. Many are now in heaven—have shot the gulf, and are safely landed there—who were sadly tossed with fears all along their voyage about the truth of grace in them. Faith unfeigned puts a soul into the ark Christ; but it doth not hinder, but such a one may be seasick in the ship. It is Christ's work, not grace's, to evidence itself to our eye so demonstratively as to enable us to own it. Besides an organ fitly disposed, there is required a light to irradiate the medium; so, besides truth of grace, it is necessary that the spirit being another light, for want of which the soul is benighted in its thoughts, and must cry for another—and he no other than the Holy Spirit—to lead them into the light. This is the great messenger which alone is able 'to show a man his uprightness.' But, as the eye may be a seeing eye in the dark, when it doth not see anything, so there may be truth of grace, where there is not present sense of that truth. Yea, the creature may be passionately hunting from ordinance to ordinance, to get that sincerity which he already hath; as sometimes you may have seen one seek very earnestly all about the house for his hat, when at the same time he hath it on his head. Well, lay down this as a real truth in thy soul, 'I may be upright, though at present I am not able to see it clearly.' This, though it will not bring in a full comfort, yet it may be some support till that come, as a shore to thy weak house; though it does not mend it, yea it will underprop and keep it standing till the master workman comes—the Holy Spirit—who, with one kind word to thy soul, is able to set thee right in thy own thoughts, and make thee stand strong on the promise—the only true basis and foundation of solid comfort. Be not more cruel to thy soul, O Christian, than thou wouldst—to thy friend's, shall I say? yea, to thine enemy's body. Should one thou didst not much love lie sick in thy house, yea so sick that, if you should ask him whether he be alive, he could not tell you—his senses and speech being both at present gone—would you presently lay him out, and coffin him up for the grave, because you cannot have it from his own mouth that he is alive? Surely not. O how unreasonable and bloody then is Satan, who would presently have thee put thyself into the pit■hole of despair, because thy grace is not so strong as to speak for itself at present!

2. Counsel. Let me send thee back upon a melius inquirendum—a closer examination. Look once again more narrowly, whether Satan—that Joab —hath not the great hand in these questions and scruples started in thy bosom about thy sincerity, merely as his last design upon thee, that he may amuse and distract thee with false fears, when thou wilt not be flattered with false hopes. The time was thou wert really worse, and then, by his means, thou thoughtest thyself better than thou wert: and now, since thou hast changed thy way, disowned thy former confidence, been acquainted with Christ, and got some savour of his holy ways in thy spirit, so as to make thee strongly breathe after them, thou art affrighted with many apparitions of fears in thy sad thoughts, if not charging thee for a hypocrite, yet calling in question the truth of thy heart. It is worth, I say, the inquiring, whether it be not the same hand again—the devil—though knocking at another door. No player hath so many several dresses to come in upon the stage [with], as the devil hath forms of temptation, and this is a suit which he very ordinarily hath been known to wear. If it were thy case only, thou mightest have more suspicion lest these fears should be the just rebukes of thy own false heart; but when thou findest the complaints of many thy fellow-brethren—of whose sincerity thou darest not doubt, though thou savest not so much charity for thyself —so meet with thine, that no key though made on purpose, can fit all the wards of a lock, than their condition doth thine. This, I say, may well make thee set about another search, to find whether he be not come forth as a 'lying spirit,' to abuse thy tender spirit with such news as he knows worse cannot come to thy ears—that thou dost not love Jesus Christ as thou pretendest, and deceivest but thyself to think otherwise. Thus this foul spirit—like a brazen-faced harlot that lays her child at an honest person's door—doth impudently charge many with that which they are little guilty of, knowing that so much of his bold accusation will likely stick to the poor Christian's spirit, as shall keep the door open to let in another temptation, which he much desires to convey into his bosom, by the favour and under the shadow of this. And it is ordinarily this, viz. to scare the Christian from duty, and knock off the wheels of his chariot, which used so often to carry him into the presence of God in his ordinances, merely upon a suspicion that he is not sincere in them. And [it is] better [to] stay at home, without hearing or joining with God's people in any other duty, than [to] go up and show the naughtiness of thy heart, saith the devil. Had the serpent a smoother skin and a fairer tale when he made Eve put forth her hand to the forbidden fruit, than he comes with in this temptation to persuade thee, poor Christian, not to touch or taste of that fruit which God hath commanded to be eaten —ordinances, I mean, to be enjoyed by thee? Yet, Christian, thou hast reason, if I mistake not, to bless God if he suffers thy enemy so far to open his mind, by which thou mayst have some light to discover the wickedness of his design in the other temptation of questioning thy sincerity. Dost thou not now perceive, poor soul, what made the loud cry of thy hypocrisy in thy fears? The devil did not like to see thee so busy with ordinances, nor thy acquaintance to grow so fast with God in them, and he knew no way but this to knock thee off. Bite at his other baits thou wouldst not. Sin, though never so well cooked and garnished, is not a dish for thy tooth, he sees; and therefore, either he must affright thee from these by troubling thy imagination with fears of thy hypocrisy in them, or else he may throw his cap at thee and give thee [up] for one got out of his reach. Dost thou think, poor soul, that if thy heart were so false and hypocritical in thy duties, that he would make all this bustle about them? He doth not use to misplace his batteries thus—to mount them where there is no enemy to offend him. Thy hypocritical prayers and hearing would hurt him no more than if [there were] none at all. Neither doth he use too be so kind as to tell hypocrites of the falseness of their hearts. This is the chain with which he hath them by the foot, and it is his great care to hide it from them, lest the rattling of

it in their conscience awaken them to some endeavour to knock it off, and so they make an escape out of his prison. Be therefore of good comfort, poor soul. If thy conscience brings not Scripture proof to condemn thee for a hypocrite, fear not the devil's charge. He shall not be on the bench when thou comest to be tried for thy life, nor his testimony of any value at that day; why then should his tongue be any slander to thee now?

3. Counsel. Neglect no means for getting thy truth of heart and sincerity evidenced to thee. It is to be had. This is the 'white stone' with the 'new name' in it, 'which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it,' promised, Revelation 2:17. And I hope thou dost not think this to be such an ens rationis—an imaginary thing, as the philosopher's stone[33] is, [of] which none could ever say to this day that he had it in his hand. Holy Paul had this white stone' sparkling in his conscience more gloriously than all the precious stones in Aaron's breast■plate. 'Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity...we have had our conversation in the world,' 2 Corinthians 1:12. And Job, sure, was not without it when he durst, with such a confidence, appeal to the thoughts that God himself had of him, even then when God was ransacking and searching every corner of his heart by his heavy hand—'thou knowest that I am not wicked,' Job 10:7. Mark, he doth not deny that he hath sin in him—that you have again and again confessed by him—but he was not wicked; i.e. a rotten■hearted hypocrite. This he will stand to, that God himself will not say so of him, though, for his trial, the Lord gives way to have him searched, to stop the devil's mouth, and shame him who was not afraid to lay suspicion of this spiritual felony to his charge.

Objection. But may be thou wilt say, these were saints of the highest form, and though they might come to see their sincerity, and have this 'white stone' in their bosoms; yet such jewels cannot be expected to be worn by ordinary Christians.

Answer. For answer to this, consider that the weakest Christian in God's family hath the same witness in him that these had. 'He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him,' 1 John 5:10. Mark, it is indefinite, every one that believeth; not this eminent Christian, or that, but every one. 'The witness' is the same; for, the same Christ and Spirit dwell in thy heart, that do in the highest saint on earth; the same blood thou hast to sprinkle, and the same water to wash thee. These can and will, when the Lord please, testify as much for thy grace and sincerity as it doth for theirs; only, as witnesses in a court stay till the judge call them forth, and then, and not till then, give their testimony, so do these; and God may and doth use his liberty, when he will do this. Just as it is also on the contrary. Every wicked impenitent sinner carries a witness in his own bosom that will condemn him; but this doth not always speak, and presently make report of the sad news it hath to tell the sinner; that is [only] when God calls a court, and keeps his private sessions in the sinner's soul, which are at his pleasure to appoint. Only, means must not be neglected, of which I shall propose a few.

(1.) Means. Reach forth, Christian—for such I must call thee, whether thou wilt own the name or no—to further degrees of grace. The more the child grows up, the more it comes to its right complexion; and so doth grace. There is so much slavish fear, selfishness, with other imperfections at present, like so much scurf[34] on the face of this new■born babe of grace, that they do hide its true favour. This, however, by degrees will wear off as it grows up. Yea, the spiritual reason of a Christian ripens, as the whole body of grace grows, whereby he is more

capable, by reflecting on his own actions, to judge of the objections Satan makes against his sincerity; so that if you would not be always tossed to and fro with your own fluctuating thoughts, whether sincere or not, but grow up to higher stature, and thou wilt grow above many of thy fears, for, by the same light that thou findest the growth of thy grace, thou mayest see the truth of it also. Though it be hard in the crepusculum, or first break of day, to know whether it be daylight or night-light that shines; yet when you see the light evidently grow and unfold itself, you, by that, know it to be day. Paint doth not grow on the face fairer than it was; nor do the arms of a child in a picture get strength by standing there months and years. Do thy love, hope, humility, godly sorrow, grow more and more, poor soul, and you yet question what it is—whether true grace or not? This is as marvelous a thing, that thou shouldst not know what thy grace is, and whence, as it was that the Jews should not know who Christ was, when he had made a man born blind to see so clearly, John 9:2.

(2.) Means. Readily embrace any call that God sends thee, by his providence, for giving a proof and experiment of thy sincerity. There are some few advantages that God gives, which, if embraced and improved, a man may come to know more of his own heart and the grace of God therein, than in all his life besides. Now these advantages do lie wrapped up in those seasons wherein God more eminently calls us forth too deny ourselves for his sake. But be ready to entertain and faithful to obey that heavenly call, and thou wilt know much of thy heart; partly because grace in such acts comes forth with such glory, that, as the sun when it shines in a clear day, it exposeth itself more visibly to the eye of the creature; as also, because God chooseth such seasons as these to give his testimony to the truth of his children's grace in, when they are most eminently exercising it. In this way, when does the master speak kindly to his servant and commend him, but when he takes him most diligent? Then he saith, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.' May be, some time or other, God is calling thee to such an act of self-denial, wherein, if thou wilt answer God's call, thou must trample upon some dear enjoyment or other, as credit, estate, or it may be a sweet child, a dear wife; yea, it may be thou canst not do the work God calls thee to but with hazard to them all—these, and more too. Well, friend, be not sick to think of thy great strait, or disquieted at the sight of the providence that now stands at thy door. Didst thou know what errand it comes about, thou wouldst invite it in, and make it as welcome as Abraham did the three angels, whom he feasted in his tent so freely. I will tell thee what God sends it for, and that is to bring thee to a sight of thy sincerity, and to acquaint thee with that grace of God in thee whose face thou hast so long desired to see. This providence brings thee a chariot—to allude to Joseph's waggons sent for old Jacob—wherein thou mayest be carried to see that grace alive, whose funeral thou hast so long kept in thy mournful soul. And does not thy spirit revive at the thought of any means whereby thou mayest obtain this? Abraham was called to offer up his son, and he went about it in earnest. Now such a piece of self-denial God could not let pass without some mark of honour; and what is it he gives him but his testimony to his uprightness? 'Lay not thine hand upon the lad;...for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me,' Genesis 22:12. Why? God knew this before. Yes, but he speaks it that Abraham may hear, and take it from God's mouth that he was sincere. May be thou art called to deny thy own education, and principles sucked in by it, [to deny] thy own company, and cross the judgment of those thou highly esteemest, yea, thy own wisdom and reason, to entertain a truth, or take up a practice, merely upon account of the word. If thou canst do this, and that without affectation of singularity, or a humour of pride, blowing thee that way, it is an act of deep

self-denial, and goes most cross to the most ingenuous natures, who are afraid of drawing eyes after them, by leaving their company to walk in a path alone, yea, [are] very loath to oppose their judgments to others, more, for number and parts, than their own; in a word, who love peace so dearly, that they can be willing to pay anything but a sin to purchase it. In these it must needs be great self-denial; and therefore such have the greater ground to expect God's evidencing their sincerity to them. He did it to Nathanael, who had all these bars to keep him from coming to Christ, and believing on him; yet he did both, and Christ welcomes him with a high and loud testimony to his uprightness. 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile,' John 1:47.

Again, may be the thing God would have thee deny thyself in is thy wrath and revenge, which, to give thee a fair occasion to do with greater demonstration of thy sincerity, he puts thy enemy into thy power, and lays him bound, as it were, under thy hand; yea, so orders it in his providence, that thou mayest have thy will on him with little noise; or, if it be known, yet the notorious wrongs he hath done thee, and some circumstances in the providence that hath brought him into thy hand, concur to give thee an advantage of putting so handsome a colour upon the business, as shall apologize for thee in the thoughts of those that hear it—making them, especially, who look not narrowly into the matter, rather observe the justice of God on thy enemy's judgment befallen him, than thy injustice and sin, who wert the instrument to execute it. Now when the way lies smooth and fair for thee to walk in, and thy own corruption calls thee forth—yea useth God's name in the matter, to make thee more confident saying to thee, as they to David, 'Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee,' 1 Samuel 24:4;—if now, thou canst withstand the temptation, and, instead of avenging thyself upon the person, thy enemy, revenge thyself on thy revenge—thy greater enemy of the two —by paying good into thy adversary's bosom for the evil he hath done thee; and, when thou hast done this, canst escape another enemy in thy return, I mean pride, so as to come out of the field a humble conqueror, and wilt consecrate the memorial of this victory not to thy own [praise] but [to the] praise of God's name—as Goliath's sword, which was not kept by David at his own home, to show what he had done, nut in the tabernacle 'behind the ephod,' as a memorial of what God had done by it in David's hand, 1 Samuel 21:9;—[if thou canst do this,] thou hast done that which speaks thee sincere, yea a high graduate in this grace, and God will sooner or later let thee know so. David's fame sounds not louder for his victories got in the open field over his slain enemies, than it doth for that he got in the cave, though an obscure hole, over his own revenge, in sparing the life of Saul—[an incident] in which you have the case in hand every way fitted. By the renown of his bloody battles, he got 'a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth,' 2 Samuel 7:9; but, by this noble act of his self-denial, he got a name, great, like unto the name of those that are famed for their holiness, in the Scripture; and rather than David shall not have the commendation of this piece of self-denial, God will send it to him in the mouth of his very enemy, who cannot hold—though by it he proclaims his own shame and wickedness—but he must justify him as a holy righteous man. 'And he,' that is Saul, 'said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil,' 1 Samuel 24:17.

(3.) Means. Continue thou to wait upon God in all the ways of his ordinances—every one in their season. Whenever thou comest to get the comfortable sight of thy sincerity, it is the Spirit of God that must befriend thee in it, or else, like Hagar, thou mayest sit by the well and not find it; thou

mayest round thy field again and again, but find not the treasure hid in it. It is the Spirit of God by which we ‘know the things that are freely given to us of God,’ 1 Corinthians 2:12. Now the Spirit sits in the ordinances, as a minister of state in his offices, whither we must resort, if we will have the truth of our graces—that are our evidences for heaven—sealed to our consciences. Thither go therefore, yea, there wait, for thou knowest not, as the wise man saith of sowing seed, Ecclesiastes 11:6, whether thy waiting on this or that, now or then, shall prosper and be successful to thee in the end. It is enough to confirm, yea, quiet and comfort thee in thy attendance, that thou art at the right door; and though thou knockest long and hearest no news of his coming, yet thou canst not stay so long, like Eglon’s servants, Judges 3:25, that thou needst be ashamed. They indeed waited on a deadman, and might have stood long enough before he had heard them; but thou on a living God, that hears every knock thou givest at heaven-gate with thy prayers and tears; yea, a loving God, that, all this while he acts the part of a stranger, like Joseph to his brethren, is yet so big with mercy, that he will at last fall on thy neck and ease his heart, by owning of thee and his grace in thee. Lift up thy head then, poor drooping soul, and go with expectation of the thing; but remember thou settest not God the time. The sun riseth at his own hour, whatever time we set it. And when God shall meet thee in an ordinance—as sometimes no doubt, Christian, thou findest a heavenly light irradiating, and influence quickening, thy soul, while hearing the word, or may be on thy knees wrestling with God—this is a sweet advantage and season thou shouldst improve for the satisfying soul. As when the sun breaks out, we then run to the dial to know how the day goes; or when, as we are sitting in the dark, one brings a candle into the room, we then bestir ourselves to look for the thing we miss, and soon find what we in vain groped for in the dark; so mayest thou, poor soul—as many of thy dear brethren and sisters before thee have done—know more of thy spiritual state in a few moments at such a time, than in many a day when God withdraws. Carefully therefore watch for such seasons and improve them. But if God will hide thy treasure from thy sight, comfort thyself, comfort thyself with this, that God knows thy uprightness, though wrapped up from thy own eye. Say as David, ‘When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path,’ Psalms 142:3; and God will do with thee, not by the false accusations thou bringest in against thyself—as it is to be feared some have suffered at men’s hands—but by the testimony which his all-seeing eye can give to thy grace.

[1]Cozen—cheat, deceive.

[2]•6"6ä<.

[3]Groundsel or groundsill, the timber of a building which lies next to the ground, commonly called a sill.—Imperial Dictionary.

[4]Wilder, to lose, or cause to lose the way or track.

[5]To roil, render turbid by stirring up the dregs or sediment.—Ed.

[6]Rowling, i.e. unsettles, changeful.—Ed.

[7]µ"P"ÆD"< •88z ÏL 6"D*4"<.

[8]Proling, i.e. searching about, prowling.—Ed.

[9]Priscillianism—This was a heresy that revived Sabellianism, which taught ‘modalism’, among other things.—SDB [10]Roost—The original text has roast; which seems to me an obvious

typo.—SDB [11]Jejune — Lacking nutritive value; interest, or significance.—SDB [12]Expatiate — To wander about freely or at will. 2. To speak or write at length or in detail.—SDB.

[13]Could Rev. Gurnall mean ‘moral’ here? I would think so as every other occurrence of this phrase has been moral uprightness, and not mortal. Although it seems to me that, with the direction he seems to be going, and what he is saying generally, the sense would not be impugned by the use of the word mortal.—SDB [14]To crock, i.e. to blacken with soot, or any matter produced by combustion.—Ed.

[15]Glozing i.e. flattering, wheedling or fawning.—Ed.

[16]Vizard:—A mask for disguise or protection.—SDB [17]Woaded: — Colored or dyed; stained.—SDB [18]B,B80DTµX<".

[19]Euge, Well done!—Ed.

[20]Primum mobile. This designates, in the ancient astronomy, a ninth heaven or sphere, supposed to be beyond the fixed stars, and to be the prime mover of all the lower spheres.—Ed.

[21]Asperseth:—1. Sprinkle esp. to sprinkle with holy water. 2 to vilify with injurious charges.—SDB [22]Gravelled:—perplex, confound; irritate, nettle.

—SDB [23]Flam, a freak or whim, also a falsehood; an illusory pretext. Imp. Dict.—Ed.

[24]Bruit, rumour, report.—Ed.

[25] Haymow, a mow or mass of hay laid up in a barn for preservation. Imp. Dict.—Ed.

[26]Cockering, Indulging, pampering.—SDB

[27]As you might know, there is no 17th verse in Ezekiel 15:1-8; in fact, it has only 8 verses. And I was unable to locate any verse that had the phrasing exactly as Rev. Gurnall had it.—SDB [28]King’s-evil:—Scrofula; from the former belief that it could be cured by a king’s touch.—SDB [29]Velleities, the lowest degree of volition, a slight wish or tendency. — From Webster’s. —SDB

[30]Prorogue: to defer, postpone; to terminate a session of (as a British parliament) by royal prerogative. From Webster’s.—SDB [31]Bottom, i.e. vessel of burden.

[32]ÐD2@B@*,4<.

[33]Philosopher’s stone — an imaginary stone, substance, or chemical preparation believed to have the power of transmuting baser metals into gold and sought for by alchemists. From Webster’s.—SDB [34]Scurf: the foul remains of something adherent.

—SDB

[1]Here, file Gurnal49.arm begins.

01.08 - Sincerity Strengthens the Christian's Spirit

Division Second.—Sincerity strengthens the Christian's Spirit.

'Girt about with truth.'

Having despatched the first reason, why sincerity is compared to the soldier's girdle or belt, and discoursed of this grace under that notion, we proceed to the second ground or reason of the metaphor, taken from the other use of the soldier's girdle, which is, to strengthen his loins, and fasten his armour, over which it goes, close to him; whereby he is more able to march, and strong to fight. Girdling, in Scripture phrase, imports strength. 'Thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle,' Psalms 18:39. He 'weakeneth the strength of the mighty,' Job 12:21; in the Hebrew it is, he looseth their girdle, sincerity doth bear a fit analogy. It is a grace that establisheth and strengthens the Christian in his whole course; as, on the contrary, hypocrisy weakens and unsettles the heart. 'A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.' As it is in bodies, so in souls. Earthly bodies, because mixed, are corruptible; whereas the heavenly bodies, being simple and unmixed, are not subject to corruption. So much a soul hath of heaven's purity and incorruptibleness as it hath of sincerity. 'Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity,' ¦< –N2"DF\', with incorruption, Ephesians 6:24. The strength of every grace lies in the sincerity of it. So that without any more ado, the point which offers itself to our consideration from this second notion of the girdle, is this,

Doctrine. That sincerity doth not only cover all our infirmities, but is excellent, yea necessary, to establish the soul in, and strengthen it for, its whole Christian warfare. 'The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them,' Proverbs 11:3. The hypocrite falls shamefully, and comes to naught, with all his shifts and stratagems to save himself; whereas sincerity carries that soul, that dares follow its conduct, safe above all dangers, though in the midst of them. But open the point. There is a threefold strength sincerity brings with it, which the false hypocritical heart wants. First. A preserving strength. Second. A recovering strength. Third. A comforting strength.

[The preserving strength of sincerity.]

First. Sincerity hath a preserving strength to keep the soul from the defilement of sin. When temptation comes on furiously, and chargeth the soul home, a false heart is put to the run, it cannot possibly stand. We are told of Israel's hypocrisy, they were 'a generation that set not their heart aright' —and what follows?—'and whose spirit was not stedfast with God,' Psalms 78:8. Stones that are not set right on the foundation, cannot stand strong or long. You may see more of this bitter fruit growing on the hypocrite's branches, in the same Psalms 78:56-57. They 'turned back, and dealt unfaithfully; they were turned aside like a deceitful bow.' When the bow is unbent, the rift it hath may be undiscerned, but go to use it by drawing the arrow to the head, and it flies a pieces. Thus doth a false heart when put to the trial. As the ape in the fable, dressed like a man, when nuts are thrown before her, cannot then dissemble her nature any longer, but shows herself

an ape indeed; so does a false heart bewray itself before it is aware, when a fair occasion is presented for its lust. Sincerity however keeps the soul pure in the face of temptation. ‘He that walketh uprightly walketh surely,’ Proverbs 10:9—that is, he treads strong on their ground, like one whose feet are sound—and though stones lie in his way, he goes over them safely; ‘but he that perverteth his ways shall be known.’ He is like one that hath some corn or other ailment about his feet. Though he may make a shift to go in a green smooth way, yet when he meets with a hobbling stony way, he presently comes down, and falters. Now that this preserving strength, which sincerity girds the soul with, may better appear, it will be requisite to instance in some of those seasons wherein sincerity keeps the soul from the power of temptation, as also some of those seasons wherein, on the contrary, hypocrisy cowardly and tamely yields the soul up into temptations’ hands.

1. A false heart usually starts aside, and yields to sin, when it can hide itself in a crowd, and have store of company, under which it may shroud itself. The hypocrite sets his watch, not by the sun—the word I mean—but by the town clock. What most do, that he will be easily persuaded to do. Vox populi is his vox Dei. Therefore it is, that you seldom have him swim against the tide of corrupt times. Light things are carried by the stream, and light spirits by the multitude. But the sincere Christian is massy and weighty. He will sooner sink to the bottom, and yield to the fury of a multitude by suffering from them, than float after their example in sinning with them. The hypocrite hath no inward principle to act him, and therefore, like the dead fish, must drive with the current. But sincerity being a principle of divine life, it directs the soul to its way, and improves it to walk in it, without the help of company to lean on, yea against any opposition it meets. Joshua spake what was in his heart, when ten of twelve that were sent with him, perceiving on which side the wind lay, accommodated themselves to the humour of the people, Numbers 14:7. The false prophet’s pleasing words, with which they clawed Ahab’s proud humour, could by no means be brought to fit good Micaiah’s mouth, though he should make himself very ridiculous by choosing to stand alone, rather than fall in with so goodly a company, ‘four hundred prophets,’ who were all agreed of their verdict, 1 Kings 22:6.

2. A false heart yields when sin comes with a bribe in its hand. None but Christ, and such as know the truth as it is in Jesus, can scorn the devil’s offer, omnia hæc dabo—‘all these will I give thee.’ The hypocrite, let him be got pinnacle high in his profession, will yet make haste down to his prey, if it lies fair before him; one that carries not his reward in his bosom, that counts it not portion enough to have God and enjoy him, may be bought and sold by any huckster, to betray his soul, God, and all. The hypocrite, when he seems most devout, waits but for a better market, and then he will play the merchant with his profession. There is no more difference betwixt a hypocrite and an apostate, than betwixt a green apple and a ripe one; come a while hence, and you will see him fall rotten-ripe from his profession. Judas, a close hypocrite, how soon an open traitor! And as fruit ripens sooner or later, as the heat of the year proves, so doth hypocrisy, as the temptation is strong or weak. Some hypocrites go longer before they are discovered than others, because they meet not with such powerful temptations to draw out their corruptions. It is observed that the fruits of the earth ripen more in a week, when the sun is in conjunction with the dog-star, than in a month before. When the hypocrite hath a door opened, by which he may enter into possession of that worldly prize he hath been projecting to obtain, then his lust within, and the occasion without, are in conjunction, and the day hastens wherein he will fall. The hook is baited, and he cannot but

nibble at it. Now sincerity preserves the soul in this hour of temptation. David prays, Psalms 26:9, that God would ‘not gather his soul with sinners, whose right hand is full of bribes,’—such as, for advantage, would be bribed to sin. To this wicked gang he opposeth himself, Psalms 26:11. ‘But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity;’ where he tell us what kept him from being corrupted, and enticed, as they were, from God—it was his integrity. A soul walking in its integrity will take bribes neither from men nor sin itself, and therefore he saith, Psalms 26:12, ‘His foot stood in an even place;’ or as some read it, ‘my foot standeth in righteousness.’

3. The hypocrite yields to the temptation, when he may sin without being controlled by man, which falls out in a double case. First. When he may embrace his lust in a secret corner, where the eye of man is not privy to it. Second. When the greatness of his place and power lifts him above the stroke of justice from man’s hand. In both these he discovers his baseness, but sincerity preserves the soul in both.

(1.) See how the hypocrite behaves himself, when he thinks he is safe from man’s sight. It was the care of Ananias and Sapphira to blind man’s eye, by laying some of their estates at the apostle’s feet; and having made sure of this, as they thought, by drawing this curtain of seeming zeal between it and them, they pocket up the rest without trembling at, or thinking of, God’s revenging eye looking on them all the while, and boldly, when they have done this, present themselves to Peter, as if they were as good saints as any in the company. The hypocrite stands more on the saving of his credit in this world, than on the saving of his soul in the other; and therefore when he can insure that, he will not stick to venture the putting of the other to the hazard; which shows he is either a flat atheist, and doth not believe there is another world, to save or damn his soul in, or on purpose stands aloof off the thoughts of it, knowing it is such a melancholy subject, and inconsistent with the way he is in, in that he dare not suffer his own conscience to tell him what he thinks of it; and so it comes to pass, that it hath no power to awe and sway him, because it cannot be heard to speak for itself. Now sincerity preserves the soul in this case. It was not enough that Joseph’s master was abroad, so long as his God was present. ‘How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?’ Genesis 39:9. Mark, not against his master, but ‘against God.’ Sincerity makes faithful to man, but for more than man’s sake. Joseph served his master with eye-service—he had God in his eye, when Potiphar had not him in his. Happy are those masters that have any who will serve them with this eye-service of sincerity.

(2.) The hypocrite, if he cannot get out of man’s sight, yet he may but stand out of the reach of his arm and power, it is as well for his turn, and doth often discover him. How unworthily and cruelly dealt Laban with Jacob, cheating him in his wife, oppressing him in his wages by changing it ten times? Alas! he knew Jacob was a poor shiftless creature, in a strange place, unable to contest with him, a great man in his country. Some princes, who, before they have come to their power and greatness, have seemed humble and courteous, kind and merciful, just and upright, as soon as they have leaped into the saddle, got the reins of government into their hands, and begun to know what their power was, have even rid their subjects off their legs with oppression and cruelty, without any mercy to their estates, liberties, and lives. Such instances the history of the world doth sadly abound with. Even Nero himself, who played the part of a devil at last, began so, that in the Roman hopes he was hugged for a state saint. Set but hypocrisy upon the stage of power and greatness, and it will not be long before its mask falls off. The prophet meant thus much when he made only this reply to Hazael’s seeming abhorrency of what he had foretold concerning him. ‘The

Lord hath shewed me that thou shalt be king over Syria,' 2 Kings 8:13; as if he had said, 'Hazael, thou never yet didst sit in a king's chair, and knowest not what a discovery that will make of thy deceitful heart.' Mark from when Rehoboam's revolt from God is dated. 'And it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the Lord,' 2 Chronicles 12:1. Policy bade him conceal his intentions, while [i.e. until] he had settled himself in his throne, lest he should have hazarded his crown; but that set on sure, and his party made strong, now all breaks out. He is like a false captain who victuals his castle, and furnisheth it with all kind of provision and ammunition, and then, and not till then, declares himself a traitor, when he thinks he is able to defend his treason. But here also sincerity preserves the gracious soul.

Two famous instances we have for this. The one we have in Joseph, who had his unnatural brethren, that would once have taken away his life, yea, who did that which might have proved worse for all that they knew—barbarously sell him as a slave into a strange land—strangely brought into his hands while he was in all his honour and power in Egypt; and now when he might have paid them in their own coin, without any fear or control from man, behold this holy man is lift above all thoughts of revenge. He pays their cruelty in his own tears, not in their blood; he weeps over them for joy to see them, that once had no joy till they had rid their hands of him; yea, when their own guilt made them afraid of his presence, measuring him by their own revengeful hearts, how soon doth he deliver them from all fears of any evil intended by him against them! Yea, he will not allow them to darken the joy which that day had with them brought to him, so much as by expressing their own grief before him for their old cruelty to him; so perfect a conquest had he got of all revenge, Genesis 45:5. And what preserved him in his hour of great temptation? He told them, Genesis 42:18, 'This do, and live; for I fear God;' as if he had said, 'Though you be here my prisoners at my will and mercy, for all that you an do to resist, yet I have that which binds my hands and heart too from doing or thinking you evil—'I fear God.' This was his preservative;—he sincerely feared God. The other instance is Nehemiah. Being governor of that colony of Jews which, under the favour of the Persian princes, were again planting their native country, he, by his place, had an advantage of oppressing his brethren if he durst have been so wicked, and from those that had before him been honoured with that office, he had examples of such as could not swallow the common allowance of the governor, without a rising in their consciences—which showed a digestion strong enough, considering the peeled state of the Jews at that time—but could, when themselves had sucked the milk, let their cruel servants suck the blood of this poor people also, by illegal exactions, so that, coming after such oppressors, Nehemiah, if he had taken his allowance, and but eased them of the other burdens which they groaned under, no doubt he might have passed for merciful in their thoughts; but he durst not so far. A man may possibly be an oppressor in exacting his own. Nehemiah knew they were not in case to pay, and therefore he durst not require it. But as one who comes after a bad husbandman that hath driven his land, and sucked out the heart of it, casts it up fallow for a time till it recovers its lost strength, so did Nehemiah spare this oppressed people. And what, I pray, was it that preserved him from doing as the rest had done? 'But I did not so, because of the fear of the Lord,' see Nehemiah 5:15. The man was honest, his heart touched with a sincere fear of God, and this kept him right.

[The recovering strength of sincerity.]

Second. Sincerity hath a recovering strength with it. When it doth not privilege from falling, yet it helps up again, whereas the hypocrite lies where he falls, and perisheth where he lies. He is therefore said to 'fall into mischief,' Proverbs 24:16. The sincere soul falls as a traveller may do, by stumbling at some stone in his path, but gets up and goes on his way with more care and speed; the other falls as a man from the top of a mast, that is engulfed past all recovering in the devouring sea. He falls as Haman did before Mordecai—when he begins he stays not, but falls till he can fall no lower. This we see in Saul, who was never right. When once his naughty heart discovered itself, he tumbled down the hill apace, and stopped not, but from one sin went to a worse, and in a few years you see how far he was got from his first stage, when he first took his leave of God. He that should have told Saul, when he betrayed his distrust and unbelief in not staying the full time for Samuel's coming—which was the first wry step taken notice of in his apostasy—that he, who now was so hot for the worship of God, that he could not stay for the prophet's coming, would ere long quite give it over, yea, fall from inquiring of the Lord, to ask counsel of the devil, by seeking to a witch, and from seeking counsel of the devil, should, at the last and worst act of his bloody tragedy, with his own hands throw himself desperately into the devil's mouth by self-murder; surely he would have stranged more than Hazael did at the plain character Elisha gave of him to his face. And truly all the account we can give of it is, that his heart was naught at first, which Samuel upon that occasion hinted to him, 1 Samuel 13:14, when he told him, 'The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart' —David he meant, who afterward fell into a sin greater as to the matter of the fact than that for which Saul was rejected of God, and yet having but a habitual sincerity as 'the root of the matter in him,' happily recovered out of it, for want of which hypocritical Saul miscarried finally. So true is that proverb, that 'frost and fraud have dirty ends.' Now there is a double reason for this recovering strength of sincerity —one taken from the nature of sincerity itself, the other from the promise by God settled on the soul where sincerity is found.

1. From the nature of sincerity itself. Sincerity is to the soul as the soul is to the body. It is a spark of divine life kindled in the bosom of the creature by the Spirit of God. It is 'the seed of God remaining' in the saint, 1 John 3:9. Now as the seed cast into the womb of the earth, and quickened there by the influence of heaven upon it, doth put forth its head fresh and green in the spring, after the many cold nips it hath had in winter; so doth sincere grace, after temptations and falls, when God looks out upon it with the beams of his exciting grace. But the hypocrite wanting this inward principle of life, doth not so. He is a Christian by art, not by a new nature; dressed up like a puppet, in the fashion and outward shape of a man, that moves by the jimmers which the workman fastens to it, and not informed by a soul of its own. And therefore, as such an image, when worn by time, or broken by violence, can do nothing to renew itself, but crumbles away by piecemeals, till it comes at last to nothing; so doth the hypocrite waste in his profession, without a vital principle to oppose his ruin that is coming upon him. There is great difference between the wool on the sheep's back, which shorn, will grow again, and the wool of a sheep's skin on a wolf's back. Clip that, and you shall see no more grow in its room. The sincere Christian is the sheep, the hypocrite is the wolf, clad in the sheep's skin. The application of it is obvious.

2. The sincere soul is under a promise, and promises are restorative, Psalms 19:7. 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul,' Heb. ,*;/ (m~sh§b)—restoring the soul. It fetcheth the soul back to life, as a strong cordial one in a fainting fit —which virtue is proper to the promissory part of the word, and therefore so to be taken in this place. Now the sincere soul is the only right heir of

the promises. Many sweet promises are laid in for assuring succour and auxiliary aid to bring them off all their dangers and temptations: Proverbs 28:18, ‘Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved;’ now mark the opposition—‘but he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once;’ that is, suddenly, irrecoverably. ‘God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help the evil-doers,’ Job 8:20—he will not take the them by the hand, Heb.—that is, to help them up when they fall. Nay, the hypocrite is not only destitute of a promise for his help, but lies also under a curse from God. Great pains we find him to take to rear his house, and, when he hath done, he leans on it, ‘but it shall not stand—he holds it fast, but it shall not endure,’ Job 8:15. ‘A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked,’ Psalms 37:16. But why? See the reason: ‘For the arms of the wicked shall be broken; but the Lord upholdeth the righteous,’ Psalms 37:17-18. The righteous man in that psalm is the upright; by the wicked is meant the hypocrite. A little true grace mixed with much corruption in the sincere Christian, is better than the hypocrite’s riches—the great faith, zeal, and devotion, he brags so of. The former hath the blessing of the promise, to recover it when decaying; these the curse of God threatening to blast them when in their greatest pomp and glory. The hypocrite’s doom is to grow ‘worse and worse,’ 2 Timothy 3:13. Those very ordinances which are effectual, through the blessing of the promise, to recover the sincere soul, being cursed to the hypocrite, give him his bane and ruin. The word which opens the eyes of the one, puts out the eyes of the other; as we find in the hypocritical Jews, to whom the word was sent, to make them blind, Isaiah 6:9-10. It melts and breaks the sincere soul, as in Josiah, 2 Kings 22:19; but meeting with a naughty false heart, it hardens exceedingly, as appeared in the same Jews, Jeremiah 42:20. Before the sermon they speak fair, ‘Whatsoever God saith they will do;’ but when sermon is done, they are farther off than ever from complying with the command of God. The hypocrite, he hears for the worse, prays for the worse, fasts for the worse. Every ordinance is a wide door, to let Satan in more fully to possess him, as Judas found the sop.

[The comforting strength of sincerity.]

Third. Sincerity hath a supporting, comforting strength. It lifts the head above water, and makes the Christian float atop the waves of all troubles, with a holy presence and gallantry of spirit. ‘Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness,’ Psalms 112:4, not only light after darkness, when the night is past, but in darkness also. Out of the eater cometh meat, and out of the strong, sweetness. Those afflictions which feed on, yea, eat out the hypocrite’s heart, the sincere soul can feed on, suck sweetness from, yea, hath such a digestion, that he can turn them into high nourishment both to his grace and comfort. A naughty heart is merry only while his carnal career is before him. God tells Israel he will take away her feasts, and all her mirth shall cease, Hosea 2:11. Her joy is taken away with the cloth. Sincerity makes the Christian sing when he hath nothing to his supper. David was in none of the best conditions when in the cave, yet we never find him merrier. His heart makes sweeter music than ever his hasp did. ‘My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise,’ Psalms 57:7. The hypocrite’s joy, like the strings of musical instruments, crack in wet weather; but sincerity keeps the soul in tune in all weather. They are unsound bodies that sympathize with the season—cheery in fair, but ill and full of aches in foul. So the unsound heart. A few pinching providences set him going, kill him as a sharp winter doth weak bodies. Whereas the sincere soul never is more hale, never more comfortable. Afflictions do him but this courtesy—to call in his affections, which in the summer of prosperity were possibly too much diffused and scattered among creature delights, and unite them more

entirely and closely upon Christ, into whose bosom it goes as directly, when storms come, as the bee to its hive; and he must needs be comfortable that hath so oft a pillow to lay his head on as Christ's lap. Sincerity keeps the soul's mouth open, to receive the sweet consolations that drop from word and Spirit; indeed all the promises are directed to such. But hypocrisy is like the squinancy[1] in the throat of the sick man, he burns within, and can get nothing down to quench the fire which his sins have kindled in his soul. Conscience tells him, when sweet promises are offered, 'These are not for me, I have dealt falsely with God and man. It is the sincere soul God invites; but I am a rotten-hearted hypocrite.' And how much short comes such a poor wretch of Dives in his misery in hell, I pray? Dives burns, and hath not a drop to quench his tongue. The hypocrite in affliction, he burns too, and hath indeed, not a drop, but a river, a fountain full of water, yea of blood, presented to him, but he cannot drink it down, he cannot make any use of it for his good. His teeth are set so close, no key can open them. His hypocrisy stares him in the face; it lies like a mastiff at his door, and suffer no comfort to come near him. And which is worst—he that hath no bread, or he that hath and cannot eat it? None so witty and cunning as the hypocrite—in prosperity to ward off the reproofs, to shift from the counsels of the word; and in affliction, when conscience awakes, none so skilful to dispute against the comforts of the word. Now he is God's close prisoner, no comfort can come at him. If God speak terror, who can speak peace? 'Give them sorrow of heart, thy curse unto them,' Lamentations 3:65. Sorrow of heart is the hypocrite's curse from God in affliction; and what God lays on sticks close. The word for sorrow in the Hebrew signifies a shield that fenceth and covers over; and, saith one upon this place, it denotes the disease physicians call cardiaca passio, which so oppresseth the heart that is covered sicut scuto—as with a shield or lid over it, and keeps all relief from the heart. Such is the sorrow of the hypocrite in affliction, when once his conscience awakes, and God fills him with the amazing thoughts of his own sins, and God's wrath pursuing him for them. But I shall descend to instance in a few particular kinds of afflictions, and show what comfort attends sincerity in them all.

1. Sincerity supports and comforts the soul under reproaches from men. These are no petty trials; they are reckoned among the saints' martyrdoms, Hebrews 11:36, called there 'cruel mockings,' yea, not unworthy to be recorded among the sufferings of Christ. The matchless patience and magnanimity of his spirit appeared not only in enduring the cross, but in 'despising the shame,' which the foul tongues of his bloody enemies loaded him unmercifully with. Man's aspiring mind can least brook shame. Credit and applause is the great idol of men that stand at the upper end of the world for parts or place. Give but this, and what will men not do or suffer? One wiser than the rest could see this proud humour in Diogenes, that endured to stand naked, embracing a heap of snow, while he had spectators about him to admire his patience, as they thought it, and therefore was asked, 'whether he would do thus, if he had none to see him?' The hypocrite is the greatest credit-monger in the world; it is all he lives on almost, what the breath of men's praise sends him in; when that fails, his heart faints; but when it turns to scorn and reproaches, then he dies, and needs must, because he has no credit with God while he is scorned by man; whereas sincerity bears up the soul against the wind of man's vain breath, because it hath conscience, and God himself, to be his compurgator[2], to whom he dare appeal from man's bar. O how sweetly do a good conscience, and the Spirit of God witnessing with it, feast the Christian at such a time! and no matter for the hail of man's reproaches that rattle without, while the Christian is so merry within doors. David is a pregnant instance for this: 'By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me,' Psalms 41:11. How, David? does not thy enemy triumph over

thee? I pray see the condition he at present was in. He had fallen into a great sin, and the hand of God was on him in a disease, chastening him for it, as appears, Psalms 41:4. His enemies from this take advantage to speak him all to naught, Psalms 41:5. ‘Mine enemies speak evil of me’—no doubt, charging him for a hypocrite. When they come to visit him, it is but to gather some matter of reproach, which they presently blab abroad, Psalms 41:6; yea, they are not ashamed to say, Psalms 41:8, that an evil disease, or as it is in the Hebrew, ‘a thing of Belial’—that is, his sin—‘cleaveth to him.’ Now God had met with him; now he lieth, he shall rise no more; yea, his familiar friend, in whom he trusted, serves him as ill as the worst of his enemies, Psalms 41:9. Was ever poor man lower? and yet he can say his enemy triumphs not over him? His meaning therefore we must take thus: that notwithstanding all these reproaches have been cast upon him, yet his spirit did not quail. This was above them all. God kept that up, and gave him such inward comfort as wiped off their scorn as fast as they threw it on. Their reproaches fell as sometimes we see snow, melting as fast as they fell. None lay upon his spirit to load and trouble it. And how came David by this holy magnanimity of spirit—these inward comforts? He tells us, ‘And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever,’ Psalms 41:12. As if he had said, ‘Thou dost not by me, O Lord, as mine enemies do. They pick out my worst, and revile me for it. If there be but one sore plat—one sinful part in my life—like flies, they light there, but thou overlookest my sinful slips and failings, pardoning them, and takest notice of my uprightness, which amidst all my infirmities thou upholdest, and so settest me before thy face, communicating thy love and favour to me, notwithstanding the sins that are found, mingled with my course of obedience.’ This kept up the holy man’s spirit, and makes him end the psalm joyfully. ‘Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting’ Psalms 41:13.

We live, Christians, in reproaching times. He that is so over-dainty of his name that he cannot bear to see some dirt, and that good store too, cast upon his back by reviling tongues, must seek a path to travel in by himself to heaven; but, for thy comfort, Christian, sincerity, though it cannot privilege thee from traveller’s fare, and keep thee from being dashed with calumnies, yet it will do thee this kind of office, that the dirt which lights on thy coat shall not soak into thy soul, to damp thy joy and chill thy inward comfort. Reproaches without may be comfortably endured, yea triumphantly worn as a crown, if they meet not with a reproaching conscience within. Yea, sincerity will do more than this comes to. It will not only comfort thee under the ‘persecution of the tongue, but of the hand also’—not only quench the fire, which from thence is spit on thy face by tongues set on fire by hell, but it will comfort thee in the very mouth of fire itself, if God shall thee by persecutors to be cast into it. Sincerity makes thee, indeed, fearful to sin. O thou darest not touch one of these coals; but it will make thee bold to burn, and even hug joyfully the flames of martyrdom when called to them. So little afraid was that sincere servant of Christ, an Italian martyr whom Mr. Fox makes mention of among many other undaunted champions of the truth, that, when the magistrate of the place where he was to be burned, and the officers of the bishop that condemned him, were in a hot contest —wrangling which of them should pay for the wood that should make the fire for his burning—he pleasantly sent to desire them, ‘they would not fall out upon that occasion, for he would take off the burden from them both, and be at the cost himself.’ Blessed soul! he made not so much ado of spending his blood and sacrificing his life, as they about a few pence wickedly to procure the same.

2. Sincerity girds the soul with comforting strength, when conflicting with affliction from the hand of God. Many are the sorts of afflictions with which God exerciseth his sincere servants. To name a few.

(1.) When the Lord toucheth his outward man by sickness, or his inward man by spiritual conflicts, sincerity is a comfortable companion in both. The hypocrite, above all, fears falling into God's hands. And well he may; for he is able to do him most hurt. Therefore, no sooner does God take hold of his collar, either of these ways, but his joy gives up the ghost. Like some murderer, whose doom is written plain in the law, he gives himself for a dead man, when once he is clapped up in prison. This made Job such an object of wonder to his wife, because he held up his holy course when battered so sadly by the afflicting hand of God, with renewed afflictions—'Dost thou yet hold thy integrity?' What! nothing but blows come from God's hand, and yet continue to bless him? This was strange to her, but not to him, who would call her 'foolish woman' for her pains, but not charge God foolishly, for all he smarted so under his hand. Sincerity enables the Christian to do two things in this case, which the hypocrite cannot—to speak good of God, and to expect good from God —and the soul cannot be uncomfortable, though head and heart ache together, which is able to do these.

(a.) Sincerity enables the Christian to think and speak well of God. A false-hearted hypocrite, his countenance falls, and his heart rises, yea, swells with venom against God. Though he dare not always let it drivel out of his mouth, yet he has bloody thoughts against him in his heart. 'Hast thou found me, O my enemy?' saith the wretch. He loves not God, and therefore a good thought of God cannot dwell in his soul. All that God has done for him, though never so bountifully, it is forgotten and embittered with the overflowing of his gall at the present dealings of God with him. He frets and fumes. You shall hear him sooner curse God than charge himself. But the sincere soul nourisheth most sweet and amiable apprehensions of God, which bind him to the peace, that he dare not think or speak unbeseeming the glory or goodness of God; as we see in David, 'I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it,' Psalms 39:9. This holy man had a breach made both in his body and spirit at this time. He was sick and sad, yet he remembers from whose hand the blow came. 'Thou, Lord, didst it:' thou whom I love dearly, and so can take it kindly; thou whom I have offended, and so take it patiently: yea, thou who mightest have cast me into a bed of flames, instead of my bed of sickness; and therefore I accept the correction thankfully. Thus he catches the blow without retorting it back upon God, by any quarrelling discontented language.

(b.) Sincerity enables the soul to expect good from God, when his hand presseth hardest on body or soul, Psalms 38:1-22. Never was David in a worse case for body and soul; it would break a flinty heart to read the sad moans that this throbbing soul makes, in the anguish of his flesh, and bitter agony of his spirit. One would have thought they had been the pangs of a soul going away in despair; yet even in this great storm, we find him casting out his sheet-anchor of hope, and that takes sure hold of God for his mercy: 'For in thee, O Lord, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O Lord my God,' Psalms 38:15. This expectation of good from God corrects and qualifies the bitterness that is upon his palate, from his present sorrow. 'I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me,' Psalms 40:17. My state at present is sad enough, but my comfort is, 'I am not cast out of his mind, I know that his thoughts are at work to do me good.' Holy Job proves that he is not a hypocrite—as his friends uncharitably charged him —by his confidence he had on God in the depth of all his afflictions: 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. I will maintain my ways before him; he also

shall be my salvation, for an hypocrite shall not come before him,' Job 13:15-16. As if he had said, "If I were not sincere, I durst not thus appeal to God, and comfortably believe, while God is killing me, that he would yet save me, 'for a hypocrite shall not come before him.'" That is, he dare not thus trust himself in God's hands, and acquiesce in his promise, when his neck is on the block, and God's knife at his throat. No; if he could, he would never come in his sight. His conscience tells him God knows him too well to intend him any good, and therefore, when God begins to lay his hand on him—except his conscience be dedolent and seared, which is the curse that God now and then brands the gross hypocrite with—he presently hath the scent of hell-fire in his soul, in a fearful expectation thereof, and looks on these present afflictions, though but a cloud of a handbreadth, as those which will spread further and further, till the shades of that everlasting night overtake and encompass him in hell's utter darkness.

(2.) Sincerity comforts the Christian when he wants success, visibly to crown his endeavours, in his place and calling. A great affliction this is, no doubt, to a gracious soul. It is as when a minister of the gospel spends his strength and sweals out his life to a gainsaying people, that sit like stocks and stones under his ministry, no more moved than the seats they sit on and the pillars they lean to; ignorant and profane he found them, and such he sees he is like to leave them, after twenty years may be, almost twice told, spent among them. This must needs be a heart-aching trial to one whom God hath given a compassionate heart to souls. It costs the mother no small pains to bring forth a living child; but what are the bitter throws of one that travails with a dead child? Such is the travail of a poor minister with a dead-hearted people, yet the portion of none of the meanest of God's messengers; indeed, God sets his most eminent servants about the hardest work. Now sincerity lightens this affliction, and sends in what may cheer the soul under it. Paul saw he should not carry all to heaven with him he preached unto—to many the gospel was 'a savour of death unto death.' The sweet perfume of the gospel proved a deadly scent to hasten and heighten their damnation. This could not be but sad to so tender a physician—to see his patients die under his hands—yet he thanks God that makes him 'triumph in Christ,' 2 Corinthians 2:14. But how can he do this? poor souls drop to hell from under his pulpit hearing him, and he triumph? This is as strange as to see the father follow his child's mournful hearse, not weeping, but singing and dancing. Mark, and the wonder will cease. He doth not triumph that they perish, but that he is not guilty of their blood; not that they are damned, but that he sincerely endeavoured their salvation. 'For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ,' 2 Corinthians 2:17. Had Paul dropped some wild gourd of error into his doctrine, or mingled some ingredient of his own, with what Christ the great physician had ordered, he would have had little list to triumph; but preaching pure gospel, and that purely, with a sincere heart, he might triumph in Christ that made him faithful, and shall triumph over them when he meets them again at the great day of the bar of Christ, where, to their face, he shall witness against them, and vote with Christ for their eternal destruction. Methinks I hear all the faithful ministers of Christ giving an account to him, on whose errand they were sent, in the language of Jeremiah's prayer, 'Lord, we have not desired the woful day, thou knowest,' Jeremiah 17:16, which now hath taken hold of these wretched souls, and which we warned them of. That which came out of our lips, in our preaching to them, was right before thee. The life of their souls was dear and precious to us. We could have sacrificed our temporal lives, to save the eternal life of their souls; but nothing we could say, or do, would stay them; to hell they would go over all the prayers, tears, and entreaties out of thy word, which stood in their way. This will make the sincere

ministers of Christ lift up their head with joy, and such forlorn wretches hang down their heads with shame to look Christ or them in the face, though now they can brazen it out with an impudent forehead. So for parents and masters, sincerity in your relations will comfort you, though you see not your seed come up which you have sown upon them in your godly examples, holy instructions, and seasonable corrections. David was one that 'walked in his house with a perfect heart,' Psalms 101:2—careful in the nurture of his children, as appears in his pious counsel to Solomon, 1 Chronicles 28:9, though not without failings. But many of his children were none of the best; one incestuous, another imbruing his hands in his brother's blood, a third catching traitorously at his crown while he was himself alive—a fact which made this holy man sadly foresee how the squares would go when he was dead and gone. Yet in this great disorder of his family, how comfortable do we find him on his dying bed! 'Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure,' 2 Samuel 23:5. Surely he had done his duty sincerely. This was his evidence for his interest in the covenant, and the covenant was all his desire and salvation. In a word, in times of public calamity, when the flood of God's wrath comes rolling in upon a nation, like waves irresistibly, at the wide breach which the high crying sins of the times make, and the few righteous that are found upon the place labour to stand in the gap, by their prayers, begging the life of the nation, but God will not hear, even then sincerity will be a sweet support while we share with others in the common calamity. Thus, indeed, it sometimes falls out—although the righteous ones be, like Noah, Job, and Daniel, beloved of God—that no bail will be taken for a nation under the arrest of God's judgments. Jeremiah, he bestirred him zealously for God in testifying against the sins of the times, and for the people faithfully and earnestly with God by prayer; but he could neither convert them by his preaching, nor divert the wrath of God by his praying. The Jews bade him hold his peace, and prophesy no more against them. God stops his mouth also, and bids him pray no more for them. Now in the dismal state of things, what easeth his sorrowful heart, swollen with grief for their sins, and judgments hastening upon them, like an eagle to her prey? Truly nothing can, but the remembrance of his sincerity to God and man in those debauched times. 'Remember that I stood up before thee to speak good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them,' Jeremiah 18:20. As if he had said, 'O Lord, though I cannot prevail with this rebellious generation to repent of their sins, or with thy majesty, to repent of thy wrath gone out by an irreversible decree against them; yet remember that I have been faithful in my place both to thee and them.' Whereas on the contrary, horror and amazement of spirit is the portion, in such times of public calamity of hypocrites, as we see in Pashur, Jeremiah 20:1-18; who was a man that bare great sway at court in Jeremiah's time, a bitter enemy tot he prophet himself and to the message he brought from God to the Jews, labouring to soothe up the king and princes with vain hopes of golden days coming—point blank against the word of the Lord in the mouth of Jeremiah. And what becomes of him when the storm falls on that unhappy people? Jeremiah tells him his doom, Jeremiah 20:4—that God will make him a magor missabib—a terror to himself. He should not only share in the common calamity, but have a brand of God's special wrath set upon him above others.

(3.) Sincerity girds the Christian with strength of comfort, when deprived of those opportunities which sometime God had intrusted him with for serving of him. [This is] an affliction which, considered in itself, [is] so grievous to a gracious soul that he knows none he fears more. He could choose any, might he be his own carver, before it; yea, to be poor, disgraced, persecuted, anything rather than be laid aside as a broken instrument, unserviceable to his God. Indeed, he

values his life, and all the comforts of it, by the opportunities they afford for the glorifying God. David stops the mouth of his soul, which began to whisper some discontented language, with this, that he should yet praise God. ‘Why art thou disquieted, O my soul,... I shall yet praise him,’ Psalms 42:5. All is well with David, and no cause of disquiet in his soul, whatever besides goes cross to him, may he but praise God, and have opportunity of glorifying him. Joseph, when God had so strangely raised him pinnacle high, as I may say, to honour in a strange land, he doth not bless himself in his preferment, carnally to think how great a man he is, but interprets the whole series of providence, bringing him at last to that place, wherein he stood compeer to a mighty king, to be no other than giving him an opportunity of being eminently serviceable to God in the preservation of his church, which was at that time contained in his father’s family. ‘God hath sent me hither,’ saith he, ‘before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance,’ Genesis 45:7. This holy man made his place give place to the work he was called to act in it for God, counting the honour of his honour, to lie in the opportunity he had by it of serving God and his church. It must therefore needs be a sad affliction to a saint, when such opportunities are taken from him that at any time he hath enjoyed. But sincerity can make good work of this also, if God will have it so. It is sad to the Christian to be laid aside, but it is comfortable to him to remember that when he was not, he did not melt his talents away in sloth, nor waste them away in riot, but was faithful in improving them for God. He counts it his affliction that God employs him not as he hath done, but he is not sorry that God can do his work without him; yea, it is a sweet comfort to him, as he lies at the grave’s mouth, to think that the glory of God shall not go down tot he grave with him. Though he dies, yet god lives to take care of his own work; and it is not the cracking of one string, or of all, that can mar the music of God’s providence, who can perform his pleasure without using any creature for his instrument. In a word, it is sad to him to be taken from any work wherein he might more eminently glorify God; yet this again comforts him that God counts that done which the Christian sincerely desires to do. David’s good-will in desiring to build the temple, was as much in God’s account as if he had done it. Many shall be at the last day rewarded by Christ for clothing and feeding the poor, who, when on earth, had neither clothes nor bread to give, yet having had a heart to give, shall be reckoned amongst the greatest benefactors to the poor. This appears from Matthew 25:34, where Christ is represented speaking not to some few saints that had great estates to bestow on charitable uses, but to all his saints, poor as well as rich. ‘Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you,’ &c. ‘For I was hungered and ye gave me meat,’ &c. Mark, not ‘ye that were rich,’ but ‘ye’—that is, ‘all—such as had bread,’ you gave that out, you that had not bread or money to give, when you could not draw out your purse, you yet drew out your souls to the hungry. Hear this, O ye precious souls that God hath made sincere, and take comfort. May be you stand low in the world; your calling is mean; your estate next to nothing; which makes you little regarded by your neighbours that overtop you. Canst thou say, though thou beest but a servant to some poor cobbler, that thou desirest to walk in the truth of thy heart, approving thyself to God in thy whole course? This bird will sing as sweet a note in thy breast, as if thou wert the greatest monarch in the world. That which brings comfort to the greatest saint in a time of distress, is the same which comforts the meanest in the family, and that is the love and favour of God, interest in Christ, and the precious promises which in him are ‘yea’ and ‘amen.’ Now, sincerity is the best evidence for our title to those. It will not be so much insisted on, whether much or little has been done by us, as whether that much or little were in sincerity.

‘Well done, good and faithful servant.’ Not ‘well done, thou hast done great things, ruled states and kingdoms, been a famous preacher in thy time,’ &c.; but ‘thou hast been faithful;’ and that thou mayest be that standest in the obscurest corner of the world. Good Hezekiah knew this, and therefore, on his sick-bed, he doth not tell God of his great services he had done—though none had done more—but only desires God to take notice of the truth and sincerity of his heart, ‘Remember, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight,’ Isaiah 38:3.

{A short improvement of the general subject.]

It remains that the point be applied in its several branches, which are three, viz. sincerity has a preserving strength, a restoring strength, and a comforting strength. But for quick despatch we shall do it under two heads, clapping the two former into one.

Use First. Therefore, sincerity hath a strengthening virtue, whereby it either preserves the soul from falling into sin, or helps the Christian fallen to rise again.

1. This affords thee, Christian, a further discovery of thy heart, whether sincere or not. Put it here upon the trial. Dost thou find a power imparted to thee, whereby thou art enabled to repel a temptation to sin, when thou hast no weapon left thee to defend thee against it, but the command forbidding it, or some arrow taken out of the quiver of the gospel, such as the love of Christ to thee, thy love to him, and the like? May be the temptation is laid so cunningly, that thou mayest sin, and save thy credit too, having a backdoor opened to let thee in to it secretly. Thou shalt hazard nothing, apparently, of thy temporal concernment; yea, rather greatly advantage it, if thou wilt hearken to the motion. Only, God stands up to oppose it. His Spirit tells thee it is against his glory, inconsistent with the duty thou owest and the love thou professest to him. Now, speak what thou thinkest of sinning, the case being thus stated. Canst thou yet stand it out valiantly, and tell Satan sin is no match for thee, till thou canst have God’s consent, and reconcile sinning against him and loving of him together? If so, bless God that hath given thee a sincere heart, and hath also opened such a window as his in thy soul, through which thou mayest see that grace to be there, which seen, is the best evidence that God can give thee for thy interest in him, and life everlasting with him. Wert thou a hypocrite, thou couldst no more resist a sin so offered, than powder fire, or chaff the wind.

Again, when thou art run down by the violence of temptation, what is the behaviour of thy soul in this case? Dost thou rally thy routed forces, and again make head against thy enemy so much the more eagerly, because foiled so shamefully? Or art thou content to sit down quietly by the loss, and choose rather to be a tame slave to thy lust, than to be at any further trouble to continue the war? The false heart indeed is soon cowed—quickly yields subjection to the conqueror—but the sincere Christian gets heart, even when he loseth ground. Uprightness makes the soul rebound higher in holy purposes against sin, by its very falls into sin. ‘Once have I spoken,’ he means foolishly, sinfully, ‘but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further,’ Job 40:5. This made holy David beg of God to be spared a little, that he might have time to recover his strength before he went hence. Loath he was to go beaten out of the field. Might he but live to recover his losses by repentance of, and some victory over, those sins that had weakened and worsted him, then death should be welcome. He felt like that brave captain who, wounded in fight, desired some to hold him up, that he might but see the enemy run before he died, and then he should close his

eyes in peace. Deal therefore impartially with thy own soul. Which way do thy falls and failings work? If they wear off the edge from thy conscience, that it is not so keen and sharp in its reproofs for sin—if they bribe thy affections, that thou beginnest to comply with those sins which formerly thy contest was, and likest pretty well their acquaintance—thy heart is not right. But if still thy heart meditates a revenge on thy sin that hath overpowered thee, and it lies on thy spirit, like undigested meat on a sick stomach, thou canst have no ease and content to thy troubled soul till thou hast cleared thyself of it, as to its reigning power; truly then thou discoverest a sincere heart.

2. This shows of what importance it is to labour for sincerity. Without it we can neither stand against, nor rise when we fall into temptation. Whatever thou beggest of God, forget not a sincere heart. David saw need of more of this grace than he had. ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me,’ Psalms 51:10; and happy was it for him he had so much as to make him desire more of it. What folly it is to build a house with beams on fire! The hypocrite’s building must needs come to nought. There is a fire unquenched—the power of hypocrisy unmortified—that will consume all his goodly profession. He carries into the field a heart that will deliver him up into his enemy’s hands. And he is sure to be overcome to whom his own side is not true.

3. Bless God, O sincere Christian, for this grace, for it is a blessing invaluable—crowns and diadems are not to be compared with it. In this, thou hast a heart after God’s own heart; a heart to his liking; yea, a heart to his likeness. Nothing makes thee liker to God in the simplicity and purity of his nature, than sincerity. Truth is that which God glories in. He is ‘a God of truth.’ When Haman was bid to say what should be done to the man that the king delighted to honour, he, thinking the king meant no other than himself, would fly as high as his ambition could carry him; and what doth he choose, but to be clothed with the king’s own apparel royal! When God gives thee sincerity, he clothes thy soul with that which he wears himself—‘who clothes himself with truth and righteousness as a garment.’ By this thou art made a conqueror greater than ever Alexander was. He overcame a world of men; but thou, a world of lust and devils. Did one bless God, at the sight of a toad, that God made him a man and not a toad? how much more thankful oughtest thou to be, who hath made thee that wert a hypocrite by nature, which is far worse, an upright Christian? It is notable saying of Lactantius,[3] ‘If,’ saith he, ‘a man would choose death, rather than to have the face and shape of a beast—though he might withal keep the soul of a man—how much more miserable is it, under the shape of a man to carry the heart of a beast?’ Yet such a one is the hypocrite; yea worse, he doth only under the shape of a man, nut in the disguise of a saint, carry a beastly filthy heart within him.

4. Let this encourage thee who art sincere against the fears of final apostasy. Though sincerity doth not privilege thee from falling, yet thy covenant-state which thou art in, if sincere, secures thee from final apostasy. Because thy stock of grace in hand is small, thou questionest thy persevering. ‘Can these weak legs,’ thinkest thou, ‘bring me to my journey’s end; these few pence in my purse’—little grace in my heart—‘bear my charges all the way to heaven, through so many expenses of trials and temptations?’ Truly no, if thou wert to receive no more than thou hast at present. The bread thou hast in the cupboard will not maintain thee all thy life. But, soul, thou hast a covenant will help thee to more when that grows low. Hath not God taught thee to pray for thy ‘daily bread?’ and dost thou not find that the blessing of God in thy calling, diligently followed, supplies thee from day to day? And hast thou not the same bond to sue for thy spiritual ‘daily bread?’ hast thou not a Father in heaven that knows what thou needest for thy soul as well as

body? Hast thou not a dear Brother, yea Husband, that is gone to heaven, where plenty of all grace is to be had, and that on purpose on his children's errand, that he might keep their souls, graces, and comforts alive in this necessitous world? All power is in his hands; he may go to the heap, and send what he pleases for your succour. And can you starve, while he hath fulness of grace by him that hath undertaken to provide for you? Luke 10:35. The two pence which the Samaritan left were not enough to pay for cure and board of the wounded man; therefore he passeth his word 'for all that he should need besides.' Christ doth not only give a little grace in hand but his bond for more to the sincere soul, even as much as will bring them to heaven. 'Grace and glory he will give,' and 'no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly,' Psalms 84:11.

5. Take heed of resting on, or glorying in, thy sincerity. It is true it will enable thee to resist temptations, and will recover you out, when in temptation; but who enables that? where grows the root that feeds thy grace? Not in thy own ground, but in heaven. It is God alone that holds thee and it in life; he that gave it is at cost to keep it. The Lord is thy strength; let him be thy song. What can the axe, though sharp, do without the workman? Shall the axe say, 'I have cut down?' or the chisel, I have carved?' is it not the skill and art of the workman rather? When able to resist temptation say, 'The Lord was on my side or else I had fallen.' Set up an 'Ebenezer,' and write on it, 'Hitherto the Lord hath helped me.'

Though God promiseth in the psalm even now cited, to give 'grace and glory' to the upright, yet he will not give the glory of his grace to uprightness. We have David asserting his uprightness, and how he was preserved by it: 'I was also upright before him, and have kept myself from mine iniquity,' 2 Samuel 22:24. He declares the fruit of his uprightness, how God bare testimony to it by rewarding him for it, in vindicating him before, and giving him victory over his enemies: 'Therefore the Lord hath recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in his eyesight,' 2 Samuel 22:25. Now, lest he should set up himself, or applaud his own uprightness, to the prejudice of God's grace, he sweetly corrects and bounds these passages, 'God is my strength and power, and he maketh my way perfect,' 2 Samuel 22:33. As if the holy man had said, 'I pray, mistake me not; I do not ascribe the victory over my enemies within me or without, to myself and my uprightness. No, God did all, he is my strength and power; yea, it is he that makes my way perfect. If I be sincere more than others in my way, I must thank him for it; for he makes my way perfect. He found me at first as crooked a piece, and walking in as crooked ways, as any other, but he made me and my way perfect and straight.' Had God pleased he could have made Saul as perfect as David. Had God left David, he would have been as crooked and false-hearted as Saul. The last branch of the point was that sincerity hath a comforting strength in all sorts of affliction. The applicatory improvement of which shall be only this—

Use Second. Let it teach us not to fear affliction but hypocrisy. Believe it, friends, affliction is a harmless thing to a sincere soul; it cannot be so great as to make it inconsistent with his joy and comfort. A gracious soul in the most sharp affliction can spare his tears and pity, to bestow them on the hypocrite when in all his pomp and glory. He hath that in his bosom that gives him more comfortable apprehensions of his own affliction, than standers-by have, or can have, of them. This once made a holy man, when the pangs of death were on him, to ask a servant of his, weeping by his bedside for him, 'What she meant by he fears,' saying, 'Never fear that my heavenly Father will do me any hurt.' Indeed affliction is not joyous to the flesh, which hath made some of God's dear

children awhile to shrink, but after they had been acquainted with the work, and the comforts which God bestows on his poor prisoners through the grate, they have learned another tune, like the bird that at first putting into the cage flutters and shows her dislike of her restraint, but afterwards comes to sing more sweetly than when at liberty to fly where she pleased. Be not therefore so thoughtful about affliction, but be careful against hypocrisy. If the bed of affliction proves hard and uneasy to thee, it is thyself that brings with thee what makes it so. Approve thyself to God, and trust him who hath promised to be his saint's bed-maker in affliction, to make it soft and easy for thee. O what a cutting word will it be in a dying hour, when thou art crying, 'Lord, Lord, mercy on a poor creature,' to hear the Lord say, 'I know thee not.' It is not the voice of a sincere soul, but the voice of a hypocrite, that howls on his bed of sorrow. What then wilt thou do, when fallen into the hands of God, with whom thou hast juggled in thy profession, and never sincerely didst love? If that speech of Joseph was so confounding to the patriarchs—'I am Joseph your brother, who you sold into Egypt'—that they could not endure his presence, knowing their own guilt, how intolerable will it be to hear from God's own mouth such language in a time of distress. 'I am God whom you have mocked, abused, and sold away, for the enjoyments of your lusts; and do you now come to me? Have I anything for you but a hell to torment you in to all eternity?'

[1]Squinancy, commonly quinsy—an inflammation of the tonsils, or any parts of the throat.

[2]Compurgator, one that under oath vouches for the character or conduct of an accused person. From Webster's.—SDB

[3]Si nemo est, quin emori malit, quàm converti in aliquam bestiæ figuram, quamvis hominis mentem sit habiturus, quanto miserius est in hominis figurâ animo esse efferato?

01.09 - Second Piece - The Christian's Breastplate

DIRECTION SIXTH. The Several Pieces of the Whole Armour of God.

Second Piece—The Christian’s Breastplate.

‘And having on the breastplate of righteousness’ (Ephesians 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,’Romans 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,’ Romans 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,’ Psalms 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,’ Romans 3:21; Romans 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, Romans 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,’ Galatians 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 1:19. 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,' Romans 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,' Ephesians 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, 1 John 3:9. 'Christ formed in you,' Galatians 4:19, the 'new creature,' Galatians 6:15, the 'law' put by God into the inner man, Jeremiah 31:33, which Paul calls 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,' Romans 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,' Galatians 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, Romans 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,' 1 Corinthians 7:1-40; who are not all children of God. Yea false professors also gain the name of being sanctified, Hebrews 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,' Matthew 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,’ Hebrews 13:18. He doth not say ‘In all things we do live honestly,’ as if no step were taken awry 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,’ Exodus 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,’ 2 Corinthians 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,’ Isaiah 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,’ Proverbs 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,’ Proverbs 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,' Proverbs 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,' 1 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, Exodus 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 mislead 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,’ Ephesians 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, Ezekiel 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, Ephesians 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,' Ephesians 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,' Colossians 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?' 1 Corinthians 3:3. When thou, Christian, actest unholily, 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,' Romans 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,' 1 Corinthians 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,' Romans 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, Hebrews 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,' Romans 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 of Solomon 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,' Matthew 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,' 2 Timothy 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,’ Hebrews 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 prosper 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,’ Proverbs 12:26 ‘The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth,’ Proverbs 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,’ 1 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,’ Proverbs 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,' Matthew 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,' Psalms 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,' Hebrews 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 not put them off, till he found his way—viz. to employ some professors as his brokers to commend them to others, and to disperse them for him. And if such do not ensnare and defile others by their

unholy walking, to be sure they grieve their hearts, and put them to shame in the world. O how Christians hang down their heads upon the scandal of any of their company!—as all the patriarchs were troubled, when the cup was found in one of their sacks. And it is no small matter to make sad the hearts of God's people. In a word, he that keeps not up, in some measure, the power of a holy life, renders himself useless and unprofitable. Wouldst thou pray for others? A heathen could bid a wicked man hold his peace, and not let the gods know he was in a ship when a storm was on them. Wouldst thou speak a word of comfort to any mournful soul? O how unsavoury are comforts dropping from such a mouth! Wouldst thou counsel another? Thy friend will think thou dost but jest. Whatever thou sayest in commendation of holiness, he will not believe that thou thyself dost think it good; for then thou wouldst take that thyself, which thou commendest to another.

Sixth. Holiness and righteousness—they are the pillars of kingdoms and nations. Who are they that keep the house from falling on a people's head, but the righteous in a nation? 'Ten righteous men,' could they have been found in Sodom, had blown over the storm of fire and brimstone that, in a few hours, entombed them in their own ashes; yea, the destroying angel's hands were tied up, as it were, while but one righteous Lot was among them. 'Haste thee, escape hither; for I cannot do anything till thou be come hither,' Genesis 19:22. Rehoboam and his kingdom were strengthened for three years, and might have been for three and twenty, if he head not, by his unrighteousness, pulled it down upon himself and people; for his unhappiness is dated from the very time of his departure from God, 2 Chronicles 11:16-23; 2 Chronicles 12:1-2. Josiah, when he came to the crown, found the kingdom of Judah tumbling apace to ruin; yet, because his heart was set for God, and prepared to walk before him, God took his bail (as I may so say) for that wretched people, even when they were under arrest from him, and almost at the prison door, so that their safety was, in a manner, bound up in his life; for soon after his decease all went to wreck among them. It was a heroic speech of Luther, who foresaw a black cloud of God's judgments coming over the head of Germany, but told some of his friends, 'That he would do his best to keep it from falling in his days'—yea, he believed it should not come—'and,' said he, 'when I am gone, let them that come after me look to it.' This poor nation of England hath, for many generations in a succession, had a number of precious, righteous ones, who have, through God's grace, walked close with God, and been kept in a great degree unspotted from the defilements of the ungodly times they lived in. These were the Atlases of their several ages; these have oft found favour of God, to beg the life of this nation, when its neck hath been on the very block. But they are gone, or wearing away apace, and a new generation coming in their room; unhappy would the day be called when you were born, if you should be the men and women that, by degenerating from the power of holiness, should cut the banks which was their chief care to keep up, and so let in a desolating judgment to overflow the land. That heir we count unworthy of his birth and patrimony, who, by his debauched courses, prodigally makes away that estate, which, by the care and providence of his ancestors, was through many descents at last transmitted to him; but which now, together with the honour of the family, unhappily ends in him. If ever any age was like to do thus by the place of their nativity, this present is it, wherein our sad lot to live is cast. How low is the power of holiness sunk among us, to what it was but in the last generation! Religion, alas! runs low and dreggy[8] among professors. God, we know, will not long suffer it. If Egypt knows a dearth is coming by the low ebbing of Nilus, surely we may see a judgment to be coming by the low fall of the power of godliness.

There are great complaints of what men have lost in these hurling times. Some bemoan their lost places and estates, others the lost lives of their friends in the wars; but professors may claim justly the first place of all the mourners of the times, to lament their lost loves to the truths of Christ, worship of Christ, servants of Christ—yea, that universal decay which appears in their holy walking before God and man. This is sad indeed, but that which adds a fearful aggravation to it is, that we degenerate and grow loose at a time when we are under the highest engagements for holiness that ever any people were. We are a people redeemed from many deaths and dangers. And when better might God expect us to be a righteous nation? It is an ill time for a person to fall a stealing and pilfering again as soon as the rope is off his neck, and he let safely come down that ladder from which he was even now like to be turned off. Surely it added to righteous Noah's sin, to be drunk as soon almost as he was set on shore, when a little before he had seen a whole world sinking before his eyes, and he, privileged person, left by God to plant the world again with a godly seed. O sirs, the earth hath hardly yet drunk in the rivers of blood that have been shed in our land. The cities and towns have hardly got out of their ruins, which the miseries of war laid them in. The moans of the fatherless and husbandless, whom the sword bereaved of their dearest relations, are not yet silenced by their own death. Yea, can our own frights and scares, which we were amazed with, when we saw the nation—like a candle lighted at both ends—on flame, and every day the fire coming nearer and nearer to ourselves—can these be so soon forgotten? Now, that at such a time as this, a nation, and that the professing part of it, should grow looser, more proud, covetous, contentious, wanton in their principles, and careless in their lives; this must be for a lamentation. We have little cause to boast of our peace and plenty, when the result of our deliverance is to deliver us up to commit such abominations. This is as if one whose quartan[9] ague is gone, but leaving him in a deep dropsy, should brag his ague hath left him, little thinking that when it went, it left him a worse guest in its place. An unhappy change, God knows it is; to have war, pestilence, and famine removed, and to be left swollen up with pride, error, and libertinism.

Again, we are a people who have made more pretensions to righteousness and holiness than our forefathers ever did. What else meant the many prayers to God, and petitions to man, for reformation? What interpretations could a charitable heart make, of our putting ourselves under the bond of a covenant, to endeavour for personal reformation, and then national, but that we meant in earnest to be a more righteous nation that ever before? This made such a loud report in foreign parts, that our neighbour-churches were set a wondering to think what these glorious beginnings might ripen to; so that now—having put forth these leaves, and told both God and man, by them, what fruit was to be looked for from us—our present state must needs be nigh unto cursing, for disappointing the just expectations of both. Nothing can save the life of this our nation, or lengthen out its tranquility in mercy to it, but the recovery of the much decayed power of holiness. This, as a spring of new blood to a weak body, would, though almost a dying, revive it, and procure more happy days—yea, more happy days to come over its head, than it hath yet seen; but alas! as we are degenerating from bad to worse, we do but die lingeringly—every day we fetch our breath shorter and shorter; if the sword should but be drawn again among us, we have hardly strength to hold out another fit.

SECOND BRANCH.

[Instances wherein the Christian is to express the power of holiness.] The second particular, into which the point was branched, comes now to be taken into hand; and that was to mention several

instances wherein especially every Christian is to express the power of a holy and righteous life. Now this I shall do under several heads.

First. The Christian must maintain the power of holiness in his contest with sin. Second. The Christian must express the power of holiness in the duties of God's worship. Third. The Christian must express the power of holiness in his particular calling and worldly employments.

[The power of holiness is expressed in the saint's behaviour towards sin.]

First Instance. The Christian must maintain the power of holiness in his contest with sin; and that in the particulars following.

Thou must not only refuse to commit broad sins, but shun the appearance of sin also; this is to walk in the power of holiness. The dove doth not only fly from the hawk, but will not so much as smell a single feather that falls from it. It should be enough to scare the holy soul from any enterprise, if it be but male coloratum—badly coloured. We are commanded to 'hate even the garment spotted by the flesh,' Jude 1:23. A cleanly person will not only refuse to swallow the dung-hill (he [who would] is a beast indeed), but he is careful also that he doth not get so much as a spot on his clothes as he is eating his meat. The Christian's care should be to keep, as his conscience is pure, so his name pure; which is done by avoiding all appearance of evil. Bernard's three questions are worth the asking ourselves in any enterprise. An liceat? an deceat? an expediat?—Is it lawful? may I do it and not sin? Is it becoming me a Christian? may I do it, and not wrong my profession? That work which would suit a mean man, would it become a prince? 'Should such a man as I flee?' Nehemiah 6:11, said Nehemiah nobly. Lastly, Is it expedient? may I do it, and not offend my weak brother? There are some things we must deny ourselves of for the sake of others. Though a man could sit his horse, and run him full speed without danger to himself; yet he should do very ill to come scouring through a town where children are in the way, that may be, before he is aware, rid over by him, and spoiled. Thus some things thou mayest do, and without sin to thee, if there were no weak Christians in thy way to ride over, and so bruise their tender consciences and grieve their spirits. But alas! this is too narrow a path for many shaleing[10] professors to walk in now-a-days; they must have more room and scope for their loose hearts, or else they and their profession must part. Liberty is the Diana of our times. O what apologies are made for some suspicious practices!—long hair, gaudy garish apparel, spotted faces, naked breasts. These have been called to the bar in former times, and censured by sober and solid Christians, as things at least suspicious, and of no 'good report;' but now they have hit upon a more favourable jury, that find them 'not guilty.' Yea, many are so fond of them, that they think Christian liberty is wronged in their censure. Professors are so far from a holy jealousy, that should make them watch their hearts, lest they go too far, that they stretch their consciences to come up to the full length of their tedder; as if he were the brave Christian that could come nearest the pit of sin, and not fall in; as in the Olympian games, he wore the garland away, that could drive his chariot nearest the mark, and not knock on it. If this were so, Paul mistook when he bade Christians 'abstain from all appearance of evil,' 1 Thessalonians 5:22. He should rather, by these men's divinity, have said 'abstain' not from 'the appearance,' only take heed of what is in itself grossly 'evil.' But he that can venture on 'the appearance of evil,' under the pretence of liberty, may, for aught I know, commit that which is more grossly evil, under some appearance of good. It is not hard, if a man will be at the cost, to put a good colour on a rotten stuff, and practice also.

Second Particular. Thou must not only endeavour against all sin, but that, on noble principles. Here lies the power of holiness. Many forbear to sin upon such an unworthy account, that God will not thank them for it another day. As it is in actions of piety and charity, God makes no account of them, except he be interested in them. When we fast or pray, God asks, 'Do you fast and pray to me, even to me?' Zechariah 7:5. When we give alms, 'a cup of cold water' for his sake, given 'in the name of a disciple,' is more valued by him, Matthew 10:42, than a cup of gold, for private and low ends. As in these, so it is in sin, God looks that his authority should conclude, and his love constrain us to renounce it; before the commandments—as princes, before their proclamations, prefix their arms and royal names—God sets his glorious name. 'God spake all these words,' saying, &c., Exodus 20:1. And why this, but that we should sanctify his name in all that we do? A master may well think himself despised by that servant that still goes on, when he bids him leave off such a work, but has done presently at the entreaty of another. O how many are there that go on to sin, for all that God says to the contrary! But when their credit bids, for shame of the world, to give over such a practice, they can knock off presently. When their profit speaks, it is heard and obeyed. O sirs! take heed of this; God expects his servants should not only do what he commands, but this, at his command, and his only. And as in abstaining from evil, so in mourning for sins committed by us, if we will be Christians indeed, we must take in, yea prefer, God's concernments before our own. Indeed, it were to be wished that some were kind to their own souls, as to mourn for themselves when they have sinned—that they would cry out with Lamech, 'I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt.' Genesis 4:23. Many have such brawny consciences, that they do not so much as complain they have hurt themselves by their sins. But, little of the power of holiness appears in all this. There may be a great cry in the conscience, 'I am damned! I have undone myself!' and the dishonour that is cast upon God by him, not laid to heart. You remember what Joab said to David, taking on heavily for Absalom's death, 'I perceive,' said he, 'if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well,' 2 Samuel 19:6. Thus we might say to such selfish mourners, 'We perceive that if thou couldst but save the life of thy soul from eternal death and damnation, though the glory of God miscarried, thou couldst be pleased well enough.' But know, that a gracious soul's mourning runs in another channel. 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned,' is holy David's moan. There is a great difference between a servant that works for another, and one that is his own man. As we say, the latter puts all his losses upon his own head: 'So much,' saith he, 'I have lost by such a ship—so much by such a bargain.' But the servant that trades with his master's stock—he, when any loss comes, he puts it on his master's account: 'So much have I lost of my master's goods.' O Christian! think of this. Thou art but a servant. All the stock thou tradest with is not thine, but thy God's; and therefore, when thou fallest into any sin, bewail it as a wrong to him. 'So much, alas! I have dishonoured my God; his talents I have wasted; his name I have wounded; his Spirit I have grieved.'

Third Particular. He must not only abstain from acting a sin, but also labour to mortify it. A wound may be hid when it is not healed—covered, and yet not cured. Some men, they are like unskilful physicians, who rather drive in the disease, than drive out the cause of the disease. Corruption thus left in the bosom, like lime unslaked, or a humour unpurged, is sure at one time or other to take fire and break out, though now it lies peaceably, as powder in the barrel, and makes no noise. I have read that the opening of a chest where some cloths were laid up—not very well aired and cleared from the infection that had been in the house—was the cause of a great plague in Venice,

after they had lain many years there, without doing any hurt. I am sure we see, for want of true mortification, many who, after they have walked so long unblameably as to gain the reputation of being saints in the opinion of others, upon some occasion, like the opening of the chest, have fallen sadly into abominable practices; and therefore it behoves us not to satisfy ourselves with anything less than a work of mortification, and that followed on from day to day. ‘I protest,’ saith Paul, ‘by my rejoicing in Christ, I die daily.’ Here was a man who walked in the power of holiness. Sin is like the beast, Revelation 13:3, which seemed at one time as if it would presently die of its wounds, but by and by it was strangely healed so as to recover again. Many a saint, for want of keeping a tight rein, and that constantly, over some corruption which they have thought they had got the mastery of, have been thrown out the saddle, and by it dragged dangerously into temptation, unable to resist the fury of lust, when it has got head, till they have broken their bones with some sad fall into sin. If thou wouldst, Christian, show the power of holiness, never give over mortifying-work, no, not when thy corruptions play least in thy sight. He that is inclined to a disease—gout, stone, or the like—must not only take physic when he hath a fit actually upon him, but ever and anon should be taking something good against it. So should the Christian, not only when he finds his corruption stirring, but every day keep his soul in a course of spiritual physic, against the growing of it. This is holiness in its power. Many professors do with their souls in this respect, as deceitful chirurgeons with their patients—lay on a healing plaster one day, and a contrary the next day, that sets the cure more back than the other set it forward. Take heed of this, except thou meanest not only to bring the power of holiness into danger, but the very life and truth of it into question in thy soul.

Fourth Particular. He must, as endeavour to mortify corruption, so to grow and advance in the contrary grace. Every sin hath its opposite grace, as every poison hath its antidote. He that will walk in the power of holiness, must not only labour to make avoidance of sin, but to get possession of the contrary grace. We read of a house that stood ‘empty,’ Matthew 12:44. ‘The unclean spirit went out,’ but the Holy Spirit came not in—that is, when a man is a mere negative Christian, he ceaseth to do evil in some ways he hath formerly walked in, but he learns not to do good. This is to lose heaven with short-shooting. God will not ask us what we were not, but what we were. Not to swear and curse will not serve our turn; but thou wilt be asked, ‘Didst thou bless and sanctify God’s name?’ It will not suffice that thou didst not persecute Christ, but ‘Didst thou receive him?’ Thou didst not hate his saints, but didst thou love them? Thou didst not drink and swill, but wert thou filled with the Spirit? He is the skilful physician who, at the same time he evacuates the disease, doth also comfort and strengthen nature; and he the true Christian, that doth not content himself with a bare laying aside of evil customs and practices, but labours to walk in that exercise of the corresponding graces. Art thou discomposed with impatience?—haunted with a discontented spirit, under any affliction? Think it not enough to silence thy heart from quarreling with God; but leave not till thou canst bring it sweetly to rely on God. Holy David drove it thus far—he did not only chide his soul for being disquieted, but he charges it to trust in God, Psalms 43:5. Hast thou any grudgings in thy heart against thy brother? Think it not enough to quench these sparks of hell-fire; but labour to kindle a heavenly fire of love to him, so as to set thee a praying heartily for him. I have known one who, when he had some envious, unkind thoughts stirring in him, against any one—as who so holy may not find such vermin sometimes creeping about him?—would not stay long from the throne of grace; but going there, that he might enter the stronger protest against them, would most earnestly pray for the increase of those good

things in them, which he before had seemed to grudge, [i.e. desiderate], and so revenged himself of those envious lustings which at any time rose in his heart against others.

Fifth Particular. He must have a public spirit against the sins of others. A good subject doth not only labour to live quietly under his prince's government himself, but is ready to serve his prince against those that will not. True holiness, as true charity, begins at home, but it doth not confine itself within its own doors. It hath a zeal against sin abroad. He that is of a neutral spirit, and, Gallio-like, cares not what dishonour God hath from others, calls in question the zeal he expresseth against sin in his own bosom. When David would know the temper of his own heart, the furthest discovery by all search that he could make of the sincerity of it, is his zeal against the sins of others. 'Do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with a perfect hatred; I count them mine enemies,' Psalms 139:21-22. Having done this, he entreats God himself to ransack his heart; 'Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me,' &c., Psalms 139:23-24; as if he had said, Lord, my line will not reach to fathom my heart any further, and therefore if it be possible that yet any evil may shroud itself under this, tell me, and 'lead me in the way everlasting.'

Sixth Particular. The Christian, when he shows most zeal against sin, and hath greatest victory over it, even then must he renounce all fiduciary[11] glorying in this. The excellency of gospel holiness consists in self-denial. 'Though I wee perfect,' saith Job, 'yet would I not know my soul,' Job 9:21; that is, I would not be conceited and proud of my innocence. When a man is lift up with any excellency he hath, we say, 'He knows it;' 'He hath excellent parts, but he knows it;' that is, he reflects too much on himself, and sees his own face too oft in the glass of his own perfections. They who climb lofty mountains find it safest, the higher they ascend, the more to bow and stoop with their bodies; and so does the Spirit of Christ teach the saints, as they get higher in their victories over corruption, to bow lowest in self-denial. The saints are bid to, 'keep themselves in the love of God,' and then to wait, 'looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life,' Jude 1:21. And, 'Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy,' Hosea 10:12. We sow on earth, we reap in heaven. The seed we are to sow is righteousness and holiness, which when we have done, with greatest care and cost, we must not expect our reward from the hand of our righteousness, but from God's mercy.

[The power of holiness is expressed in the duties of God's worship.]

Second Instance. The Christian must exert the power of holiness in the duties of God's worship. The same light that shows us a God, convinceth us he is to be worshipped, and not only so, but that he will be worshipped in a holy manner also. God was very choice in all that belonged to his worship under the law. If he hath a tabernacle—the place of worship—it must be made of the choicest materials; the workmen employed to make it must be rarely gifted for the purpose; the sacrifices to be offered up, the best in every kind, the males of the flock, the best of the beasts, the fat of the inwards, not the offals. The persons that attend upon the Lord, and minister unto him, they must be peculiarly holy. What is the gospel of all this? but that God is very wonderful in his worship. If in any action of our lives we be more holy than in others, sure it is to be, when we have to do with God immediately. Now this holiness in duties of worship should appear in these particulars.

First. In making conscience of one duty as well as another. The Christian must encompass all within his religious walk. It is dangerous to perform one duty, that we may dispense with ourselves in the neglect of another. Partiality is hateful to God, especially in the duties of religion—which have all a divine stamp upon them. There is no ordinance of God's appointment which he doth not bless to his people; and we must not reject what God owns. Yea, God communicates himself with great variety to his saints, now in this, anon in that, on purpose to keep up the esteem of all in our hearts. The spouse seeks her Beloved in secret duty at home, and finds him not; then she goes to the public, and meets 'him whom her soul loveth,' Song of Solomon 3:4. Daniel, no doubt, had often visited the throne of grace, and been a long trader in that duty; but God reserved the fuller manifestation of his love, and the opening of some secrets to him, till he did, to ordinary prayer, join extraordinary fasting and prayer. Then the commandment came forth, and a messenger from heaven was despatched to acquaint him with God's mind and heart, Daniel 9:3 compared with Daniel 9:23. There is no duty, but the saints, at one time or another, find the Spirit of God breathing sweetly in, and filling their souls from it, with more than ordinary refreshing. Sometimes the child sucks its milk from this breast, sometimes from that. David, in meditation, while he was 'musing,' Psalms 39:3, finds a heavenly heat kindling in his bosom, till at last the fire breaks out. To the eunuch in 'reading' of the word, Acts 8:27-28, is sent Philip to join his chariot; to the apostles, Christ 'makes known himself in breaking of bread,' Luke 24:35; the disciples walking to Emmaus, and conferring together, presently have Christ fall in with them, Luke 24:15, who helps them to untie those knots which they were posed with; Cornelius, at duty in his house, has 'a vision,' Acts 10:3 from heaven, to direct him in the way he should walk. Take heed, Christian, therefore that thou neglectest not any one duty. How knowest thou, but that is the door at which Christ stands waiting to enter at into thy soul? The Spirit is free. Do not bind him to this or that duty, but wait on him in all. It is not wisdom to let any water run past thy mill, which may be useful to set thy soul a-going heavenward. May be, Christian, thou findest little in those duties thou performest; they are empty breasts to thy soul. It is worth thy inquiry, whether there be not some other thou neglectest? Thou hearest the word with little profit, may be? I pray, tell me, dost thou not neglect sacraments? I am sure too many do, and that upon weak grounds, God knows. And wilt thou have God meet thee in one ordinance, who dost not meet him in another? Or, if thou frequentest all public ordinances, is not God a great stranger to thee at home, in thy house and closet? What communion dost thou hold with him in private duties? Here is a hole wide enough to lose all thou gettest in public, if not timely mended. Samuel would not sit down to the feast with Jesse and his sons, till David, though the youngest son, was fetched, who was also the only son what was wanting, 1 Samuel 16:11. If thou wouldst have God's company in any ordinance, thou must wait on him in all; he will not have any willingly neglected. Oh fetch back that duty which thou hast sent away; though least in thy eye, yet, it may be, it is that which God means to crown with his choicest blessing to thy soul.

Second. In a close and vigorous pursuance of those ends for which God hath appointed them. Now there is a double end which God chiefly aims at in duties of his worship. 1. God intends that by them we should do our homage to him as our sovereign Lord. 2. He intends them to be as means through which he may let out himself into the bosoms of his children, and communicate the choicest of his blessings to them. Now here the power of holiness puts forth itself, when the Christian attends narrowly to reach these ends in every duty he performs.

1. God appoints them for this end, that we may do our homage to him as our sovereign Lord. Were there not a worship paid to God, how should we declare and make it appear that we hold our life and being on him? One of the first things that God taught Adam, and Adam his children, was in divine worship. Now if we will do this holily, we must make it our chief care so to perform every duty, that by it we may sanctify his name in it, and give him the glory due unto him. A subject may offer a present after such a ridiculous fashion to his prince, that he may count himself rather scorned than honoured by him. The soldiers bowed the knee to Christ, but they 'mocked him,' Matthew 27:29, and so does God reckon that many do by him, even while they worship him. By the carriage and behaviour of ourselves in religious duties, we speak what our thoughts are of God himself. He that performs them with a holy awe upon his spirit, and comes to them filled with faith and fear, with joy and trembling—he declares plainly that he believes God to be a great God and a good God—a glorious majesty and a gracious. But he that is careless and slovenly in them, tells God himself to his face that he hath mean and low thoughts of him. The misbehaviour of a person in religious duties, ariseth from his misapprehensions of God whom he worships. What is engraven on the seal, you shall surely see printed on the wax. And what thoughts the heart hath of God, are stamped on the duties the man performs. Abel showed himself to be a holy man, and Cain appeared a wicked wretch, in their sacrifice. And how? but in this—that Abel aimed at that end which God intends in his worship—the sanctifying {of} his name—but which, Cain minded not at all. This may appear by comparing Abel's sacrifice with his, in two particulars.

(1.) Abel is very choice in the matter of his sacrifice—not any of the flock that comes first to hand, but 'the firstlings;' nor does he offer the lean of them to God, and save the fat for himself, but gives God the best of the best. But of Cain's offering no such care is recorded to be taken by him. It is only said, that he, 'brought of the fruit of the ground, an offering unto the Lord,' but not a word that it was the first fruit or the best fruit, Genesis 4:3-4. Again,

(2.) Abel did not put God off with a beast or two for a sacrifice; but with them give his heart also. 'By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain,' Hebrews 11:4. He gave God the inward worship of his soul; and this was it that God took so kindly at his hands, for which he obtained a testimony from God himself that he was 'righteous.' Whereas Cain thought it enough—if not too much —to give him a little of the fruit of the ground. Had the wretch but considered who God was, and what was his end in requiring an offering at his hands, he could not have thought rationally that a handful or two of corn was that which he prized or looked at, any further than to be a sign of that inward and spiritual worship which he expected to come along with the outward ceremony. But he showed what base and unworthy thoughts he had of God, and accordingly he dealt with him. O Christians! remember when you engage in any duty of religion, that you go to do your homage to God, who will be worshipped like himself. 'Cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen,' Malachi 1:14. This made David so curious about the temple which he had in his heart to build, 'because this palace is not for man, but for the Lord God,' 1 Chronicles 29:1; therefore he saith, he 'prepared with all my might for the house of his God,' 1 Chronicles 29:2. Thus should the gracious soul say, when going to any duty of religion, 'It is not man, but the Lord God, I am going to minister unto, and therefore I must be serious and solemn, holy and humble,' &c.

2. The second end God hath appointed divine ordinances and religious duties for, is to be a means whereby he may let out himself to his people, and communicate the choicest of his blessings into their bosoms. ‘There,’ saith the psalmist, speaking of the mountain of Zion, where the temple stood, the place of God’s worship, ‘the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore,’ Psalms 133:3; that is, he hath appointed the blessing of life spiritual, grace, and comfort, which at last shall swell into life eternal, to issue and stream thence. The saints ever drew their water out of these wells. ‘Your heart shall live that seek God,’ Psalms 69:32. And their souls must needs die that seek not God here. The husbandman may as well expect a crop where he never plowed and sowed; and the tradesman to grow rich, who never opens his shop-doors to let customers in; as he to thrive in grace, or comfort, that converseth not with the duties of religion. The great things God doth for his people are got in communion with him. Now here appears the power of holiness—when a soul makes this his business, which he follows close, and attends to, in duties of religion, viz. to receive some spiritual advantage from God by them. As a scholar knowing he is sent to the university to get learning himself, gives up to pursue this, and neglects other things (it is not riches, or pleasures he looks after, but learning); thus, too, the gracious soul bestirs him, and flees from one duty to another, as the bee from flower to flower, to store itself with more and more grace. It is not credit and reputation to be thought a great saint, but to be indeed such, that he takes all this pains for. The Christian is compared to a merchantman that trades for rich pearls; he is to go to ordinances, as the merchant that sails from port to port, not to see places, but to take in his lading, some here, some there. A Christian should be as much ashamed to return empty from his traffic with ordinances, as the merchant to come home without his lading. But, alas! how little is this looked after by many that pass for great professors, who are like some idle persons that come to the market, not to buy provision, and carry home what they want, but to gaze and look upon what is there to be sold, to no purpose. O my brethren, take heed of this! Idleness is bad anywhere, but worst in the market-place, where so many are at work before thy eyes, whose care for their souls both adds to thy sin, and will, another day, to thy shame. Dost thou not see others grow rich in grace and comfort, by their trading with those ordinances, from which thou comest away poor and beggarly? and canst thou see it without blushing? If thou hadst but a heart to propound the same end to thy soul, when thou comest, thou mightest speed as well as they. God allows a free trade to all that value Christ and his grace, according to their preciousness. ‘Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price,’ Isaiah 55:1. The Spirit of God seems, in the judgment of some, to allude to a certain custom in maritime towns. When a ship comes with commodities to be sold, they use to cry them about the town. ‘Oh, all that would have such and such commodities, let them come to the waterside, where they are to be had at such a price.’ Thus Christ calls every one that sees his need of him; and of his graces, to the ordinances, where these are to be freely had of all that come to them, for this very end.

[The power of holiness is to be shown in the Christian’s worldly employments.]

Third Instance. The Christian must express the power of holiness in his particular calling and worldly employments—that wherein he is conversant. Holiness must be written upon those, as well as on his religious duties. He that observes the law of building, is as exact in making a kitchen, as in making a parlour; so, by the law of Christianity, we must be as exact in our worldly business, as in duties of worship —‘Be ye holy in all manner of conversation,’ 1 Peter 1:15. We

must not leave our religion, as some do their Bibles, at church. As in man, the highest faculty —which is reason—guides his lowest actions, even those which are common to beasts, such as eating, drinking, and sleeping (man doth, that is, should, if he will deserve his own name, exercise these acts as reason directs—should show himself in them a rational creature); so in a Christian, grace, that is the highest principle, is to steer and guide him in those actions that are common to man as man. The Christian is not to buy and sell, as a mere man, but as a Christian man. Religion is not like that statesman's gown, which, when he went to recreate himself, he would throw off, and say, 'There lie, lord treasurer, a while.' No, wherever the Christian is, whatever he is adorning, he must keep his religion on—I mean, do it holily. He must not do that in which he cannot show himself a Christian. Now the power of holiness puts itself forth in our particular callings these ways. But take them conjunctively, and 'the beauty of holiness' will appear in the symmetry of all the parts together.

First. When the Christian is diligent in his particular calling. When God calls us to be Christians, he calls us indeed out of the world as to our affections, but not out of the world as to employment. It is true, when Elisha was called, he left his plough, and the apostles their nets, but not as they were called to be saints, but because they were called to office in the church. Some, however, in our days, could find in their hearts to send the officers of the church to the plough again; but upon how little reason let themselves judge, who find one trade, if it be well followed, and managed with a full stock, enough to find them work all the week. Surely then the minister that has to do with, yea, provide for, more souls than they bodies, may find his head and heart as full of work in his calling, from one end of the year, as any of them all. But I am speaking to the private Christian. Thou canst not be holy, if thou beest not diligent in a particular calling. The law of man counts him a vagrant that hath not a particular abiding place; and the word of God counts him a disorderly person that hath not a particular calling, wherein to move and act for God's glory and the good of others. 'We hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all,' 2 Thessalonians 3:11. God would have his people profitable, like the sheep which doth the very ground good it feeds on. Every one should be better for a Christian. When Onesimus was converted, he became 'profitable' to Paul and Philemon also; to Paul as a Christian, to Philemon as a servant, Phil 11. Grace made him of a runaway, a diligent servant. An idle professor is a scandalous professor. An idle man does none good, and himself most hurt.

Second. When he is not only diligent, but for conscience's sake. There are many who are free enough of their pains, in their particular callings; they need no spur. But what sets them on work? It is conscience, because God commands it? Oh no! then they would be diligent in their general calling also. They would pray as hard as they work. They then would knock off, as well as fall on, at God's command. If conscience were the key that opened their shop on the week-day, it would shut it on the Lord's day. When we see a man, like the hawk, fly after the world's prey, and will not come to God's lure[12], but—though conscience in God's name bids 'Come off, and wait on thy God in this duty in thy family, that in thy closet'—still goes on his worldly chase: he shows plain enough whose errand he goes on—not that of conscience, but that of his own lusts. But if thou wilt walk in the power of holiness, thou must be diligent in thy calling on a religious account. That which makes thee 'fervent in prayer,' must make thee 'not slothful in business.' Thou must say, 'This is the place God hath set me in. I am but his servant in my own shop, and here I must serve him as I would have my prentice or child serve me; yea, much more, for they are not mine so much

as I am his.'

Third. When he expects the success of his labour from God, and accordingly, if he speeds, gives his humble thanks to God. Indeed, they go together; he that doeth not the one, will not the other. The worldling that goes not through his closet by prayer into his shop in the morning when he enters upon his business, no wonder if he returns not at night by his closet, in thankfulness to God. He began without God; it were strange if he should end in him. The spider that spins her web out of her own bowels, dwells in it when she hath done, Job 8:14; and men that carry on their enterprises by their own wit and care, entitle themselves to what they think they have done. They will sooner sacrifice—as they to their 'net' and 'drag,' Habakkuk 1:15—to their own wisdom and industry than to God. Such a wretch I have lately heard of in our days, who, being by a neighbour excited to thank God for a rich crop of corn he had standing on his ground, atheistically replied, 'Thank God! nay, rather thank my dung-cart'—the speech of a dung-hill spirit, more filthy than the muck in his cart. But if thou wilt be a Christian, thou must acknowledge God 'in all thy ways,' not 'leaning to thy own understanding;' and this will direct thee to him, when success crowns thy labours, to crown God with the praise. Jacob laboured as diligently, and took as much pains for the estate he had at last, as another, yet laying the foundation of all in prayer, and expecting the blessing from heaven, Genesis 28:20; he ascribes all that fair estate he at last was possessed of, to the mercy and truth of God, whom he had, in his poor state—when with his pilgrim staff he was travelling to Padan-aram—engaged by a solemn vow to provide for him, Genesis 32:10.

Fourth. When the Christian is content with the portion, little or much, that God upon his endeavours allots to him; not content because he cannot have it otherwise. Necessity was the heathen's schoolmaster to teach contentment; but faith must be the Christian's, whereby he acquiesces in the dispositions of God's providence with a sweet complacency as the will of God concerning him. Here is godliness in triumph—when the Christian can carve contentment out of God's providence, whatever the dish is that is set before him. If he 'gathers little,' he lacks not, but is satisfied with his short meal. If he 'gathers much,' he hath 'nothing over'—I mean not more than his grace can well digest and turn to good nourishment; 'nothing over' that turns to bad humours of pride and wantonness. This was the pitch Paul attained unto, Php 4:12. He knew how 'to abound and to suffer need.' Take contentment from godliness, and you take one of the best jewels away she wears in her bosom. 'Godliness with contentment is great gain;' not godliness with an estate, but 'godliness with contentment,' 1 Timothy 6:6.

Fifth. When the Christian's particular calling doth not encroach upon his general. Truly this requires a strong guard. The world is of an encroaching nature, hard it is to converse with it, and not come into bondage to it. As Hagar, when Abraham showed her some respect more than ordinary, began to contest with, yea, crow over, her mistress, so will our worldly employments jostle with our heavenly, if we keep not a strict hand over them. Now the power of holiness appears here in two things.

1. When the Christian suffers not his worldly business to eat upon his time for communion with God, but keeps it inviolable from the sacrilegious hands of the world. The Christian may observe, that, if he will listen to it, he shall never think of setting about any religious duty, but some excuse or other, to put off, will present itself to his thoughts. 'This thing must be just now done; that friend spoken with, or that customer waited for;' so that, as the wise man saith, 'He that observeth the

wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap,' Ecclesiastes 11:4. In the same way he that will regard what his own sloth, worldly interest, and fleshly part suggest, shall never pray, meditate, or hold communion with God in any other religious duty. O it is sad! when the master must ask the man leave when to eat, and when not—when the Christian must take his orders from the world, when to wait on God and when not, whereas religion should give law to that. Then holiness is in its power—as Samson in his strength—when it can snap asunder these excuses, that would keep him from his God, as easily as he did his cords of flax —when the Christian can make his way into the presence of God, through the throng of worldly encumbrances. 'Behold,' saith David, 'I have prepared for the house of the Lord an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver,' &c, 1 Chronicles 22:14. He had ways enough to have disposed of his treasures, if he would have been discouraged from the work; he might have had a fair apology from the wars he was all his reign involved in—which were continually draining his exchequer—to have spared this cost. But as Rome showed her puissance in sending succours to Spain when Hannibal was at her gates; so David would show his zeal for God and his house, by laying aside such vast sums for the building of a temple in the midst of the troubles and expenses of his kingdom. He is the Christian, indeed, that lays aside a good portion of time daily, in the midst of all his worldly occasions, for communion with God. Whoever he compounds with and pays short, he dares not make bold with God, to serve him by halves. He shall have his time devoted to him, though others are put off with the less; like the devout man, who, when the time for his devotions came, what company soever he was with, would take his leave of them with this fair excuse, that he had a friend that stayed to speak with him (he meant his God).

2. When his worldly employments do not turn the edge of his affections, and leave a bluntness upon his spirit as to holding communion with God. Here is holiness in the power. As the husband, when he hath been abroad all day in this company and that, yet none of these makes him love his wife and children the less. When he comes home at night, he brings his affections to them as entire as when he went out, yea, he is glad he got from all others to them again. This is a sweet frame of spirit indeed. But alas! how hard to keep it. Canst thou say, O Christian! after thou hast passed a day amidst thy worldly profits, and been entertained with the delight and pleasures which thy full estate affords thee, that thou bringest thy whole heart to thy God with thee, when at night thou returnest into his presence to wait on him? Thou canst say more than many can that have some good in them. Oh it is hard to converse with the world all day, and shake it off at night, so as to be free to enjoy privacy with God. The world does by the Christian as the little child by the mother; if it cannot keep the mother from going out, then it will cry after her to go with her. If the world cannot keep us from going to religious duties, then it will cry to be taken along with us, and much ado to part it and the affections.

[The power of holiness to be shown in the Christian's behaviour to others.]

Fourth Instance. The Christian must express the power of holiness in his carriage and behaviour to others, and they are either within doors, or without.

[To those within doors—family relations.]

First. The Christian must express the power of holiness in his carriage to those within doors—his family relations. Much, though not all, of the power of godliness lies within doors, to those that God

hath there related us unto. It is in vain to talk of holiness, if we can bring no letters testimonial from our holy walking with our relations. O it is sad, when they that have reason to know us best, by their daily converse with us, do speak least for our godliness. Few so impudent as to come naked into the streets. If men have anything to cover their naughtiness, they will put it on when they come abroad. But what art thou within doors? what care and conscience to discharge thy duty to thy near relations? He is a bad husband that hath money to spend among company abroad, but none to lay in provisions to keep his family at home. And can he be a good Christian that spends all his religion abroad, and leaves none for his nearest relations at home, that is a great zealot among strangers, and yet hath little or nothing of God coming from him in his family? Yea, it were well, if some that gain the reputation for Christians abroad, did not fall short of others that pretend not to profession in those moral duties which they should perform to their relations. There are some who are great strangers to profession, who yet are loving and kind in their way to their wives. What kind of professors then are they, who are doggish and currish to the wife of their bosoms? who by their tyrannical lording it over them, embitter their spirits, and make them 'cover the Lord's altar with tears and weeping?' There are wives to be found that are not clamorous, peevish, and froward to their husbands, who yet are far from a true work of grace in their hearts. Do they then walk as becomes holiness, who trouble the whole house with their violent passions? There are servants who, from the authority of a natural conscience, are kept from railing and reviling language, when reproved by their masters; and shall not grace keep pace with nature? Holy David knew very well how near this part of the saints' duty lies to the very heart of godliness; and therefore, when he makes his solemn vow to walk holily before God, he instanceth in this, as one stage whereon he might eminently discover the graciousness of his spirit. 'I will walk within my house with a perfect heart,' Psalms 101:2. But, to instance in a few particulars wherein the power of holiness is to appear as to family relations.

1. The power of holiness is to appear in the choice of our relations, such, I mean, as are eligible. Some are not in our choice. The child cannot choose what father he will have, nor the father what child; but where God allows a liberty, he expects a care.

(1.) Art thou godly and wantest a service? O take heed thou showest thy holiness in the family thou choosest, and towards the governors thou puttest thyself under. Inquire more whether it be a healthful air for thy soul within doors, than for thy body without. The very senseless creatures groan to serve the ungodly world, and is capable of choosing, would count it their 'liberty' to serve the 'children of God,' Romans 8:21. And wilt thou voluntarily, when thou mayest prevent it, run thyself under the government of such as are ungodly, who art thyself a child of God? It is hard to serve two masters, though much alike in disposition; but impossible to serve those two—a holy God, and a wicked ungodly man or woman—so as long to please them both. But, if thou beest under the roof of such a one, forget not thy duty to them, though they forget their duty to God; possibly thy faithfulness to them may bring them to inquire after thy God, for thy sake, as Nebuchadnezzar did for Daniel's. No doubt wicked men would take up religion and the ways of God more seriously into their consideration, if there were a more heavenly luster and beauty upon Christians' lives in their several relations to invite them thereunto. Sometimes a book is read the sooner for the fairness of the characters, which would have been not much looked in if the print had been naught. O how oft do we hear that the thoughts of religion are thrown away with scorn, by wicked masters, when their professing servants are taken false, appear proud and undutiful,

slothful or negligent! What then follows, but ‘is this your religion? God keep me from such a religion as this.’ O commend the ways of God to thy carnal and ungodly master or mistress by a clear unblotted conversation in thy place! But withal let me tell thee, if—doing thy utmost in thy place to promote religion in the family —thou seest that the soil is so cold that there is no visible hope of planting for God, it is time, high time, to think of transplanting thyself; for it is to be feared, the place which is so bad to plant in, will not, cannot, be very good for thee to grow and thrive in.

(2.) Art thou a godly master? When thou takest a servant into thy house, choose for God as well as thyself. Remember there is a work for God to be done by thy servant, as well as thyself; and shall he be fit for thy turn, that is not for his? Thou desirest that the work should prosper thy servant takes in hand. Dost thou not? and what ground hath thou from the promise to hope, that the work should prosper in his hand that sins all the while he is doing of it? ‘The plowing of the wicked, is sin,’ Proverbs 21:4. A godly servant is a greater blessing than we think on. He can work and set God on work also for his master’s good; ‘O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham,’ Genesis 24:12. And sure Abraham’s servant did his master as much service by his prayer, as by his prudence in that journey. If you were but to plant an orchard, you would get the best fruit trees, and not cumber your ground with crabs. There is more loss in a graceless servant in the house, than a fruitless tree in the orchard. Holy David observed, while he was at Saul’s court, the mischief of having wicked and ungodly servants; for with such was that unhappy king so compassed, that David compares his court to the profane and barbarous heathens, among whom there was scare more wickedness to be found. ‘Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!’ Psalms 120:5, that is, among those who were as prodigiously wicked as any there. And, no doubt, but that fact made this gracious man, in his banishment before he came to the crown—having seen the evil of a disordered house—to resolve what he will do, when God should make him the head of such a royal family. ‘He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight,’ Psalms 101:7. He instanceth those sins not as if he would spend all his zeal against them, but because he had observed them principally to abound in Saul’s court, by which he had suffered so much; as you may perceive by Psalms 120:2-3.

(3.) Art thou godly? show thyself so in the choice of husband or wife. I am sure, if some, and those godly also, could bring no other testimonial for their godliness, than the care they have taken in this particular, it might justly be called into question both by themselves and others. There is no one thing that gracious persons, even those recorded in Scripture as well as others, have shown their weakness, yea, given offence and scandal, more in, than in this particular. ‘The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair,’ Genesis 6:2. One would have thought the sons of God should have looked for grace in the heart rather than for beauty in the face; but we see that even they sometimes turn in at the fairest sign, without much inquiring what grace is to be found dwelling within. But, Christian, let not the miscarriage of any in this particular—how holy soever otherwise—make thee less careful in thy choice. God did not leave their practice on record for thee to follow, but to shun. He is but a slovenly Christian that will swallow all the saints do without paring their actions. Is it not enough that the wicked break their necks over the sins of the saints; but wilt thou run upon them also to break thy shins? Point not at this godly man, and that godly woman, saying, they can marry into such a profane family, and lie by the side of a drunkard, swearer, &c.; but look to the rule, O Christian! if thou wilt keep the power of holiness. That is clear

as a sunbeam written in the Scripture, ‘Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?’ 2 Corinthians 6:14. And where he give the widow leave to marry again, he still remembers to bound this liberty —‘to whom she will, only, in the Lord,’ 1 Corinthians 7:39. Mark that, ‘in the Lord,’ that is, in the church. All without the faith are ‘without God in the world.’ The Lord’s kindred and family is in the church. You marry out of the Lord, when you marry out of the Lord’s kindred. Or again, ‘in the Lord’ may be taken as in the fear of the Lord, with his leave and liking. That the parents’ consent is fit to be had, we all yield; and is not thy heavenly Father’s? And will he ever give his consent that thou shouldst bestow thyself on a beast, a sot, an earthworm? Holy men have paid dear for such matches. What a woful plague was Delilah to Samson? and Michal was none of the greatest comforts to David. Had he not better have married the poorest damsel in Israel, if godly—though no more with her than the clothes on her back—than such a fleering[13] companion, that mocked him for his zeal to God?

2. The power of holiness is to appear in labouring to interest God in our relations. The Christian cannot indeed propagate grace to his child, nor jointure[14] his wife in his holiness, as he may in his lands, yet he must do his utmost to entitle God to them. Why did God command Abraham that all his house should be circumcised? surely he would have him go as far as he could, to draw them into affinity with and relation to God. Near relations call for dear affections. Grace doth not teach us to love them less than we did, but to love them better. It turns our love into a spiritual channel, and makes chiefly desire their eternal good. What singular thing else is in the Christian’s love above others? Do not the heathens lay up estates for their children here? are not they careful for their servants’ backs and bellies as well as others? Yes, sure, but your care must exceed theirs. I remember Augustine, speaking how highly some commended his father’s cost and care to educate him, even above his estate, makes this sad complaint:[15] ‘whereas,’ saith he, ‘my father’s drift in all was not to train me up for thee. His project was that I might be eloquent, an orator, not a Christian.’ O my brethren! if God be worth your acquaintance, is he not worth theirs also that are so near and dear to you? One house now holds you; would you not have one heaven receive you? Can you think, without trembling, that those who live together in one family, should, when the house is broken up by death, go, one to hell, another to heaven? Surely you are like to have little joy from them on earth, who you fear shall not meet you in heaven. By the law of Lycurgus, the father that gave no learning to his child when young, was to lose that succour that was due from his child to him in his old age. The righteousness of that law though I dare not assert, yet this I may say—what he unjustly commanded, God doth most righteously suffer—that those who do not teach their children their duty to God, lose the honour and reverence which should be paid them by their children; and so of other relations also.

3. The power of holiness is to appear in your taking heed that thy relations be not a snare to thee, or thou to them. There are such sad families to be found, who do nothing else but lead one another into temptation, by drawing forth each other’s corruption, from one end of the year to the other. What can we call such families, but so many hells above ground? A man may live with as much safety to his body in a pest-house, as he can there to his soul. And truly the godly are not so far out of danger, but that the devil may make use of their passions to roil and defile one another. I am sure he is very ambitious to do them a mischief this way, and too often prevails. Abraham’s fear laid the snare for Sarah his wife, who was easily persuaded to dissemble for him she loved so dearly, Genesis 12:13. And Rebekah’s vehement affection to Jacob, together with the reverence,

both her place and grace in Jacob's heart, made him, of a plain man, become the subtle man, to deceive his father and brother; which, though it was too broad a sin for him at first proposal to swallow, as appears, 'I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing,' Genesis 27:12; yet with a little art-using by his mother, we see the passage was widened, and down it went, for all his straining at it; and yet both were godly persons. Look therefore to thyself, that thou dost not bring sin upon thy relations. It would be a heavy affliction to thee to see thy wife, child, or servant sick of the plague, which thou broughtest home to them, or bleeding by a wound which thou unawares gavest them. Alas! better thus than that they should be infected with sin, wounded with guilt, by thy means. And be as careful to antidote thy soul against receiving infection from them, as to take heed of breathing it on them. Thy love is great to thy wife. O let it not make the apple of temptation the more fair or desirable, when offered to thee by her hand! Thou lovest thyself, yea thy God too little, if her so much as to sin for her sake. Thou art a dutiful wife, but obey 'in the Lord;' take heed of turning the tables of the commandments, by setting the seventh before the first. Be sure to save God's stake, before thou payest thy obedience to thy husband. Say to thy soul, 'Can I keep God's command in obeying my husband's?' In paying of debts those should be first discharged which are due by the most, and those the greatest obligations. And to whom thou art deepliest bound—God or thy husband —is easy to resolve. Thus too in all other relations. Go as far with thy relations as thou canst travel in God's company, and no farther, as thou wouldst not leave thy holiness and righteousness behind thee; the loss of which is too great, that thou shouldst expect they can recompense unto thee.

4. The power of holiness appears as to our relations, when the Christian is careful to improve the graces of his relations, and get what good from them he can while they are with him. May be thou hast a holy father, a gracious husband or wife—let it be but a servant in a family that is godly—there is good to be got by his gracious conversation, speeches, and holiness, which, like ointment, will betray itself wherever it stays awhile. O Christian! if any such holy person be with thee in the family, observe what such a one in his speeches, duties of worship, behaviour under affliction, receipt of mercies, returns of Sabbaths, and ordinances, and such like, affords for thy instruction, quickening, and promoting in the ways of holiness. The prophet bade the widow bring all the vessels she had, or could borrow, to catch what should fall from the pot of oil that she had in the house, and therewith pay her debts, 2 Kings 4:3. Truly, I think it were good counsel to some that complain—or may justly, if they do not—how poor and beggarly they are in grace, to make an improvement of that holy oil of grace which drops from the lips and lives of their godly relations. Set you memories, consciences, hearts, and affections, as vessels to receive all the expressions of holiness that come from them. Thy memory—let that keep and retain the instructions, reproofs, comforts drawn by them out of the word; thy conscience—let that apply these to thy soul, till from thence they distil into thy affections, and thou becomest in love more and more with holiness thy own self, from their recommendation of it to thee. It is a sad thing to consider what a different use a naughty heart makes of the gifts and graces of the godly with whom they live, as they sparkle forth, to what a humble sincere one doth. A naughty heart does but envy and malign such a one the more, and, instead of getting good, is made worse; whereas the sincere soul, he labours to treasure up all for his good. When Joseph told his prophetic dream to his brethren, their envy, which before lay smoldering in their breasts, took fire presently, and a while after flamed forth into that unnatural cruelty practised upon him by them. There was all the use they made of it. But of good Jacob, it is said, by way of opposition to them, Genesis 37:11, 'His brethren envied him; but

his father observed the saying'—he laid it up for future use, as that which had something of God in it. Thus, Christian, do thou by the holy breathings of the Spirit in those thou livest with. Note the remarkable passages of their gracious conversations, as thou wouldst do the notions of some excellent book, which is not thine own, but lent thee for a time to peruse. Indeed, upon these terms, and no surer, do we enjoy our gracious friends and relations. They are but lent us for a while; and, improve them, or not improve them, they will be called for ere long. And will it be for thy comfort to part with them, before thou hast had a heart to get good by them? It was a solemn speech of that reverend, holy man of God, Mr. Bolton, to his children, when on his death-bed, 'I charge you, O my children, not to meet me at the great day before Christ's tribunal in a Christless graceless condition.' God keeps an exact account of the means he affords us for our salvation; and the lives of his holy servants are not of the lowest rank. You shall observe that God is very particular in Scripture to record the time, how long his faithful servants lived on earth; and sure, among other reasons, he would have us know that he means to reckon with those that lived with them, for every year, yea, day and hour, they had them among them. They shall know they had a prophet, a father, a husband, that were godly, and that they had them so long, and God will know of them what use they made of them.

[To those without doors—our neighbours.]

Second. The power of holiness is to appear to others, must not stay within doors, but walk out into the streets, and visit thy neighbours round. Thy behaviour to and conversation with them, must be holy and righteous. In Scripture, 'righteousness,' and 'living righteously,' do oft import the whole duty of the Christian to his neighbour; and so, these terms stand distinguished from 'piety,' which hath God for its immediate object, and from 'sobriety' or 'temperance,' which immediately respects ourselves. See them all together, Titus 2:12, where 'the grace of God that bringeth salvation,' is said to teach us to 'live soberly righteously, and godly in this present world.' He that would be the death of all these three, needs do no more, but stab one of them, no matter which, the life of holiness will run out at any one door, here or there, wherever the wound is given. It is true indeed that there is a moral righteousness, which leaves us short of true holiness; but there is no true holiness that leaves us short of moral righteousness. Though the sensitive soul be found in a beast without the rational, yet the rational soul is not found in man without the sensitive. Grace and evangelical holiness being the higher principle, includes and comprehends the other within itself. This is the dignity and honour due to Christianity, and the principle it lays down in the gospel—its enemies being judges—that though some who profess it, are none of the best, yet they learn not their unrighteousness of it. Most true it is what one saith, 'No Christian can be bad, except he be a hypocrite.' Either therefore renounce thy baptism, or abominate the thoughts of all unrighteousness. To be sure thou mightest escape better, if thou wouldst let the world know thou didst claim no kindred with Christ, before thou practised such wickedness. Some are unresolved where to find Aristides, Socrates, Cato, and some few other heathens eminent for their moral righteousness—whether in heaven or hell; but, were there ever any that doubted what would become of the unrighteous Christian in the other world? Hell gapes for these above all others. 'Know ye not,' saith the apostle, 'that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?' 1 Corinthians 6:9; as if he had said, 'Sure you have not so far lost the use of your reason as to think that there is any room for such cattle as these in heaven.' And if not the unrighteous, what crevice of hope is left for their salvation, whose unrighteousness hath a thousand time more malignity in it,

than any other's in the world is capable of? The heathen shall, for their unrighteousness, be indicted, and condemned as rebels to the law. So shall the unrighteous Christian also; and that more deeply. But the charge which is incomparably heaviest, and which will lay weight upon him far above the other, is that which the gospel brings in, viz. that, by his unrighteousness, he hath been an 'enemy to the cross of Christ,' Php 3:18. Indeed, if a man had a mind to show his despite to the height against Christ and his cross, the devil himself could not help him to express it more fully, than to clothe himself with a gaudy profession of the gospel, and with this wrapped about him, to roule[16] himself in the kennel of sordid, base practices of unrighteousness. O how it makes the profane world blaspheme the name of Christ, and abhor the very profession of him, when they see any of this filth upon the face of their conversation, who take to themselves the name of saints more than others do. What! shall that tongue lie to man, that even now prayed so earnestly to God?—those eyes be sent on lust's or envy's errand, that a few moments past thou tookest off the Bible from reading those sacred oracles?—those hands in thy neighbour's pocket to rob him of his estate, which were not long ago stretched forth so devoutly to heaven?—those legs carry thee to-day into thy shop or market to cheat and cozen, which yesterday thou wentest with to worship God in public? In a word, dost thou think to commute with God, so as, by a greater semblance of outward zeal to God in the first table, to obtain a dispensation in point of righteousness to man in the second? Will thy pretended love to God excuse the malice and rancour which thy heart swells with against thy neighbour?—thy devotion to God, disoblige thee from paying thy debts to man? God forbid thou shouldst think so. But if thou dost, Peter's counsel to Simon Magus is mine to thee. 'Repent of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee,' Acts 8:22. In the name of God I charge every one that wears Christ's livery, to make conscience of this piece of righteousness, as you would not bring upon your heads the vengeance of God for all those blasphemies, which the nakedness of some professors in this particular—yea, the base practices of some hypocrites—have given occasion to be belched out by the ungodly world against Christ and the good ways of holiness. Now the power of holiness, as to this particular, will be preserved, when these two things are looked to.

1. When our care is uniform, and equally distributed to endeavour the performing of one duty we owe to our neighbour as well as another. For we must know, there is a righteousness that, as one saith, runs through every precept, as it were the veins of every law in the second table; and calls for obedience due to parents natural, civil, ecclesiastical, in the fifth command; our care to preserve our neighbour's life in the sixth; chastity in the seventh; estate in the eighth; good name in the ninth; and the keeping of our desires in their due bounds, against coveting what is our neighbour's, in the tenth. Now, as health in the body is preserved by keeping the passages of life open, for the spirits freely to move from one part to another —which once obstructed from doing their office in any part, the health of the body is presently in danger —so here the spirit and life of holiness is preserved in the Christian, by a holy care and endeavour to keep the heart free and ready to pass from doing one duty he owes his neighbour to another, according to the several walks that are in every command for him to move in.

2. As our care must be uniform, so the motive and spring within that sets us at work, and makes all these wheels move, must be evangelical. The command is a road in which both heathen, Jew, and Christian may be found travelling. How now shall we know the Christian from the other, when heathen and Jew also walk along with him in the same duty—seem as dutiful children, obedient

wives, loyal subjects, loving neighbours, as the Christian himself? Truly, if it be not in the motive from which and end to which he acts, nothing else can do it. Look therefore well to this, or else thou art out of thy way while thou seemest to be in thy road. It is very ordinary for men to wrong Christ when they do their neighbour right, and this is done when Christ is not interested in the action, and love to him doth not move us thereunto. Without this thou mayest go for an honest heathen, but canst not be a good Christian. Suppose a servant were intrusted by his master to go and pay such a man a sum of money, which he doth, yet not out of any dutiful respect to the command, or love to the person of his master, but for shame of being taken for a thief; in this case the man should have his due, but the master a great deal of wrong. Such wrong do all mere civil persons do the Lord Jesus. They are very exact and righteous in their dealings with their neighbours, but very injurious at the same time to Christ, because they do not this upon his account. This makes love to our neighbour evangelical, and, as Christ calls it, ‘a new commandment,’ John 13:34, when our love to our brother tales fire from his love to us. We cannot, in a gospel sense, be said to do the duty of any commandment, except we first love Christ, and then for his sake do it. ‘If ye love me, keep my commandments,’ John 14:15. Where, observe, that as God prefixes his name before the decalogue, so Christ for the same reason doth before the Christian’s obedience to any of them, that so they may keep them, both as his commandments, and out of love to him who hath brought us out of a worse house of bondage than Egypt was to Israel.

BRANCH THIRD.

[Ten directions, to guide those who desire to maintain the power of holiness.] The third thing propounded in handling the point calls now for one despatch; and that is, to lay down some directions by way of counsel and help to all those that desire to maintain the power of holiness and righteousness in their daily walking.

First Direction. Be sure thou gettest a good foundation laid, on which may be reared the beautiful structure of a holy righteous conversation; and that can be no less than the change of thy heart by the powerful work of God’s sanctifying Spirit in thee. Thou must be righteous and holy before thou canst live righteously and holily. If the ship hath not its right make at first, be not equally poised according to the law of that art, it will never sail trim; and if the heart be not moulded anew by the workmanship of the Spirit, and fashioned according to the law of ‘the new creature,’ in which ‘old things pass away, and all things become new,’ the creature will never walk holily, 2 Corinthians 5:17. It is solid grace in the vessel of the heart that feeds profession in the lamp—holiness in the life, Matthew 25:4. Now this thorough change of thy heart is especially to be looked at in these two things.

First. Look that there be a change made in thy judgment of and disposition of heart to sin. Thou hast formerly had such a notion of sin, as hath made it desirable; thou hast looked upon it as Eve did on the forbidden fruit; thou hast thought it ‘pleasant to the eye, good for food,’ and worth thy choice, ‘to be desired of thee;’ and if thou continuest of the same mind, thy teeth will be watering and heart continually hankering after it. Thou mayest possibly be kept from expressing and venting the inward thought of thy heart for a while; but, as two lovers kept asunder by their friends, will one time or another make an escape to each other, so long as their affection is the same it was; so wilt thou to thy lust, and therefore never rest till thou canst say thou dost as heartily loathe and hate sin

as ever thou lovedst it before.

Second. Look that there be such a change in thy judgment and heart, as makes thee take an inward complacency and delight in Christ and his holy commands. There is then little fear of thy degenerating, when thou art tied to him and his service by the heart-strings of love and complacency[17]. The devil finds it no hard work to part him and his duty that never joyed nor took true content in doing of it. He whose calling doth not like him, nor 'fit his genius,' as we say, will never excel in it. A scholar learns more in week, when he comes to relish learning, and is pleased with its sweet taste, than he did in a month when he went to school to please his master, whom he feared, not himself. Observe any person in the thing wherein he takes high content, and he is more careful and curious, about that than any other. If his heart be on his garden, oh how neatly it is kept! It shall lie, as we say, in print. All the rare roots and slips that can be got for love and money shall be sought for. Is it beauty that one delights in? How curious and nice is such a one in dressing herself! she hardly knows when she is fine enough. Truly thus it is here; a soul that truly loves Christ delights in holiness, all his strength is laid out upon it. May he but excel in this one thing—be more holy, more heavenly —he will give others leave to run before him in anything else.

Second Direction. Be sure to keep thine eye on the right rule thou art to walk by. Every calling hath a rule to go by, peculiar to itself, which requires some study to get an insight into, without which a man will but bungle in his work. No calling hath such a sure rule and perfect law to go by, as the Christian's. Therefore, in earthly professions and worldly callings, men vary in their way and method, though of some trade, because there is no such perfect rule, but another may superadd to it. But the Christian hath one standing rule, the word of God, able to make the man of God perfect. Now, he that would excel in the power of holiness must study this. The physician consults with his Galen, the lawyer with his Littleton, and the philosopher with his Aristotle—the masters of these arts; how much more should the Christian consult with the word, so as to be determined by that, and drawn by that more than by a whole team of arguments from men! 'We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth,' 2 Corinthians 13:8. O Christian! when credit votes this way, friends and relatives that way; when profit bids thee do this, and pleasure that; say, as Jehoshaphat concerning Micaiah, 'Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might enquire of him?' 1 Kings 22:7. Is there not the word of God, that I may be concluded by it, rather than by any of these lying prophets? Now there are three ways that men go contrary to this direction—all of them destructive to the power of holiness. Some walk by no rule; some by a false rule; and some by the true rule, but partially. The first is the antinomist and libertine, the second is the superstitious zealot, the third is the hypocrite. Beware of all these, except thou meanest to lay the knife to the throat of holiness.

First. Take heed thou dost not take away the rule God sets before thee, with the antinomist and libertine, who say the law is not a rule to the Christian. These must needs make crooked lines in their lives that live by rote and not by rule. I had thought Christ had baptized the law and gospellized it, both by preaching it as a rule of holiness in his sermons, Matthew 5:27, and by walking in his life by the rule of it, 1 Peter 2:21-22. That principle therefore may be indicted for a murderer of a righteous and holy life, which takes away the rule by which it should be led. This is a subtle way indeed of Satan to surprise the poor creature. If he make the Christian traveller weary of his guide, and once send him away, then it will not be long before he wander out of heaven way and fall into hell roads. The apostle tells us of a generation of men who, 'While they promise

themselves liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption,' 2 Peter 2:19. Truly these, methinks, look like the men who slip off the yoke of the command under a pretence of liberty, that soon have a worse yoke on in its room, even the yoke of sin.

Second. Take heed thou walkest not by a false rule. There is but one true rule—the word of God—and therefore we may know which is false. 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,' Isaiah 8:20. Pretend not to more strictness than the word will vouch. This is to be 'righteous overmuch' indeed, Ecclesiastes 7:16. Excess makes a monster as well as a defect; not only he that hath but one hand, but he that hath three, is one. There is a curse scored up for him that 'adds to,' as well as for him that 'takes from the words of this book,' Revelation 22:18. The devil hath had of old a design to undermine scriptural holiness, by crying up an apocryphal holiness. He knows too well that, as the pot by seething over puts out the fire, and so comes in a while not to seethe at all; thus, by making men's zeal to boil over into a false pretended holiness, he is sure to quench all true holiness, and bring them at last to have no zeal, but prove key-cold atheists. The Pharisee must eke out the commands of God with the traditions of men; the Papist, his true son and heir, hath his unwritten verities, holy orders, and rules for a more austere life than ever came into God's heart to require; and of late the Quakers have borrowed many of their shreds from both, with which they are very busy to patch up a ridiculous kind of religion, which a man cannot possibly take up, till he hath first fore-done his own understanding, and renounced all subjection to the word of God. O beware of a will-holiness and a will-worship. It is a heavy charge God puts in against Israel, 'Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples!' Hosea 8:14. This may seem strange—to forget God, and yet be so devout as to build temples! Yes, she built them without warrant from God. God counts himself forgotten when we forget his word, and keep not close to that. It is laid at Jeroboam's door as a great sin, that 'he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel...in the month which he had devised of his heart,' 1 Kings 12:33. He took counsel of his own heart, not of God, when and where to offer. A holiness which is the device of our heart, is not the holiness after God's heart. The curse which falls upon such bold men, is, that while they seek to establish holiness of their own, they submit not to the true holiness which God requires in his word. God justly gives them over to real unholiness, for pretending to a further holiness than they should. Witness those sinks and common-shores of all abominations—religious houses, I mean, as they are called by the Papists —which being the institutions of men, for want of the salt of a divine warrant to keep them sweet, have run into filthiness and corruption. God will not endure that his creature should be a self-mover. It is a greater sin to do what we are not commanded, than not to do what we are commanded by God; as it is in a subject to presume to make laws of his own head, than not to obey the law his prince enacts. By setting up a holiness of our own, we take God's mint as it were out of his hand, to whom alone it belongs to stamp what is holy and what not.

Third. Use not the true rule partially. To be partial in practicing is as bad as to be partial in handling of the law; this made the priests contemptible, Malachi 2:9, and so will that the professor, to God and man. Square the whole frame of thy life by rule, or all is to no purpose. 'Divers measures, are an abomination to the Lord,' Proverbs 20:10. He is the honest man in his dealings with men that hath but one measure, and that according to law, which he useth in his trade. And he is the holy man that useth but one rule for all his actions, and that no other than the word of God. O how fulsome was the Jews' hypocrisy to God that durst not go into the judgment hall, for fear of render-

ing themselves unclean, John 18:1-40, but made no scruple of embruing their hands in Christ's blood! and the Pharisees, who observed the rule of the law strictly in 'tithing anise and cummin,' but dispensed with themselves in 'the weightier matters of the law!' O beware of this, as thou lovest thy soul's life! You would not thank that customer, who comes into your shop, and buys a pennyworth of you, but steals from you what is worth a pound; or him that is very punctual in paying a small debt he owes, only that he may get deeper into your book, and at last cheat you of a greater sum. This is horrid wickedness, to comply with the word in little matters, on a design that you may more covertly wrong God in greater.

Third Direction. Be sure to propound a right end to thyself in thy righteous holy walking, and here be sure thou standest clear off a legal end. Do not think, by thy righteousness, to purchase anything at God's hand. Heaven stands not upon sale to any. 'The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord,' Romans 6:23. What God sold to Christ he gives to us. Christ was the purchaser, believers are but heirs to what he hath bought, and must claim nothing but in his right. By claiming anything of God for our righteousness, we shut ourselves out from having anything of his. We cannot be in two places at the same time. If we be found leaning on our own house, we cannot also be found in Christ. Paul knew this, and therefore renounceth the one, that he may be entitled to the other, Php 3:8-9. It is Satan's policy to crack the breastplate of thy own righteousness, by beating it out further than the metal will bear. Indeed, by trusting in it, thou destroyest the very nature of it—thy righteousness becomes unrighteousness, and thy holiness degenerates into wickedness. What greater impiety than pride?—such a pride as rants it over Christ, and alters the method which God himself hath set for saving souls! O soul! if thou wouldst be holy, learn to be humble. They are clasped together, 'What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?' Micah 6:8. And how that he that trusts in his own holiness should be said to walk humbly, it cannot enter into our heart to conceive. God does not set thee to earn heaven by thy holiness; but thereby, to show thy love and thankfulness to Christ that hath earned it for thee. Hence the great argument Christ useth to provoke his disciples to holiness, is love: 'If ye love me, keep my commandments,' John 14:15. As if he had said, 'You know what I came into the world, and am now going out of the world for. I do both upon your service, for whom I lay down my life, and take it up again, that I may live in heaven, to intercede for you. If these, then, and the blessed fruits you reap from these, be valued by you, love me, and if you love me, testify it in keeping my commandments.' That is gospel holiness which is bred and fed by this love, when all the Christian doth is by him offered up as a thanksgiving sacrifice to Christ, 'that loved us unto death.' Thus the spouse to Christ, 'I will give thee my loves,' Song of Solomon 7:12. What she means by her loves she expresseth, 'All manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved,' Song of Solomon 7:13. In verse 18 she had professed her faith on Christ, and drunk deep of his love; and now to rebound his love in thankfulness, she bestirs herself to entertain him with the pleasant fruits of his own graces, as gathered from a holy conversation, which she doth not lay up to feed her pride and self■confidence with, but reserves for her Beloved, that he may have the entire praise of them.

Fourth Direction. Be sure to look often on the perfect pattern, which Christ, in his own example, hath given thee for a holy life. Our hand will be as the copy is we write after. If we set low examples before us, it cannot be expected we should rise high ourselves; and indeed the holiest saint on earth is too low to be our pattern, because perfection in holiness must be aimed at by the

weakest Christian, 2 Corinthians 7:1, and that is not to be found in the best of saints in this lower world. Moses, the meekest man on earth, at a time even his spirit is ruffled; and Peter, the foreman of the apostles, doth not always ÏD2`B@*,Ã< (foot it right), according to the gospel, Galatians 2:14, and he that would follow him in then, is sure to go out of his way. The good soldier follows his file-leader, not when he runs away, but when he marches after his captain orderly. 'Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ,' 1 Corinthians 11:1. The comment must be followed no further than it agrees with the text. The master doth not only rule the scholar's book for him, but writes him a copy with his own hand. Christ's command is our rule, his life our copy. If thou wilt walk holily, thou must not only endeavour to do what Christ commands, but as Christ himself did it; thou must labour to shape every letter in thy copy—action in thy life —in a holy imitation of Christ. By holiness we are the very image of Christ,' Romans 8:29. We represent Christ and hold him forth to all that see us.

Now two things go to make a thing the image of another. First, likeness; secondly, derivation. It must not only be like it, but this likeness must be deduced and derived from it. Snow and milk are both alike white; yet we cannot say that they are the image one of another, because that likeness they have is not derived either from the other. But the picture which is drawn every line by the face of a man, this may be called the image of that man after whose likeness it is made. Thus true holiness is that which is derived from Christ, when the soul sets Christ in his word and Christ in his example before him—as one would the person whose picture he intends to draw —and labours to draw every line in his life by these. O this is a sweet way indeed to maintain the power of holiness. When thou art tempted to any vanity, set Christ before thy eye in his holy walking; ask thy soul, 'Am I in this speech, action, company I consort with, like Christ? Did he, or would he, if again to live on earth, do as I do? would not he be more choice of his words than I am? did ever such a vain speech drop from his lips? would he delight in such company as I do? spend his time upon such trifles and impertinences as I do? would he bestow so much cost in pampering of his body, and swallow down his throat at one meal what would feed many poor creatures ready to starve for want? would he be in every fashion that comes up, though never so ridiculous and offensive? should cards and dice ever have been found in his hands to drive time away? And shall I indulge myself in anything that would make me unlike Christ? God forbid! We think it enough if we can quote such a good man, or great professor, to countenance our practice, and so are led into temptation. But Christian, if thy conscience tells thee Christ likes not such doings, away with them, though thou couldst produce the example of the most eminent saint in the country to favour them. Thou knowest some, possibly, of great name for profession, that have cast off duties in their families. But did not Christ show an especial care of the apostles, which lived under him, and were of his family?—often praying with them, repeating to them, and further opening to them what he preached in public; keeping also the passover with them as his household, according to the law of that ordinance, Exodus 12:1-51. Thou seest some turn their back on the public assemblies, under a pretence of sinful mixtures there that would defile them. Did our Lord Jesus do thus? was not he in the temple and in the synagogues holding communion with them in the service of God, which was for the substance there preserved, though not without some corruptions crept in among them? O Christian, study Christ's life more, and thou wilt soon learn to mend thy own! Summa religionis est imitari, quem colis—it is the very sum and top of religion, to be as, like the God we worship as may be.

Fifth Direction. Be sure to walk dependingly on God. The vine is fruitful so long as it hath a pole or wall to run upon, but without such a help it would soon be trodden under foot, and come to nothing. ‘It is not in man to direct his own way.’ ‘There are many good things that God doth in man, which man has no hand in; but there is no good and holy action that man does but God enables him to do it.’[18] As was said of that Grecian captain, ‘Parmenio did many exploits without Alexander, but Alexander nothing without Parmenio.’ If thou wilt therefore maintain holiness in its power ‘acknowledge God in all thy ways,’ and ‘lean not unto thine own understanding,’ Proverbs 3:5, 6. He is ready to help them that engage him, but counts himself charged with the care of none but such as depend on him. The Christian’s way to heaven is something like that in our nation called ‘the washes,’ where the sands, by reason of the sea’s daily overflowing, do so alter, that the traveller who passed them safely a month ago, cannot without great danger venture again, except he hath his guide with him. Where then he found firm land, possibly a little after, coming, he may meet with a devouring quicksand. Truly thus, the Christian who gets over a duty at one time with some facility, his way smooth and plain before him, at another time may find a temptation in the same duty enough to set him, if he had not help from heaven to carry him safe out of the danger. O Christian, it is not safe for thee to venture one step without thy stay, thy hand of faith leaning on thy Beloved’s arm. Trust to thy own legs, and thou fallest; use thy legs, but trust to his arm, and thou art safe.

Sixth Direction. Be sure to look to thy company—who they are thou consortest with. Flee unholy company, as baneful to the power of godliness. Be but as careful for thy soul as thou wouldst for thy body. Durst thou drink in the same cup , or sit in the same chair, with one that hath an infectious disease? And is not sin as catching a disease as the plague itself? Darest thou come where such ill scents are to be taken as may soon infect thy soul? Of all trades it would not do well to have the collier and fuller live together. What one cleanseth the other will crock and smutch.[19] Thou canst not be long among unholy ones, but thou wilt hazard the defiling of thy soul, which the Holy Spirit hath made pure. He did not wash thee clean to run where thou shouldest be made foul; and certainly thou shalt have no help from them to advance thy holiness. Truly we should not choose that society where we may not hope to make them, or be made ourselves, better by them. It is observable what the Spirit of God notes concerning Abraham, ‘he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise,’ Hebrews 11:9. He is not said to dwell with the natives of that land, but ‘with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.’ Abraham did not seek acquaintance with the heathen; no, he was willing to continue a stranger to them; but he lived with those that were of his own family, and God’s family also. Christians are a company of themselves, ‘being let go, they went to their own company,’ Acts 4:23. Who should believers join themselves to but believers? As Paul said, ‘Have you not a wise man among you, but you must go to law before unbelievers?’ so may I say to thee, Christian —Is there never a saint in all the town that thou canst be acquainted with, sit and discourse with, but you must join with the profane and ungodly amongst whom you live? No wonder thy holiness thrives no better, when thou breathest in wicked company; it is like the east wind, under which nothing grows and prospers.

Seventh Direction. Be sure to get some Christian friend whom thou mayest trust above others to be thy faithful monitor. O that man hath a great help for the maintaining the power of godliness, that hath an open-hearted friend that dare speak his heart to him! A stander-by sees more

sometimes, by a man, than the actor can do by himself, and is more fit to judge of his actions than he is of his own. Sometimes self-love blinds us in our own cause, that we see not ourselves so bad as we are; and sometimes we are over-suspicious of the worst by ourselves, which makes us appear to ourselves worse than we are. Now that thou mayest not deprive thyself of so great help from thy friend, be sure to keep thy heart ready with meekness to receive, yea, with thankfulness to embrace, a reproof from his mouth. Those that cannot bear plain dealing hurt themselves most; for by this they seldom hear the truth. He that hath not love enough to give a reproof seasonably to his brother, nor humility enough to bear a reproof from him, is not worthy to be called a Christian. By the first he shows himself a 'hater of his brother,' Leviticus 19:17; by the second he proves himself 'a scorner,' Proverbs 9:8. Holy David professed he would take it as 'a kindness' for the 'righteous to smite him,' yea, as kindly as he broke a box of precious oil upon his head, which was amongst the Jews a high expression of love, Psalms 141:5. And he made his word good. He did not, as the Papists do by their holy water, commend it highly, but turn away his face, when it comes to sprinkled on him. No, Abigail and Nathan who reproved him —one for his bloody intentions against Nabal and his family—the other for his bloody fact upon Uriah; —they both sped well in their errand. The first prevented the fact intended by her seasonable reproof; the second recovered him out of that dismal sin of murder, wherein he had lain some months without coming so far to himself as to repent of it, for aught that we read. And it is observable that they did not only prevail in the business, but endeared themselves so unto him, by their faithfulness to his soul, that he takes Abigail to be his wife, and Nathan to be his most privy counsellor to hi dying day, 1 Kings 1:27, 1 Kings 1:32. Truly it is one great reason why the falls of professors are so frequent in our days, and their recoveries so rare of late, because few in these unloving times are to be found so faithful as to do this Christian office of reproof to their brethren. They will sooner go and tattle of it to others to their disgrace, than speak of it to themselves for their recovery. Indeed, by telling others, we obstruct our way from telling the person himself with any hope of doing him good. It will be hard to make him believe thou comest to heal his soul when thou hast already wounded his name.

Eighth Direction. Be often seriously thinking how holily and righteously you will, in a dying hour, wish you had lived. They who now think it matters not much what language drivels from them, what company they walk in, what they busy their time about, how they comport with God in his worship, and with man in their dealings, but live at large, and care not much which end goes foremost, yea wonder at the niceness and zeal of others, as if there were no pace would carry them to heaven but the gallop; when once death comes so near as to be known by its own grim face, and not to report of others, when these poor creatures see they must in earnest into another world, without any delay, and their naked souls must return to 'God who gave them,' to hear what interpretation he will put upon the course and tenor of their walking, and accordingly to pass an irrevocable sentence of life or death upon them, now their thoughts will begin to change, and take up other notions of a righteous and holy life than ever they had before. It is observed among the Papists that many cardinals, and other great ones, who would think that their cowl and religious habit ill become them in their health,, yet are very ambitious to die and to be buried in them, as commonly they are. Though this be a foppery in itself, yet it helps us to a notion considerable. They who live wickedly and loosely, yet like a religious habit very well when to go into another world. As that young gallant said to his swaggering companion—after they had visited Ambrose lying on his dying bed, and saw how comfortably he lay, triumphing over death now

approaching—'O that I might live with thee, and die with Ambrose.' Vain wish! wouldst thou, O man, not reap what thou sowest, and find what thou layest up with thy own hands? Dost thou sow cockle and wouldst reap wheat? Dost thou fill thy chest with dirt, and expect to find gold when thou openest it? Cheat and gull thyself thou mayest, but thou canst not mock God, who will pay thee in the same coin at thy death which thou treasurest up in thy life. There are few so horribly wicked, but the thoughts of death awes them. They dare not fall upon their wicked practices till they have got some distance from the thoughts of this. Christian, walk in the company of it every day by serious meditation, and tell me at the week's end whether it doth not keep worse company from thee.

Ninth Direction. Be sure to improve the covenant of grace for thy assistance in thy holy course. Moses himself had his holiness not from the law, but gospel. Those heroic acts, for which he is recorded as one so eminently holy, they all are attributed to his faith, Hebrews 11:24-25. 'By faith' Moses did this, and 'by faith' that, to show from whence he had his strength. Now the better to improve the covenant of grace, for this purpose, consider these three particulars.

First. That God in the covenant of grace hath promised to furnish and enable his children for a holy life, 'I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes,' Ezekiel 36:27. This is the way God hath by himself. The mother can take her child by the hand to lead it, but cannot put strength into its feeble joints to make him go. The prince can give his captains a commission to fight, but not courage to fight. There is a power goes with the promises; hence it is they are called 'exceeding great and precious promises,' because given for this very end—that by them we 'might partake of the divine nature,' 2 Peter 1:4; and therefore we are not only pressed to holiness from the command, but especially from the promise, 'Having therefore these promises,' (he means to help and encourage us), 'let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God,' 2 Corinthians 7:1. O it is good travelling in his company that promiseth to pay our charges all the way—it is good working for him that promiseth to work all our work for us, Php 2:12-13.

Second. That God hath laid up in Christ a rich and full treasure of grace to supply thy wants continually, 'It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell,' Colossians 1:19. Fulness! all fulness! all fulness dwelling! not the fulness of a land-flood, up and down; not the fulness of a vessel, to serve his own turn only; but of a fountain that lends its streams to others without straitening or lessening its own store. Indeed, it is a fulness purposely ministerial, as the sun hath not its light for itself, but for the lower world, called therefore :/: (shemesh), because it is the great minister and servant to hold forth light to the world. Thus Christ is the Sun of righteousness, diffusing his grace into the bosoms of his people. 'Grace' is said to be 'poured into his lips,' to let us know he hath it, not to keep to himself, but to impart, 'that of his fulness we may receive, and grace for grace.' And,

Third. That every child of God hath not only a right to this fulness in Christ, but an inward principle—which is faith—whereby he is, by the instinct of the new creature, taught to suck and draw grace from Christ, as the child doth nourishment in the womb by the navel-string from the mother. Therefore, poor soul, if thou wouldst be more holy, believe more, suck more from Christ. Holy David, affected with the thoughts of God's gracious providence in delivering him out of his deeper distress, takes up, as the best messenger he could send his thanks to heaven by, a strong

resolution for a holy life, ‘I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living,’ Psalms 116:9, he would spend his days now in God’s service; but lest we should think he was rash and self-confident, he adds, ‘I believed, therefore have I spoken,’ Psalms 116:10. First, he acted his faith on God for strength, and then he promiseth what he will do. Indeed, the Christian is a very beggarly creature considered in himself. He is not ashamed to confess it. What he promiseth to expend in any holy duty, is upon the credit of his Saviour’s purse, who, he humbly believes, will bear him out in it with assisting grace.

Tenth Direction. Be sure to fortify thyself against those discouragements, by which Satan, if possible, will divert thee from thy purpose, and make thee lay aside this breastplate of righteousness and holiness, as cumbersome, yea prejudicial, to thy carnal interests. Now the better to arm thee against his assaults of this kind, I shall instance two or three great objections, whereby he scares many from this holy walking, and also lend a little help to wrest these weapons out of thine enemy’s hand, by preparing an answer to them.

[Satan’s stratagems to disarm the Christian of his breastplate defeated.]

First. Satan attempts to make the Christian throw away his breastplate of righteousness, by presenting it as that which hinders the pleasure of his life.

Second. He endeavours to make the Christian throw away his breastplate, as being prejudicial to his worldly profits.

Third. He endeavours to make the Christian throw away his breastplate, by scaring him with the contradiction, opposition, and feud which it brings from the world.

[Satan’s first stratagem defeated; that, viz. in which he represents the Christian’s breastplate as hindering the pleasure of life.]

First Stratagem. Satan attempts to make the Christian throw away his breastplate, by presenting it as that which hinders the pleasure of his life.

He labours to picture a holy righteous life with such an austere sour face, that the creature may be out of love with it. ‘O,’ saith he, ‘if you mean to be thus precise and holy, then bid adieu to all joy. You at once deprive yourselves of all those pleasures which others pass their days so merrily in the embraces of, that are not so strait-laced in their consciences.’ How true a charge this is, that Satan lays upon the ways of holiness we shall now see. And truly he that desires to see the true face of holiness in its native hue and colour, should do well not to trust Satan, or his own carnal heart, to draw its picture. I shall deal with this objection first, by way of concession, then by way of negation, and lastly by way of affirmation.

Answer First. I answer by way of concession, viz. that there are some pleasures which, if they may be so called, are inconsistent with the power of holiness. Whoever will take up a purpose to ‘live righteously’ must shake hands with them. They are of two sorts.

1. Sort. All such pleasures as are in themselves sinful. Godliness will allow no such in thy embraces. And art thou not shrewdly hurt, dost thou think, to be denied that which would be thy bane to drink? Would any think the father cruel that should charge his child not to dare so much as taste of any rat’s-bane? Truly, I hope, you that have passed under the new work of the Spirit, can

call sin by another name than pleasure. I am sure saints in former times have not counted themselves tied up, but saved, from such pleasures. The bondage lies in serving them, and the liberty in being saved from them. The apostle bemoans the time when himself, and other saints, were 'foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures,' Titus 3:3; and he reckons it among the prime benefits they received by the grace of the gospel, to be delivered from that vassalage, 'but according to his mercy he saved us'—how?—not by pardoning only, but—'by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost,' Titus 3:5. However the devil makes poor creatures expect pleasure in sin, and promiseth them great matters of this kind; yet he goes against his conscience, and his own present sense also. He doth not find sin so pleasant a morsel to his own taste that he should need to commend it upon this account to others. Sin's pleasure is like the pleasure which a place in the West Indies affords those that dwell in it. There grows in it most rare luscious fruit, but these dainties are so sauced by with the intolerably scorching heat of the sun by day, and the multitude of a sort of creatures stinging them by night, that they can neither well eat by day nor sleep by night to digest their sweet-meats. This made the Spaniards call the place 'comfits in hell;' and truly what are the pleasures of sin but such comfits in hell? There is some carnal pleasure they have which delights a rank sensual palate, but they are served in with the fiery wrath of God, and the stinging of a guilty, restless conscience; and the fears of the one, and the anguish of the other, are able sure to melt and waste away that little joy and pleasure they bring to the sense.

2. Sort. There are pleasures which are not in their own nature sinful. Such are creature comforts and delights. The sin lies, as to these, not in the using, but in the abusing of them. This is done in two ways.

(1.) When a due measure is not kept in the use of them. He cannot live holily and righteously in this present world that lives not soberly also. Godliness will allow thee to taste of these pleasures as sauce, but not to feed on them as meat. The rich men's charge runs thus, 'ye have lived in pleasure on the earth,' James 5:5. They lived in pleasures as if they had lived for them, and could not live without them. When once this wine of creature contents fumes up to the brain, intoxicates the man's judgment, that he begins to dote of them, and cannot think of parting with them to enjoy better, but cries, loath to depart—as those Jews in Babylon, who, beginning to thrive in that soil, were very willing to stay and lay their bones here for all Jerusalem, which they were called to return unto—then truly they are pernicious to the power of holiness. Though a master doth not grudge his servant his meat and drink, yet he will not like it if, when he is to go abroad, his servant be laid up drunk and disabled from waiting on him by his intemperance. And a drunken man is as fit to attend on his master, and do his business for him, as a Christian, overcharged with the pleasures of the creature, is to serve his God in any duty of godliness.

(2.) They are sinful when not rightly timed. Fruit ate out of its season is nought. We read of 'a time to embrace and a time to refrain,' Ecclesiastes 3:5. There are some seasons that the power of holiness calls off, and will not allow what is lawful at another time. As,

(a) On the Lord's-day. Then all carnal, creature-pleasures are out of season. God calls us them to higher delights, and he expects we should lay the other aside, and not put our palates out of taste with those lower pleasures, that we may the better relish his heavenly dainties. 'If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight,

the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord,' Isaiah 58:13-14. Mark! we can neither taste the sweetness of communion with God, nor pay the honour due to God in sanctifying his day, except we deny ourselves in our carnal delights. If a king should at some certain times of the year invite some of his poor subjects to sit and feast with him at his own royal table, they should exceedingly dishonour their prince, and wrong themselves, to bring their ordinary mean fare with them to court. Do glorified saints in heaven call for any of their carnal delights, or miss them, while they are taken up in heaven praising God, and feeding on the joys that flow from the full-eyed vision of God? And doth not God make account he gives you to enjoy heaven in a figure, when he admits you the service of his holy day? (b) In days of solemn fasting and prayer. We are on such occasions to afflict our souls, and creature-pleasures will fit that work no better than a silver lace would do a mourning suit. (c) In times of public calamity in the church abroad, especially at home. And this a gracious heart cannot but count reasonable, that he should deny himself, or at least tie up himself to a very short allowance in his creature-delights, when Christ in his church lies a■bleeding. Sympathy is a debt we owe to our fellow■saints —Christ mystical. And truly the cords of others' afflictions will be little felt through our soft downy beds, if we indulge ourselves, I mean, to a full enjoyment of our ease and carnal delights. What child that is merry and pleasant in his own house, and hath a father or mother lying at the same time in great misery at the point of death, but unknown to him, will not, when the doleful news at last comes to him, change his note, yea, mourn that he did not know it sooner, and had not rather have been weeping for and with his dear relations in the house of mourning, than passing away his time pleasantly at home? Hitherto I have answered by concession, confessing what pleasures a holy and righteous life denies and forbids, and I hope they appear to be no other than such as may, without any loss to the believer's joy, be fairly dismissed.

Answer Second. Now, in the second place, I come to answer by way of negation; viz. that though a holy righteous life denies the Christian the pleasures forementioned, yet it doth not deprive him of any true pleasure the creature affords; yea, so far from this, that none doth or can enjoy the sweetness of the creature, like the gracious soul that walks in the power of holiness, as will appear in these two particulars.

1. The gracious person hath a more curious palate, that fits him to taste a further sweetness in, and so draw more pleasure from, any creature-enjoyment, than an unholy person can do. The fly finds no honey in the same flower from whence the bee goes laden away. Nor can an unholy heart taste the sweetness which the saint doth in a creature. He hath indeed a natural fleshly palate, whereby he relisheth the gross carnal pleasure the flesh affords, and that he makes his whole meal on; but a gracious heart tastes something more. 'All' Israel drank of the rock, 'and that rock was Christ,' 1 Corinthians 10:4. But did all that tasted the water's natural sweetness, taste Christ in it? No, alas! they were but a few holy souls that had a spiritual palate to do this. Samson's father and mother ate of the honey out of the lion's carcass, as well as Samson, and may be liked the taste of it for honey as well as Samson; yet he took more pleasure sure than they. He tasted the sweetness of God's providence in it, that had delivered him from that very lion that now affords him this honey, Judges 14:1-20.

2. The Christian has more true pleasure from the creature than the wicked, as it comes more refined to him than to the other. The unholy wretch sucks dregs and all—dregs of sin and dregs of

wrath —whereas the Christian's cup is not thus spiced. (1.) He sucks dregs of sin. The more he hath of the creature's delights given him, the more he sins with them. Oh, it is sad to think what work they make in his naughty heart! They are but fuel for his lusts to kindle upon. Away they run with their enjoyments, as the prodigal with his bags, or like hogs in shaking time; no sight is to be had of them, or thought of their return, as long as they can get anything abroad, among the delights of the world. None so prodigiously wicked as those that are fed high with carnal pleasures. They are to the ungodly as the dung and ordure is to the swine, which grows fat by lying in it. Their hearts grow gross and fat, their consciences more stupid and senseless in sin by them; whereas the comforts and delights that God gives in to a holy soul by the creature, turn to the spiritual nourishment of his graces, and draw these forth into exercise, as they do the others' lust. (2.) The unholy man sucks dregs of wrath. The Israelites had little pleasure from their dainties when the wrath of God fell upon them before they could get them down their throats, Psalms 78:30. The sinner's feast is no sooner served in, but divine justice is preparing to send up a reckoning after it; and the fearful expectation of this cannot but spoil the taste of the other. But the gracious soul is entertained upon free-cost. No amazing thoughts need discompose his spirit, so as to break his draught, or make him spill any of the comfort of his present enjoyment from the fear of an approaching danger. All is well. The coast is clear. He may say with David, 'I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety,' Psalms 4:8. God will not—all beside cannot—break his rest. As the unicorn heals the waters by dipping his horn in them, that all the beasts may drink without danger, so Christ hath healed creature-enjoyments, that there is no death now in the saints' cup.

Answer Third. I answer by way of affirmation. The power of holiness is so far from depriving a man of the joy and pleasure of his life, that there are incomparable delights and pleasures peculiar to the holy life, which the gracious soul finds in the ways of righteousness, enjoys by itself, and no stranger intermeddles with. They lie inward indeed, and therefore the world speaks so wildly and ignorantly concerning them. They will not believe they have such pleasures till they see them, and they shall never see them till they believe them. The Roman soldiers, when they entered the temple, and went into the holy of holies, seeing there no image, as they used to have in their own idolatrous temples, gave out in a jeer that the Jews worshipped the clouds. Truly thus, because the pleasures of righteousness and holiness are not so gross as to come under the cognizance of the world's carnal senses, as their brutish ones do, therefore they laugh at the saints, as if their joys were but the child of fancy, and that they do but embrace a cloud, instead of Juno herself—a fantastic pleasure for the true. But let such know that they carry in their own bosom what will help them to think the pleasures of a holy life more real than thus. The horror, I mean, which the guilt of their unholy and unrighteous lives does sometimes fill their amazed consciences with, though there be no whip on their back, and pain in their flesh, tells them, the peace which results from a good conscience, may as well fill the soul with sweet joy, when no carnal delights contribute to the same, as at any other time. There are three things considered in the nature of a holy righteous life, that are enough to demonstrate it to be the only pleasant life. It is a life from God; it is a life with God; it is the very life of God.

1. It is a life from God, and therefore must needs be pleasant and joyous. Whatever God makes is good and pleasant in its kind. Now life is one of the choicest of God's works, insomuch that the poorest, silliest gnat, or fly, in this respect, exceeds the sun in its meridian glory. To every life God

hath appointed a pleasure suitable to its kind. The beasts have a pleasure suitable to the life of beasts, and man much more to his. Now, every creature we know, enjoys the pleasure of its life best when it is in its right temper. If a beast be sick, it droops and groans; and so does man also. No dainties, sports, or music please a man that is ill in his health. Now holiness is the due temper of the soul, as health is of the body, and therefore a holy life must needs be a pleasant life. Adam, I hope, in paradise, before sin spoiled his temper, lived a pleasant life. When the creature is made holy, then he begins to return to his primitive temper, and with it to his primitive joy and pleasure. O sirs! men fall out with their outward conditions, and are discontented with their rank and place in the world, but the fault lies more inward—the shoe is straight and good enough, but the foot is crooked that wears it. All would do well if thou wert well, and thou wilt never be well till thou art righteous and holy.

2. It is a life with God. A gracious soul, he walks in God's presence, and keeps communion with him. If you would meet a saint, you know his haunt, what company he keeps. 'That ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ,' 1 John 1:3. See the ingenuity of a holy soul, 'truly our fellowship' is with God, we tell you no lie. An unholy heart dares not be thus free, I warrant you, and tell what company his soul walks with from day to day. We see there is no danger of going among holy men; they will bring you acquainted with no ill company; they will carry you to God where their greatest resource lies. And tell me now, must not that man live a pleasant life that walks with God? Let it be but a man you ride with in a journey, one that loves you well, and is able to entertain you with good and cheerful discourse; doth not the delight you take in his company, strangely, yet sweetly, beguile you of the tediousness of the way? O what joy must God bring with him then to that soul he walks with! 'Blessed is the people,' saith the psalmist, 'that know that joyful sound, they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance; in thy name shall they rejoice all day.' The sound of the trumpet, which called them to their religious assemblies, is called there 'the joyful sound,' because in his worship God sis especially manifest himself to his people. The heaven of heavens is to be where the Lord is; surely then, that which the saint hath of God's presence here is enough to make the Christian's life joyous. O Christians, is it not sweet to walk with God, to God!—to walk with God here below, by his assisting, comforting presence, to God manifesting himself in all his glory above in heaven! O all you that are for pleasant prospects in your walks, and out of your windows, see here one that the world cannot match—the prospect that a gracious soul hath, walking in the paths of righteousness. He may see God walking with him, as a friend with his friend, and manifesting himself to him; yea, he hath not only the sweetness of God's present company with him, but he hath the goodly prospect of heaven before him, where God is leading him, and in this way of holiness will certainly bring him at last. Whereas the unholy wretch, walking in the company of his lusts, though they sweeten his mouth with a little frothy pleasure at present, that soon is melted off his tongue, and the taste forgotten, yet they show him the region of darkness before him, whither they will bring him, and where they will leave him, to repent of his dear-bought pleasures in torments easeless and endless.

3. It is the life of God himself. Read the expression, 'being alienated from the life of God,' Ephesians 4:18. That is the life of godliness. A holy life is the life of God. But how? Not only as God is the author of it; so he is of the beast's life. Thus the wicked are not alienated from the life of God, for they have a natural life which God gave them. But the expression carries more in it, and

that is this. The life of God is as much as a life which God himself lives. He is a living God, and his life is a holy life. Holiness is the life of his life. Now, I pray, friends, do you not think God himself lives a life of pleasure? And what is the pleasure of his life but holiness? He takes pleasure in the graces of his saints, Psalms 149:4; how much more in his own essential holiness, from whence those beams which shine so beautifully to his eye in his children were first shot! Thou, whoever thou beest, hast an art above God himself, if thou canst fetch any true pleasure out of unholiness and unrighteousness. And let me tell thee also, it is not the lowest of blasphemies for thee to charge the way of righteousness and holiness, to be an enemy to true pleasure, for in that thou chargest God himself to want true joy and pleasure: who has no pleasure if holiness will not yield it. But away with such putrid stuff as this is. The devils and damned souls themselves, that hate God with the most perfect hatred of any other, yet dare not say, they cannot say so. They know God to be glorious and happy, yea, 'glorious in holiness,' and the creature's bliss and glory to consist in a participation of that holiness which makes God himself so blessed and glorious. This, Christian, is the utmost that can be said of thy happiness, either here or in heaven hereafter. That makes thee glorious which makes God glorious. Thy joy and pleasure is of the same kind with the pleasure God delights himself in. 'Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures,' Psalms 36:8. Mark that phrase, 'the river of thy pleasures.' God hath his pleasures, and God gives his saints to drink of his pleasures. This is the sweet accent of his saints' pleasures. When a prince bids his servants carry such a man down into the cellar, and let him drink of their beer or wine, this is a kindness from so great a personage to be valued highly. But for the prince to set him at his own table, and let him drink of his own wine, this I hope is far more. When God gives a man estate, corn, and wine, and oil—the comforts of the creature—he entertains the man but in the common cellar. Such as have none but carnal enjoyments, they do but sit with the servants, and in some sensual pleasures they are but fellow-commoners with the beasts. But when he bestows his grace, beautifies a soul with holiness, then he prefers the creature the highest it is capable of. He never sends this rich clothing to any, but he means to set such by them, at his own table with him, in heaven's glory.

[Satan's second stratagem defeated; that, viz. in which he represents the Christian's breastplate as prejudicial to his worldly profits.]

Second Stratagem. Satan endeavours to make the Christian throw away his breastplate, by presenting it as prejudicial to his worldly profits. If thou didst not stumble at the former stone, the devil hath another at hand to throw in thy way. He is not so unskilful a fowler as to go with one single shot into the field; and therefore expect him, as soon as he hath discharged one and missed thee, to let fly at thee with a second, and tell thee, 'This holy life and righteous walking thou hadst best never meddle with, except thou meanest to undo thyself, and all that depend on thee. Look upon the rich and great men in the world, how dost thou think these heap together such vast estates, and raised their families to such dignity and grandeur in their places? was it by their righteousness and holiness? Alas! if they had been so strait-laced in their consciences as thou must be, if thou tiest thyself up to the rules of a holy life, they had never come to so good a market for this world as they have done; and if thou wilt thrive with them thou must do as they have done—throw off this breastplate of righteousness quite, or unbuckle it, that it may hang loose enough, to turn aside when an advantage is offered, or else you may shut up your shop■windows, and give over your trade, for all you are like to get at year's end.' To defend thee, Christian,

against this assault, take these few considerations, from which it will not be hard to draw an answer that will stop the mouth of this objection.

Answer First. Consider, it is not necessary that thou shouldst be rich, but it is necessary that thou shouldst be holy, if thou meanest to be happy. You may travel to heaven with never a penny in you purse, but not without holiness in your heart and life also. And wisdom bids thee first attend to that which is of greatest necessity.

Answer Second. Heaven is worth the having, though thou goest poor and ragged, yea, naked thither. There are some in the world that will accept God's offer thankfully, may they be admitted into that glorious city, though God doth not bribe them, and toll them along thither with great estates here. And therefore, for shame, resolve to be holy at all peradventures. Do not stand indenting with God for that, which if you were actually possessed of, and loved him, you would leave, and throw at your heels with scorn, rather than part with him.

Answer Third. A little of the world will give thee content, if holiness be kept in its power, as few clothes will serve a hale strong man. And better is the warmth that comes from blood and spirits within, than that from a load of clothes without. Better, I trow, the content which godliness gives the Christian in his poverty, than the content—if there be such a thing in the world—which the rich man hath from his wealth. 'Godliness with contentment is great gain.' The holy person is the only contented man in the world. Paul tells us he had 'learned in whatsoever state he was therewith to be content,' Php 4:11. But if you ask him who was his master that taught him this hard lesson, he will tell you, he had it not by sitting at Gamaliel's feet, but Christ's. 'I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me,' Php 4:13. What the philosopher said is a brag, that the holy soul, in truth and soberness, can say through Christ, when he is lowest and poorest, that his heart and condition are matches. We would count him a happy man—stilo mundi, after the fashion of the world—that can live of himself without trading or borrowing; or that, when he would buy or purchase, hath ready cash for the purpose in his coffers; when he would indulge his fanciful appetite with varieties, hath all the rarities the several elements can afford within his own pale, and needs not to send abroad to this market and that for provision. Godliness is so rich a continent, that it is able to maintain the Christian of its own growth, as I may say, and out of its own store, with all that his gracious heart can desire, without begging at the creature's door, and hazarding unworthily his holiness to attain.

Answer Fourth. Consider what a dear bargain they have who part with or pawn their breastplate of righteousness for the world's riches. This will appear, 1. In the sin. 2. In the heavy curse that treads upon the heels of that sin.

1. It is a great sin. The devil sure would tempt Christ to no small sin. We find him, laying this golden bait before him, when he 'showed him all the kingdoms of the world,' and promised them all unto him, if he would 'fall down and worship him,' Luke 4:5-7. What was the foul spirit's design in this demand, but to draw Christ to acknowledge him the lord of the world, and by worshipping him, to declare that he expected the good things of the world, not from God, but him? Now truly, every one that by unrighteousness seeks the world's pelf, he goes to the devil for it, and doth in effect worship him. He had as good speak out, and say he acknowledges not God, but the devil, to be lord of the world, and to have the disposing of it; for he doth what God interprets so. Now, how much better is it to have poverty from God, than riches from the devil? Here is a daring sin with a

witness, at one clasp to take away God's sovereignty, and to bestow it upon the devil, to do what he pleases with the world!

2. It is a foolish sin. 'They that will be rich' —that is, by right or wrong—'fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish...lusts,' 1 Timothy 6:9. What greater folly than to play the thief to acquire that which is man's already? If thou beest a saint, all is thine the world hath. 'Godliness' hath the 'promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come,' 1 Timothy 4:8. If riches be good for thee, thou shalt have them, for that is the tenure of temporal promises; and if it be not thought good by God—who is best able to judge—to pay thee the promise in specie—in kind, then another promise comes in for thy relief, which assures thee thou shalt have money-worth. 'Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,' Hebrews 13:5. If God hath given thee riches, but calls thee to part with it for his name's sake, then he gives thee his bond upon which thou mayest recover thy loss, with 'a hundred-fold' advantage 'in this life,' besides 'eternal life in the world to come,' Matthew 19:29. And he is a fool, with witness, that parts with God's promises, for any security the devil can give him.

3. Unrighteous gain will appear to be a dear bargain, from the heavy curse that cleaves unto it. 'The curse of God is in the house of the wicked,' Proverbs 3:33; but 'in the house of the righteous is much treasure,' Proverbs 15:6. You may come to the righteous man, and find, possibly, no money in his house, but you are sure to find 'a treasure;' whereas there is no treasure in the wicked man's house when much gold and silver is to be found, because the curse of God eats up all his gains. God's fork follows the wicked's rake. It is most righteous for him to scatter what such gather by unrighteousness. They are said therefore, to 'consult shame to their house,...for the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it,' Habakkuk 2:10-11. O who that prizeth the comfort of his life would, though for tons of gold, live in a house thus haunted!—where the cry of his unrighteousness follows him into every room he goes, and he doth, as it were, hear the stones and beams of his house groaning under the weight of his sin that laid them there! Yea, so hateful is this sin to the righteous Lord, that not only they who purse up the gain thus got are cursed by him, but also the instruments such use to advance their unrighteous projects. The poor servant, that to curry favour with his master, advanceth his estate by fraud and unrighteousness, God threatens to pay him his wages. 'I punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit,' Zephaniah 1:9. This is spoken of either servants standing at the door to hook in customers they may cheat; or else of great men's officers that came with absolute power into men's houses to take by violence from them what they pleased; these, though their masters pocketed the gain, shall be punished—their masters as the great devourers, and they as their sharks to seek and provide prey for them.

[Satan's third stratagem defeated; viz. that in which he represents the Christian's breastplate as bringing in the opposition of the world.]

Third Stratagem. Satan endeavours to make the Christian throw away his breastplate, by scaring him with the contradictive opposition and feud which it brings from the world. This is yet a third stumbling-block which Satan useth to lay in the way of a soul setting forth in this path of righteousness. 'O,' saith Satan, 'this is the ready way to bring thee under the lash of every tongue, to lose the love of thy neighbours, and contract the scorn, yea hatred, of all thou livest among. And

dost thou not desire to live friendly and peaceably with thy neighbours? canst thou bear to be hooted at, as Lot was among the Sodomites, and Noah amidst the old world, that were all of another way? This holiness breeds ill blood wherever it comes. Own that, and you bring the world's fists about thy ears presently.'

Truly, though this be a sorry weak objection in itself, yet, where it meets with a soft temper, and a disposition tendered with a facility of nature, one in whom love and peaceful inclinations are predominant, it carries weight enough to amount to a dangerous temptation. No doubt Aaron stumbled at this stone in the business of the golden calf. He did not please himself, surely, in the thing; but it was an act merely complacential to the people, as appears by his apology to Moses, 'Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief,' Exodus 32:22. As if he has said, 'I did not know what they would have done to me upon my denial. What I did was to pacify them, and prevent more trouble from them.' There is need we see to be armed against this temptation, which that thou mayest be, seriously weigh these two particulars.

Answer First. Thy God, Christian, whom thou servest, commands the tongues, hands, yea hearts, of all men. He can, when he pleaseth—without the least abating in thy holy course—give thee to find favour in the eyes of those thou most fearest. 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him,' Proverbs 16:7. Laban, in a fury, pursues Jacob, but God meets him in the way, and gives him his lesson how he should carry himself to the good man, Genesis 31:24; and, Genesis 31:29, he doth ingenuously confess to Jacob what turned the wind into a warmer corner, and made him so calm with him, that set out so full of rage, 'It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yester-night,' &c. Thank him for nothing. He had power to hurt Jacob, but God would not let him. Mordecai, one would have thought, took the readiest way to incur the king's wrath, by denying Haman that reverence which all were, by royal command, to pay him. But the holy man's conscience would not suffer his knee to bow. And yet we see, when that proud favourite had done his worst to be revenged on him, he was forced himself to inherit the gallows intended for Mordecai, and leave Mordecai to succeed him in his prince's favour. Thus God, who hath a key to king's breasts, on a sudden locked Ahasuerus's heart against that cursed Amalekite, and opened it to let this holy man into his room. O who would be afraid to be conscientious when God can, and doth so admirably provide for his people's safety, while they keep close to him!

Answer Second. Suppose thy holy walking stirs up the wrath of ungodly ones against thee, know that there may be more mercy in their hatred than in their love. Commonly the saints get good by the wrath of the wicked against them, not so oft by their favour and friendship. Their displeasure wakens their care, and makes them more accurate (thus David prayed God to 'make his way plain for him,' because of his observing enemies), whereas their friendship too oft lays it asleep, and proves a snare to draw them into some sinful compliance with them. Jehoshaphat was wound in too far by his correspondence with Ahab, so hard is it to keep in with God and wicked men also. Luther professed he 'would not have Erasmus's honour for a world;' indeed the friendship he had with, and respect he had from, the great ones of the world made him mealy-mouthed in the cause of God. The Moabites could not give Israel the fall at arm's length, but when they closed in alliances with the children of Israel, then they were too hard for them. Not their curses, but their embraces did them hurt. Again, we can never lose the love, or incur the wrath of men, upon better or more advantageous terms than for keeping our 'breastplate of righteousness' close to us.

1. When we lose for this any love from men, we gain God's blessing instead of it. 'Blessed are ye, when all men speak evil of you falsely, for my name's sake,' Matthew 5:11. God's blessing is a good roof over our head to defend us from the storm of man's wrath. O it is sad, when a Christian opens the mouths of the wicked, by some unholy action, to speak evil of him! No promise will open then its door to hide thee from the storm of their railing tongues. Man reviles and God frowns. Little welcome such a one has, when he returns home to look into his own conscience, or converse with his God; but when it is for thy holiness they hate thee, God is bound by promise to pay thee love for their hatred, blessing for their cursing. And truly that courtier has little cause to complain, that for a little disrespect from others, that cannot hurt him, is advanced higher in his prince's favour.

2. While thy holy walking loseth thee some love from the world, it gains thee the more reverence and honour. They that will not love thee because thou art holy, cannot choose but fear and reverence thee, at the same time, for what they hate thee. Let a saint comply with the wicked, and remit a little of his holiness to correspond with them, and he loses by the hand—as to his interest, I mean, in them—for by gaining a false love he loses that true honour which inwardly their consciences paid to his holiness. A Christian walking in the power of holiness is like Samson in his strength, the wicked fear him; but when he shows an impotent spirit, by any indecency in his course to his holy profession, then presently he is taken prisoner by them, and falls under both the lash of their tongue and the scorn of their hearts. They can now dance about such a one, and make him their May-game, whose holiness even now kept them in awe. It is not poverty, or the baseness of thy outward state in the world, that will render the contemptible, so long as thou keepest thy breastplate of righteousness on. There sits majesty in the brow of holiness though clad in rags. Righteous David commands reverence from wicked Saul. The king himself does this homage to his poor exiled subject, 'He wept, and said to David, Thou art more righteous than I,' 1 Samuel 24:17. Ay, this is as it should be, when carnal men are forced to acknowledge that they are outshot by the holy lives of Christians. O Christians, do some singular thing—what the best of your merely civil neighbours cannot do—and you sit sure in the throne of their consciences, even when they throw you out of their hearts and affections! So long as the magicians did something like the miracles Moses wrought, they thought themselves as good men as he; but when they were nonplussed in the plague of lice, and could not, with all their art, produce the like, they acknowledged 'the finger of God' to be in it, Exodus 8:16. Do not more than carnal men do, and you stand but level with themselves in their opinions of you, yea, they think themselves better than you, who pretend to holiness more than they. It is expected that every one in the calling he professeth should more than a little exceed another that is not of that calling, which if he do not, he becomes contemptible. We come to the application, in which we shall be the shorter, having sprinkled something of this nature all along as we handled the doctrinal part.

APPLICATION.

[Use for information on two points as to holiness.]

Use First. The information afforded in the preceding, bearing on those two particulars, viz. as to maintaining the power of holiness, and as to the possibility of doing so.

1. If we are thus to endeavour the maintaining of the power of holiness, then sure there is such a thing as righteousness and unrighteousness—holiness, and sin that opposeth it. Yet there is a generation of men that make these things to be mere fancies, as if all the existence they had were

in the melancholy imaginations of some poor-spirited timorous men, who dream of these things, and then are scared with the bugbears that their own foolish thoughts represent to them. Hence, some among us have dared to make it their boast and glorying that they have at last got from under the bondage of that tyrant conscience; they can now do that which we call swearing, lying, yea, what not, without being bearded and checked by an imperious conscience; yea, they assert that there is no sin to any but him that thinks so. These are worse fools than he the psalmist speaks of, Psalms 14:1. He doth but 'say in his heart there is no God;' but these tell the world what fools they are, and cannot hide their shame. I do not mention these os much to confute them—that were to as little purpose, as to go prove there is a sun shining in a clear day because a mad frantic man denies it—as rather to affect your hearts with the abominations of the times, ye holy ones of God. O how deep asleep were men, that the enemy could come and sow such tares as these amongst us! Perhaps they thought such poisonous seed would not grow in our soil, that had so much labour and cost bestowed on it by Christ's husbandmen; that such strong delusions would never go down with any that had been used to so pure a gospel diet! But alas! we see by woeful experience that, as a plague when it hits into a city that stands in the purest air, oft rageth more than in another place, so when a spirit of delusion falls upon a people that have enjoyed most of the gospel, it grows most prodigious. It makes me even tremble to think what a place of nettles England, that hath so long continued—without wrong to any other church Christ hath in the world—one of his fairest, fruitfullest garden■plots, may at last become, when I see what weeds have sprung up in our days. I have heard that reverend and holy Master Greenham say, he feared rather atheism than Popery would be England's ruin. Had he lived in our dismal days, he would have had his fears much increased. Were there ever more atheists made and making in England since it was acquainted with the gospel, than in the compass of a dozen years last past? I have reason to think there are not. When men shall fall so far from profession of the gospel, and be so blinded that they cannot know light from darkness, righteousness from unrighteousness, are they not far gone in atheism? This is not natural blindness, for the heathen could tell when they did good and evil, and see holiness from sin without scripture light to show them, Romans 2:14-15. No, this blindness is a plague of God fallen on them for rebelling against the light when they could see it. And if this plague should grow more common, which God forbid! woe then to England!

2. If we be to maintain the power of holiness, then surely it is possible. God would not command what he doth not enable his own peculiar people to do; only here, you must remember carefully the distinction premised in the opening of the text, between a legal righteousness and an evangelical righteousness. The latter of these is so far from being unattainable, that there is not a sincere Christian in the world but is truly holy in this sense, that is, he doth truly desire, and conscionably endeavour—with some success of his endeavour through divine grace assisting—to walk according to the rule of God's word. I confess all Christ's scholars are not of the same form. All his children are not of the same stature and strength. Some foot it more nimbly in the ways of holiness than others, yet not a saint but is endued with a principle of life that sets him at work for God, and to desire to do more than he is able. As the seed, though little in itself, yet hath in it virtually the bigness and height of a grown tree, towards which it is putting forth with more and more strength of nature as it grows, so in the very first principle of grace planted at conversion, there is perfection of grace contained in a sense;—that is, a disposition putting the creature forth in desires and endeavours after that perfection to which God hath appointed him in Christ Jesus. And therefore, Christian, whenever such thoughts of the impossibility of obtaining this holiness here on

earth are suggested to thee, reject them as sent in from Satan, and that on a design to feed thy own distrustful humour—which he knows they will suit too well, as the news of giants and high walls, that the spies brought to the unbelieving Israelites, did them—and all to weaken thy endeavours after holiness, which he knows will surely prove him a liar. Do but strongly resolve to be conscientious in thy endeavours, with an eye upon the promise of help, and the work will go on. Thou needest not fear it, 'for the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly,' Psalms 84:11. Mark that 'grace and glory,' that is, 'grace unto glory.' He will still be adding 'more grace' to that thou hast, till thy grace on earth commenceth glory in heaven.

[Use for reproof of several sorts of persons.] Use Second. The improvement of the preceding doctrine for reproof of several sorts of persons.

1. All those who content themselves with their unholy state wherein they are. Such is the state of every one by nature. These, alas! are so far from maintaining the power of holiness, that they are under the power of their lusts. These give law to them, and cut out all their work for them, which they bestow all their time to make up. And is not that a sad life, sirs, which is spent about such filthy, beastly work as sin and unrighteousness is? Well may the 'bond of iniquity' and 'the gall of bitterness' be joined together, Acts 8:23. The apostle is thought to allude to Deuteronomy 29:18, where all sin and unrighteousness is called 'a root that beareth gall and wormwood.' He that plants sin and unholiness, and then thinks to gather any other than bitter fruit for all his labour, pretends to a knowledge beyond God himself, who tells the natural fruit which grows from this root is 'gall and wormwood.' Who would look for musk in a dog's kennel? That thou mayest sooner find there than any true sweetness and comfort in unholiness. The devil may possibly for a time sophisticate, with his cookery and art, this bitter morsel, so that thou shalt not have the natural taste of it upon thy palate; but, as Abner said to Joab, 'knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end?' 2 Samuel 2:26. In hell all the sugar will be melted wherein this bitter pill was wrapped. Then, if not before, thou wilt have the true relish of that which goes down now so sweetly. O how many are they now in hell cursing their feast and feast■maker too! Do you think it gives any ease to the damned to think what they had for their money? I mean what pleasures, profits, and carnal enjoyments they once had on earth, for which they now pay those unspeakable torments that are upon them, and shall continue for ever without any hope or help? No, it increaseth their pain beyond all our conceit, that they should sell their precious souls so cheap, in a manner for a song, and lose heaven and blessedness, because they would not be holy, which now they learn too late, was itself —however once they thought otherwise—a great part of that blessedness, and now torments them to consider they put it from them under the notion of a burden and a bondage. But alas! alas! how few thoughts do unholy wretches spend with themselves, in considering what is doing in another world! They see sinners die daily in the prosecution of their lusts, but do not more think what is become of them—that they are in hell burning and roaring for their sin—than the fish in the river do think what is become of their fellows that were twitched up by their gills from them even now with the angler's hook, and cast into the seething-pot or frying-pan alive. No, as those silly creatures are ready still to nibble and bite at the same hook that struck their fellows, even so are men and women forward to catch at those baits still of sinful pleasures, and wages of unrighteousness, by which so many millions of souls before them have been hooked into hell and damnation.

2. Those who are as unholy as others, naked to God's eye and Satan's malice, but to save their credit in the world, wear something like a breastplate—a counterfeit holiness, which does them this service for the present, that they are thought to be what they are not. 'Verily they have their reward,' and a poor one it is. For the Lord's sake consider what you do, and tremble at it. You do the devil, God's great enemy, double service, and God double disservice, just as he comes into the field and brings deceitful arms with him, he draws his prince's expectation towards him as one that would do some exploit for him, but means nothing so, yea, he hinders some other that would be faithful to his prince in that place where he, a traitor, now stands. Such a one may do his prince more mischief than many who cowardly stay at home, or rebelliously run over to the enemy's side, and tell him plainly what they mean to do.

O friends! be serious. If you will trade for holiness, let it be for 'true holiness,' as it is phrased, 'Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness,' Ephesians 4:24. Two phrases are here observable. Holiness is called the 'new man after God,' that is, according to the likeness of God—such a sculpture on the soul or image as is drawn after God, as the picture after the face of a man. Again, 'true holiness,' or holiness of truth, either respecting the word, which is the rule of holiness, and then it means a Scripture holiness, not pharisaical and traditional; or else it respects the heart, which is the seat of truth or falsehood. True holiness in this sense is holiness and righteousness in the heart. There must be truth of holiness in the inner parts. Many a man's beauty of holiness is but like the beauty of his body, skin deep, all on the outside. Rip the most beautiful body, and that which was so fair without will be found within, when opened, to have little besides blood, filth, and stench; so this counterfeit holiness, when unbowelled and inside exposed to view, will appear to have hid within it nothing but abundance of spiritual impurities and abominations. 'God,' said Paul to the high priest, 'shall smite thee, thou whited wall,' Acts 23:3. Thus say I to thee, O hypocrite! God shall also smite thee, thou whited wall, or rather painted sepulchre, that thy paint without in thy profession doth not now more dazzle the eyes of others into admiration of thy sanctity, than thy rottenness within, which then shall appear without, will make thee abhorred and loathed of all that see thee.

3. Those who are so far from being holy themselves, that they mock and jeer others for being so. This breastplate of righteousness is of so base an account with them, that they who wear it in their daily conversation do make themselves no less ridiculous to them than if they came forth in a fool's coat, or were clad in a dress contrived on purpose to move laughter. When some wretches would set a saint most at naught, and represent him as an object of greatest scorn, what is the language he wraps him up in but 'there goes a holy brother, one of the pure ones!' His very holiness is that which he thinks to disgrace him with. This shows a heart extremely wicked. There is a further degree of wickedness appears in mocking holiness in another, than harbouring unholiness in a man's own bosom. That man hath a great antipathy indeed against a dish of meat who not only himself refuseth to eat of it, but cannot bear the sight of it on another's trencher without vomiting. O how desperately wicked is that man with whom the very scent and sight of holiness, at such a distance, works so strange an effect as to make him cast up the gall and bitterness of his spirit against it! The Spirit of God bestows the chair upon this sort of sinners, and sets them above all their brethren in iniquity, as most deserving the place. 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful,' Psalms 1:1. The scorner here is set as chairman at the counsel-table of sinners.

Some read the word for scornful, ‘rhetorical mockers.’ There is indeed a devilish wit that some show in their mocks at holiness; they take a kind of pride in polishing those darts which they shoot against the saints. The Septuagint read it ‘the chair of pestilent ones.’ Indeed, as the plague is the most mortal among diseases, so is the spirit of scorning among sins. As few recover out of this sin as any whatever besides. The Scripture speaks of this sort of sinners as almost free among the dead. [There is] as little hope of doing them good for their souls, as of those for their bodies who cannot keep the physic administered to them, but presently cast it up before it hath any operation on them; and therefore we are even bid to save our physic, and not so much as bestow a reproof on them, lest we have it cast on our faces: ‘Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee,’ Proverbs 9:8. All we can do is write ‘Lord, have mercy on them,’ upon their door—I mean, rather pray for them than speak to them.

There hath of old been this sort of mocking sinners mingled amongst the godly. A mocking Ishmael was in Abraham’s family, Genesis 21:9. And observable it is, what interpretation the Spirit of God makes of his scornful carriage towards his brother: ‘As then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now,’ Galatians 4:29. Pray, mark,

1. What was the ground of the quarrel. It was this. His brother ‘was born after the Spirit,’ and this, he, being ‘born after the flesh,’ hated.

2. Observe how the Spirit of God phraseth this his scornful carriage to his brother—it is called persecuting him. To aggravate the evil of a scornful spirit, and a mocking tongue, which stands for so little a sin in the world’s account-book—who count none persecutors but those that draw blood for religion—God would have the jeerer and scoffer know among what sort of men he shall be ranked and tried at Christ’s bar—no less sinners than persecutors. But this I conceive is not all. This mocking of holiness is called persecuting, because there is the seed of bloody persecutions in it. They who are so free of their tongue to jeer, and show their teeth in fleering at holiness, would fasten their teeth also on it, if they had power to use their cheek-bone.

3. Observe this was not barely the cross disposition of Ishmael’s personal, peevish, and froward temper, so to abuse his brother, but it is laid as the charge of all wicked men. As he did persecute his brother, because born after the Spirit, ‘even so it is now.’ This mocking spirit runs in the blood. The whole litter are alike, and if any seem more ingenuous and favourable to the holy ones of God, we must fetch the reason from some other head than their sinful natures. God rides some of them with a curb bit, who, though they open not their hearts to Christ savingly, yet truth is got so far into them by a powerful conviction, that it makes conscience say to them concerning their holy neighbours, what Pilate’s wife by message said to her husband of Christ, Matthew 27:19, ‘Have thou nothing to do with these just men, for I have suffered much concerning them.’ But though there were ever mockers of holiness among the saints, because there were ever wicked to be their neighbours, yet the Spirit of God prophesieth of a sort of mockers to come upon the stage in the last days, that should differ from the ordinary scoffers that the people of God have been exercised with. And still the last is the worst. You know those who mock and jeer at holiness used to be men and women that pretended nothing to religion themselves—such as walk in an open defiance to God, and wallow in all manner of wickedness—but the Spirit of God tells us of a new gang that shall mock at holiness under a colour of holiness. They shall be as horribly wicked, some of them, as the worst of the former sort were, but wicked in a mystery. ‘But, beloved, remember ye the

words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts,' Jude 1:17-18. But mark! lest we should expect them at the wrong door, and so mistake, thinking they should arise as formerly from among the common swearers, drunkards, and other notorious sinners among us, he in the next words gives you as clear a character of them as if they carried their name on their forehead, 'these be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit,' Jude 1:19.

Learned Master Perkins reads these words thus, 'These be sect-makers, fleshly,' not having the Spirit. Sect-makers! those that separate themselves! Do not our hearts tremble to see the mockers arrows shot out at this window? These are they who pretend more to purity of worship than others, and profess they separate on account of their conscience, because they cannot suffer themselves so much as touch them that are unclean by joining with them in holy ordinances. And they mockers? they fleshly? Truly, if the Spirit of God had not told us this, we should have gone last into their tent, as Laban did into Rachel's, as least suspecting that any mocker of holiness could stay there. Yea, God forbid that we should lay it in general as the charge of all who have separated from communion in the public, many of whom, my conscience tells me, are lovers of holiness, and led, though out of their way, by the tenderness of their consciences, which, when God hath better enlightened, will bring them as fast back to their brethren, as now it carrieth them from them. And truly I think it might give a great lift to the making of them think of a return, if they would but, in their sad and serious thoughts, consider how far many of those who went from us with them, are gone—even to mock at the holiness of those from whom once they parted, because they were not holy enough for their company (God the searcher of hearts knows that I speak this with a sad heart), so that were they to come and join with us again in some ordinances, such scandal hath been given by them, that they who durst not join with us, ought not, as they are, to be admitted by us. How many of those have you heard of, that began with a separation from our assemblies, who mock at Sabbaths, cast off family duties, indeed all prayer in secret by themselves, yea, drink in those cursed opinions that make them speak scornfully of Christ the Son of God himself, and the great truths of the gospel, which are the foundation of all true holiness, so that now, none are so great an object of their scorn as those who walk most close to the holy rule of the gospel.

Well, sirs, of what sort soever you are, whether atheistical mockers at holiness, or such as mock at true holiness in the disguise of a false one, take heed what you do; it is as much as your life is worth. 'Be not deceived, God will not be mocked,' nor suffer his grace to be mocked in his saints. You know how dearly that scoff did cost them, though but children, that spake it to the prophet, 'Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head,' 2 Kings 2:23, where, they did not only revile him with that nickname of bald-head, but made a mock and jeer of Elijah's rapture into heaven. As if they had said, 'You would make us believe your master has gone up to heaven, why do you not go up after him, that we may be rid of both your companies at once?' And we need not wonder that these children should rise to such a height of wickedness so soon, if you observe the place where they lived —at Bethel—which was most infamous for idolatry, and one of the two cities where Jeroboam did set up his calves, 1 Kings 12:28, so that this seems but the natural language which they learned, no doubt, from their idolatrous parents. God met with Michal also, for despising her husband, merely upon a religious account, because he showed a holy zeal for God, which her proud spirit, as many others since have done, thought it too mean and base to do. Well, what is

her punishment? ‘Therefore Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no child unto the day of her death.’ The service of God was too low for a king in her thoughts, therefore shall none come out of her womb to sit on the throne or wear a crown.

It is great wickedness to mock at the calamity of another. ‘He that mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker,’ Proverbs 17:5. Yea, to laugh at and triumph over a saint’s sin is a heavy sin. So did some sons of Belial, when David fell into that sad temptation of adultery and murder! And they are upon that account indicted for blaspheming God. What then is it to mock one for his holiness? Sin carries some cause of shame, and gives naughty hearts an occasion to reproach him they see besmeared with that, which is so inglorious and unbecoming, especially a saint. But holiness, this is honourable, and stamps dignity on the person that hath it. It is not only the nobility of the creature, but the honour of the most high God himself. So runs his title of honour, ‘Who is like thee, glorious in holiness?’ Exodus 15:11, so that none can mock that, but, upon the same account, he must mock God infinitely more, because there is infinitely more of that holiness which he jeers at in the creature, to be found in God, than all the creatures, men and angels in both worlds, have among them. If you would contrive a way how to cast the greatest dishonour upon God possible, you could not hit upon the like to this. The Romans, when they would put contempt upon any, and degrade them of their nobility, commanded that those, their statues and portraitures, which were set up in the city or temples to their memory, should all be broken down. Every saint is a lively image of God, and the more holy, the more like God; when thou therefore puttest scorn on them, and that for their holiness, now thou touchest God’s honour nearly indeed. Will nothing less content thee but thou must deface that image of his, which he hath erected, with so much cost, in his saints, on purpose that they might be a praise to him in the earth? Was it such horrible wickedness in those heathens to ‘cast fire into the sanctuary,’ and to ‘break down the carved work thereof,....with axes and hammers,’ Psalms 74:6-7, of which the church makes her moan, ‘O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?’ Psalms 74:10. What then is thy devilish malice, whose rage is spent, not on wood and stones, but on the carved work of his Spirit—the grace and holiness of his living temples?

[Use for exhortation of the saints.]

Use Third. The preceding doctrine may be for exhortation to the saints in several particulars. I shall only name three, because I have directed myself, in the whole discourse, to them.

1. Bless God that hath furnished thee with this breastplate. Canst thou do less, when thou seest such multitudes on every hand slain before thy face by the destroyer of souls, for want of this piece to defend their naked breasts against his murdering shot? Had God made thee rich and great in the world, but not holy, he had but given thee stock to trade with for hell. These would have made thee a greater booty for Satan, and only procured in the end a deeper damnation. When an enemy comes before a city that hath no walls nor arms to defend it, truly, the richer it is, the worse it fares. When Satan comes to a man that hath much of the world about him, but nothing of God in his soul to defend him, O what miserable work doth he make with such! He takes what he pleaseth, and doth what he will; purse, and all the poor wretch hath, is at his command. Let a lust ask never so unreasonably, he hath not a heart to deny it. Though he knows what the gratifying of it will cost him in another world, yet he will damn his soul rather than displease his lust. Herod throws half his kingdom at the foot of a wanton wench, if she will ask it; and because that

was thought too little by her, he will sacrifice his whole kingdom to his lust—for so much the blood of John Baptist may be judged to have cost him in this life, being, so wakeful was divine providence, shortly after turned out of his throne—besides what he pays in the other. But when God made thee a holy man or woman, then he gave thee gates and bars to thy city. Thou art now able, through his grace, to stand on thy defence, and with the continual succours heaven sends thee to withstand all his power. Thou wert once, indeed, a tame slave to him, but now he is a servant to thee. That day thou becamest holy, God did set thy foot on the serpent's head. Thy lusts were once the strongholds with which he kept thee in awe, and out of which he did come and do thee so much hurt; but now these are out of his hand. O what joy is there in a town when the castle that commanded it is taken from the enemy. Now, poor soul, Satan is dislodged and unkennelled. Never more shall he play rex in thy soul as he hath done. In a word, when thou wert made a holy righteous person, then did God begin heaven in thy soul. That day thou wert born again, an heir to heaven was born. And if such acclamations be at the birth of a young prince, heir to some petty territories, hast not thou more cause, that then hadst heaven's glory settled on thee, in reversion, especially if thou considerest where all thy inheritance lay a little before, that thou couldst lay claim to? Paul joins both together to make his doxology full: 'Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son,' Colossians 1:12-13. O blessed change! to step out of the devil's dark dungeon, where thou wert kept in chains of sin and unrighteousness, prisoner for hell, into the kingdom of Christ's grace, where thou hast the gold chain of holiness, and righteousness put about thy neck as heir-apparent to heaven. Such honour have all his saints.

2. Look thou keepest thy breastplate on, Christian. Need we bid the soldier be careful of his armour? When he goes into the field, can he easily forget to take that with him, or be persuaded to leave it behind him? Yet some have done so, and paid dear for their boldness. Better thou endure the weight of thy plate, though a little cumbersome to the flesh, than receive a wound in thy breast for want of it. Let this piece fall off, and thou canst keep none of the other on. If thou allowest thyself in any unholiness, thy sincerity will presently be called into question in thy conscience. I confess we find that Peter, a little after his sad fall in denying his Master, had the testimony of his uprightness, 'Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee,' John 21:17. After Christ had thrice put it to the question, he could confidently vouch his sincerity. But we must know, (1.) That sin was not a deliberate sin. The poor man was surprised on a sudden. And, (2.) There had intervened his bitter sorrow between his sin and this his profession; and the renewing of his repentance so speedily, conduced much to the clearing of his sincerity to his conscience. But David found it harder work who sinned more deliberately, and lay longer soaking in his guilt, as you may perceive, Psalms 51:10, where he pleads so earnestly that God would 'renew a right spirit within him.'

Again, the gospel-shoe will not come on thy foot so long as swelled with any sinful humour—I mean any unrighteousness or unholy practice—till assuaged and purged out by repentance. Consider the gospel in its preparation. Art thou in a fit case to suffer cheerfully for God, or patiently for God, as thou art? No more than a soldier in a disease, sick abed, is to make a hard march. Unholiness weakens the soul as much as sickness doth the body, and indisposeth it to endure any hardship. 'O spare me' a little, 'that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more,'

Psalms 39:13. David was not yet recovered out of that sin, which had brought him exceeding low, as you may perceive, Psalms 39:10-11. And the good man cannot think of dying with any willingness till his heart be in a holier frame. And for the peace of the gospel —serenity of conscience and inward joy—alas! all unholiness is to it as poison is to the spirit which drinks them up. Throw a stone into a brook, and though clear before, it presently is royled and muddy. 'He will speak peace unto his people,....but let them not turn again to folly,' Psalms 85:8. Mark, here, what an item he gives, 'But let them not turn,' and as if he had said, 'Upon their peril be it, if they turn from holy walking to folly; I will turn from speaking peace, to speak terror.'

Again by thy negligence in thy holy walking thou endangerest thy faith, which is kept in a good conscience, as the jewel in the cabinet. Faith is an eye. All sin and unholiness casts a mist before this eye. A holy life, to faith, is as a clear air and medium to the eye. We can see farther in a clear day. Thus faith sees farthest into the promise, when it looks through a holy, well-ordered conversation. Faith is a shield; and when does the soldier drop that out of his hand but when dangerously wounded? And if faith fail, what will become of hope, which hangs upon faith, and draws all her nourishment from her, as the sucking child doth from the nurse? If faith cannot see a pardon in the promise, then hope cannot look for salvation. If faith cannot lay claim to sonship, then hope will not wait for the inheritance. Faith tells the soul it hath 'peace with God,' then the soul 'rejoiceth in the hope of glory,' Romans 5:1-2. And now, Christian, what hast thou yet left for thy help? Wilt thou betake thyself to the sword of the Spirit? Alas! how canst thou wield it when, by thy unholy walking, thou hast lamed thy hand of faith that should hold it? This sword hath two edges. With one it heals, with the other it wounds—with one it saves, with the other it damns. O it is a dreadful weapon when it strikes with its wounding, damning side; and for the other side thou hast nothing to do with it while in any way of unholiness. Not a kind word in the whole Bible spoken to one sinning. Now, poor creature, think, and think again; is there any sin worth hazarding all this confusion and mischief, which, if thou beest resolved to have it, will inevitably befall thy soul?

3. Be humble when thou art most holy. Which way soever pride works—as thou shalt find it like the wind—sometimes at one door, sometimes at another —resist it. Nothing more baneful to thy holiness; it turns righteousness into hemlock, holiness into sin. Never art thou less holy than when puffed up with the conceit of it. When we see a man blown up and swelled with the dropsy, we can tell his blood is naught and waterish, without opening a vein for the trial. The more pride puffs thee, the less pure blood of holiness thou hast running in the veins of thy soul. 'Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright,' Habakkuk 2:4. See an ecce! [behold!] like a sign, is set up at the proud man's door, that all passengers may know a naughty man dwells there. As thou wouldst not, therefore, not only enfeeble the power of holiness, but also call in question the truth of thy holiness, take heed of pride. Sometimes, possibly, thou wilt be ready to despise others, and bid them, in thy thoughts, stand off, as not so holy as thyself; this smells of the Pharisee, beware of it. It is the nature of holiness to depress ourselves, and to give our brethren the advantage in measuring their gifts or graces with our own. 'In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves,' Php 2:3. At another time, possibly, thou mayest find a spice of the justiciary's[20] disease hanging about thee—thy heart leaning on thy righteousness, and lifting up thyself into confidence of it, so as to expect thy acceptation with, and salvation from, God for that. O take heed of this, as thou lovest thy life! I may say to thee as Constantine did to Acetius the Novatian, 'Set then up thy ladder, and go to heaven by thyself, for never any went this way thither;'

and dost thou think to be the only man that shall appear in heaven purchaser of his own happiness? Go, first, poor creature, and measure the length of thy ladder by the extent of the holy law, and if thou findest it but one round short of that, thou mayest certainly conclude it will leave thee short of heaven. If, therefore, thou hast beheld—to allude to that in Job 31:27—thy righteousness, when it hath shined, and thy holiness walking in its brightness, and thy heart thereby hath been enticed secretly, or thy mouth hath kissed thy hand; know this is a great wickedness, and in this thou hast denied the God above. Thou hast given the highest part of divine worship unto a creature, the created sun of thy inherent holiness, which God hath appointed should be given alone to the uncreated Sun of righteousness, the Lord Jesus, 'the Lord our righteousness.' Renounce thy plea, as now thou hast laid it, for life and salvation, or else give up thy cause as lost. Now the more effectually to keep down any insurrection of pride from the conceit of thy holiness, be pleased to take often these soul-humbling considerations into thy serious thoughts.

(1.) Often meditate on the infinite holiness of God. When men stand high their heads do not grow dizzy till they look down. When men look down upon those that are worse than themselves, or less holy than themselves, then their heads turn round. Looking up would cure this disease. The most holy men, when once they have fixed their eyes a while upon God's holiness, and then looked upon themselves, they have been quite out of love with themselves, and could see nothing but unholiness in themselves. After the vision the prophet had of God sitting on his throne, and his heavenly ministers of state, the seraphim, about him, covering their faces and crying, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts:' how was this gracious man presently smitten with the sense of his own vileness? They did not more cry up God as holy, than he did cry out upon himself as 'unclean,' Isaiah 6:3, Isaiah 6:5. So Job, 'Now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself,' Job 42:5-6. Never did the good man more loathe himself for the putrid sores of his ulcerous body, when on the dunghill he sat and scraped himself, than now he did for the impurities of his soul. We see ourselves in a dark room, and we think we are fine and clean; but would we compass ourselves with the beams of God's glorious majesty and holiness, then the sun rays would not discover more atoms in the air, than the holiness of God would convince of sin to be in us. But it is the trick of pride not to come where it may be outshined; it had rather go where it shall be adored, than where it is sure to be put to shame.

(2.) Often meditate on the holiness of man's innocent state. It is true now, if a believer, thou hast a principle of holiness planted in thee; but, alas! what is that at present to what thy nature once had? They who saw the second temple, and remembered not the first, which Solomon built, thought it, no doubt, a glorious fabric; but others, whose eyes had seen the stately work and goodly buildings of the other, could not but rejoice with tears in their eyes. 'Many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid,....wept with a loud voice,' Ezra 3:12. O! it revived the sad thoughts of the sacking of that glorious structure; and so may this little beginning upon a new foundation of the new covenant, remind thee, with sorrow, to think of the ruins that man, in all his glory, fell into by Satan's policy! It is true, in heaven thou shalt have the odds of Adam in paradise, but thou shalt have many a weary step before thou gettest up that hill. When a man that hath had some thousands a-year hath now but a few pounds per annum allowed him, and the rest sequestered from him for thirty or forty years; it is sad, though comfortable also to think, it shall at last return,

and may be, with a great overplus; but at present, he is put to many straits, and fain to make a hard shift to rub through, so as to live anything like his noble descent and family. Thus it is joyous to the saint to think of heaven when all his means shall come into his hands; but truly his imperfect grace, and the many expenses he is at—from afflictions at God's hands, temptations at Satan's, mutinies and intestine broils from remaining lusts within doors —do put him into so many sad straits, that the poor soul is fain oft to snap short in his comfort, yea, much ado he hath to keep shop windows open with the little stock he hath. Hence, the Christian's getting to heaven is set out as a business of so much difficulty. 'If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?' 1 Peter 4:18. The wise virgins had no oil to spare. The Christian shall hold out, and that is even all. Think of this, and let thy plumes fall.

(3.) Often meditate on thy own personal miscarriages, especially in thy unregenerate state. This kept Paul so humble. How oft does his unregenerate wicked conversation rise, though not in his conscience, to darken his comfort, yet in his mind, to qualify the thoughts of his gifts and grace, 1 Corinthians 15:9-10, where he speaks how he 'laboured more than them all.' O how he waylays his pride that possibly might follow such his glorying too close at his heels! and therefore, before he dare speak a word of his present holiness, he bolts the door upon pride, and first falls upon the story of that black part of his life. O how he batters his pride, and speaks himself all to naught! No enemy could have drawn his picture with a blacker coal, 1 Corinthians 15:7. He calls himself one 'born out of time,' 1 Corinthians 15:9, 'for I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.' And now having sufficiently besmeared and doused himself in the puddle of his former sins, how humbly doth the holy man speak of his transcendent graces! ver. 10. 'By the grace of God I am what I am,....and I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God.' O this is the way of killing this weed of pride, to break up our own hearts, and turn the inside outward—I mean humble and abase ourselves for our former abominations. Pride will not easily thrive in a soul where this plough often walks. Pride is a worm that bites and gnaws out the heart of grace. Now you know they are bitter things that must break the bag of worms that are gathered in the stomach. All sweet things nourish them; they are bitter that scatter and kill them. O Christian, take some quantity of this aloes often, and with God's blessing thou shalt find ease of that which, if a Christian, thou art troubled withal. And do not think that this worm breeds only in children—weak Christians, and young novices. I confess that it is the most ordinary disease of that age. But aged and stronger Christians are not out of danger. Old David had this worm of pride crawling out of his mouth when he bade Joab number the people. And dost not thou too, oft take thyself in numbering the duties and good works thou hast done, and the sufferings thou hast endured for thy God, with some secret self-applauding thoughts that tickle thee for them?

[1]Velleity—volition in its weakest form; a mere wish. >From The Random House Dictionary. —SDB [2]Flagitious, marked by outrageous or scandalous crime or vice.—SDB [3]Toll, usually spelled tole—to draw on, allure.—Ed.

[4]Minatory, threatening, menacing.—SDB

[5]Teasel, any of a genus of Old World prickly herbs; with flower heads covered with stiff hooked bracts —called also fuller's teasel. Or: a flower head of a fuller's teasel used when dried to raise a nap on woolen cloth. Or: a wire substitute for a fuller's teasel. From Webster's. —SDB

[6]Carbonading, i.e. cutting up or across, in order to broiling.

[7]Copy-hold, A former tenure of land in England and Ireland by right of being recorded in the court of the manor. From Webster's.—SDB [8]Dreggy, full of dregs, muddy.—Ed.

[9]Quartan, occurring every fourth day.—Ed..

[10]Shaleing, taken, probably, from shale, meaning a husk or shell; hence, outside, specious.—Ed.

[11]Fiduciary, i.e. confident.

[12]Lure is explained by Latham to be—'that whereto falconers call their young hawks by casting it up in the air;'—generally something which invites by the prospect of advantage.—Ed.

[13]Fleering, i.e. mocking, deriding.—Ed.

[14]Jointure—an estate settled on a wife to be taken by her in lieu of a dower; a settlement on the wife of a freehold estate for her lifetime. From Webster's.—SDB

[15]Cum interea non satageret pater, qualis cresserem tibi, dummodo essem disertus, velpotius desertus a culturâ tuâ deus.

[16]Roule i.e. roll.—Halliwell.

[17]Complacency—It would seem that the Rev. Gurnall has in mind here the meaning more associated with the word complaisance i.e., a disposition to please or oblige: affability. From Webster's.—SDB

[18]Multa bona facit Deus in homine, quæ non facit homo, nulla vero facit homo, quæ non facit Deus ut faciat.

— Augustine [19]Crock and smutch, i.e. blacken with smoke, soot, or coal.—Ed.

[20]Justiciary—it would seem that he means to say that one might be feeling self-righteous and not just a little judgmental.—SDB

01.10 - Third Piece - The Christian's Spiritual Shoe

Direction Seventh. The Several Pieces of the Whole Armour of God.

Third Piece—The Christian’s Spiritual Shoe.

‘And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace’ (Ephesians 6:15). This verse presents us with the third piece of armour in the Christian’s panoply—A Spiritual Shoe, fitted to his foot, and to be worn by him, so long as he keeps the field against sin and Satan. ‘And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.’ We shall cast the words into distinct questions or inquiries, from the resolution of which will result the several points to be insisted on. First. What is meant by the ‘gospel.’ Second. What is meant by ‘peace,’ and why it is attributed to ‘the gospel.’ Third. What the ‘feet’ here mentioned import, and what grace is intended by ‘the preparation of the gospel of peace,’ which here is compared to the shoe, and fitted for these feet.

DIRECTION VII.—FIRST GENERAL PART.

[What is meant by the Gospel.]

What is meant by the gospel. Gospel, according to the notation of the original word, ¦L"((X84@<, signifies any good news, or joyful message. So, Jeremiah 20:15, ‘Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto thee; making him very glad’—Septuagint, Ò ¦L"((,84FVµ,<@H Jè B"JDÂ. But usually in Scripture, it is restrained, by way of excellency, to signify the doctrine of Christ, and salvation by him to poor sinners. ‘I bring you good tidings,’ said the angel to the shepherds, ‘of great joy,’ Luke 2:10. And, Luke 2:11, he addeth, ‘unto you is born....a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.’ Thus it is taken in this place, and generally in the New Testament, and affords this note.

Doctrine. The revelation of Christ, and the grace of God through him, is without compare the best news, and the joyfullest tidings, that poor sinners can hear. It is such a message that no good news can come before it, nor no ill news follow. No good news can come before it, no, not from God himself to the creature. He cannot issue out any blessing to poor sinners till he hath shown mercy to their souls in Christ. ‘God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us,’ Psalms 67:1.

First. God forgives and then he gives. Till he be merciful to pardon our sins through Christ, he cannot bless or look kindly on us sinners. All our enjoyments are but blessings in bullion, till gospel grace —pardoning mercy—stamp, and make them current. God cannot so much as bear any good-will to us, till Christ makes peace for us; ‘on earth peace, good-will toward men,’ Luke 2:14. And what joy can a sinner take, though it were to hear of a kingdom befallen to him, if he may not have it with God’s good-will?

Second. Again, no ill news can come after the glad tidings of the gospel, where believingly embraced. God’s mercy in Christ alters the very property of all evils to the believer. All plagues and judgments that can befall the creature in the world, when baptized in the stream of

gospel-grace, receive a new name, come on a new errand, and have a new taste on the believer's palate, as the same water by running through some mine, gets a tang and a healing virtue, which before it had not. 'The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity,' Isaiah 33:24. Observe, he doth not say 'They shall not be sick.' Gospel grace doth not exempt from afflictions, but 'they shall not say, I am sick.' they shall be so ravished with the joy of God's pardoning mercy, that they shall not complain of being sick. This or any other cross is too thin a veil to darken the joy of the other good news. This is so joyful a message which the gospel brings, that God would not have Adam long without it, but opened a crevice to let some beams of this light, that is so pleasant to behold, into his soul, amazed with the terror of God's presence. As he was turned out of paradise without it, so he had been turned into hell immediately; for such the world would have been to his guilty conscience. This is the news God used to tell his people of, on a design to comfort them and cheer them, when things went worst with them, and their affairs were at the lowest ebb, Isaiah 7:15; Micah 5:5. This is the great secret which God whispers, by his Spirit, in the ear of those only [whom] he embraces with his special distinguishing love, Luke 10:21; 1 Corinthians 2:12, so that it is made the sad sign of a soul marked out for hell, to have the gospel 'hid' from it, 2 Corinthians 4:3. To wind up this in a few words, there meet all the properties of a joyful message in the glad tidings of the gospel.

[The five properties of a joyful message found in the gospel.]

Five ingredients are desirable in a message, yea, must all conspire to fill up the joyfulness thereof into a redundancy.

First Property. A message to be joyful must be good. None rejoice to hear evil news. Joy is the dilation of the heart, whereby it goes forth to meet and welcome in what it desires; and this must needs be some good. Ill news is sure to find the heart shut against it, and to come before it is welcome.

Second Property. It must be some great good, or else it affects little. Affections are stirred according to the degrees of good or evil in the object presented. A thing we hear may be so inconsiderable, that it is no great odds how it goes, but if it be good, and that great also, of weighty importance, this causeth rejoicing proportionable. The greater the bell, the more strength is required to raise it. It must be a great good that raiseth great joy.

Third Property. This great good must intimately concern them that hear it. My meaning is, they must have propriety in it. For though we can rejoice to hear of some great good befallen another, yet it affects most when it is emptied into our own bosom. A sick man doth not feel the joy of another's recovery with the same advantage as he would do his own.

Fourth Property. It would much add to the joyfulness of the news if this were inauditum or insperatum—unheard of and unlooked for—when the tidings steal upon us by way of surprise. The farther our own ignorance or despair has set us off all thoughts of so great enjoyment, the more joy it brings with it when we hear the news of it. The joy of a poor swineherd's son, who never dreamed of a crown, would be greater at the news of such a thing conferred on him, than he whose birth invited him to look for it, yea, promised it him as his inheritance. Such a one's heart would but stand level to the place, and therefore could not be so ravished with it, as another, who lay so far below such a preferment.

Fifth Property. To fill up the joy of all these, it is most necessary that the news be true and certain, else all the joy soon leaks out. What great joy would it afford to hear of a kingdom befallen to a man, and the next day or month to hear all crossed again and prove false? Now, in the glad tidings of the gospel, all these do most happily meet together, to wind up the joy of the believing soul to the highest pin that the strings of his affections can possibly bear.

1. The news which the gospel hath in its mouth to tell us poor sinners is good. It speaks promises, and they are significations of some good intended by God for poor sinners. The law, that brings ill news to town. Threatenings are the lingua vernacula legis —the native language of the law. It can speak no other language to sinners but denunciations of evil to come upon them; but the gospel smiles on poor sinners, and plains the wrinkles that sit on the law's brow, by proclaiming promises.

2. The news the gospel brings is as great as good. It was that the angel said, 'I bring you good tidings of great joy,' Luke 2:10. Great joy it must needs be, because it is all joy. The Lord Christ brings such news in his gospel as that he left nothing for any after him to add to it. If there be any good wanting in the tidings of the gospel, we find it elsewhere than in God, for in the covenant of the gospel he gives himself through Christ to the believing soul. Surely the apostle's argument will hold: 'All things are yours and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's,' 1 Corinthians 3:22-23. The gospel lays our pipes close to the fountain of goodness itself; and he, sure, must have all, that is united to him that hath that is all. Can any good news come to the glorified saints which heaven doth not afford them? In the gospel we have news of that glory. 'Jesus Christ, hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,' 2 Timothy 1:10. The sun in the firmament discovers only the lower world; absignat cælum dum revelat terram—O it hides heaven from us, while it shows the earth to us! But the gospel enlightens both at once—'Godliness hath the promise of the life that is now, and of that which is to come,' 1 Timothy 4:8.

3. The gospel doth not tell us news we are little concerned in—not what God has done for angels, but for us. 'Unto you,' saith the angel, 'is born a Saviour, Christ the Lord.' If charity made angels rejoice for our happiness, surely then, the benefit which is paid into our nature by it, gives a further pleasure to our joy at the hearing of it. It were strange that the messenger who only brings the news of some great empire to be devolved on a person should sing, and the prince to whom it falls should not be glad. And, as the gospel's glad tidings belong to man's nature, not to angels; so in particular, to thee, poor soul, whoever thou art, that embracest Christ in the arms of thy faith. A prince is a common good to all his kingdom —every subject, though never so mean, hath a part in him—and so is Christ to all believers. The promises are so laid that, like a well■drawn picture, they look on all that look on them by an eye of faith. The gospel's joy is thy joy, that hast but faith to receive it.

4. The glad tidings of the gospel were unheard of and unlooked for by the sons of men. Such news it brings as never could have entered into the heart of man to conceive, till God unlocked the cabinet of his own good pleasure, and revealed the counsel of his will, wherein this mysterious price of love to fallen man lay hid far enough from the prying eye of the most quick-sighted angel in heaven, much more from man himself, who could read in his own guilty conscience within, and spell from the covenant without, now broken by him, nothing but his certain doom and damnation. So that the first gospel-sermon preached by God himself to Adam, anticipated all thoughts of such a thing intended to him. O who but one that hath really felt the terrors of an approaching hell in his

despairing soul, can conceive how joyous the tidings of gospel mercy is to a poor soul, dwelling amidst the black thoughts of despair, and bordering on the very marches of the region of utter darkness! Story tells us of a nobleman of our nation, in King Henry VIII.'s reign, to whom a pardon was sent a few hours before he should have been beheaded, which, being not at all expected by him, did so transport him that he died for joy. And if the vessel of our nature be so weakly hooped that the wine of such an inferior joy breaks it, how then could it possibly be able to bear the full joy of the gospel tidings, which doth as far exceed this as the mercy of God doth the mercy of a mortal man, and as the deliverance from an eternal death in hell doth a deliverance from a temporary death, which is gone before the pain can well be felt?

5. The glad tidings of the gospel are certainly true. It is no flying report, cried up today, and liked to be crossed tomorrow—not news that is in every one's mouth, but none can tell whence it came, and who is the author of it; we have it from a good hand —God himself, to whom it is impossible to lie. He from heaven voucheth it—'This is my beloved Son: hear him,' Luke 9:35. What were all those miracles which Christ wrought but ratifications of the truth of the gospel? Those wretches that denied the truth of Christ's doctrine, were forced many times to acknowledge the divinity of his miracles, which is a pretty piece of nonsense, and declares the absurdity of their unbelief to all the world. The miracles were to the gospel as seals are to a writing. They could not deny God to be in the miracles, and yet they could not see him in the doctrine! As if God would set his seal to an untruth! Here, Christians, is that which fills up the joy of this good news the gospel brings—that we may lay our lives upon the truth of it. It will never deceive any that lay the weight of their confidence on it. 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,' 1 Timothy 1:15. This bridge which the gospel lays over the gulf of God's wrath, for poor sinners to pass from their sins into the favour of God here, and [into the] kingdom of God hereafter, is supported with no other arches than the wisdom, power, mercy, and faithfulness of God; so that the believing soul needs not fear, till it sees these bow or break. It is called the 'everlasting gospel,' Revelation 14:6. When heaven and earth go to wreck, not the least iota or tittle of any promise of the gospel shall be buried in their ruins. 'The word of the Lord endureth for ever; and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you,' 1 Peter 1:25.

USE OR APPLICATION.

[Claim of those who never heard the gospel on our compassion.]

Use First. Pity those that never heard word of this good news. Such there are in the world—whole nations, with whom the day is not yet broke, but a dismal night of ignorance and barbarism continues to be stretched over them—whose forlorn souls are under a continual massacre from the bloody butcher of hell! An easy conquest, God knows, that soul-fiend makes of them. He lays his cruel knife to their throats, and meets with no resistance, because he finds them fast asleep in ignorance—utterly destitute of that light which alone can discover a way to escape the hands of this destroyer. What heart, that ever tasted the sweetness of gospel grace, trembles not at their deplored state?—yea, doth not stand astonished at the difference of God's dispensations to them and us? 'Lord, why wilt thou manifest thyself to us, and not to the world?' God pardon the unmercifulness of our hearts, that we can weep no more over them. Truly we do not live so far from the Moors and Indians but we may—by not pitying of them, and earnest desiring their conversion—besmear ourselves with the guilt of their souls' blood, which is shed continually by the

destroyer of mankind. O how seldom is their miserable the companion of our sorrowful thoughts, and their conversion the subject of our prayers and desires! There have been, alas! in the world, more counsels how to ease them of their gold, than enrich them with the treasure of the gospel —how to get their land, than how to save their souls. But the time is coming, when winning souls will be found more honourable than conquering nations. Well, Christian, though thou canst not impart to them what God hath laid on thy trencher, yet, as thou sittest at the feast of the gospel, think of those poor souls, and that compassionately, who starve to death for want of that bread with which thou art fed unto eternal life. There is an opinion which some have lately taken up, that the heathens may spell Christ out of the sun, moon and stars. These may seem kinder than others have been to them; but I wish it doth not make them more cruel to them in the end —I mean by not praying so heartily for gospel light to arise among them, as those must needs do who believe them under a sad necessity of perishing without it. When a garrison is judged pretty well stored with provisions for its defence, it is an occasion that relief and succour comes the slower to it. And I wish Satan hath not such a design against those forlorn souls in this principle. If such a lesson were to be got by the stars, we should ere this have heard of some that had learned it. Indeed, I find a star led the wise men to Christ; but they had a heavenly preacher to open the text to them, or else they would never have understood it.

[Lamentation for the unkind welcome the gospel finds in the world.]

Use Second. A sad lamentation may be here taken up, that so good news should have such an ill welcome as the gospel commonly finds in the world. When the tidings were first told at Jerusalem of a Saviour being born, on would have thought—especially if we consider that the Scripture reckoning was now out for the birth of the Messias, and they big with the expectation of his coming—that all hearts should have leaped within them for joy at the news, to see their hopes so happily delivered and accomplished. But, behold, the clean contrary. Christ's coming proves matter of trouble and distaste to them. They take the alarm at his birth, as if an enemy, a destroyer —not a Saviour—were landed in their coast; and as such, Herod goes out against him, and makes him flee the country. But possibly, though at present they stumble at the meanness of his birth and parentage, yet, when the rays of his divinity shall shame through his miracles, then they will religiously worship him when now they contemn; when he comes forth into his public ministry, opens his commission and shows his authority—yea, with his own lips tells the joyful message he brings from the Father unto the sons of men, then surely they will dearly love his person, and thankfully embrace, yea greedily drink in, the glad tidings of salvation which he preacheth to them. No; they persist in their cursed unbelief and obstinate rejecting of him. Though the Scripture, which they seemed to adore, bear so full a testimony for Christ that it accuseth them to their own consciences, yet they will have none of him. Christ tells them so much—'Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me; and ye will not come to me, that ye might have life,' John 5:39-40. Life they desired, yet will lose it rather than come to him for it. And is the world now amended? Doth Christ in his gospel meet with any kinder usage at the hands of most? The note that Christ sings is still the same, 'Come unto me, that ye may have life.' The worst hurt Christ does poor souls that come unto him, is to put them into a state of life and salvation; and yet where is the person that likes the offer? O, it is other news that men generally listen after. This makes the exchange, the market-place, so full, and the church so thin and empty. Most expect to hear their best news from the world. They look upon the news of the gospel as

foreign, and that which doth not so much concern them, at least at present. It is time enough, they think, to mind this, when they are going into another world. Alas! the gospel is not accommodated to their carnal desires. It tells them off no fields and vineyards that it hath to give. It invites them not with the gaieties of worldly honours and pleasures. Had Christ in his gospel but gratified the cravings of men's lusts with a few promises for these things—though he had promised less for another world—the news would have gone down better with these sots, who had rather hear one prophecy of wine and strong drink, than [to hear] preach of heaven itself. Truly, there are but a very few—and those sufficiently jeered for their pains —that like the message of the gospel so well as to receive it cordially into their hearts. If any one does but give entertainment to Christ, and it be known, what an alarm does it give to all his carnal neighbours! If they do not presently beset his house, as the Sodomite's did Lot's, yet do they set some brand of scorn upon him—yea, make account they have now reason enough to despise and hate him, how well soever they loved him before.

O what will God do with this degenerate age we live in! O England! England! I fear some sad judgment or other bodes for thee! If such glad tidings as the gospel brings be rejected, sad news cannot be far off—I cannot think of less than of a departing gospel. God never made such settlement of his gospel among any people but he could remove it from them. He comes but upon liking, and will he stay where he is not welcome? Who will that hath elsewhere to go? It is high time for the merchant to pack up and be gone when few or none will buy, nay, when instead of buying, they will not suffer him to be quiet in his shop, but throw stones at him, and dirt on his richest commodities. Do we not see the names of Christ's faithful messengers bleeding at this day under the reproaches that fly so thick about their ears? Are not the most precious truths of the gospel almost covered with the mire and dirt of errors and blasphemies, which men of corrupt minds—set on work by the devil himself—have raked out of every filthy puddle and sink of old heretics and thrown on the face of Christ and his gospel! And where is the hand so kind as to wipe off that which they have thrown on? the heart so valiant for the truth as to stop these foul mouths from spitting their venom against Christ and his gospel? If anything be done of this kind, alas! it is so faintly, that they gather heart by it. Justice is so favourably sprinkled, like a few drops upon fire, that it rather increaseth the flame of their rage against the truth than quencheth it. A prince calls not home his ambassador for every affront that is offered him in the streets—only when he is affronted and can have no redress for the wrong.

Objection. But some may say, Though it cannot be denied that the gospel hath found very unkind entertainment by many among us, and especially of late years—since a spirit of error hath so sadly prevailed in the land—yet, make us not worse than we are.' There is, blessed be God, 'a remnant of gracious souls yet to be found to whom Christ is precious —who gladly embrace the message of the gospel, and weep in secret for the contempt that is cast upon it by men of corrupt minds and profane hearts, and therefore we hope we are not in such imminent danger of losing the gospel as your fears suggest.'

Answer. If there were not such a sprinkling of saints among us, our case would indeed be desperate, conclusum esset de nobis—the shades of that dismal night would quickly be upon us. These are they that have held the gospel thus long among us. Christ had, as to his gospel presence, been gone ere this, had not these hung about his legs, and with their strong cries and prayers entreated his stay. But there are a few considerations as to these, which, seriously

weighed, will not leave us without some tremblings of heart.

1. Consideration. Consider what little proportion, as to the number, I mean, do these that embrace the gospel bear with those that continue to reject it —those that desire to keep Christ among us with those that wish him gone and would gladly be rid of him. Were it put to the vote, would not they carry it by thousands of thousands that care not whether we have a gospel or not? And doth it not prophesy sadly when the odds are so great? In all the departures of God from a people, there were ever some holy ones mingled amongst the rout of sinners. Sardis had her 'few names which had not defiled their garments;' but yet the 'candlestick was removed.' All that they could get was a promise for themselves in particular—'They shall walk with me in white,' Revelation 3:4—but no protection for the church. God can pull down the house, and provide well for his saints also that he finds there. A few voices are easily drowned in the outcry of a multitude—a few pints of wine are hardly tasted in a tun of wine—and a little number of saints can do, sometimes, but little to the saving of a wretched people among whom they live. Possibly, as in a weak body, where the disease hath got the mastery, nature putting forth its summum conatum—its utmost strength—may keep life a while in the body—some days or weeks—but cannot long, without some help to evacuate the distemper; so a few saints, shut up in a degenerate age amongst an ungodly Christ-despising people, may a while prorogue the judgment, and reprieve a while the life of such a people; but if there be no change made upon them for the better, ruin must needs break in upon them.

2. Consideration. Consider, of these few gracious ones found amongst us that embrace the gospel, how many are new converts—such, I mean, as the gospel hath of late days won to Christ. I am afraid you will find this little number of saints chiefly to consist of old disciples—such as were wrought upon many years since. Alas! the womb of the gospel hath been in a great measure shut up of late, as to the bringing forth of souls by a thorough solid work of conversion. Indeed, if they may pass for converts that baptize themselves into a new way and form of worship, or that begin their religion with a tenet and an opinion, we have more than a good many to show of these. But in this old age of England's withered profession, how great a rarity is a sincere convert? We cannot deny but God is graciously pleased to bring the pangs of the new birth now and then upon some poor souls in our assemblies, that his despised servants may have his seal to confirm their ministry, and stop those mouths which are so scornfully opened against it; yet, alas! it is but here and there one. And doth not this prophesy sadly to this nation? I am sure, when we see a tree that used to stand thick with fruit no bring forth but little—may be an apple on this bough, and another on that—we look upon it as a dying tree. Leah comforted herself from her fruitfulness, that therefore her husband would love her and cleave to her, Genesis 29:34. May we not, on the contrary, fear that God will not love, but leave, a people when they grow barren under the means of grace? God threatens as much, 'Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee,' Jeremiah 6:8. And if God's soul departs, then he is upon his remove as to his visible presence also. So indeed it follows, 'lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.' O my brethren, those golden days of the gospel are over when converts come flying as a cloud—as the doves to their windows in flocks. Now gospel news grow stale; few are taken with them. Though a kingdom hath much treasure and riches in it; yet, if trade cease, no new bullion comes in, nor merchandise be imported, it spends upon its old stock, and must needs in time decay. Our old store of saints—the treasure of their times—wears away apace, what will become of us if no new ones come in their

room? Alas! when our burials are more than our births, we must needs be on the losing hand. There is a sad list of holy names taken away from us; but where are they which are born to God? If the good go, and those which are left continue bad—yea, become worse and worse—we have reason to fear that God is clearing the ground, and making way for a judgment.

3. Consideration. Consider the unhappy contentions and divisions that are found among the people of God yet left upon the place: these prophesy sadly, the Lord knows. Contentions ever portend ill. The remarkable departures of God, recorded in Scripture, from the church of the Jews, found them woefully divided and crumbled into parties. And the Asian churches no less. Christ sets up the light of his gospel to walk and work by, not to fight and wrangle; and therefore it were no wonder at all if he should put it out, and so end the dispute. If these storms which have been of late years upon us, and are not yet off, had but made Christians, as that did the disciples, Mark 6:48, to ply their oar and lovingly row all one way, it had been happy. We might then have expected Christ to come walking towards us in mercy, and help us safe to land. But when we throw away the oar, and fall a scuffling in the ship, while the wind continues loud about us, truly we are more like to drive Christ from us than invite him to us, we are in a more probable way of sinking than saving the ship and ourselves in it.

[A word of exhortation to unbelievers and also to believers.]

Use Third. A word of exhortation to you who have not closed with the terms of the gospel, and also to you who have—to believers and to unbelievers.

1. To unbelievers. Be persuaded to receive the message of the gospel kindly, believingly, into your hearts; it is the best news you can send back to heaven, as a gratulatory return, for the glad tidings that the gospel brings from thence. Thy embracing Christ preached to thee in the gospel, will be as welcome news to heaven, I can tell thee, as the tidings of Christ and salvation through him, can be to thee. ‘There is joy in heaven’ at the conversion of a sinner. Heaven soon rings of this. The angels that sang Christ into the world, will not want a song when he is received into thy heart; for he came into the world for this end. Christ descended when he came into the world, but now he ascends. That was an act of his humiliation, this of his exaltation. The highest created throne that God can sit in, is the soul of a believer. No wonder then, that Christ calls all his friends to joy with him at a soul’s return to him and reception of him, Luke 15:9. What joy is now in heaven upon this occasion, we may collect from the joy it drew from Christ when on earth. It was some great good news that could wring a smile then from Christ, or tune his spirit into a joyful note, who was ‘a man of sorrows,’ and indeed came into the world to be so. Yet when his disciples whom he had sent forth to preach the gospel, returned with news of some victorious success of their labours, ‘in that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father,’ Luke 10:21. Of all the hours of his life, that is the hour wherein Christ would express his joy; which, with the care of the Spirit to record this passage in the history of Christ’s life, shows that Christ had an especial design in that expression of his joy at that time. And what could it be, but to let us know how much his heart was set upon this work of saving souls? and that, when he should be gone to heaven, if we meant to send any joyful news to him thither, it should be of the prosperous and victorious success the gospel hath over our hearts. This, this which could make him rejoice in the midst of all his sorrows here on earth, must needs be more joyous to him in heaven now, where he hath no bitterness from his own sufferings—which are all healed, past, and gone—to mingle with the joy of this news.

And, if the kind reception of the gospel be such joyful news to him, you may easily conceive how distasteful the rejecting of it is to him. As he rejoiced in spirit to hear the gospel prevailed; so he cannot but be angry when it meets with a repulse from the unbelieving world. We find, Luke 14:21 'the master of the house'— that is Christ—'angry,' when his servants, sent to invite the guests—that is, preach the gospel —return with a denial from those that were bidden (for so their mannerly excuses were interpreted by Christ), yea, so angry, that he claps a fearful doom upon them—'not one of those which were bidden shall taste of my supper,' Luke 14:24. God can least bear any contempt cast upon his grace. The Jews, though they had many grievous calamities which befell them for their idolatries and other sins, yet never any like that which the rejecting Christ brought upon them. Under those they relented, but under this they hardened. They would not come when the supper was on the table; and therefore the cloth is drawn, and they go supperless to bed, and die in their sins. While they shut the door of their hearts against Christ, this padlock, as I may so call it, of judiciary impenitence is fastened to it. Christ needs take no other revenge on a soul for its refusing him, to make it miserable to the height, than to condemn such a one to have its own desire. Christ thou wilt not, Christ therefore thou shalt not have. O unhappy soul thou! that hast offers of Christ, but diest without Christ! Thou goest with thy full lading to damnation. None sink so deep in hell, as those that fall into it with a stumble at Christ. That gospel which brings now good news, will, when thou shalt have a repetition sermon of it at the great day, bring the heaviest tidings with it that ever thy ears heard.

2. To believers. You who have entertained the message of the gospel, rejoice at the news. Glad tidings and sad hearts do not well together. When we see one heavy and sorrowful, we ask him, what ill news he hath heard. Christian, what ill news hath Christ brought from heaven with him, that makes thee walk with thy folded arms and pensive countenance? Psalms 132:16. To see a wicked man merry and jocund, or a Christian sad and dumpish, is alike uncomely. 'A feast is made for laughter,' saith Solomon, Ecclesiastes 10:19. I am sure God intended his people's joy in the feast of the gospel. Mourners are not to sit at God's table, Deuteronomy 26:1-19. Truly the saint's heaviness reflects unkindly upon God himself. We do not commend his cheer, if it doth not cheer us. What saith the world? The Christian's life is but a melancholy walk. Sure, thinks the carnal wretch, it is a dry feast they sit at, where so little wine of joy is drunk. And wilt thou confirm them in this their opinion, Christian? Shall they have an example to produce Christ and his word, which promise peace and joy to all that will come to this feast? O God forbid that thy conversation, wherein thou art to 'hold forth the word of life'—to live in the eyes of the world—and which ought to be as a comment or gloss upon the word, to clear up the truth and reality of it to others—forbid that this should so disagree with the text, as to make the gladsome tidings spoken of in it, more disputed and questioned in the thoughts of the unbelieving world than before. It is an error, I confess, and that a gross one, which the Papists teach—that we cannot know the Scriptures to be the word of God, but by the testimony of the church; yet it is none to say, that a practical testimony from the saints' lives hath great authority over the consciences of men, to convince them of the truth of the gospel. Now they will believe it is good news indeed the gospel brings, when they can read it in your cheerful lives. But when they observe Christians sad with this cup of salvation in their hands, truly they suspect the wine in it is not so good as the preachers commend it to them for. Should men see all that trade to the Indies come home poorer than they went, it would be hard to persuade others to venture thither, for all the golden mountains said to be there. O Christians, let the world see that you are not losers in your joy since you have been acquainted with the

gospel. Give not them cause to think by your uncomfortable walking, that when they return Christians, they must bid all joy farewell and resolve to spend their days in a house of mourning. Is the gospel a message of glad tidings? Do not then for shame, Christian, run on the world's score by taking up any of its carnal joy; thou needest not go out of God's house to be merry. Here is joy enough in the glad tidings of the gospel, more than thou canst spend, though thou shouldst live at a higher rate than thou dost or canst here on earth. Abraham would not take so much as ' thread,' or shoe■latchet' from the king of Sodom, lest he should say that he made Abraham rich, Genesis 14:23. A Christian should deny himself of the world's joy and delights, lest they say, These Christians draw their joy out of our cistern. The channel is cut out by the Spirit of God, in which he would have his saints' joy to run. 'If any be merry, let him sing psalms.' Let the subject of his mirth be spiritual; as, on the other hand, if he be sick, let him pray, James 5:14. A spiritual vent is given to both affections of sorrow and joy. Aliter ludit ganeo, aliter princeps—a prince's recreation must not be like a ruffian's. No more a Christian's joy like the carnal man's. If ever there was need to call upon Christians to feed the lamp of their joy with spiritual fuel, holy oil, that drops from a gospel pipe, now the time is, wherein professors do symbolize with the world in their outward bravery, junketings, fashions, pastimes, and are so kind to the flesh in allowing of, yea in pleading so much for, a carnal liberty in these things, that shows too plainly that the spiritual joy to be drawn out of these wells of salvation does not satisfy them; or else they would not make up their draught from this puddle■water, which was wont to be thirsted after only by those that had never drunk of Christ's cup. O what is the reason for those, who would pass for Christians, forsake this pure wine of gospel joy, for the sophisticated stuff which this whore the world presents in her golden cup to them? Is it because the gladsome message of the gospel is grown stale, and so its joy—which once sparkled in the preaching of it, as generous wine doth in the cup, and cheered the hearts of believers with strong consolations—hath now lost its spirits? or can that pure stream of spiritual joy, which hath run so long through the hearts and lives of the saints in so many generations, with our mingling with the brackish water of the world's sensual pleasures, at last fall in with them, and be content to lose its own divine nature and sweetness in such a sink? O no! The gospel is the same it was; the joy it brings as sweet and brisk, as spiritual and pure, as ever it was, and will be as long as God and Christ continue to be the same, out of whose bosom of love it first flowed, and is still fed; but the professors of this gospel now, are not the same with those holy men and women of primitive times. The world grows old, and men's affections with it chill and become cold. We have not our taste so lively, nor our spirits so chaste and pure, to relish the heavenly viands dished forth in the gospel. The cheer is as good as ever, but the guests are worse. We are grown debauched in our judgments, and corrupt in our principles; no wonder then if carnal in our joys. Error is a whore, it takes away the heart from Christ and his spiritual joys. The head once distempered soon affects the heart, and, by dropping the malignity of its principles upon it, poisons it with carnal affections; and carnal affections cannot fare with any other than gross and carnal joys. Here, here is the root of the misery of our times. Hath not, think you, the devil played his game cunningly among us, who, by his instruments—transforming themselves into the likeness of angels of light—could first raise so many credulous souls into a fond expectation of higher attainments in grace and comfort from their new pretended light, than ever yet the saints were acquainted with, and then at last make them fall so low, be so reasonable, or rather unreasonable, as to accept such sensual pleasures and joys as this world can afford, in full payment for all the glorious things he promised them? Well, sirs, this I hope will make some love the gospel the more,

and stick closer to it as long as they live.

O Christians! bless God for the glad tidings of the gospel; and never lend an ear to him that would be telling you other news, except you mean to part with truth to purchase a lie. Yea, let it make you careful to draw all your comfort and joy from the gospel's breast. When a carnal heart would be merry, he doth not take the Bible down to read in that. He doth not go into the company of the promises, and walk in the meditation of them. It brings no joy to him to think of Christ or heaven. No, he takes down a play-book, may be; seeks some jovial company; goes to the exchange or market, to hear what news he can meet with. Every one, as his haunt lies; but still it is from the world he expects his joy. And now where lies thy road, Christian? whither doth thy soul lead thee for thy joy? Dost thou not go to the word, and read there what Christ has done for thee on earth, and is doing for thee in heaven? Is not the throne of grace the exchange, to which thou resortest for good news from that far country, heaven, where all thy estate lies, and thy best friends live? Art thou not listening what promise he will speak peace from to thy soul? If so, thou hast not thy name for naught, thou art a Christian indeed. 'True students,' saith Erasmus, 'that love their book indeed, when they have wearied their spirits with study, can recreate them again with study, by making a diversion from that which is severe and knotty, to some more facile and pleasant subject.'[1] Thus the true Christian, when his spirits are worn and wasted in the severer exercises of Christianity, such as are fasting and prayer, wherein he afflicts both body and soul for his sins, then can he recover them at the feast of God's love in Christ, where he sees his water turned into wine, and the tears that even now his sins covered his face with, all washed off with the blood of Christ. When his soul is struck into a fear and trembling with the consideration of the justice of God, and the terror of his threatenings and judgements for sin, then the meditation of the sweet promises of the gospel recreate and revive him; so that, in the same word where he meets with his wound, he finds his healing; where he hath his sorrow, there also he receives his joy.

DIRECTION VII.—SECOND GENERAL PART.

[What is here meant by Peace.] The second inquiry follows, viz.—What peace is here meant that is attributed to the gospel. Peace is a comprehensive word. 'We looked for peace,' saith the prophet, 'but no good came,' Jeremiah 8:15. Peace brings, and carries away again with it, all good, as the sun doth light, to and from the world. When Christ would to the utmost express how well he wished his disciples, he wraps up all the happiness which his large heart could beterm them in this blessing of peace—'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you,' John 14:27. Now, take peace in its greatest latitude, if not spurious, and it will be found to grow upon this gospel-root. So that we shall lay the conclusion in general terms.

Doctrine. True peace is the blessing of the gospel, and only of the gospel. This will appear in the several kinds of peace, which may be sorted into this fourfold division:—first. Peace with God which we may call peace of reconciliation. second. Peace with ourselves, or peace of conscience. third. Peace with one another, or peace of love and unity. fourth. Peace with the other creatures, even the most hurtful, which may be called a peace of indemnity and service. Let us begin, where all the others begin, with peace of reconciliation with God. For when man fell out with God, he fell out with himself, and all the world besides; and he can never come to be at peace with these, till his peace be made with God. Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia—a tranquil God tranquilizes all things.

FIRST KIND OF PEACE.

[Peace with God the blessing of the gospel.]

Peace with God we may call peace of reconciliation; and peace of reconciliation with God is the blessing of the gospel. Three things are here to be done in prosecution of the point.

First. I shall show you that there is a quarrel depending between God and the sons of men. Second. I shall show you that the gospel, and only the gospel, takes this up, and makes peace betwixt God and man; therefore called the gospel of peace. Third. I shall show you why God conveys this second piece of reconciliation into the world in this way, and by this method.

[Need for peace with God.]

First. I shall show you there is a quarrel depending betwixt God and the sons of men. Open acts of hostility done by one nation against another proclaim there is a war commenced. Now, such acts of hostility pass betwixt God and man. Bullets fly quickly to and fro on either hand. Man, he lets fly against God—though, against his will, he shoots short —whole volleys of sins and impieties. The best saints acknowledge thus much of themselves, before converting grace took them off. ‘We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures,’ Titus 3:3. Mark the last words, ‘serving lusts and pleasures.’ They were in pay to sin, willing to fight against God, and side with this his only enemy. Not a faculty of the soul or member of the body of an unconverted man which is not in arms against him. ‘The carnal mind,’ saith the apostle, ‘is enmity against God,’ Romans 8:7. And if there be war in the mind, to be sure there can be no peace in the members—inferior faculties, I mean—of the soul, which are commanded all by it. Indeed, we are by nature worst in our best part; the enmity against God is chiefly seated in the superior faculties of the soul. As in armies, the common soldiery are wholly taken up with the booty and spoil they get by the war, without much minding one side or other, but the more principal officers, especially the princes or general, go into the field full of enmity against them that oppose them; so the inferior faculties seek only satisfaction to their sensual appetite in the booty that sin affords, but the superior faculties of the mind, these come forth more directly against God, and oppose his sovereignty; yea, if it could lay a plot effectually to take away the life of God himself, there is enmity enough in the carnal mind to put it in execution. And as man is in arms against God, so is he against man. ‘God is angry with the wicked every day;...he hath bent his bow and made it ready; he hath also prepared for him the instruments of his death,’ Psalms 7:11-13. God hath set up his royal standard in defiance of all the sons and daughters of apostate Adam, who from his own mouth are proclaimed rebels and traitors to his crown and dignity; and as against such, he hath taken the field, as with fire and sword, to be avenged on them. Yea, he gives the world sufficient testimony of his incensed wrath, by that of it which is revealed from heaven daily in the judgements executed upon sinners, and those, many of them, but ‘of a span long’—before they can show what nature they have by actual sin—yet crushed to death by God’s righteous foot, only for the viperous kind of which they come. At every door where sin sets it foot, there the wrath of God meets us. Every faculty of soul and member of body are used as a weapon of unrighteousness against God; so every one hath its portion of wrath, even to the tip of the tongue. As man is sinful all over, so is he cursed all over; inside and outside, soul and body, written all with woes and curses so close and full, that there is not room for another to interline or add to what God hath written. In a word, so fiery is the Lord’s wrath against sinful man, that all the creatures

share with him in it. Though God takes his aim at man, and levels his arrows primarily at his very heart, yet as they go they slant upon the creature. God's curse blasts the whole creation for man's sake; and so he pays him some of his misery from the hand of those creatures which were primarily ordained to minister to him in his happy estate, yea, contribute some drops to the filling of his cup. As an enraged army makes spoil and havoc of all in their enemies' land—destroys their provision, stops or poisons their waters, burns up their houses, and lets out his fury on all his hand comes at—truly thus God plagues man in every creature, not one escapes his hand. The very bread we eat, water we drink, and air we breathe in, are poisoned with the curse of God; of which they who live longest die at last. All these, however, are no more to hell than the few files of men in a forlorn[2] to the whole body of an army. God doth but skirmish with sinners here, by some small parties of judgments, sent out to let them know they have an enemy alive, that observes their motions, takes the alarm their sins give him, and can be too hard for them when he pleaseth. But it is in hell where he falls on with his whole power. There sinners 'shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power,' 2 Thessalonians 1:9. And so much for the first, that there is a quarrel between God and man: the second follows.

[The gospel effects the peace needed.]

Second. I shall show you that the gospel, and only the gospel, takes this quarrel up, and makes peace between God and man:—therefore called the 'gospel of peace.' This will appear in two particulars. First. The gospel presents us with the articles of peace which God offers graciously to treat upon with the children of men, and this none but the gospel doth. Second. The gospel, preached and published, is the great instrument of God to effect this peace thus offered.

First. The gospel presents us with the articles of peace which God graciously offers to treat and conclude an inviolable peace upon, with rebellious man. In it we have the whole method which God laid in his own thoughts from eternity of reconciling poor sinners to himself. The gospel, what is it but God's heart in print? The precious promises of the gospel, what are they but heaven's court-rolls translated into the creature's language? In them are exposed to the view of our faith all the counsels and purposes of love and mercy which were concluded on by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for the recovery of lost man by Jesus Christ, who was sent as heaven's plenipotentiary to earth, fully empowered and enabled, not only by preaching to treat of a peace as desired on God's part to be concluded between God and man, but by the purchase of his death to procure a peace, and by his Spirit to seal and ratify the same to all those who —believing the credential letters which God sent with him in the miracles wrought by him, and especially the testimony which the Scripture gives of him—do by a faith unfeigned receive him into their souls as their only Lord and Saviour, Galatians 3:23. This is such a notion as is not to be learned elsewhere. A deep silence we find concerning it in Aristotle and Tully. They cannot tell us how a poor sinner may be at peace with God. Nothing of this is to be spelled from the covenant God made with Adam. That shuts the sinner up in a dark dungeon of despair—bids him look for nothing but what the wrath of a just God can measure out to him. Thus the guilty creature is surrounded on every side as with a deluge of wrath —no hope nor help to be heard of—till the gospel, like the dove, brings the olive branch of peace, and tells him the tide is turned, and that flood of wrath which was poured on man for his sin is now fallen into another channel, even upon Christ, who was 'made a curse for us,' and hath not only drunk of the brook that lay in the way and hindered our passage to God, but hath drunk it off; so that where a sea was now appears dry land, a safe and fair causey, called, 'a living

way,' Hebrews 10:20, by which every truly repenting and believing sinner may pass without any danger from the justice of God now appeased into the love and favor of God. 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,' Romans 5:1. We are entirely beholden to the gospel for the discovery of this secret, which the apostle solemnly acknowledgeth, where Christ is said to bring 'life and immortality to light by the gospel,' 2 Timothy 1:10. It lay hid in the womb of God's purpose, till the gospel arose, and let us into the knowledge of it, as the light of the sun reveals to the eye what was before, but what could not be seen without its light; and therefore, it is not only called 'a living way,' but 'a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us,' in the place forementioned—so 'new,' that the heart of man never was acquainted with one thought of it, till the gospel opens it, according to that of Isaiah 42:16, 'I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known.'

Second. The gospel, published and preached, is the great instrument of God to effect this peace. Before peace is concluded betwixt God and the creature, both must be agreed; as God to pardon, so the sinner to accept and embrace peace upon God's own terms. But how shall this be done? The heart of man is so deeply rooted in its enmity against God, that it requires a strength to pluck up this equal with that which tears up mountains, and carries rocks from one place to another. The gospel preached is the instrument which God useth for the effecting of it. 'I am not ashamed,' saith the apostle, 'of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation,' Romans 1:16. It is the chariot wherein the Spirit rides victoriously when he makes his entrance into the hearts of man—called therefore 'the ministration of the Spirit,' 2 Corinthians 3:8. He fashions anew the heart, as he framed the world at first, with a word speaking. This is the day of God's 'power,' wherein he makes his people 'willing'—power indeed, to make those that had the seeds of war sown in their very natures against God willing to be friends with him. Unheard-of power! As if the beating of a drum should carry such a charm along with its sound as to make those on the enemy's side upon the hearing of it to throw down their arms, and seek peace at his hand against whom they even now took the field with great rage and fury. Such a secret power accompanies the gospel. It strikes many times not only the sinner's sword out of his hand while it is stretched out against God, but the enmity out of his heart, and brings the stoutest rebel upon his knee, humbly to crave the benefit of the articles of peace published in the gospel. It makes sinners so pliant and tractable to the call of God in the gospel, that they on a sudden, upon the hearing of a gospel sermon, forget their old natural affections which they have had to their beloved lusts, and leap out of their embraces with indignation, lest they should keep God and them at odds one moment longer. Now follows the third.

[Why God effects peace by the gospel.]

Third. Why doth God convey this peace of reconciliation unto the sons of men in this way and by this method? or, in plainer terms, why doth God chose to reconcile poor sinners to himself by Christ? For this is the peace which the gospel proclaims, Colossians 1:20, 'And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself;' and, Colossians 1:21-22, 'and you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight.' But let us reply. They are too bold with God who say that he could not find out another way. Who can tell that, except God himself had told him so? Alas! how unmeet is the short line of our created understanding for such a daring attempt as to

fathom the unsearchableness of God's omnipotent wisdom! —to determine what God can, and what he cannot do! But we may say, and not forgat to revere the Majesty of heaven, that the wisdom of God could not have laid the method of salvation more advantageous to the exalting of his own glorious name, and his poor creatures' happiness, than in this expedient of reconciling them to himself by Christ our great Peace-maker. This transaction hath in it a happy temperament to solve all the difficulties on either hand; and, for its mysterious contrivance, it exceeds the workmanship which God put forth in making this exterior world—though in its kind so perfect and so glorious that the least creature tells its maker to be a Deity, and puts the atheist to shame in his own conscience that will not believe so; yet, I say, the plan of reconciliation exceeds this goodly frame of heaven and earth as far as the watch itself doth the case which covers it. Indeed, God intended, by this way of reconciling poor sinners to himself, to make work for angels and saints to admire the mystery of his wisdom, power, and love therein, to everlasting.

O, when they shall all meet together in heaven, and there have the whole counsel of God unfolded to them!—when they shall behold what seas were dried up, and what rocks of creature impossibilities digged through, by the omnipotent wisdom and love of God, before a sinner's peace could be obtained, and then behold the work, notwithstanding all this, to be effected and brought to a happy perfection—O how will they be swallowed up in adoring the abyss of his wisdom, who laid the platform of all this according to the eternal counsel of his own will! Surely the sun doth not so much exceed the strength of our mortal eyes as the glory of this will their understandings from ever fully comprehending it. This, this is the piece which God drew on purpose, for its rare workmanship, to beautify heaven itself withal. When Christ returned to heaven he carried none of this world's rarities with him—not its silver and gold, not crowns and diadems, which here men venture their lives, yea part with their souls, so prodigally for. Alas! what are these, and the whole pride and gallantry of this world, to heaven? That which it glories most of, suits heaven no better than the beggar's dish and scraps do a prince's table; or the patched, tattered coat of the one, the wardrobe of the other. No, the Lord Christ came on a higher design than this to earth. The enterprise he undertook to achieve was to negotiate, yea effect, a peace betwixt God and his rebel creature man, that had by his revolt incurred his just wrath and vengeance. This was a work that became God himself so well to engage in, that he thought none high and worthy enough to be trusted with the transacting of it beneath his only Son, who stayed here but while he had brought his negotiation to a happy period, and then carried the joyful tidings of its being finished back with him to heaven, which made his return infinitely welcome to his Father, and all the glorious inhabitants of heaven, his attendants. But I shall proceed to give some more particular answer to the question propounded.

[Particular reasons why God adopts the method of reconciliation by the gospel.]

Reason First. God lays this method of reconciling sinners to himself by Christ, that he might give the deepest testimony of his perfect hatred to sin in that very act wherein he expresseth the highest love and mercy to sinners. No act of mercy and love like that of pardoning sin. To receive a reconciled sinner into heaven is not so great an advance as to take a rebel into a state of favour and reconciliation. The terms here are infinitely wider. There is reason to expect the one, none to look for the other. It is pure mercy to pardon, but truth, being pardoned, to save, Micah 7:19-20. Well, when God puts forth this very act, he will have the creature see his hatred to sin written upon the face of that love he shows to the sinner. And truly this was but needful, if we consider how hard

it is for our corrupt hearts to conceive of God's mercy without some dishonourable reflection upon his holiness. 'I kept silence,' saith God, Psalms 50:21. And what inference doth the wicked draw from thence? 'Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself,' that is, 'thou thoughtest I liked sin as well as thyself.' Now, if so plain and easy a text as God's forbearing mercy be wrested, and a false gloss, so repugnant, not only to the end of God therein, but to the holy nature of God, imposed, how much more subject is forgiving mercy—that is so far superlative to that, and infinitely more luscious to the sinner's palate—to be abused? Some men gaze so long on this pleasing object that they are not willing to look off, and see any other attribute of God. Now, in this way of reconciling himself to sinners by Christ, he hath given such an argument to convince sinners that he is an implacable hater of sin, as hath not its fellow. It is true, every threat in the Bible tells us that sin finds no favour in God's heart; the guilty consciences of men, that hunt them home, and follow them into their own bosoms, continually yelling and crying damnation in their ears; the remarkable judgments which now and then take hold of sinners in this world; and much more the furnace which is heating for them in another world, show abundantly how hot and burning God's heart within him is in wrath against sin. But, when we see him run upon his Son, and lay the envenomed knife of his wrath to his throat, yea, thrust it into his very heart, and there let it stick—for all the supplications and prayers which in his bitter agonies he offered up to his Father, 'with strong crying and tears'—without the least sparing of him, till he had forced his life, in a throng of sad groans and sighs, out of his body, and therewith paid justice the full debt, which he had, as man's surety, undertaken to discharge—this, this I say, doth give us a greater advantage to conceive of God's hatred to sin, than if we could stand in a place to see what entertainment the damned find in hell, and at once behold all the torments they endure. Alas! their backs are not broad enough to bear the whole weight of God's wrath at once—it being infinite and they finite, which, if they could, we would not find them lying in that prison for nonpayment. But behold one here who had the whole curse of sin at once upon his back. Indeed, their sufferings are infinite extensivè—extensively, because everlasting; but his were infinite intensivè —intensively. He paid in one sum what they shall be ever paying, and yet never come to the last farthing of. 'The chastisement of our peace was upon him,' Isaiah 53:5. 'the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all,' Isaiah 53:6. Or [as it is in the margin], 'he hath made the iniquity of us all to meet in him.' The whole curse met in him, as all streams do in the sea—a virtual collection of all the threatenings denounced against sin, and all laid on him. And now, take but one step more, and consider in how near relation Christ stood to God, as also the infinite and unspeakable love with which this relation was filled, and mutually endeared on each hand, and this at the very same time when he ascended the stage for this bloody tragedy to be acted on him in; and, I think, that you are at the highest stair the word of God can lead you to ascend by, into the meditation of this subject. Should you see a father that has but one only son, and can have no more, make him his mittimus to prison; come into court himself, and sit judge upon his life; and with his own lips pass sentence of death upon him, and order that it be executed with the most exquisite torments that may be, yea, go to the place himself, and with his own eyes, and those not full of water, as mourning for his death, but full of fire and fury—yea, a countenance in every way so set as might tell all that see it, the man took pleasure in his child's death;—should you see this, you would say, Surely he bitterly hates his son, or the sin his son hath committed. This you see in God the Father towards his Son. It was he, more than men or devils, that procured his death. Christ took notice of this, that the warrant for his death had his Father's hand and seal to it. 'Shall I not drink of the cup my Father

gives me?' Yea, he stands by and rejoiceth in it. His blood was the wine that made glad the heart of God—'It pleased the Lord to bruise him,' Isaiah 53:10. When God corrects a saint he doth it, in a manner, unwillingly; but when Christ suffers, it pleaseth him; and not this from want of love in his heart to Christ, nor that any disobedience in Christ had hardened his Father's against him —for he never displeased him—but from that hatred he had to sin, and from zeal to exalt his mercy towards sinners, by satisfying his justice on his Son.

Reason Second. God effected our peace by Christ, that he might for ever hide pride from his saints' eyes. Pride was the stone on which both angels and men stumbled and fell. In man's recovery, therefore, he will roll that stone, as far as may be, out of the way—he will lay that knife aside with which man did himself the mischief. And that he may do this, he transacts the whole business by Christ for them. Man's project was to cut off the entail of his obedience to God, and set up for himself as a free and absolute prince, without holding upon his Maker. A strange plot! for to effect this he must first have thrown away that being which God gave him, and, by self-creation—if such a thing had been possible —have bestowed a new one upon himself; then, indeed, and not till then, he might have had his will. But alas! his pride to be what he could not, lost him what he had, and still might have, enjoyed. Yet how foolish soever it now appears and infeasible, that was the plot pride had sprung into man's heart. Now, God, to preserve his children from all future assaults and batteries of hell at this door, chose such a way of reconciling and saving them, that, when the prince of the world comes to tempt them to pride, he should find nothing in them to give the least countenance or colour to such a motion; so that, of all sins, pride is such a one as we may wonder how it should grow, for it hath no other root to bear it up but what is found in man's dreaming fancy or imagination. It grows, as sometimes we shall see a mushroom or moss, among stones, where little or no soil is for its root to take hold of. God, in this gospel way reconciling sinners by Christ, makes him fetch all from without doors. Wilt thou, poor soul, have peace with God? Thou must not have it from thine own penance for thy sins. 'The chastisement of our peace was upon him;,' Isaiah 53:5. O know thou art not thy own peacemaker! That is Christ's name, who did that work: 'for he is our peace, who hath made both one,' Ephesians 2:14—Jew and Gentile one with God, and one with one another. Wouldst thou be righteous? Then thou must not appear before God in thy own clothes. It is another's righteousness, not thy own, that is provided for thee. 'Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness,' Isaiah 45:24. In a word, wouldst thou ever have a right in heaven's glory? Thy penny is not good silver to purchase it with. The price must not come out of thy purse, but Christ's heart; and therefore, as it is called the 'purchased possession,' in regard of Christ —because he obtained it for us with a great sum, not 'silver and gold,' but his 'precious blood'— so 'an inheritance' in regard of us, because it descends upon us as freely as the father's estate on his child, Ephesians 1:14. And why all this, but that the 'lofty looks' of man may be 'humbled,' and the 'haughtiness of man' should be 'bowed down, and the Lord alone exalted' in the day of our salvation? The manna is expounded by Christ himself in a type of him: 'The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world,' John 6:33. Now observe wherefore God chose that way of feeding them in the wilderness: 'Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee,' Deuteronomy 8:16. But wherein lay this great humbling of them? Were they not shrewdly humbled think you, to be fed with such a dainty dish, which had God for its cook, and is called 'angels' food' for its delicacy? Psalms 78:25—such, that if they needed any repast, might well suit their table. I answer, it was not the meanness of the fare, but the manner of having it, which God

intended should humble them. Man is proud, and loves to be his own provider, and not stand to another's allowance. The same feast sent in by the charity and bounty of another, will not go down so well with his high stomach as when it is provided at his own cost and charges; he had rather have the honour of keeping his own house, though mean, than to live higher upon the alms and allowance of another's charity. This made them wish themselves at their onions in their own gardens in Egypt, and their flesh-pots there, which though they were grosser diet, they liked better, because bought with their own penny.

Reason Third. God lays this method of reconciling sinners to himself by Christ, that it might be a peace with the greatest advantage possible—that God and man might meet again on better terms by this pacification, than when Adam stood in all his primitive glory. God, no doubt, would not have let the beauty of his first workmanship to be so defaced by sin, had he not meant to have reared a more magnificent structure out of its ruins. Now, God intending to print man's happiness in the second edition with a fairer character than at the first, he employs Christ in the work, as the only fit instrument to accomplish so great a design. Christ himself tells us as much: 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly,' John 10:10. His coming was not to give those who were dead and damned bare peace, naked life, but 'more abundantly' than ever man had before the breach. It was Christ in the second temple who filled it with a glory superlative to the first—Christ in the second creation of man, that lifts his head above the first state in happiness. As Adam was a pattern to all his seed—what he was in his innocent state, that should they all have been, if sin had not altered the scene, and turned the tables —so Christ is a pattern to all his seed of that glory which they shall be clothed with, 1 John 3:2. 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him'—that is, 'our vile bodies like his glorious body.' as the apostle hath it, Php 3:21, and our souls also, like his glorious soul. Now, by how much our nature in Christ is more glorious than it was in Adam, by so much the state of a reconciled sinner surpasseth Adam's first condition. Some little discovery whereof, take in two particulars.

[Superiority of our nature in Christ to its state in Adam.]

1. The reconciled sinner hath the advantage of Adam in his union to God. 2. The reconciled sinner hath the advantage of Adam in his communion with God.

1. The reconciled sinner hath the advantage of Adam in his union to God. And that,

(1.) As it is nearer. The union is nearer, because God and man make one person in Christ. This is such a mystery as was not heard of by Adam in all his glory. He, indeed, was in league of love and friendship with God—and that was the best flower in his crown—but he could lay no claim to such kindred and consanguinity as now—with reverence be it spoken—the reconciled soul can with God. This comes in by the marriage of the divine nature with the human, in the person of Christ, which personal union is the foundation of another, a mystical union betwixt Christ and the person of every believer; and this is so near a union, that, as by the union of the divine nature and human, there is one person, so also by this mystical union, the saints and their head make one Christ, 'for as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ,' 1 Corinthians 12:12. Ecclesia est Christus explicatus—the church is nothing but Christ displayed. Who can speak what an advance this is to the human nature in general, and to the persons of believers in especial?—such a one, as it leaves not only Adam, but

angels, beneath a reconciled sinner in this respect. Adam, at first, was made but ‘little lower than the angels;’ but, by this pair of unions, God hath set the reconciled soul more than a little above them both, for Christ, by taking on him, not ‘the nature of angels’—though the more ancient and noble house—but the seed of Abraham,’ made ‘the elder serve the younger.’ Even angels themselves minister to the meanest saint, as unto their Master’s heir, Hebrews 1:14.

(2.) As it is stronger. Therefore stronger, because nearer. The closer stones stand together the stronger the building. The union betwixt God and Adam in the first covenant, was not so near but Adam might fall, and yet God’s glory stand entire and unshaken; but the union now is so close and strong betwixt Christ and his saints, that Christ cannot be Christ without his members. ‘Because I live,’ saith Christ, ‘ye shall live also,’ John 14:19—implying that their life was bound up in his, and [that] it was as easy for him to be turned out of heaven as for them to be kept out. The church is called Christ’s ‘body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all,’ Ephesians 1:23. A body is not full if it hath not every member and joint, though never so little, and them in their fulness too. The saints’ graces is Christ’s glory, 2 Corinthians 8:23; and, though his essential glory as God receives no filling from his saints, or their graces, yet consider him in his mediatorship as head of his church, so Christ’s glory is daily filling, as the elect are called in daily, and as those that are called in grow up to their appointed stature. Christ hath not his fulness till the saints have their perfection and complement of grace in heaven’s glory.

2. The reconciled sinner hath the advantage of Adam in his communion with God. The nearer, we use to say, the dearer. Communion results from union. If the union be nearer and stronger between a reconciled soul and God than Adam’s was, his communion must needs be sweeter and fuller. Why else is the communion between husband and wife fuller than of friend and friend, but because the union is closer? God converseth with Adam as a friend with his friend and ally, but with the reconciled soul as a husband with his wife. ‘For thy Maker is thy husband,’ Isaiah 54:5. There is a double sweetness peculiar to the reconciled sinner’s communion with God.

(1.) There is, in Christ, a foundation laid for greater familiarity with God, than Adam was at first capable of. He, indeed, was the son of God, yet he was kept at a further distance, and treated with more state and majesty, from God, than now the reconciled soul is; for, though he was the son of God, by creation, yet ‘the Son of God’ was not then ‘the Son of man’ by incarnation; and at this door comes in the believer’s sweetest familiarity with God. The Christian cannot now lift up an eye of faith to God, but sees his own nature standing upon the throne by him, in the person of Christ. And, if the sight of Joseph at Pharaoh’s right hand, in court favour and honour, sent the patriarchs home with such joyful news to their aged father, what a ravishing message of joy must faith carry then to the soul of a reconciled sinner, when it comes in after some vision of love in an ordinance and saith, ‘Cheer up, O my soul, I see Jesus Christ, thy near kinsman, at God’s right hand in glory, to whom ‘all power is given in heaven and earth;’ fear not, he is so nigh in blood to thee that he cannot be unmindful of thee, except he should do what is unnatural in thyself, that is, hide himself from his own flesh.’ The lower a prince stoops to the meanest of his subjects, the more familiar he makes himself to his subjects.

It was a wonderful condescension in the great God, who can have no compeer, first to make man, and then to strike so friendly a league and covenant with him. This God doth now with every reconciled soul, and that too enriched with so many astonishing circumstances of condescending

grace as must needs speak the way of the believer's access to God more familiar. God, in this second and new alliance with the poor creature, descend from his throne—exchanges his majestic robes of glory for the rags of man's frail flesh. He leaves his palace to live for a time in his creature's humble cottage, and there not only familiarly converses with him, but, which is stranger, ministers to him, yea, which is more than all these, he surrenders himself up to endure all manner of indignities from his sorry creature's hand; and when this, his coarse entertainment is done, back he posts to heaven, not to complain to his Father how he hath been abused here below, and to raise heaven's power against those that had so ill-entreated him, but to make ready heaven's palace for the reception of those who had thus abused him, and now will but accept of his grace; and lest these yet left on earth should fear his re-assumed royalty and majesty in heaven's glory would make some alteration in their affairs in his heart—to give them therefore a constant demonstration that he would be the same in the height of his honour that he was in the depth of his abasement—he goes back in the same clothes he had borrowed of their nature, to wear them on the throne in all his glory—only some princely cost bestowed, to put them into the fashion of that heavenly kingdom, and make them suit with his glorified state—giving them a pattern by this, what their own vile bodies, which are now so dishonourable, shall be made another day. Now none of all those circumstances were found in God's first administration to Adam, and therefore this is the more familiar.

(2.) There is the sweetness of pardoning mercy, and the bleeding love of Christ—who, by his death, purchased it for him—to be tasted in the reconciled soul's communion with God. This lump of sugar Adam had not in his cup. He knew what the love of a giving God meant, but was stranger to the mercy of a forgiving God. The reconciled soul experiments both. The love of a father, more than ordinary kind, is a great comfort to a dutiful child—one that never displeased his father; but it carries no such wonder in it to our thoughts as the compassion and melting bowels of a father towards a rebellious child doth. And certainly the prodigal child, that is received again into his father's embraces, hath the advantage for loving his father more than his brother that never came under his father's displeasure. O this pardoning mercy, and the love of Christ that procured it! —they are the most spacious and fruitful heads for a gracious soul to enlarge his sweetest meditations upon, here on earth. But who can conceive what ravishing music glorified saints will make in running division on this sweet note? I am sure the song their harps are tuned unto is 'the song of the Lamb,' Revelation 15:2-3. The saints' finished happiness in heaven's glory is a composition of all the rare ingredients possible—so tempered by the wise hand of God, that, as none could well be spared, so not the taste of any one shall be lost in another. But this ingredient of pardoning mercy, and of the stupendous love and wisdom of God through Christ therein, shall, as I may so say, give a sweet relish to all, and be tasted above all the rest.

[Use or application.]

Let it provoke everyone to labour to get an interest in this peace of reconciliation with God which the gospel brings. Peace with God! Sure it is worth the sinner's having, or else the angels were ill employed when they welcomed the tidings thereof into the world at our Saviour's birth with such acclamations of joy. 'Glory to God,....on earth peace,' Luke 2:14. Yea otherwise Christ himself was deceived in his purchase, who, if a sinner's peace with God be not of high praise and value, hath little to show for the effusion of his heart-blood, which he thought well spent to gain this. But this we cannot believe. And yet to see how freely God offers peace and pardon to the sons of men

through Christ, and how coy, yea sullen and cross they are to the motion:—one that does not well know them both—God's infinite goodness, and wretched man's horrible baseness—might be ready to think it some low prized ware which lay upon God's hands, and this to be the cause why God is so earnest to put it off, and man so loath to take it off his hands. Ah poor deluded wretches! who is the wicked counsellor that hardens your hearts from embracing your own mercies? None, sure, but a devil can hate God and you so much. And hath he sped so well in his own quarrel against God, that he should be hearkened to by thee, poor sinner? Can he give thee armour that will quench God's bullets? How then is it that he is so unkind to himself as to let them lie burning in his own bosom to his unspeakable torment? Or will he lend thee any pity when thou hast by his advice undone thyself? Alas! no more than the cruel wolf doth the silly sheep, when he hath sucked her blood and torn her in pieces. Think, and think again, poor sinner, what answer thou meanest to send to heaven before God calls his ambassadors home, and the treaty break up, never to be renewed again. And that thou mayest not want some seasonable matter for thy musing thoughts to enlarge upon on this subject, let me desire thee to treat with thy own heart upon these four heads. First. Consider what it is that is offered thee. Second. Who it is that offers it. Third. How he offers it. Fourth. What thou dost when thou refusest it.

[Exhortations to the sinner to embrace this peace with God, offered in the gospel.]

First. Consider what it is that is offered thee —peace with God. A thing so indispensable—thou canst not have less, and so comprehensive—thou needest have no more than this, and what cometh with it, to make thee truly, fully happy. Of all the variety of enjoyments with which it is possible thy table can be spread, this is a dish can least be spared. Take away peace, and that but of an inferior nature —outward peace—and the feast is spoiled, though it be on a prince's table. David's children had little stomach to their royal dinner when one of them was slain that sat at the board with them. And what taste can you have in all your junkets while God is in array against you; many sinners slain before your eye by God's judgments; and the same sword that hath let out their blood, at thy throat, while the meat is in thy mouth? Methinks your sweet morsels should stick in your throat, and hardly get down, and hardly get down, while you muse on these things. O sinner! is not this as a toad swelling at the bottom of thy most sweetly sugared cup—that the controversy yet depends betwixt God and thee? Thy sins are unpardoned, and thou a dead damned creature, however thou dost frolic it for the present in thy prison. Would you not wonder to see a man at his sport, hunting or hawking, and one should tell you that that man is to be hanged tomorrow? Truly God is more merciful to thee than thou canst promise thyself, if he stay the execution till another day. I confess, when I meet a man whose life proclaims him an unreconciled sinner, and see him spruce up himself with the joy of his children, estate, honour, or the like, in this life, it administers matter of admiration [amazement] to me, what such a one thinks of God or himself. Canst thou think it is long thou shalt sit at this fire of thorns thou hast kindled, and not God for thee? Must it needs provoke a creditor to see his debtor live high, and go brave, all at his cost, and all the while never think of getting out of his debt, or of making his peace with him? Much more then doth it provoke God to see sinners spend upon his bounty—lead joyful jovial lives in the abundance of outward enjoyments he lends them, but take no thought of making peace with him in whose debt■book they are so deep in arrears.

What folly had it been for the Jews, when Ahasuerus had sealed the warrant for their destruction, to have gone and painted their houses, planted their fields, and let out their hearts in the

enjoyment of their estates, without taking care, in the first place, of getting that bloody decree reversed? A worse sot art thou, that doest all these, while thou carriest the sentence of death from God's mouth, about thee in thy own conscience. Sir Thomas More, when in the Tower, would not so much as trim himself, saying, 'There was a controversy betwixt the king and him for his head, and till that was at a happy end, he would be at no cost about it.' Scum but off the froth of his wit and you may make a solemn use of it. Certainly all the cost you bestow on yourselves to make your lives pleasurable and joyous to you is mere folly, till it be decided what will become of the suit betwixt God and you, not for your heads, but souls, yea soul and body, whether for heaven or hell. O were it not thy wisest choice to begin with making thy peace, and then thou mayest soon lead a happy life! We say, 'He that gets out of debt grows rich.' I am sure the reconciled soul cannot be poor. As soon as the peace is concluded a free trade is opened betwixt God and the soul. If once pardoned, thou mayest then sail to any port that lies in God's dominions, and be welcome. All the promises stand open with their rich treasure. Take, poor soul, full lading in of all the precious things they afford, even as much as thy faith can bear, and none shall hinder thee. As a man may draw the wine of a whole vessel through one tap, so faith may draw the comfort of all the covenant out of this one promise of reconciliation. If reconciled, then the door is open to let thee into communion with God in all his ordinances. God and thou being agreed may now walk together, whereas before thou couldst not look into God's presence but his heart rose against thee, as one at the sight of his enemy, ready to draw upon thee with his judgments. 'The smith,' we say, 'and his penny, both are black.' So wert thou with all thy duties and performances, while unreconciled in his eye. But now thy 'voice is sweet, and countenance comely.' All the attributes of God, thy ally, are thine: his horses and chariots thine, as Jehoshaphat told Ahab. Whenever any enemy puts thee in fear, you know where to have a friend that will take part with thee. All his providences, though like bees, they fly some this way, and some that, yea, one contrary to another, as, thou thinkest, impossible to trace them, are yet all at work for thee; and thy soul is the hive wherein they will unlade the sweet fruit of all their labour, though possibly it may be night—the evening of thy days—before thou findest it. In a word, if reconciled, thou standest next step to heaven; 'whom he justifies, them he glorifies,' Romans 8:30. Thou art sure to be there as soon as death rends the veil of thy flesh, which is all that interposeth between thee and it.

Second. Consider who it is that offers peace to thee—the great God. It is hard to say which speaks the greatest wonder—for God to offer, or thee to deny what he offers. We marvel not to see the undutiful child on his knee, labouring to soften his father's heart with his tears, which he hath hardened against him with his rebellions; nor a condemned traitor prostrate at his prince's foot, begging for his life, now forfeited to the justice of the law; but it is something strange to see the father become suppliant to his child, more, for the traitor to open his dungeon door and find his prince standing there, and that upon no other errand than to desire him to accept of a pardon. And yet self-love may be the great motive for this seeming self-denial. The parent doth but love himself when he steps below his place to gain his child, that carries so much of its parent's life about him. And such necessity of state there is sometimes, that great princes are forced to stoop to the meanest, yea worst of his subjects. A prince's safety may be so intimately concerned in a traitor's life that he cannot cut off his head without imminent danger to the crown that stands upon his own. But none of these straits forced God to take up thoughts of peace to his poor creature; no, they are the birth of free condescending love. And now, think again, sinner, before the great God hath a denial from thee. If a neighbour, the poorest in the town, and he one that hath done thee wrong,

and not received it from thee, comes to thee and desires peace, shouldst thou reject the motion? Would not thy conscience reproach thee to thy dying day? How then wilt thou endure to look God or conscience in the face, if thou refusest peace at God's hands that thou doth not treat, like men, when their sword is broke, and they cannot fight, but when he hath absolute power over thy life—which is ever in his hands—yea, a God that hath ever received the wrong—never did thee any—yea, should have done thee none, if he had long before this hanged thee up in chains of darkness among the damned.

Third. Consider how God offers thee peace.

1. He offers peace sincerely. He covers not fraud under a treaty of peace. Among men there hath been horrible juggling in this case. The flag of peace is oft hung out at lip only, to draw them within the reach of their dagger, which is ready to smite them, as Joab did Abner, 'under the fifth rib.' In all the civil wars of France the poor Protestants found peace more costly to them than war; they beat the Papists in the field, when open enemies, but were betrayed by them in the chamber, when false friends. But for thy comfort know it is, 'a God of truth' thou treatest with. Never did he shed the blood of war in peace, or give a soul to the sword of his wrath, after quarter taken and peace given. 'If we confess,....he is just and faithful to forgive.' His promises are not 'yea and nay,' like the devil's, who lays them so that he may have the credit both ways. No, the very heart of God may be seen as through a crystal window in the promise; they are all 'yea and amen' in Christ, 2 Corinthians 1:20.

2. He offers peace affectionately, his heart deeply engaged in the tenders of mercy to poor sinners; which will appear,

(1.) In his contriving a way for reconciling sinners to himself. What men strongly desire, they stretch their wits to the utmost how to accomplish. 'The liberal man deviseth liberal things,' Isaiah 32:8. It shows the heart exceeding large in charity, when a man shall sit down and study how he may find out ways for the exercise of his charity; whereas, most men, alas! beat their brains how they may save their purses and escape with giving as little as may be to the poor. O what a rare invention hath God found out for showing mercy, which hath so many mysterious passages in it, that angels themselves are put hither to school, that by studying this mystery of God's reconciling sinners to himself by Christ, they might know 'the manifold wisdom of God!' Ephesians 3:10.

(2.) By the early discovery he made of this to the sons of men. He would go among us, for no sooner had man broken the peace, and taken up rebellious arms against his Maker, but the Lord's heart relented towards him, and could not let the sun go down on his wrath against him, but must, in the very same day that he sinned, let him hear of a Saviour, by preaching peace to him, in 'the seed of the woman,' Genesis 3:15. Little did Adam think that God had such a message in his mouth for him, when he first heard him coming towards him, and for fear ran his head into a bush, meditating a flight from him, if he had known whither to have gone. O, that 'Adam, where art thou?' sounded, no doubt, in his guilty ears, like the voice of an avenging God calling him, a malefactor, to execution! But it proved the voice of a gracious God, coming, not to meet man in his way returning to him, but to seek him out, who had lost all thoughts of him, that he might give some ease to his own gracious heart, now full of mercy to his poor creature, by disclosing to him the purposes of grace which he had there conceived towards him. Surely his heart was very full, or else this would not have burst out so soon.

(3.) The great ordinance of the gospel-ministry, which God hath set up in the church, on purpose to treat with sinners upon a peace, speaks his deep affection to the work, 2 Corinthians 5:18. One would have thought it had been enough to print his thoughts and purposes of mercy in the Scripture, though he had done no more. Princes, when they put out a statute or law, expect all their subjects should inquire after it, and do not send one to every town, whose office shall be to give notice thereof, and persuade people to submit to it. Yet this the great God doth. The minister's work from one end of the year to the other, what is it but to beseech sinners to be reconciled to God? And in this observe,

(a) The persons he sends to preach. Not angels, foreigners to our nature, who, though they wish us well, yet are not so intimately concerned in man's fall, as to give them the advantage of preaching with those melting bowels, that God would have them filled with who go on his errand. No, he sends men, with whom he may converse familiarly, creatures of like passions—whose nature puts them under the same depravation, temptation, condemnation with ourselves—who can, from the acquaintance they have with their own hearts, tells us the baseness of ours —from the fire of God's wrath, which hath scorched them for their sins, [can] tell us the desert of ours, and the danger we are in by reason of them—as also, from the sweet sense that the taste of God's love in Christ hath left on their souls, can commend the cheer and feast they invite us to upon their own knowledge. Did not God, think you, desire good speed to his embassage when he chose such to carry it?

(b) Observe the qualifications required in those he employs as ambassadors to offer peace to sinners. 'The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves,' 2 Timothy 2:24-25. O how careful is God that nothing should be in the preacher to prejudice the sinner's judgment, or harden his heart, against the offer of his grace. If the servant be proud and hasty, how shall they know the master is meek and patient? God would have them do nothing to make the breach wider, or hinder a happy close betwixt him and them. Indeed, he that will take the bird must not scare it. A froward peevish messenger is no friend to him that sends him. Sinners are not pelted into Christ with stones of hard provoking language, but wooed into Christ by heart-melting exhortations.

(c) Look into the commission God gives his ambassadors, and still his heart appears in the business, whether you consider the largeness of it, on the one hand, or the strictness of it on the other. First, the largeness of it—'Go and preach,' saith Christ, 'the gospel to every creature.' Make no difference—rich or poor, great sinners or little, old sinners or young. Offer peace to all that will but repent and believe. Bid as many come as will; here is room for all that come. Again, the strictness of it on the other hand. O what a solemn charge have they of delivering their message faithfully! Paul trembles at the thoughts of loitering—'Woe is me if I preach not.' What an argument doth Christ use—fetched from his very heart—to persuade Peter to be careful, 'If thou lovest me, feed my sheep.' As if he had said, 'Peter, thou now art in tears for thy cowardice in denying me, but thou hast yet one way left, for all that unkindness, to demonstrate thy love to me, and that is by feeding my sheep; do this, and trouble not thyself for that.' Christ shows more care of his sheep than of himself.

(d) The joy God expresseth when poor sinners come into the offer of peace. Joy is the highest testimony that can be given to our complacency in any thing or person. Love to joy is as fuel to the

fire. If love lay little fuel of desires on the heart, then the flame of joy that comes thence will not be great. Now God's joy is great in pardoning poor sinners that come in; therefore his affection great in the offer thereof. It is made the very motive that prevails with God to pardon sinners, 'because he delighteth in mercy,' Micah 7:18. 'Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.' God doth all this, 'because he delighteth in mercy.' Ask why the fisher stands all night with his angle in the river. He will tell you, 'because he delights in the sport.' Well, you now know the reason why God stands so long waiting on sinners, months, years, preaching to them; it is that he may be gracious in pardoning them, and in that act delight himself. Princes very oft pardon traitors to please others more than themselves, or else it would never be done, but God doth it chiefly to delight and gladden his own merciful heart. Hence the business Christ came about—which was no other but to reconcile sinners to God—is called 'the pleasure of the Lord,' Isaiah 53:10. The Lord takes such joy and pleasure in this, that, whereas other fathers —whose love to their children sinks infinitely beneath any comparison with the love of God to Christ —mourn at the death of their children, and most of all when violent and bloody, God takes content in his Son's death; yea, had the chief hand in the procuring of it, and that with infinite complacency: 'It pleased the Lord to bruise him.' And what joy could God take in his Son's death, but as it made way for him and his poor creature that were fallen out, and at open war one against another, to fall in again by a happy accord? And now, speak, O sinner! if God doth so affectionately desire to be reconciled with thee, doth it not much more behove thee to embrace the peace, than it doth him to offer it? There is but one thing more I would desire thee, sinner, to consider, and then I leave thee to thy own choice.

Fourth. Consider what thou doest when thou refusest peace with God. Determinations of war or peace use to be the result of the most grave counsels and mature deliberation possible. Think and think again, what thou doest, before thou breakest off the treaty of peace, lest thou makest work for repentance when it will be bootless. But, lest thou shouldst not be so faithful to God and thy own soul as to give thy conscience liberty to speak freely in this matter, I shall do it for thee, and tell thee what thou doest when thou rejectest peace. Thou justifiest thy former hostilities against God, and declarest that thou wilt vouch what thou hast done, let God right himself as well as he can. He that refuseth a pardon, either denieth he hath done wrong, or, which is worse, stands to defend it. Thou hadst as good say thou desirest not to be friends with God, but hast a mind to perpetuate the feud betwixt God and thee, like Amilcar, who was such an enemy to Rome, that, when he died, he made his son Hannibal heir to his hatred against them. Is it not enough that thou hast fought so many battles on earth against thy Maker, but wilt thou keep the quarrel up in another world also, where there is no more possibility to put an end to it than to eternity itself? Thou throwest the greatest scorn upon God that it is possible for a creature to do. As if God's love and hatred were such inconsiderable things that they need not, when cast into the scale of thy thoughts, preponderate[3] thee either way—the one to move thy desire, or the other thy fear! In a word, thou consentest to thy own damnation, and desperately flingest thyself into the mouth of God's flaming wrath, which gapes in the threatening upon thee. God is under an oath to procure thy destruction, if thou diest in this mind, which God forbid! Death is the trap-door which will let thee down to hell's dungeon; and when once thou art there, thou art where thou wilt have space enough to weep over thy past folly, though here thou hast neither mind nor leisure to make God thy friend. The very thoughts of those offers of peace which once thou hadst, but no heart to

embrace them, will be like so much salt and vinegar, with which thy accusing conscience will be continually basting thee, as thou liest roasting in hell-fire, to make thy torment the more intolerable. I know this language grates on the sinners' ears, but not so ill as the gnashing of the sinner's own teeth will in hell.

I have read of a foolish, I may say cruel, law among the Lacedemonians[4], that none should tell his neighbour any ill news befallen him, but every one should be left, in process of time, to find it out themselves. Many among us, I think, would be content if there were such a law, that might tie up ministers' mouths from scaring them with their sins, and the miseries that attend their unreconciled state. The most are more careful to run from the discourse of their misery, than to get out of the danger of it—are more offended with the talk of hell, than troubled for that sinful state that shall bring them thither. But alas! when, then, shall we show our love to the souls of sinners if not now, seeing that in hell there remains no more offices of love to be done for them? Hell is a pest-house, that we may not write so much on the door of it as 'Lord, have mercy on them that are in it.' Nay, they who now pray for their salvation, and weep over their condition, must then with Christ vote for their damnation, and rejoice in it, though they be their own fathers, husbands, and wives they see there. O, now bethink yourselves, before the heart of God and man be hardened against you!

Question. But how may a poor sinner be at peace with God?

1. See and be sensible of the feud and enmity that at present stands betwixt God and thee. 2. Look thou propoundest right ends in thy desire of reconciliation with God. 3. Throw down thy rebellious arms, and humbly submit to his mercy. 4. Hie thee, as soon as may be, to the throne of grace, and humbly present thy request to God to be at peace with thee through Christ.

[Directions to sinners as to how they may be at peace with God.] 1. Direction. See and be sensible of the feud and enmity that at present stands betwixt God and thee.

(1.) As to the reality of the thing, that there is indeed a quarrel, which God hath against thee. Wherever thou goest, an angry God is at thy back, and his wrath, like a big-bellied cloud, hangs full of curses over thy head, ready every moment to empty them upon thy head. There is need of pressing this. For, though it is ordinary for men to confess themselves sinners, yet most are loath to disparage their state so far as to rank themselves among the enemies of God. No, they hope God and they are good friends for all this. Like thieves they will confess some little matter, but they have a care of letting fall anything that may hazard their necks. 'Sinner' is a favourable word. Who lives and sins not? That they will grant. But, to be in a state of enmity, and under the wrath of God, this scares them too much, and brings them too near the sight of the gallows—the seat of hell—which are due to that state; and therefore, when pressed thus far—as the Jews desired Rabshakeh, when he scared them with the dreadful things that would befall them if they stood out against the king his master, 'that he would not speak in the Jews' language in the ears of the people,' Isaiah 36:11, for fear of affrighting them, but in a foreign tongue—so sinners desire those that deal plainly with them, that they should not speak so broad in the hearing of their conscience, which they are afraid should know the worst. But, if thou lovest thy own soul, make a true representation of thy state to thyself. O what folly is it for a man to lose his cause by concealing the badness of it!

(2.) Labour to bring thyself under the sense of thy miserable condition as thou art. Hadst thou the empire of the world, and all nations creeping to thy foot, as once the beasts did to Adam, and a lease as long as Methuselah's life twice told to enjoy it in, without the interposition of one cloud all the while, to darken the glory of this thy royalty, yet, supposing thee to be one to whom God is an enemy, I would choose to be the worm under thy foot, the toad in the ditch, sooner than thy miserable self in thy palace. One thought of thy approaching death, and eternal misery in store for thee, will let out all the joy of thy present happiness. This, this makes the great ones of the world—indeed all unreconciled sinners, high and low—to go to their graves as bears down a hill—backwards. Alas! if they should but look forward whither they were going, their hearts would soon be at their mouths, for want of this breastplate—a comfortable persuasion of their peace made with God. Go, therefore, as a poor malefactor condemned to die would do, shut thyself up from all thy old flattering companions, that would still lullaby thy miserable soul in a senseless security—the cradle which the devil rocks souls in, to their utter destruction; let none of them come to thee, but send for those that dare be faithful to thee, and, like Samuel, dare tell thee every word that God saith against thee, and conceal nothing; yea, read thy doom with thy own eyes in the word, and take thy condemnation from God's own mouth, and not man's. 'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.' Muse on it till it cleaves to thy soul like a drawing-plaster to a sore, and brings out the very core of thy pride and carnal confidence, which hardened thy heart from all sense of thy condition; by which time, the anguish of thy own spirit, seeing the straits thou art brought into, will prompt thee to desire peace with God, and this is that which God waits for to hear drop from thee, as much as Benhadad's servants did for a word from Ahab's mouth.

2. Direction. Look thou propoundest right ends in thy desire of reconciliation with God. Nothing more hateful to God or man than falsehood and treachery in treaties of peace; and yet some men can have words as smooth as butter in their mouths, and war be in their hearts at the same time, Psalms 55:21. O take heed of any hollowness of heart in thy inquiry for peace! When found out—as it must needs be, except God's eye fails him, which is impossible—it will exceedingly harden the heart of God against thee. God never repented of any he pardoned or took up into the chariot of peace with him, because he was never deceived by any, as men are, who make often peace with those that prove at last false brethren, and give them cause to wish they had never known them. Joab killed Amasa, but he took no heed to the sword in Joab's hand. God looks to the heart, and sees what is in its hand; be sure thou therefore stand clear in thy own thoughts as to the ends thou aimest at. It is lawful for thee to look to thy own safety. God will give thee leave to look to thyself. This thou mayest, and yet not neglect him. But never was any peace true or sure where only self-love made it, whether it be with God, or between man and man. Thou seest thou art undone if thou keepest thy old side, and therefore thou seekest peace with God, as the kings that served Hadarezer. When they saw he was 'smitten before Israel, they made peace with Israel' themselves, 2 Samuel 10:19. Well, this may be allowed thee to come over to God, because his is the surer side. Never any made peace with God, but this argument weighed much with them. If Jacob could have been safe at home, he had never fled to Laban. All are fired out of their holds before they yield to God. But take heed this be not all thou aimest at, or the chief thou aimest at. This thou mayest do, and hate God as much as ever, like those who are said to yield 'feignedly' to David's victorious arms, because no help for it. A man taken in a storm may be forced under the pent-house of his greatest enemy for shelter, without any change of his heart, or better thoughts of him than before he was wont. Two things, therefore, thou mayest look to have in thy eye, above

thy own self-preservation.

(1.) You must desire to be reconciled to God with an eye to the honour of God. Hence, oft the saints' prayers are pressed with an argument from God, as well as themselves and their own misery: 'Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake,' Psalms 79:9. Certainly, if God could not be more glorified in our peace and reconciliation, than in our death and damnation, it were a wicked thing to desire it. But God hath cleared this up to us, that he is no loser by acts of mercy. In this lies the greatest revenue of his crown, or else he could not love 'mercy rather than sacrifice.' God is free to choose what suits his own heart best, and most conduceth to the exalting of his great name; and he delights more in the mercy shown to one, than in the blood of all the damned that are made a sacrifice to his justice. And, indeed, he had a higher end in their damnation than their suffering, and that was the enhancing of the glory of his mercy in his saved ones. This is the beautiful piece God takes delight in, and the other but the shadow to it. Then thou art in a fit disposition to pray for peace, and mayest go with encouragement, when thy heart is deeply affected with the honour that will accrue to God by it. It is an argument God will not deny. 'This,' said Abigail to David, 'shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord,' 1 Samuel 25:31. She meant he should never have cause to repent that he was kept from shedding blood. Thus mayest thou plead with God and say, 'O Lord, when I shall with saints and angels be praising thy pardoning grace in heaven, it will not grieve thee that thy mercy kept thee from shedding my blood, damning my soul to hell.' But now it is evident that many who seem to seek peace, and pursue it too, very strongly, yet do not take overmuch care for God's honour in the thing, because they are earnest with God to pardon them in a way that were to him dishonourable. Pardoned they would be, though wholly ignorant of God and Christ. They would have God to be at peace with them while they were enemies to him. Like a thief at the bar, he would have the judge spare his life, right or wrong, legally or illegally, what cares he? Doth this wretch consider the honour of the judge? or that sinner, who, so he be saved, how unrighteous God is in the act of mercy? O deceive not yourselves, poor souls, God will not make war between his own attributes to make peace with you!

(2.) You must desire to be reconciled to God, that you may have fellowship with God. Certainly a soul sensible what the loss of communion with God is, counts it hath not all her errand done when it hath naked peace given it. Should God say, 'Soul, I am friends with thee—I have ordered thou shalt never go to hell. Here is a discharge under my hand that thou shalt never be arrested for my debt more; but, as for any fellowship with me, or fruition of me, thou canst expect none. I have done with thee—for ever being acquainted more with thee.' Certainly the soul, in such a case, would take little joy in her peace. Were the fire out as to positive torments, yet a hell would be left in the dismal darkness which the soul would sit under for want of God's presence. Absalom knew no middle condition that could please him betwixt seeing the king his father's face, and being killed. 'Let me see the king's face; and if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me,' 2 Samuel 14:32—'if I be not worthy to enjoy my father's love and presence, neither do I desire to live;' whereas a naughty heart seeks reconciliation without any longing after any fellowship with God. Like the traitor, if the king will but pardon and save him from the gallows, he is ready to promise him never to trouble him at court. It is his own life, not the king's favour, he desires.

3. Direction. Throw down thy rebellious arms and humbly submit to his mercy. God will not so much as treat with thee so long as thy sword is in thy hand—'Come now, and let us reason

together, saith the Lord,' Isaiah 1:18. Mark when the parley begins: 'put away the evil of your doings,' ver. 16. Now come and treat with God about a peace.

(1.) God is a great God, and it doth not become his sovereignty to treat with his sorry creature on equal terms, as a king doth with his fellow-prince, who, if he cannot have peace on his own terms, is able probably to revenge himself by force of arms; but, as a mighty king with his rebel subject, whom he hath fast bound with chains in prison, and can at pleasure hang up for his treason. The great God will have thee know that. Let those capitulate who can retire to their strength and live without peace. But as for thee, poor sinner, thou dost not, I hope, think thou art in a capacity to meet with God in the field, or to thrive by this trade of war against God. No, thy only way is to conquer him upon thy knee, to lay thy neck at his foot and say, 'Lord, I put my life in thy hands, thy true prisoner I will be, choosing rather to die by the hand of thy justice, than to continue fighting against thy mercy.' Now, poor soul, thou art got into the right path, that leads to peace. 'Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up,' James 4:10. That soul shall not long be out of his arms that is prostrate at his foot. But, though 'the high and lofty One' can stoop to take up a penitent sinner into the arms of his pardoning mercy, yet he will not debase his sovereignty to treat with a wretch that stands to his arms and stouts it out with him. There is one red letter in God's name—'he will by no means clear the guilty,' Exodus 34:7.

(2.) The holy nature of God requires this. Sin is that which made the breach, and caused God to take arms against his creature; how canst thou rationally think to make thy peace with him, and keep this makebate[5] in thy bosom? God is willing to be reconciled with thee, but wilt thou have him be at peace with thy sin also? Is it not enough to be justified from thy sin? but wouldst thou have God betray his own honour by justifying thee in thy sin? Did you ever hear a prince give a patent to another to cut his own throat? What security canst thou give to God of thy love to him if thou wilt not renounce that which is the only thing that seeks his life? Peccatum est deicidium—sin is deicide. As long as the traitor is in favour within, God will not raise his siege, or hear of peace without. They cannot reign together; choose which you will have of them. And be not so far deluded as to think it is enough to send thy lust out of the way for a while, as princes use to do their favourites in a popular commotion, to please the people, and then call for them home when the hubbub is over. No, God will not be thus dodged and mocked. See how the promise runs, and this he will stand to. 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon,' Isaiah 55:7. See how cautious God is in the terms; no corner left for the least sin to skulk and save its life in—he must 'forsake all.' That implies,

(a) A deliberate choice in the soul; he does it freely. Some men's sins 'forsake' them. The unclean spirit goes out, and is not driven out—occasions to sin cease, or bodily ability to execute the command of sin is wanting. There is no forsaking sin, however, in all this. But to break from it with a holy indignation and resolution, when temptation is most busy and strength most active—now as David said, when his enemy opposed him as bees, in the name of the Lord to repel and resist them—this is to forsake. This is the encomium[6] of Moses. He forsook the court when he was grown up; not for age, as Barzillai, but when his blood was warm in his veins. A man doth not forsake his wife when he is detained from her in prison, but when he puts her away, and gives her a bill of divorce.

(b) To ‘forsake’ sin is to leave it without any thought reserved of returning to it again. Every time a man takes a journey from home about business we do not say he hath forsaken his house, because he meant, when he went out, to come to it again. No, but when we see a man leave his house, carry all his stuff away with him, lock up his doors, and take up his abode in another, never to dwell there more, here is a man hath indeed forsaken his house. It were strange to find a drunkard so constant in the exercise of that sin, but some time you may find him sober, and yet a drunkard he is, as well as if he was then drunk. Every one hath not forsaken his trade that we see now and then in their holiday suit. Then the man forsakes his sin when he throws it from him, and bolts the door upon it with a purpose never to open more to it. ‘Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?’ Hosea 14:8.

Again observe, before pardon can be sealed he must ‘forsake,’ not this sin or that, but the whole ‘way’ of sin. ‘Let the wicked forsake his way.’ A traveller may step from one path to another, and still go on in the same way—leave a dirty, deep, rugged path, for one more smooth and even. So many, finding some gross sins uneasy, and too toilsome to their awakened consciences, step into a more cleanly path of civility; but alas! poor creatures, all they get is to go a little more easily and cleanly to hell than their beastly neighbours. But he forsakes the way of sin that turns out of the whole road. In a word, thou must forsake the blindest path of all in sin’s way —that which lies behind the hedge, as I may so say, in the thoughts of the heart—‘and the unrighteous man his thoughts;’ or else thou knockest in vain at God’s door for pardoning mercy; and therefore, poor soul, forsake all or none. Save one lust and you lose one soul. If men mean to go to hell, why are they so mannerly? This halving with sin is ridiculous. Art thou afraid of this sin, and not of a less, which hinders thy peace, and procures thy damnation as sure, only not with so much distraction to thy drowsy conscience at present? This is as ridiculous as it was with him, who, being to be hanged, desired that he might by no means go through such a street to the gallows, for fear of the plague that was there. What wilt thou get, poor sinner, if thou goest to hell, though thou goest thither by thy ignorance, unbelief, spiritual pride, &c., yet led about so as to escape the plague of open profaneness? O sirs, consider but the equity, the honourableness of the terms that God offers peace upon. What lust is so sweet or profitable that is worth burning in hell for? Darius, when he fled before Alexander, that he might run the faster out of danger, threw away his massy crown from his head which hindered him; and is any lust so precious in thy eye that thou canst not leave it behind thee, rather than fall into the hands of God’s justice? But so sottish is foolish man, that a wise heathen could take notice of it[7]—we think we only buy what we part with money for, and as for those things we pay ourselves our souls for, these we think we have for nothing, as if the man were not more worth than his money! Having been faithful to follow the preceding directions, thou art now in a fair way to effect thy much desired enterprise. Therefore,

4. Direction. Hie thee, therefore, as soon as may be, to the throne of grace, and humbly present thy request to God that he would be at peace with thee, yea, carry with thee a faith that thou shalt find him more ready to embrace the motion than thou to make it. Take heed only, what thou makest thy plea to move God, and where thou placest thy confidence. Not in thy repentance or reformation, this were to play the merchant with God; but know he expects not a chapman to truck with him, but a humble supplicant to be suitor to him. Nor his absolute mercy, as ignorant souls do. This is to take hold of the sword by the blade, and not by the hilt. Such will find their death and damnation from that mercy which they might be saved by, if they did take hold of it as God offers it

them, and that is ‘through Christ.’ ‘Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me,’ Isaiah 27:5. And where lies god’s saving strength, but in Christ? He hath, ‘laid strength’ upon this ‘mighty’ one, ‘able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God.’ It is not God’s absolute power or mercy will help thee, but his covenant strength and mercy, and this is in Christ. Take hold of Christ and thou hast hold of God’s arm; he cannot strike the soul that holds thereby.

Indeed, God’s essential goodness is a powerful argument to persuade the poor soul to rely upon the promise in Christ for pardon—when he considers that God who promiseth peace to the believer, is a God whose very nature is forgiving, and mercy itself —but had there been no promise to engage this mercy to poor sinners through Christ, this would have been but cold comfort to have believed God was good. He could have damned the whole stock of Adam, and not called his essential goodness the least in question. It is no blot to the almightiness of his power that he doth not all he can. He could make more worlds, if he was so pleased, than he hath done; but we have no ground to believe he will, neither is he the less almighty because he does not. So he could have saved the fallen angels with the sons of lost man. He is not scanted in mercy for such a design, if he had thought it fit. But, having passed no promise for such a thing, the essential goodness of God affords the devils but little relief, or hope that he will do it. And yet God continues good. And, for aught I can find out of the word, they among the sons of men who, either throu gh simple ignorance of the gospel, or prejudice, which their proud reason hath taken up against the way it chalks out for making our peace with God, through Christ’s satisfaction for us, do neglect Christ, or scornfully reject his satisfaction, and betake themselves to the absolute goodness and mercy of God, as the plea which they will make at Christ’s bar for their pardon and salvation, shall find as little benefit from it as the devils themselves.

Suppose, friends, a prince should freely make a law, by which he will govern his people, and takes a solemn oath to keep close to it, could a malefactor that is condemned by this law to die expect any relief by appealing from the law to the mercy and goodness of the prince’s nature? I confess some have sped and saved their lives by taking this course. But it hath been, because either the prince was imprudent in making the law, or unfaithful in keeping his oath; neither of which can, without blasphemy, be imputed to God, infinitely wise and holy. He hath enacted a law, called the law of faith, for the saving poor sinners through Christ, and is under an oath to make it good both in the salvation of every one that believes on Christ, and damnation on every one that doth not believe: and, to make all sure, hath given Christ an oath to be faithful in his office; who was trusted as priest to secure redemption, and shall sit judge to pronounce the sentence at the great day of absolution or condemnation. Take heed, therefore, poor sinner, that thou beest not drawn from placing thy entire confidence on Christ the Son of God—both God and man in one person—who laid down his life upon agreement with his Father, to make an atonement for the sin of the world; and now offers thee that blood which then he shed, as a price to carry in the hand of thy faith to the Father, for pardon and peace. No, though they should come and call thee from Christ to Christ—from a Christ without thee, to a Christ within thee. As the Jesuit doth in the Quaker, into whom he is now got; as the friars of old were wont into their hollow images, viz. that they might deliver their lying doctrines out of the mouths of their reputed saints, and thereby cozen the multitude without any suspicion of their knavery. Just so do the Jesuits nowadays deliver their popish stuff out of the mouths of the Quakers—a design so much more dangerous as it is more

cunning than the other. There is too much light shed abroad for that old puppet play to take. But, though men are too wise to lend an ear to a block or a stone, yet holiness in a living saint commands such reverence, that the devil hath ever found, and will, to the end of the world, that he may pass least suspected under this cloak. Well, when he comes to call thee from a Christ without thee to a Christ within thee; strip the doctrine out of its pleasing phrase, and, in plain English, he calls thee from trusting in the righteousness of Christ wrought by him for thee, and by faith to be made thine for thy justification before God, to an inherent work of grace or righteousness wrought by the Spirit of God in thee for thy sanctification and renovation, called sometimes the 'new creature,' and 'Christ within us.' Now, hadst thou not made a goodly change if thou hadst let go thy hold on Christ, who is thy righteousness, to rely on a creature, and that a weak one too, God knows, full of so many imperfections that thy conscience —except injudicious and given over to believe a lie —can tell it is but a vein of gold embased with much more earth and dross, which shall never be quite purged till thou beest put into the refining pot of the grave. Look to thyself, Christian. Here it is a matter of life and death. Prize Christ's grace within thee thou must; yea thou hast none in thee, if thou dost not value it above all the mountains of gold the world hath. But trust not to this Christ or grace of Christ within thee for life and salvation; for now thou prizest the creature above God, and settest 'Christ within thee' to fight with 'Christ without thee.' The bride doth well highly to esteem her husband's picture which he hath given her, especially if very like him, and most of all, if drawn by his own hand; but it were very ridiculous if she should dote on that so far as to slight her husband, and, when she wants money, clothes, or the like, to go, not to her husband, but to the picture he gave her, for all. The saint's grace is called 'Christ within him,' because it is his picture, and makes the saint so like Christ. This, for the resemblance it bears to the holiness of Christ, himself thy husband, who with the finger of his own Spirit, drew it on thy soul, deserves highly to be valued. But, what a dotage were it for thee turn thy back on the Lord Jesus Christ himself, to whom by faith thou art married, and, when thou wantest pardon and comfort —wouldst have heaven and happiness—to expect these, not from Christ, but from thy grace? O will Christ thank thee for honouring his creature to the dishonour of his person?

[Exhortations to those already at peace with God.] A few words by way of improvement to you whose peace with God is concluded with Christ.

First. Hast thou peace with God?—look thou makest no peace with sin. This broke thy peace with God; now let thy peace with God begin a war with that never to have end. Thou canst not, sure, forget the inestimable wrong and damage thou hast suffered by it. Every moment's sweet enjoyment of God —whose bosom-love thou hast now happily recovered—will help to keep the fire of wrath and revenge burning in thy heart against that cursed enemy, that both threw and kept thee so long thence. God hath now won thy heart, I hope, by his pardoning mercy, dearly to love him for his love to thee. How then canst thou with patience see any lust come braving forth from its trench—thy heart I mean—defying thy God and his grace in thee? Paul's spirit was stirred in him at Athens to see God dishonoured by the superstition of others; and is not thine, to see him reproached by the pride, unbelief, and other sins, that do it from under thy own soul's roof? O Christian, meditate some noble exploit against it. Now, the more to steel thy heart, and harden it against all relenting towards it, carry the blood and wounds of thy Saviour into the field with thee, in the hand of thy faith. The sight of those will certainly enrage thy heart against thy lusts, that stabbed and killed him, more than the bloody garments of Cæsar, held up by Antony, did the

Roman citizens against his murderers. O see how cruelly they used the Lord of glory, and where they laid him in an ignominious grave —and that fastened with a seal, stronger than that which man set to it—the curse due to us sinners, never possible to have been broke up by any less than his own almighty arm! And now, Christian, shall these murderers, not of man, but of God—for it was the blood of God that was shed—escape that vengeance which God would have done with thy hand upon them? Wherefore else doth he leave thee any life in thy soul but that thou shouldst have the opportunity of showing thy love to Christ by running thy dagger of mortification into their heart? Alexander got no more honour by his great victories in the field than by his piety to his dead father Philip, whose bloody death he avenged as soon as he came into the throne, slaying the murderers upon his father's tomb. O, show thou, Christian, thy pity to thy dear Saviour by falling upon thy cursed lusts, and that speedily! Never rest till thou hast had their blood that shed his. Till thou dost this thou art consenting to all the cruelty that was executed on him. This, this is the 'honour' which all 'the saints shall have,' and therefore the 'two-edged sword' of the Spirit is put into their hands that they may execute the vengeance written.

Second. Is God reconciled to thee? Be thou willing to be reconciled to any that have wronged thee. Thy God expects it at thy hands. Thou hast reason to pardon thy brother for God's sake, who pardoned thee for his pure mercies' sake. Thou, in pardoning, dost no more than thou owest thy brother, but God pardoned thee when he did owe thee nothing but wrath. Thou needest not, I hope, think that thou dishonourest thyself in the act, though it be to the veriest beggar in the town. Know thou dost it after thy betters. Thy God stooped lower when he reconciled himself to thee, yea, sought it at thy hands, and no dishonour, neither, to the high and lofty One. Nay, by implacableness and revenge, thou debasest thyself the most thou canst likely do; for, by these, thou stoopest not only beneath thy heaven-born nature, but beneath thy human nature. It is the devil, and none but such as bear his image, that are implacable enemies. Hell-fire it is that is unquenchable. 'The wisdom from above' is 'easy to be entreated.' Thou a Christian, and carry hell-fire about thee! How can it be? When we see a child, that comes of merciful parents, furious and revengeful, we use to say, 'We wonder of whom he got his currish, churlish disposition, his father and mother were not so.' Who learns thee, O Christian, to be so revengeful and unmerciful? Thou hast it not of thy heavenly Father, I am sure.

Third. Is God at peace with thee? Hath he pardoned thy sins? Never, then, distrust his providence for anything thou wantest as to this life. Two things, well weighed, would help thy faith in this particular.

1. When he pardoned thy sins he did more for thee than this comes to. And, did he give the greater, and will he grudge thee the less? Thou hast Christ in thy pardon bestowed on thee. 'How shall he not with him also freely give thee all things?' Romans 8:32. When the father gives his child the whole orchard, it were folly to question he gives him this apple or that in it —'all things are yours,' and 'ye are Christ's,' 1 Corinthians 3:22. The reconciled soul hath a right to all. The whole world is his. But, as a father who, though he settles a fair estate on his child, yet lets him hold no more in his own hand than he can well manage; so God gives believers a right to all the comforts of this life, but proportions so much out to them for their actual use, as his infinite wisdom sees meet, so that he that hath less than another in his present possession, ought to impute it not to any want of love or care in God, but to the wisdom both of his love and care, that gives stock as we have grace to work it out. We pour the wine accordingly as the cup is. That which but fills one

would half be lost if poured into a less.

2. Consider how God gives these temporals to those he denies peace and pardon to. Though, within a while, they are to be tumbled into hell, yet while on earth his providence reacheth unto them. And, doth God feed these ‘ravens,’ unclean birds? Doth he cause his rain to drop fatness on their fields, and will he neglect thee, thinkest thou, that art a believer? If the prince feeds the traitor in prison, surely the child in his house shall not starve. In a word, to allude to that, Luke 12:28, if God in his providence so abounds to the to the ungodly, as we see he doth, if he ‘so clothe the grass,’ for to this the wicked may well be compared, ‘which is to-day in the field, and to- morrow is cast into hell’s burning oven, how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?’

Fourth. Art thou at peace with God? O show then no discontent at any cross or affliction that God visiteth thee withal! If he hath visited thee first with his mercy, thou hast reason to bid him kindly welcome when he comes to visit thee with his rod. Thou hast sugar by thee now to sweeten thy bitter cup. When the Prophet Samuel came to Bethlehem, it is said, ‘The elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably? And he said, Peaceably!’ 1 Samuel 16:4-5. Thus when God comes with some heavy affliction to us, it may make us tremble till we know what it comes for, whether peaceable or no. Now, if thou beest at peace with God the fear is over, it cannot but come peaceably; thou mayest conclude it comes on mercy’s errand.

What condition canst thou, O pardoned soul, be in, that should part thee and the joy of thy peace with God? Is it the wrath of man thou fearest? Possibly thou hast many enemies, and those great ones, and their wrath as great as such can express. Let it be so. Is God among them or no? Doth God let out their wrath in his wrath against thee? If not, thou exceedingly wrongest God, if overmuch troubled, and thyself also. Thou wrongest God by not sanctifying his name in thy heart, whose mercy, I hope, is able to secure thee from their wrath: ‘If God be for us, who can be against us?’ Romans 8:31. Thou needest not fear them though an army of them were about thee—no more than if they were so many wisps of straw. And thou wrongest thyself also: for how, indeed, can we wrong God and not ourselves? So long as thou art under the power of such a fear from man’s wrath, thou canst never have the taste of God’s love in its true sweetness.

Again, art thou sick, poor, and what not beside? May not God reasonably expect that reconciling mercy should stop thy mouth from whispering any word of discontent against him, and prevent all envious glances of thy eye at the prosperity of the wicked? Remember, man, that thou canst say one great word which they cannot, in the midst of all their pomp and worldly glory. ‘Though I lie here poor and sick, yet I am, through mercy, at peace with God.’ This, well thought on, would soon change both your notes—the joy of the prosperous sinner into bitter mourning, and thy sorrow, Christian, into joy. The Lady Elizabeth —afterwards England’s gracious queen—hearing a simple milk-maid sing merrily in the field, when the poor princess, being then a sorrowful prisoner, had more mind to sigh than sing, though served at the same time in state as a princess, said, ‘That poor maid was happier than herself.’ And so would the sinner, how great and high soever in the world, think the poorest Christian, with his rags and penury, a better man, and happier in his liberty, and peace with God, than himself in all his grandeur and worldly gaieties, did he but consider that in the midst of all these he is a prisoner, not to man, but God, out of whose hands there is no escaping.

Fifth. Comfort thyself with this, that thou, who art at peace with God now on earth, shalt feast with God ere long in heaven. ‘And whom he justified, them he also glorified,’ Romans 8:30. And do not think this news to be too good or great to be true. Here is a word for it, you see. Heaven’s number of glorified saint’s is made up of justified sinners. Neither more nor less of the one than of the other. Art thou justified by faith, by which thou hast peace with God? Then, lose not thy privilege, but rejoice with thy fellow-saints, ‘in hope of the glory of God.’ It is before thee. Every day brings thee nearer to it, and nothing can hinder thee of it at last. Not thy sins themselves, and I know thou fearest them most. He that paid thy great score at thy conversion will find mercy enough in his heart, surely, to pass by thy dribbling debts, which thy own infirmity, and Satan’s subtlety, have run thee into. Thou wert an enemy when God thought of doing the first, but now thou art a friend; and this will oblige him to do the second, that he may not lose his disbursement in the first; yea, provision is made by God in this method of our salvation for the one, as strongly as for the other. Christ died to make us, of enemies to God, friends with him, and he lives now to bring God and us, being thus made friends, to meet in one heaven together. Yea, the apostle gives the advantage to this of the two for our faith to triumph in. ‘For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life,’ Romans 5:10. As if the apostle had said, ‘Can you believe that God hath taken you that were bloody enemies, into a state of peace and favour with himself? Surely, then, you must needs find it easier for your faith to argue from reconciliation to salvation, than from hostility to enmity to pardon and peace. Could Christ procure the one by his death, when he was weakest, as I may so say, and at the lowest descent of his humiliation; how much more shall he, in the height of his court-favour in heaven —when he hath all power given him, and in particular ‘the keys of the hell and death’ to open and shut as he pleaseth—to be able to save those whom he hath reconciled?’ Revelation 1:18.

Sixth. Art thou at peace with God? Knowing the goodness of God to thyself, then do thou woo in some others to embrace the same mercy. The house is not so full, but ‘yet there is room,’ Luke 14:22. Hast thou none thou lovest so well as to wish them thy happiness? Haply, thou hast a carnal husband lying by thy side, children of thy womb or loins, neighbours in whose company thou art every day almost, and all these in an unreconciled state—who, should they die as now they live, their precious souls are lost for ever, and yet themselves think no more of this misery coming on them, than the silly sheep doth, as to what the butcher is doing, when he is whetting his knife to cut her throat. Well, the less merciful they are to their own souls, the more need there is thou shouldst show thy compassion towards them. We take most care of those that are least capable of taking care for themselves. If thou hadst a friend sick in thy house, and of such a disease that he could not help himself, should he die rather than thou wouldst look after him? If a child were condemned to die, though he did himself not mind the getting of a pardon, yet surely thou wouldst run and ride to obtain it, rather than see him end his days so shamefully. In a word, didst thou but know thy next neighbour had an intention to foredo himself, and for that end had locked himself up in a room, wouldst thou not bestir thee to break up the door, rather than the man should thus miscarry? But alas, where is the holy violence that is used to save poor souls? Parents, husbands, neighbours, they can see their relations going to hell before their eyes, and who saith to them, Why do you so? O, for the Lord’s sake, be more merciful to the souls of others. Thou hast found a feast, let not any that are near thee starve for want of knowing where it is to be had. Go and invite all thou canst see to God’s house. So did David: ‘O taste and see that the Lord

is good,' Psalms 34:8. Thou needst not fear a chiding from God for sending him more guests. He complains he hath no more. 'Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life,' John 5:40. He threatens those that keep sinners off from making their peace with him, by flattering them with a false one, called a 'strengthening the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life,' Ezekiel 13:22. O how acceptable a work then must it needs be to woo souls to Christ! The merchant is not angry for sending a customer into his warehouse that will buy what he hath taken so much cost and travail to get that he may sell. Nor will the physician blame any for bringing a patient to him, by whose cure he may let the world know his skill and art. And this is the great design Christ hath long had in particular prayed for, viz. 'that the world might believe he was sent of God,' John 17:21. What aims he at in the gathering in of souls by the grace of the gospel, but 'to take out of them a people' from the heap of sinners 'for his name,' Acts 15:14, that is, cull out a number, in showing mercy to whom he might exalt his own name gloriously.

SECOND KIND OF PEACE.

[Peace of conscience the blessing of the gospel.]

We come now to the second kind of peace, and that is peace of consolation, or peace of conscience. By the former—peace of reconciliation—the poor sinner is reconciled to God; by this, he becomes anima pacata sibi—a soul reconciled to itself. Since man fell out with God, he could never be truly friends with his own conscience. This second peace is so necessary, that he cannot taste the sweetness of the first, nor indeed of any other mercy, without it. This is to the soul what health is to the body, it sugars and sweetens all enjoyments. A suit, though of cloth of gold, sits not easy on a sick man's back. Nothing joyous to a distressed conscience. Moses brought good news to the distressed Israelites in Egypt, but it is said, 'They hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit,' Exodus 6:9. Hannah, she went up to the festival at Jerusalem with her husband, but it is said, 'She wept, and did not eat,' 1 Samuel 1:7. Truly, thus the wounded soul goes to the sermon, but doth not eat of the feast before it; hears many precious promises, but her ear is shut up from receiving the good news they bring. Tell one in trouble of conscience, here is your dear husband, [your] sweet children, will you not rejoice with them; alas, the throes such a one feels are so amazing, that he regards these things no more than Phinehas' wife in her sore travail did the woman that joyed her with the birth of a son. Set the most royal feast before such a soul that ever was on prince's table, and, poor heart, it had rather go into a corner and weep, than sit and eat of those delicacies. 'A wounded spirit who can bear?' yea, who can cure? Some diseases are, for their incurableness, called ludibrium medicorum—the physician's shame and reproach. To be sure this spiritual trouble of an accusing conscience puts all the world to shame for their vain attempts. Many have attempted to conjure this evil spirit out of their own bosoms and others'; but have found it at last to leap upon them, and prevail against them, as the 'evil spirit' did by the sons of Sceva, Acts 19:14.

No, peace of conscience, I am now to show, is the blessing of the gospel, and only of the gospel. Conscience knows Jesus, and the gospel of Jesus; these and none else it will obey. Two particulars considered will demonstrate the truth of the point. First. If we consider what is the argument that pacifies and satisfies conscience. Second. If we consider what the power is and strength required to apply this argument so close and home to the conscience as to quiet and fully satisfy it. Both these will be found in the gospel, and only in the gospel.

[The argument which gives peace to the conscience.]

First. Let us inquire what is the argument that is able to pacify conscience when thoroughly awakened. Now to know this, we must inquire what is the cause of all those convulsions of horror and terror with which the consciences of men are at any time so sadly rent and distorted. Now this is sin. Could this little word—but great plague—be quite blotted out of men's minds and hearts, the storm would soon be hushed, and the soul become a pacific sea, quiet and smooth, without the least wave of fear to wrinkle the face thereof. This is the Jonah which raiseth the storm—the Achan that troubles the soul. Wherever this comes, as was observed of a great queen in France, a war is sure to follow. When Adam sinned, he dissolved another manner of jewel than Cleopatra did, he drank away this sweet peace of conscience in one unhappy draught, which was worth more to him than the world he lived in, Hebrews 10:2. No wonder that it rose in his conscience as soon as it was down his throat—'they saw that they were naked.' Their consciences reproached them for cursed apostates. That therefore which brings peace to conscience must prostrate this Goliath—throw this troubler overboard —pluck this arrow out of the soul—or else the war will not end, the storm will not down, the wound will not close and heal which conscience labours under. Now the envenomed head of sin's arrow, that lies burning in conscience, and, by its continual boking[8] and throbbing there, keeps the poor sinner out of quiet—yea, sometimes in unsupportable torment and horror—is guilt. By it the creature is alarmed up to judgment, and bound over to the punishment due to his sin; which, being no less than the infinite wrath of the eternal living God, must needs lay the poor creature into a dismal agony, from the fearful expectation thereof in his accusing conscience. He, therefore, that would use an argument to pacify and comfort a distressed conscience that lies roasting upon these burning coals of God's wrath kindled by his guilt, must quench these coals, and bring him the certain news of this joyful message—that his sins are all pardoned; and that God, whose wrath doth so affright him is undoubtedly, yea everlastingly, reconciled to him. This and no other argument will stop the mouth of conscience, and bring the creature to true peace with his own thoughts. 'Son, be of good cheer,' said Christ to the palsied man, 'thy sins be forgiven thee,' Matthew 9:2. Not, be of good cheer, thy health is given thee (thou gh that he had also); but, thy 'sins are forgiven thee.'

If a friend should come to a malefactor on his way to the gallows, put a sweet posy into his hands, and bid him 'be of good cheer, smell on that,' alas! this would bring little joy with it to the poor man's heart, who sees the place of execution before him. But if one comes from the prince with a pardon, which he puts into his hand, and bids him be of good cheer; this, and this only, will reach the poor man's heart, and overrun it with a sudden ravishment of joy. Truly, anything short of pardoning mercy is as inconsiderable to a troubled conscience towards any relieving or pacifying of it, as that posy in a dying prisoner's hand would be. Conscience demands as much to satisfy it as God himself doth to satisfy him for the wrong the creature hath done him. Nothing can take off conscience from accusing but that which takes off God from threatening. Conscience is God's sergeant he employs to arrest the sinner. Now the sergeant hath no power to release his prisoner upon any private composition between him and the prisoner, but listens whether the debt be fully paid, or the creditor be fully satisfied; then, and not till then, he is discharged of his prisoner. Well, we have now only one step to go further, and we will bring this demonstration to a head. From what quarter comes this good news, that God is reconciled to a poor soul, and that his sins are pardoned? Surely from the gospel of Christ, and no other way besides. Here alone is the covenant

of peace to be read betwixt God and sinners; here the sacrifice by which this pardon is purchased; here the means discovered by which poor sinners may have benefit of this purchase; and therefore here alone can the accusing conscience find peace. Had the stung Israelites looked on any other object besides the brazen serpent, they had never been healed. Neither will the stung conscience find ease with looking upon any besides Christ in the gospel promise. The Levite and the priest looked on the wounded man, but would not come near him. There he might have lain and perished in his blood for all them. It was the good Samaritan that poured oil into his wounds. Not the law, but Christ by his blood, bathes and supplies, closeth and cureth, the wounded conscience. Not a drop of oil in all the world to be got that is worth anything for this purpose besides what is provided and laid up in this gospel vial. There was abundance of sacrifices offered up in the Jewish church; yet, put all the blood of those beasts together which was poured out from first to last in that dispensation, and they were not able to quiet one conscience or purge away one sin. The 'conscience of sin,' as the apostle phraseth it, Hebrews 10:2—that is, guilt in their conscience—would still have remained unblotted notwithstanding all these, if severed from what was spiritually signified by them. And the reason is given, Hebrews 10:4, 'for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.' There is no proportion betwixt the blood of beasts, though it should swell into a river—a sea, and the demerit of the least sin. Man's sin deserves man's death, and that eternal, both of body and soul, in hell. This is the price God hath set upon the head of every sin. Now, the death of beasts being so far beneath this price which divine justice demands as satisfaction for the wrong sin doeth him, it must needs be as far beneath pacifying the sinner's conscience —which requires as much to satisfy it, yea, the very same, as it doth to satisfy the justice of God himself. But in the gospel, behold, joyful news is brought to the sinner's ears, of a fountain of blood there opened, which for its preciousness is as far above the price that divine justice demands for man's, as the blood of bulls and beasts was beneath it, and that is the blood of Jesus Christ, who freely poured it out upon the cross, and by it 'obtained eternal redemption for us,' Hebrews 9:1-28. This is the door all true peace and joy comes into the conscience by. Hence we are directed to bottom our confidence and draw our comfort here, and nowhere else: 'Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience,' Hebrews 10:22. Mark that, 'sprinkled from an evil conscience.'

Conscience, by office, is appointed to judge of a man's actions and state, whether good or bad, pardoned or unpardoned. If the state be good, then it is to acquit and comfort; if evil, then to accuse and condemn him; therefore the 'evil conscience' here, is the accusing conscience. From this 'evil conscience' we are said to be 'sprinkled,' that is, freed by the blood of Christ sprinkled on us. It is sin the evil conscience accuseth of, and wrath, the due punishment for that, it condemns the poor creature unto; and to be sprinkled with the blood of Christ is to have the blood of Christ applied to the heart by the Spirit, for pardon and reconciliation with God. Sprinkling in the law did denote the cleansing of the person so sprinkled from all legal impurities; yea, the believing soul from all sinful uncleanness by the blood of Christ, which was signified by the blood of those sacrifices. Therefore David prays, 'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean,' Psalms 51:7—that is, apply the blood of Christ to my troubled conscience, as they did with the bunch of hyssop did the blood of the beast into which it was dipped upon the leper, to cleanse him, 'then,' saith he, 'I shall be clean,' Leviticus 14:6. This sin, which now doth affright my conscience, shall be washed off, and I at peace, as if I had never sinned. To this sprinkling of blood the Holy Ghost alludes, where we are said in the gospel administration to be 'come...to Jesus the Mediator of the new

covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel,' Hebrews 12:24, that is, 'better things' in the conscience. Abel's blood, sprinkled in the guilt of it upon Cain's conscience, spake swords and daggers, hell and damnation; but the blood of Christ sprinkled in the conscience of a poor trembling sinner speaks pardon and peace. Hence it is called 'the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,' 1 Peter 3:21. An answer supposeth a question, an 'answer toward God' supposeth a question from God to the creature. Now the question God here is supposed to propound to the poor creature may be conceived to be this, viz. what canst thou say —who art a sinner, and standest by the curse of my righteous law doomed to death and damnation—why thou shouldst not die the death pronounced against every sinner?

Now the soul that hath heard of Christ, and hearing of him hath received him by faith into his heart, is the person, and the only person, that can answer this question so as to satisfy God or himself. Take the answer as it is formed and fitted for, yea, put into the mouth of every believer, by the apostle Paul, 'Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us,' Romans 8:34. Such an answer this is that God himself cannot object against it, and therefore St. Paul, representing all believers, triumphs in the invincible strength thereof against all the enemies of our salvation, 'who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Romans 8:35, and proceeds to challenge in death and devils, with all their attendants, to come and do their worst against believers who have got this breast-work about them, and at last he displays his victorious colours, and goes out of the field with this holy confidence, that none—be they what they will—shall ever be able to hurt them: 'I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities,...shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord,' Romans 8:38-39. In him he lodgeth his colours, and lays up all his confidence. But I am afraid I have been too long; if I can be said to be too long on this subject—the richest vein in the whole mine of gospel treasure.

[The power required so to apply this argument as to give peace of conscience.]

Second. This second demonstration is taken from the strength and power required to press this argument home to the conscience, so as to quiet and fully satisfy it. Conscience is a lock that goes hard; though the key fit it (I mean the argument used to comfort it be suitable and strong), yet, if this key be in a weak hand, that cannot turn it in this lock—as it is whenever a mere creature holds it—conscience will not open; its doubts and fears will not be resolved. No, this must be the work of the Spirit, or else it will never be done. Conscience is God's officer; and, though the debt be paid in heaven, yet it will not let the soul go free, till a warrant comes from thence to authorize it. And who can bring this but the Spirit of God? Thus as it is not in all their power that are about the poor prisoner to comfort him, till news come from court what the prince means to do with him; so here in this case. 'When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him?' Job 34:29. Now two things I shall do for the bringing of this demonstration to a head. 1. I shall show that the gospel alone presents the Spirit of God to us under the notion of a Comforter. 2. I shall show the admirable fitness and sufficiency of the Holy Spirit to pacify and comfort a guilty troubled conscience. The first will evince that peace of conscience is nowhere else to be found but from the gospel; the second will show that it is there abundantly to be found.

1. It is the gospel alone that presents the Spirit of God as a Comforter to poor sinners. Indeed the comforting office of the Spirit is founded on the satisfaction of Jesus Christ. When Christ had shed his blood, and in it laid down upon the nail the full price of a sinner's peace with God; then, at his return to heaven, he prays his Father to send the Comforter. Neither could Christ desire this request of his Father, nor his Father grant it to him, but upon the account of this his death, which secures the justice of God from receiving any damage by the comfort which the Spirit carries into the believing sinner's bosom. Christ tells his disciples thus much, 'If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you,' John 16:7. Pray, mark the Spirit, as a Comforter, stays till Christ goes to heaven to send him down, and no room for Christ there, till the work was done he came about. And what was that, but, by his bloody death, to purchase peace with God for poor believing sinners? Now let him come when he will. The Spirit is ready to be sent as a comforter, as soon as he appears in the heavens with his blood as an intercessor. But whence then had the Old Testament saints all their peace and comfort, who lived before Christ returned to heaven, yea, before he took his first journey from heaven, I mean to earth? I answer, 'Upon the same account they had their comfort, that they had their pardon.' They were pardoned through the blood of Christ, who was virtually a lamb slain from the beginning of the world; and they were comforted by the Spirit of Christ, whose comforting office bears the same date with Christ's mediatorial office. As all their pardons were issued out upon the credit of Christ, who stood engaged in the fulness of time to lay down his life; so all the comfort which the Spirit of Christ issued out into their consciences, was upon the same credit of Christ, who should, as in the fulness of time die on earth for sinners, so appear also in the heavens—by virtue of the satisfaction that his death should make—there to intercede with the Father for a comforter. Thus you see the first thing. The Spirit as a comforter hath his office from the gospel covenant, and could never have spoken a word of comfort, but upon this gospel account. Hence it is, when the Father sends him as a comforter, he sends him in Christ's name, who hath made up the breach betwixt him and sinners, John 14:26—that is, for his sake and at his entreaty. Yea, when the Spirit doth comfort, what is it he saith? The joyful news he brings is gospel intelligence, 'He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak,' John 16:13. The meaning is [that] when he comes to teach, he shall not bring new light, different from what shines in the gospel, but what truth Christ preached in the gospel, that he shall teach. When he comforts, the ingredients which his soul-reviving cordials shall be made of, are what grow in the gospel garden, as John 16:14: 'He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you'—that is, my death, my merit, my resurrection, my ascension and intercession, my promises purchased and sealed with my blood—these he shall take and make report of to you, for your eternal joy and comfort. So that, if it had not been for these, the Spirit, who is Christ's messenger, would have wanted an errand of this comfortable nature to have brought unto poor sinners, yea, instead of a comforter, he would have been an accuser and a tormentor. He that now bears witness with our spirits for our reconciliation, adoption, and salvation, would have joined in a sad testimony with our guilty consciences against us, for our damnation and destruction.

2. I am to show the admirable fitness of the Spirit for this comforting office, which the gospel reveals him to have, for the pacifying and satisfying the consciences of poor disconsolate sinners. You have heard the gospel affords an argument sufficient to satisfy the most troubled conscience in the world—to wit, the full satisfaction which Christ by his precious blood hath made to God for sinners—but, if poor man had been left to improve this as well as he could for his comfort, he

might have lain long enough roaring in the horror of his scorched conscience without ease, for want of one to drop this cooling healing balm into it. But, as both the wisdom and love of God appeared in providing an able Saviour to purchase eternal redemption for us; so also a meet Comforter, as able to apply this purchased redemption to us. His consolations are called ‘strong consolations.’ Christ showed his strength, when he unhinged the gates of the grave, and made his way out of that dark prison by his glorious resurrection. By this he was ‘declared to be the Son of God with power,’ as the apostle hath it, Romans 1:4. And truly, it requires no less power to break open the dungeon, wherein the guilty conscience lies shut up, as one free among the dead in his own despairing thoughts. For, if you observe it well, the same stone and seal are upon the sinner’s conscience to keep him down from a resurrection of comfort, as was on Christ’s grave to keep him down from a resurrection to life. What was the heaviest stone, the strongest seal, upon dead Jesus to keep him from rising? Not the stone man rolled upon him, not the seal the Jews thought to fasten the grave with, but the curse of the law for sin, which divine justice rolled upon him. This pressed heaviest upon Christ without all compare. The angel himself that rolled away the stone could not have removed the curse. Now, look in upon the distressed conscience’s grave, where its own guilt hath laid it. What is that? no other than the lowest hell in its fears and present dismal apprehensions. I am damned, I am for ever an undone creature, is the language such a one rings continually in his own ears. But inquire, what is it that keeps him down in this grave? what hinders, but the poor wretch may be helped out of this pit of horror, and receive some comfort? Alas he will tell you, that it is but in vain to comfort him; this ointment is all wasted to no purpose, which you pour upon his head. No, he is an undone sinner. The curse of God sticks like a dagger in his heart; the wrath of God lies like a mountain of lead on his conscience. Except you can put your hand into his bosom, and pluck out the one, or by main force roll off the other, it is impossible he should be raised to any peace or comfort in his miserable conscience. You see it is the same gravestone on both. But for thy eternal comfort know, poor heart, that art thus fast laid under the sense of the curse due to thy sins, know that as the weight that keeps thee from comfort is the same which lay on Christ to keep him from life; so the same power and strength is sent to raise thee to comfort, that enabled Christ to rise to life. That Spirit, who kept the Lord Jesus from seeing corruption in the grave; that restrained death, when it had Christ in its very mouth, so as it could no more feed on him than the whale could digest Jonah in her belly; yea that quickened his dead body, and raised him with honour, not only to life, but immortality also—is he that Christ sends for his messenger, to come and satisfy the trembling consciences of his poor children on earth concerning his love, yea his Father’s love to them for his sake. This blessed Spirit hath all the properties of a comforter. He is also pure and holy, he cannot deceive; called therefore ‘the Spirit of truth,’ John 14:1-31. If he tell thee thy sins are pardoned, thou mayest believe him. He will not flatter. If thy were not so pardoned he would have brought another message to thee; for he can chide and reprove as well as comfort, convince of sin as well as of righteousness. He is so wise and omniscient, that he cannot be deceived. Never did the Spirit of God knock at the wrong doors, and deliver his letters into a wrong hand, as a man may do, especially where persons are very like. The Spirit exactly knows the heart of God to the creature, with all his counsels concerning him: ‘The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God,’ 1 Corinthians 2:10. And what are those ‘deep things of God’ the apostle means, but the counsels of love, which lie deep in his heart, till the Spirit draws them forth and acquaints the creature with them? That appears by 1 Corinthians 2:9. And he also knows the whole frame of man’s heart. It were strange indeed if he that made the cabinet should

not know every secret box in it. Some few men have compassed that we call the greater world. But the little world of man, as we call him, never did any creature encircle with his knowledge, no not the devil himself, who hath made it his work so many thousands of years to make a full discovery of it. But the Spirit of God doth know him, intus est in cute—as we say, thoroughly; and knowing both these, he cannot be deceived. In a word, he is so unresistible, that none can hinder the efficacy of his comforts. The pardon brought by Nathan to David did not lie so close as the holy man desired; and therefore away goes he to beg comfort of the Comforter, Psalms 51:1-19. There you find him on his knees praying hard to have his lost joy restored, and his trembling heart established by the free Spirit of God. Though thou canst baffle man, and through thy own melancholy fancy, and the sophistry of Satan, who coins distinctions for thee, evade the arguments that Christians and ministers bring for thy comfort; yet, when the Spirit comes himself, all disputes end. The devil cannot chop logic with him. No; then the lying spirit vanisheth, and our own fears too, as the darkness flees before the sun. So sweetly and powerfully doth the comforting Spirit overrun the heart with a flood of joy that the soul can no more see her sins in the guilt of them, than Noah could the mole-hills when the whole earth was under water.

USE OR APPLICATION.

[A reproof to three sorts of persons.] Use first. Is peace of conscience the blessing of the gospel? This reproves three sorts of persons.

1. Sort. The Papists, who interpretatively deny that peace of conscience is the blessing of the gospel, for they deny that any person can know in this life, unless by an extraordinary revelation, that he is a child of God, and one that shall be saved—which, if true, would stave all to pieces the vessel in which the Christian's joy and inward peace is kept. Whence comes the peace we have with our own consciences, but from the knowledge we have of our peace with God? 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God,' Romans 5:1. If the poor soul be left at uncertainties here, and the gospel cannot resolve to it what its state is for hell or heaven, farewell to all inward peace. The poor Christian may then say of himself, with a trembling heart, what St, John saith, in another case, of him that hateth his brother, 'He walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth,' 1 John 2:11. Truly then the gospel might rather be called the gospel of fears and doubts, than the gospel of peace. But is that the top of the blessing the gospel brings to saints, which was almost the bottom of the curse that the law denounced against sinners?—that 'their life should hang in doubt before them; and they shall fear day and night, and should have no assurance of life,' Deuteronomy 28:66. Bold men they are that dare so wretchedly disfigure the sweet face of the gospel; making Christ in his precious promises speak as doubtfully to his saints, as the devil did in his oracles to his devotees. Because their hypocrisy makes them justly question their own salvation, and will not suffer them to apply the comfort of the promises to themselves, must they therefore seal up these wells of salvation from those that are sincere, and then lay the blame on the gospel which is due only to their own wickedness? But there is a mystery of iniquity which hath at last been found to be at the root of this uncomfortable doctrine of theirs. They are a little akin to Judas, who was a thief, and carried the bag. These have a bag, too, into which they put more gold and silver, that this doctrine brings them in, than ever Judas had in his. Though the doctrine of gospel-grace to poor sinners' would bring more peace to others' consciences —might it be seen in its naked glory among them —yet the superstitious fear

which they keep ignorant souls in, brings more money to their purses; and this lies so near the heart of their religion, that gospel, Christ, heaven, and all, must bow unto it.

2. Sort. Those are to be reproved, who frame very unlovely images in their own foolish imaginations of the gospel—as if there was nothing less than peace of conscience and inward comfort to be found in it—and all, because they see some that profess it, who cannot show that they have got any more peace and comfort since their acquaintance with the gospel than they had before, or than themselves have who are yet strangers to it; yea may be, discover more trouble of spirit. Such I would desire to take these following particulars, by way of answer, into their serious consideration.

(1.) Consider all that are not true Christians that hang upon the gospel by profession. And no blame can be laid on the gospel, though it doth not lavish out this treasure to every one that scrapes acquaintance with it. The Spirit of God is too wise and faithful to set his seal to a blank. The minister indeed offers peace to all that will accept it. But where the peace of the gospel meets with a false heart, it will not stay there, 'If the house be not worthy, let your peace return to you,' Matthew 10:13. As the dove returned to the ark again, when it found the earth under water, so doth the Spirit of God carry his comfort back with him to heaven from a soul that is yet in the suds of sin, soaking in his abominations. Where can this heavenly dove find rest for the sole of her foot in such a soul? And will he speak peace to that soul in which himself can find no rest?

(2.) As for those that are sincere, true-hearted Christians, there are several considerations which will vindicate the gospel to answer its name, and to be a gospel of peace and consolation.

(a) Some that are sincere Christians, do not so clearly understand the doctrine of the gospel as others; and the want of light, of joy, and comfort in their consciences comes from that want of light in their understandings. The ignorance of the workman doth not disparage the art. Plus est in arte, quam in artifice—there is more in an art than the attainment of the artist. There is a fulness of comfort in the principles of the gospel, but every Christian hath not attained to the 'riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ,' which the apostle directs the Colossians to, as a sovereign means whereby 'their hearts might be comforted,' Colossians 2:2.

(b) Some that do understand the doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ—the only foundation to build and rear up true comfort and peace of conscience on—yet may, by their negligence in their Christian course—not walking carefully by the rule of the gospel—deprive themselves at present of this sweet peace, which otherwise might flow into their bosoms from the promises of the gospel. 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them,' Galatians 6:16. And if so, what blame can be laid on the gospel? Be the pen never so good, and the hand never so skilful, it will not write on wet paper; yet we do not fault the hand or pen, but the paper. If the heart—though of a saint never so eminent —be under the defilement of a present lust, not repented of, no promise will speak peace to him; he is a disorderly walker, and the Spirit hath his rod to whip such. No sweet-meats of joy and peace to entertain them withal in that night.

(3.) As for those which do walk close to the rule of the gospel—I mean by a sincere endeavour—and thou seest no such peace and comfort, as we speak of, that they have, I answer,

(a) They may have it, and thou not know it. The saint's joy and peace is not such a light giggling joy as the world's; res severa verum gaudium—true joy is a real thing. The parlour, wherein the Spirit of Christ entertains the Christian, is an inner room, not next to the street, for every one that goes by to smell the feast. 'The stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy,' Proverbs 14:10. Christ and the soul may be at supper within, and thou not so much as see one dish go in, or hear the music that sounds so sweetly in the Christian's ears. Perhaps thou thinkest he wants peace, because he doth not hang out a sign in his countenance of the joy and peace he hath within. Alas, poor wretch! may not the saint have a peaceful conscience with a solemn, yea sad countenance, as well as thou and thy companions have a sorrowful heart, when there is nothing but fair weather in your faces? 'In laughter the heart is sorrowful,' Proverbs 14:13. Sure he means the wicked man's laughter. It never looks more like rain with them than when it shines. Their conscience lowers when their face laughs. So, on the contrary, there is never more inward peace and comfort to be found in a saint's bosom, than sometimes when his face is blubbered with tears. Shouldst thou come in and hear the Christian bemoaning himself, and complaining with sighs and sobs of his sins against God, thou wouldst go home, and cry out of this melancholy religion, and the sad condition this man was in. And yet he whom thou so pitiest can desire thee to save it for thyself, and not spend it in vain for him; for he would not part with that very sorrow that scares thee so much, for all the joy which the world, with all its gallantry, when best set forth, could afford. There is a mystery in this sorrow which thou canst not unriddle. Know therefore that there is a sorrow and anguish of heart which ariseth from the guilt of sin and the fearful apprehensions of God's wrath due to sin; and another that flows, not from fear of wrath arising from guilt, but from the sense of sin's inbeing in the soul, provoking the Christian to do that which is dishonourable to that God who hath pardoned his sins to him; and this is the sorrow which sometimes makes the saints go for sad uncomfortable creatures, when all the same time their hearts are as full of comfort from the sense of God's pardoning mercy as they can hold. This sorrow is but like a summer shower, melted by the sense of God's love, as that by the warm sun, and leaves the soul—as that doth a garden of sweet flowers—on which it falls, more fresh and odoriferous.

(b) Though some precious souls, that have closed with Christ, and embraced the gospel, be not at present brought to rest in their own consciences, but continue for a while under some dissatisfactions and troubles in their own spirits; yet even then they have peace of conscience in a threefold respect. In precio, in promisso, in semine—in what purchases it, in the promise, and in the germ.

Every true believer hath peace of conscience in precio —in the price. The gospel puts that price into his hand which will assuredly purchase it, and that is the blood of Christ. We say, 'That is gold which is worth gold'—which we may anywhere exchange for gold. Such is the blood of Christ. It is peace of conscience, because the soul that hath it, may exchange it for this. God himself cannot deny the poor creature that prays on these terms, 'Lord, give me peace of conscience, here is Christ's blood the price of it.' That which could pay the debt, surely can procure the receipt. Peace of conscience is but a discharge under God's hand that the debt due to divine justice is fully paid. The blood of Christ hath done that the greater for the believer, it shall therefore do this the less. If there were such a rare potion, that did infallibly procure health to every one that takes it, we might safely say, as soon as the sick man hath drunk it down, that he hath drunk his health; it is in him, though at present he doth not feel himself to have it, in time it will appear.

Every true believer hath peace of conscience in promisso—in the promise. And that we count as good as ready money in the purse, which we have sure bond for, Psalms 29:11. ‘The Lord will bless his people with peace.’ He is resolved on it, and then who shall hinder it? It is worth your reading the whole psalm, to see what weight the Lord gives to this sweet promise, for the encouragement of our faith in expecting the performance thereof; nothing more hard to enter into the heart of a poor creature—when all is in an uproar in his bosom, and his conscience threatening nothing but fire and sword, wrath and vengeance, from God for his sins—than thoughts or hopes of peace and comfort. Now, the psalm is spent is showing what great things God can do, and that with no more trouble to himself than a word speaking. ‘The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty,’ Psalms 29:4. ‘It breaketh the cedars; it divideth the flames; it shaketh the wilderness; it maketh the hinds to calve.’ This God that doth all this, promiseth to bless his people with peace, outward and inward. For without this inward peace, though he might give them peace, yet could he never bless them with peace as he here undertakes. A sad peace, were it not, to have quiet streets, but cutting of throats in our houses? yet infinitely more sad is it to have peace both in our streets and houses, but war and blood in our guilty consciences. What peace can a poor creature taste or relish, while the sword of God’s wrath lies at the throat of conscience—not peace with God himself? Therefore Christ purchased peace of pardon, to obtain peace of conscience for his pardoned ones; and accordingly hath bequeathed it in the promise to them. ‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you,’ John 14:27. There, you see, he is both the testator to leave and the executor of his own will—to give out with his own hands what his love hath left believers; so that there is no fear, but his will shall be performed to the full, seeing himself lives to see it done.

Every believer hath this inward peace in semine—in the seed. ‘Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart,’ Psalms 97:11. Where sown, but in the furrows of the believer’s own bosom, when principles of grace and holiness were cast into it by the Spirit of God? Hence it is called ‘the peaceable fruit of righteousness,’ Hebrews 12:11. It shoots as naturally from holiness as any fruit in its kind doth from the seed proper to it. It is indeed most true, that this seed runs and ripens into this fruit sooner in some than it doth in others. This spiritual harvest comes not alike soon to all, no more than the other that is outward doth. But here is the comfort, whoever hath a seedtime of grace pass over his soul, shall have his harvest-time also of joy. This law God hath bound himself to, as strongly as for the other; which are ’not to cease while the earth remaineth,’ Genesis 8:22; yea, more strongly, for that was to the world in general, not to every particular country, town or field in these, which may want a harvest, and yet God keep his word; but God cannot perform his promise, if any one particular saint should everlastingly go without his reaping time. ‘He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him,’ Psalms 126:6. And therefore you who think so basely of the gospel and the professors of it, because at present their peace and comfort is not come, know it is on the way to them, and comes to stay everlastingly with them; whereas your peace is going from you every moment, and is sure to leave you without any hope of returning to you again. Look not how the Christian begins, but ends. The Spirit of God by his convictions comes into the soul with some terrors, but it closeth with peace and joy. As we say of March, ‘It enters like a lion, but goes out like a lamb.’ ‘Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace,’ Psalms 37:37.

3. Sort. This reproves those that think to heal their consciences with other than gospel balm; who leave the waters of living comfort, that flow from this fountain opened in the gospel by Christ, to draw their peace and comfort out of cisterns of their own hewing, and they are two—a carnal cistern, and a legal cistern.

(1.) Some think to draw their peace out of a carnal cistern. There is not more variety of plasters and foolish medicines used for the cure of the ague of the body, than there is of carnal receipts used by self-deceiving sinners to rid themselves of the shaking ague which the fear of God's wrath brings upon their guilty consciences. Some, if they be but a little awakened by the word, and they feel their hearts chill within them, from a few serious thoughts of their wretched undone condition, fall to the physic of Felix; who, as soon as his conscience began to be sick at Paul's sermon, had enough of the preacher, and made all the haste he could to get that unpleasing noise out of his head: 'Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way,' Acts 24:25. Thus many turn their back off God, run as far as they can from those ordinances, that company, or anything else that is likely to grate upon their consciences, and revive the thoughts of their deplored state, which all their care is to forget. Such a one I have heard of, that would not be present at any funeral; could not bear the sight of his own gray hairs, and therefore used a black-lead comb to discolour them; lest, by these, the thoughts of death, which he so abhorred, should crowd in upon him. A poor cowardly shift, God knows! yet all that this wretch had, and all that many more have, betwixt them and a hell above ground in their consciences. Others, their light is so strong, and glares on them so constantly, that this will not do, but wherever they go, though they hear not a sermon in a month, look not on a Bible in a year, and keep far enough from such company as would awake their consciences, yet they are haunted with their own guilt. And therefore they do not only go 'from the presence of the Lord,' as Cain did, Genesis 4:16; but as he also made diversion of those musing thoughts which gathered to his guilty conscience, by employing them another way in 'building a city,' Galatians 4:17, so do they labour to give their consciences the slip in a crowd of worldly businesses. This is the great leviathan that swallows up all the thoughts of heaven and hell in many men's hearts. They are so taken up with that project and this, that conscience finds them not at leisure to exchange a few words with them of a long time together. Conscience is as much hunched at and spited among sinners, as Joseph was among the patriarchs. That which conscience tells them, likes them no better than Joseph's dream did his brethren; and this makes many play the merchants with their consciences, as they did with him—which they do by bribing it with the profits of the world. But this physic is found too weak also; and therefore Saul's harp, and Nabal's feast, is thought on by others. With these they hope to drown their cares, and lay their raving consciences asleep, like some ruffian that is under an arrest for debt, and hath no way, but now to prison he must go, except he can make the sergeant drunk in whose hand he is; which he doth, and so makes an escape. Thus many besot their conscience with the brutish pleasures of sin; and when they have laid it as fast asleep in senseless stupidity as one that is dead drunk, then they may sin without control till it wakes again. This is the height of that peace which any carnal recipe can help the sinner unto—to give a sleeping potion, that shall bind up the senses of conscience for a while, in which time the wretch may forget his misery, as the condemned man doth when he is asleep; but as soon as it awakes, the horror of his condition is sure again to affright him worse than before. God keeps you all from such a cure for your troubles of conscience, which is a thousand times worse than the disease itself. Better to have a dog that will, by his barking, tell us a thief is in our yard, than one that will still, and let us be robbed before we have any notice of our

danger.

(2.) Some draw their peace of conscience from a legal cistern. All the comfort they have is from their own righteousness. This good work, and that good duty, they bless themselves in, when any qualm comes over their hearts. The cordial drink which they use to revive and comfort themselves with, is drawn, not from the satisfaction which Christ by his death hath given to God for them poor sinners, but from the righteousness of their own lives; not from Christ's intercession in heaven for them, but [from] their own good prayers on earth for themselves. In a word, when any spark of disquiet kindles in their consciences—as it were strange, if, where so much combustible matter is, there should not at one time or other some smothering fire begin in such a one's bosom—then, not Christ's blood, but their own tears, are cast to quench it. Well, whosever thou art that goest this way to work to obtain peace of conscience, I accuse thee as an enemy to Jesus Christ and his gospel. If any herb could be found growing in thy garden to heal the wounds of thy conscience, why did the Lord Christ commend for such a rarity the balm which he came from heaven on purpose to compound with his own blood? why doth he call sinners from all besides himself as comforters of no value, and bid us come to him, as ever we would find rest for our souls? Matthew 11:28. No; know, poor creature, and believe it —while the knowing of it may do thee good—either Christ was an impostor, and the gospel a fable, which I hope thou art not such an infidel, worse than the devil himself, to believe; or else thou takest not the right method of healing thy conscience wounded for sin, and laying a sure bottom for solid peace in thy bosom. Prayers and tears—repentance I mean—good works and duties, these are not to be neglected; nay, thou canst never have peace without them in thy conscience; yet these do not, cannot, procure this peace for thee, because they cannot thy peace with God. And peace of conscience is nothing but the echo of pardoning mercy, which, sounding in the conscience, brings the soul into a sweet rest with the pleasant music it makes. And the echo is but the same voice repeated; so that, if prayers and tears, good duties and good works, cannot procure our peace of pardon, then not our peace of comfort. I pray remember I said, 'You can never have inward peace without these; and yet not have it by these.' A wound would hardly ever cure, if not wrapped up from the open air, and also kept clean; yet not these, but the balm cures it. Cease therefore, not from praying and the exercise of any other holy exercise of grace or duty, but from expecting thy peace and comfort to grow from their root, or else thou shuttest thyself out from having any benefit of that true peace which the gospel offers. The one resists the other; like those two famous rivers in Germany, whose streams, when they meet, will not mingle together. Gospel peace will not mingle and incorporate, as I may so say, with any other. Thou must drink it pure and unmixed, or have none at all. 'We,' saith holy Paul for himself, and all other sincere believers, 'are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,' Php 3:3. As if he had said, 'We are not short of any in holy duties and services, nay, we exceed them, for we worship God in the Spirit; but this is not the tap from whence we draw our joy and comfort; we rejoice (fiduciarily) in Christ Jesus, not in the flesh,' where, that which he called worshipping God in the Spirit, now, in opposition to Christ and rejoicing in him, he calls flesh.

They are to be proved from hence, who do indeed use the balm of the gospel for the healing of conscience-wounds; but who use it very unevangelically. The matter they bottom their peace and comfort on, is right and good—Christ and the mercy of God through him in the promise to poor sinners. What can be said better? But they do not observe gospel rule and order in the applying it.

They snatch the promise presumptuously, force and ravish it, rather than seek to have Christ's consent—like Saul, who was in such haste that he could not stay till Samuel came to sacrifice for him, but boldly falls to work before he comes, flat against order given him. Thus many are so hot upon having comfort, that they will not stay for the Spirit of God to come and sprinkle their consciences with the blood of Christ in gospel order; but profanely do it themselves, by applying the comfort of those promises which indeed at present does not belong to them. O sirs, can this do well in the end? Should he consult well for his health, that will not stay for the doctor's direction, but runs into the apothecary's shop, and on his own head takes his physic, without the counsel of the physician how to prepare it, or himself for the taking of it? This every profane wretch doth, that lives in sin, and yet sprinkles himself with the blood of Christ, and blesseth himself in the pardoning mercy of God. But let such know that, as the blood of the paschal lamb was not struck on the Egyptians' doors, but the Israelites'; so neither is the blood of Christ to be sprinkled on the obstinate sinner, but on the sincere penitent. Nay, further, as that blood was not to be spilt on the threshold of an Israelite's door, where it might be trampled on, but on the side posts; so neither is the blood of Christ to be applied to the believer himself while he lies in any sin unrepented of, for his present comfort. This were indeed to throw it under his foot to be trod upon. David confesseth his sin with shame, before Nathan comforts him with the news of a pardon.

[Four characters of gospel peace.]

Use Second. Let this doctrine be as a touchstone to try the truth of your peace and comfort; hath it a gospel stamp upon it? The devil hath his false mint of comfort as well as of grace; put thyself therefore to the trial, while I shall lay before you some characters of the peace that Christ in his gospel speaks to his people.

1. Character of gospel peace. Gospel comfort may be known by the vessel it is poured into, which is a broken heart. The promise is superscribed by name to such, and such only. 'I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones,' Isaiah 57:15. Christ's commission from his Father binds him up; he can comfort none besides. 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,' Isaiah 61:1. And what he receives himself from the Father, the same he gives to those he sends upon the same errand. First, he gives his Spirit, concerning whom he tells his disciples, that 'the Comforter, when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment,' John 16:8. Mark, first of sin; and as for his inferior messengers, they have direction to whom they are to apply the comforts of the gospel. 'Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not,' Isaiah 35:3. And upon their peril be it, if they pour this ointment upon the head of an unhumbled sinner; to give such any comfort, by promising life to him, as he is. God protests against it; he calls it a lie, a 'strengthening the hands of the wicked,' and as much as in them lies, by blowing him up with a false comfort, to make sure that he shall never have the true peace.

Thus you see the order of the gospel in comforting souls. As in needle-work, the sad groundwork is laid before the beautiful colours; as the statuary cuts and carves his statue before he gilds it; so doth the Spirit of Christ beginning with sadness, ends in joy; first cuts and wounds, then heals and overlays the soul with comfort and peace. I hope that you do not think I limit the Holy One in his

workings to the same degree and measure in all. I have opened my thoughts in another place concerning this. But so far the convincing, humbling work of the Spirit goes in every soul before peace and comfort comes, as to empty the soul of all her false comforts and confidences which she had laid up; that the heart becomes like a vessel whose bottom is beat out, and all the water it held thereby split and let out. The sins it loved, now it hates. The hopes and comforts it pleased itself with, they are gone, and the creature left in desolate solitary condition. No way now it sees, but perish it must, except Christ be her friend, and interpose betwixt hell and it. To him she therefore makes her moan, as willing to follow his counsel, and to be ordered by his direction, as every patient was by his physician, of whose skill and care he is thoroughly satisfied. This I call 'the broken heart,' which if you be wholly strangers to, your acquaintance is to begin with gospel peace. I beseech you, rest not till you have an answer from your consciences. What is it they say? was your wine once water? doth your light arise out of darkness? is your peace the issue of a soul-conflict and trouble? did you bleed before you were healed? You may hope it is a kindly work of God's gracious Spirit; make much of it, and bless thy God that hath given this wine to cheer thy sad heart. But if thou commencest per saltum—by a leap, hast thy wine, before thy pots were filled with water—[if] thy morning be come, before thou hast had thy evening—thy peace be settled, before thy false peace is broken—thy conscience sound and whole, before it is lanced, and the putrid stuff of thy pride, carnal confidence, and other sins thou hast lived in, be let out —[if so,] thou mayest have some ease for a while; but know it, the Lord Jesus denies it to be his cure. The strong man's house kept 'in peace,' Luke 11:21, as well as the good man's. It requires more power to work true sorrow, than false joy and peace. A happier man thou wouldst be, if mourning in the distress of a troubled conscience, than dancing about this idol peace, which the devil, thy sworn enemy, mocks thee withal.

2. Character of gospel peace. Gospel peace is obtained in a gospel way, and that is twofold.

(1.) Gospel peace is given to the soul in a way of obedience and holy walking. 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, Galatians 6:16. Now this rule you may see, to be the rule of the 'new creature,' Galatians 6:15. And what is that, but the holy rule of the word? to which the principles of grace planted in the soul of a believer are so fitted, that there is not a more connatural[9] agreement betwixt the eye and light, than betwixt the disposition of this new nature in a saint, and the rule of holiness in the word. Now, it is not enough for one to be a new creature, and to have a principle of grace in his bosom, but he must actually walk by this rule, or else he will be to seek for true peace in his conscience. No comfort in the saints is to be found, but what the Comforter brings. And he who commands us to 'withdraw from them' (though our brethren) 'that walk disorderly,' 2 Thessalonians 3:6, will himself surely withdraw from such, and withhold his comforts, so long as they are disorderly walkers; which they are as long as they walk beside this rule. And therefore, if thou be such a one, say not the Spirit brought thy comfort to thy hand; for he would not bid thee good speed in an evil way. No; he hath been withdrawn as a Comforter ever since thou hast withdrawn thy foot from walking by the holy rule. All thy peace, which thou pretendest to have in this time, is base-born; and thou hast more cause to be ashamed of it, than to glory in it. It is little credit to the wife, that she hath a child when her husband is abroad, and cannot father it; and as little to pretend to comfort, when the Spirit of Christ will not own it.

(2.) Gospel peace is given in the soul in a way of duty, and close attendance on God in his ordinances. 'Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means.' 2 Thessalonians

3:16—that is, bless all means of comforting and filling your souls with inward peace, so that he who drives no trade in ordinances, and brags of his peace and comfort, speaks enough to bring the truth of it into suspicion in the thoughts of sober Christians. I know God can by immediate illapses[10] of his Spirit comfort the Christian, and save him the labour of hearing, praying, meditating; but where did he say he would? Why may we not expect a harvest as well without sowing and ploughing, as peace without using the means? If we were like Israel in the wilderness—in such a state and posture, wherein the means is cut from us, and not by pride or sloth put from us, as sometimes it is the Christian's condition [when] he is sick, and knocked off from ordinances, or, by some other providence as pressing, shut out from the help of this means or that—then I should not wonder to see comfort lie as thick in his soul as manna about the Israelites' tents; but as God would not rain bread any longer, when once they had corn, of which with their labour might make bread, Joshua 5:11-12, so neither will the Lord comfort by a miracle, when the soul may have it in an ordinance. God could have taught the eunuch, and satisfied him with light from heaven, and never have sent for Philip to preach to him. But he chooseth to do it out of Philip's mouth, rather than immediately out of his own, no doubt to put honour on his ordinance.

3. Character of gospel peace. Gospel peace in the conscience is strengthening and restorative. It makes the Christian strong to fight against sin and Satan. The Christian is revived, and finds his strength come, upon a little tasting of this honey; but O what a slaughter doth he make of his spiritual enemies, when he hath a full meal of this honey, a deep draught of this wine! now he goes like a giant refreshed with wine into the field against them. No lust can stand before him. It makes him strong to work. O how Paul laid about him for Christ! He 'laboured more abundantly than they all.' The good man remembered what a wretch he once was, and what mercy he had obtained; the sense of this love of God lay so glowing at his heart, that it infired him with a zeal for God above his fellow-apostles. This made holy David pray so hard to drink again of this wine, which so long had been locked up from him. 'Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit; then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee,' Psalms 51:12-13. Pray mark, it was not his lickerish palate after the sweet taste of this wine of comfort that was the only or chief reason why he so longed for it; but the admirable virtue he knew in it, to inspirit and empower him with zeal for God. Whereas the false peace and comfort of hypocrites is more heady than hearty; it leaves them as weak as they were before; yea, it lies rotting, like unwholesome food in the stomach, and leaves a surfeit in their souls—as luscious summer fruits do in the bodies of men—which soon breaks out in loose practices. Thieves commonly spend their money as ill as they get it; and so do hypocrites and formalists their stolen comforts. Stay but a little, and you shall find them feasting some lust or other with them. 'I have peace-offerings with me,' saith the religious whore—the hypocritical harlot —'this day I have paid my vows, therefore I came forth to meet thee,' Proverbs 7:14-15. She pacifies her conscience and comforts herself with this religious service she performs; and now, having, as she thought, quit scores with God, she returns to her own lustful trade; yea, emboldens herself from this, in her wickedness. 'Therefore came I forth to meet thee,' as if she durst not have played the whore with man till she had played the hypocrite with God, and stopped the mouth of her conscience with her peace-offering. Look, therefore, I beseech you, very carefully, what effect your peace and comfort have in your hearts and lives. Are you the more humble or proud for your comfort? do you walk more closely or loosely after your peace? how stand you to duties of worship? are you made more ready for communion with God in them, or do you grow strange to and infrequent in them? have

you more quickening in them, or lie more formal and lifeless under them? In a word, can you show that grace and peace grow in thee alike? or doth the one less appear, since thou doest more pretend to the other? By this thou mayest know whether thy peace comes from the peace-maker, or peace-marrer, from the God of truth or the father of lies.

4. Character of gospel peace. Gospel peace comforts the soul, and that strongly, when it hath no other comfort to mingle with it. It is a cordial rich enough itself, and needs not any other ingredient to be compounded with it. David singles out God by himself. 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee,' Psalms 73:25. Give David but his God, and let who will take all besides; let him alone to live comfortably, may he but have his love and favour. Hence it is that the Christian's peace pays him in the greatest revenues of joy and comfort, when outward enjoyments contribute least, yea nothing at all, but bring in matter of trouble. 'But David encouraged himself in his God,' 1 Samuel 30:6. You know when that was. If David's peace had not been right and sound, he would have been more troubled to think of God at such a time than of all his other disasters. 'Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them,' Psalms 119:165. This distinguishes the saint's peace, both from the worldling's and the hypocrite's.

(1.) From the worldling's. His peace and comfort, poor wretch, runs dregs as soon as creature-enjoyments run a tilt—when poverty, disgrace, sickness, or anything else, crosseth him in that which he fondly doted on, then his night is come, and day shut up in dismal darkness. In this respect it is, that Christ, as I conceive, opposeth his peace to the world's. 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid,' John 14:27. Pray mark, Christ is laying in arguments of comfort for his disciples against his departure, which he knew would go so near their hearts. One amongst the rest is taken from the difference of that peace and comfort which he leaves them, from what the world gives. If he had said, If the peace and comfort you have from me lay in such things as the world's peace is made up of—plenty, ease, outward prosperity, and carnal joy—truly then you had reason to be the greatest mourners at my funeral that ever followed friend to the grave; for after my departure you are like to have none of these; nay, rather expect trouble and persecution. But know, the peace I have with you is not in your houses, but hearts; the comfort I give you lies not in silver and gold, but in pardon of sin, hopes of glory, and inward consolations, which the Comforter that is to come from me to dwell with you, shall, upon my appointment, pay into your bosoms; and this shall outlive all the world's joy. This is such a legacy as never any left their children. Many a father dying, hath in a farewell speech to his children, wished them all peace and comfort when he should be dead and gone; but who besides Jesus Christ could send a comforter into their hearts, and thrust peace and comfort into their bosoms? Again, it distinguisheth the true Christian's peace,

(2.) From the hypocrite's. He, though he pretends to place his comfort, not in the creatures, but in God, and seems to take joy in the interest which he lays claim to have in Christ and the precious promises of the gospel; yet, when it comes indeed to the trial, that he sees all his creature-comforts gone, and not like to return anymore—which at this time had his heart, though he would not it should be thought so —and now he sees he must in earnest into another world, to stand or fall eternally, as he shall then be found in God's own scrutiny to have been sincere or false-hearted in his pretensions to Christ and his grace; truly, then recoil his thoughts, his

conscience flies in his face, and reproacheth him for spiritual cozenage[11] and forgery. Now, soul, speak, is it thus with thee? does thy peace go with thee just to the prison door, and there leave thee? Art thou confident thy sins are pardoned all the while thou art in health and strength, but as soon as ever the sergeant knocks at the door to speak with thee—as soon as death, I mean, comes in sight—do thy thoughts then alter, and thy conscience tells thee he comes to prove thee a liar in thy pretended peace and joy? This is a sad symptom. I know indeed that the time of affliction is a trying time to grace; that is true. The sincere Christian for a while may, like a valiant soldier, be beat from his artillery, and the enemy Satan may seem to possess his peace and confidence; yea, so far have some precious saints been carried down the stream of violent temptations, as to question whether their former comforts were from the Holy Spirit the Comforter, or the evil spirit the deceiver; yet their is great difference between the one and the other.

(a) They differ in their causes. This darkness, which sometimes is upon the sincere Christian's spirit in deep distress, comes from the withdrawing of God's lightsome countenance; but the horror of the other from his own guilty conscience, that before was lullabied asleep with prosperity, but now, being awakened by the hand of God on him, doth accuse him to have been false with God in the whole course of his profession. It is true, some particular guilt may be contracted by the Christian through negligence or strong temptation in his Christian course, for which his conscience may accuse him, and may further embitter the present desertion he is in so far, as from those particular miscarriages to fear his sincerity in the rest, though he hath no reason to do it; but his conscience cannot charge him of an hypocritical design, to have been the spring that hath set him on work through the whole course of his profession.

(b) They differ in their accompaniments. There is something concomitant with the Christian's present darkness of spirit, that distinguisheth it from the hypocrite's horror; and it is the lively working of grace, which then commonly is very visible when his peace and former comfort are most questioned by him. The less joy he hath from any present sense of the love of God, the more abounding you shall find him in sorrow for his sin that clouded his joy. The further Christ is gone out of his sight, the more he clings in his love to Christ, and vehemently cries after him in prayer, as we see in Heman, 'Unto thee have I cried, O Lord; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee,' Psalms 88:13. O the fervent prayers that then are shot from his troubled spirit to heaven, the pangs of affection which are springing after God, and his face and favour! Never did banished child more desire admittance into his angry father's presence, than he to have the light of God's countenance shine on him, which is now veiled from him. O how he searcheth his heart, studies the Scripture, wrestles with God for to give him that grace, the non-evidence of which at present makes him so question the comforts he hath formerly had! Might he but have true grace, he will not fall out with God for want of comfort, though he stays for it till the other world. Never did any woman big with child long more to have the child in her arms that is at present in her womb, than such a soul doth to have that grace which is in his heart—but through temptation questioned by him at present—evidenced to him in the truth of it. Whereas the hypocrite in the midst of all his horror doth not, cannot—till he hath a better heart put into his bosom —cordially love or desire grace and holiness for any intrinsic excellency in itself—only as an expedient for escaping the tormentor's hand, which he sees he is now falling into.

(c) They differ in the issue. The Christian—he, like a star in the heavens, wades through the cloud that, for a time, hides his comfort; but the other, like a meteor in the air, blazeth a little, and then

drops into some ditch or other, where it is quenched. Or, as the Spirit of God distinguisheth them, ‘The light of the righteous rejoiceth: but the lamp (or candle, as in the Hebrew) of the wicked shall be put out,’ Proverbs 13:9. The sincere Christian’s joy and comfort is compared there to the light of the sun, that is climbing higher, while it is muffled up with clouds from our eye; and by and by, when it breaks out more gloriously, doth rejoice over those mists and clouds that seemed to obscure it; but the joy of the wicked, like a candle, wastes and spends—being fed with gross fuel of outward prosperity, which in a short time fails—and the wretches comfort goes out in a snuff at last, past all hope of being lighted again. The Christian’s trouble of spirit again is compared to a swooning fainting fit, which he within a while recovers. A qualm comes over the holy man’s heart from the thought of his sins in the day of his great distress. ‘Innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me,’ Psalms 40:12; but, before the psalm is at an end, after a few deep groans in prayer, Psalms 40:13-14, he comes again to himself, and acts his faith strongly on God ‘yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer,’ Psalms 40:17. But the hypocrite’s confidence and hope, when once it begins to sink and falter, it dies and perisheth. ‘The eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost,’ Job 11:20.

THIRD KIND OF PEACE.

[Peace of love and unity the blessing of the gospel.]

We come now to the third kind of peace, which I called a peace of love and unity. A heavenly grace this is, whereby the minds and hearts of men, that even now jarred and rang backwards are made tunable each to other; so as to chime all in to an harmonious consent and concord among themselves. Thus peace in Scripture is frequently taken, as you may see, Mark 9:50; Hebrews 12:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:13. Now the gospel is a ‘gospel of peace,’ if taken in this notion also, which we shall briefly speak to from this note.

[The gospel alone can knit the hearts of men in solid peace.] The doctrine we lay down is, that the gospel, and only the gospel, can knit the hearts and minds of men together in a solid peace and love. This, next the reconciling us to God and ourselves, is especially designed by Christ in the gospel; and truly those [blessings] without this, would not fill up the saint’s happiness; except God should make a heaven for every Christian by himself to live in. John Baptist’s ministry, which was as it were the preface to and brief contents of, the gospel, was divided into these two heads, ‘To turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God,’ Luke 1:16, and ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ Luke 1:17; that is, to make them friends with God and one another. This is the natural effect of the gospel, where it is powerfully and sincerely embraced—to unite and endear the hearts of men and women in love and peace together, how contrary soever they were before. This is the strange metamorphosis, which the prophet speaks shall be under the gospel, ‘The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid,’ Isaiah 11:6. That is, men and women, between whom there was a great feud and enmity as betwixt those creatures, they shall yet sweetly agree, and lie in one another’s bosoms peaceably. And how all this, but by the efficacy of the gospel on their hearts? So ‘for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord,’ Isaiah 11:9. Indeed it is in the dark when men fight, and draw upon one another in wrath and fury. If gospel light comes once savingly in, the sword will soon be put up. The sweet spirit of love

will not suffer these doings where he dwells; and so peculiar is this blessing to the gospel, that Christ appoints it for the badge and cognizance by which not only they should know one another, but [by which] even strangers should be able to know them from any other sect and sort of men in the world, John 13:35. 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.' A nobleman's servant is known as far as he can be seen, by the coat on his back, whose man he is; so, saith Christ, shall all men know you, by your mutual love, that you retain to me and my gospel. If we would judge curiously of wine, [as to] what is its natural relish, we must taste of it, before it comes into the huckster's hands, or after it is refined from its lees. So, the best way to judge of the gospel and the fruit it bears, is to taste of it, either when it is professed and embraced, with most simplicity—and that was without doubt in the first promulgation—or, secondly, when it shall have its full effect on the hearts of men, and that is in heaven. In both these, though chiefly the last, this peace will appear to be the natural fruit of the gospel.

First. When the gospel was first preached and embraced, what a sweet harmony of peace and admirable oneness of heart was then amongst the holy professors of it, who but a while before were strangers to or bitter enemies one against another! They lived and loved, as if each Christian's heart had forsaken his own, to creep into his brother's bosom. They alienated their estates to keep their love entire. They could give their bread out of their own mouths to put it into their brethren's that were hungry; yea, when their love to their fellow-Christians was most costly and heavy, it was least grudged and felt by them. See those blessed souls, 'They sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need; and they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their bread with gladness and singleness of heart,' Acts 2:46. More, they are more merry now they have been emptying of their bags by charity, than if they had come from filling them by worldly traffic. So notorious was the love of Christians in the primitive times, that the very heathens would point at them, as Tertullian saith, and say, 'See how they love one another.' And therefore, if less love and peace be found now amongst Christians, the blame lies not on the gospel, but on them. The gospel is as peaceful, but they are minùs evangelici—less evangelical, as we shall further show.

Second. Look on the gospel, as at last, in the complement of all in heaven, when the hearts of saints shall be thoroughly gospelized, and the promises concerning the peaceable state of saints have their full accomplishment—then above all this peace of the gospel will appear. Here it puts out and in, like a budding flower in the spring; which one warm day opens a little, and another that is cold and sharp shuts it again. The 'silence' in the lower heaven—the church on earth—is but for 'the space of half an hour,' Revelation 8:1. Now there is a love and peace among Christians; anon, scandals are given, and differences arise, which drive this sweet spring back; but in heaven it is full blown, and so continues to eternity. There dissenting brethren are made thorough friends, never to fall out. There, not only the wound of contention is cured; but the scar which is here oft left upon the place, is not to be seen on the face of heaven's peace, to disfigure the beauty of it, which made the German divine so long to be in heaven—where, said he, Luther and Zuinglius are perfectly agreed, though they could not be agreed on earth. But I come to give some particular account how the gospel knits the hearts and minds of men in peace together, and why the gospel alone can do this. While I clear one, I shall the other also.

[How the gospel knits the hearts of men in peace, and why it alone can do so.]

First. The gospel knits the hearts of men together, as it propounds powerful arguments for peace and unity; and indeed such as are found nowhere else. It hath cords of love to draw and bind souls together that were never weaved in nature's loom: such as we may run through all the topics of morality, and meet with [in] none of them, being all supernatural and of divine revelation, Ephesians 4:3. The apostle exhorts them 'to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.' And how doth he persuade them Ephesians 4:4-7. First, 'there is one body.' Such a one however, it is, as natural philosophy treats not of; but a mystical one, the church—which consists of several saints, as the natural body of several members; and, as it were strange to see one member to fall out with another—which all are preserved in life by their union together—so much more in the mystical body. Again there is 'one spirit.' That is the same holy Spirit which quickens them all that are true saints, and he is to the whole number of saints as the soul is to the whole man —informing every part. Now, as it were a prodigious violence to the law of nature, if the members, by an intestine war among themselves, should drive the soul out of the body, which gives life to them in union together; so much more would it be for Christians to force the Holy Spirit from them by their contentions and strifes; as indeed a wider door cannot easily be opened for them to go out at. Again, it presseth 'unity,' from the 'one hope of our calling,' where hope is put pro re speratâ—for the thing hoped for, the bliss we all hope for in heaven. There is a day coming, and it cannot be far from us, in which we shall meet lovingly in heaven, and sit at one feast without grudging one to see what lies on another's trencher. Full fruition of God shall be the feast, and peace and love the sweet music that shall sound to it. What folly is it then for us to fight here, who shall feast there? draw blood of one another here, that shall so quickly lie in each other's bosom's? Now the gospel invites to this feast, and calls us to this hope. I might run through the other particulars, which are all as purely evangelical—as these, 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism;' but enough to have given you a taste.

Second. The gospel doth this, as it takes away the cause of that feud and enmity which is among the sons and daughters of men. They are chiefly two —the curse of God on them, and their own lusts in them.

1. The feud and hostility that is among men and women is part of that curse which lies upon mankind for his apostasy from God. We read how the ground was cursed for man's sake, 'thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee,' saith God, Genesis 3:18. But a far greater curse it was, that one man should become as a thorn and briar, to fetch blood of another. Some have a fancy that the rose grew in paradise without prickles. To be sure man, had he not sinned, should never have been such a pricking briar as now the best of them is. These thorns that come up so thick in man's dogged, quarrelsome nature, what do they speak but the efficacy of God's curse? The first man that was born in the world proved a murderer; and the first that died, went to his grave by that bloody murderer's hand. May we not wonder as much at the power of God's curse on man's nature, that appeared so soon in Cain's malicious heart, as the disciples did at the sudden withering of the fig tree blasted by Christ's curse? And truly, it was but just with God to mingle a perverse spirit among them who had expressed so false a one to him. They deserved to be confounded in their language, and suffered to bite and devour one another, who durst make an attempt upon God himself, by their disobedience. Very observable is that in Zechariah 11:10, compared with Zechariah 11:14. When once 'the staff of beauty,' Zechariah 11:10 —which represented God's covenant with the Jews —was asunder, then presently the 'staff of bands'

—which signified the brotherhood between Judah and Jerusalem—was cut asunder, also. When a people break covenant with God, they must not expect peace among themselves. It is the wisdom of a prince, if he can, to find his enemy work at home. As soon as man fell out with God, behold there is a fire of war kindled at his own door, in his own nature. No more bitter enemy now to mankind than itself. One man is a wolf, yea a devil, to another. Now, before there can be any hope of true solid peace among men, this curse must be reversed; and the gospel, and only the gospel, can do that. There an expedient is found how the quarrel betwixt God and the sinner may be reconciled; which done, the curse ceaseth. A curse is a judiciary doom, whereby God in wrath condemns his rebel creature to something that is evil. But there is 'no condemnation' to him that is in Christ. The curse is gone. No arrow now in the bow of threatening; that was shot into Christ's heart, and can never enter into the believer's. God may whip his people, by some unbrotherly unkindness they receive from one another's hands, by way of fatherly chastisement —and indeed it is as sharp a rod as he can use in his discipline—the more to make them sensible of their falling out with him. But the curse is gone, and his people are under a promise of enjoying peace and unity; which they shall, when best for them, have performed to them.

2. The internal cause of all the hostility and feud that is to be found amongst men is lust that dwells in their own bosoms. This is the principle and root that bears all the bitter fruit of strife and contention in the world: 'From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?' James 4:1. This breaks the peace with God, ourselves, and others. If there be a fiery exhalation wrapped up in the cloud, we must look for thunder and lightning to follow; if lust in the heart, it will vent itself, though it rends peace of family, church, and kingdom. Now, before there can be a foundation for a firm, solid peace, these unruly lusts of men must be taken to. What peace and quiet can there be while pride, envy, ambition, malice, and such like lusts, continue to sit in throne and hurry men at their pleasure? Neither will it be enough for the procuring peace, to restrain these unruly passions, and bind them up, forcibly. If peace be not made between the hearts of men, it is worth nothing. The chain that ties up the mad dog will in time wear; and so with all cords break, by which men seem at present so strongly bound together, if they be not tied by the heart-strings, and the grounds of the quarrel be there taken away. Now the gospel, and only the gospel, can help us to a plaster, that can draw out of the heart the very core of contention and strife. Hear the apostle telling us how himself and others his fellow-saints got cure of that malicious heart which once they were in bondage to. 'For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another,' Titus 3:3. Well, what was the physic that recovered them? See Titus 3:4-5, 'But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' As if he had said, Had not this love of God to us in Christ appeared, and we been thus washed by his regenerating Spirit, we might have lain to this day under the power of those lusts, for all the help that any other could afford us. Mortification is a work of the Spirit. 'If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live,' Romans 8:13. And the gospel is the sacrificing knife in the hand of the Spirit. The word is called 'the sword of the Spirit,' as that which he useth to kill and slay sin within the hearts of his people.

3. As the gospel lays the axe to the root of bitterness and strife, to stub that up; so it fills the hearts of those that embrace it with such gracious principles as to incline to peace and unity. Such are self-denial —that prefers another in honour before himself, and will not jostle for the wall; long-suffering—a grace which is not easily moved and provoked; gentleness —which, if moved by any wrong, keeps the doors open for peace to come in at again, and makes him easy to be entreated. See a whole bundle of these sweet herbs growing in one bed, ‘But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness,’ Galatians 5:22. Mark, I pray, this is not fruit that grows in every hedge, but ‘fruit of the Spirit’—fruit that springs from gospel seed. As the stones in the quarry, and cedars as they grew in the wood, would never have lain close and comely together in the temple, so neither could the one cut and polish, nor the other hew and carve themselves into that fitness and beauty which they all had in that stately fabric. No, that was the work of men gifted of God for that purpose. Neither can men and women, with all their skill and tools of morality, square and frame their hearts so as to fall in lovingly into one holy temple. This is the work of the Spirit, and that also with this instrument and chisel of the gospel, to do; partly by cutting off the knottiness of our churlish natures, by his mortifying grace; as also by carving, polishing, and smoothing them, with those graces which are the emanations of his own sweet, meek, and Holy Spirit.

USE AND APPLICATION.

[Difference between the peace among saints and that of the wicked.]

Use First. What we have now learned of gospel peace as a peace of love and unity, helps us what to think of that peace and love which sometimes is to be found among the wicked of the world. It is not true peace and solid love, because they are strangers to the gospel that alone can unite hearts together. What then shall we call this their peace? In some, it is a mere conspiracy. ‘Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy,’ Isaiah 8:12. The peace of some is rather founded in wrath to the saints that in love among themselves. They are united—but how?—no other way than Samson’s foxes, to do mischief to others, rather than good to themselves. Two dogs that are worrying one another, can leave off to run both after a hare that comes by them; who, when the chase is over, can to it as fiercely as before. ‘In the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves,’ Luke 23:12. Again, the peace and unity of others is founded upon some base lust that ties them together. Thus shall you see a knot of ‘good fellows,’ as they miscall themselves, set over the pot with abundance of seeming content in one another. And a pack of thieves, when upon a wicked design, jug and call one another together, as partridges their fellows, saying, ‘Come with us; cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse,’ Proverbs 1:14. Here now is peace and unity, but alas! they are only ‘brethren in iniquity.’ Thirdly, where it is not thus gross; as it cannot indeed be denied but there are some that never felt the power of the gospel so as to be made new creatures by it, who yet hold very fair quarter one with another, and correspond together; and that not on so base and sordid an account, among whom such offices of love are reciprocated as do much sweeten their lives and endear them one to another; and for this they are much beholden to the gospel, which doth civilize oft, where it doth not sanctify. But this is a peace so fundamentally defective, that it doth not deserve the name of true peace.

1. The peace of the wicked is in cortice non in corde—superficial and external, not inward and cordial. We may say, rather their lusts are chained from open war than their hearts are changed into inward love. As the beasts agreed in the ark pretty well, yet kept their hostile nature, so do unregenerate men.

2. The peace of the wicked is unsanctified peace.

(1.) Because, while they seem to have peace with one another, they have not peace with God; and it is peace with God takes away the curse. (2.) Because it proceeds from unsanctified hearts. It is the altar that sanctifies the gift; the heart, the unity. Amicitia non esti inter bonos—friendship exists only between the good. A heathen could say this—that true love and friendship can only be between good men; but alas he knew not what made a good man. When God intends in mercy to make the hearts of men 'one,' he first makes them 'new,' 'and I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you,' Ezekiel 11:19. The peace of the right kind is a fruit of the Spirit, and that sanctifies before it unifies. (3.) Because the end that all such propound in their love is carnal, not spiritual. As Austin did not admire Cicero for his eloquence and oratory so much as he did undervalue and pity him because the name of Jesus Christ was not to be found in him; so, this draws a black line upon carnal men's peace and unity—nothing of God and Christ in it. Is it his glory they aim at? Christ's command that binds them to the peace? No alas! here is the 'still voice,' but God is not in it. Their own quiet and carnal advantage is the primum mobile—prime motive. Peace and unity are such good guests, and pay so well for their entertainment, that this makes their men who have no grace, if they have but their wits left, desirous but to keep up an external peace among themselves.

3. The peace of the wicked is, in a word, a peace that will not long last, because it wants a strong cement. Stones may a while lie together without mortar, but not long. The only lasting cement for love is the blood of Christ; as Austin sayeth of his friend Alypius and himself, they were sanguine Christi glutinati—cemented in their friendship by the blood of Christ.

[The sin of ministers who stir up strife.]

Use Second. Is the gospel a gospel of peace in this sense as taken for unity and love?—this dips their sin into a deep die, who abuse the gospel to a quite contrary end, and make it their instrument to promote strife and contention withal. Such the apostle speaks of, 'Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife,' Php 1:15. The gospel of peace is a strange text, one would think, to preach division and raise strife from; and the pulpit as strange a mount for to plant the battering pieces of contention on. O how strangely do these men forget their Lord that sent them, who is a Prince of peace! and their work, which is not to blow a trumpet of sedition and confusion, or sound an alarm to battle, but rather a joyful retreat from the bloody fight wherein their lusts had engaged them against God and one another. Indeed there is a war they are to proclaim, but it is only against sin and Satan; and I am sure we are not fit to march out against them till we can agree among ourselves. What would the prince think of that captain who, instead of encouraging his soldiers to fall on with united forces as one man against a common enemy, should make a speech to set his soldiers together by the ears among themselves? surely he would hang him up for a traitor. Good was Luther's prayer, A doctore glorioso, à pastore contentioso, et inutilibus quæstionibus liberet ecclesiam Deus—from a vainglorious doctor, a contentious pastor, and nice questions, the Lord deliver his church. And we, in these sad times, have reason to say as hearty

an amen to it as any since his age. Do we not live in a time when the church is turned into a sophister's school? where such a wrangling and jangling hath been that the most precious truths of the gospel are lost already to many. Their eyes are put out with the dust these contentions have raised, and they have at last fairly disputed themselves out of all their sober principles; as some ill husbands that light among cunning gamesters, and play all their money out of their purses. O woe to such vile men, who have prostituted the gospel to such devilish ends! God may have mercy on the cheated souls to bring them back to the love of the truth, but for the cheaters, they are gone too far towards hell that we can look for their return. This gives us the reason why there is no more peace and unity among the saints themselves. The gospel cannot be faulted that breathes peace. No! it is not because they are gospellers, but because they are but imperfectly gospelized, that they are no more peaceful. the more they partake of the spirit of the gospel, the less will they be haunted with the evil spirit of contention and strife. The best of saints are in part unevangelical in two particulars, from which come all the unkind quarrellings and unbrotherly contests among them.

1. Christians are unevangelical in their judgments; 'they know but in part, and prophesy but in part,' 1 Corinthians 13:9. He that pretends to more than this boasts without his measure, and doth thereby discover what he denies—his ignorance, I mean, in the gospel. And this defect and craze that is in the saints' judgments exposeth them sometimes to drink in principles that are not evangelical. Now, these are they that make the bustle and disturb their peace and unity. All truth is reducible to a unity; like lines they lovingly meet in one center—the God of truth—and are so far from jostling and clashing, that, as stones in an arch, they uphold one another. They then which so sweetly agree in one themselves cannot learn us to divide. No, it is this strange error that creeps in among the saints, and will needs be judge; this breaks the peace, and kindles a fire in the house, that in a while, if let alone, will be seen at the house-top. Wholesome food makes no disturbance to a healthy body; but corrupt food doth presently make the body feverish and untoward, and then, when the man is distempered, no wonder if he begins to be pettish and peevish; we have seen it by woful experience. Those from whom we had nothing but sweetness and love while they fed on the same dish of gospel truth with us, how strangely froward are they grown since they have taken down some unevangelical and erroneous principles! We know not well how to carry ourselves towards them they are so captious and quarrelsome; yea, at the very hearing of the word, if they have not yet forgot the way to the ordinance, what a distasteful behaviour do many of them show, as if every word went against their stomach, and made them sick! O sirs, let us not blame the gospel, it is innocent as to these sad contentions among us. Paul tells us where to find a father for this brat of strife. See at whose door he directs us to lay it: 'Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine ye have learned,' Romans 16:17. I pray observe how he clears the gospel here. This dividing quarrelling spirit is contrary to the gospel; they never learned it in Christ's school. And then he tacitly implies that they have it somewhere else, from some false teacher and false doctrine or other. 'Mark them,' saith he, as if he had said, 'Observe them well, and you shall find them tainted some way or other.' They have been warming themselves at Satan's fire, and from thence have brought a coal with them, that does the mischief.

2. Christians are in part unevangelical in their hearts and lives. The whole root of sin is not stubbed up at once; no wonder some bitter taste remains in the fruit they bear. Saints in heaven shall be all grace, and no sin in them, and then they shall be all love also; but here they are part grace, part

corruption, and so their love is not perfect. How can they be fully soldered together in unity never to fall out, as long as they are not so fully reconciled to God, in the point of sanctification, but now and then there are some breeches betwixt them and God himself? And the less progress the gospel hath made in their hearts to mortify lust and strengthen grace, the less peace and love is to be expected among them. The apostle concludes from the contentions among the Christians at Corinth, that they were of little growth in grace, such as were not past the child's spoon and meat. 'I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able, for ye are yet carnal,' 1 Corinthians 3:2. Nay, he conceives this to be so clear evidence, that he appeals to their consciences if it be not so. 'For whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?' ver. 3. But as grace strengthens, and the gospel prevails on the hearts of Christians, so does love and a spirit of unity increase with it. We say 'older and wiser;'—though children, when young, do scratch and fight, yet when they get up into years, they begin to agree better. Omne invalidum est naturá quærulum—those that are young and weak are peevish and quarrelsome. Age and strength bring wisdom to overcome those petty differences that now cannot be borne. In the controversy between the servants of Abraham and Lot, Abraham, who was the elder and stronger Christian, was most forward for peace, so as to crave it at the hands of his nephew, every way his inferior. Paul, who was a Christian higher by the head than others—O how he excelled in love!—he saith of himself, 1 Timothy 1:14, 'The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus;' where, saith Calvin, fides incredulitati opponitur; dilectio in Christo sævitiæ quam exercuerat adversus fideles—faith is opposed to his former obstinate unbelief, when a Pharisee; love in Christ Jesus, to the cruelty he expressed against Christians, when, breathing slaughter, he went on a persecuting errand to Damascus. Now he was as full of faith as then of unbelief, now as fire-hot of love to the saints as then of cruelty against them. But that I quote chiefly the place for, is to see how this pair of graces thrive and grow together; if abundant in faith, then abundant in love.

[Exhortation to saints to maintain and promote peace.]

Use Third. What we have learned of gospel peace as a peace of love and unity, brings a seasonable exhortation to all the saints, that they would nourish peace what they can among themselves. You all profess to have been baptized into the spirit of the gospel, but you do not show it when you bite and snarl at one another. The gospel, that makes wolves and lambs agree, doth not teach the lambs to turn {into} wolves and devour each other. Our Saviour told the two disciples whose choler was soon up, that they would be fetching fire from heaven to go on their revengeful errand, that they little thought from what hearth that wild-fire of their passion came: 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of,' Luke 9:55. As if he had said, Such fiery wrathful speeches do not suit with the meek Master you serve, nor with the gospel of peace he preacheth to you. And if the gospel will not allow us to pay our enemies in their own coin, and give them wrath for wrath, then much less will it suffer brethren to spit fire at one another's faces. No, when any such embers of contention begin to smoke among Christians, we may show who left the spark—no other but Satan; he is the greatest kindle-coal of all their contentions. If there be a tempest, not in the air, but in the spirits of Christians, and the wind of their passions be high and loud, it is easy to tell who is the conjurer. O it is the devil, who is practicing his black art upon their lusts, which yet are so much unmortified as gives him too great an advantage of raising many times sad

storms of division and strife among them. Paul and Barnabas set out in a calm together, but the devil sends a storm after them —such a storm as parted them in the midst of their voyage: ‘And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other,’ Acts 15:39. There is nothing, next Christ and heaven, that the devil grudged believers more than their peace and mutual love. If he cannot rend them from Christ, stop them from getting heaven, yet he takes some pleasure in seeing them go thither in a storm; like a shattered fleet severed one from another, that they may have no assistance from, nor comfort of, each other’s company all the way; though, where he can divide he hopes to ruin also, well knowing this to be the most probable means to effect it. One ship is easier taken than a squadron. A town, if it can be but set on fire, the enemy may hope to take it with more ease; Let it therefore be your great care to keep the devil’s spark from your powder. Certainly peace among Christians is no small mercy, that the devil’s arrows fly so thick at its breast. Something I would fain speak to endear this mercy to the people of God. I love, I confess, a clear and still air, but, above all, in the church among believers; and I am made the more sensible what a mercy this would be, by the dismal consequence of these divisions and differences that have for some years together troubled our air, and filled us with such horror and confusion, that we have not been much unlike that land called Terra del Fuego—the land of smoke, because of the frequent flashings of lightnings and abundance of smoke found there. What can I compare error to, better than smoke? and contention to, better than to fire? a kind of emblem of hell itself, where flames and darkness meet together to increase the horror of the place. But, to press the exhortation a little closer, give me leave to provoke you by three arguments to peace and unity.

1. Argument. The Christian should seek peace for Christ’s sake. And methinks, when begging for his sake I should have no nay. When you pray to God and do but use his name in the business, you are sure to speed. And why should not an exhortation, that woos you for Christ’s sake, move your hearts to duty, as a prayer put up by you in his name, moves God’s heart to mercy? Indeed, how can you in faith use Christ’s name as an argument to unlock God’s heart to thee, which hath not so much credit with thyself as to open thy own heart into a compliance with a duty, which is so strongly set on his heart to promote among his people? This appears,

(1.) By the solemn charge he gave his disciples in this particular: ‘A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another,’ John 13:34. I pray observe how he prepares their hearts to open readily, and bid his commandment kindly welcome. He sets his own name upon it—‘a new commandment I give unto you.’ As if he had said, ‘Let this command, though as old as any other, Leviticus 19:18, yet go under my name in an especial manner. When I am gone and the fire of strife begins at any time among you, remember what particular charge I now give you, and let it quench it presently.’ Again, observe how he delivers this precept, and that is by way of gift and privilege. ‘A new commandment I give unto you.’ Indeed, this was Christ’s farewell sermon, the very streakings of that milk which he had fed them withal. Never dropped a sweeter discourse from his blessed lips. He saved his best wine till the last. He was now making his will, and amongst other things that he bequeaths his disciples, he takes this commandment, as a father would do his seal-ring off his finger, and gives it to them. Again, thirdly, he doth not barely lay the command before them, but, to make it the more effectual, he annexeth in a few words the most powerful argument why they should, as also the most clear and full direction how they might, do this, that is possible to be given—As I have loved you, that ye

also love one another.

O Christians, what may not the love of Christ command you? If it were to lay down your lives for him that loved you to death, would you deny them? and shall not this his love persuade you to lay down your strifes and divisions? This speaks enough, how much weight he laid upon this commandment. But then, again, observe how Christ, in the same sermon, over and over again minds them of this; which if he had not been very solicitous of, should not have had so large a room in his thoughts at that time, when he had so little time left in which he was to crowd and sum up all the heavenly counsel and comfort he desired to leave with them before his departure. Nay, so great weight he lays on this, that he seems to lock up his own joy and theirs together in the care that they should take about this one command of loving one another, 'These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might reMal. in you, and that your joy might be full,' John 15:11. What these things were appears by the precedent verse, 'If ye keep my commandment, ye shall abide in my love.' These were the things that he spake of in order to {keep} his joy in them, and theirs in him, that they would 'keep his commandments.' Now, to let them know how high a place their obedience to this particular command of love and unity had in his heart, and how eminently it conduced to the continuing his joy in them, and filling up their own; he chooseth that above any for this instance, in order to what he had said, as you may see, John 15:12, 'This is my commandment, That ye love one another.' Observe still, how Christ appropriates this commandment to himself. 'This is my commandment;' as if he would signify to them that as he had one disciple, who went by the name of 'the disciple whom Jesus loved,' so he would have a darling commandment, in which he takes some singular delight, and that this should be it, 'their loving one another.' But we are not yet at the last link of this golden chain of Christ's discourse. When he hath put some more warmth into their affections to this duty, by exposing his own love to them in the deepest expression of it, even to die for them, John 15:13, then he comes on more boldly, and tells them he will own them for his friends, as they are careful to observe what he had left in charge with them, John 15:14, 'Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.' And now taking it for granted that he had prevailed upon them, and that they would walk in unity and love as he had commanded them, he cannot conceal the pleasure he takes therein, yea and in them for it. He opens his heart to them, and locks no secret from them, yea bids them go and open their heart to God and be free to him, as he is to them. And mark from what blessed hour all this familiarity that they are admitted to, bears date. 'From henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth,' John 15:15, that is from the time you walk dutiful to me and lovingly to one another. One would think he had now said enough; but he thinks not so. In the very next words he is at it again. 'These things I command you, that ye love one another,' John 15:17, as if all he had left else in charge with them had been subservient to this.

(2.) A second thing that speaks Christ's heart deeply engaged in the promoting of love and unity among Christians, is his fervent prayer for this. Should you hear a preacher with abundance of vehemency press a grace or duty upon the people in his pulpit, and as soon as sermon is done, you should go under his closet window, and hear him as earnestly wrestling with God that he would give his people what he had so zealously pressed upon them; you would easily believe the man was in earnest. Our blessed Saviour hath taught us ministers whither to go when we come out of the pulpit, and what to do. No sooner hath he done his sermon to them, but he is at prayer with God for them. And what he insisted on most in preaching he enlargeth most upon in prayer.

Unity and peace was the legacy he desired so much to leave with them, and this is the boon he puts in strongly with God to bestow on them: ‘Father, keep through thine own power those whom thou hast given me,’ John 17:11. And why all this care?—‘that they may be one, as we are.’ As if he had said, ‘Father, did we ever fall out? was there ever discord betwixt us? why then should they, who are thine and mine, disagree?’ So, John 17:21, and again, John 17:23, he is pleading hard for the same mercy. And why so oft? is it so hardly wrung from God, that Christ himself must tug so often for it? No, sure; but as Christ said of the voice that came from heaven, ‘This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes;’ John 12:30, so may I say here. This ingeminated[12] zeal of Christ for his people’s unity and love was for their sakes.

(a) He would by this raise the price of this mercy in their thoughts. That is sure worth their care which he counted. Worth his redoubled prayer—when not a word was spoken for his own life—or else he misplaced his zeal, and improved not his time with God for the best advantage of his people.

(b) He would make divisions appear more scareful and dreadful things to his people, by putting in so many requests to God for preventing them. Certainly if Christ had known one evil worse than another like to come upon his people at his departure, he would have been so true and kind to his children as to deprecate that above all, and keep that off. He told his children what they must look for at the world’s hand—all manner of sufferings and torments that their wit could help their malice to devise —yet he prays not so much for immunity from these, as from unbrotherly contentions among themselves. He makes account, if they can agree together, and be in love, saint with saint, church with church, that they have a mercy that will alleviate the other, and make it tolerable, yea joyous. This heavenly fire of love among themselves will quench the flames of the persecutor’s fire, at least the horror of them.

(c) In a word, Christ would, as strengthen our faith to ask boldly for that which he hath bespoke for us, so also aggravate the sin of contention to such a height, that all who have any love to him, when they shall see they cannot live in strife, but they must sin against those prayers which Christ with strong cries put up for peace and unity, may tremble at the thoughts of it.

(3.) The price that Christ gave for the obtaining of this peace and unity. As Christ went from preaching up peace to pulling down peace from heaven by prayer, so he went from praying to paying for it. Indeed Christ’s prayers are not beggar’s prayers, as ours are; he prays his Father that he may only have what he pays for. He was now on the way to the place of payment, Calvary, where his blood was the coin he laid down for this peace. I confess peace with God was the chief pearl that this wise merchant, Christ, bought up for his people. But he had this in his eye also, viz. love to the brethren; and therefore the sacrament of the Lord’s supper, which is the commemoration feast of Christ’s death, as it seals our peace with God, so it signifies our love one to another, 1 Corinthians 10:1-33. And need I now give you any account why our dear Lord pursued his design so close of knitting his people in peace and unity together? Truly the church is intended by Christ to be his house, in which he means to take up his rest. And what rest could he take in a house all on fire about him? It is his kingdom; and how can his laws be obeyed, if all his subjects be in a hubbub one against another? Inter arma silent leges—laws are silent amid arms. In a word, his church are a people that are called out of the world to be a praise to him in the sight of the nations, as Peter saith, ‘God did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his

name,' Acts 15:14—that is, a people for his honour. But a wrangling divided people would be little credit to the name of Christ. Yea such, where they are foun d—and where alas are they not to be found?—are to the name of Christ as smoke and dirt to a fair face. They crock and disfigure Christ, so that the world will not acknowledge him to be who he saith he is; they lead them even into temptation to think basely of Christ and his gospel. Christ prays his people may be made perfect in one, and mark his argument—'That the world may know that thou hast sent me,' John 17:23. Whose heart bleeds not to hear Christ blasphemed at this day by so many black mouths? and what hath opened them more than the saints' divisions?

2. Argument. The second argument shall be taken from yourselves; for your own sakes live in peace and unity.

(1.) Consider your obligations to love and unity; your relations call for it. If believers, Paul tells you your kindred, 'Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,' Galatians 3:26; not only children of God, so are all by creation, but by faith in Jesus Christ also. Christ is the foundation of a new brotherhood to believers. O Christians! consider how near you are set one to another. You are conceived in the same womb of the church, begotten by the same seed of the word to this new creation, whereby, as one saith, you become brethren of the whole blood, and therefore there should be more unity and dear affection among you than among any others. Joseph's heart went out more to Benjamin, than any of the rest of his brethren, because he was his brother both by father and mother. If you fall out, who shall agree? what is it that can rationally break your peace? Those things which use to be bones of contention, and occasion squabbling among other brethren, Christ hath taken care to remove them all, so that of all others, your quarrellings are most childish, yea sinful. Sometimes one child finds himself grieved at the partiality of his parents' affection, more set on some others than himself, and this makes him envy them, and they despise him. But there is no such foundling in his God's family—all dear alike to Christ: 'Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us,' Ephesians 5:2, that is, for one as well as another. Christ in the church is like the soul in the body, he is totus in toto, et totus in qualibet parte—every member in Christ hath whole Christ, his whole heart and love, as if there were none besides himself to enjoy it.

Again, among men, though the father shows not so much partiality in his affection, yet oft great inequality in the distribution of his estate. Though all are children, yet not all heirs, and this sows the seed of strife among them; as Jacob found by woeful experience. But Christ hath made his will so, that they are all provided for alike, called therefore the 'common salvation,' Jude 1:3, and 'the inheritance of the saints in light,' Colossians 1:12, for the community. All may enjoy their happiness without justling with or prejudicing of one another, as millions of people who look upon the same sun, and at the same time, and none stand in another's light. Methinks that speech of Christ looks a little this way, 'The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one,' John 17:22. By 'glory' there I would understand heaven's glory principally. Now saith Christ, 'I have given it,' that is, in reversion, I have given it them; not this or that favourite, but 'them'—I have laid it out as the portion of all sincere believers, and why? 'that they may be one,' that all squabbles may be silenced, and none may envy another for what he hath above him, when he sees glory in his. It is true indeed some difference there is in Christians' outward garb—some poor, some rich —and in common gifts also—some have more of them, some less. But are these tanti? of such weight, to commence a war upon, among those that wait for the same heaven? If the

father clothes all his children in the same cloth, it were sad to see them stab one another, because one hath a lace more than the other; nay because one's lace is red, and the other's green; for indeed the quarrel among Christians is sometimes, not for having less gifts than another, but because they are not the same in kind, though another, as good and useful, which possibly he wants whom we envy.

(2.) Consider where you are, and among whom. Are you not in your enemies' quarters? If you fall out, what do you but kindle a fire for them to warm their hands by? 'Aha! so would we have it,' say they. The sea of their rage will weaken this bank fast enough; you need not cut it for them. The unseasonableness of the strife betwixt Abraham's herdsmen and Lot's is aggravated by the near neighbourhood of the heathens to them: 'And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land,' Genesis 13:7. To fall out while these idolaters looked on—this would be town-talk presently, and put themselves and their religion both to shame. And I pray, who have been in our land all the while the people of God have been scuffling? Those that have curiously observed every uncomely behaviour among them, and told all the world of it —such as have wit and malice enough to make use of it for their wicked purposes. They stand on tiptoes to be at work; only we are not yet quite laid up and disabled, by the soreness of those our wounds, which we have given ourselves, from withstanding their fury. They hope it will come to that; and then they will cure us of our wounds, by giving one, if they can, that shall go deep enough to the heart of our life, gospel and all. O Christians! shall Herod and Pilate put you to shame? They clapped up a peace to strengthen their hands against Christ; and will not you unite against your common enemy? It is an ill time for mariners to be fighting, when an enemy is boring a hole at the bottom of their ship.

(3.) Consider the sad consequences of your contentions.

(a) You put a stop to the growth of grace. The body may as well thrive in a fever, as the soul prosper when on a flame with strife and contention. No, first this fire in the bones must be quenched, and brought into its natural temper, and so must this unkindly heat be slaked among Christians before either can grow. I pray observe that place, 'But speaking the truth in love'—or being sincere in love—'may grow up into him in all things,' Ephesians 4:15. The apostle is upon a cure, showing how souls that at present are weak and their grace rather wan and withered than growing, may come to thrive and flourish; and the recipe he gives is a composition of these two rare drugs, sincerity and love. Preserve these, and all will do well; as Ephesians 4:16, where the whole body is said to 'edify itself in love.' There may be preaching, but no edifying, without love. Our times are a sad comment upon this text.

(b) You cut off your trade with heaven at the throne of grace. You will be little in prayer to God, I warrant you, if much in squabbling with your brethren. It is impossible to go from wrangling to praying with a free spirit. And if you should be so bold as to knock at God's door, you are sure to have cold welcome. 'Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift,' Matthew 5:24. God will not have the incense of prayer put to such strange fire; nor will he eat of our leavened bread, taste of any performance soured with malice and bitterness of spirit. First the peace was renewed, and a covenant of love and friendship struck between Laban and Jacob, Genesis 31:44, and then, 'Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread,' Genesis 31:54. The very heathens thought

no serious business could be well done by quarrelling spirits. Therefore the senators of Rome used to visit the temple dedicated Jovi depositorio, because there they did deponere inimicitias—lay down all their feuds and controversies, before they went into the senate to consult of state affairs. Durst not they go to the senate, till friends? and dare we go up to God's altar, bow our knees to him in prayer, while our hearts are roiled and swollen with anger, envy, and malice? O God humble us.

(c) As we cut off our trade with heaven, so with one another. When two countries fall out, whose great interest lies in their mutual traffic, they must needs both pinch by the war. Truly, the Christians' great gains come in by their mutual commerce, and they are the richest Christians commonly who are seated with the greatest advantage for this trade. As no nation have all their commodities of their own growth, but needs some merchandise with others; so there is no Christian that could well live without borrowing from his brethren. There is 'that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part,' Ephesians 4:16. Paul himself is not so well laid in, but he hopes to get something more than he hath from the meanest of those he preacheth to. He tells the Christians at Rome, Romans 1:1-32, he longs to see them, as to impart some spiritual gift to them, Romans 1:11, so, saith he, 'that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me,' Romans 1:12; yea, he hopes to be 'filled with their company,' Romans 15:24. As a man is filled with good cheer, so he hopes to make a feast of their company. Now contentions and divisions spoil all intercourse between believers. They are as baneful to Christian communion, as a great pestilence or plague is to the trade of a market town. Communication flows from communion, and communion that is founded upon union. The church grows under persecution. That sheds the seed all over the field, and brings the gospel where else it had not been heard of. But divisions and contentions, like a furious storm, wash the seed out of the land, with its heart, fatness, and all.

(d) You do not only hazard the decay of grace, but growth of sin. Indeed, it shows there is more than a little corruption got within doors already; but it opens the door to much more, 'If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not,' James 3:14; that is do not think you are such good Christians. This stains all your other excellencies. Had ye the knowledge and gifts of the holy angels, yet this would make you look more like devils than them. He gives the reason, 'For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work,' James 3:16. Contention is the devil's forge, in which if he can but give a Christian a heat or two, he will not doubt but to soften him for his hammer of temptation. Moses himself when his spirit was a little hot 'spake unadvisedly with his lips.' It must needs be an occasion of much sinning, which renders it impossible for a man while in his distemper to do any one righteous action. 'For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God,' James 1:20. Now what a sad thing is it for Christians to stay long in that temper in which they can do no good to one another, but provoke lust?

(e) They are prognostics of judgment coming. A lowering sky speaks of foul weather at hand; and mariners look for a storm at sea, when the waves begin to swell and utter a murmuring noise. Hath there been nothing like these among us? What can we think but a judgment is breeding, by the lowering countenances of Christians, their swellings of heart, and discontented passions vented from their swollen spirits, like the murmuring of waters, or rumbling of thunder in the air before a tempest? When children fight and wrangle, now is the time they may expect their father to come and part them with his rod. 'He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of

the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse,' Malachi 4:6. Strife and contention set a people next door to a curse. God makes account he brings a heavy judgment upon a people when himself leaves them. If the master leaves the ship, it is near sinking indeed. And truly no readier way to send him going, than by contentions. These smoke him out of his own house. 'Be of one mind,' saith the apostle, 'and the God of love and peace shall be with you,' 2 Corinthians 13:11—implying, if they did not live in peace, they must not look to have his company long with them. God was coming in Moses with a great salvation to the Israelites, and, as a handsel of the good services he was to do for them, he begins to make peace between two discontented brethren as they strove; but his kindness was not accepted, and this was the occasion of many years' misery more that they endured in Egypt. 'Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Midian,' Acts 7:29. And there was no news of deliverance for the space of 'forty years' after, ver. 30. And have not our dissensions, or rather our rejecting those overtures which God by men of healing spirits have offered for peace, been the cause why mercy hath fled so fast from us, and we left to groan under those sad miseries that are upon us at this day? and who knows how long? O who can think what a glorious morning shone upon England in that famous Parliament begun 1640, and not weep and weep again to see our hopes for a glorious reformation, that opened with them, now shut up in blood and war, contention and confusion!—miseries too like the fire and brimstone that fell from heaven upon those unhappy cities of the plain.

3. Argument. O labour for peace and unity, for others's sake, I mean those who at present are wicked and ungodly, among whom ye live. We are not, saith Austin, to despair of the wicked, but do our utmost they may be made good and godly: quia numerus sanctorum, semper de numero impiorum auctus est —because God ever calls his number out of the heap and multitude of the ungodly world. Now, no more winning means to work upon them, and pave a way for their conversion, than to commend the truths and ways of God to them, by the amiableness of your love and unity that profess the same. This is the cumin-seed that would draw souls, like doves, to the window. This is the gold, to overlay the temple of God, the church, so as to make all in love with its beauty that look into it. Every one is afraid to dwell in a house haunted with evil spirits; and hath hell a worse than the spirit of division? O Christians, agree together and your number will increase. It is said, 'They, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,' Acts 2:46. And mark what follows: 'They had favour with all the people, and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved,' Acts 2:47. The world was so great a stranger to love and peace, that it was amused, and set of considering what heavenly doctrine that was, which could so mollify men's hearts, plane their rugged natures, and joint them so close in love together, and were the more easily persuaded to adopt themselves into the true family of love. But alas, when this gold became dim—I mean, peace among Christians faded—then the gospel lost credit in the world, and the doctrine of it came under more suspicion in their thoughts, who, seeing such clefts gape in their walls, were more afraid to put their heads under its roof, 'I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please,' Song of Solomon 2:7. Cotton, on the place, 'by the roes and hinds of the field'—which are fearful creatures, easily scared away, yet otherwise willing to feed with the sheep—takes the Gentiles to be meant; inclinable to embrace the Jewish religion, but very soon scared away by the troublesome state of it, or any offensive carriage of the Jews. And what more offensive carriage

than divisions and strifes? See them joined together, ‘Mark them which cause divisions and offences,’ Romans 16:17. If divisions, then there are sure to be offences taken, and many possibly hardened in their sins thereby. Do not your hearts tremble to lay the stumbling block for any to break his neck over? to roll the stone over any poor sinner’s grave, and seal him down in it, that he never have a resurrection to grace here or glory hereafter? As you would keep yourselves free of the blood of those that die in their sins, O take heed of lending anything by your divisions to the hardening of their souls in their impenitency!

FOURTH KIND OF PEACE.

[Peace of indemnity and service the blessing of the gospel.] The fourth and last sort of peace which I thought to have spoken of, is a peace with all the creatures, even the most fierce and cruel. I called it a peace of indemnity and service. This, Adam, in his primitive state, enjoyed. While he was innocent, all the creatures were innocent and harmless to him. The whole creation was at his service. No mutinous principle was found in any creature that did incline it in the least to rebel against him. When God sent the beasts of the field and fowls of the air to receive names from him, it was that they should do their homage to him and acknowledge him as their lord; and that he, by exercising that act of authority over them—in giving them names —might have an experiment of his perfect, though not absolute and independent, dominion over them. But no sooner did man withdraw his allegiance from God; than all the creatures—as if they had been sensible of the wrong man by his apostasy had done his and their Maker, by whose patent he had held his lordship over them —presently forget their subjection to him, yea, take up arms in their supreme Lord’s quarrel against apostate man. And thus they continue in array against him, till God and man meet together again in a happy covenant of peace; and then the commission, which God in wrath gave them against rebel man, is called in; and, in the same day that God and the believing soul are made friends, the war ends between him and them. ‘In that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven,’ Hosea 2:18. And mark the day from whence this covenant bears date: ‘In that day,’ that is, in the day that ‘I betroth thee unto me.’ So that our peace with the creatures comes in by our peace with God. And this being the blessing of the gospel, so must that also. But as our peace with God is not so perfectly enjoyed in this life, but God hath left himself a liberty to chastise his reconciled ones, and that sharply too; so our peace with the creatures doth not hinder but that they may be, yea often are, the rod which God useth to correct them with. The water may drown one saint, and the fire consume another to ashes, and yet these creatures at peace with these saints; because they are not sent by God in wrath against them, for any real hurt that God means them thereby. This indeed was the commission he gave all the creatures against apostate man as part of his curse for his sin. He sent the creatures against him—as a prince doth his general against a company of traitors in arms against him—with authority to take vengeance on them for their horrid rebellion against their Maker. But now the commission is altered, and runs in a more comfortable strain. Go, fire, and be the chariot in which such a saint may be brought home from earth to me in heaven’s glory. Go, water, waft another; and so of all the rest. Not a creature comes on a worse message to a saint. It is true they are sharp corrections as to the present smart they bring; but they are ever mercies, and do a friendly office in the intention of God and happy issue to the believer. ‘All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose,’ Romans 8:28. And the apostle speaks it as a common principle well known among the saints. ‘We know that all things

work,' &c., as if he had said, 'Where is the saint that doth not know this?' And yet it were happy for us {if} we knew it better. Some of us would then pass our days more comfortably than now we do. But I intend not a discourse of this. Let brevity here make amends for prolixity in the former. We come, however, to the third inquiry or question from these words propounded.

DIRECTION VII.—THIRD GENERAL PART.

[What is meant by the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace.] 'Shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace' (Ephesians 6:15).

Let us now ask what is meant by this 'preparation of the gospel of peace' with which the Christian's feet are to be 'shod?' or thus, What grace doth this 'preparation,' with which we are to be 'shod,' signify? and, Why called 'the preparation of the gospel of peace.'

Question First—What is meant by this preparation of the gospel of peace? As for the grace held forth by this 'preparation of the gospel of peace,' I find great variety in the apprehensions of the learned, and indeed variety rather than contrariety. I shall therefore spare the mentioning them—many of which you may find in a bunch collected by the Rev. Dr. Gouge upon the place, with his thoughts upon them—and crave the boldness to lay down with due respect to others, the apprehensions I have had thereon, which I conceive, will rather amplify than thwart their sense. Now what this ©J@4µ"F\"—or preparation, is, will best appear by considering the part it is designed for—and that is 'the foot,' the only member in the body to be shod—and the piece of armour it is compared to, and that is the soldier's shoe, which (if right) is to be of the strongest make, being not so much intended for finery as defence. So necessary is this piece of armour indeed, that, for want of it alone, the soldier in some cases is disabled for service, as when he is called to march far on hard ways, and those, may be, strewed with sharp stones. How long will he go, if not shod, without wounding or foundering? Or, if the way be good, but the weather bad, and his feet not fenced from the wet and cold, they are not so far from the head but the cold, got in them, may strike up to that; yea [may] bring a disease on the whole body, which will keep him on his bed when he should be in the field. As many almost are surfeited as slain in armies. Now, what the foot is to the body, that the will is to the soul. The foot carries the whole body, and the will the soul; yea, the whole man, body and soul also. Voluntas est loco motiva facultas—we go whither our will sends us. And what the shoe is to the foot, that 'preparation,' or, if you please, a readiness and alacrity, is to the will. The man whose feet are well shod fears no ways, but goes through thick and thin, foul or fair, stones or straws; all are alike to him that is well shod; while the barefooted man, or slenderly shoed, shrinks when he feels the wet, and shrieks when he lights on a sharp stone. Thus, when the will and heart of a man is prompt, and ready to do any work, the man is, as it were, shod and armed against all trouble and difficulty which he is to go over in the doing of it. They say the Irish tread so light on the ground that they will run over some bogs wherein any other almost would stick or sink. A prepared ready heart, I am sure, will do this in a spiritual sense. None can walk where he can run. He makes nothing of afflictions, yea persecutions, but goes singing over them. David was never so merry as in the cave, Psalms 57:1-11. And how came he so? 'My heart is prepared, O God, my heart is prepared,' saith he, 'I will sing and give praise,' Psalms 57:7. If David's heart had not been shod with this preparation, he would not have liked the way he was in so well. You would have had him sing to another tune, and heard him quarrel with his destiny, or fall out with his profession, that had put him to so much trouble, and driven him from the pleasures

of a prince's court, to hide himself under ground in a cave from those that hunted for his precious life. He would have spent his breath rather in pitying and be moaning himself than in praising of God. An unprepared heart, that is not well satisfied with its work or condition, hangs back, and, though it may be brought to submit to it with much ado, yet it is but as a foundered horse on a stony way, which goes in pain every step, and would oft be turning out of the path, if bit and whip did not keep him in.

Question Second.—But why is it called 'the preparation of the gospel of peace?'

Because the gospel of peace is the great instrument by which God works the will and heart of man into this readiness and preparation to do or suffer what he calls to. It is the business we are set about, when preaching the gospel, to make 'a willing people,' Psalms 110:1-7—'to make ready a people prepared for the Lord,' Luke 1:17. As a captain is sent to beat up his drum in a city, to call in a company that will voluntarily list themselves to follow the prince's wars, and be in a readiness to take the field and march at an hour's warning,—thus the gospel comes to call over the hearts of men to the foot of God, to stand ready for his service, whatever it costs them. Now this it doth, as it is a 'gospel of peace.' It brings the joyful tidings of peace concluded betwixt God and man by the blood of Jesus. And this is so welcome to the trembling conscience of poor sinners, who before melted away their sorrowful days in 'a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation from the Lord to devour them as his adversaries; that no sooner [is] the report of a peace concluded betwixt God and them, sounded in their ears by the preaching of the gospel, and certainly confirmed to be true in their own consciences by the Spirit—who is sent from heaven to seal it to them, and give them some sweet gust [taste] of it, by shedding abroad the sense of it in their souls—but instantly there appears a new life in them; to the effect that they, who before were so fearful and shy of every petty trouble as to start and boggle at the thought of it—knowing it could bring no good news to them—are now, 'shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace,' able to go out smilingly to meet the greatest sufferings that are, or can be, on the way towards them, and say undauntedly to them, as once Christ did to those that came with swords and staves to attack him, 'Whom seek ye?' 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God,' saith the apostle, Romans 5:1. And this, how mightily doth it work! even to make them 'glory in tribulations.' The words opened afford these two points or doctrines. first. It is our duty to be always prepared and ready to meet with any trial, and endure any hardship, which God may lay out for us in our Christian warfare. second. The peace which the gospel brings and speaks to the heart, will make the creature ready to wade through any trial or trouble that meets him in his Christian course.

FIRST DOCTRINE.

[The saints' duty to be always prepared for trials.]

It is our duty, as Christians, to be always prepared and ready to meet with any trial, and endure any hardship, which God may lay out for us in our Christian warfare. Saints are sure to want no trials and sufferings. 'These,' as Christ saith of the poor, 'we shall have always with us.' The bloody sweat which Christ felt signified, saith Augustine, the sufferings which in his whole mystical body he should endure. Christ's whole body was lift upon the cross, and no member must now look to escape the cross. And, when the cross comes, how must we behave ourselves towards it? It will not speak us Christians, that we are merely passive, and make no notorious resistance against the will of God; but we must be active in our patience, if I may so speak, by showing a holy

readiness and alacrity of spirit to be at God's ordering, though it were to be led down into the very chambers of death itself. That epitaph would not become a Christian's gravestone, which I have heard was engraved upon one's tomb, and might too truly on most that die: 'Here lies one against his will.' Holy Paul was of a better mind, 'I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus,' Acts 21:13. But, may be, this was but a flourish of his colours, when he knew the enemy to be far enough off; he may yet live to change his thoughts, when he comes to look death in the face. No, what he hath said he stands to: 'I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand,' FBX<*@µ"4, 2 Timothy 4:6. He speaks of it as if it were already done. Indeed he had already laid his head on the block, and was dead before the stroke was given, not with fear (as some have been), but with a free resignation of himself to it; and, if a malefactor be civiliter mortuus—dead in a law sense, as soon as the sentence is out of the judge's mouth, though he lives some weeks after, then I am sure in a gospel sense we may say those are dead already that are ready to die, that have freely put themselves under the sentence of it in their own willingness. And this alacrity and serenity that was on Paul's spirit was the more remarkable if we consider how close he stood to his end. Indeed, some from the word FBX<*@µ"4—which properly signifieth a libation or drink offering—conceive that Paul knew the very kind of death which he should suffer, namely, beheading; and that he alludes to the pouring out of the blood or wine, used in sacrifice, as that kind of sacrifice which did best illustrate the nature of his death, viz. the pouring out of his blood, which he did as willingly offer up in the service of Christ and his church as they did pour out their wine in a drink-offering to the Lord. We shall now give some rational account of the point why we are to be ready and prompt at suffering-work. The reasons of the point shall fall under two heads. First. [Those] taken from Christ, for or from whom we suffer. Second. Those taken from the excellency of such a temper as this readiness to endure any hardship imports.

[Why we are to be always ready for trials —Reasons in regard of Christ.]

First. There are reasons taken from Christ, for or from whom we suffer, why we are to be always prepared for trials.

Reason First. Christ commands this frame of spirit. Indeed, this frame of spirit is implied in every duty as the modus agendi—that qualification which, like the stamp on coin, makes it current in God's account. 'Put them in mind,' saith the apostle, 'to be ready to every good work,' Titus 3:1; be it active or passive, they must be ready for it, or else all they do is to no purpose. The word there is the same with this in the text, and is taken from a vessel that is fashioned and fitted for the use the master puts it to. We do not like, when we are to use, or to mend and scour, a vessel, cup, or pot, to have them out of the way at the time we call for them; but to find them at hand, on the shelf, clean and fit for present use, or our servants shall hear of it. Thus God expects we should keep our hearts clean from the defilements of sin, and our affections whole and entire for himself—that they be not lent out to the creature, nor broken and battered by any inordinacy of delight in them, lest we should be to seek when he calls us to do or suffer, or be found very unprepared, without much ado to set us to right, and make us willing for the work, as the same apostle, 'If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work,' 2 Timothy 2:21. Now, as God commands this readiness in all, so especially in suffering-work: 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me,' Luke 9:23. These words may be called the Christian's indenture.

Every one that will be Christ's servant must seal to this before he hath leave from Christ to call him Master; wherein you see the chief provision Christ makes is about suffering-work, as that which will most try the man. If the servant can but fadge[13] with that, no fear but he will like the other part of his work well enough. Now, I pray observe how careful Christ is to engage the heart in this work; he will have his servants not only endure the hardship of his service, but show their readiness in it also. Four remarkable passages are put in for this purpose.

1. The Christian 'must deny himself'—that is, deliver up his own will out of his own hands; and, from that day that he enters into Christ's service, acknowledge himself not to be sui juris—at his own disposal. Whatever Christ bears, he cannot{,} to hear his servants, when sent by him on any business, say, 'I will not.'

2. Christ tells his people the worst at first, and chooseth to speak of the cross they must bear, rather than [of] the crown they shall at last wear; and withal, that he expects they should not only 'bear' it—this the wicked do full sore against their wills—but also 'take it up.' Indeed he doth not bid them make the cross, run themselves into trouble of their own head, but he will have them take that up which he makes for them—that is, not step out of the way by any sinful shift to escape any trouble, but to accept of the burden God lays for them, and go cheerfully under it, yea thankfully, as if God did us a favour to employ us in any suffering for him. We do not take so much pains as to stoop to take up that which is not worth something. Christ will have his people take up the cross as one does to take up a pearl that lies on the ground before him.

3. This they must do every day—'take up his cross daily.' When there is none on his back, he must carry one in his heart, that is, continually be preparing himself to stand ready for the first call, as porters stand at the merchants' doors in London, waiting for when their masters have any burden for them to carry. Thus Paul professeth he 'died daily.' How, but by a readiness of mind to die? He set himself in a posture to bid God's messenger welcome, whenever it came. This indeed is to 'take up the cross daily,' when our present enjoyments do not make us strange to, or fall out with, the thoughts of future trials. The Jews were to eat the passover with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand, and in all haste, Exodus 12:11. When God is feasting the Christian with present comforts, he must have this gospel shoe on, he must not set to it as if he were feasting at home, but as at a running meal on his way in an inn, willing to be gone as soon as he is refreshed a little for his journey.

4. When the cross is on—what then? then the Christian must 'follow Christ.' He is not [to] stand still and fret, but 'follow;' not be drawn and hauled after Christ, but [to] follow, as a soldier his captain, voluntarily. Christ doth not, as some generals, drive the country before him, and make his servants fight whether they will or no; but he invites them in, 'I will allure her...into the wilderness,' Hosea 2:14. Indeed a gracious heart follows Christ into the wilderness of affliction as willing as a lover his beloved into some solitary private arbour or bower, there to sit and enjoy his presence. Christ useth arguments in his word, and by his Spirit, so satisfactory to the Christian, that he is very willing to follow him; as the patient, who at first, may be, shrinks and draws back, when the physician talks of cutting or bleeding, but, when he hath heard the reasons given by him why that course must be taken, and is convinced it is the best way for his health, then he very freely puts forth his arm to the knife, and thanks the physician for his pains.

Reason Second. Christ deserves this frame of spirit at our hands. Of many, take but two particulars, wherein this will appear. 1. If we consider his readiness to endure trouble and sorrow for us. 2. [If we consider] his tender care over us, when he calls us into a suffering condition.

1. Christ deserves this readiness to meet any suffering he lays out in his providence for us, if we consider his readiness to endure sorrow and trouble for us. When God called him to the work of mediatorship, he found the way laid with sharper stones, I hope, than we do in the road that is appointed us to walk in. He was to tread upon swords and spikes, all manner of sorrows—and those edged with the wrath of God; this was the sharpest stone of all, which he hath taken out of our way, and yet how light did he go upon the ground! O had not his feet been well shod with love to our souls, he would soon have turned back, and said the way was unpassable; but he goes on and blinks not; never did we sin more willingly, than he went to suffer for our sin. 'Lo, I come,' saith he to his Father, 'I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart,' Psalms 40:7-8. O what a full consent did the heart of Christ rebound to his Father's call, like some echo that answers what is spoken twice or thrice over! Thus, when his Father speaks to him to undertake the work of saving poor lost man, he doth not give a bare assent to the call, but trebles it; 'I come...I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart.' He was so ready, that before his enemies laid hands on him, in the instituting of the Lord's supper, and there did sacramentally rend the flesh of his own body, and broach his own heart to fill that cup with his precious blood, which with his own hand he gave them, that they might not look upon his death now at hand as a mere butchery from the hand of man's violence, but rather as a sacrifice, wherein he did freely offer up himself to God for them and all believers. And when the time was come that the sad tragedy should be acted, he, knowing the very place whither the traitor with his black guard would come, goes out, and marcheth into the very mouth of them. O what a shame were it, that we should be unwilling to go a mile or two of rugged way to bear so sweet a Saviour company in his sufferings! 'Could ye not watch with me one hour?' said Christ to Peter, Matthew 26:40—not with me, who am now going to meet with death itself, and ready to bid the bitterest pangs of it welcome for your sakes? not with me?

2. Christ deserves this readiness to meet any suffering he lays out in his providence for us, if we consider his tender care over his saints, when he calls them into a suffering condition. Kind masters may well expect cheerful servants. The more tender the captain is over his soldiers, the more prodigal they are of their own lives at his command. And it were strange, if Christ's care, which deserves more, should meet with less ingenuity in a saint. Now Christ's care appears,

(1.) In proportioning the burden to the back he lays it on. That which overloads one ship, and would hazard to sink her, is but just ballast for another of a greater burden. Those sufferings which one Christian cannot bear, another sails trim and even under. The weaker shoulder is sure to have the lighter carriage. As Paul burdened some churches, which he knew more able, to spare others; so Christ, to ease the weaker Christian, lays more weight on the stronger. 'Paul laboured more abundantly than them all,' he tells us, 1 Corinthians 15:10. But why did Christ so unequally divide the work? Observe the place, and shall find that it was but necessary to employ that abundant grace he had given him. 'His grace,' saith he, 'which was bestowed on me, was not in vain; but I laboured more,' &c. There was so much grace poured into him, that some of it would have been in vain, if God had not found him more to do and suffer than the rest. Christ hath a perfect rate by him of every saint's spiritual estate, and according to this all are assessed, and so none are

oppressed. The rich in grace can as easily pay his pound, as the poor his penny. Paul laid down his head on the block for the cause of Christ as freely as some—and those true, but weak Christians —would have done a few pounds out of their purse. He endured death with less trouble than some could have done reproach for Christ. All have not a martyr's faith, nor all the martyr's fire. This forlorn consists of a few files picked out of the whole army of the saints.

(2.) In the consolations he gives them then (in exceedings) above other of their brethren, that are not called out to such hard service. That part of an army which is upon action in the field is sure to have their pay—if their masters have any money in their purse or care of them—yea, sometimes, when their fellows left in their quarters are made to stay. I am sure, there is more gold and silver—spiritual joy I mean, and comfort—to be found in Christ's camp, among his suffering ones, than their brethren at home, in peace and prosperity, ordinarily can show. What are the promises, but vessels of cordial wine, tunned on purpose against a groaning hour, when God usually broacheth them? 'Call upon me (saith God) in the day of trouble,' Psalms 50:15. And may we not do so in the day of peace? yes, but he would have us most bold with him in a 'day of trouble.' None find such quick despatch at the throne of grace as suffering saints. 'In the day when I cried (saith David), thou answeredst me, and gavest me strength in my soul,' Psalms 138:3. He was now at a strait, and God comes in haste to him. Though we may make a well friend stay, that sends for us, yet we will give a sick friend leave to call us up at midnight. In such extremities we usually go with the messenger that comes for us, and so doth God with the prayer. Peter knocks at their gate, who were assembled to seek God for him, almost as soon as their prayer knocked at heaven-gate in his behalf. And truly it is no more than needs, if we consider the temptations of an afflicted condition. We are prone then to be suspicious our best friends forget us, and to think every stay a delay and neglect of us. Therefore God chooseth to show himself most kind at such a time: 'As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ,' 2 Corinthians 1:5. As man laid on trouble, so Christ laid on consolation. Both tides rose and fell together. When it was spring-tide with him in affliction, it was so with him in his joy. We relieve the poor as their charge increaseth; so Christ comforts his people as their troubles multiply. And now, Christian, tell me, doth not thy dear Lord deserve a ready spirit in thee to meet any suffering with, for, or from him, who gives his sweetest comforts when his people use to expect their saddest sorrows? Well may the servant do his work cheerfully, when his master is so careful of him as with his own hands to bring him his breakfast into the fields. The Christian stays not till he come to heaven for all his comfort. There indeed shall be the full supper; but there is a breakfast, Christian, of previous joys, more or less, which Christ brings to thee in the field, and shall be eaten on the place where thou endurest thy hardship.

(3.) In seasonable succours which Christ sends to bring them off safe. He doth not only comfort them in, but helps them out of, all their troubles. There is ever a door more than the Christian sees in his prison, by which Christ can, with a turn of his hand, open a way for his saint's escape. And what can we desire more? All is well that ends well. And what better security can we desire for this than the promise of the great God, with whom to lie is impossible? And I hope the credit which God hath in his people's hearts is not so low, but a bill under his hand will be accepted at first sight by them in exchange of what is dearest to them—life itself not excepted. Look to thyself when thou hast to do with others. None so firm, but may crack under thee, if thou layest too much weight on them. One would have thought so worthy a captain as Uriah was, might have trusted his general,

yea his prince, and he so holy a man as David was. But he was unworthily betrayed by them both into the hands of death. Man may, the devil, to be sure, will, leave all in the lurch that do his work. But if God sets thee on, he will bring thee off; never fear a ‘look thou to that’ from his lips, when thy faithfulness to him hath brought thee into the briers. He that would work a wonder, rather than let a runaway prophet perish in his sinful voyage—because a good man in the main—will heap miracle upon miracle rather than thou shalt miscarry and sink in thy duty. Only, be not troubled, if thou beest cast overboard, like Jonah, before thou seest the provision which God makes for thy safety. It is ever at hand, but sometimes lies close, and out of the creature’s sight, like Jonah’s whale—sent of God to ferry him to shore —underwater, and the prophet in its belly, before he knew where he was. That, which thou thinkest comes to devour thee, may be the messenger that God sends to bring thee safe to land. Is not thy shoe, Christian, yet on? Art thou not yet ready to march? Canst [thou] fear any stone can now hurt thy foot through so thick a sole?

[Why we are to be always ready for trials—reasons from the excellency of such a spirit.]

Second. There are reasons why Christians should always be prepared for trials, taken from the excellency of the frame of spirit which such a holy readiness would import.

First. This readiness of heart to stoop to the cross evidenceth a gracious heart. And a gracious spirit, I am sure, is an excellent spirit. Flesh and blood never made any willing to suffer either for God or from God. He that can do this, hath that ‘other spirit’ with Caleb, which proves him of a higher descent than this world, Numbers 14:24. A carnal heart can neither act nor suffer freely; voluntas libera, in quantum liberata—the will is no more free than it is made free by grace (Luther). So much flesh as is left in a saint, so much awkness[14] and unwillingness to come to God’s foot; and therefore where there is nothing but flesh, there can be nothing but unwillingness. He that can find his heart following God in his command or providence cheerfully, may know who hath been there (as one said of the famous Grecian limner). This is a line that none but God could draw on thy soul. The midwives said of the Israelitish women, they were not like the Egyptian in bringing forth their children, for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives could come in unto them, Exodus 1:19. Truly thus lively and ready is the gracious heart in anything it is called to do or suffer. It is not delivered with so much difficulty of a duty as a carnal heart, which must have the help and midwifery of some carnal arguments, or else it sticks in the birth. But the gracious heart has done before these come to lend their helping hand. Pure love to God, obedience to the call of his command, and faith on the security of his promise, facilitate the work, so that, be it never so burdensome to the flesh, yet it is not grievous to their spirit. It is ever ready to say, ‘Thy will be done, and not mine.’ The apostle makes this free submission to the disclosure to the disposure of God’s afflicting hand to evidence a son’s spirit, ‘If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons,’ Hebrews 12:7. Observe, he doth not say, ‘If you be chastened,’ but, ‘If ye endure chastening.’ Naked suffering doth not prove sonship, but ÛB@µ,<,4< B"4*,\"< doth—to endure it so as not to sink in our courage, or shrink from under the burden God lays on, but readily to offer our shoulder to it, and patiently carry it, looking with a cheerful eye at the reward when we come—not to throw it off, but to have it taken off by that hand which laid it on, all which the word imports. This shows a childlike spirit. And the evidence thereof must needs be a comfortable companion to the soul, especially at such a time, when that sophister of hell useth the afflictions which lie upon it as an argument to disprove its child’s relation to God. Now—to have this answer to stop the liar’s mouth at hand—Satan, if I be not a child, how could I so readily submit to the

Lord's family discipline? This is no small mercy.

Second. This frame of spirit makes him a free man that hath it. Now no mean price useth to be set upon the head of liberty. The very birds had rather be abroad in the woods with liberty—though lean with cold and care —to pick up here and there a little livelihood, than in a golden cage with all their attendance. Now truly there is a bondage which few are sensible of, and that is a bondage to the creature —when a man is so enslaved to his enjoyments and low contentments here on earth, that they give law to him that should give law to them, and measure out his joy to him (what he shall have), little or much, as he abounds with or is cut short of them. Thus, some are slaves to their estates; it is said, 'Their heart goes after their covetousness'—that is, as the servant after the master, who dares not be from his back. Their money is the master, and hath the best keeping. Their heart waits on it, shall I say as a servant after his master? yea, as a dog at his master's foot. Others are as great slaves to their honours, so poor-spirited that they cannot enjoy themselves if they have not the cap and knee of all they meet. Such a slave was Haman, the great favourite of his prince. Who but he at court? At the expense of a few words he could get the king's ring to seal a bloody decree for the massacring of so many thousands of innocent persons, against all sense and reason of state, merely to fulfill his lust. Had not this man honour enough put upon him to content his ambitious spirit? No, there is a poor Jew at the king's gate will not make a leg to him as he goes by, and so roils his proud stomach, that he has no joy of all his other greatness, 'Yet all this availeth me nothing,' saith the poor-spirited wretch, 'so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate,' Esther 5:13. A third sort are as much in bondage to their pleasures. They are said to 'live in pleasure on the earth,' James 5:5. Their life is bound up in their pleasures. As the rush grows in the mud, and the fish lives in the water, they cannot live without their pleasures. Take them from their feasts and sports, and their hearts, with Nabal's, die like a stone in their bosoms. Now this frame of spirit we are speaking of breaks all these chains, and brings the Christian out of every house of bondage. It learns him to like what fare God sends. If prosperity comes, he 'knows how to abound,' so, that if he be, by a turn of providence, thrown out of the saddle of his present enjoyments, his foot shall not hang in the stirrup, nor his enslaved soul drag him after it with whining desires. No, through grace he is a free man, and can spare the company of any creature, so long as he may but have Christ's with him. Blessed Paul stands upon his liberty. 'All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any,' 1 Corinthians 6:12. I know the place is meant of those indifferent things, concerning which there was a present dispute. There is but another sense, in which all things here below were indifferent things to that holy man; honour or dishonour, abundance or want, life or death. These were indifferent to Paul, he would not come under the power of any one of them all. It did not become a servant of Christ, he thought, to be so tender of his reputation as to write himself undone when he had not this or that—not to be so in love with abundance as not to be ready to welcome want—not to be endeared so to life as to run from the thoughts of death —nor to be so weary of a suffering life as to hasten death to come for his ease. That mind is to be called superior which chooses rather to meet and show the experiences of life, than to escape them.

Third. This readiness to suffer, as it ennobles with freedom, so it enables the Christian for service. It is a sure truth [that] so far and no more is the Christian fit to live serviceably, than he is prepared to suffer readily. Because there is no duty but hath the cross attending on it; and he that is offended at the cross, will not be long pleased with the service that brings it. Prayer is the daily

exercise of a saint. This he cannot do as he should, except he can heartily say, ‘Thy will be done.’ And who can do that in truth, unless ready to suffer? Praising God is a standing duty; yea, ‘in everything we must give thanks,’ 1 Thessalonians 5:18. But, what if affliction befalls us? How shall we tune our hearts to that note, if not ready to suffer? Can we bless God, and murmur?—praise God, and repine? The minister’s work is to preach, ‘Woe to him if he do not;’ and if he do preach, he is sure to suffer. Paul had his orders for the one, and his mittimus for the other, together. He was sent at the same time to preach the grace of God to the world and to endure the wrath of the world for God. So God told Ananias, ‘that he should bear his name before the Gentiles,’ and ‘suffer great things for his name’s sake,’ Acts 9:15-16. And if the gospel did not please the ungrateful world out of Paul’s mouth, who had such a rare art of sweetening it, it were strange that any who fall so far short of his gifts to move in the pulpit, and of his grace to win upon the hearts of men when out, should, if they mean to be faithful, think to go without the wages which the world paid him for his pains—reproach and contempt, if not downright blows of bloody persecution, as he met with. And is not this shoe needful for the preacher’s foot, that is to walk among so many hissing serpents? Who but a Paul, that had got over the fond love of life, and fear of a bloody death, would have been so willing to go into the very lion’s den, and preach the gospel there, where in a manner, he invited death to come unto him?—I mean at Rome itself, the seat of cruel Nero. ‘So much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also; for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,’ Romans 1:15-16. In a word, it is the duty of every Christian to make a free profession of Christ. Now this cannot be done without hazard many times. And if the heart be not resolved in this point—what to do; the first storm that riseth will make the poor man put in to any creek or hole, rather than venture abroad in foul weather. ‘Among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue,’ John 12:42. Poor souls, they could have been content if the coast had been clear to have put forth, but had not courage enough to bear a little scorn that threatened them. O what folly is it to engage for God, except we be willing to lay all at stake for him! It is not worth the while to set out in Christ’s company by profession, except we mean to go through with him, and not leave him unkindly when we are half way, because of a slough or two.

Fourth. This readiness of spirit to suffer, gives the Christian the true enjoyment of his life. A man never comes to enjoy himself truly, in any comfort of his life, till prepared to deny himself readily in it. It is a riddle; but two considerations will unfold it.

1. Consideration. When we are prepared to deny ourselves in any comfort we may enjoy, then, and not till then, is that which hinders the enjoyment of our lives taken away; and that is fear. Where there is, ‘there is torment.’ The outsetting deer is observed to be lean—though where good food is—because always in fear. And so must they needs be, in the midst of all their enjoyments, on whose heart this virtue is continually feeding. There needs nothing else to bring a man’s joy into a consumption, than an inordinate fear of losing what he hath at present. Let but this get hold of a man’s spirit, and [he] once become hectical[15], and the comfort of his life is gone past recovery. How many, by this, are more cruel to themselves, than it is possible their worst enemies in the world could be to them? They alas, when they have done their utmost, can kill them but once. But, by antedating their own miseries, they kill themselves a thousand times over, even as oft as the fear of dying comes over their miserable hearts. When once, however, the Christian hath got this piece of armour on—‘the gospel of peace’—his soul is prepared for death and danger. He sits at

the feast which God in his present providence allows him, and fears no messenger with ill news to knock at his door. Yea, he can talk of his dying hour, and not spoil the mirth of his present condition, as carnal men think it does. To them a discourse of dying in the midst of their junkets, is like the coming in of the officer to attack a company of thieves that are making merry together with their stolen goods about them; or, like the wet cloth that Hazael clapped on the king his master's face, it makes all the joy, which flushed out before, squat in on a sudden, [so] that the poor creatures sit dispirited and all a mort, as we say, till they get out of this affrighting subject by some divertisement or other. [And even when they do so, the effect is] only to relieve them for the present. It puts them out of that particular fit which this brought upon them; but leaves them deeper in slavery to such amazement of heart, whenever the same ghost shall appear for the future. Whereas, the Christian, that hath this preparation of heart, never tastes more sweetness in the enjoyments of this life, than when he dips these morsels in the meditation of death and eternity. It is no more grief to his heart to think of the remove of these—which makes way for those far sweeter enjoyments—than it would be to one at a feast, to have the first course taken off, when he hath fed well on it, that the second course of all rare sweetmeats and banqueting stuff may come on, which it cannot till the other be gone. Holy David, Psalms 23:4-6, brings in (as it were), a death's head with his feast. In the same breath almost he speaks of his dying, Psalms 23:4, and of the rich feast he at present sat at, through the bounty of God, Psalms 23:5. To that however he was not so tied by the teeth, but if God, that gave him this cheer, should call him from it to look death in the face, he could do so and 'fear no evil, when in the valley of the shadow thereof,' Psalms 23:4. And what think you of the blessed apostle Peter? Had not he, think you, the true enjoyment of his life? when he could sleep so sweetly in a prison—no desirable place—fast bound 'between two soldiers' —no comfortable posture—and this the very 'night' before Herod 'would have brought him forth' in all probability to his execution! This was no likely time (one would think) to get any rest; yet we find him even there, thus, and then, so sound asleep, that the angel who was sent to give him his gaol delivery smote him on the side to awake him, Acts 12:6-78. I question whether Herod himself slept so well that night as this his prisoner did. And what was the potion that brought this holy man so quietly to rest? No doubt 'this preparation of the gospel of peace.' He was ready to die, and that made him able to sleep. Why should that break his rest in this world, which, if it had been effected, would have brought him to his eternal rest in the other?

2. Consideration. The more ready and prepared the Christian is to suffer from God, or for God, the more God is engaged to take care for him, and of him. A good general is most tender of that soldier's life who is least tender of it himself. The less the Christian values himself and his interests for God's sake, the more careful God is of him, either to keep him from suffering, or in it. Both of these blessings are meant, 'Whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it,' Matthew 16:25. Abraham was ready to offer up his son, and then God would not suffer him to do it. But if the Lord at any time takes the Christian's offer, and lets the blow be given, though to the severing of soul and body, he yet shows his tender care of him, by the high esteem he sets upon their blood, which is not more prodigally spilt by man's cruelty, than carefully gathered up by God. 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.'

Thus we see, that by resigning ourselves up readily to the disposure of God, we engage God to take care of us whatever befalls us. And that man or woman, sure, if any other in the world, must needs live comfortably, that hath the care of himself wholly taken off his own shoulders, and rolled

upon God, at whose finding he now lives. The poor widow was never better off than when the prophet kept house for her. She freely parted with her little meal for the prophet's use, and, [as] a reward of her faith—in crediting the message he brought from the Lord, so far as to give the bread out of her own mouth, and child's, to the prophet—she is provided for by a miracle, 1 Kings 17:12-13. O when a soul is once thus brought to the foot of God, that it can sincerely say, 'Lord, here I am; willing to deliver up all I have, and am, to be at thy dispose; my will shall be done, when thou hast thy will of me;' God accounts himself deeply obliged to look after that soul!

USE OR APPLICATION.

[True Christians few, shown from the gospel holy readiness to suffer.]

Use First. Must the Christian stand thus shod in readiness to march at the call of God in any way or weather? This will exceedingly thin and lessen the number of true Christians, to what they appear to be at the first view, by the estimate of an easy cheap profession. He that should come into our assemblies, and see them thracked and wedged in so close with multitudes flocking after the word, might wonder at first to hear the ministers sink the number of Christians so low, and speak of them as so little a company. Surely their eyes fail them, that they cannot see wood for trees, Christians for multitudes of Christians that stand before them. This very thing made one of the disciples ask Christ with no little stranging [wondering] at it, 'Lord, are there few that be saved?' Luke 13:23. Observe the occasion of this question. Christ, 'went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem,' Luke 13:22. He saw Christ so free of his pains to preach at every town he came to, and people throng after him, with great expressions of joy that fell from many, Luke 13:17. Then said he, 'Lord, are there few that be save d?' As if he had said, This seems very strange and almost incredible. To see the way to heaven strewed so thick with people, and the means of salvation in such request, and yet be few saved at last! how can this be? Now mark our Saviour's unriddling this mystery. 'And he said unto them (it seems the man spoke more than his own scruple), Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able,' Luke 13:24. As if Christ had said, You judge by a wrong rule. If profession would serve the turn, and flocking after sermons, with some seeming joy at the word, were enough to save, heaven would soon be full. But, as you love your souls, do not boult[16] or try yourselves by this coarse sieve; but 'strive to enter,' •(T<Æ.,F2,—fight and wrestle, venture life and limb, rather than fall short of heaven. 'For many shall seek,...but shall not be able;' that is, seek by an easy profession, and cheap religion, such as is hearing the word, performance of duties, and the like. Of this kind there are many that will come and walk about heaven-door—willing enough to enter, if they may do it without ruffling their pride in a crowd, or hazarding their present carnal interest by any contest and scuffle; 'but they shall not be able!' that is, they 'shall not be able to enter'—because their carnal cowardly hearts shall not be able to strive. So that take Christians under the notion of 'seekers,' and by Christ's own words they are 'many.' But consider them under the notion of 'strivers,' such as stand ready shod with a holy resolution to strive even to blood—if such trials meet them in the way to heaven—rather than not enter, and then the number of Christian soldiers will shrink, like Gideon's goodly host, to a 'little troop.' O how easy were it to instance in several sorts of Christians—so called in a large sense—that have not this gospel shoe to their foot, and therefore are sure to founder and falter when once brought to go upon sharp stones!

1. Sort. The ignorant Christian—what work is he like to make of suffering for Christ and his gospel? and such are not the least number in many congregations. Now, they who have not so much light of knowledge in their understanding, as to know who Christ is and what he hath done for them, will they have so much heat of love as to march cheerfully after him, when every step they take must fetch blood from them? Nabal thought he gave a rational answer to David's servants, that asked some relief of him in their present strait, when he said, 'Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?' 1 Samuel 25:11. He thought it too much to part with upon so little acquaintance. And will the ignorant person, think you, be ready to part, not only with his bread and flesh out of the pot —a little of his estate I mean—but the flesh of his own body, if called to suffer, and all this at the command of Christ, who is one he knows not whence he is? Paul gives this as the reason why he suffered and was not ashamed, 'for (saith he) I know whom I have believed,' 2 Timothy 1:12. Story tells us of the Samaritans —a mongrel kind of people both in their descent and religion—that, when it went well with the people of God, the Israelites, then they would claim kindred with them, and be Jews, but, when the church of God was under any outward affliction, then they would disclaim it again. And we may the less wonder at this base cowardly spirit in them, if we read the character Christ gives of them, to be a people that 'worship they know not what,' John 4:22. Religion hath but loose hold of them, that have no better hold of it than a blind man's hand.

2. Sort. Carnal gospellers, who keep possession of their lusts while they make profession of Christ. A generation these are that have nothing to prove themselves Christians by, but their baptism, and a Christian name which they have obtained thereby; such as, were they to live among Turks and heathens, their language and conversations—did they but conceal whence they came—would never bewray them to be Christians. Can it now be rationally thought then that these are the men and women who stand ready to suffer for Christ and his gospel? No sure; they who will not wear Christ's yoke will much less bear his burden. If the yoke of command that binds them to duty be thought grievous, they will much more think the burden of the cross insupportable. He that will not do [work] for Christ, will not die for Christ. That servant is very unlike to fight to blood in his master's quarrel, that will not work for him so as to sweat in his service.

3. Sort. The politic professor—a fundamental article in whose creed is, to save himself, not from sin, but from danger. And therefore he studies the times more than the Scriptures; and is often looking what corner the wind lies in, that accordingly he may shape his course, and order his profession, which, like the hedgehog's house, ever opens toward the warm side!

4. Sort. The covetous professor, whose heart and head are so full of worldly projects, that suffering for Christ must needs be very unwelcome to him, and find him far enough from such a disposition. You know what the Egyptians said of the Israelites, 'They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in,' Exodus 14:3. More true is it of this sort of professors. They are entangled in the world, this wilderness hath shut them in. A man whose foot in a snare is as fit to walk and run as they to follow Christ, when to do it may prejudice their worldly interest. Our Saviour, speaking of the miseries that were to come on Jerusalem, saith, 'Woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days,' Matthew 24:19—because it would be more difficult for them to escape the danger by flight. But many more woes to them, who in days of trial and persecution for the gospel, shall be found big with the world, or that give suck to any covetous inordinate affection

to the creature. Such will find it hard to escape the temptation that these will beset them with. It is impossible in such a time to keep estate and Christ together; and as impossible for a heart that is set upon the world, to be willing to leave it for Christ's company.

5. Sort. The conceited professor, who hath a high opinion of himself, and is so far from a humble holy jealously and fear of himself, that he is self-confident. Here is a man shod and prepared he thinks, but not with the right gospel shoe. 'By strength shall no man prevail,' 1 Samuel 2:9. He that, in Queen Mary's days, was so free of his flesh for Christ [that], as he said, he would see his fat—of which he had a good store—melt in the fire rather than fall back to Popery, lived, poor man, to see this his resolution melt, and himself cowardly part with his faith to save his fat. Those that glory of their valour, when they put on the harness, ever put it off with shame. 'The heart' of man 'is deceitful above all things,'—a very Jacob, that will supplant its own self. He that cannot take the length of his own foot, how can he of himself fit a shoe to it?

[Exhortation to get on this shoe of preparation.]

Use Second. Be exhorted all you that take the name of Christ upon you, to get this shoe of preparation on, and keep it on, that you may be ready at all times to follow the call of God's providence, though it should lead you into a suffering condition. Take but two motives.

1. Motive. Consider, Christian, suffering work may overtake thee suddenly, before thou art aware of it; therefore be ready shod. Sometimes orders come to soldiers for a sudden march; they have not so much as an hour's warning, but must be gone as soon as the drum beats. And so mayest thou be called out, Christian, before thou art aware, into the field, either to suffer for God or from God. Abraham had little time given him to deal with his heart, and persuade it into a compliance with God, for offering his son Isaac. A great trial, and short warning, 'Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac,' Genesis 22:2, not a year, a month, a week hence, but now. This was in the night, and Abraham is gone 'early in the morning,' Genesis 22:3. How would he have entertained this strange news, if he had been then to gain the consent of his heart? But that was not now to do. God had Abraham's heart already, and therefore he doth not now dispute his order, but obeys. God can make a sudden alteration in thy private affairs, Christian; how couldst thou in thy perfect strength and health, endure to hear the message of death? If God should, before any lingering sickness hath brought thee into some acquaintance with death, say no more, but 'Up and die,' as once to Moses, art thou shod for such a journey? Couldst thou say, 'Good is the word of the Lord?' What if one day thou wert to step out of honour into disgrace, to be stripped of thy silks and velvets, and, in vile raiment, called to act a beggar's part? Couldst thou rejoice that thou art made low, and find thy heart ready to bless the Most High? This would speak thee a soul evangelically shod indeed.

Again, God can as soon change the scene, in the public affairs of the times thou livest in, as to the gospel and profession of it. May be, now, authority smiles on the church of God; but, within a while it may frown, and the storm of persecution arise. 'Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea,' Acts 9:31. This was a blessed time. But how long did it last? Alas! not long, see Acts 12:1-25. There is sad news of a bloody persecution in the first verse of it. 'Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.' In this persecution James the brother of John lost his life by his cruel sword; and Peter we find in prison, like to go to the same shambles. The entire church, indeed, is driven into a corner to pray in the night together, Acts 12:12. O what a sad change is here! Now in blood, who even now had 'rest' on every side. It

is observed that in islands the weather is far more variable and uncertain than in the continent. Here you may know, ordinarily, what weather will be for a long time together; but in islands, in the morning we know not what weather will be before night. We have ofttimes summer and winter in the same day. And all this is imputed to the near neighbourhood of the sea that surrounds them. The saints in heaven, they live, as I may so say, on the continent. A blessed constancy of peace and rest is there enjoyed. They may know by what peace and bliss they have at present, what they shall have to eternity. But here below, the church of Christ is as a floating island, compassed with the world —I mean men of the world—as with a sea; and these [i.e. men of the world] sometimes blow hot, and sometimes cold; sometimes they are still and peaceable, and sometimes enraged and cruel, even as God binds up or lets loose their wrath. Now, Christian, doth it not behove thee to be always in a readiness, when thou knowest not but in the next moment the wind may turn into the cold corner, and the times which now favour the gospel, so as to fill the sails of thy profession with all encouragement, on a sudden blow full on thy face, and oppose it as much as it did before countenance it?

2. Motive. Consider, if thy feet be not shod with a preparation to suffer for Christ here on earth, thy head cannot be crowned in heaven. ‘If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ,’ Romans 8:17. Now mark the following words, ‘If so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together.’ It is true, all the saints do not die martyrs at a stake; but every saint must have a spirit of martyrdom, as I may so call it—a heart prepared for suffering. God never intended Isaac should be sacrificed, yet he will have Abraham lay the knife to his throat. Thus God will have us lay our neck on the block, and be, as Paul said of himself, ‘bound in the spirit,’ under a sincere purpose of heart to give up ourselves to his will and pleasure, which is called ‘a presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God,’ Romans 12:1. The end in view is, that as the Jew brought the beast alive, and presented it freely before him, to be done withal as God had commanded, so we are to present our bodies before God, to be disposed of as he commands, both in active and passive obedience. He that refuseth to suffer for Christ, refuseth also to reign with Christ. The putting off of the shoe among the Jews was a sign of a man’s putting off the right of an inheritance, Deuteronomy 25:9-10. Thus did Elimelech’s kinsman, when he renounced and disclaimed any right that he might have in his estate—he drew off his shoe, Ruth 4:7-8. O Christian, Talk heed of putting off thy gospel shoe! By this thou dost disclaim thy right in heaven’s inheritance. No portion is there laid up for any that will not suffer for Christ. The persecutions which the saints endure for the gospel, are made by Paul an evident token to them of salvation, and that of God, Php 1:28. Surely then the denying Christ, to escape suffering, is a sad token of perdition. O sirs, is not heaven’s inheritance worth enduring a little trouble for it? Naboth’s vineyard was no great matter, yet rather than he would—not lose it, but—sell it to its worth, or change it for a better in another place, chose to lay his life at stake by provoking a mighty king. Thou canst, Christian, venture no more for thy heavenly inheritance, than he paid for refusing his petty patrimony of an acre or two of land—thy temporal life I mean. And besides the odds between his vineyard on earth and thy paradise in heaven —which is infinite, and suffers no proportion, thou hast this advantage also of him in thy sufferings for Christ. When Naboth lost his life, he lost his inheritance also that he so strove to keep; but thy persecuting enemies shall do thee this friendly office against their wills, that when they dispossess thee of thy life, they shall help thee into possession of thy inheritance.

[Directions for helping on this spiritual shoe.] The great question I expect now to fall from thy mouth, Christian, is not how mayest thou escape these troubles and trials which, as the evil genius of the gospel, do always attend it? but rather, how thou mayest get this shoe on, thy heart ready for a march to go and meet them when they come, and cheerfully wade through them, whatever they be, or how long soever they stay with thee? This is a question well becoming a Christian soldier, to ask for armour wherewith he may fight; whereas the coward throws away his armour, and asks whether he may flee. I shall therefore give the best counsel I can, in these few particulars.

First Direction. Look carefully to the ground of thy active obedience, that it be sound and sincere. The same right principles whereby the sincere soul acts for Christ, will carry him to suffer for Christ, when a call from God comes with such an errand, 'The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle,' Psalms 78:9. Why? what is the matter? so well armed, and yet so cowardly? This seems strange. Read the precedent verse, and you will cease wondering. They are called there 'a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God.' Let the armour be what it will, yea, if soldiers were in a castle whose foundation were a rock, and its walls brass, yet, if their hearts be not right to their prince an easy storm will drive them from the walls, and a little scare open their gate, which hath not this bolt of sincerity on it to hold it fast. In our late wars we have seen that honest hearts within thin and weak works have held the town, when no walls would defend treachery from betraying trust. O labour for sincerity in the engaging at first for God and his gospel! Be oft asking thy own soul for whom thou prayest, hearest, reformest this practice and that. If thou canst get a satisfactory answer from thy soul here, thou mayest hope well. If faith's working hand be sincere, then its fighting hand will be valiant. That place is observable, Hebrews 11:33 'Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire,' and with other great things, that faith enabled them to endure, as you may read in Hebrews 11:34-36. There note, I pray, how the power of faith enabling the Christian to 'work righteousness'—that is, live holily and righteously—is reckoned among the wonders of sufferings which it strengthened them to endure. Indeed had it not done this, it would never have endured these.

Second Direction. Pray for a suffering spirit. This is not a common gift, which every carnal gospeller and slighty professor hath. No; it is a peculiar gift, and bestowed on a few sincere souls. 'Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake,' Php 1:29. All the parts and common gifts that a man hath will never enable him to drink deep of this cup for Christ. Such is the pride of man's heart. He had rather suffer any way than this; rather from himself, and for himself, than from Christ or for Christ. You would wonder to see sometimes, how much a child will endure at his play, and never cry for it—this fall, and that knock, and no great matter is made of it, because got in a way that is pleasing to him. But, let his father whip him, though it puts him not to half the smart, yet he roars and takes on, that there is no quieting of him. Thus, men can bring trouble on themselves, and bite in their complaints. They can, one play away his estate at cards and dice, and another whore away his health, or cut off many years from his life by beastly drunkenness; and all is endured patiently. Yea, if they had their money and strength again, they should go the same way. They do not repent of what their lusts have cost them, but mourn they have no more to bestow upon them. Their lusts shall have all they have, to a morsel of

bread in their cupboard and drop of blood in their veins; yea, they are not afraid of burning in hell, as their sins' martyrs. But come, and ask these that are so free of their purse, flesh, soul, and all, in lust's service, to lay their estate or life for a few moments at stake in Christ's cause and his truth's, and you shall see that God is not so much beholden them. And therefore pray and pray again for a suffering spirit in Christ's cause. Yea, saints themselves need earnestly to plead with God for this. Alas! they do not find suffering work follow their hand so easily. The flesh loves to be cockered, not crucified. Many a groan it costs the Christian before he can learn to love this work. Now prayer, if any means, will be helpful to thee in this particular. He that can wrestle with God, need not fear the face of death and danger. Prayer engageth God's strength and wisdom for our help. And what is there too hard for the creature, that hath God at his back for his help, to do or suffer? We are bid to 'count it all joy, when we fall into divers temptations,' James 1:2—not temptations to sin, but for righteousness. He means troubles for Christ and his gospel. Ah! but might the poor Christian say, it were cause of more joy to be able to stand under these temptations, than to fall into them. Little joy would it be to have the temptation, and not the grace to endure temptation. True indeed; but, for thy comfort, Christian, he that leads thee into this temptation stands ready to help thee through it. Therefore, ver. 5, there is a gracious si quis —if any one—set up; 'If any of you'—i.e. you suffers chiefly—'lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.' This, methinks, should not much strain our faith to believe. There are not many masters so disingenuous to be found, that would twit and upbraid their servant for asking humbly their counsel in a work of peril and difficulty, which they cheerfully undertake out of love to their persons and obedience to their command. How much less then needest thou fear such dealing from thy God? If thou hast so much faith and love as to venture at his command upon the sea of suffering, he will, without doubt, find so much mercy as to keep thee from drowning, if, feeling thyself begin to sink, thou criest earnestly as Peter did to him, 'Lord, save me.' Wert thou even under water, prayer would buoy thee up again. The proverb indeed is, 'He that would learn to pray, let him go to sea.' But I think it were better thus, 'He that would go to sea—this I mean of suffering—let him learn to pray before he comes there.' But, if thou beest not a man of prayer before suffering work come, thou wilt be able to do little at that weapon then.

Third Direction. Be much in the meditation of a suffering state. He will say his lesson best, when his master calls him forth, that is oftenest conning[17] it over beforehand to himself. Do by the troubles thou mayest meet with, as porters used to do with their burdens—they will lift them again and again, before they take them on their back. Thus do thou. Be often lifting up in thy meditations those evils that may befall thee for Christ and his truth; and try how thou couldst fadge [agree] with them, if called to endure them. Set poverty, prison, banishment, fire, and fagot, before thee, on the one hand; and the precious truths of Christ on the other, with the sweet promises made to those that shall hold fast the word of patience held forth in such an hour of temptation. Suppose it were now thy very case, and thou wert put to thy choice which hand thou wouldst take, study the question seriously, till thou determinest it clearly in thy conscience. And do this often, so that the arguments which flesh and blood will then be sure to use for thy pitying thyself, may not be new and unanswered, nor the encouragements and strong consolations which the word affords be strange and under any suspicion in thy thoughts, when thou art to venture thy life upon their credit and truth. That of Augustine we shall find most true, non facile inveniuntur præsidia in adversitate, quæ non fuerint in pace quæsita—the garrisons are not easily found in adversity which were not

sought for and known during peace. The promises are our garrison and fastness at such a time; and we shall not find it easy to run to them in a strait, except we were acquainted with them in a time of peace. A stranger that flies to a house for refuge in the dark night, he fumbles about the door, and knows not how to find the latch—his enemy, if nigh, may kill him before he can open the door. But one that lives in the house, or is well acquainted with it, is not long a getting in. ‘Come, my people,’ saith God, ‘enter thou into thy chambers,’ Isaiah 26:20. He is showing them their lodgings in his attributes and promises, before it is night and their sufferings be come, that they may readily find the way to them in the dark.

Fourth Direction. Make a daily resignation of thyself up to the will of God. Indeed this should be, as it were, the lock of the night and the key of the morning. We should open and shut our eyes with this recommending of ourselves into the hands of God. This, if daily performed—not formally, as all duties frequently repeated, without the more care, are like to be; but solemnly—would sweetly dispose the soul for a welcoming of any trial that can befall him. The awkness of our hearts to suffer comes much from distrust. An unbelieving soul treads upon the promise as a man upon ice—at the first going upon it, it is full of fears and tumultuous thoughts lest it should crack. Now this daily resignation of thy heart, as it will give thee an occasion of conversing more with the thoughts of God’s power, faithfulness, and other of his attributes—for want of familiarity with which, jealousies arise in our hearts when put to any great plunge—so also it will furnish thee with many experiences of the reality both of his attributes and promises; which, though they need not any testimony from sense to gain them any credit with us, yet, so much are we made of sense, so childish and weak is our faith, that we find our hearts much helped by those experiences we have had, to rely on him for the future. Look therefore carefully to this; every morning leave thyself and ways in God’s hand, as the phrase is, Psalms 10:14. And at night, look again, how well God hath looked to his trust, and sleep not till thou hast affected thy heart with his faithfulness, and laid a stronger charge on thy heart to trust itself again in God’s keeping in the night. And when any breach is made, and seeming loss befall thee in any enjoyment, which thou hast by faith insured of thy God, observe how God fills up that breach, and makes up that loss to thee; and rest not till thou hast fully vindicated the good name of God to thy own heart. Be sure thou lettest no discontent or dissatisfaction lie upon thy spirit at God’s dealings; but chide thy heart for it, as David did his, Psalms 42:1-11. And thus doing, with God’s blessing, thou shalt keep thy faith in breath for a longer race, when called to run it.

Fifth Direction. Make self-denial appear as rational and reasonable as thou canst to thy soul. The stronger the understanding is able to reason for the equity and rationality of any work or duty, the more readily and cheerfully it is done, if the heart is honest and sincere. Suppose, Christian, thy God should call for thy estate, liberty, yea, life and all; can it seem unreasonable to thee? especially,

1. If thou considerest that he bids thee deliver his own, not thy own. He lent thee these, but he never gave away the propriety of them from himself. Dost thou wrong thy neighbour to call for that money thou lentest him a year or two past? No sure, thou thinkest he hath reason to thank thee for lending it to him, but none to complain for calling it from him.

2. Consider that he doth not, indeed cannot, bid thee deny so much for him as he hath done for thee. Is reproach for Christ so intolerable, that thy proud spirit cannot brook it? Why, who art thou?

what great house comest thou from? See One that had more honour to lay at stake than I hope thou darest pretend to—Jesus Christ—who 'thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation,' Php 2:6-7. Is it pain and torment thou art afraid of? O look up to the cross where the Lord of life hung for thy sins! and thou wilt take up thy own cross more willingly, and thank God too, that he hath made thine so light and easy, when he provided one so heavy and tormenting for his beloved Son.

3. Consider, whatever God calls thee to deny for his truth, it is not more than he can recompense. Moses saw this, and that made him leap out of his honours and riches into the reproach of Christ, 'for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward,' Hebrews 11:26. It is much that a man will deny himself in for something his heart strongly desires in this life. If a man be greedy of gain, he will deny himself half of a night's sleep to plot in his bed, or rise early from it to be at his work; he will eat homely fare, go in vile raiment, dwell in a smoky hole, as we see in London, for the conveniency of a shop. How men of quality will crowd themselves up into a little corner, though to the prejudice of their healths, and hazard sometimes of their lives! yet, hope of gain recompenseth all. And now, put their gains into the scale with thine Christian, that are sure to come in by denying thyself for Christ, which theirs are not, and ask thy soul whether it blush not to see them so freely deny themselves of the comfort of their lives for an imaginary, uncertain, at best a short advantage, while thou hucklest[18] so with Christ for a few outward enjoyments, which shall be paid thee over a hundred-fold here, and beyond what thou canst now conceive when thou comest to heaven's glory!

Sixth Direction. Labour to carry on the work of mortification every day to further degrees than other. It is the sap in the wood that makes it hard to burn, and corruption unmortified that makes the Christian loath to suffer. Dried wood will not kindle sooner, than a heart dried and mortified to the lusts of the world will endure anything for Christ. The apostle speaks of some that were 'tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection,' Hebrews 11:35. They did not like the world so well, as being so far on their journey to heaven—though in hard way—to be willing to come back to live in it any longer. Take heed, Christian, of leaving any worldly lust unmortified in thy soul. This will never consent thou shouldest endure much for Christ. Few ships sink at sea; they are the rocks and shelves that split them. Couldst thou get off the rocks of pride and unbelief, and escape knocking on the sands of fear of man, love of the world, thou wouldst do well enough in the greatest storm that can overtake thee in the sea of this world. 'If a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for his Master's use, and prepared unto every good work,' 2 Timothy 2:21. O that we knew the heaven that is in a mortified soul! one that is crucified to the world and lusts of it. He hath the advantage of any other in doing or suffering for Christ, and enjoying Christ in both. A mortified soul lives out of all noise and disturbance from those carnal passions, which put all out of quiet where they come. When the mortified soul goes to duty there are not those rude and unmannerly intrusions of impertinent, carnal, yea sinful thoughts, between him and his God. Is he to go to prison? Here is not such weeping and taking on; no lust to hang about his legs, and break his heart with its insinuations; no self-love to entreat him that he would pity himself. His heart is free, got out of the acquaintance of these troublers of his peace; and a prison to him, if he may go upon so honourable an errand as testifying to the truth, O how welcome to him! Whereas a unmortified heart is wedged in with so great acquaintance and kindred, as I may so say, which his heart hath

in the world, that it is impossible to get out of their embraces into any willingness to suffer. A man that comes into an inn in a strange place, he may rise at what time he pleaseth, and be gone as early as he pleaseth in the morning. There are none {to} entreat him to stay. But it is hard to get out of a friend's house; these, like the Levite's father■in■law, will be desiring him to stay one day, and then one more, and another after that. The mortified soul is the stranger. He meets with no disturbance—I mean comparatively—in his journey to heaven; while the unmortified one is linked in fast enough for getting on his journey in haste, especially so long as the flesh hath so fair an excuse as the foulness of the way or weather, any hardship likely to be endured for his profession. I have read of one of the Catos, that, in his old age, he withdrew himself from Rome to his country-house, that he might spend his elder years free from care and trouble. And all the Romans, as they ride by his house, used to say, iste solus scit vivere—this man alone knows how to live. I know not what art Cato had to disburden himself, by his retiring, of the world's cares. I am sure, a man may go into the country and yet not leave the city behind him. His mind may be in a crowd while his body is in the solitude of a wilderness. Alas! poor man, he was a stranger to the gospel. Had he been but acquainted with this, it could have shown him a way out of the world's crowd in the midst of Rome itself, and that is, by mortifying his heart to the world, both in the pleasures and troubles of it; and then that high commendation might have been given him without any hyperbole. For, to speak truth, he only knows aright how to live in the world that hath learned to die to the world. And so much for the first point; which, we may remind you, was, that the Christian is to stand ready for all trials and troubles that may befall him. The second follows.

SECOND DOCTRINE.

[The gospel's blessing of peace prepares the saint for trials.] The peace which the gospel brings and speaks to the heart, will make the creature ready to wade through any trial or trouble that meets him in his Christian course. He who enjoys in his bosom the peace of the gospel, is the person and the only person, that stands shod for all ways, prepared for all troubles and trials. None can make a shoe to the creature's foot, so as he shall go easy on a hard way, but Christ. He can do it to the creature's full content. And how doth he {do} it? Truly by no other way that by underlaying it, or, if you will, lining it, with the peace of the gospel. What though the way be set with sharp stones? if this shoe go between the Christian's foot and them, they cannot much be felt. Solomon tells us that ways of wisdom,—that is, Christ—'are ways of pleasantness.' But how so, when some of them are ways of suffering? The next words resolve it; 'and all her paths are peace,' Proverbs 3:17. Where there is peace—such peace as peace with God and conscience—there can want no pleasure. David goes merry to bed when he hath nothing to supper but the gladness that God by this puts into his heart, and promiseth himself a better night's rest than any of them all that are feasted with the world's cheer; 'Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep,' Psalms 4:7-8. This same peace with God enjoyed in the conscience, redounds to the comfort of the body. Now David can sleep sweetly when he lies on a hard bed. What here he saith he would do, he saith he had done: 'I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me,' Psalms 3:5. The title of the psalm tells us when David had this sweet night's rest, not when he lay on his bed of downs in his stately palace at Jerusalem, but when he fled for his life from his unnatural son Absalom, and possibly was forced to lie in the open field under the canopy of heaven. Truly it must be a soft pillow indeed that could make him forget his danger, who then had such a disloyal army at his

back hunting of him. Yea, so transcendent is the sweet influence of this peace, that it can make the creature lie down as cheerfully to sleep in the grave as on the softest bed. You shall say that child is willing that calls to be put to bed. Some of the saints have desired God to lay them at rest in their beds of dust; and that not in a pet and discontent with their present trouble, as Job did, but from a sweet sense of this peace in their bosoms. 'Now let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation,' was the swan-like song of old Simeon. He speaks like a merchant that had got all his goods on shipboard, and now desires the master of the ship to hoist sail and be gone homewards. Indeed what should a Christian, that is but a foreigner here, desire to stay any longer for in the world, but to get this full lading in for heaven? And when hath he that, if not when he is assured of his peace with God? This peace of the gospel, and sense of the love of God in the soul, doth so admirably conduce to the enabling of a person in all difficulties, and temptations, and troubles, that ordinarily before he calls his saints to any hard service or hot work, he gives them a draught of this cordial wine next their hearts, to cheer them up, and embolden them in the conflict. God calls Abram out of his native country, Genesis 12:1, and what so fit as a promise of Christ to bring his heart to God's foot? Genesis 12:2-3. A sad errand it was that sent Jacob to Padan-aram. He fled from an angry wrathful brother, that had murdered him already in his thoughts, to an unkind, deceitful, uncle, under whom he should endure much hardship. Now God comes in a sweet gospel vision to comfort this poor pilgrim; for by that 'ladder, whose foot stood on earth, and top reached heaven,' Christ was signified to his faith, in whom heaven and earth meet, God and man are reconciled; and, by the 'moving up and down of the angels on the ladder,' the ministry of the angels, which Christ by his death and intercession procures for his saints, that they shall tend on them, as servants on their master's children. So that the sum of all is as much as God had said, 'Jacob, thy brother Esau hates thee, but in Christ I am reconciled to thee, thy uncle Laban, he will wrong thee, and deal hardly by thee, but fear him not. As I am in Christ at peace with thee so through him thou shalt have my especial care over thee, and the guardianship of the holy angels about thee, to defend thee wherever thou goest.' The Israelites when ready to take their march out of Egypt into a desolate wilderness, where they should be put to many plunges, and their faith tried to purpose; to prepare them the more for these, he entertains them at a gospel supper before they go forth—I mean the passover, which pointed to Christ. And no doubt the sweetness of this feast made some gracious souls among them, that tasted Christ in it, endure the hardship and hunger of the wilderness the more cheerfully. And the same care and love did our Lord Jesus observe in the institution of his supper, choosing that for the time of erecting this sweet ordinance when his disciples' feet stood at the brink of a sea of sorrows and troubles, which his death and the consequences of it would inevitably bring upon them. Now the pardon of their sins, sealed to their souls in the ordinance must needs be welcome, and enable them to wade through their sufferings the more comfortably. Indeed, the great care which Christ took for his disciples, when he left the world, was not to leave them a quiet world to live in, but to arm them against a troublesome world. And to do this, he labours to satisfy their poor hearts with his love to them, and his father's love to them for his sake; he bequeaths unto them his peace, and empties it in the sweet consolations of it into their bosoms; for which end he tells them, as soon as he got to heaven, he would pray his Father to send the Comforter to them with all speed, and sends them to Jerusalem, there to stay privately, and not go into the field, or openly contest with the angry world, till they received the strength and succour which the Spirit in his comforts should bring with him. By all which it doth abundantly appear how powerful this gospel peace is to enable the soul for suffering.

Now I proceed to show how this peace doth prepare the heart for all sufferings. And that it doth these two ways. First. As it brings along with it, and possesseth the soul where it comes, with such glorious privileges as lift it above all danger and damage from any sufferings whatever from God, man, or devils. Second. As it is influential unto the saint's graces and affections, exciting them, and making them act to such a height, as lifts the Christian above the fear of trouble and suffering.

[How gospel peace prepares the soul for suffering by its privileges.]

First. Gospel peace prepares the heart for suffering, as it brings along with it, and possesseth the soul where it comes, with such glorious privileges as lift it above all danger from any sufferings whatever, from God man, or devils. If a man could be assured he might walk as safely on the waves of the sea, or in the flames of fire, as he doth in his garden, he would be no more afraid of the one than he is to do the other. Or, if a man had some coat of mail secretly about him, that would undoubtedly resist all blows and quench all shot that are sent against him, it would be no such scareful thing for him to stand in the midst of swords and guns. Now, the soul that is indeed at peace with God, is invested with such privileges as do set it above all hurt and damage from sufferings. 'The peace of God' is said 'to garrison the believer's heart and mind,' Php 4:7. He is surrounded with such blessed privileges, that he is as safe as one in an impregnable castle.

1. Privilege. A person at peace with God becomes then a child of God. And when once the Christian comes to know his relation, and the dear love of his heavenly Father to him, afflictions for or sufferings from him, dread him not, because he knows it is inconsistent with the love of a father, either to hurt his child himself, or to suffer him to be hurt by another, if he can help it. I have often wondered at Isaac's patience to submit to be bound for a sacrifice, and see the knife so near his throat, without any hideous outcries or strugglings that we read of. He was old enough to be apprehensive of death, and the horror of it, being conceived by some to be above twenty years of age. That he was of good growth is out of doubt by the wood which Abraham caused him to carry for the sacrifice. But, such was the authority Abraham had over his son, and the confidence that Isaac had in his father, that he durst put his knife into his hands; which, had the knife been in any other hand, he would hardly have done. Whoever may be the instrument of any trouble to a saint, the rod or sword is at God's disposure. Christ saw the cup in his Father's hand, and that made him take it willingly.

2. Privilege. Every soul at peace with God is heir to God. This follows his relation. 'If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ,' Romans 8:17. This is such a transcendent privilege, that the soul to whom the joyful news of it comes is lift up above the amazing and affrightening fears of any suffering. The apostle having, in the forenamed place, but a little sweetened his thoughts with a few meditations on this soul-ravishing subject, see how his blessed soul is raised into a holy slighting of all the troubles of this life: 'I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us,' Romans 8:18. He will not allow his own soul, or any that hath the hope of this inheritance, so far to undervalue the glory thereof, or the love of God that settled it on them, as to mention the greatness of their sufferings in any way of pitying themselves for them. As if he had said, 'Hath God made us his heirs, and bestowed heaven upon us in reversion, and shall we be so poor-spirited to sit down and bemoan ourselves for our present sorrows, that are no more to be compared with the glory that we are going to, than the little point of time, into which our short life

with all our sufferings are contracted, is to be compared with the vast circumference of that eternity which we are to spend in endless bliss and happiness?' He is a poor man, we say, that one or two petty losses quite undoes; and he is a poor Christian that cries out he is undone by any cross in this life. We may safely conclude such a one either is heir to nothing in the other world, or hath little or no evidence for what he hath here.

[How gospel peace prepares the soul for suffering by its influences.]

Second. Gospel peace prepares the heart for suffering, as it is influential unto the saint's graces and affections, exciting them, and making them act to such a height, as lifts him above the fear of trouble and suffering.

1. Influence. This peace where it is felt, makes the Christian unconquerable in his faith. Nothing is too hard for such a one to believe, that carries a pardon in his conscience, that hath his peace with God sealed to him. Moses was to meet with many difficulties in that great work of conducting Israel out of Egypt towards Canaan. Therefore, to make them all a more easy conquest to his faith, when he should be assaulted with them, God gives him at his very first entering upon his charge an experiment of his mighty power in some miracles—as the turning {of} his rod into a serpent, and that again into a rod, making his hand leprous, and then restoring it again to be as sound as before—that he might never think anything too hard for that God to do towards their salvation and deliverance, even when things seem most desperate. And how unconquerable Moses was after these in his faith, we see. Truly, when God speaks to a poor soul, he gives such a testimony of his almighty power and love, that, so long as the sweet sense of this lasts in the soul, the creature's faith cannot be posed. What doth God in his pardoning mercy, but turn the serpent of the law—with all its threatenings, from which the sinner fled, as that which would sting him to death—into the blossoming rod of the gospel, that brings forth the sweet fruit of peace and life? And which is the greater miracle of the two, think you?—the leprous hand of Moses made clean and sound, or a poor sinner's heart, leprous with sin, made clean and pure by washing in the blood of Christ? Certainly this miracle of mercy, where it is strongly believed to be done, will make it easy for that soul to trust God in a sea of temporal sufferings, and cheerfully follow him through a whole wilderness of troubles in this life. When David hath comfortable apprehensions of God's pardoning mercy, then his faith is up, and can strongly act on God for temporal deliverance. We find him, Psalms 32:5, under the sweet sense of his peace with God, able to vouch God as reconciled to him. 'I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.' And now see, Psalms 32:7, to what a height his faith acts on God as to outward troubles. 'Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.' He spells this, which is the less, from the other, that is incomparably the greater mercy.

2. Influence. This peace with God, where it is felt, fills the heart with love to Christ. The Christian's love to Christ takes fire at Christ's love to him. And the hotter Christ's love lies on the soul, the stronger reflection doth the creature make of love to him again, 'she loved much,' to whom much was 'forgiven,' Luke 7:47. And the more love, the less fear there will be of suffering. We will venture far for a dear friend. When Christ told his disciples Lazarus was dead, Thomas would needs go and die with him for company, John 11:16. So powerful is love, even as strong as death. 'For a good man,' saith the apostle, 'some would even dare to die'—that is, a merciful kind man,

whose had endeared him to them. How much more daring will a gracious soul be to sacrifice his life for a good God? ‘Thy name,’ saith the spouse of Christ, ‘is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee,’ Song of Solomon 1:3. Then Christ’s name is poured forth, when the love of God through him is shed abroad in the soul. Let this precious box be but broke, and the sweet savour of it diffused in the heart, and it will take away the unsavoury scent of the most stinking prison in the world. This heavenly fire of Christ’s love, beaming powerfully on the soul, will not only put out the kitchen fire of creature love; but also the hell fire, as I may call it, of slavish fear. What makes us so aghast at the thoughts of death, especially if it comes towards us in a bloody dress, and hath some circumstances of persecutors’ cruelty, to put a further grimness on its unpleasing countenance? Surely this comes from guilt, and unacquaintance with Christ, and what he hath done for us; who came partly on this very errand into the world, ‘To deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage,’ Hebrews 2:15. And how hath he done it, but by reconciling us to God, and so reconciling us to the thoughts of death itself, as that which only can do us this kind office—bring us and Christ, that hath done all this for us, together.

3. Influence. This peace enjoyed in the Christian’s bosom hath a sweet influence into his self-denial—as grace so necessary to suffering, that Christ lays the cross, as I may so say, upon the back of it. ‘Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me,’ Mark 8:34. Another, with Simon of Cyrene, may be compelled to carry Christ’s cross after him a little way. But, it is the self-denying soul that will stoop willingly, and down on his knees, to have this burden laid on him at Christ’s hand. Now the sense of a soul’s peace with God will enable the creature in a twofold self-denial, and by both, sweetly dispose him for any suffering from or for Christ.

(1.) The sense of this peace will enable the Christian to deny himself in his sinful self. Sin may well be called ourself; it cleaves so close to us, even as members to our body. [It is] as hard to mortify a lust as to cut off a joint. Some sins too are more ourself than others, as our life is more bound up in some members than others. Well, let them be what they will, there is a good day, in which, if Christ asks the head of the proudest lust among them all, he shall have it with less regret than Herodias obtained the Baptist’s at Herod’s hands. And what is that gaudy day, in which the Christian can so freely deny his sin, and deliver it up to justice, but when Christ is feasting him with this ‘hidden manna’ of pardon and peace? A true friend will rather deny himself than one he loves dearly, if it be in his power to grant his request. But, least of all can he deny him, when his friend is doing him a greater kindness at the same time that he asks a less. No such picklock to open the heart as love. When love comes a begging, and that at a time when it is showing itself in some eminent expression of kindness to him at whose door she knocks, there is little fear but to speed. Esther chose that time to engage Ahasuerus’ heart against Haman her enemy, when she expressed her love most to Ahasuerus, viz. at a banquet. When doth God give, or indeed when can he give, the like demonstration of his love to a poor soul, as when he entertains it at this gospel banquet? Now sure, if ever, God may prevail with his child to send the cursed Amalekite to the gallows, his lust to the gibbet. Do you think that Mary Magdalene, when that blessed news dropped from Christ into her mournful heart, that her ‘sins, which were many, were all forgiven her,’ could now have been persuaded to have opened the door to any of her former lovers, and gone out of these embraces of Christ’s love to have played the whore again? No, I doubt not but she would sooner have chosen the flames of martyrdom than of lust. Indeed, that which can make the creature deny a

lust, can make the creature it shall not deny a cross.

(2.) The sense of this peace will enable the Christian to deny himself in his carnal enjoyments. And these the Christian finds his great pull-backs from suffering. As the heart burns in the hot fit of love to the pleasures and profits of this world when he abounds with them, in that degree will his shaking fit of fear and grief be when Christ calls him to part with them. What the sweet wines and dainty fare of Capua was to Hannibal's soldiers, that we shall find any intemperance of heart to the creature will be to us. It will enervate our spirits, and so effeminate us, that we shall have little mind to endure hardship when drawn into the field to look an enemy in the face. Now the sense of this gospel peace will deaden the heart to the creature, and facilitate the work of self-denial as to the greatest enjoyments the world hath. 'God forbid,' saith Paul, 'that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world,' Galatians 6:14. Paul's heart is dead to the world. Now mark what gave the death's wound to his carnal affections. 'By whom,' saith he, 'the world is crucified to me, and I unto it;' that is, Christ and his cross. There was a time, indeed, that Paul loved the world as well who most. But, since he hath been acquainted with Christ, and the mercy of God in him to his soul —pardoning his sins and receiving him into favour and fellowship with himself—he is of another mind. He leaves the world, as Saul his seeking of the asses, at the news of a kingdom; his haunt lies another way now. Let the Zibas of the world take the world, and all they can make of it with their best husbandry. He will not grudge them their happiness, forasmuch as his heavenly Lord and King is come in peace to his soul. None can part with the comfort of the creature so cheerfully as he who hath his mouth at the fountain-head, the love of God himself. Parents are near, and friends are dear, yet a loving wife can forget her father's house, and leave her old friends' company, to go with her husband though it be to a prison. How much more will a gracious soul bid adieu to these, yea life itself, to go to Christ, especially when he hath sent the Comforter into his bosom, to cheer him in the solitariness of the way with his sweet company?

4. Influence. This peace, where it is felt, promotes the suffering grace of patience. Affliction and suffering to a patient soul are not grievous. Patience is, as one calls it, BXR4H J0H RLP0H—the concoctive faculty of the soul —that grace which digests all things, and turns them into good nourishment. Meats of hard digestion will not do well with squeamish weak stomachs, and therefore they are dainty and nice in their diets; whereas men of strong stomachs, they refuse no meat that is set before them; all fare is alike to them. Truly thus there are some things which are of very hard digestion to the spirits of men. The peevish, passionate, short-spirited professor will never concoct reproaches, prison, and death itself, but rather quarrel with his profession, if such fare as these attend the gospel. 'When tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended,' Matthew 13:21. This will not stay in his stomach, but makes him cast up even that which else he could have kept—a profession of Christ—might he have had it with a quiet life and a whole skin. But now the patient soul, he makes his meal of what God in his providence sets before him. If peace and prosperity be served up with the gospel, he is thankful, and enjoys the sweetness of the mercy while it lasts. If God takes these away, and instead of them, will have him eat the gospel feast with sour herbs of affliction and persecution, it shall not make him sick of his cheer. It is but eating more largely of the comforts of the gospel with them, and they go down very well wrapped up in them. Indeed the Christian is beholden to those consolations which flow from the peace of the gospel for his patience. It were impossible for the people of God to endure

with what sometimes they meet with from men and devils also, as they do, had they not sweet help from the sense of God's love in Christ, that lies glowing at their hearts in inward peace and joy. The apostle resolves all the saints' patience, experience, and hope, yea, glorying in their tribulations, into this, as the cause of all, 'Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us,' Romans 5:5. Sin makes suffering intolerable. When that [sin, viz.] is gone, the worst part of the trouble is removed. A light cart goes through that slough easily, where the cart deeply laden is set fast. Guilt loads the soul, and bemires it in any suffering. Take that away, and let God speak peace to his soul, and he that raged before like a madman under the cross, shall carry it without whinching[1] and whining. 'The peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds,' Php 4:7. Now what is patience but the keeping of the heart and mind composed and serene in all troubles that befall us? But a word or two for application.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. The preceding doctrine informs our judgments in two particulars. 1. What to judge of their patience in affliction that have no interest in the gospel's peace. 2. What to think of their peace who, in affliction, have no patience at all.

1. What we are to judge of their patience in affliction who have no interest in the gospel's peace. Some you shall see very still and quiet in affliction, yet mere strangers to this peace, ignorant of Christ the Peace-maker, walking in opposition to the terms God offers peace in the gospel upon, and yet very calm in affliction. Certainly all is not right with this poor creature. If he had any sense how it is with him, he would have little patience to see himself under the hand of God, and not know but it may leave him in hell before it hath done with him. When I see one run over the stones and hard ways barefoot and not complain, I do not admire his patience, but pity the poor creature that hath benumbed his feet, and, as it were, soled them with a brawny, dead kind of flesh, so as to lose his feeling. But, save your pity much more for those whose consciences are so benumbed and hearts petrified into a senseless stupidity, that they feel their misery no more than the stone doth the mason's saw which cuts it asunder. Of all men out of hell, none [is] more to be pitied than he that hangs over the mouth of it, and yet is fearless of his danger, while thus the poor wretch is incapable of all means for his good. What good does physic put into a dead man's mouth? If he cannot be chased to some sense of his condition, all applications are in vain. And if afflictions—which are the strongest physic—leave the creature senseless, there is little hope left that any other will work upon him.

2. What are we to think of their peace who, in affliction, have no patience at all—those that are great pretenders to gospel peace, yet cannot think with any patience of suffering from God or for God. Certainly, so far as the creature is acquainted with this peace, and hath the true sense of God's love in Christ lying warm at his heart, he cannot but find proportionably his heart stand ready to submit to any suffering that God lays out for him. And therefore it behooves us well to try our peace and comfort. If thou hast no heart to suffer for God, but choosest a sin to escape a cross, thy peace is false. If thou hast but little patience under ordinary afflictions, to compose thy spirit from murmuring, and sustain thy heart from sinking, thy faith on the promise is weak. 'If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small,' Proverbs 24:10.

Use Second. Let this doctrine stir thee up, Christian, to be very tender and chary of thy peace with God and thy own conscience. Keep this peace clear and unbroken, and it will keep thy heart

whole, when the whole world breaks about thee. So long as this peace of God rules in your hearts, you are safe from fear or danger, though in a prison or at a stake. But if thou sufferest it to be wounded, then thy enemies will come upon thee as Simeon and Levi on the men of Shechem when sore, and be too hard for thee. O it is sad, friends—you will find it so—to go with sore and smarting consciences into a suffering condition. A thorn in the foot will make any way uneasy to the traveller; and guilt in the conscience any condition uncomfortable to the Christian, but most of all a suffering one. Now, if you will keep your peace unbroken, you must bestow some attendance on it, and set as it were a life-guard about it. The choicest flowers need most looking to. The richer the treasure the safer we lay it. This peace is thy treasure; look well where thou layest it. Two ways our Saviour tells us that worldly treasure, such as silver and gold is, may be lost—by thieves that break in and carry it away, and by rust that eats and corrupts it, Matthew 6:19. There are two ways something like these, wherein the Christian may go by the loss in this his heavenly treasure of inward peace and comfort.

1. Presumptuous sins, these are the thieves that ‘break through and steal’ the saint’s comfort away. When the Christian comes to look into his soul after such a bold act, and thinks to entertain himself, as formerly, with the comforts of his pardoned state, interest in Christ, and hopes of heaven through him, alas! he finds a sad change. There is no promise that will give out its consolations to him—the cellar-door is locked, Christ withdrawn, and the keys carried away with him. He may even cry out with a sad complaint, as Mary when she found not Christ’s body in the sepulchre, ‘They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.’ Thus the Christian may, with aching heart, bemoan his folly, ‘My pride, my uncleanness, my earthly-mindedness, they have taken away my treasure, robbed me of my comfort. I could never have a comfortable sight of God’s face in any duty or promise since I fell into that foul sin.’ And therefore, Christian, have a care of such robbers of thy peace as this. ‘The spirit of man’ is called ‘the candle of the Lord,’ Proverbs 20:27. Hath God lighted thy candle, Christian—cheered thy spirit, I mean, with the sense of his love? Take heed of presumptuous sins. If such a thief be suffered in this thy candle, thy comfort will soon sweal out. Hast thou fallen into the hands of any such presumptuous sins as have stolen thy peace from thee? Send speedily thy hue and cry after them—I mean, take thy sad moan to God, renew thy repentance out of hand, and raise heaven upon them by a spirit of prayer. This is no time to delay. The farther thou lettest these sins go without repentance, the harder thou wilt find it to recover thy lost peace and joy out of their hands. And for thy encouragement know, God is ready, upon thy serious and solemn return, to restore thee ‘the joy of his salvation,’ and do justice upon these enemies of thy soul for thee by his mortifying grace, if thou wilt prosecute the law upon them closely and vigorously, without relenting towards them, or being bribed with the pleasure or carnal advantage that they will not spare to offer, so their lives may be spared.

2. Again, as presumptuous sins are the ‘thieves’ that with a high hand rob the Christian of his comfort; so sloth and negligence are as the ‘rust,’ that in time will fret into his comfort and eat out the heart and strength of it. It is impossible that the Christian who is careless and secure in his walking, infrequent and negligent in his communion with God, should long be owner of much peace or comfort that is true. What if thou dost not pour water of presumptuous sins into the lap of thy joy to quench it? It is enough if thou dost not pour oil of duty to feed and maintain it. Thou art murderer to thy comfort by starving it, as well as by stabbing of it.

End of Volume I.

[1]Qui litteris addicti sumus, saith Erasmus, animi lassitudinem à studiis gravioribus contractam, ab iisdem studiis, sedamænioribus recreamus.

[2]Forlorn—a small group of soldiers detached from the main group for a very dangerous mission; with very little chance of success. From Webster's.

[3]Preponderate—outweigh; to weigh down; to exceed in weight; to descend or incline downward; to exceed in influence, power, or importance. — From Webster's.

[4]Lacedemonians—This is the same as Sparta, a city-state in ancient Greece, before the time of Rome. — SDB [5]Makebate, any thing or person that excites dispute—a bone of contention.—Ed.

[6]Encomium, High or glowing praise.—From Webster's.

[7]Ea sola emi putamus, pro quibus pecuniam solvimus; ea gratuita vocamus, pro quibus, nos-ipsos impendimus, &c.—Sen. Epist. 42.

[8]Boke—to nauseate, to vomit, to belch.—Halliwell.

[9]Connatural, connected by nature; inborn; of the same nature. — From Webster's.

[10]ILLAPSE, n. illaps'. [See Lapse.] A sliding in; an immission or entrance of one thing into another.

1. A falling on; a sudden attack.—From Webster's 1828 Dictionary—SDB [11]Cozenage; to cheat, defraud; the act of cozening or deception — From Webster's.

[12]ingeminate—to stress or make more forceful by repeating. From Webster's.—SDB [13]Fadge, to suit or fit.—Ed.

[14]Awkness, clumsiness, oddness.—Ed.

[15]Hectical: — of, relating to, or being a fluctuating but persistent fever (as in tuberculosis); having a hectic fever; flushed, red; marked by feverish activity.—From Webster's.

[16]Boult, or bolt, to sift, separate the pure from the impure, to examine.—Ed.

[17]Conning — [ME, connen, to be able] to peruse carefully; study; fix in the memory.—From Webster's [18]Huckle, i.e. to haggle in trading.—Imp. Dict.

[1]I need to find out what the word "whinching" means.

02 - Volume 2

Volume 2 1. Fourth Piece—The Christian’s Spiritual Shield.

2. The Saint’s Enemy Described.

3. Fifth Piece—The Christian’s Helmet.

4. Sixth Piece—The Christian’s Sword.

5. The necessary duty of the Christian, as clothed in the Whole Armour of God: or, how the Spiritual Panoply may alone be kept furbished.

6. How to perform the duty commanded—a directory for prayer.

7. The Inward Principle of Prayer 8. The Duty of every Christian in complete Armour to aid by Prayer. The Christian In Complete Armour

Volume Two A Treatise of The Whole Armour of God

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

— Ephesians 6:13-20

Chapter 13

02.01 - Fourth Piece - The Christian's Spiritual Shield

Part Second.—Direction Eighth. The Several Pieces of the Whole Armour of God.

Fourth Piece—The Christian’s Spiritual Shield.

‘Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.’

— Ephesians 6:16 The Fourth piece in the Christian’s panoply presents itself in this verse to our consideration —and that is The Shield of Faith. A grace of graces it is, and here fitly placed in the midst of her other companions. It stands, methinks, among them, as the heart in the midst of the body; or, if you please, as David when Samuel ‘anointed him in the midst of his brethren,’ 1 Samuel 16:13. The apostle, when he comes to speak of this grace doth, as it were, lift up its head, and anoint it above all its fellows—‘above all, take the shield of faith.’ The words easily fall into these two general parts. FIRST. An exhortation—‘above all, take the shield of faith.’ SECOND. A powerful argument pressing the exhortation—‘whereby ye are able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked.’ explication of the words. In the exhortation ‘Above all, taking the shield of faith, whereby ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked,’ these four particulars call for our inquiry towards the explication of the words. First. What faith it is that is here commended to the Christian soldier. Second. Having found the kind, we are to inquire what his faith is as to its nature. Third. Why it is compared to a shield rather than other pieces. Fourth. What is the importance of this §B4 B■F4<, ‘above all.’

[The kind of faith here meant.]

First Inquiry. What faith is it that here is commended? This will soon be known, if we consider the use and end for which it is commended to the Christian, and that is to enable him to ‘quench all the fiery darts of the wicked;’ i.e. of the wicked one, the devil. Now, look upon the several kinds of faith, and that among them must be the faith of this place which enables the creature to quench Satan’s fiery darts, yea, all his fiery darts. Historical faith cannot do this, and therefore is not it. This is so far from quenching Satan’s fiery darts, that the devil himself, that shoots them, hath this faith. ‘The devils believe,’ James 2:19. Temporary faith cannot do it. This is so far from quenching Satan’s fiery darts, that itself is quenched by them. It makes a goodly blaze of profession, and ‘endures for a while,’ Matthew 13:21, but soon disappears. Miraculous faith, this falls as short as the former. Judas’ miraculous faith, which he had with other of the apostles—for aught that we can read —enabling him to cast devils out of others, left himself possessed of the devil of covetousness, hypocrisy, and treason; yea, a whole legion of lusts, that hurried him down the hill of despair into the bottomless pit of perdition. There is only one kind of faith remains, which is it the apostle means in this place, and that is justifying faith. This indeed is the grace that makes him, whoever hath it, the devil’s match. Satan hath not so much advantage of the Christian by the transcendency of his natural abilities, as he hath of Satan in this cause and this his weapon. The apostle is confident to give the day to the Christian before the fight is fully over: ‘Ye have

overcome the wicked one,' 1 John 2:13, that is, ye are as sure to do it as if you were now mounted on your triumphant chariot in heaven. The knight shall overcome the giant; the saint, Satan; and the same apostle tells us what gets him the day. 'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith,' 1 John 5:4.

[Justifying faith, as to its nature.] Second Inquiry. What is this justifying faith as to its nature?

I shall answer this, First. Negatively. Second. Affirmatively.

First. Negatively, in two particulars.

1. Justifying faith is not a naked assent to the truths of the gospel. This justifying faith doth give; but this doth not make it justifying faith. A dogmatical faith, or historical, is comprehended in justifying faith. But dogmatical faith doth not infer justifying faith. Justifying faith cannot be without a dogmatical; it implies it, as the rational soul in man doth the sensitive. But, the dogmatical may be without the justifying, as the sensitive soul in the beast without the rational. Judas knew the Scriptures, and without doubt did assent to the truth of them, when he was so zealous a preacher of the gospel; but he never had so much as one dram of justifying faith in his soul. 'But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him,' John 6:64. Yea, Judas' master, the devil himself—one far enough, I suppose, from justifying faith—yet he assents to the truth of the word. He goes against his conscience who denies them. When he tempted Christ he did not dispute against the Scripture, but from the Scripture, drawing his arrows out of this quiver, Matthew 4:6. And at another time, he makes as full a confession of Christ, for the matter, as Peter himself did, Matthew 8:29, compared with Matthew 16:17. Assent to the truth of the word is but an act of the understanding, which reprobates and devils may exercise; but justifying faith is a compounded habit, and hath its seat both in the understanding and will; and therefore [it is] called a 'believing with the heart,' Romans 10:10; yea, a 'believing with all the heart,' Acts 8:37. 'Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.' It takes all the powers of the soul. There is a double object in the promise—one proper to the understanding, to move that; another proper to the will, to excite and work upon that. As the promise is true, so it calls for an act of assent from the understanding; and as it is good as well as true, so it calls for an act of the will to embrace and receive it. Therefore, he which only notionally knows the promise, and speculatively assents to the truth of it, without clinging to it, and embracing of it, doth not believe savingly, and can have no more benefit from the promise, than nourishment from the food he sees and acknowledgeth to be wholesome, but eats none of.

2. Justifying faith is not assurance. If it were, St. John might have spared his pains, who wrote to them that 'believed on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life,' 1 John 5:13. They might then have said 'We do this already. What else is our faith, but a believing that we are such as through Christ are pardoned, and shall through him be saved?' But this cannot be so. If faith were assurance, then a man's sins would be pardoned before he believes, for he must necessarily be pardoned before he can know he is pardoned. The candle must be lighted before I can see it is lighted. The child must be born before I can be assured it is born. The object must be before the act. Assurance rather is the fruit of faith. It is in faith as the flower is in the root. Faith, in time, after much communion with God, acquaintance with the word, and experience of his dealings with the soul, may flourish into assurance. But, as the root truly lives before the flower

appears, and continues when that hath shed its beautiful leaves, and gone again; so doth true justifying faith live before assurance comes, and after it disappears. Assurance is, as it were, the cream of faith. Now you know there is milk before there is cream, this riseth not but after some time standing, and there remains milk after it is fleted off. How many, alas! of the precious saints of God must we shut out from being believers, if there is no faith but what amounts to assurance? We must needs offend against the generation of God's children, among whom some are babes, not yet come to the use of their reflex act of faith, so as to own the graces of God in them to be true, upon the review that they take of their own actings. And, must not the child be allowed to be a child, till he can speak for himself, and say he is so? Others there are in Christ's family, who are of higher stature and greater experience in the ways of God, yet have lost those apprehensions of pardoning mercy, which once they were, through the goodness of God, able to have shown—shall we say their faith went away in the departure of their assurance? How oft then in a year may a believer be no believer? even as oft as God withdraws and leaves the creature in the dark. Assurance is like the sun-flower, which opens with the day and shuts with the night. It follows the motion of God's face. If that looks smilingly on the soul, it lives; if that frowns or hides itself, it dies. But faith is a plant that can grow in the shade, a grace that can find the way to heaven in a dark night. It can 'walk in darkness,' and yet 'trust in the name of the Lord,' Isaiah 50:10. In a word, by making the essence of faith to lie in assurance, we should not only offend against the generation of God's children, but against the God and Father of these children; for at one clap we turn the greater number of those children he hath here on earth out of doors. Yes, we are cruel to those he is most tender of, and make sad the hearts of those that he would have chiefly comforted. Indeed if this were true, a great part of gospel provision laid up in the promises is of little use. We read of promises to those that mourn, 'they shall be comforted,' to the contrite, 'they shall be revived,' to him that 'walks in darkness,' and the like. These belong to believers, and none else. Surely then there are some believers that are in the dark, under the hatches of sorrow, wounded and broken with their sins, and temptation for them. But they are not such as are assured of the love of God; their water is turned into joy, their night into light, their sighs and sobs into joy and praise.

Second. I shall answer affirmatively, what justifying faith is, and in the description of it I shall consider it solely as justifying. And so take it in these few words—It is the act of the soul whereby it rests on Christ crucified for pardon and life, and that upon the warrant of the promise. In the description observe,

1. The subject where faith is seated, not any single faculty, but the soul. 2. The object of faith as justifying—Christ crucified. 3. The act of faith upon this object, and that is resting on Christ crucified for pardon and life. 4. The warrant and security that faith goes upon in this act.

1. The subject where faith is seated, not any single faculty, but the soul. Of this I have spoken something before, and so pass on to the second point.

2. Here is the object of faith as justifying, and that is Christ crucified. The whole truth of God is the object of justifying faith. It trades with the whole word of God, and doth firmly assent unto it; but, in its justifying act, it singles out Christ crucified for its object. (1.) The person of Christ is the object of faith as justifying. (2.) Christ as crucified.

(1.) The person of Christ. Not any axiom or proposition in the word. This is the object of assurance, not of faith. Assurance saith 'I believe my sins are pardoned through Christ.' Faith's language is, 'I

believe on Christ for the pardon of them.' The word of God doth direct our faith to Christ, and terminates it upon him; called therefore, a 'coming to Christ,' Matthew 11:28, a 'receiving of him,' John 1:12, a 'believing on him,' John 17:20. The promise is but the dish in which Christ, the true food of the soul, is served up; and, if faith's hand be on the promise, it is but as one that draws the dish to him, that he may come at the dainties in it. The promise is the marriage-ring on the hand of faith. Now we are not married to the ring, but with it unto Christ. 'All the promises,' saith the apostle, 'are yea and amen in him.' They have their excellency from him, and efficacy in him—I mean in a soul's union to him. To run away with a promise, and not to close with Christ, and by faith become one in him, is as if a man should rend a branch from a tree, and lay it up in his chest, expecting it to bear fruit there. Promises are dead branches severed from Christ. But when a soul by faith becomes united to Christ, then he partakes of all his fatness; not a promise but yields sweetness to it.

(2.) As Christ is the primary object of faith, so Christ as crucified. Not Christ in his personal excellencies—so he is the object rather of our love than faith—but as bleeding, and that to death, under the hand of divine justice for to make an atonement by God's own appointment for the sins of the world. As the handmaid's eye is to her mistress's hand for direction, so faith's eye is on God revealing himself in his word; which way God by it points the soul, thither it goes. Now there faith finds God, intending to save poor sinners, pitched on Christ, and Christ alone, for the transacting and effecting of it, and him whom God chooseth to trust with the work—him and him alone—will faith choose to lay the burden of her confidence on.

Again, faith observes how Christ performed this great work, and accordingly how the promise holds him forth to be applied for pardon and salvation. Now faith finds that then Christ made the full payment to the justice of God for sin, when he poured out his blood to death upon the cross. All the precedaneous[1] acts of his humiliation were but preparatory to this. He was born to die; he was sent into the world as a lamb bound with the bonds of an irreversible decree for a sacrifice. Christ himself when he came into the world understood this to be the errand he was sent on, Hebrews 10:5. 'Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me;' i.e. to be an expiatory sacrifice. Without this, all he had done would have been labour undone. No redemption but by his blood, 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins,' Ephesians 1:7. No church without his blood, 'The church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood,' Acts 20:28. E latere Christi morientis exstitit ecclesia— the church is taken out of dying Jesus' side, as Eve out of sleeping Adam's. Christ did not redeem and save poor souls by sitting in majesty on his heavenly throne, but by hanging on the shameful cross, under the tormenting hand of man's fury and God's just wrath. And therefore the poor soul, that would have pardon of sin, is directed to place his faith not only on Christ, but on bleeding Christ, Romans 3:25: 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.'

3. The act of faith upon this object, and that is resting on Christ crucified for pardon and life. I know there are many acts of the soul antecedent to this, without which the creature can never truly exercise this. As knowledge, especially of God and Christ, upon whose authority and testimony it relies: 'I know whom I have believed,' 2 Timothy 1:12. None will readily trust a stranger that he is wholly unacquainted with. Abraham indeed went he knew not whither, but he did not go with he knew not whom. The greatest thing God laboured to instruct Abraham in, and satisfy him with,

was—

(1.) The knowledge of his own glorious self —who he was—that he might take his word and rely on it, how harsh and improbable, soever it might sound in sense or reason's ear, 'I am Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect.'

(2.) Assent to the truth of the word of God. If this foundation-stone be not laid, faith's building cannot go on. Who will trust him that he dares not think speaks true?

(3.) A sense of our own vileness and emptiness. By the one he means us see our demerit, what we deserve, hell and damnation; by the other, our own impotency, how little we can contribute—yea, just nothing, to our own reconciliation. I join them together, because the one ariseth out of the other. Sense of this emptiness comes from the deep apprehensions a soul hath of the other's fulness in him. You never knew a man full of self-confidence and self-abasement together. The conscience cannot abound with the sense of sin and the heart with self-conceit at the same time. 'When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died,' Romans 7:9—that is, when the commandment came, in the accusations of it, to his conscience, sin, like a sleepy lion had lain still, and he secure and confident by it, when that began to roar in his conscience, then he died—that is, his vain-confidence of himself gave up the ghost. Both these are necessary to faith—sense of sin, like the smart of a wound, to make the creature think of a plaster to cure it; and sense of emptiness and insufficiency in himself or any creature to do the cure necessary to make him go out to Christ for cure. We do not go abroad to beg what we have of our own within doors. These, with some other, are necessary to faith. But the receiving of Christ, and resting on Christ, is that act of faith to which justification is promised. 'He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God,' John 3:18. Now every one that assents to the truth of what the Scripture saith of Christ, doth not believe on Christ. No; This believing on Christ implies an union of the soul to Christ and fiduciary recumbency on Christ. Therefore we are bid to take hold of Christ, Isaiah 27:5, who is there called God's 'strength,' as elsewhere his arm—'that we may make peace with God, and we shall make peace with him.' It is not the sight of a man's arm stretched out to a man in the water will save him from drowning, but the taking hold of it. Christ is a stone. Faith builds upon Christ for salvation. And how? but by laying its whole weight and expectation of mercy on him. What Paul, 2 Timothy 1:12, calls 'believing' in the former part of the verse, he calls in the latter part a 'committing to him to be kept against that day.'

(4.) The fourth and last branch in the description, is the warrant and security that faith goes upon in this act. And this it takes from the promise. Indeed, there is no way how God can be conceived to contract a debt to his creature but by promise. There are ways for men to become debtors one to another, though never any promise passed from them. The father is a debtor to his child, and owes him love, provision, and nurture. The child is a debtor to his parent, and owes him honour and obedience, though neither of them promised this to each other. Much more doth the creature stand deep in God's debt-book, and owes himself with all he hath to God his Maker, though he hath not the grace voluntarily to make these over to God by promise and covenant. But the great God is so absolute a Sovereign, that none can make a law to bind him but himself. Till he be pleased to pass an act of grace, of his own good-will, to give this or do that good thing to and for his poor creatures, no claim can be laid to the least mercy at his hands. There are two things

therefore that are greatly to be heeded by the soul that would believe.

(1.) He must inquire for a promise to bear his faith out, and warrant him to expect such a mercy at God's hand.

(2.) Again, when he hath found a promise, and observed the terms well on which it runs, the Christian is not to stay for any further encouragement, but upon the credit of the naked promise to set his faith on work.

(a) He is to inquire out a promise, and observe well the terms on which it runs. Indeed upon the point it comes all to one; to believe without a promise, or to believe on a promise, but not observe the terms of it. Both are presumptuous, and speed alike. A prince hath as much reason to be angry with him that doth not keep close to his commission, as with another that acts without any commission. O how little considered is this by many who make bold of God's arm to lean on for pardon and salvation, but never think that the promise, which presents Christ to leaned on as a Saviour, presents him at the same time to be chosen as a Lord and Prince! Such were the rebellious Israelites, who durst make God and his promise a leaning-stock for their foul elbows to rest on. 'They call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; The Lord of hosts is his name,' Isaiah 48:2; but they were more bold than welcome. God rejected their confidence and loathed their sauciness. Though a prince would not disdain to let a poor wounded man, faint with bleeding, and unable to go alone, upon his humble request, make use of his arm, rather than he should perish in the streets; yet he would, with indignation, reject the same motion from a filthy drunkard that is besmeared with his vomit, if he should desire leave to lean on him because he cannot go alone. I am sure, how welcome soever the poor humble soul—that lies bleeding for his sins at the very mouth of hell in his own thoughts—is to God when he comes upon the encouragement of the promise to lean on Christ, yet the profane wretch that emboldens himself to come to Christ, shall be kicked away with infinite disdain and abhorrency by a holy God for abusing his promise.

(b) When a poor sinner hath found a promise, and observes the terms with a heart willing to embrace them, now he is to put forth an act of faith upon the credit of the naked promise, without staying for any other encouragement elsewhere. Faith is a right pilgrim-grace; it travels with us to heaven, and when it sees us safe got within our Father's doors —heaven I mean—it takes leave of us. Now, the promise is this pilgrim's staff with which it sets forth, though, like Jacob on his way to Padan-aram, it hath nothing else with it. 'Remember the word unto thy servant,' saith David, 'upon which thou hast caused me to hope,' Psalms 119:49. The word of promise was all he had to show, and he counts that enough to set his faith on work. But alas! some make comfort the ground of faith, and experience their warrant to believe. They will believe when God manifests himself to them, and sends in some sensible demonstration of his love to their souls; but, till this be done, the promise hath little authority to silence their unbelieving cavils, and quiet their misgiving hearts into a waiting on God for the performance of what there is spoken from God's own mouth. It is like old Jacob, who gave no credit to his children when they told him Joseph was yet alive and governor over all the land of Egypt. This news was too good and great to enter into his belief, who had given him {up} for dead {for} so long; it is said, 'his heart fainted, for he believed them not,' Genesis 45:26. But when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him thither, then it is said, 'the spirit of Jacob revived,' Genesis 45:27. Truly thus, though the promise tells the poor humbled

sinner Christ is alive, governor of heaven itself, with all power there and on earth put into his hand, that he may give eternal life unto all that believe on him, and he be therefore exhorted to rest upon Christ in the promise, yet his heart faints and believes not. It is the wagons he would fain see—some sensible expressions of God's love that he listens after—if he did but know that he was an elect person, or were one that God did love, then he would believe. But God hath little reason to thank him in the meantime for suspending his faith till these come. This is, as I may so say, to believe for spiritual loves, and is rather sense than faith.

[Why faith is compared to a shield.] Third Inquiry. Why is faith compared to a shield?

It is so, because of a double resemblance that is between this grace and that piece of armour.

First Resemblance. This shield is not for the defence of any particular part of the body—as almost all the other pieces are—the helmet fitted for the head, the plate designed for the breast, and so others having their several parts which they are fastened to—but is intended for the defence of the whole body. It was used therefore to be made very large, for its broadness called 2LD,ÎH, of {from} 2bD", a gate or door, because so long and large as in a manner to cover the whole body. To this that place alludes, 'For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield,' Psalms 5:12. And if the shield were not large enough at once to cover every part, yet, being a movable piece of armour, the skilful soldier might turn it this way or that way, to latch the blow or arrow from lighting on any part they were directed to. And this indeed doth excellently well set forth the universal use that faith is of to the Christian. It defends the whole man; every part of the Christian by it preserved. Sometimes the temptation is levelled at the head. Satan, he will be disputing against this truth and that, to make the Christian, if he can, call them into question, merely because his reason and understanding cannot comprehend them; and he prevails with some that do not think themselves the unwisest in the world, upon this very account, to blot the deity of Christ, with other mysterious truths of the gospel, quite out of their creed. Now faith interposeth between the Christian and this arrow. It comes into the relief of the Christian's weak understanding as seasonably as Zeruiah did to David, when the giant Ishbi-benob thought to have slain him. I will trust the word of God, saith the believer, rather than my own purblind reason. 'Abraham not being weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead,' Romans 4:19. If sense should have had the hearing of that business, yea, if that holy man had put it to a reference between sense and reason also, what resolution his thoughts should come to concerning this strange message that was brought him, he would have been in danger of calling the truth of it in question, though God himself was the messenger; but faith brought him honourably off.

Again, Is it conscience that the tempter assaults? —and it is not seldom that he is shooting his fiery darts of horror and terror at his mark. Faith receives the shock, and saves the creature harmless: 'I had fainted, unless I had believed,' saith David, Psalms 27:13. He means when false witnesses rose up against him, and such as breathed out cruelty, as appears, Psalms 27:12. Faith was his best fence against man's charge; and so it is against Satan's and conscience's also. Never was a man in a sadder condition than the poor jailer, Acts 16:1-40. Much ado he had to keep his own hands from offering violence to himself. Who that had seen him fall trembling at the feet of Paul and Silas, with that sad question in his mouth, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' Acts 16:30, could have thought this deep wound that was now given his conscience, would so soon have been closed and cured as we find it, Acts 16:34. The earthquake of horror that did so

dreadfully shake his conscience is gone, and his trembling turned into rejoicing. Now mark what made this blessed calm. ‘Believe,’ saith Paul, ‘on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,’ Acts 16:31; and Acts 16:34, it is said, he ‘rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.’ It is faith stills the storm which sin had raised—faith that changed his doleful note into joy and gladness. Happy man he was, that had such skilful chirurgeons so near him, who could direct him the nearest way to a cure.

Again, Is it the will that the temptation is laid to catch? Some commands of God cannot be obeyed without much self-denial, because they cross us in that which our own wills are carried forth very strongly to desire; so that we must deny our will before we can do the will of God. Now a temptation comes very forcible, when it runs with the tide of our own wills. ‘What,’ saith Satan, ‘wilt thou serve a God that thus thwarts thee in everything?’ If thou lovest anything more than another, presently he must have that from thee. No lamb in all the flock will serve for a sacrifice, but Isaac, Abraham’s only child, he must be offered up. No place will content God, that Abraham should serve him in, but where he must live in banishment from his dear relations and acquaintance. ‘Wilt thou,’ saith Satan, ‘yield to such hard terms as these?’ Now faith is the grace that doth the soul admirable service at such a pinch as this. It is able to appease the tumult which such a temptation may raise in the soul, and dismiss the rout of all mutinous thoughts, yea, to keep the King of heaven’s peace so sweetly in the Christian’s bosom, that such a temptation, if it comes, shall find few or none to declare for it, ‘By faith,’ it saith, ‘Abraham obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither,’ Hebrews 11:8. And we do not read of one fond look that his heart cast back upon his dear native country, as he went from it, so well pleased had faith made him with his journey. It was hard work for Moses to strip himself of the magistrate’s robes, and put his hands on his servants head; hard to leave another to enter upon his labours, and reap the honour of lodging the Israelites’ colours in Canaan, after it had cost him so many a weary step to bring them within sight of it. Yet, faith made him willing; he saw better robes, that he should put on in heaven, than those he was called on to put off on earth. The lowest place in glory is, beyond all compare, greater preferment than the highest place of honour here below; to stand before the throne there, and minister to God in immediate service, than to sit in a throne on earth and have all the world waiting at his foot.

Second Resemblance. The shield doth not only defend the whole body, but is a defence of the soldier’s armour also. It keeps the arrow from the helmet as well as head, from the breast and breast-plate also. Thus faith it is armour upon armour, a grace that preserves all the other graces. But of this more hereafter.

[The import of the expression ‘above all.’] Fourth Inquiry. What doth this ¦B4 BVF4<, ‘above all,’ import?

There is variety among interpreters about it. Jerome reads it, in omnibus, sumentes scutum fidei —in all things taking the shield of faith, i.e. in all duties, enterprises, temptations, or afflictions—in whatever you are called to do or suffer, take faith. Indeed, faith to the Christian is like fire to the chemist; nothing can be done without it christianly. ‘But without faith it is impossible to please God,’ Hebrews 11:6. And how can the Christian please himself in that wherein he doth not please his God? Others read it, ‘Over all take the shield of faith,’ i.e. take it over all your graces, as that which will cover them. All other graces have their safety from faith; they lie secure under the shadow of faith, as an army lies safe under the protection and command of a strong castle planted

round with cannon. But we shall follow our translation, as being most comprehensive, and that which will take these within its compass. ‘Above all, take,’ &c., that is, among all the pieces of armour which you are to provide and wear for your defence, let this have the pre-eminence of your care to get; and having got, to keep it. Now, that the apostle meant to give a preeminency to faith above the other graces appears,

First. By the piece of armour he compares it to —the shield. This, of old, was prized above all other pieces by soldiers. They counted it greater shame to lose their shield, than to lose the field, and therefore when under the very foot of their enemy, they would not part with it, but esteemed it an honour to die with their shield in their hand. It was the charge that one laid upon her son, going into the wars, when she gave him a shield, ‘that he should either bring his shield home with him, or be brought home upon his shield.’ She had rather see him dead with it, than come home alive without it.

Second. By the noble effect which is here ascribed to faith—‘by which ye shall quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.’ The other pieces are nakedly commended, ‘take the girdle of truth, breast-plate of righteousness,’ and so the rest; but there is nothing singly ascribed to any of them, what they can do, yet, when he speaks of faith, he ascribes the whole victory to it. This quencheth ‘all the fiery darts of the wicked.’ And why thus? Are the other graces of no use, and doth faith do all? What need then the Christian load himself with more than this one piece? I answer, every piece hath its necessary use in the Christian’s warfare: not any one part of the whole suit can be spared in the day of battle. But the reason, I humbly conceive, why no particular effect is annexed severally to each of these, but all ascribed to faith, is, to let us know that all these graces—their efficacy and our benefit from them—is in conjunction with faith, and the influence they receive from faith; so that this is plainly the design of the Spirit of God to give faith the precedency in our care above the rest. Only, take heed that you do not fancy any indifferency or negligence to be allowed you in your endeavours after the other graces, because you are more strongly provoked and excited up to the getting and keeping this. The apostle would intend your care here, but not remit it there. Cannot we bid a soldier above all parts of his body to beware of a wound at his heart, but he must needs think presently he need take no care to guard his head? Truly, such a one would deserve a cracked crown to cure him of his folly. The word thus op ened, we shall content ourselves with one general observation from them; and it is this.

DIRECTION VIII.—FIRST GENERAL PART.

[The pre-eminence of faith above other graces.] The exhortation—‘Above all, taking the shield of faith’ (Ephesians 6:16). Of all graces faith is the chief, and is chiefly to be laboured for. There is a precedency or pre-eminence peculiar to this above all other. It is among graces, as the sun is among the planets, or as Solomon’s ‘virtuous woman among the daughters,’ Proverbs 31:29. Though every grace had done virtuously, yet thou, O faith, excellest them all. The apostle indeed give the precedency to love, and sets faith on the lower hand. ‘And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity,’ 1 Corinthians 13:13. Yet, you may observe, that this prelation of it before faith hath a particular respect to the saints’s blissful state in heaven, where love remains, and faith ceaseth. In that regard love indeed is the greater, because it is the end of our faith. We apprehend by faith that we may enjoy by love. But, if we consider the Christian’s present state, while militant on earth, in this respect love must give place to faith. It is

true, love is the grace that shall triumph in heaven. But it is faith, not love, which is the conquering grace on earth. ‘This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith,’ 1 John 5:4. Love indeed hath its place in the battle, and doth excellent service, but is under faith its leader. ‘Faith which worketh by love,’ Galatians 5:6. Even as the captain fighteth by his soldiers whom he leads on, so faith works by love which it excites. Love, it is true, is the grace that at last possesseth the inheritance, but it is faith that gives the Christian right unto it. Without this he should never have enjoyed it, John 1:12. In a word, it is love that unites God and glorified saints together in heaven; but it was faith that first united them to Christ while they were on earth—‘That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith,’ Ephesians 3:17. And if Christ had dwelt in them by faith on earth, they should never have dwelt with God in heaven.

BRANCH FIRST.

[Four Particulars in which faith stands pre-eminent above other graces.]

I proceed to show wherein it appears that faith hath such a pre-eminence above other graces as we previously have indicated. This takes in the following particulars.

First Particular. In the great inquiry that God makes after faith above all other graces. Nothing more speaks our esteem of persons or things than our inquiry after them. We ask first and most for those that stand highest in our thoughts. ‘Is your father well?’ said Joseph, ‘the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive?’ Genesis 43:27. No doubt there were others of whose welfare Joseph would have been glad to hear also, but being most pent and pained with a natural affection to his father, he easeth himself of this first. And when David asks for Absalom above all others, ‘Is the young man Absalom safe?’ and over again with it to Cush, 2 Samuel 18:1-33, it was easy to guess how highly he valued his life. Now you shall find the great inquiry that God makes is for faith: ‘When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?’ Luke 18:8—implying that this is the grace which he will especially look for and desires to find. We read, John 9:1-41, of a great miracle, a man by Christ restored to his sight that was born blind. This so enraged the malicious Pharisees that they excommunicate the poor man for no other fault but giving his merciful physician a good word. This brings Christ the sooner to him—so tender is he of those that suffer for him, that they shall not long want his sweet company—and he hath no cause to complain for being cast out of man’s society that gains Christ’s presence by the same. Now, observe what Christ saith to him at his first meeting, ver. 35, ‘Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?’ The man had already expressed some zeal for Christ, in vindicating him, and speaking well of him to the head of the bitterest enemies he had on earth, for which he was now made a sufferer at their hands. This was very commendable. But there is one thing Christ prizeth above all this, and that is faith. This he inquires after, ‘Dost thou believe on the Son of God?’ As if he had said, ‘All this thy zeal in speaking for me, and patience in suffering, are nothing worth in my account except thou hast faith also.’ Indeed most of God’s dealings with his people, what are they but inquiries after faith? either the truth or strength of it. When he afflicts them, it is ‘for the trial of their faith,’ 1 Peter 1:7. Afflictions they are God’s spade and mattock, by which he digs into his people’s hearts to find out this gold of faith. Not but that he inquires for other graces also; but this is named for all as the chief; which found, all the other will soon appear. When God seems to delay, and makes, as it were, a halt in his providence, before he comes with the mercy he promiseth, and we pray for, it is

exploratory to faith. ‘O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt,’ Matthew 15:28. She had received her answer without so much ado; only Christ had a mercy in store more than she thought of. With the granting of her suit in the cure of her daughter, he had a mind to give her the evidence of her faith also, and the high esteem God hath of his grace, as that which may have of him what it will.

Second Particular. The commendations that are given to faith above other graces. You shall observe, that in the same action wherein other graces are eminently exercised as well as faith, even then faith is taken notice of, and the crown set upon faith’s head rather than any of the other. We hear nothing almost of any other grace throughout the whole 11th of Hebrews but faith. ‘By faith Abraham,’ ‘by faith Jacob,’ and the rest of those worthies, did all those famous exploits. There was a concurrence of the other graces with faith in them all. But all goes under the name of faith. The whole army fight, yet the general or the captain hath the honour of the victory ascribed to him. Alexander and Cæsar’s names are transmitted to posterity as the great conquerors that overcame so many battles, not the private soldiers that fought under them. Faith is the captain grace. All those famous acts of those saints are recorded as the achievements of faith. Thus concerning the centurion, ‘Verily,’ saith Christ, ‘I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel,’ Matthew 8:10. There were other graces very eminent in the centurion besides his faith;—his conscientious care of his poor servant, for whom he could have done no more if he had been his own child. There are some that call themselves Christians, yet would not have troubled themselves so much for a sick servant. Such, alas! are oft less regarded in sickness than their master’s beast. But, especially his humility; this shined forth very eminently in that self-abasing expression: ‘Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof,’ Matthew 8:8. Consider but his calling and degree therein, and it makes his humility more conspicuous. A swordsman, yea, a commander! such use to speak big and high. Power is seldom such a friend to humility. Surely he was a man of a rare humble spirit, that he, whose mouth was used so much to words of command over his soldiers, could so demit[2] and humble himself in his address to Christ; yet his faith outshines his humility in its greatest strength. Not, I have not found such humility, but ‘such faith’ in all Israel. As if Christ had said, ‘There is not one believer in all Israel but I know him, and how rich he is in faith also; but I have not found so much of this heavenly treasure in any one hand as in this centurion’s.’ Indeed the Christian’s chief riches is in faith’s hand. ‘Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith?’ James 2:5. Why rich in faith, rather than rich in patience, rich in love, or any other grace? O great reason for it, when the creature comes to lay claim to pardon of sin, the favour of God, and heaven itself. It is not love, patience,&c., but faith alone that lays down the price of all these. Not ‘Lord, pardon, save me, here is my love and patience for it;’ but ‘here is Christ, and the price of his blood, which faith presents thee for the full purchase of them all.’ This leads to a third particular, and indeed the chief of all.

Third Particular. The high office that faith is set in above other graces, in the business of our justification before God—‘being justified by faith, we have peace with God,’ Romans 5:1. Not justified by love, repentance, patience, or any other grace beside faith. O how harsh doth it sound in a Christian ear, justifying patience, justifying repentance! And if they were concerned with the act of justification, as faith is, the name would as well become them as it doth faith itself. But we find this appropriated to faith, and the rest hedged out from having to do in the act of justification, though included and supposed in the person who is justified. It is faith that justifies without works. This is

Paul's task to prove, Romans 3:1-31. But this faith which justifies is not dead or idle, but a lively working faith, which seems to be James' design in the second chapter of his epistle. As God did single Christ out from all others to be the only mediator betwixt him and man, and his righteousness to be the meritorious cause of our justification; so he hath singled faith out from all the other graces, to be the instrument or means for appropriating this righteousness of Christ to ourselves. Therefore, as this righteousness is called 'the righteousness of God,' and opposed to our 'own righteousness,' though wrought by God in us, Romans 10:3, because it is wrought by Christ for us, but not inherent in us, as the other is; so also it is called 'the righteousness of faith,' Romans 4:11, Romans 4:13—not the righteousness of repentance, love, or any other grace. Now, wherefore is it called 'the righteousness of faith,' and not of love, repentance, &c.? Surely, not that faith itself is our righteousness. Then we should be justified by works, while we are justified by faith, contrary to the apostle, who opposeth faith and works, Romans 4:1-25. In a word, then, we should be justified by a righteousness of our own, for faith is a grace inherent in us, and as much our own work as any grace besides is. But this is contrary to the same apostle's doctrine, Php 3:9, where our own righteousness, and the righteousness which is by faith, are declared to be inconsistent. It can therefore be called 'the righteousness of faith' for this reason and no other—because faith is the only grace whose office it is to lay hold on Christ, and so to appropriate his righteousness for the justification of our souls. Christ and faith are relatives which must not be severed. Christ, he is the treasure, and faith the hand which receives it. Christ's righteousness is the robe, faith the hand that puts it on; so that it is Christ who is the treasure. By his blood he dischargeth our debt, and not by faith; whose office is only to receive Christ, whereby he becomes ours. It is Christ's righteousness that is the robe which covers our nakedness, and makes us beautiful in God's eye; only, faith hath the honour to put the robe on the soul, and it is no small honour that is therein put upon it above other graces. As God graced Moses exceedingly above the rest of his brethren the Israelites, when he was called up the mount to receive the law from God's mouth, while they had their bounds set them—to stand waiting at the bottom of the hill till he brought it down to them; so doth God highly honour faith, to call this up as the grace by whose hand he will convey this glorious privilege of justification over to us.

Question. But why is faith rather than any other grace else employed in this act?

Answer First. Because there is no grace hath so proper a fitness for this office as faith. Why hath God appointed the eye to see and not the ear? why the hand to take our food rather than the foot? It is easily answered, because these members have a particular fitness for these functions and not the other. Thus faith hath a fitness for this work peculiar to itself. We are justified not by giving anything to God of what we do, but by receiving from God what Christ hath done for us. Now faith is the only receiving grace, and therefore only fit for this office.

Answer Second. There is no grace that God could trust his honour so safely with in this business of justification as with faith. The great design God hath in justifying a poor sinner is to magnify his free mercy in the eye of his creature. This is written in such fair characters in the word, that he who runs {to it} may read it. God was resolved that his free mercy should go away with all the honour, and the creature should be quite cut out from any pretensions to partnership with him therein. Now there is no way like to this of being justified by faith, for the securing and safe-guarding of the glory of God's free grace, Romans 3:25-26. When the apostle hath in some verses together discoursed of the free justification of a sinner before God, he goes on to show how this cuts the very comb,

yea throat, of all self-exalting thoughts, Romans 3:27: ‘Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.’ Princes, of all wrongs, most disdain and abhor to see their royal bed defiled. So jealous they have been of this, that, for the prevention of all suspicion of such a foul fact, it hath been of old the custom of the greatest monarchs, that those who were their favourites, and admitted into nearest attendance upon their own persons and queens, should be eunuchs—such whose very disability of nature might remove all suspicion of any such attempt by them. Truly, God is more jealous of having the glory of his name ravished by the pride and self-glorying of the creature, than ever any prince was of having his queen deflowered. And therefore to secure it from any such horrid abuse, he hath chosen faith—this eunuch grace, as I may so call it—to stand so nigh him, and be employed by him in this high act of grace, whose very nature, being a self-emptying grace, renders it incapable of entering into any such design against the glory of God’s grace. Faith hath two hands; with one it pulls off its own righteousness and throws it away, as David did Saul’s armour; with the other it puts on Christ’s righteousness over the soul’s shame, as that in which it dares alone see God or be seen of him. ‘This makes it impossible,’ saith learned and holy Master Ball, ‘how to conceive that faith and works should be conjoined as concauses in justification; seeing the one—that is faith—attributes all to the free grace of God; the other—that is works—challenge to themselves. The one, that is faith, will aspire no higher but to be the instrumental cause of free remission; the other can sit no lower, but to be the matter of justification, if any cause at all. For, if works be accounted to us in the room or place of exact obedience in free justification, do they not supply the place? are they not advanced to the dignity of works complete and perfect in justification from justice?’ Treatise of Covenant of Grace, p. 70.

Fourth Particular. The mighty influence, yea universal, that faith hath upon all her sister-graces, speaks her the chief of them all. What makes the sun so glorious a creature but because it is a common good, and serves all the lower world with light and influence? Faith is a grace whose ministry God useth as much for the good of the spiritual world in the saints—called in Scripture the 6"4< 6JÂF4H, ‘the new creation,’ Galatians 6:15—as he doth the sun for the corporeal. Nothing is hid from the heat of the sun, Psalms 19:6, and there is no grace that faith’s influence reacheth not unto.

[The influence of faith reacheth unto all other graces.]

First. Faith finds all the graces with work. As the rich tradesman gives out his wool, some to this man, and some to that, who all spin and work of the stock he gives them out, so that, when he ceaseth to trade, they must also, because they have no stock but what he affords them,—thus faith gives out to every grace what they act upon. If faith trades not, neither can they. To instance in one or two graces for all the rest. Repentance, this is a sweet grace, but set on work by faith. Nineveh’s repentance is attributed unto their faith: ‘The people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth,’ Jonah 3:5. It is very like indeed that their repentance was no more than legal, but it was as good as their faith was. If their faith had been better, so would their repentance also. All is whist and quiet in an unbelieving soul; no news of repentance, nor noise of any complaint made against sin till faith begins to stir. When faith presents the threatening, and binds the truth and terror of it to the conscience, then the sinner hath something to work upon. As light accentuates colours and brings the eye acquainted with its object, whereupon it falls to work, so doth faith actuate sin in the conscience; now musing thoughts will soon arise, and, like clouds,

thicken apace into a storm, till they bespread the soul with a universal blackness of horror and trembling for sin; but then also the creature is at a loss, and can go no further in the business of repentance, while faith sends in more work from the promise by presenting a pardon therein to the returning soul; which no sooner is heard and believed by the creature, but the work of repentance goes on apace. Now the cloud of horror and terror, which the fear of wrath, from consideration of the threatening, had gathered in the conscience, dissolves into a soft rain of evangelical sorrow, at the report which faith makes from the promise.

Love is another heavenly grace; but faith gathers the fuel that makes this fire. Speak, Christian, whose soul now flames with love to God, was it always thus? No! sure there was a time, I dare say for thee, when thy heart was cold—not a spark of this fire to be found on the altar of thy heart. How is this then, Christian, that now thy soul loves God, whom before thou didst scorn and hate? Surely thou hast heard some good news from heaven, that hath changed thy thoughts of God, and turned the stream of thy love, which ran another way, into this happy channel. And who can be the messenger besides faith that brings any good news from heaven to the soul? It is faith that proclaims the promise; opens Christ's excellencies; pours out his name, for which the virgins love him. When faith hath drawn a character of Christ out of the word, and presented him in his love and loveliness to the soul, now the creature is sweetly inveigled in his affections to him; now the Christian hath a copious theme to enlarge upon in his thoughts, whereby to endear Christ more and more unto him —'Unto him that believes, he is precious;' and the more faith, the 'more precious,' 1 Peter 1:7. If we should sit in the same room by the dearest friend we had in all the world, and our eyes were held from seeing him, we would take no more notice of him, and give no more respect to him, than to a mere stranger. But if one should come and whisper {to} us in the ear, and tell us this is such a dear friend of yours, that once laid down his life to save yours, that hath made you heir to all the goodly estate that he hath, will you not show your respect to him? O how our hearts would work in our breasts, and make haste to come forth in some passionate expression of our dear affection to him! Yea, how heartily ashamed would we be for our uncivil and unbecoming behaviour towards him, though occasioned by our ignorance of him. Truly thus it is here. So long as faith's eye hath a mist before it, or is unactive and as it were asleep in the dull habit, the Christian may sit very nigh Christ in an ordinance, in a providence, and be very little affected with him, and drawn out in loves to him. But when faith is awake to see him as he passeth by in his love and loveliness, and active to make report to the soul of the sweet excellencies it sees in Christ, as also of his dear bleeding love to his soul, the Christian's love now cannot choose but spring and leap in his bosom at the voice of faith, as the babe did in Elizabeth's womb at the salutation of her cousin Mary.

Second. As faith sets the other graces on work by actuating their objects, about which they are conversant, so it helps them all to work, by fetching strength from Christ to act and reinforce them. Faith is not only the instrument to receive the righteousness of Christ for our justification, but it is also the great instrument to receive grace from Christ for our sanctification. 'Of his fulness...we receive grace for grace,' John 1:16. But how do we receive it? Even by faith. Faith unites the soul to Christ; and as by a pipe laid close to the mouth of a fountain water is carried to our houses for the supply of the whole family, so by faith is derived to the soul supply in abundance for the particular offices of all the several graces. He that believes, 'out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water,' John 7:38. That is, he that hath faith, and is careful to live in the exercise of it, shall

have a flow and an increase of all other graces, called here ‘living waters.’ Hence it is that the saints, when they would advance to a high pitch in other graces, pray for the increase of their faith. Our Saviour, Luke 17:3-4, sets his apostles a very hard lesson when he would wind up their love to such a high pitch as to forgive their offending brother ‘seven times’ in a day. Now mark, Luke 17:5—‘The apostles,’ apprehending the difficulty of the duty, ‘said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.’ But why did they rather not say, ‘Increase our love,’ seeing that was the grace they were to exercise in forgiving their brother? Surely it was not because love hath its increase from faith. If they could get more faith on Christ, they might be sure they should have more love to their brother also. The more strongly they could believe on Christ for the pardon of their own sins, not ‘seven,’ but ‘seventy times’ in a day committed against God, the more easy it would be to forgive their brother offending themselves seven times a day. This interpretation, our Saviour’s reply to their prayer for faith favours, Luke 17:6 —‘And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.’ Where Christ shows the efficacy of justifying faith by the power of a faith of miracles. As if he had said, ‘You have hit on the right way to get a forgiving spirit; it is faith indeed that would enable you to conquer the unmercifulness of your hearts. Though it were as deeply rooted in you as this sycamore-tree is in the ground, yet by faith you should be able to pluck it up.’ When we would have the whole tree fruitful, we think we do enough to water the root, knowing what the root sucks from the earth it will soon disperse into the branches. Thus that sap and fatness, faith, which is the radical grace, draws from Christ, will be quickly diffused through the branches of the other graces, and tasted in the pleasantness of their fruit.

Third. Faith defends the Christian in the exercise of all his graces. ‘By faith we stand,’ Romans 11:20. As a soldier under the protection of his shield stands his ground and does his duty, notwithstanding all the shot that are made against him to drive him back. When faith fails, then every grace is put to the run and rout. Abraham’s simplicity and sincerity, how was it put to disorder when he dissembled with Abimelech concerning his wife? and why, but because his faith failed him. Job’s patience received a wound when his hand grew weary, and his shield of faith, which should have covered him, hung down. Indeed, no grace is safe if from under the wing of faith. Therefore, to secure Peter from falling from all grace, Christ tells him, ‘I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not,’ Luke 22:32. This was the reserve that Christ took care should be kept to recover his other graces when foiled by the enemy, and to bring him off that encounter wherein he was so badly bruised and broken. It is said that Christ could not do many mighty things in his own country ‘because of their unbelief,’ Matthew 13:58. Neither can Satan do any great hurt to the Christian so long as faith is upon the place. It is true he aims to fight faith above all, as that which keeps him from coming at the rest, but he is not able long to stand before it. Let a saint be never so humble, patient, devout, alas! Satan will easily pick some hole or other in these graces, and break in upon him when he stands in the best array, if faith be not in the field to cover these. This is the grace that makes him face about and take him to his heels, 1 Peter 5:9.

Fourth. Faith alone procures acceptance with God for all the other graces and their works. ‘By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice,’ Hebrews 11:4. When a Christian hath wrought hardest in a day, and hath spun the finest, evenest, thread of obedience at the wheel of duty, he is afraid to carry home his work at night with an expectation of any acceptance at God’s hands for his work’s sake. No, it is faith he makes use of to present it through Christ to God for acceptance. We

are said, 1 Peter 2:5, ‘To offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ;’ That is, by faith in Christ, for without faith Christ makes none of our sacrifices acceptable. God takes nothing kindly but what the hand of faith presents. And so prevalent is faith with God, that he will take light gold—broken services—at her hand; which, were they to come alone, would be rejected with indignation. As a favourite that hath the ear of his prince, finds it easy to get his poor kindred entertained at court also (so Joseph brought his brethren into Pharaoh’s presence with great demonstrations of favour shown them by him for his sake; and Esther wound Mordecai into a high preferment in Ahasuerus’ court, who upon his own credit could get no farther than to sit at the gate), thus faith brings those works and duties into God’s presence, which else were sure to be shut out, and, pleading the righteousness of Christ, procures them to be received into such high favour with God, that they become his delight, Proverbs 15:8, and as a pleasant perfume in his nostrils, Malachi 3:4.

Fifth. Faith brings in succours when other graces fail. Two ways the Christian’s graces may fail—in their activity, or in their evidence.

1. In their activity, it is low water sometimes with the Christian. He cannot act so freely and vigorously then as at another time when the tide runs high, through divine assistances that flow in amain upon him. Those temptations which he could at one time snap asunder as easily as Samson did his cords of flax, at another time he is sadly hampered with that he cannot shake them off. Those duties which he performs with delight and joy, when his grace is in a healthful plight; at another time he pants and blows at, as much as a sick man doth to go up a hill—so heavily doth he find them come off. Were not the Christian, think you, ill now on it, if he had no comings in but from his own shop of duty? Here now is the excellency of faith; it succours the Christian in this his bankrupt condition. As Joseph got over his brethren to him, and nourished them out of his granaries all the time of famine, so doth faith the Christian in his penury of grace and duty. And this it doth in two ways.

(1.) By laying claim to the fulness of that grace which is in Christ as its own. Why art thou dejected, O my soul, saith the Christian’s faith, for thy weak grace? There is enough in Christ, all fulness dwells in him, it pleased the Father it should be so, and that to pleasure thee in thy wants and weaknesses. It is a ministerial fulness; as the clouds carry rain not for themselves but the earth, so doth Christ his fulness of grace for thee. ‘He is made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,’ 1 Corinthians 1:30. When the rags of the Christian’s own righteousness discourage and shame him, faith hath a robe to put on that covers all this unco meliness. ‘Christ is my righteousness,’ saith faith, and ‘in Him’ we are ‘complete,’ Colossians 2:10. Faith hath two hands, a working hand a receiving hand; and the receiving hand relieves the working hand, or else there would be a poor house kept in the Christian’s bosom. We find Paul himself but in a starving condition, for all the comfort his own graces could with their earnings afford him. He is a wretched man in his own account, if these be all he hath to live upon, Romans 7:24; yet even then, when he sees nothing in his own cupboard, his faith puts forth his receiving hand to Christ, and he is presently set at a rich feast, for which you find him giving thanks, Romans 7:25, ‘I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.’

(2.) Faith succours the Christian in the weakness and inactivity of his graces, by applying the promises for the saints’ perseverance in grace. It brings great comfort to a sick man, though very

weak at present, to hear his physician tell him, that though he is low and feeble, yet there is no fear he will die. The present weakness of grace is sad, but the fear of falling quite away is far sadder. Now faith, and only faith, can be the messenger to bring the good news to the soul, that it shall persevere. Sense and reason are quite posed and dunced here. It seems impossible to them, that such a bruised reed should bear up against all the counterblasts of hell, because they consider only what grace itself can do, and finding it so overmatched by the power and policy of Satan, think it but rational to give the victory to the stronger side. But faith, when it seeth symptoms of death in the saint's grace, finds life in the promise, and comforts the soul with this—that the faithful God will not suffer his grace to see corruption. He hath undertaken the physicking of his saints: 'Every branch in me that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit' John 15:2. When Hazael came to inquire of Elisha for his sick master, whether he should live or die; the prophet sent him with this answer back unto the king his master: 'Thou mayest certainly recover: howbeit the Lord hath shewed me that he shall surely die,' 2 Kings 8:10—that is, he might certainly recover for all his disease, but he should die by the traitorous bloody hand of Hazael his servant. Give me leave only to allude to this. When the Christian consults with his faith, and inquires of it, whether his weak grace will fail or hold out, die or live, faith's answer is, 'Thy weak grace may certainly die and fall away, but the Lord hath showed me it shall live and persevere' —that is, in regard of its own weakness and the mutability of man's nature, the Christian's grace might certainly die and come to nothing; but God hath shown faith in the promise that it shall certainly live and recover out of its lowest weakness. What David said in regard of his house, that every Christian may say in regard of his grace. 'Though his grace be not so with God (so strong, so unchangeable in itself), yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire,' 2 Samuel 23:5. This salt of the covenant is it shall keep, saith faith, thy weak grace from corruption. 'Why art thou cast down,' saith the psalmist, 'O my soul? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God,' Psalms 42:11. The health of David's countenance was not in his countenance, but in his God, and this makes his faith silence his fears, and so peremptorily resolve upon it, that there is a time coming—how near soever he now lies to the grave's mouth—when he shall yet praise him. 'The health and life of thy grace lie both of them, not in thy grace,' saith faith, 'but in God, who is thy God, therefore I shall yet live and praise him.' I do not wonder that the weak Christian is melancholy and sad when he sees his sickly face in any other glass but this.

2. In the evidence of them the Christian's grace may fail. It may disappear, as stars do in a cloudy night. How oft do we hear the Christian say in an hour of desertion and temptation, 'I know not whet her I love God or no in sincerity; I dare not say I have any true godly sorrow for sin; indeed I have thought formerly these graces had a being in me, but now I am at a loss what to think, yea, sometimes I am ready to fear the worst.' Now in this dark benighted state, faith undergirds the soul's ship, and hath two anchors it casts forth, whereby the soul is stayed from being driven upon the devouring quicksands of despair and horror.

(1.) Faith makes a discovery of the rich mercy in Christ to poor sinners, and calls the soul to look up to it, when it hath lost the sight of his own grace. It is no small comfort to a man, that hath lost his acquaintance for a debt paid, when he remembers that the man he deals with is a merciful good man, though his discharge be not presently to be found. That God whom thou hast to do with

is very gracious; what thou hast lost he is ready to restore—the evidence of thy grace I mean. David begged this and obtained it, see Psalms 51:1-19. ‘Yea,’ saith faith, ‘if it were true what thou fearest, that thy grace was never true, there is mercy enough in God’s heart to pardon all thy former hypocrisy, if now thou comest in the sincerity of thy heart.’ And so, faith persuades the soul by an act of adventure to cast itself upon God in Christ. ‘Wilt thou not,’ saith faith, ‘expect to find as much mercy at God’s hands as thou canst look for at a man’s?’ It is not beyond the line of created mercy to forgive many unkindnesses, much falseness and unfaithfulness, upon a humble sincere acknowledgment of the same. The world is not so bad, but it abounds with parents that can do thus much for their children, and masters for their servants; and is that hard for God to do which is so easy in his creature? Thus faith vindicates God’s name. And so long as we have not lost the sight of God’s merciful heart, our head will be kept above water, though we want the evidence of our own grace.

(2.) Faith makes a discovery of the rich mercy in Christ to poor sinners, and calls the soul to look up to it, when it hath lost the sight of his own grace. And it is some comfort, though a man hath no bread in his cupboard, to hear there is some to be had in the market. ‘O,’ saith the complaining Christian, ‘there were some hope, if I could find but those relentings and meltings of soul which others have in their bosoms for sin; then I could run under the shadow of that promise and take comfort, ‘Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted,’ Matthew 5:4. But alas! my heart is as hard as the flint.’ ‘Well,’ saith faith, ‘for thy comfort know, there are not only promises to the mourning soul and broken heart, but there are promises that God will break the heart, and give a spirit of mourning.’ So for other graces; not only promises to those that fear God, but to ‘put the fear of God into our hearts;’ not only promises to those that walk in his statutes and keep his judgments, but also to ‘put his spirit within us, and cause us to walk in his statutes,’ Ezekiel 36:27. Why then, O my soul, dost thou sit there bemoaning thyself fruitlessly for what thou sayest thou hast not, when thou knowest where thou mayest have it for going? As Jacob said to his sons, ‘Why do ye look one upon another? Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die,’ Genesis 42:1-2. Thus faith rouseth the Christian out of his amazed thoughts upon which his troubled spirit dwells like one destitute of counsel, not knowing what to do; and turns his bootless complaints, wherein he must necessarily pine and starve, into fervent prayer for that grace he wants. ‘There is bread in the promise,’ saith faith. Sit not here languishing in a sluggish despondency, but get you down upon your knees, and humbly, but valiantly, besiege the throne of grace for grace in this time of need. And certainly, the Christian may sooner get a new evidence for his grace, by pleading the promise, and plying the throne of grace, than by yielding so far to his unbelieving thoughts as to sit down and melt away his strength and time in the bitterness of his spirit —which Satan dearly likes—without using the means, which he will never do to any purpose, till faith brings thus much encouragement from the promise, that what he wants is there to be had freely and fully.

Sixth. As faith succours the Christian when his other graces fail him most, so it brings in his comfort when they most abound. Faith is to the Christian as Nehemiah was to Artaxerxes, Nehemiah 2:1. Of all the graces this is the Christian’s cup-bearer. The Christian takes the wine of joy out of faith’s hand, rather than any other grace. ‘Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,’ Romans 15:13. It is observable, 1 Peter 1:1-25, to see how the apostle therefore doth, as it were, cross his hands, as once Jacob did in blessing his son Joseph’s

children, and gives the pre-eminence to faith, attributing the Christian's joy to his faith, rather than to his love ver. 8: 'Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.' Mark, 'believing, ye rejoice.' Here is the door, the Christian's chief joy, yea, all his fiduciary joy comes in at. It is Christ that we are in this respect allowed only to rejoice in, 'For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,' Php 3:3,—where Christ is made the sole subject of our rejoicing fiduciarily, in opposition to all else, even our graces themselves, which become flesh when thus rejoiced and glorified in. Christ's blood is the wine that only glads the heart of God by way of satisfaction to his justice, and therefore only that can bring true gladness into the heart of man. When Christ promiseth the Comforter, he tells his disciples from what vessel he should draw the wine of joy that he was to give them: 'He shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you,' John 16:15. No grape of our own vine is pressed into this sweet cup. As if Christ had said, When he comes to comfort you with the pardon of your sins, 'he shall take of mine,' not anything of yours—my blood by which I purchased your peace with God, not your own tears of repentance by which you have mourned for your sins. All the blessed privileges which believers are instated into, they are the fruits of Christ's purchase, not of our earnings. Now, the Christian's joy flowing in from Christ, and not anything that he, poor creature, doth or hath; hence it comes to pass, that faith, above all the graces, brings in the Christian's joy and comfort, because this is the grace that improves Christ and what is Christ's for the soul's advantage. As of grace, so of comfort. Faith is the good spy, that makes discovery of the excellences in Christ, and then makes report of all to the soul it sees in him and knows of him. It is faith that broaches the promises, turns the cock and sets them a running into the soul. It doth not only show the soul how excellent Christ is, and what dainties are in the promises; but it applies Christ to the soul, and carves out the sweet viands that are dished forth in the promises. Yea, it puts them into the very mouth of the soul; it masticates and grinds the promise so, that the Christian is filled with its strength and sweetness. Till faith comes and brings the news of the soul's welcome, O how maidenly and uncomfortably do poor creatures sit at the table of the promise! Like Hannah, 'they weep and eat not.' No, alas! they dare not be so bold. But, when faith comes, then the soul falls to, and makes a satisfying meal indeed. No dish on the table but faith will taste of. Faith knows God sets them not on to go off untouched. It is though an humble yet a bold grace, because it knows it cannot be so bold with God in his own way as it is welcome.

USE OR APPLICATION.

[Unbelief hath the same pre-eminence among sins, as faith 'above all' graces.]

Use First. Is faith the chief of graces? This may help us to conceive of the horrible nature of unbelief. This surely will deserve as high a place among sins as faith hath among the graces. Unbelief! It is the Beelzebub, the prince of sins. As faith is the radical grace, so is unbelief a radical sin, a sinning sin. As of all sinners, those are most infamous who are ringleaders and make others sin—which is the brand that God hath set upon Jeroboam's name, 'Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin,' 1 Kings 14:16—so among sins, they are most horrid that are most productive of other sins. Such a one is unbelief above any other. It is a ring-leading sin, a sin-making sin. The first poisonous breath which Eve sucked in from the tempter was sent in the words, 'Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?' Genesis 3:1. As if he had said, 'Consider well on the matter. Do you believe God meant so? Can you think so ill of God as to

believe he would keep the best fruit of the whole garden from you?' This was the traitor's gate, at which all other sins entered into her heart; and it continues of the same use to Satan to this day, for the hurrying souls into other sins—called therefore, 'an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God,' Hebrews 3:12. The devil sets up this sin of unbelief as a blind betwixt the sinner and God, that the shot which come from the threatening, and are levelled at the sinner's breast, may not may not be dre aded and feared by him. And then the wretch can be as bold with his lust, as the pioneer is at his work, when once he hath got his basket of earth between him and the enemies' bullets. Nay, this unbelief doth not only choke the bullets of wrath which are sent out of the law's fiery mouth, but it damps the motions of grace which come from the gospel. All the offers of love which God makes to an unbelieving heart, they fall like seed into dead earth, or, like sparks into a river, they are out as soon as they fall into it.

'The word'—it is said—'did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it,' Hebrews 4:2. The strength of this whole body of sin lies in this lock of unbelief. There is no mastering of a sinner while unbelief is in power. This will carry all arguments away, whether they be from law or gospel, that are pressed upon him, as easily as Samson did the doors, posts, with bar and all, from the city of Gaza, Judges 16:2. It is a sin that doth keep the field—one of the last of all the others; that which the sinner is last convinced of, and the saint ordinarily last conqueror of. It is one of the chief strengths and fastnesses unto which the devil retreats when other sins are routed. O how oft do we hear a poor sinner confess and bewail other sins he hath lived in formerly, with brinish tears, but will not hearken yet to the offer of mercy in Christ. Bid him believe on Christ, and he shall be saved—which was the doctrine Paul and Silas preached to the trembling jailor, Acts 16:31—alas! he dares not, he will not; you can hardly persuade him it is his duty to do so. The devil hath now betaken himself to this city of gates and bars, where he stands upon his guard; and, the more strongly to fortify himself in it, he hath the most specious pretenses for it of any other sin. It is a sin that he makes the humbled soul commit out of fear of sinning, and so stabs the good name of God, for fear of dishonouring him by a saucy presumptuous faith. Indeed it is a sin by which Satan intends to put the greatest scorn upon God, and unfold all his cankered malice against him at once. It is by faith that the saints 'have obtained a good report.' Yea, it is by the saints' faith that God hath a good report in the world. And, by unbelief, the devil doth his worst to raise an evil report of God in the world; as if he were not what his own promise and his saints' faith witness him to be. In a word, it is a sin that hell gapes for of all the others.

There are two sins that claim a pre-eminence in hell—hypocrisy and unbelief; and therefore other sinners are threatened to 'have their portion with the hypocrites,' Matthew 24:51, and 'with unbelievers,' Luke 12:46; as if those infernal mansions were taken up principally for these, and all others were but inferior prisoners. But of the two unbelief is the greater, and that which may, with an emphasis, be called above this or any other, 'the damning sin.' 'He that believeth not is condemned already,' John 3:18. He hath his mittimus already to jail; yea, he is in it already in a sense—he hath the brand of a damned person on him. The Jews are said, Romans 11:32, to be shut up 'in unbelief.' A surer prison the devil cannot keep a sinner in. Faith shuts the soul up in the promise of life and happiness, as God shut Noah into the ark. It is said, 'the Lord shut him in,' Genesis 7:16. Thus faith shuts the soul up in Christ, and the ark of his covenant, from all fear of danger from heaven or hell; and [thus too,] on the contrary, unbelief shuts a soul up in guilt and wrath, that there is no more possibility for an unbeliever of escaping damnation, than for one to

escape burning that is shut up in a fiery oven. No help can come to the sinner so long as this bolt of unbelief is on the door of his heart. As our salvation is attributed to faith, rather than to other graces —though none [be] wanting in a saved person—so sinners' damnation and ruin is attributed to their unbelief, though the other sins [are] found with it in the person damned. The Spirit of God passeth over the Jews' hypocrisy, murmuring, rebellion, and lays their destruction at the door of this one sin of unbelief. 'They could not enter in because of unbelief,' Hebrews 3:19.

O sinners!—you who live under the gospel I mean—if you perish, know beforehand what is your undoing—it is your unbelief that does it. If a malefactor that is condemned to die be offered his life by the judge upon reading a psalm of mercy, and he reads not, we may say his not reading hangs him. The promise of the gospel is this psalm of mercy, which God offers in his son to law■condemned sinners. Believing is reading this psalm of mercy. If thou believest not and are damned, thou goest to hell rather for thy final unbelief than any of thy other sins, for which a discharge is offered thee upon thy receiving Christ and believing on him. Let this cause us all to rise up against this sin, as the Philistines did against Samson, whom they called the destroyer of their country,' Judges 16:24. This is the destroyer of your souls, and that is worse; yea, it destroys them with a bloodier hand than other sins do that are not aggravated with this. We find two general heads of indictments upon which the whole world of sinners shall be condemned at the great day, 2 Thessalonians 1:8. There Christ's coming to judgment is expressed; and those miserable undone creatures that shall fall under his condemning sentence, are comprised in these two [classes]—such as 'know not God,' and such as 'obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ.' The heathens' negative unbelief of the gospel shall not be charged upon them, because they never had it preached to them. No; they shall be sent to hell for 'not knowing God,' and so shall escape with a lighter damnation by far, than Jews or Christian Gentiles to whom the gospel hath been preached —though to some of these with a stronger and longer continued beam of light than [has been the lot of] others. The dismal charge which shall be brought against these will be, that they have not obeyed the gospel of our Lord Jesus; that is, not believed on Christ—called therefore the 'obedience of faith,' Romans 16:26. And certainly, we cannot but think that there shall be a torment proper to these gospel refusers, which those that never had the offer of grace shall not feel, in hell. And among those that obey not the gospel the greatest vengeance waits for them that have had the longest and most passionate treaty of mercy allowed them. These are they that put God to the greatest expense of mercy, and therefore they must necessarily expect the greatest proportion of wrath and vengeance to be measured to them; yea, their unbelief puts Christ, and the grace of God in him, to the greatest shame and scorn that is possible for creatures to do; and it is but righteous that God should therefore put their unbelief and themselves with it to the greatest shame before men and angels, of any other sinners.

[Reasons why we should be serious in the trial of our faith.]

Use Second. Is faith the chief of graces? Let this make us the more curious and careful that we be not cheated in our faith. There are some things of so inconsiderable worth, that they will not pay us for the pains and care we take about them; and there to be choice and scrupulous is folly; to be negligent and incurious is wisdom. But there are other things of such worth and weighty consequence, that none but he that means to call his wisdom in question can be willing to be mistaken and cozened in them. Who that is wise would pay as for a precious stone, and have a pebble, or at best a Bristol-stone, put upon him for his money? Who, when his life is at stake, and

knows no way to save it but by getting some one rich drug which is very scarce, but to be had, would not be very careful to have the right? O my dear friends, doth it not infinitely more concern you to be careful in your merchandise for this pearl of precious faith? Can you be willing to take the devil's false sophisticated ware off his hand? a mock faith which he would cheat you with, rather than obtain the 'faith unfeigned,' which God hath to give unto his children —called therefore the 'faith of God's elect?' Will the devil's drugs, that are sure to kill thee, serve thy turn, when thou art offered by God himself a rich drug that will cure thee? When thou goest to buy a garment, thou askest for the best piece of stuff of cloth in the shop. In the market thou wouldst have the best meat for thy belly; when with the lawyer the best counsel for thy estate; and of the physician the best directions for thy health. Art thou for the best in all but for thy soul? Wouldst thou not have a faith of the best kind also? If a man receives false money, who doth he wrong but himself? and if thou beest gulled with a false faith, the loss is thy own, and that no small one. Thyself will think so when thou comest to the bar, and God shall bid thee either pay the debt thou owest him, or go to rot and roar in hell's prison. Then how wilt thou be confounded! When thou producest thy faith and hopest to save thyself with this—that thou believest on the Lord Jesus—but shalt have thy confidence rejected, and God tell thee to thy teeth it is not faith but a lie in thy right hand that thou hast got, and therefore he will not accept the payment, though it be Christ himself that offerest to lay down; nay, that he will give thee up into the tormentor's hand, and that not only for believing, but also for counterfeiting the King of heaven's coin, and setting his name on thy false money; which thou dost by pretending to faith, when it is a false one thou hast in thy bosom. This were enough to awaken your care in the trial of your faith, but to give some further weight to the exhortation we shall cast in these three conditions.

1. Reason. Consider that as thy faith is, so are all thy other graces. As a man's marriage is so are all his children, legitimate, or illegitimate. Thus, as our marriage is to Christ, so all our graces are. Now, it is faith by which we are married to Christ. 'I have espoused you to one husband,' saith Paul to the Corinthians, 2 Corinthians 11:2. How, but by their faith? It is faith whereby the soul gives its consent to take Christ for her husband. Now, if our faith be false, then our marriage to Christ is feigned; and if that be feigned, then all our pretended graces are base-born. How goodly soever an outside they have—as a bastard may have a fair face—they are all illegitimate; our humility, patience, temperance—all bastards. And, you know, 'a bastard was not to enter into the congregation,' Deuteronomy 23:2. No more shall any bastard grace enter into the congregation of the just in heaven. He that hath children of his own will not make another's bastard his heir. God hath children of his own to inherit heaven's glory, in whose hearts he hath by his own Spirit begotten those heavenly graces which do truly resemble his own holy nature; surely he will never settle it upon strangers, counterfeit believers, that are the devil's brats and by-blows.

2. Reason. Consider the excellency of true faith makes false faith so much the more odious. Because a king's son is an extraordinary personage, therefore it is so high a crime for an ignoble person to counterfeit himself to be such a one. It is by that we 'become the sons of God,' John 1:12. And what a high presumption is it then that, by a false faith, thou committest? Thou pretendedst to be a child of God, when no heaven-blood runs in thy veins, but hast more reason to look for thy kindred in hell and derive thy pedigree from Satan. This passeth for no less than blasphemy in the account of the Scripture. 'I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan,' Revelation 2:9. God loathes such with his

heart. A false friend is worse than an open enemy in man's judgment; and a hypocritical Judas more abhorred by God than a bloody Pilate. Either, therefore, get true faith, or pretend to none. The ape, because he hath the face of a man, but not the soul of a man, is therefore the most ridiculous of all creatures. And of all sinners, none will be put more to shame at the last day than such as have aped and imitated the believer in some exterior postures of profession, but never had the spirit of a believer so as to perform one vital act of faith. The psalmist tells us of some whose 'image' God will 'despise,' Psalms 73:20. It is spoken chiefly of the wicked man's temporary prosperity—which, for its short continuance, is compared to the image or representation of a thing in the fancy of a sleeping man, that then is busy and pl easeth us with many fine pleasing objects, but all are lost when our sleep leaves us—this God will despise at the great day; when he shall not give heaven and glory by the estates and honours that men had in the world, but tumble them down to hell if graceless, as well as the poorest beggar in the world. But, there is another sort of persons whose image God will at that day despise more than these, and that is the image of all temporary believers and unsound professors, who have a fantastical faith, which they set up like an image in their imaginations, and dance about it with as many self-pleasing thoughts as a man doth that is dreaming himself to be some great prince; but this great idol shall then be broken, and the worshippers of it hissed down to hell with the greatest shame of any other.

3. Reason. Consider that none stand at greater disadvantage for the obtaining of a true faith than he who flatters himself with a false one. 'Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him,' Proverbs 26:12, that is, there is more hope of persuading him. Of all fools the conceited fool is the worst. Pride makes a man incapable of receiving counsel. Nebuchadnezzar's mind is said to be 'hardened in pride,' Daniel 5:20. There is no reasoning with a proud man. He castles himself in his own opinion of himself, and there stands upon his defence against all arguments that are brought. Bid a conceited professor labour for faith, or he is undone; and the man will tell you that you mistake and knock at the wrong door. It is the ignorant person, or profane, you should go to on the errand. He thanks God he is not now to seek for a faith, and thus blesseth himself in his good condition, when God knows 'he feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?' Isaiah 44:20. The ignorant profane person, like the psalmist's 'man of low degree,' is plain 'vanity.' It is not hard to make themselves to acknowledge as much as that they have nothing, deserve nothing, can look for nothing as they are but hell and damnation. But, such as pretend to faith, and content themselves with a false one, they are like the 'men of high degree' 'a lie,' which is vanity as well as the other, but with a specious cover over it that hides it. Therefore the devil is forward enough to put poor silly souls on believing, that he may forestall, if he can, the Spirit's market, and prevent the creature's obtaining of a true faith, by cheating of it with a counterfeit. It is like the wicked policy of Jeroboam, who, to keep the Israelites from going to Jerusalem, and hankering after the true worship of God there, set up something like a religious worship nearer hand, at home, in the 'golden calves;' and this pleased many well enough, that they missed not their walk to Jerusalem. O friends, take heed therefore of being cheated with a false faith. Every one, I know, would have the living child to be hers and not the dead one. We would all pass for such as have the true faith and not the false. But, be not your own judges; appeal to the Spirit of God, and let him, with the sword of his word, come and decide the controversy. Which faith is thine, the true or false?

SECOND BRANCH.

‘The shield of faith’ itself, and how its truth may be judged of. By this time, possibly, you may be solicitous to know what your faith is, and how you may come to judge of the truth of it. Now for your help therein, take these two directions. One, taken from the manner of the Spirit’s working faith; the other, from the properties of faith, when it is wrought.

[The manner of the Spirit’s working faith.]

First Direction. We know what faith is, and how to judge of it, from the manner of the Spirit’s working it in the soul. It is incomparably the greatest work that passeth upon the soul from the Spirit of Christ; it is called the ßB,D$V88T< µX(,2@H JH *L<■µ,TH –LJ@Ø—‘The exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe,’ Ephesians 1:19. Oh, observe with what a heap of expressions the Spirit of God loads our weak understandings, that labouring under the weight of them, and finding the difficulty of reaching the significancy of them, we might be the more widened to conceive of that power which can never be fully understood by us—being indeed infinite, and so too big to be inclosed within the narrow walls of our understandings—power,’ ‘greatness of power,’ ‘exceeding greatness,’ and lastly, ‘exceeding greatness of his power,’ that is, of God. What angel in heaven can tell us what all these amount to? God, with reverence be it spoken, sets his whole force to this work. It is compared to no less than ‘the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power,’ Ephesians 1:20-21. To raise anyone from the dead is a mighty, an almighty work; but to raise Christ from the dead, carries more wonder with it than to raise any other. He had a heavier grave-stone to keep him down than any besides—the weight of a world’s sin lay upon him—yet notwithstanding this he is raised with power by the Spirit, not only out of the grave, but into glory. Now the power God puts forth upon the soul in working faith, is according to this of raising Christ, for, indeed, the sinner’s soul is as really dead in sin as Christ’s body was in the grave for sin. Now, speak, poor creature, art thou any way acquainted with such a power of God to have been at work in thee? or dost thou think slightly of believing, and so show thyself a stranger to this mystery? Certainly, this one thing might resolve many—if they desired to know their own state—that they have no faith, because they make faith so trivial and light a matter, as if they were as easy to believe as to say they do; and it were of no more difficulty to receive Christ into their souls by faith, than to put a bit of bread into their mouths with their hand. Ask some, whether ever such a day or time of God’s power came over their heads, to humble them for sin, drive them out of themselves, and draw them effectually unto Christ? And they may answer you as those did Peter, when he asked—‘Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard wh ether there be any Holy Ghost,’ Acts 19:2. So these might say, ‘We know not whether there be any such power required to the working of faith or no.’ But to descend into a more particular consideration of this powerful work of the Spirit upon the soul for the production of faith, it will be necessary to consider—O what posture the Spirit of Christ finds the soul in before he begins this great work! and then how he makes his addresses to the soul, and what acts he puts forth upon the soul for the working faith.

First. The posture of the soul when the Spirit begins his great work of grace in it. The Spirit finds the creature in such a state as it neither can, nor will, contribute the least help to the work. As the ‘prince of the world,’ when he came to tempt Christ, ‘found nothing in him’ to befriend and further

his tempting design; so, when the Spirit of Christ comes, he finds as little encouragement from the sinner. No party within the castle of the soul to side with him when he comes first to set down before it, and lay siege to it, but all the powers of the whole man in arms against him! Hence it is that so many scornful answers are sent out to the summons that are given sinners to yield. ‘He came unto his own, and his own received him not,’ John 1:11. Never was a garrison more resolved to stand out against both the treaties and batteries of an assailing enemy, than the carnal heart is all means that God useth to reduce it into his obedience. The noblest operations of the soul, they are ‘earthly, sensual, devilish,’ James 3:15, so that except heaven and earth can meet—sensual and spiritual please one palate, God and the devil agree —there is no hope that a sinner of himself should like the motion that Christ makes, or that with any argument he should be won over to like it, so long as the ground of dislike remains in his earthly, sensual, and devilish nature.

Second. We proceed to show how the Spirit makes his addresses to the soul, and what acts he puts forth upon it for the working faith. Now the Spirit’s address is suited to the several facilities of the soul, the principal of which are these three, understanding, conscience, and will. These are like three forts, one within the other, which must all be reduced before the town be taken—the sinner, I mean, subdued to the obedience of faith—and to these the Spirit makes his particular addresses, putting forth an act of almighty power upon every one of them, and that in this order.

[The Spirit’s particular addresses to the soul, when working faith in it.]

1. The Spirit makes his approach to the understanding, and on it he puts forth an act of illumination. The Spirit will not work in a dark shop; the first thing he doth in order to faith, is to beat out a window in the soul, and let in some light from heaven into it. Hence, believers are said to be ‘renewed in the spirit of their minds,’ Ephesians 4:23, which the same apostle calleth being ‘renewed in knowledge,’ Colossians 3:10. By nature we know little of God, and nothing of Christ or the way of salvation by him. The eye of the creature therefore must be opened to see the way of life, before he can by faith get into it. God doth not use to waft souls to heaven, like passengers in a ship, who are shut under the hatches, and see nothing all the way they are sailing to their port. If [it had been] so, that prayer might have been spared which the psalmist, inspired of God, breathes forth in the behalf of the blind Gentiles ‘That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations,’ Psalms 67:2. As faith is not a naked assent without affiance[3] and innitency[4] on Christ; so neither is it a blind assent without some knowledge. If, therefore, thou continuest still in thy brutish ignorance, and knowest not so much as who Christ is, and what he hath done for the salvation of poor sinners, and what thou must do to get interest in him, thou art far enough from believing. If the day be not broken in thy soul, much less is the Sun of righteousness arisen by faith in thy soul.

2. Again, when the Spirit of God hath sprung with a divine light into the understanding, then he makes his address to the conscience, and the act which passeth upon that is an act of conviction; ‘he shall convince the world of sin,’ &c, John 16:8. Now this conviction is nothing but a reflection of the light that is in the understanding upon the conscience whereby the creature feels the weight and force of those truths he knows, so as to be brought into a deep sense of them. Light in a direct beam heats not, nor doth knowledge swimming in the brain affect. Most under the gospel know that unbelief is a damning sin, and that there is ‘no name’ to be saved by but the name of Christ; yet how few of those know this convincingly, so as to apply it to their own consciences, and to be

affected with their own deplored state, who are the unbelievers and Christless persons? As he is a convicted drunkard in law, who, in open court, or before a lawful authority, upon clear testimony and deposition of witnesses, is found and judged to be such; so he, scripturally, is a convinced sinner, who, upon the clear evidence of the word brought against him by the Spirit, is found by his own conscience —God's officer in his bosom—to be so. Speak now, poor creature, did ever such an act of the Spirit of God pass upon thee as this is? which that thou mayest the better discern of, try thyself by these few characters of a convinced person.

(1.) A sinner truly convinced is not only convinced of this sin or that sin, but of the evil of all sin. It is an ill sign when a person seems in a passion to cry out of one sin, and to be senseless of another sin. A parboiled conscience is not right, soft in one part, and hard in another. The Spirit of God is uniform in its work.

(2.) The convinced sinner is not only convinced of acts of sin, but of the state of sin also. He is not only affected [by] what he hath done—this law broken, and that mercy abused by him—but with what his state and present condition is. Peter leads Simon Magus from that one horrid act he committed to the consideration of that which was worse—the dismal state that he discovered him to be in. 'I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity,' Acts 8:23. Many will confess they do not do as they should, who will not think by any means so ill of themselves that their state is na ught—a state of sin and death; whereas the convinced soul freely puts himself under this sentence of death, owns his condition, and dissembles not his pedigree. 'I am a most vile wretch,' saith he, 'a limb of Satan, full of sin as the toad is of rank poison. My whole nature lies in wickedness, even as the dead rotten carcass doth its slime and putrefaction. I am a child of wrath, born to no other inheritance than hell-flames; and if God will now tread me down thither, I have not one righteous syllable to object against his proceedings, but there is that in my own conscience which will clear him from having done me any wrong in my doom.'

(3.) The convinced sinner doth not only condemn himself for what he hath done and is, but he despairs of himself as to anything he can now do to save himself. Many, though they go so far as to confess they are vile wretches, and have lived wickedly, and for this deserve to die; yet, when they have put the rope around their neck by a self-condemning act, they are so far from being convinced of their own impotency, that they hope to cut the rope with their repentance, reformation, and I know not what bundle of good works, which they think shall redeem their credit with God and recover his favour, which their former sins have unhappily lost them. And this comes to pass, because the plough of conviction did not go deep enough to tear up those secret roots of self-confidence with which the heart of every sinner is woefully tainted. Whereas every soul, thoroughly convinced by the Spirit, is a self-despairing soul; he sees himself beyond his own help, like a poor condemned prisoner, laden with so many heavy irons, that he sees it is impossible for him to make an escape, with all his skill or strength, out of the hands of justice. O friends! look whether the work be gone thus far in your souls or no. Most that perish, it is not their disease that kills them, but their physician. They think to cure themselves, and this leaves them uncurable. Speak, soul, did the Lord ever ferret thee out of this burrow where so many earth themselves? Art thou as much at a loss what to do, as sensible for what thou hast done? Dost thou see hell in thy sin and despair in thyself? Hath God got thee out of this Keilah, and convinced thee if thou wouldst stay in the self-confidence of thy repentance, reformation, and duties, they would all deliver thee up into the hands of God's justice and wrath, when they shall come against thee? Then, indeed,

thou hast escaped one of the finest snares that the wit of hell can weave.

(4.) The convinced sinner is not only convinced of sin, so as to condemn himself, and despair of himself, but he is convinced of a full provision laid up in Christ for self-condemned and self-despairing ones. ‘He shall convince the world of sin, and of righteousness,’ John 16:9-10. And this is as necessary an antecedent for faith as any of the former. Without this, the soul convinced of sin is more like to go to the gallows with Judas, or fall on the sword of the law—as the jailer attempted to do on his when he thought his condition desperate—than think of coming to Christ. Who will go to his door that hath not wherewithal to relieve him?

3. The third and last faculty to be dealt with is the will, and on this, for the production of faith, the Spirit puts forth an act of renovation, whereby he doth sweetly, but powerfully, incline the will, which before was rebellious and refractory, to accept of Christ, and make a free deliberate choice of him for his Lord and Saviour. I say a ‘free’ choice, not only cudgelled into him with apprehensions of wrath, as one may run under an enemy’s pent-house in a storm, whose door he would have passed by in fair weather, and never looked that way. Speak, soul, dost thou please thyself in choosing Christ? dost thou go to Christ, not only for safety, but delight? So the spouse: ‘I sat under his shadow with great delight,’ Song of Solomon 2:3. I say a ‘deliberate’ choice, wherein the soul well weighs the terms Christ is offered on, and when it hath considered all seriously, likes them, and closeth with him. Like [as it was with] Ruth, who when Naomi spake the worst she could to discourage her, yet liked her mother’s company too well to lose it for those troubles that attended her. Speak, soul, hath the Spirit of God thus put his golden key into the lock of thy will, to open the everlasting door of thy heart to let Christ the King of glory in? Hath he not only opened the eye of thy understanding, as he awaked Peter asleep in prison, and caused the chains of senselessness and stupidity to fall off thy conscience, but also opened the iron gate of thy will, to let thee out of the prison of impenitency, where even now thou wert fast bolted in; yea, brought thee to knock at heaven-door for entertainment, as Peter did at the house of Mary, where the church was met. Be of good comfort, thou mayest know assuredly that God hath sent, not his angel, but his own Spirit, and hath delivered thee out of the hand of sin, Satan, and justice.

[The properties of true faith, when it is wrought.]

Second Direction. We know what faith is, and how to judge of it, from its properties when it is wrought in us buy the Spirit. We shall content ourselves by noticing three. First. True faith is obediential. Second. It is prayerful. Third. It is uniform in its acting.

[True faith is obediential.]

First Property. This choice excellent faith is an obediential faith; that is, true faith on the promise works obedience to the command. Abraham is famous for his obedience; no command, how difficult soever, came amiss to him. He is an obedient servant indeed, that, when he doth but hear his master knock with his foot, leaves all and runs presently to know his master’s will and pleasure. Such a servant had God of Abraham: ‘Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot,’ Isaiah 41:2. But what was the spring that set Abraham’s obedience a going? See for this, Hebrews 11:8 ‘By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheri’tance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.’ As it is impossible to please God without faith, so it is impossible not to desire to please God with faith. It

may well go for an idol faith, that hath hands but doth not work, feet, but doth not walk in the statutes of God. No sooner had Christ cured the woman in the gospel of her fever, but it is said, ‘She arose, and ministered unto them,’ Matthew 8:15. Thus the believing soul stands up and ministers unto Christ in gratitude and obedience. Faith is not lazy; it inclines not the soul to sleep, but work; it sends the creature not to bed, there to snort away his time in ease and sloth, but into the field. The night of ignorance and unbelief, that was the creature’s sleeping time; but, when the Sun of righteousness ariseth, and it is day in the soul, then the creature riseth and goeth forth to his labour. The first words that break out faith’s lips, are those of Saul in his hour of conversion: ‘Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?’ Acts 9:6. Faith turns the Jordan, and alters the whole course of a man. ‘We were,’ saith the apostle, ‘foolish’ and ‘disobedient,’ ‘but after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,’ Titus 3:3-4, then the case was altered, as it follows. And, therefore, take your foul fingers off the promise, and pretend no more to faith, if ye be children of Belial—such whose necks do not freely stoop to this yoke of obedience. The devil himself may as soon pass for a believer as a disobedient soul. Other things he can show as much as you. Dost thou pretend to knowledge? thou wilt not deny the devil to be a greater scholar than thyself, I hope, and that in Scripture knowledge. Dost thou believe the Scripture to be true? and doth not he more strongly? Dost thou tremble? he much more. It is obedience he wants, and this makes him a devil, and it will make thee like him also.

[Two characters distinguishing true faith’s obedience.]

Question. But, you may ask, what stamp is there to be found on faith’s obedience which will distinguish it from all counterfeits—for there are many fair semblances of obedience, which the devil will never grudge us the having?

Answer. Take these two characters of the obedience of faith.

1. Character. Faith’s obedience begins at the heart, and from thence it diffuseth and dilates itself to the outward man, till it overspreads the whole man in a sincere endeavour. As in natural life, the first part that lives in the heart, so the first that faith subdues into obedience is the heart. It is called a ‘faith which purifieth the heart,’ Acts 15:9. And the believing Romans ‘obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to them,’ Romans 6:17. Whereas a false faith, which apes this true faith—as art imitates nature—begins without, and there ends. All the seeming good works of a counterfeit believer, they are like the beautiful colour in a picture’s face, which comes not from a principle of life within, but the painter’s pencil without. Such were those, John 2:23, who are said to ‘believe on Christ,’ ‘but Jesus did not commit himself unto them,’ John 2:24. And why? ‘for he knew what was in man,’ John 2:25. He cared not for the painted porch and goodly outside: ‘for he knew what was in man,’ and by that knowledge he knew them to be rotten at core, naught at heart, before they were specked on the skin of their exterior conversation.

Question (1.) But how may I know my obedience is the obedience of the heart?

Answer. If it comes from love then it is the obedience of the heart. He commands the heart that is the master of its love. The castle must needs yield when he that keeps it, and hath the keys of it, submits. Love is the affection that governs this royal fort of man’s heart. We give our hearts to them we give our love to. And indeed thus it is that faith brings the heart over into subjection and obedience to God, by putting it under a law of love; ‘faith worketh by love,’ Galatians 5:6. First,

faith worketh love, and then it worketh by it. As first the workman sets an edge on his tools, and then carves and cuts with them; so faith sharpens the soul's love to God, and then acts by it. Or, as a statuary, to make some difficult piece, before he goes about it, finding his hands numb with cold, that he cannot handle his tools so nimbly as he should, goes first to the fire, and, with the help of its heat, chafes them till they of stiff and numb become agile and active, then to work he falls; so faith brings the soul—awk and listless enough, God knows, to any duty—unto the meditation of the peerless, matchless love of God in Christ to it; and at this fire faith stays the Christian's thoughts till his affections begin to kindle and come to some sense of this love of God, and now the Christian bestirs himself for God with might and main.

Question (2.) But how may I know my obedience is from love?

Answer. I will send to St. John to be resolved of this question, 'For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous,' 1 John 5:3. Speak, soul, what account have you of the commandments? Do you look upon them as an iron chain about your legs, and think yourselves prisoners because you are tied to them? or do you value them as a chain of gold about your neck, and esteem yourselves favourites of the King of heaven, that he will honour you to honour him by serving of him? So did as great a prince as the world had: 'Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly,' 1 Chronicles 29:1-30. Not, 'Who am I, that I should be a king over my people?' but 'that I should have a heart so gracious to offer willingly with my people.' Not, 'Who am I, that they should serve me?' but, 'that thou wilt honour me with a heart to serve thee with them?' The same holy man in another place speak of sin as his prison, and his obedience as his liberty: 'I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts,' Psalms 119:45. When God gives him a large heart for duty, he is as thankful as a man that was bound in prison is when he is set at liberty, that he may visit his friends and follow his calling. The only grievous thing to a loving soul is to be hindered in his obedience. This is that which makes such a one out of love with the world, and with being in it —because it cumbers him in his work, and many times keeps him from it. As a conscionable faithful servant, that is lame or sickly, and can do his master little service, O how it grieves him! Thus the loving soul bemoans itself, that it should put God to so much cost, and be so unprofitable under it. Speak, is this thy temper? Blessed art thou of the Lord! There is a jewel of two diamonds, which this will prove thou art owner of, that the crown-jewels of all the princes of the world are not so worthy to be valued with, as a heap of dust or dung is to be compared with them. The jewel I mean, is made of this pair of graces —faith and love. They are thine, and, with them, God and all that he hath and is. But, if the commandments if the commandments of God be 'grievous,' as they are to every carnal heart, and thou countest thyself at ease when thou canst make an escape from a duty to commit a sin, as the beast doth when his collar is off and he in his fat pasture again; now thou art where thou wouldst be, and can show some spirits that thou hast. But when conscience puts on the trace again, thou art dull and heavy again. O, it speaks thee to have no love to God, and therefore no faith on God, that is true. That is a jade indeed who hath no mettle but in the pasture.

2. Character. The obedience of faith is full of self-denial. Faith keeps the creature low; as in what he hath, so he doth. 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,' Galatians 2:20. As if he had said, 'I pray, mistake me not; when I say, 'I live,' I mean, not that I live by myself, but Christ in me. I live, and that deliciously, but it is Christ that keeps the house, not I. I mortify my corruptions, and vanquish temptations, but I am debtor to Christ for the strength.' None can write here, as one did

under Pope Adrian's statue —where the place of his birth was named, and those princes that had preferred him from step to step till he mounted the pope's chair, but God left out of all the story—'nihil hic Deus fecit'—God did nothing for this man. No, blessed Paul, and in him every believer, acknowledgeth God for sole founder, and benefactor too, of all the good he hath and doth. They are not ashamed to acknowledge who they are beholden to for all. 'These are the children which God hath graciously given me,' said Jacob. And these the services which God hath graciously assisted me in, saith Paul; 'I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me,' 1 Corinthians 15:10. All is ex dono Dei—from the gift of God. O how chary are saints of writing themselves the authors of their own good works, parts, or abilities! 'Art thou able,' said the king to Daniel, 'to make known unto me the dream which I have seen?' Daniel 2:26. Now mark, he doth not say, as the proud astrologers, 'We will show the interpretation,' Daniel 2:4. That fitted their mouths well enough who had no acquaintance with God, but not Daniel's—the servant of the living God. Though at the very time he had the secret revealed to him and could tell the king his dream, yet he was careful to stand clear from any filching of God's glory from him; and therefore he answers the king by telling him what his God could do rather than himself. 'There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets,' &c. And what makes Daniel so self■denying? Truly it was because he had obtained this secret of God by faith at the throne of grace; as you may perceive by Daniel 2:15-17 compared. That faith which taught him to beg the mercy of God, enabled him to deny himself, and give the entire glory of it from himself to God. As rivers empty their streams again into the bosom of the sea, whence they at first received them; so men give the praise of what they do unto that by which they do it. If they attempt any enterprise with their own wit or industry, you shall have them bring their sacrifice to their wit or net. No wonder to hear Nebuchadnezzar—who looked no higher than himself in building his great Babylon—ascribe the honour of it to himself, 'Is not this great Babylon, that I have built...by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?' Daniel 4:30. But faith teacheth the creature to blot out his own name, and write the name of God in its room, upon all he hath and doth. When the servants came to give up their accounts to their Lord, every one for his pound; those that were faithful to improve it how humbly and self-denyingly do they speak! 'Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds,' saith the first, Luke 19:16. 'Thy pound hath gained five,' saith another, ver. 18. Mark, not 'I have gained,' but, 'thy pound hath gained ten and five.' They do not applaud themselves, but ascribe both principal and increase to God; thy talent hath gained, that is, thy gifts and grace, through thy assistance and blessing, have gained thus much more. Only he that did least comes in with a brag, and tells his Lord what he had done. 'Behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin.' Least doers are greatest boasters.

[True faith is prayerful.]

Second Property. True faith is prayerful. Prayer, it is the child of faith; and as the child bears his father's name upon him, so doth prayer the name of faith. What is it known by but by 'the prayer of faith?' James 5:15. Prayer, it is the very natural breath of faith. Supplication and thanksgiving—the two parts of prayer—by these, as the body by the double motion of the lungs, doth the Christian suck in mercy from God, and breathe back again that mercy in praise to God. But, without faith he could do neither; he could not by supplication draw mercy from God; 'for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,' Hebrews 11:6. Neither could he return praises to God without faith. David's heart must be fixed before he can

sing and give thanks, Psalms 56:1-13. Thanksgiving is an act of self-denial, and it is faith alone that will show us the way out of our own doors; and as the creature cannot pray—I mean acceptably—without faith, so with faith he cannot but pray. The new creature, like our infants in their natural birth, comes crying into the world; and therefore Christ tells it for great news to Ananias of Saul, a new-born believer, 'Behold he prayeth.' But is that so strange, that one brought up at the foot of Gamaliel, and so precise a Pharisee as he was, should be found upon his knees at prayer? Truly no, it was that his sect gloried in—their fasting and praying—and therefore, he, being strict in his way, was no doubt acquainted with this work as to the exterior part of it, but he never had the spirit of prayer, till he now had the Spirit of grace, whereby he believed on Jesus Christ. And therefore, if you will try your faith, it must not be by bare praying, but by some peculiar characters which faith imprints prayer withal. Now there are three acts by which faith discovers itself in reference to this duty of prayer. 1. Faith puts forth an exciting act, whereby it stirs up the Christian to pray. 2. Faith hath an assisting act in prayer. 3. Faith hath a supporting act after prayer.

[Three acts by which faith discovers itself in reference to prayer.]

1. Act. Faith puts forth an exciting act, whereby it provokes the Christian and strongly presseth him to pray. And this it doth,

(1.) By discovering to the creature his own beggary and want, as also the fulness that is to be had from God in Christ for his supply—both which faith useth as powerful motives to quicken the soul up to pray. As the lepers said to one another, 'Why sit we here until we die? If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: come, and let us fall into the host of the Syrians,' 2 Kings 7:3-4. Thus faith rouseth up the soul to prayer. If thou stayest at thy own door, O my soul, thou art sure to starve and die. What seest thou in thyself but hunger and famine? No bread there; no money to buy any in thy own purse. Up therefore, haste thee to thy God, and thy soul shall live. O sirs, are you pressed with this inward feeling of your own wants? Press to the throne of grace as the only way left for your supply. You may hope it is faith that sends you. Faith is the principle of our new life. 'I live,' said Paul, 'by the faith of the Son of God,' Galatians 2:20. This life being weak, is craving and crying for nourishment, and that naturally, as the new-born babe doth for the milk. If therefore you find this inward sense prompting and provoking of you to cry to God, it shows this principle of life—faith I mean —is in thee.

Objection. But, may not an unbeliever pray in the sense of his wants, and be inwardly pinched with them, which may make him pray very feelingly?

Answer. We must distinguish of wants. They are either spiritual or carnal. It cannot be denied, but an unbeliever may be very sensible of outward carnal wants, and knock loud at heaven-gate for supply. We find them 'howling on their beds, and assembling themselves for corn and wine,' Hosea 7:14. There is the cry of the creature, and the cry of the new creature. Every creature hath a natural cry for that which suits their nature. Hence, 'The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God,' Psalms 104:21. But, give the lion flesh, and he will not roar for want of grass; give the ox grass, and you shall not hear him lowing for flesh; so give the faithless, graceless person his fill of his carnal food—sensual enjoyments—and you shall have little complaint of spiritual wants from him. They are therefore spiritual wants you must try your faith by. If thou canst heartily pray for love to Christ, faith on him, or any other grace—feeling the want of

them, as a hungry man doth of his food —thou mayest conclude safely there is this principle of new life, which, like the veins at the bottom of the stomach, by its sucking, puts thee to pain till it be heard and satisfied; for these graces being proper to the new creature, can be truly desired of none but one that is a new creature.

(2.) Faith excites to prayer from an inward delight it hath in communion with God. ‘It is good for me,’ saith the psalmist, ‘to draw near to God.’ Now mark the next words, ‘I have put my trust in the Lord,’ Psalms 73:28. We take delight to be often looking where we have laid up our treasures. This holy man had laid up his soul, and all he had, in God, by faith, to be kept safely for him; and now he delights oft to be with God. He hath that which invites him into his presence with sweet content. By faith the soul is contracted to Christ. Now, being espoused to Christ, there is no wonder at all that it should desire communion with him. And prayer, being the place of meeting where Christ and the soul can come the nearest on this side of heaven, therefore the believer is seen so oft walking that way. Canst thou say, poor soul, that this is thy errand when praying—to see the face of God? Can nothing less, and needest thou nothing more to satisfy, and recreate thy soul in prayer, than communion with God? Certainly God hath thy faith, or else thou couldst not so freely bestow thy love on him and take delight in him.

2. Act. Faith puts forth an assisting act in prayer. To instance only in two particulars.

(1.) It assists the soul with importunity. Faith is the wrestling grace. It comes up close to God; takes hold of God, and will not easily take a denial. It infires all the affections, and sets them on work. This is the soul’s eye, by which it sees the filth, the hell, that is in every sin. And seeing affects the heart, and puts it into a passion of sorrow when the soul spreads its abominations before the Lord. The creature now needs no onion to make it weep. Tears come alone freely, as water from a flowing spring. It makes a discovery of Christ to the soul in the excellencies of his person, love, and graces, from the glass of the promise, at the sight of which it is even sick with longing after them, and such pangs of love come upon it, as make it send forth strong cries and supplications for that it so impatiently desires. Yea, further, faith doth not barely set the creature’s teeth on edge by displaying the excellency of Christ and his grace; but it supplies him with arguments, and helps the soul to wield and use them both valiantly and victoriously upon the Almighty. Never could he tell what to do with a promise in prayer, till now that faith teacheth him to press God with it, humbly, yet boldly. ‘What wilt thou do unto thy great name?’ Joshua 7:9. As if he had said, ‘Thou art so fast bound to thy people by promise and oath, that thou canst not leave them to perish, but thy name will suffer with them.’ Faith melts promises into arguments, as the soldier doth lead into bullets, and then helps the Christian to send them with a force to heaven in a fervent prayer; whereas a promise in an unbeliever’s mouth is like a shot in a gun’s mouth without any fire to put to it. O how cold and dead doth a promise drop from him in prayer! He speaks promises, but cannot pray promises or press promises. And therefore, try thyself not by naked praying, but by importunity in prayer; and that, not by the agitation of thy bodily spirits, but the inward working of thy soul and spirit, whether carried out to plead the promise and urge it upon God with an humble importunity, or not.

(2.) Faith enables the soul to persevere in the work. False faith may show some mettle at hand, but it will jade at length. Will the hypocrite pray always? Job 27:10. No; as the wheel wears with turning, till it breaks at last; so doth the hypocrite. He prays himself weary of praying. Something or

other will in time make him quarrel with that duty which he never inwardly liked; whereas the sincere believer hath that in him which makes it impossible he should quite give over praying, except he should also cease believing. Prayer, it is the very breath of faith. Stop a man's breath, and where is he then? It is true the believer through his own negligence may find some more difficulty of fetching his prayer-breath at one time than at another—as a man in a cold doth for his natural breath. Alas! who is so careful of his soul's health that needs not to bewail this? But for faith to live, and this breath of prayer to be quite cut off, is impossible. We see David did but hold his breath a little longer than ordinary, and what a distemper it put him into, till he gave himself ease again by venting his soul in prayer. 'I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred. My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue, Lord, make me to know mine end,' Psalms 39:2. Dost thou, O man, find thyself under a necessity of praying? As the little babe who cannot choose but cry when it ails or wants anything—because it hath no other way to help itself than by crying to hasten its mother or nurse to its help—[so] the Christian's wants, sins, and temptations continuing to return upon him, he cannot but continue also to pray against them. 'From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee,' saith David, Psalms 61:2. Wherever I am I will find thee out. Prison me, banish me, or do with me what thou wilt, thou shalt never be rid of me, 'I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever,' ver. 4. But how could David do that when banished from it? Surely he means by prayer. The praying Christian carries a 'tabernacle' with him. As long as David can come at the tabernacle he will not neglect it; and when he cannot through sickness, banishment, &c., then he will look towards it, and as devoutly worship God in the open fields as if he were in it. 'Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice,' Psalms 141:2. He speaks of such a time when he could not come to offer sacrifice at the tabernacle.

3. Act. Faith hath a supporting act after prayer.

(1.) It supports the soul to expect a gracious answer. 'I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up,' Psalms 5:3. Or, 'I will look' for what, but for a return? An unbelieving heart shoots at random, and never minds where his arrow lights, or what comes of his praying; but faith fill the soul with expectation. As a merchant, when he casts up his estate, counts what he hath sent beyond sea, as well as what he hath in hand; so doth faith reckon upon what he hath sent to heaven in prayer and not received, as well as those mercies which he hath received, and are in hand at present. Now this expectation which faith raiseth in the soul after prayer, appears in the power that it hath to quiet and compose the soul in the interim between the sending forth, as I may say, the ship of prayer, and its return home with its rich lading it goes for. And it is more or less, according as faith's strength is. Sometimes faith comes from prayer in triumph, and cries victoria—victory. It gives such a being and existence to the mercy prayed for in the Christian's soul, before any likelihood of it appears to sense and reason, that the Christian can silence all his troubled thoughts with the expectation of its coming. So Hannah prayed, and 'was no more sad,' 1 Samuel 1:18. Yea, it will make the Christian disburse his praises for the mercy long before it is received. Thus high faith wrought in David, 'What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee;' and in the next words, 'In God I will praise his word,' Psalms 56:3, 4; that is, he would praise God for his promise, before there were any performance of it to him, when it had no existence but in God's faithfulness and David's faith. This holy man had such a piercing eye of faith, as he could see the promise, when he was at lowest ebb of misery, so certain and unquestionable in the power and truth of God, that

he could then praise God, as if the promised mercy had actually been fulfilled to him. But I would not have thee, Christian, try the truth of thy faith by this heroic high strain it mounts to in some eminent believers. Thou mayest be a faithful soldier to Christ, though thou attainest not to the degree of a few worthies in his army, more honourable in this respect than the rest of their brethren.

(2.) There is a lower act of faith, which, if thou canst find, may certify thee of its truth: that, I mean, which, though it doth not presently, upon praying, disburden the soul of all its anxious disquieting thoughts, yet keeps the soul's head above their waves and gives a check to them, that they abate, though by little and little, as the stream in a channel doth at a falling tide. When God took the deluge from the earth, he did not do it in a moment. It is said, 'The waters returned from off the earth continually,' Genesis 8:3; that is, it was falling water from day to day, till all was gone. Canst thou not find, Christian, that some of thy tumultuous disquieting thoughts are let out at the sluice of prayer, and that it is some ease to thy encumbered spirit, that thou hast the bosom of a gracious God to empty thy sorrowful heart into? and, though praying doth not drain away all thy fears, yet it keeps thee, doth it not, from being overflown with them, which thou couldst not avoid without faith? A soul wholly void of faith, prays, and leaves none of its burden with God, but carries all back with it that it brought, and more too. Calling on God gives no more relief to him, than throwing out an anchor that hath no hooks to take hold on the firm earth, doth the sinking ship. If, therefore, poor soul, thou findest, upon throwing thy anchor of faith in prayer, that it takes such hold on Christ in the promise as to stay thee from being driven by the fury of Satan's affrighting temptations, or thy own despairing thoughts, bless God for it. The ship that rides at anchor is safe —though it may be a little tossed to and fro—so long as the anchor keeps its hold. And so art thou, poor soul. That faith will save from hell, that will not wholly free the soul here from fears[5].

[True faith is uniform.]

Third Property. True faith is uniform. As sincere obedience doth not pick and choose—take this commandment, and leave that—but hath respect to all the precepts of God; so, faith unfeigned hath respect to all the truths of God. It believes one promise as well as another. As the true Christian must not have 'the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ,' James 2:1, so, not with respect to truths. To pretend to believe one promise, and to give no credit to another, this is to be partial in the promises, as the priests are charged to be in the duties of the law, Malachi 2:9. The honour of God is as deeply engaged to perform one promise as another. Indeed, as the breach of but one commandment would put us under the guilt of the whole; so God's failing in one promise—which is blasphemy to think—would be the breaking of his whole covenant. Promises are copulative as well as commands; and therefore, neither can God keep one, except he perform all; nor we believe one, except we believe all. God hath spoken all these words of promises, as he did those of precepts; his seal is to all, and he looks that we should compass all within the embraces of our faith. David bears witness to the whole truth of God, 'Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever,' Psalms 119:160. Try now thy faith here. Possibly, thou pretendest to believe the promise for pardon, and art oft pleasing thyself with the thoughts of it; but, what faith hast thou on the promise, for sanctifying thy nature and subduing thy corruptions? May be thou mindest not these, improvest not these. This fruit may hang long enough on the branches of the promises before thou gatherest it. The other is for thy tooth, not these; whereas true faith would like one as well as the other. See how David heartily prays for the

performance of this promise, ‘Be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name. Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me,’ Psalms 119:132-133. David would not lose any privilege that God hath by promise settled on his children. ‘Do with me,’ saith he, ‘as thou usest to do.’ this is no more than family fare—what thou promisest to do for all that love thee; and let me not go worse clad than the rest of my brethren. May be thou fanciest thou hast a faith for the eternal salvation of thy soul. But, hast thou faith to rely on God for the things of this life? A strange believer, is he not, that lives by faith for heaven, and by his wits and sinful policy for the world? Christ proves that they, John 5:44, did not believe on him, because they durst not trust him with their names and credits. If we cannot trust him with the less, how can we in the greater?

I deny not, but he that hath a true faith, yea, a strong faith for heaven, may be put to a plunge and his faith foiled about a temporal promise; but we must not from an hour of temptation, wherein God leaves his most eminent saints to humble them, judge of the constant ordinary frame of the believer’s heart. Though Abraham dissembled once to save his life, which he thought in some danger for his wife’s beauty; yet he did, at other times, give eminent testimony that he trusted God for his temporal life, as well as for his eternal salvation. I do not therefore bid thee question the truth of thy faith for every fainting fit that comes over it, as to the good things of the promise of this life. A man may, in a time of war, have some of his estate lie under the enemy’s power for a time, and he, so long, have no profits from it; but still he reckons it as his estate, is troubled for his present great loss, and endeavours, as soon as he can, to recover it again out of his enemy’s hand. So, in the hurry of a temptation, when Satan—the soul’s great enemy—is abroad, and God withdraws his assistance, the believer may have little support from some particular promise; but he ever counts that as his portion as well as any other, mourns he can act his faith no more upon it, and labours to reinforce his faith with new strength from heaven when he can, that he may be able to live upon it, and improve it more to his comfort. So that still it holds true, if we believe not God for this life, neither do we for the other. In a word, may be thou pretendest for a faith for thy temporals, and seemest to trust God for things of this life; but art a mere stranger to those prime acts of faith, whereby the believing soul closeth with Christ, and receiveth him as his Lord and Saviour, and so seals to the covenant that in the gospel is tendered to poor sinners. Canst thou so far fight against thy own reason, as to think that any temporal promise belongs to thee without these? What gives the woman the right to her jointure[6] but her marriage covenant? And what gives the creature a true claim to these promises, or any other in the covenant of grace, but its union to Christ, and accepting of him as he is offered? The first act of God’s love to the creature is that whereby he chooseth such a one to be his, and sets him apart, in his unchangeable purpose, to be an object of his special love in Christ, and therefore called ‘the foundation,’ as that on which God lays the superstructure of all other mercies: ‘The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his,’ 2 Timothy 2:19. First, God chooseth a person to be his, and on this foundation he builds, and bestows all his further cost of mercy upon the creature, as one that is his. So on the creature’s part, fist, faith closeth with Christ, severs him in his thoughts from all others, and chooseth him to be his Saviour, in whom alone he will trust, and whom alone he will serve; which done, then it trades with this promise and that, as the portion which falls to him by marriage with Christ. And therefore see how preposterous thy course is, who snatchest these promises to thyself, before there hath passed any good-will from thee to Christ.

BRANCH THIRD.

[Exhortation to unbelievers, to obtain ‘the shield of faith.’] Is faith so precious a grace? Let it provoke you, who want it, to get it. Can you hear of this pearl and not wish it were yours? Wherefore hath the Spirit spoken such great and glorious things of faith in the Word but to make it the more desirable in your eye? Is there any way to get Christ, but by getting faith? or dost not thou think that thou needest Christ as much as any other? There is a generation of men in the world would almost make one think this was their judgment, who, because their corruptions have not, by breaking out into plague-sores of profaneness, left such a brand of ignominy upon their name as some others lie under, but their conversations have been strewed with some flowers of morality, whereby their names have kept sweet among their neighbours; and, therefore, they do not at all listen to the offers of Christ, neither do their consciences check them for this neglect. And why so? Surely it is not because they are more willing to go to hell than others; but because the way they think they are in will bring them in good time to heaven, without any more ado. Poor deluded creatures! Is Christ then sent to help only some more debauched sinners to heaven, such as drunkards, swearers, and of that rank? And are civil, moral men, left to walk thither on their own legs? I am sure, if the word may be believed, we have the case resolved clear enough. That tells of but one way to heaven for all that mean to come there. As there is but ‘one God,’ so but ‘one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,’ 1 Timothy 2:5. And if there is but one bridge over the gulf, judge what is like to become of the civil, righteous man, for all his sweet-scented life, if he miss this one bridge, and goes on in the road he hath set out in for heaven? O remember, proud man, who thou art, and cease thy vain attempt. Art thou not of Adam’s seed? Hast thou not traitor’s blood in thy veins? If ‘every mouth be stopped,’ Romans 3:19-20, how darest thou open thine? If ‘all the world become guilty before God,’ that ‘by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified in his sight,’ where then shalt thou stand to plead thy innocency before him who sees thy black skin under thy white feathers, thy foul heart through thy fair carriage? It is faith on Christ that alone can purify thy heart. Without it thy washed face and hands—external righteousness I mean—will never commend thee to God. And therefore thou art under a horrible delusion if thou dost not think that thou needest Christ and a faith to interest thee in him, as much as the bloodiest murderer or filthiest Sodomite in the world. If a company of men and children in a journey were to wade through some brook, not beyond a man’s depth, the men would have the advantage of the children. But if to cross the seas, the men would need a ship to waft them over, as well as the children. And they might well pass for madmen, if they should think to wade through, without the help of a ship, that is offered them as well as the other, because they are a little taller than the rest are. Such a foolish, desperate adventure wouldst thou give for thy soul, if thou shouldst think to make thy way through the justice of God to heaven, without shipping thyself by faith in Christ, because thou art not so bad in thy external conversation as others. Let me therefore again and again beseech all that are yet destitute of faith, to endeavour for it, and that speedily. There is nothing deserves the precedency in your thoughts before this. David resolved not to ‘give sleep to his eyes, or slumber to his eyelids, till he find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob,’ Psalms 132:4-5. The habitation which pleaseth God most is thy heart; but it must be a believing heart, ‘That Christ may dwell in your heart by faith,’ Ephesians 3:17. O how dare yo sleep a night in that house where God doth not dwell? and he dwells not in thee, if thou carriest an unbelieving heart in thy bosom. There is never a gospel sermon thou hearest, but he stands at thy door to be let in. Take heed of multiplying unkindnesses

in denying him entertainment. How knowest thou but God may, finding thy heart shut so oft by unbelief against his knocks, suddenly seal thee up under final unbelief?

[Directions to unbelievers for attaining faith.] But possibly thou wilt ask now, how thou mayest get this precious grace of faith? The answer to this question, take in these following directions. First. Labour to get thy heart convinced of, and affected with, thy unbelief. Second. Take heed of resisting or opposing his help to the Spirit of God, when he offers his help to the work. Third. Lift up thy cry aloud in prayer to God for faith. Fourth. Converse much with the promises, and be frequently pondering them in thy musing thoughts. Fifth. Press and urge thy soul home with that strong obligation that lies on thee, a poor humbled sinner, to believe.

[The unbeliever must get his heart convinced of its unbelief.]

First Direction. Labour to get thy heart convinced of, and affected with, thy unbelief. Till this be done, thou wilt be but sluggish and slighty in thy endeavours for faith. A man may be convinced of other sins and never think of coming to Christ. Convince a drunkard of his drunkenness, and upon leaving his drunken trade his mind is pacified; yea, he blesseth himself in his reformation, because all the quarrel his conscience had with him was for that particular sin. But, when the Spirit of God convinceth the creature of his unbelief, he gets between him and those burrows in which he did use to earth and hide himself. He hath no ease in his spirit from those plasters now, which formerly had relieved him, and so kept him from coming over to Christ. Before, it served the turn to bring his conscience to sleep when it accused him for such a sin, that he had left the practice of it; and, for the neglect of a duty, that now he had taken it up without an inquiry into his state, whether good or bad, pardoned or unpardoned. Thus many make a shift to daub and patch up the peace of their consciences, even as some do to keep up an old rotten house, by stopping in, here a tile and there a stone, till a loud wind comes and blows the whole house down. But, when once the creature hath the load of its unbelief laid upon his spirit, then it is little ease to him to think he is no drunkard as he was, no atheist in his family—without the worship of God—as he was. ‘Thy present state,’ saith the Spirit of God, ‘is as damning, in that thou art an unbeliever, as if thou wert these still.’ Yea, what thou wert, thou art; and wilt be found at the great day, to be the drunkard and atheist, for all thy seeming reformation, except by an intervening faith thou gainest a new name. What though thou beest drunk no more? yet the guilt remains upon thee till faith strikes it off with the blood of Christ. God will be paid his debt; by thee, or Christ for thee; and Christ pays no reckoning for unbelievers.

Again, as the guilt remains, so the power of those lusts remains, so long as thou art an unbeliever—however they may disappear in the outward act. Thy heart is not emptied of one sin, but the vent stopped by restraining grace. A bottle full of wine, close stopped, shows no more what it hath in it than one that is empty. And that is thy case. How is it possible thou shouldst truly mortify any one lust, that hast no faith, which is the only victory of the world? In a word, if under the convincement of thy unbelief thou wilt find—how little a sin soever now it is thought by thee—that there is more malignity in it than in all thy other sins. Hast thou been a liar? That is a grievous sin indeed. Hell gapes for every one that loveth and telleth a lie, Revelation 22:15. But know, poor wretch, the loudest lie which ever thou toldest is that which by thy unbelief thou tellest. Here thou bearest false witness against God himself, and tellest a lie, not to the Holy Ghost, as Ananias did, but a lie of the Holy Ghost; as if not a word were true he saith in the promises of the gospel. If ‘he that believeth

setteth to his seal that God is true,' judge you whether the unbeliever makes him not a liar? Hast thou been a murderer, yea, had thy hand in the blood of saints—the best of men? This is a dreadful sin, I confess. But by thy unbelief, thou art a more bloody murderer by how much the blood of God is more precious than the blood of mere men. Thou killest Christ over again by thy unbelief, and treadest his blood under thy feet, yea, throwest it under Satan's feet to be trampled on by him.

Question. But how can unbelief be so great a sin, when it is not in the sinner's power to believe?

Answer. By this reason the unregenerate person might wipe off any other sin and shake off the guilt of it with but saying, 'It is not my fault that I do not keep this commandment or that, for I have no power of myself to do them.' This is true; he cannot perform one holy action holily and acceptably. 'They that are in the flesh cannot please God,' Romans 8:8. But, it is a false inference, that therefore he doth not sin because he can do no other.

1. Because his inability is not created by God, but contracted by the creature himself. 'God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions,' Ecclesiastes 7:29. Man had not his lame hand from God. No, he was made a creature fit and able for any service his Maker would please to employ him in. But man crippled himself. And man's fault cannot prejudice God's right. Though he hath lost his ability to obey, yet God hath not lost his power to command. Who, among ourselves, thinks his debtor discharged, by wasting that estate whereby he was able to have paid us? It is confessed, had man stood, he should not, indeed could not, have believed on Christ for salvation, as now he is held forth in the gospel; but this was not from any disability in man, but from the unmeetness of such an object to Adam's holy state. If it had been a duty meet for God to command, there was ability in man to have obeyed.

2. Man's present impotency to yield obedience to the commands of God, and in particular to this of believing—where it is promulgated—doth afford him no excuse; because it is not a single inability, but complicated with an inward enmity against the command. It is true man can not believe. But it is as true man will not believe. 'Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life,' John 5:40. It is possible, yea, ordinary, that a man may, through some feebleness and deficiency of strength, be disabled to do that which he is very willing to do; and this draws out our pity. Such a one was the poor cripple, who lay so long at 'the pool,' John 5:5. He was willing enough to have stepped down if he could have but crept thither; or that any other should have helped him in, if they would have been so kind. But, what would you think of such a cripple that can neither go himself into the pool for healing, nor is willing any should help him in; but flees in the face of him that would do him this friendly office? Every unbeliever is this cripple. He is not only impotent himself, but a resister of the Holy Ghost that comes to woo and draw him unto Christ. Indeed, every one that believes believes willingly. But he is beholden, not to nature, but to grace, for this willingness. None are willing till 'the day of power' comes, Psalms 110:3, in which the Spirit of God overshadows the soul, and by his incubation, as once upon the waters, new■forms and moulds the will into a sweet compliance with the call of God in the gospel.

[The Spirit of God must not be resisted when proffering his help to the work of faith.]

Second Direction. Take heed of resisting or opposing the Spirit of God when he offers his help to the work. If ever thou believest, he must enable thee; take heed of opposing him. Master workmen

love not to be controlled. Now, two ways the Spirit of God may be opposed. First. When the creature waits not on the Spirit, where he ordinarily works faith. Second. When the creature, though he attends on him in the way and means, yet controls him in his work.

First. Take heed thou opposest not the Spirit by not attending on him in the way and means by which he ordinarily works faith. Thou knowest where Jesus used to pass, and his Spirit breathe, and that is in the great gospel ordinance—the ministry of the word. Christ's sheep ordinarily conceive when they are drinking the water of life here. The hearing of the gospel it is called, Galatians 3:2, 'The hearing of faith;' because by hearing the doctrine of faith, the Spirit works the grace of faith in them. This is the still voice he speaks to the souls of sinners in. 'Thine eyes shall see thy teachers: and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it,' Isaiah 30:20. Here are God and man teaching together. Thou canst not neglect man's teaching, but thou resist the Spirit's also. It was for something that the apostle placed them so near, 1 Thessalonians 5:19-20. He bids us 'quench not the Spirit;' and in the next words, 'Despise not prophesyings.' Surely he would have us know that the Spirit is dangerously quenched when prophesying, or preaching of the gospel, is despised. Now the most notorious way of despising prophesying or preaching, is to is to turn our back off the ordinance and not attend on it. When God sets up the ministry of the word in a place, his Spirit then opens his school, and expects that all who would be taught for heaven should come thither. O take heed of playing the truant, and absenting thyself from the ordinance upon any unnecessary occasion, much less of casting off the ordinance. If he tempts God that would be kept from sin, and yet will not keep out of the circle of the occasion that leads to the sin; then he tempts God as much that would have faith, and pretends his desire is that the Spirit should work it, but will not come within the ordinary walk of the Spirit where he doth the work. Whether it is more fitting that the scholar should wait on his master at school to be taught, or that the master should run after the his truant scholar at play in the field to teach him there, judge you?

Second. Take heed that in thy attendance on the word thou dost not control the Spirit in those several steps he takes in thy soul in order to the production of faith. Though there are no preparatory works of our own to grace, yet the Holy Spirit hath his preparatory works whereby he disposeth souls to grace. Observe therefore carefully the gradual approaches he makes by the word to thy soul, for want of complying with him in which he may withdraw in a distaste and leave the work at a sad stand for a time, if not quite give it over, never more to return to it. We read, Acts 7:23, how 'it came into the heart of Moses to visit his brethren the children of Israel' —stirred up no doubt by God himself to the journey. There he begins to show his good-will to them, and zeal for them, in slaying an Egyptian that had wronged an Israelite; which, though no great matter towards their full deliverance out of Egypt, yet 'he supposed' (it is said, ver. 25) 'his brethren would have understood,' by that hint, 'how that God by his hand would deliver them.' But they did not comply with him, nay, rather opposed him; and therefore he withdrew, and they hear no more of Moses or their deliverance for 'forty years'' space, ver. 30. Thus, may be, the Spirit of God gives thee a visit in an ordinance —directs a word that speaks to thy particular condition. He would have thee understand by this, sinner, how ready he is to help thee out of thy house of bondage—thy state of sin and wrath —if now thou wilt hearken to his counsel and kindly entertain his motions. [But], carry thyself rebelliously now against him, and God knows when thou mayest hear of him again knocking at thy door upon such an errand.

God makes short work with some in his judiciary proceedings. If he finds a repulse once, sometimes he departs, and leaves a dismal curse behind him as the punishment of it. ‘I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper,’ Luke 14:24. They were but once invited, and, for their first denial, this curse [is] clapped upon their heads. It is not said they shall never come where the supper stands on the board, but they shall never ‘taste.’ Many sit under the ordinances, where Christ in gospel-dishes is set forth admirably, but, through the efficacy of this curse upon them, never taste of these dainties all their life. They hear precious truths, but their hearts are sealed up in unbelief, and their minds made reprobate and injudicious, that they are not moved at all by them. There is a kind of frenzy and madness I have heard of, in which a man will discourse soberly and rationally, till you come to speak of some one particular subject that was the occasion of his distemper, and first broke his brain; here he is quite out, and presently loses his reason, not able to speak with any understanding of it. O how many men and women are there among us—frequent attenders on the word—who, in any matter of the world are able to discourse very understandingly and rationally; but, when you come to speak of the things of God, Christ, and heaven, it is strange to see how soon their reason is lost and all understanding gone from them! they are not able to speak of these matters with any judgement. Truly I am afraid, in many —who have sat long under the means, and the Spirit hath been making some attempts on them—th is injudiciousness of mind in the things of God is but the consequence of that spiritual curse which God hath passed upon them for resisting these essays of his Spirit.

I beseech you, therefore, beware of opposing the Spirit. Doth he beam any light from his word into thy understanding, whereby thou, who wert before an ignorant sot, comest to something of the evil of sin, the excellency of Christ, and canst discourse rationally of the truths of the Scripture? Look now to it, what thou canst with this candle of the Lord is lighted in thy mind; take heed thou beest not found sinning with it, or priding thyself in it, lest it goes out in a snuff, and thou, for ‘rebelling against the light,’ comest at last to ‘die without knowledge,’ as is threatened, Job 36:12. If the Spirit of God goes yet further, and [so] fortifies the light in thy understanding that it sets thy conscience on fire with the sense of thy sins, and apprehensions of the wrath due to them; now, take heed of resisting him when in mercy to thy soul he is kindling this fire in thy bosom, to keep thee out of a worse in hell, if thou wilt be ruled by him. Thou must expect that Satan, now his house is on fire over his head, will bestir him what he can to quench it; thy danger is lest thou shouldst listen to him for thy present ease. Take heed therefore where thou drawest thy water with which thou quenchest this fire; that it be out of no well, but out of the word of God. In thinking to quiet thy conscience, thou mayest quench the Spirit of God in thy conscience; which is the mischief the devil longs thou shouldst pull upon thy own head. There is more hope of a sick man when his disease comes out, than when it lies at the heart and nothing is seen outwardly. You know how Hazael helped his master to his sad end, who might have lived for all his disease. ‘He took a thick cloth, and dipped it in water, and spread it on his face, so that he died;’ and it follows, ‘and Hazael reigned in his stead,’ 2 Kings 8:15. Thus the wretch came to the crown. He saw the king like to recover, and he squatted his disease, in all probability, to his heart by the wet cloth, and so by his death made a way for himself to the throne. And truly Satan will not much fear to recover the throne of thy heart—which this present combustion in thy conscience puts him in great fear of losing—can he but persuade thee to apply some carnal coolings to it, thereby to quench the Spirit in his convincing work. These convictions are sent thee mercifully in order to thy spiritual delivery, and they should be as welcome to thee as the kindly bearing pains of a woman in travail are to

her. Without them she could not be delivered of her child, nor without these, more or less, can the new creature be brought forth in thy soul.

Again, may be the Spirit of God goes yet further, and doth not only dart light into thy mind, hell-fire into thy conscience, but heaven-fire also into thy affections. My meaning is, he from the word displays Christ so in his own excellencies, and the fitness of him in all his offices to thy wants, that thy affections begin to work after him. The frequent discourses of him, and the mercy of God through him to poor sinners, are so luscious, that thou beginnest to taste some sweetness in hearing of them, which stirs up some passionate desires, whereby thou art in hearing the word often sallying forth in such■like breathings as these, 'O that Christ were mine! Shall I ever be the happy soul whom God will pardon and save?' Yea, possibly in the heat of thy affections thou art cursing thy lusts and Satan, who have held thee so long from Christ; and sudden purposes are taken up by thee that thou wilt bid adieu to thy former ways, and break through all the entreaties of thy dearest lusts, to come to Christ. O soul! now the kingdom of God is nigh indeed unto thee. Thou art, as I may so say, even upon thy quickening, and therefore, above all, this is the chief season of thy care, lest thou shouldst miscarry. If these sudden desires did but ripen into a deliberate choice of Christ; and these purposes settle into a permanent resolution to renounce sin and self, and so thou cast thyself on Christ; I durst be the messenger to joy thee with the birth of this babe of grace—faith I mean—in thy soul.

I confess, affections are up and down; yea, like the wind, how strongly soever they seem to blow the soul one way at present, [they] are often found in the quite contrary point very soon after. A man may be drunk with passion and affection, as really as with wine or beer. And as it is ordinary for a man to make a bargain, when he is in beer or wine, which he repents of as soon as he is sober again; so it is as ordinary for poor creatures, who make choice of Christ and his ways in a sermon—while their affections have been elevated above their ordinary pitch by some moving discourse—to repent of all they have done a while after, when the impression of the word, which heated their affection in hearing, is worn off. Then they come to themselves again and are what they were —as far from any such desires after Christ as ever. Content not therefore thyself with some sudden pangs of affection in an ordinance, but labour to preserve those impressions which then the Spirit makes on thy soul, that hey be not defaced and rubbed off —like colours newly laid on before they are dry—by the next temptation that comes. This is the caveat of the apostle, Hebrews 2:1, 'Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip'—or run out as leaking vessels. May be, at present, thy heart is melting, and in a flow with sorrow for thy sins, and thou thinkest, Surely now I shall never give my lust a kind look more—indeed one might wonder, to see the solemn mournful countenances under a sermon, which of these could be the man or woman that would afterwards be seen walking hand in hand with those sins they now weep to hear mentioned—but, as thou lovest thy life, watch thy soul, lest this prove but 'as the early dew,' none of which is to be seen at noon. Do thou therefore as those do who have stood some while in a hot bath, out of which when they come they do not presently go into the open air (that were enough to kill them), but betake themselves to their warm bed, that they may nourish this kindly heat; and now while their pores are open, by a gentle sweat breathe out more effectually the remaining dregs of their distemper. Thus betake thyself to thy closet, and there labour to take the advantage of thy present relenting frame for the more free pouring out of thy soul to God, now the ordinance hath thawed the tap;

and, with all thy soul, beg of God he would not leave thee short of faith, and suffer thee to miscarry now he hath thee upon the wheel, but make thee a ‘vessel unto honour;’ which follows as the third direction.

[The unbeliever must cry in prayer for faith.] Third Direction. Lift up thy cry aloud in prayer to God for faith.

Question. But may an unbeliever pray? Some think he ought not.

Answer. This is ill news, if it were true, even for some who do believe, but dare not say they are believers. It were enough to scare them from prayer too; and so it would be as Satan would have it—that God would have few or none to vouch him in this solemn part of his worship; for they are but the fewest of believers that can walk to the throne of grace in view of their own faith. Prayer, it is medium cultus, and also medium gratiæ—means, whereby we give worship to God, and also wait to receive grace from God; so that to say a wicked man ought not to pray, is to say he ought not to worship God and acknowledge him to be his Maker; and also, that he ought not to wait on the means whereby he may obtain grace and receive faith. ‘Prayer is the soul’s motion God-ward,’ saith Rev. Mr. Baxter; and to say an unbeliever should not pray, is to say he should not turn to God, who yet saith to the wicked, ‘Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near.’ ‘Desire is the soul of prayer,’ saith the same learned author, ‘and who dares say to the wicked, Desire not faith, desire not Christ or God?’ (Right Method for Peace of Conscience, p. 63)

It cannot indeed be denied, but that an unbeliever sins when he prays. But it is not his praying is his sin, but his praying unbelievingly. And therefore, he sins less in praying than in neglecting to pray; because, when he prays, his sin lies in the circumstance and manner, but when he doth not pray, then he stands in a total defiance to the duty God hath commanded him to perform, and means God hath appointed him to use, for obtaining grace. I must therefore, poor soul, bid thee go on, for all these bugbears, and neglect not this grand duty which lies upon all the sons and daughters of men. Only go in the sense of thy own vileness, and take heed of carrying purposes of going on in sin with thee to the throne of grace. This were a horrible wickedness indeed. As if a traitor should put on the livery which the prince’s servants wear, for no other end but to gain more easy access to his person, that he might stab him with a dagger he hath under that cloak. Is it not enough to sin, but wouldst thou make God accessory to his own dishonour also? By this bold enterprise thou dost what lies in thee to do it. Should this be thy temper —which, God forbid —if I send thee to pray, it must be with Peter’s counsel to Simon Magus, ‘Repent of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee,’ Acts 8:22. But I suppose thee, to whom now I am directing my advice, to be of a far different complexion—one brought to some sense of thy deplored state, and so softened by the word that thou couldst be content to have Christ upon any terms; only thou art at a loss in thy own thoughts, how such an impotent creature, yea impudent sinner, as thou hast been, should ever come to believe on him. So that it is not the love of any present sin in thy heart, but the fear of thy past sins in thy conscience, that keeps thee from believing. Now for thee it is that I would gather the best encouragements I can out of the word, and with them strew thy way to the throne of grace.

Go, poor soul, to prayer for faith. I do not fear a chiding for sending such customers to God’s door. He that sends us to call sinners home unto him, cannot be angry to hear thee call upon him. He is not so thronged with such suitors as that he can find in his heart to send them away with a denial

that come with this request in their mouths. Christ complains that sinners ‘will not come unto him that they may have eternal life;’ and dost thou think he will let any complain of him, that they desire to come, and he is unwilling they should? Cheer up thy heart, poor creature, and knock boldly; thou hast a friend in God’s own bosom that will procure thy welcome. He that could, without any prayer made to him, give Christ for thee, will not be unwilling, now thou so earnestly prayest, to give faith unto thee. When thou prayest God to give, he commands thee to do. ‘And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ,’ 1 John 3:23. So that, in praying for faith, thou prayest that his will may be done by thee; yea, that part of his will which above all he desires should be done—called therefore with an emphasis ‘the work of God.’ ‘This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent,’ John 6:29. As if Christ had said, ‘If ye do not this, ye do nothing for God;’ and surely Christ knew his Father’s mind best. O how welcome must that prayer be to God which falls in with his chiefest design.

Joab found his request, in the mouth of the woman of Tekoah, to take as he would have it. How could it do otherwise, when he asks nothing but what the king liked better than himself did or could? And doth it not please God more, thinkest thou—how strong soever thy desires for faith are—that a poor humbled sinner should believe, than it can do to the creature himself? Methinks, by this time, thou shouldst begin to promise thyself, poor soul, a happy return of this thy adventure, which thou hast now sent to heaven. But for thy further encouragement know that this grace, which thou so wantest and makest thy moan to God for, is a principal part of Christ’s purchase. That blood, which is the price of pardon, is the price of faith also, by which poor sinners may come to have the benefit of that pardon. As he has bought off that wrath which man’s sin had justly kindled in God’s heart against him, so hath also that enmity which the heart of the creature is filled with against God, and paid for a new stock of grace, wherewith his bankrupt creature may again set up; so that, poor soul, when thou goest to pray for faith, look up unto Christ, as having a bank of grace lying by him, to give out to poor sinners who see they have nothing of their own to begin with, and in the sense of this their beggary repair to him. ‘Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them,’ Psalms 68:18. This is beyond all doubt meant of Christ, and to him applied, Ephesians 4:8. Now observe, First. There is a bank and treasure of gifts in the hand of Christ—‘Thou hast.’

Second. Who trusts him with them; and that is his Father—‘Thou hast received gifts;’ that is, Christ of his Father.

Third. When, or upon what consideration, doth the Father deposit this treasure into Christ’s hands? ‘Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received,’ &c. That is, when Christ had vanquished sin and Satan by his death and rode in the triumphant chariot of his ascension into heaven’s glorious city, then did Christ receive these gifts. They were the purchase of his blood, and the payment of an old debt which God, before the foundation of the world—when the covenant was transacted and struck—promised his Son, upon the condition of his discharging sinful man’s debt with the effusion of his own precious blood unto death.

Fourth. The persons for whose use Christ received these gifts—‘for men,’ not angels—for ‘rebellious’ men, not men without sin; so that, poor soul, thy sinful nature and life do not make thee an excepted person, and shut thee out from receiving any of this dole.

Fifth. Observe the nature of these gifts, and the end they are given Christ for; ‘that God may dwell in them or with them.’ Now, nothing but faith can make a soul that hath been rebellious a place meet for the holy God to dwell in. This is the gift indeed he received all other gifts for, in a manner. Wherefore the gifts of the Spirit and ministry, ‘apostles, teachers, pastors,’ &c., but that by these he might work faith in the hearts of poor sinners? Let this give thee boldness, poor soul, humbly to press God for that which Christ hath paid for. Say, ‘Lord, I have been a rebellious wretch indeed; but did Christ receive nothing for such? I have an unbelieving heart; but I hear there is faith paid for in thy covenant. Christ shed his blood that thou mightest shed forth thy Spirit on poor sinners.’ Dost thou think, that while thou art thus pleading with God, and using Christ’s name in prayer to move him, that Christ himself can sit within hearing of all this, and not befriend thy motion to his Father? Surely he is willing that what God is indebted to him should be paid; and therefore, when thou beggest faith upon the account of his death, thou shalt find him ready to join issue with thee in the same prayer to his Father. Indeed, he went to heaven on purpose that poor returning souls might not want a friend at court, when they come with their humble petitions thither.

[The unbeliever should, for faith, converse much with the promises.]

Fourth Direction. Converse much with the promises, and be frequently pondering them in thy musing thoughts. It is indeed the Spirit’s work, and only his, to bottom thy soul upon the promise, and give his word a being by faith in thy heart. This thou canst not do. Yet, as fire came down from heaven upon Elijah’s sacrifice, when he had laid the wood in order and gone as far as he could; so thou mayest comfortably hope that then the Spirit of God will come with spiritual light and life to quicken the promise upon thy heart, when thou hast been conscionably diligent in meditating on the promise; if withal thou ownest God in the thing as he did. For when he had laid all in order, he lift up his heart to God in prayer, expecting all from him, 1 Kings 18:36. I know no more speedy way to invite the Spirit of God into our assistance than this. As he tempts the devil to tempt him that lets his eyes gaze, or thoughts gad, upon a lustful object, so he bespeaks the Holy Spirit’s company that lets out his thoughts upon holy heavenly objects. We need not doubt but the Spirit of God is as willing to cherish any good motion, as the infernal spirit is to nourish that which is evil. We find the spouse sitting under the shadow of her beloved, as one under an apple■tree, Song of Solomon 2:3, and presently she tells us ‘his fruit was sweet to her taste.’ What doth this her sitting under his shadow better signify, than a soul sitting under the thoughts of Christ and the precious promises, that grow out of him as branches out of a tree? Do but, O Christian, place thyself here awhile, and it were strange if the Spirit should not shake some fruit from one branch or another into thy lap. Thou knowest not but, as Isaac met his bride when he went into the fields to meditate, so thou mayest meet thy beloved while walking by thy meditations in this garden of the promises.

[The unbeliever should press his soul with the strong obligation we are under to believe.]

Fifth Direction. Press and urge thy soul home with that strong obligation that lies upon thee, a poor humbled sinner, to believe. Possibly, God hath [so] shamed thee in the sight of thy own conscience for other sins, that thou loathest the very thought of them, and durst as well run thy head into the fire as allow thyself in them. If thou shouldst wrong thy neighbour in his person, name, or estate, it would kindle a fire in thy conscience and make thee afraid to look within doors—converse, I mean, with thy own thoughts—till thou hadst repented of it. And is faith the only indifferent thing—a business left to thy own choice, whether thou wilt be so good to thyself as to

believe or no? Truly, the tenderness of conscience which many humbled sinners express in trembling at, and smiting them for, other sins, compared with the little sense they express for this of unbelief, speaks as if they thought that they offended God in them, and only wronged themselves by this their unbelief. O how greatly thou art deceived and abused in thy own thoughts if these be thy apprehensions!—yea, if thou dost not think thou dishon ourest God and offendest him in a more transcendent manner by thy unbelief than by all thy other sins!

What Bernard saith of a hard heart I may say of an unbelieving heart, illud cor verè durum, quod non trepidat, ad nomen cordis duri—that is a hard heart indeed, saith he, that trembles not at the name of a hard heart. And that is an unbelieving heart indeed, that trembles not at the name of an unbelieving heart. Call thyself, O man, to the bar, and hear what thy soul hath to say for its not closing with Christ, and thou shalt then see what an unreasonable reason it will give. It must be either because thou likest not the terms, or else because thou fearest they are too good ever to be performed. Is the first of these thy reason, because thou likest not the terms on which Christ is offered? Possibly, might thou but have had Christ and thy lusts with him, thou wouldst have been better pleased. But to part with thy lusts to gain a Christ, this thou thinkest is ‘a hard saying.’ It is strange this should offend thee, which God could not have left out and truly loved us. Thou art a sot, a devil, if thou dost not think thy sins the worst piece of thy misery. O what is Christ worth in thy thoughts if thou darest not trust him to recompense the loss of a base lust? That man values Gold little who thinks he shall pay too dear for it by throwing the dirt or dung out of his hands, with which they are full, to receive it. Well sinner, the terms for having Christ, it seems, content thee not. Ask then thy soul how the terms on which thou holdest thy lusts like thee? Canst thou, doth thou think, better spare the blissful presence of God and Christ in hell, where thy lusts, if thou holdest of this mind, are sure enough to leave thee at last, than the company of thy lusts in heaven, whither faith in Christ would as certainly bring thee? Then take thy choice, and leave it for thy work in hell to repent of thy folly. But I should think, if thou wouldst be so faithful to thyself as to state the case right, and then seriously acquaint thy soul with it, giving it time and leisure to dwell upon it daily, that thou wouldst soon come to have better thoughts of Christ, and worse of thy sins. But may be this is not the reason that keeps thee from believing. The terms thou likest highly, but it cannot enter into thy heart to think that ever such great things as are promised should be performed to such a one as thou art. Well, of the two, it is better the rub in thy way to Christ should lie in the difficulty that thy understanding finds to conceive, than in the obstinacy of thy will not to receive, what God in Christ offers. But this must be removed also. And therefore fall to work with thy soul, and labour to bring it to reason in this particular, for, indeed, nothing can be more irrational than to object against the reality and certainty of God’s promises. Two things well wrought on thy soul, would satisfy thy doubts and scatter thy fears as to this.

First. Labour to get a right notion of God in thy understanding, and it will not appear strange at all that a great God should do so great things for poor sinners. If a beggar should promise you a thousand pounds a year, you might indeed slight it, and ask where should he have it? But if a prince should promise more, you would listen after it, because he hath an estate that bears proportion to his promise. God is not engaged for more by promise than infinite mercy, power, and faithfulness can see discharged. ’Be still, and know that I am God,’ Psalms 46:10. Of this psalm Luther would say, in times of great confusion in the church, ‘Let us sing the six and fortieth psalm, in spite of the devil and all his instruments.’ And this clause of it, poor humbled soul, thou mayest

sing with comfort, in spite of Satan and sin also, ‘Be still, O my soul, and know that he who offers thee mercy is God.’ ‘They that know his name will trust in him.’

Second. Peruse well the securities which this great God gives for the performance of his promise to the believer, and thou shalt find them so many and great—though his bare word deserves to be taken for more than our souls are worth—that if we had the most slippery cheating companion in the world under such bonds for the paying of a sum of money, we should think it were sure enough; and wilt thou not rest satisfied when the true and faithful God puts himself under these for thy security, whose truth is so immutable that it is more possible for light to send forth darkness, than it is that a lie should come out of his blessed lips?

BRANCH FOURTH.

[Exhortation to believers to preserve the ‘shield of faith.’]

I now turn myself to you that are believers in a double exhortation. First. Seeing faith is such a choice grace, be stirred up to a more than ordinary care to preserve it. Second. If faith be such a choice grace, and thou hast it, dent not what God hath done for thee.

[Faith is to be preserved with exceeding care because of its pre-eminence among graces.]

Exhortation First. Seeing faith is such a choice grace, be stirred up to a more than ordinary care to preserve it. Keep that, and it will keep thee and all thy other graces. Thou standest by faith; if that fails thou fallest. Where shall we find thee then but under thy enemies’ feet? Be sensible of any danger thy faith is in; like that Grecian captain who, being knocked down in fight, asked as soon as he came to himself where his shield was. This he was solicitous for above anything else. O be asking, in this temptation, and that duty, where is thy faith, and how it fares? This is the grace which God would have us chiefly judge and value ourselves by, because there is the least danger of priding in this self-emptying grace above any other. ‘I say through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith,’ Romans 12:3. There were many gifts which the Corinthians received from God, but he would have them think of themselves rather by their faith, and the reason is, that they may ‘think soberly.’

Indeed all other graces are to be tried by our faith; if they be not fruits of faith they are of no true worth. This is the difference between a Christian and an honest heathen. He values himself by his patience, temperance, liberality, and other moral virtues which he hath to show above others. These he expects will commend him to God and procure him a happiness after death; and in these he glories and makes his boast while he lives. But the Christian, he is kept sober in the sight of these—though they commence graces in him that were but virtues in the heathen—because he hath a discovery of Christ, whose righteousness and holiness by faith become his; and he values himself by these more than what is inherent in him. I cannot better illustrate this than by two men—the one a courtier, the other a countryman and a stranger to the court, both having fair estates, but the courtier the greatest by far. Ask the country gentleman, that hath no relation to court or place in the prince’s favour, what he is worth; and he will tell you as much as his lands and monies amount to. These he values himself by. But, ask the courtier what he is worth; and he—though he hath more land and money by far than the other—will tell you he values himself by the favour of his prince more than by all his other estate. I can speak a big word, saith he: ‘What

my prince hath is mine, except his crown and royalty; his purse mine to maintain me, his love to embrace me, his power to defend me.' The poor heathens, being strangers to God and his favour in Christ, they blessed themselves in the improvement of their natural stock, and that treasure of moral virtues which they had gathered together with their industry, and the restraint that was laid upon their corruptions by a secret hand they were not aware of. But the believer, having access by faith into this grace wherein he stands so high in court favour with God by Jesus Christ, he doth and ought to value himself chiefly by his faith rather than any other grace. Though none can show these graces in their true heavenly beauty besides himself, yet, they are not these, but Christ, who is his by faith, that he blesseth himself in. The believer, he can say through mercy, that he hath a heart beautified with those heavenly graces, to which the heathen's mock-virtue's and the proud self-justiciary's mock-graces also, are no more to be compared, than the image in the glass is to the face, or the shadow to the man himself. He can say he that hath holiness in truth, which they have but in show and semblance. And this grace of God in him he values infinitely above all the world's treasure or pleasure—he had rather be the ragged saint than the robed sinner—yea, above his natural life, which he can be willing to lose, and count himself no loser, may he thereby but secure this his spiritual life. But this is not the biggest word a believer can say. He is not only partaker of the divine nature by that principle of holiness infused to him; but he is heir to all the holiness, yea, to all the glorious perfections, that are in God himself. All that God is, hath, or doth, he hath leave to call his own. God is pleased to be called his people's God—'The God of Israel,' 2 Samuel 23:3. As a man's house and land bears the owner's name upon it, so God is graciously pleased to carry his people's name upon him, that all the world may know who are they he belongs to. Naboth's field is called 'the portion of Naboth,' 2 Kings 11:21; so God is called 'the portion of Jacob,' Jeremiah 10:16. Nothing hath God kept from his people, saving his crown and glory. That, indeed, he 'will not give to another,' Isaiah 42:8. If the Christian wants strength, God would have him make use of his; and that he may do boldly and confidently, the Lord calls himself his people's strength, 'the strength of Israel will not lie,' 1 Samuel 15:29. Is it righteousness and holiness he is scanted in? Behold, where it is brought unto his hand—Christ 'is made unto us righteousness,' 1 Corinthians 1:30, called therefore 'the Lord our righteousness,' Jeremiah 33:16. Is it love and mercy they would have? All the mercy in God is at their service. 'Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee!' Psalms 31:19. Mark the phrase, 'laid up for them.' His mercy and goodness—it is intended for them. As a father that lays up such a sum of money, and writes on the bag, 'This is a portion for such a child.' But how comes the Christian to have this right to God, and all that vast and untold treasure of happiness which is in him? This indeed is greatly to be heeded. It is faith that gives him a good title unto all this. That which makes him a child makes him an heir. Now faith makes him a child of God, 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name,' John 1:12. As therefore, if you would not call your birthright into question, and bring your interest in Christ, and those glorious privileges that come along with him, under a sad dispute in your souls, look to your faith.

Question. But what counsel, may the Christian say, can you give for the preserving of my faith?

Answer. To this I answer in these following particulars. First. That which was instrumental to beget thy faith will be helpful to preserve it, viz. the word of God. Second. Wouldst thou preserve thy faith, look to thy conscience. Third. Exercise it. Fourth. Take special notice of that unbelief which yet remains in thee. Fifth. If thou wouldst preserve thy faith, labour to increase it.

[Directions to believers for the preserving of faith.]

First Direction. That which was instrumental to beget thy faith will be helpful to preserve it—I mean the word of God. As it was seed for the former purpose in thy conversion, so now it is milk for the present sustentation of thy faith. Lie sucking at this breast, and that often. Children cannot suck long, nor digest much at a time, and therefore need the more frequent returns of their meals. Such children are all believers in this world. 'Precept' must be 'upon precept, line upon line, here a little, and there a little.' The breast [must be] often drawn out for the nourishing of them up in their spiritual life, or else they cannot subsist. It was not ordinary that Moses should look so well as he did after he had fasted so long, Exodus 34:28-29. And truly it is a miraculous faith they must have who will undertake to keep their faith alive without taking any spiritual repast from the word. I have heard of some children that have been taken from their mother's breast as soon almost as born, and brought up by hand, who yet have done well for their natural life. But I shall not believe a creature can thrive in his spiritual life, who cast off ordinances, and weans himself from the word, till I hear of some other way of provision that God hath made for the ordinary maintenance of it besides this; and I despair of living so long as to see this proved. I know some, that we may hope well of, have been for a time persuaded to turn their backs on the word and ordinances; but they have turned well hunger-bit to their old fare again, yea, with Naomi's bitter complaint in their mouths, 'I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty,' Ruth 1:21. And happy are them that they are come to their stomachs in this life, before this food be taken off the table, never more to be set on. He that taught Christians to pray for their daily bread, did suppose they had need of it; and surely he did not mean only or chiefly corporal bread, who, in the same chapter bids them, 'But seek ye first the kingdom of God,' Matthew 6:33. Well, Christian, prize thou the word, fed savourily on the word, whether it be dished forth in a sermon at the public, or in a conference with some Christian friend in private, or in a more secret duty of reading and meditation by thy solitary self. Let none of these be disused, or carnally used, by thee, and with God's blessing thou shalt reap the benefit of it in thy faith. When thy stomach fails to the word, thy faith must needs begin to fail on the word. O that Christians, who are so much in complaints of their weak faith, would but turn their complaints into inquiries why it is so weak and declining! Is it not because faith hath missed its wonted meals from the word? Thou, haply, formerly broken through many straits to keep thy acquaintance with God in his word, and wert well paid for that time which thou didst borrow of thy other occasions for this end, by that sweet temper that thou foundest thy heart in to trust God and rely upon him in all conditions; but now, since thou hast discontinued thy acquaintance with God in those ordinances, thou perceivest a sad change. Where thou couldst have trusted God, now thou art suspicious of him. Those promises that were able in a mutiny and hubbub of thy unruly passions, to have hushed and quieted all in thy soul at their appearing in thy thoughts, have now, alas! but little authority over thy murmuring unbelieving heart, to keep it in any tolerable order. If it be thus with thee, poor soul, thy case is sad; and I cannot give thee better counsel for thy soul, than that which physicians give men in a consumption for their bodies. They ask them where they were born and bred up, and to that their native air they send them, as the best means to recover them. Thus, soul, let me ask thee, if thou ever hadst faith, where it was born and bred up? was it not in the sweet air of ordinances, hearing, meditating, conferring of the word, and praying over the word? Go, poor creature, and get thee as fast as thou canst into thy native air, where thou didst draw thy first Christian breath, and where thy faith did so thrive and grow for a time. No means more hopeful to set thy feeble faith on its legs again than

this.

Second Direction. Wouldst thou preserve thy faith, look to thy conscience. A good conscience is the bottom faith sails in. If the conscience be wrecked, how can it be thought that faith should be safe? If faith be the jewel, a good conscience is the cabinet in which it is kept; and if the cabinet be broken, the jewel must needs be in danger of losing. Now you know what sins waste the conscience—sins either deliberately committed, or impudently continued in.

O take heed of deliberate sins! Like a stone thrown into a clear stream, they will so roil thy soul and muddy it, that thou, who even now couldst see thy interest in the promise, wilt be at a loss and not know what to think of thyself. They are like the fire on the top of the house; it will be no easy matter to quench it. But, if thou hast been so unhappy as to fall into such a slough, take heed of lying in it by impenitency. The sheep may fall into a ditch, but it is the swine that wallows in it; and therefore, how hard wilt thou find it, thinkest thou, to act thy faith on the promise, when thou art, by thy filthy garments and besmeared countenance, so unlike one of God's holy one's? It is dangerous to drink poison, but far more to let it lie in the body long. Thou canst not act thy faith, though a believer, on the promise, so as to apply the pardon it presents to thy soul, till thou hast renewed thy repentance.

Third Direction. Exercise thy faith, if thou meanest to preserve it. We live by faith, and faith lives by exercise. As we say of some stirring men, they are never well but at work—confine them in their bed or chair and you kill them; so here, hinder faith from working, and you are enemies to the very life and being of it. Why do we act faith so little in prayer, but because we are no more frequent in it? Let the child seldom see its father or mother, and when he comes into their presence he will not make much after them. Why are we no more able to live on a promise when at a plunge? Surely because we live no more with the promise. The more we converse with the promise, the more confidence we shall put in it. We do not strangers as we do our neighbours, in whose company we are almost every day. It were a rare way to secure our faith, yea, to advance it and all our other graces, would we, in our daily course labour to do all our actions, as in obedience to the command, so in faith on the promise. But alas! how many enterprises are undertaken where faith is not called in, nor the promise consulted with, from one end of the business to the other? And therefore, when we would make use of faith in some particular strait, wherein we think ourselves to be more than ordinary at a loss, our faith itself is at a loss, and to seek, like a servant who, because his master very seldom employs him, makes bold to be gadding abroad, and so when his master doth call him upon some extraordinary occasion, he is out of the way and not to be found. O Christian! take heed of letting your faith be long out of work. If you do not use it when you ought, it might fail you when you desire most to act it.

Fourth Direction. Take special notice of that unbelief which yet reMal. in thee and, as it is putting forth daily its head in thy Christian course, be sure thou loadest thy soul with the sense of it, and deeply humblest thyself before God for it. What thy faith loseth by every act of unbelief, it recovers again by renewing thy repentance. David's faith was on a mending hand when he could shame himself heartily for his unbelief, Psalms 73:22. He confesseth how 'foolish and ignorant' he was; yea, saith he, 'I was as a beast before thee'—so irrational and brutish his unbelieving thoughts now appeared to him—and, by this ingenuous, humble confession, the malignity of his distemper breathes out [so] that he is presently in his old temper again, and his faith is able to act as high as

ever. ‘Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory,’ Psalms 73:23-24. But so long as thy unbelief is sure to grow upon thee as thou beest unhumbled for it. We have the reason why the people of Laish were so bad. ‘There was no magistrate in the land, that might put them to shame in anything,’ Judges 18:7. Christian, thou hast a magistrate in thy bosom commissioned by God himself to check, reprove, and shame thee, when thou sinnest. Indeed, all things go to wreck in that soul where this [one] doth his office. Hear therefore what this hath to charge thee with, that thou mayest be ashamed. There is no sin dishonours God more than unbelief; and this sword cuts his name deepest when in the hand of a saint. O to be wounded in the house of his friends, this goes near the tender heart of God. And there is reason enough why God should take this sin so unkindly at a saint’s hand, if we consider the near relation such a one stands in to God. It would grieve an indulgent father to see his own child come into court, and there bear witness against him and charge him of some untruth in his words, more than if a stranger should do it; because the testimony of a child, though, when it is for the vindication of a parent it may lose some credit in the opinion of those that hear it, upon the suspicion of partiality, yet, when against a parent, it seems to carry some more probability of truth than what is another that is a stranger says against him; because the band of natural affection with which the child is bound to his parent is so sacred that it will not be easily suspected. He can offer violence to it, but upon the more inviolable necessity of bearing witness to the truth.

O think of this, Christian, again and again—by thy unbelief thou bearest false witness against God! And if thou, a child of God, speakest no better of thy heavenly Father, and presentest him in no fairer character to the world, it will be no wonder if it be confirmed in its hard thoughts of God, even to final impenitency and unbelief, when it shall se how little credit he finds with thee, for all thy great profession of him and near relation to him. When we would sink the reputation of a man the lowest possible, we cannot think of an expression that will do it more effectually than to say, ‘He is such a one as those that are nearest to him, even his own children, dare not trust, or will not give him a good word.’ O Christian, ask thyself whether thou couldst be willing to be the unhappy instrument to defame God, and take away his good name in the world. Certainly thy heart trembles at the thought of it if a saint; and if it doth, then surely thy unbelief, by which thou hast done this so oft, will wound thee to the very heart; and, bleeding for what thou hast done, thou wilt beware of taking that sword into thy hand again, with which thou hast given so many a wound to the name of God and thy own peace.

Fifth Direction. If thou wouldst preserve thy faith, labour to increase it. None [are] in more danger of losing what they have than those poor-spirited men who are content with what they have. A spark is sooner smothered than a flame; a drop more easily drunk up and dried than a river. The stronger thy faith is, the safer thy faith is from the enemies’ assaults. The intelligence which an enemy hath of a castle’s being weakly provided for a siege, is enough to bring him against it, which else should not have been troubled with his company. The devil is a coward, and he loves to fight on the greatest advantage; and greater he cannot have than the weakness of the Christian’s faith. Didst thou but know, Christian, the many privileges of a strong faith above a weak, thou wouldst never rest till thou hadst it. Strong faith comes conqueror out of those temptations where weak faith is foiled and taken prisoner. Those Philistines could not stand before Samson in his strength, who durst dance about him scornfully in his weakness. When David’s faith was up how undauntedly did he look death in the face! 1 Samuel 30:6. But, when that was out of heart, O how

poor-spirited is he! —ready to run his head into every hole, though never so dishonourably, to save himself, 1 Samuel 21:13.

Strong faith frees the Christian from those heart-rending thoughts which weak faith must needs be oppressed with. ‘Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee,’ Isaiah 26:3. So much faith, so much inward peace and quietness. If little faith, then little peace and serenity, through the storms that our unbelieving fears will necessarily gather. If strong faith, then strong peace; for so the ingemination in the Hebrew, ‘peace, peace,’ imports. It is confessed that weak faith hath as much peace with God through Christ as the other hath by his strong faith, but not so much bosom peace. Weak faith will as surely land the Christian in heaven as strong faith; for it is impossible the least dram of true grace should perish, being all incorruptible seed. But the weak doubting Christian is not like to have so pleasant a voyage thither as another with strong faith. Though all in the ship come safe to shore, yet he that is all the way sea■sick hath not so comfortable a voyage as he that is strong and healthful. There are many delightful prospects occur in a journey which he that is sick and weak loseth the pleasure of. But the strong man views all with abundance of delight; and though he wisheth with all his heart he was at home, yet the entertainment he hath from these do much shorten and sweeten his way to him. Thus, Christian, there are many previous delights which saints travelling to heaven meet on their way thither—besides what God hath for them at their journey’s end—but it is the Christian whose faith is strong and active on the promise that finds them. This is he who sees the spiritual glories in the promise that ravish his soul with unspeakable delight; while the doubting Christian’s eye of faith is so gummed up with unbelieving fears that he can see little to affect him in it. This is he that goes singing all the way with the promise in his eye; while the weak Christian, kept in continual pain with his own doubts and jealousies, goes sighing and mourning with a heavy heart, because his interest in the promise is yet under a dispute in his own thoughts. As you would not therefore live uncomfortably, and have a dull melancholy walk of it to heaven, labour to strengthen your faith.

Question. But may be you will ask, How may I know whether my faith be strong or weak? I answer by these following characters.

[Characters by which we may know whether faith be strong or weak.]

1. Character. The more entirely the Christian can rely on God, upon his naked word in the promise, the stronger his faith is. He, surely, putteth greater confidence in a man that will take his own word or single bond for a sum of money, than he who dares not, except some others will be bound for him. When we trust God for his bare promise, we trust him on his own credit, and this is faith indeed. He that walks without staff or crutch is stronger than he that needs these to lean on. Sense and reason, these are the crutches which weak faith leans on too much in its acting. Now, soul, inquire,

(1.) Canst thou bear up thyself on the promise, though the crutch of sense and present feeling be not at hand? May be thou hast had some discoveries of God’s love and beamings forth of his favour upon thee; and so long as the sun shined thus in at thy window thy heart was lightsome, and thou thoughtest thou shouldst never distrust God more, or listen to thy unbelieving thoughts more; but how findest thou thy heart now, since those sensible demonstrations are withdrawn, and may be some frowning providence sent in the room of them? Dost thou presently dispute the promise in thy thoughts, as not knowing whether thou mayest venture to cast anchor on it or no?

Because thou hast lost the sense of his love, does thy eye of faith fail thee also, that thou hast lost the sight of his mercy and truth in the promise? Surely thy eye of faith is weak, or else it would read the promise without these spectacles. The little child, indeed, thinks the mother is quite lost if she goes but out of the room where he is; but as it grows older so it will be wiser. And truly so will the believer also. Christian, bless God for the experiences and sensible tastes thou hast at any time of his love; but know, that we cannot judge of our faith, whether weak or strong, by them. Experiences, saith Parisiensis, are like crutches, which do indeed help a lame man to go, but they do not make the lame man sound or strong; food and physic must do that. And therefore, Christian, labour to lean more on the promise, and less on sensible expressions of God's love, whether it be in the present feeling or past experiences of it. I would not take you off from improving these, but [from] leaning on these, and limiting the actings of our faith to these. A strong man, though he doth not lean on his staff all the way he goes—as the lame man doth on his crutch, which bears his whole weight—yet he may make good use of it now and then to defend himself when set upon by a thief or dog in his way. Thus the strong Christian may make good use of his experiences in some temptations, though he doth not lay the weight of his faith upon them, but [upon] the promise.

(2.) Canst thou bear thyself upon the promise, when the other crutch of reason breaks under thee? or does thy faith ever fall to the ground with it? That is a strong faith indeed that can trample upon the improbabilities and impossibilities which reason would be objecting against the performance of the promise, and give credit to the truth of it with a non obstante —notwithstanding. Thus Noah fell hard to work about the ark, upon the credit he gave both the threatening and promissory part of God's word, and never troubled his head to clear the matter to his reason how these strange things could come to pass. And it is imputed to the strength of Abraham's faith, that he could not suffer his own narrow reason to have the hearing of the business, when God promised him a Michaelmas[7] spring—as I may say—a son in his old age. 'And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead,' Romans 4:19. Skilful swimmers are not afraid to go above their depth, whereas young learners feel for the ground, and are loath to go far from the bank-side. Strong faith fears not when God carries the creature beyond the depth of his reason: 'We know not what to do,' said good Jehoshaphat, 'but our eyes are upon thee,' 2 Chronicles 20:1-37. As if he had said, 'We are in a sea of troubles; beyond our own help, or any thought how we can wind out of these straits; but our eyes are upon thee. We dare not give our case for desperate so long as there is strength in thine arm, tenderness in thy bowels, and truth in thy promise.' Whereas weak faith, that is groping for some footing for reason to stand on, it is taken up how to reconcile the promise and the creature's understanding. Hence those many questions which drop from its mouth. When Christ said, 'Give ye them to eat,' Mark 6:1-56, his disciples ask him, 'Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread?' As if Christ's bare word could not spare that cost and trouble! 'Whereby shall I know this?' saith Zacharias to the angel, 'for I am an old man,' Luke 1:18. Alas! his faith was not strong enough to digest, at present, this strange news.

2. Character. The more composed and contented the heart is under the changes which providence brings upon the Christian's state and condition in the world, the stronger his faith is. Weak bodies cannot bear the change of weather so well as healthful and strong ones do. Hot and cold, fair or foul, cause no great alteration in the strong man's temper; but alas! the other is laid up by them, or at best goes complaining of them. Thus strong faith can live in any climate, travel in all

weather, and fadge with any condition. ‘I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content,’ Php 4:11. Alas! all Christ’s scholars are not of Paul’s form; weak faith hath not yet got the mastery of this hard lesson. When God turns thy health into sickness, thy abundance into penury, thy honour into scorn and contempt, into what language dost thou now make thy condition known to him? Is thy spirit embittered into discontent, which thou ventest in murmuring complaints? or art thou well satisfied with God’s dealings, so as to acquiesce cheerfully in thy present portion, not from an unsensibleness of the affliction, but approbation of divine appointment? If the latter, thy faith is strong.

(1.) It shows God hath a throne in thy heart. Thou reverencest his authority and ownest his sovereignty, or else thou wouldst not acquiesce in his orders. ‘I was dumb, because thou didst it,’ Psalms 39:9. If the blow had come from any other hand he could not have taken it so silently. When the servant strike the child, he runs to his father and makes his complaint; but, though the father doth more to him, he complains not of his father, nor seeks redress from any other, because it is his father whose authority he reveres. Thus thou comportest thyself toward God; and what but a strong faith can enable thee? ‘Be still, and know that I am God,’ Psalms 46:10. We must know God believingly to be what he is, before our hearts will be ‘still.’

(2.) This acquiescency of spirit under the disposition of providence shows that thou dost not only stand in awe of his sovereignty, but hast amiable comfortable thoughts of his mercy and goodness in Christ. Thou believest he can soon, and will certainly make thee amends, or else thou couldst not so easily part with these enjoyments. The child goes willingly to bed when others, may be, are going to supper at a great feast in the family; but the mother promiseth the child to save something for him against the morning; this the child believes and is content. Surely thou hast something in the eye of thy faith which will recompense all thy present loss; and this makes thee fast so willingly when others feast, be sick when others are well. Paul tells us why he and his brethren in affliction did not faint, 2 Corinthians 4:16-17. They saw heaven coming to them while earth was going from them. ‘For which cause we faint not, ...for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.’

3. Character. The more able to wait long for answers to our desires nd prayers, the stronger faith is. It shows the tradesman to be poor and needy when he must have ready money for what he sells. They that are forehanded are willing to give time, and able to forbear long. Weak faith is all for the present; if it hath not presently its desires answered, then it grows jealous and lays down sad conclusions against itself—his prayer was not heard, or he is not one God loves, and the like. Much ado to be kept out of a fainting fit—‘I said in my haste that all men were liars.’ But strong faith that can trade with God for time, yea, waits God’s leisure—‘He that believeth shall not make haste,’ Isaiah 28:16. He knows his money is in a good hand, and he is not over-quick to call for it home, knowing well that the longest voyages have the richest returns. As rich lusty ground can forbear rain longer than lean or sandy [ground], which must have a shower ever and anon, or the corn on it fades; or as a strong healthful man can fast longer without faintness, than the sickly and weak,—so the Christian of strong faith can stay longer for spiritual refreshing from the presence of the Lord, in the returns of his mercy and discoveries of his love to him, than one of weak faith.

4. Character. The more the Christian can lose or suffer upon the credit of the promise, the stronger his faith is. If you should see a man part with a fair inheritance, and leave his kindred and country

where he might pass his days in the embracements of his dear friends and the delicious fare which a plentiful estate would afford him every day, to follow a friend to the other end of the world, with hunger and hardship, through sea and land, and a thousand perils that meet him on every hand, you would say that this man had a strong confidence of his friend, and a dear love to him, would you not? Nay, if he should do all this for a friend whom he never saw, upon the bare credit of a letter which he sends to invite him to come over to him, with a promise of great things he will do for him; now, to throw all his present possessions and enjoyments at his heels, and willingly put himself into the condition of a poor pilgrim and traveller, with the loss of all he hath, that he may come to his dear friend, this adds to the wonder of his confidence. Such gallant spirits we read of—'Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice,' 1 Peter 1:6-8. Observe the place, and you shall find them in sorrowful plight —'in heaviness through manifold temptations'—yet, because their way lies through the sloughs to the enjoyment of God and Christ, whom they never saw or knew, but by the report the word makes of them, they can turn their back off the world's friendship and enjoyments—with which it courted them as well as others—and go with a merry heart through the deepest of them all. Here is glorious faith indeed. It is not praising of heaven, and wishing we were there, but a cheerful abandoning the dearest pleasures, and embracing the greatest sufferings of the world when called to the same, that will evidence our faith to be both true and strong.

5. Character. The more easily that the Christian can repel motions, and resist temptations to sin, the stronger is his faith. The snare or net which holds the little fish fast, the greater and stronger fish easily breaks through. The Christian's faith is strong or weak as he finds it easy or hard to break from temptations to sin. When an ordinary temptation holds thee by the heel, and thou art entangled in like the fly in the spider's web—much ado to get off, and persuade thy heart from yielding—truly it speaks faith very feeble. To have no strength to oppose the assaults of sin and lust, speaks the heart void of faith. Where faith hath not a hand to prostrate an enemy, it yet hath a hand to lift up against it, and a voice to cry out for help to heaven. Some way or other faith will show its dislike and enter its protest against sin. And to have little strength to resist, evidenceth a weak faith. Peter's faith was weak when a maid's voice dashed him out of countenance; but it was well amended when he could withstand, and, with a noble constancy, disdain the threats of a whole counsel, Acts 4:1-37. Christian, compare thyself with thyself, and give righteous judgment on thyself. Do now thy lusts as powerfully inveigle thy heart, and carry it away from God, as they did some months or years ago; or canst thou in truth say thy heart is got above them. Since thou hast known more of Christ, and had a view of his spiritual glories, canst thou now pass by their door and not look in; yea, when they knock at thy door in a temptation, thou canst shut it upon them, and disdain the motion? Surely thou mayest know thy faith is grown stronger. When we see that the clothes which a year or two ago were even fit for the person, will not now come on him, they are so little, we may easily be persuaded to believe the person is much grown since that time. If thy faith were no more grown, those temptations which fitted thee would like thee as well now. Find but the power of sin die, and thou mayest know that faith is more lively and vigorous. The harder the blow, the stronger the arm that gives it. A child cannot strike such a blow as a man. Weak faith cannot give such a home-blow to sin as a strong faith can.

6. Character. The more ingenuity and love is in thy obediential walking, the stronger thy faith is. Faith works by love, and therefore its strength or weakness may be discovered by the strength or

weakness of that love it puts forth in the Christian's actings. The strength of a man's arm that draws a bow, is seen by the force the arrow which he shoots flies with. And certainly the strength of our faith may be known by the force our love mounts to God with. It is impossible that weak faith—which is unable to draw the promise as a strong faith can—should leave such a forcible impression on the heart to love God to abandon sin, perform duty, and exert acts of obedience to his command, know thy place, and take it with humble thankfulness, thou art a graduate in the art of believing. The Christian's love advanceth by equal paces with his faith, as the heat of the day increaseth with the climbing sun; the higher that mounts towards its meridian, the hotter the day grows. So the higher faith lifts Christ up in the Christian, the more intense his love to Christ grows, which now sets him on work after another sort than he was wont. Before, when he was to mourn for his sins, he was acted by a slavish fear, and made an ugly face at the work, as one doth that drinks some unpleasing potion; but now acts of repentance are not distasteful and formidable, since faith hath discovered mercy to sit on the brow of justice, and undeceived the creature of those false and cruel thoughts of God which ignorantly he had taken up concerning him. He doth not now 'hate the word repentance'—as Luther said he once did before he understood that place, Romans 1:17—but goes about the work with amiable sweet apprehensions of a good God, that stands ready with the sponge of his mercy dipped in Christ's mercy, to blot out his sins as fast as he scores them up by his humble sorrowful confession of them. And the same might be said concerning all other offices of Christian piety. Strong faith makes the soul ingenuous. It doth not pay the performance of any duty, as an oppressed subject doth a heavy tax —with a deep sigh, to think how much he parts with —but as freely as a child would present his father with an apple of that orchard which he holds by gift from him. Indeed, the child when young is much servile and selfish, forbearing what his father forbids for fear of the rod, and doing what he commands for some fine thing or other that his father bribes him with, more than for pure love to his person or obedience to his will and pleasure. But, as he grows up and comes to understand himself better, and the relation he stands in, with the many obligations of it to filial obedience, then his servility and selfishness wear off, and his FJ`D(¬—natural affection—will prevail more with him to please his father than any other argument whatever. And so will it with the Christian where faith is of any growth and ripeness.

7. Character. To name no more, the more able faith is to sweeten the thoughts of death, and make it desirable to the Christian, the stronger his faith. Things that are very sharp or sour will take much sugar to make them sweet. Death is one of those things which hath the most ungrateful taste to the creature's palate that can be. O it requires a strong faith to make the serious thoughts of it sweet and desirable! I know some in a pet and a passion have professed great desires of dying, but it hath been as a sick man desires to change his place, merely out of a weariness of, and discontent with, his present condition, without any due consideration of what they desire. But a soul that knows the consequences of death, and the unchangeableness of that state, whether of bliss or misery, that it certainly marries us to, will never cheerfully call for death in his cordial desires, till he be in some measure resolved from the promise what entertainment he may expect from God when he comes into that other world—and that weak faith will not do without abundance of fears and doubts. I confess, that sometimes a Christian of very weak faith may meet death with as little fear upon his spirit, yea, more joy, than one of a far stronger faith, when he is held up by the chin by some extraordinary comfort poured into his soul from God immediately. Should God withdraw this, however, his fears would return upon him, and he feel again his faintings; as a sick

man, that hath been strangely cheered with a strong cordial, does his feebleness when the efficacy of it is spent. But we speak of the ordinary way how Christians come to have their hearts raised above the fear, yea, into a strong desire, of death, and that is by attaining to a strong faith. God can indeed make a feast of a few loaves, and multiply the weak Christian's little faith on a sudden, as he lives on a sick-bed, into a spread table of all varieties of consolations. But I fear that God will not do this miracle for that man or woman who, upon the expectation of this, contents himself with the little provision of faith he hath, and labours not to increase his store against that spending time.

[Faith or the graces of God in a believer must be acknowledged.]

Exhortation Second. We come to the second word of exhortation we have to speak to the saints:—If faith be such a choice grace, and thou hast it, deny not what God hath done for thee. Which is worst, thinkest thou?—the sinner to hide his sin and deny it, or the Christian to hide and deny his faith? I confess the first does worst, if we look to the intention of the persons; for the sinner hides his sin out of a wicked end. The doubting soul [however] means well:—he is afraid to play the hypocrite and be found a liar in saying he hath what he fears he hath not. But, if we consider the consequence of the Christian's disowning the grace of God in him, and what use the devil makes of it for the leading him into many other sins, it will not be so easy to resolve whose sin is the greatest. Good Joseph meant piously when he had thought of putting away secretly his espoused Mary —thinking no other but that she had played the whore—and yet, it would have been a sad act if he had persisted in his thoughts, especially after the angel had told him that which was conceived in her to be of the Holy Ghost. Thus thou, poor mourning soul, may be, art oft thinking to put away thy faith as some by-blow of Satan, and base-born counterfeit grace begot on thy hypocritical heart by the father of lies. Well, take heed what thou dost. Hast thou had no vision—not extraordinary of and angel or immediate revelation, but ordinary of the Spirit of God—I mean in his word and ordinances, encouraging thee from those characters which are in the Scripture given of faith, and the conformity thy faith hath to them, to take and own thy faith as that which is conceived in thee by the Holy Ghost, and not a brat formed by the delusion of Satan in the womb of thy own groundless imagination? If so, be afraid of bearing false-witness against the grace of God in thee. As there is that makes himself rich in faith that hath nothing of this grace, so there is that maketh himself poor that hath great store of this riches. Let us therefore hear what are the grounds of this thy suspicion, that we may see whether thy fears or thy faith be imaginary and false. First. Saith the poor soul, I am afraid I have no true faith because I have not those joys and consolations which others have who believe. Second. O but can there be any true faith where there is so much doubting as I find in myself? Third. O but I fear mine is a presumptuous faith, and if so, to be sure it cannot be right.

[Grounds of suspicion which lead to a believer's denying his faith.]

First Ground of Suspicion. I am afraid, saith the poor soul, I have no true faith, because I have not those joys and consolations which others have who believe.

Answer First. Thou mayest have inward peace though not joy. The day may be still and calm though not glorious and sunshine. Though the Comforter be not come with his ravishing consolations, yet he may have hushed the storm of thy troubled spirit; and true peace, as well as joy, is the consequent of 'faith unfeigned.'

Answer Second. Suppose thou hast not yet attained so much as to this inward peace, yet know, thou hast no reason to question the truth of thy faith for want of this. We have peace with God as soon as we believe, but not always with ourselves. The pardon may be past the prince's hand and seal, and yet not put into the prisoner's hand. Thou thinkest them too rash, dost thou not, who judged Paul a murderer by the viper that fastened on his hand? And what art thou who condemnest thyself for an unbeliever, because of those troubles and inward agonies which may fasten for a time on the spirit of the most gracious child God hath on earth?

Second Ground of Suspicion. O but can there be any true faith where there is so much doubting as I find in myself?

Answer. There is a doubting which the Scripture opposeth to the least degree of faith. Our blessed Saviour tells them what wonder they shall do if they believe and 'doubt not,' Matthew 21:21; and, Luke 17:6, he tells his disciples if they have faith as a grain of mustard-seed,' they shall do as much. That which is a faith without doubting in Matthew is faith as a grain of mustard-seed in Luke. But again, there is a doubting which the Scripture opposeth not to the truth of faith, but to the strength of faith, 'O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?' Matthew 14:31. They are the words of Christ to sinking Peter, in which he so chides his doubting as yet to acknowledge the truth of his faith, though weak. All doubting is evil in its nature, yet some doubting, though evil in itself, doth evidence some grace that is good to be in the person so doubting; as smoke proves some fire. And peevishness and pettishness in a sick person that before lay senseless, is a good sign of some mending, though itself a thing bad enough. But the thing here desirable, I conceive, would be to give some help to the doubting soul, that he may what his doubting is symptomatical of; whether of true faith, though weak, or of no faith. Now for this I shall lay down four characters of those doubtings which accompany true faith.

1. Character. The doubtings of a true believer are attended with much shame and sorrow of spirit, even for those doubtings. I appeal to thy conscience, poor doubting soul, whether the consideration of this one sin doth not cost thee many a salt tear and heavy sigh which others know not of? Now, I pray, from whence come these? Will unbelief mourn for unbelief? or sin put itself to shame? No, sure, it shows there is a principle of faith in the soul that takes God's part, and cannot see his promises and name wronged by unbelief without protesting against it, and mourning under it, though the hands of this grace be too weak at present to drive the enemy out of the soul. The law cleared the damsel that 'cried' out 'in the field,' and so will the gospel thee who sincerely mournest for thy unbelief, Deuteronomy 22:27. That holy man, whoever he was, was far gone in his doubting disease, Psalms 77:1-20. How many times do we find his unbelief putting the mercy and faithfulness of God—which should be beyond all dispute in our hearts—to the question and dubious vote in his distempered soul? He might with as much reason have asked his soul whether there was a God? as whether his mercy was clean gone and his promise failed? yet so far did his fears in this hurry carry him aside. But at last you have him acknowledging his folly, Psalms 77:10, 'And I said this in my infirmity.' This I may thank thee for, O my unbelief! thou enemy of God and my soul, thou wilt be puzzling me with needless fears, and make me think and speak so unworthily of my God. This proved there was faith at the bottom of his unbelief.

2. Character. The doubtings of a sincere believer are accompanied with ardent desires those things which it most calls in question and doubts of. The weak believer, he questions whether God

loves him or no, but he desires it more than life. And this is the language of a gracious soul, ‘Thy lovingkindness is better than life,’ Psalms 63:3. He doubts whether Christ be his; yet, if you should ask him what value he sets upon Christ, and what he would give for Christ, he can tell you, and that truly, that no price should be too great if he were to be bought. No condition that God offers Christ upon appears to him hard, but all easy and cheap. And this is the judgment which only the believing soul can have of Christ. ‘Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious,’ 1 Peter 2:7. In a word, he doubts whether he be truly holy or only counterfeit; but his soul pants and thirsts after those graces most which he can see least. He to him should be the more welcome messenger that brings him the news of a broken heart, than another that tells him of a whole crown and kingdom fallen to him. He disputes every duty and action he doth, whether it be according to the rule of the word; and yet he passionately desires that he could walk without one wry step from it; and doth not quarrel with the word because it is so strict, but with his heart because it is so loose. And how great a testimony these give of a gracious frame of heart! See Psalms 119:20, Psalms 119:140 where David brings these as the evidence of his grace. Canst thou therefore, poor soul, let out thy heart strongly after Christ and his graces, while thou dost not see thy interest in either? Be of good cheer, thou art not so great a stranger with these as thou thinkest thyself. These strong desires are the consequent of some taste thou hast had of them already; and these doubts may proceed, not from an absolute want, as if thou wert wholly destitute of them, but [from] the violence of thy desires, which are not satisfied with what thou hast. It is very ordinary for excessive love to beget excessive fear, and that groundless. The wife, because she loves her husband dearly, fears when he is abroad she shall never see him more. One while she thinks he is sick; another while killed; and thus her love torments her without any just cause, when her husband is all the while well and on his way home. A jewel of great price, or ring that we highly value, if but laid out of sight, our extreme estimate we set on them makes us presently think them lost. It is the nature of passions in this our imperfect state, when strong and violent, to disturb our reason, and hide things from our eye which else were easy to be seen. Thus many poor doubting souls are looking and hunting to find that faith which they have already in their bosoms—[it] being hid from them merely by the vehemency of their desire of it, and [by the] fear they should be cheated with a false one for a true. As the damsel ‘opened not the gate for gladness’ to Peter Acts 12:14—her joy at [the time then] present made her forget what she did—so the high value the poor doubting Christian sets on faith, together with an excess of longing after it, suffer him not to entertain so high an opinion of himself as to think he at present hath that jewel in his bosom which he so infinitely prizeth.

3. Character. The doubtings of a truly believing soul make him more inquisitive how he may get what he sometimes he fears he hath not. Many sad thoughts pass to and fro in his soul whether Christ be his or no, whether he may lay claim to the promise or no; and these cause such a commotion in his spirit, that he cannot rest till he come to some resolution in his own thoughts from the word concerning this great case. Therefore, as Ahasuerus, when he could not sleep, called for the records and chronicles of his kingdom, so the doubting the doubting soul betakes himself to the records of heaven—the word of God in the Scripture—and one while he is reading there, another while looking into his own heart, if he can find anything that answers the characters of Scripture—faith, as the face in the glass doth the face of man. David, Psalms 77:1-20, when he was at a loss what to think of himself, and many doubts did clog his faith —insomuch that the thinking of God increased his trouble—did not sit down and let the ship drive, as we say, not regarding whether God loved him or no. No; he ‘communes with his own heart, and his spirit

makes diligent search.' Thus it is with every sincere soul under doubtings. He dares no more sit down contented in that unresolved condition, than one who thinks he smells fire in his house dares settle himself to sleep till he hath looked into every room and corner, and satisfied himself that all is safe, lest he should be waked with the fire about his ears in the night. The poor doubting soul [is indeed] much more afraid, lest it should awake with hell■fire about it; whereas a soul in a state and under the power of unbelief, is secure and careless. The old world did not believe the threatening of the flood, and they spend no thoughts about the matter. It is at their doors and windows before they had used any means how to escape it.

4. Character. In the midst of the true believer's doubtings there is an innitency of his heart on Christ, and a secret purpose still to cleave to him. At the same time that Peter's feet were sinking into the waters, he was lifting up a prayer to Christ; and this proved the truth of his faith, as the other its weakness. So Jonah, he had many fears, and sometimes so predominant, that as bad humours settle into a sore, so they gathered into a hasty unbelieving conclusion, yet then his faith had some little secret hold on God. 'Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple,' Jonah 2:4. And, 'When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord,' Jonah 2:7. Holy David also, though he could not rid his soul of all those fears which got into it through his weak faith, as water into a leaking ship, yet he hath his hand at the pump, and takes up a firm resolution against them. 'What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee,' Psalms 56:3. The doubting Christian sinks, but, as a traveller in a slough where the bottom is firm, and so recovers himself. But the unbeliever, he sinks in his fears, as a man in a quick-sand, lower and lower till he be swallowed up into despair. The weak Christian's doubting is like the wavering of a ship at anchor —he is moved, yet not removed from his hold on Christ; but the unbeliever's, like the wavering of a wave, which, having nothing to stay it, is wholly at the mercy of the wind. 'Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed,' James 1:6.

Third Ground of Suspicion. O but, saith another, I fear mine is a presumptuous faith, and if so, to be sure it cannot be right.

Answer. For the fuller assoiling [i.e. clearing] this objection, I shall lay down three characters of a presumptuous faith.

1. Character. A presumptuous faith is an easy faith. It hath no enemy of Satan or our own corrupt hearts to oppose it, and so, like a stinking weed, shoots up and grows rank on a sudden. The devil never hath the sinner surer than when dreaming in this fool's paradise, and walking in his sleep, amidst his vain fantastical hopes of Christ and salvation. And therefore he is so far from waking him, that he draws the curtains close about him, that no light nor noise in his conscience may break his rest. Did you ever know the thief call up him in the night whom he meant to rob and kill? No, sleep is his advantage. But true faith he is a sworn enemy against. He persecutes it in the very cradle, as Herod did Christ in the cratch;[8] he pours a flood of wrath after it as soon as it betrays its own birth by crying and lamenting after the Lord. If thy faith be legitimate Naphtali may be its name; and thou mayest say, 'With great wrestlings have I wrestled with Satan and my own base heart, and at last have prevailed.' You know the answer that Rebecca had when she inquired of God about the scuffle and striving of the children in her womb, 'Two nations,' God told her, 'were in her womb.' If thou canst find the like strife in thy soul, thou mayest comfort thyself that it is from

two contrary principles, faith and unbelief, which are lusting one against another; and thy unbelief, which is the elder —however now it strives for the mastery—shall serve the younger.

2. Character. Presumptuous faith is lame of one hand; it hath a hand to receive pardon and heaven from God, but no hand to give up itself to God. True faith hath the use of both her hands. 'My beloved is mine'—there the soul takes Christ; 'and I am his' —there she surrenders herself to the use and service of Christ. Now, didst thou ever pass over thyself freely to Christ? I know none but will profess they do this. But the presumptuous soul, like Ananias, lies to the Holy Ghost, by keeping back part, yea, the chief part, of that he promised to lay at Christ's feet. This lust he sends out of the way, when he should deliver it up to justice; and that creature enjoyment he twines about, and cannot persuade his heart to trust God with the disposure of it, but cries out when the Lord calls for it, 'Benjamin shall not go.' Life is bound up in it, and if God will have it from him he must take it by force, for there is no hope of gaining his consent. Is this the true picture of thy faith, and [of the] temper of thy soul? then verily thou blessest thyself in an idol, and mistake a bold face for a believing heart. But, if thou beest as willing to be faithful to Christ, as to pitch thy faith on Christ; if thou countest it as great a privilege that Christ should have a throne in thy heart and love, as that thou shouldst have a place and room in his mercy; in a word, if thou beest plain-hearted and wouldst not hide a sin, nor lock up a creature enjoyment, from him, but desirest freely to give up thy dearest lust to the gibbet, and thy sweetest enjoyments to stay with, or go from thee, as thy God thinks fit to allow thee—though all this be with much regret and discontent from a malignant party of the flesh within thee—thou provest thyself a sound believer; and the devil may as well say that himself believeth as that thou presumest. If this be to presume, be thou yet more presumptuous. Let the devil nickname thee and thy faith as he pleaseth; the rose-water is not the less sweet because one writes 'wormwood water' on the glass. The Lord knows who are his, and will own them for his true children, and their graces for the sweet fruits of his Spirit, though a false title be set on them by Satan and the world, yea, sometimes by believers on themselves. The father will not deny his child because he is a violent fit of a fever talks idle and denies him to be his father.

3. Character. The presumptuous faith is a sapless and unsavoury faith. When an unsound heart pretends to greatest faith on Christ, even then it finds little savour, tastes little sweetness in Christ. No, he hath his old tooth in his head, which makes him relish still the gross food of sensual enjoyments above Christ and his spiritual dainties. Would he but freely speak what he thinks, he must confess that if he were put to his choice whether he would sit with Christ and his children, to be entertained with the pleasures that they enjoy from spiritual communion with him in his promises, ordinances, and holy ways; or had rather sit with the servants, and have the scraps which God allows the men of the world in their full bags and bellies of carnal treasure; that he would prefer the latter before the former. He brags of his interest in God, but he care not how little he is in the presence of God in any duty or ordinance. Certainly, if he were such a favourite as he speaks, he would be more at court than he is. He hopes to be saved, he saith, but he draws not his wine of joy at this tap. It is not the thoughts of heaven that comfort him; but what he hath in the world and of the world, these maintain his joy. When the world's vessel is out, and the creature joy spent, alas, the poor wretch can find little relief from, or relish in, his pretended hopes of heaven and interest in Christ, but he is still whining after the other. Whereas true faith alters the very creature's palate. No feast so sweet to the believer as Christ is. Let God take all other dishes off

the board and leave but Christ, he counts his feast is not gone—he hath what he likes; but let all else stand, health, estate, friends, and what else the world sets a high value on, if Christ be withdrawn he soon misseth his dish, and makes his moan, and saith, ‘Alas! who hath taken away my Lord?’ It is Christ that seasons these and all his enjoyments, and makes them savoury meat to his palate; but without him they have no more taste than the white of an egg without salt.

[1]Precedaneous: Preceding; antecedent; anterior. From Webster’s 1828 Dictionary. — SDB [2]Demit: dismiss; resign, to withdraw from office or membership. From Webster’s — SDB [3]Affiance, trust or faith.

[4]Innitency, act of leaning on.

[5]Can anyone, at this point, avoid thinking of the following verses from Hebrews? — SDB

17Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: 18that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: 19which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; 20whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

— Hebrews 6:1-20

[6]Jointure — 1. [Now Rare] an act or instance of joining; 2. Law a) an arrangement by which a husband grants real property to his wife for her use after her death. b) the property thus settled; widow’s portion c) [Obs] the holding of property jointly.

— From Webster’s

[7]Michaelmas — the feast of the archangel Michael, celebrated chiefly in England, on September 29: also Michaelmas Day. — from Webster’s. SDB [8]Cratch, i.e. manger or crib.

02.02 - The Saint's Enemy Described

DIRECTION VIII.—SECOND GENERAL PART.

[Argument pressing the exhortation.] ‘Whereby ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked’ (Ephesians 6:16)

We have done with the exhortation, and now come to the second general part of the verse, viz. a powerful argument pressing this exhortation, contained in these words—‘Whereby ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.’ ‘Ye shall be able.’ Not an uncertain ‘may be ye shall;’ but he is peremptory and absolute—‘ye shall be able.’ But what to do? ‘able to quench’—not only to resist and repel, but ‘to quench.’ But what shall they ‘quench?’ Not ordinary temptations only, but the worst arrows the devil hath in his quiver—‘fiery darts;’ and not some few of them, but ’all the fiery darts of the wicked.’ In this second general there are two particulars. first. The saint’s enemy described—‘The wicked.’ second. The power and puissance of faith over the enemy—‘Ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.’

Division First.—The Saint’s Enemy Described.

‘The Wicked.’

Here we have the saint’s enemy described in three particulars. First. In their nature—‘wicked.’ Second. In their unity—‘wicked,’ or ‘wicked one,’ J@Ø B@<ZD@Ø, in the singular number. Third. In their warlike furniture and provision, with which they take the field against the saints—‘darts,’ and they are ‘fiery.’

[The saints enemy described by their nature.]

First. The saint’s enemy is here described by their nature—‘wicked.’ Something I have said of this, Ephesians 6:12 where Satan is called ‘spiritual wickednesses.’[1] I shall at present therefore pass it over with the lighter hand. Certainly there is some special lesson that God would have his people learn even from this attribute of the devil and his limbs—for the whole pack of devils and devilish men are here intended —that they are represented to the saint’s consideration by this name so oft as ‘wicked.’ I shall content myself with two ends, that I conceive God aims at by this name.

First End. They are called ‘wicked,’ as an odious name whereby God would raise his children’s stomachs into a loathing of sin above all things in the world, and provoke their pure souls as to hatred and detestation of all sin, so [to] a vigorous resistance of the devil and his instruments, as such, who are wicked; which is a name that makes him detestable above any other. God would have us know, that when he himself would speak the worst he can of the devil, he can think of no name for the purpose like this—to say he is ‘the wicked one.’ The name which exalts God highest, and is the very excellency of all his other excellencies, is, that he is ‘the holy One,’ and ‘none holy as the Lord.’ This therefore gives the devil the blackest brand of infamy, that he is ‘the wicked one,’ and none wicked to that height besides himself. Could holiness be separated from any other of God’s attributes—which is the height of blasphemy to think —the glory of them would be departed.

And could the devil's wickedness be removed from his torments and misery, the case would be exceedingly altered. We ought then to pity him whom now we must no less than hate and abominate with a perfect hatred.

1. Consider this, all ye who live in sin, and blush not to be seen in the practice of it. O that you would behold your faces in this glass, and you would see whom you look like! Truly, no other than the devil himself and in that which makes him most odious, which is his wickedness. Never more spit at the name of the devil, nor seem to be scared at any ill-shapen picture of him; for thou carriest a far more ugly one —and the truest of him that is possible—in thy own wicked bosom. The more wicked the more like the devil; who can draw the devil's picture like himself? If thou beest a wicked wretch thou art of the devil himself. 'Cain,' it is said, 'was of that wicked one,' 1 John 3:12. Every sin thou committest is a new line that the devil draws on thy soul. And if the image of God in a saint—which the Spirit of God is drawing for many years together in him—will be so curious a piece when the last line shall be drawn in heaven, O think, then, how frightful and horrid a creature thou wilt appear to be, when after all the devil's pains here on earth to imprint his image upon thee, thou shalt see thyself in hell as wicked to the full as a wicked devil can make thee.

2. Consider this, O ye saints, and bestow your first pity on those poor forlorn souls that are under the power of a wicked devil. It is a lamentable judgment to live under a wicked government, though it be but of men. For a servant in a family to be under a wicked master is a heavy plague. David reckons it among other great curses. 'Set thou a wicked man over him,' Psalms 109:6. O what is it then to have a wicked spirit over him! He would show himself very kind to his friend that should wish him to be the worst slave in Turkey, rather than the best servant of sin or Satan. And yet see the folly of men. Solomon tells us, 'When the wicked bear rule, the people mourn,' Proverbs 29:2. But when a wicked devil rules, poor besotted sinners laugh and are merry. Well, you who are not out of your wits so far, but know sin's service to be the creature's utmost misery, mourn for them that go themselves laughing to sin, and by sin to hell. And again, let it fill thy heart, Christian, with zeal and indignation against Satan in all his temptations. Remember he is wicked, and he can come for no good. Thou knowest the happiness of serving a holy God. Surely, then, thou hast an answer ready by thee against this wicked one comes to draw thee to sin. Canst thou think of fouling thy hands about his base nasty drudgery, after they have been used to so pure and fine work as the service of thy God is? Listen not to Satan's motions except thou hast a mind to be 'wicked.'

Second End. They are called 'wicked,' as a name of contempt, for the encouragement of all believers in their combat with them. As if God had said, 'Fear them not; they are a wicked company you go against'—cause, and they who defend it, both 'wicked.' And truly, if the saints must have enemies, the worse they are the better it is. It would put mettle into a coward to fight with such a crew. Wickedness must needs be weak. The devils' guilt in their own bosoms tells them their cause is lost before the battle is fought. They fear thee, Christian, because thou art holy, and therefore thou needest not be dismayed at them who are wicked. Thou lookest on them as subtle, mighty, and many, and then thy heart fails thee. But look on all these subtle mighty spirits as wicked ungodly wretches, that hate God more than thee, yea thee for thy kindred to him, and thou canst not but take heart. Whose side is God on that thou art afraid? Will he that rebuked kings for touching his anointed ones and doing them harm in their bodies and estates, stand still, thinkest

thou, and suffer these wicked spirits to attempt the life of God himself in thee, thy grace, thy holiness, without coming in to thy help? It is impossible.

[The saint's enemy described by their unity.]

Second. The saint's enemy is set out by their unity—'fiery darts of the wicked'—J@Ø B@<ZD@Ø 'of the wicked one.' It is as if all were shot out of the same bow, and by the same hand; as if the Christian's fight were a single duel with one single enemy. All the legions of devils, and multitudes of wicked men and women, make but one great enemy. They are all one mystical body of wickedness; as Christ and his saints [are] one mystical holy body. One Spirit acts Christ and his saints; so one spirit acts devils, and ungodly men his limbs. The soul is in the little toe; and the spirit of the devil in the least of sinners. But I have spoken something of this subject elsewhere.[2]
[The saint's enemy described by their warlike provision.]

Third. The saint's enemy is here described by their warlike furniture and provision with which they take the field against the saints—'darts,' and those of the worst kind, 'fiery darts.'

First. Darts. The devil's temptations are the darts he useth against the souls of men and women. They may fitly be so called in a threefold respect.

1. Darts or arrows are swift. Thence is our usual expression, 'As swift as an arrow out of a bow.' Lightning is called God's arrow, because it flies swiftly. 'He sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them,' Psalms 18:14, that is, lightning like arrows. Satan's temptations flee like a flash of lightning—not long of coming. He needs no more time than the cast of an eye for the despatch of a temptation. David's eye did but unawares fall upon Bathsheba, and the devil's arrow was in his heart before he could shut his casement. Or the hearing of a word or two [will suffice]. Thus, when David's servants had told what Nabal the churl said, David's choler was presently up—an arrow of revenge wounded him to the heart. What quicker than a thought? Yet how oft is that a temptation to us? one silly thought riseth in a duty, and our hearts, before intent upon the work, are on a sudden carried away, like a spaniel after a bird that springs up before him as he goes after his master. Yea, if one temptation speeds not, how soon can he send another after it!—as quick as the nimblest archer. No sooner than one arrow is delivered, but he hath another on the string.

2. Darts or arrows fly secretly. And so do temptations.

(1.) The arrow oft comes afar off. A man may be wounded with a dart and not see who shot it. The wicked are said, to shoot their arrows 'in secret at the perfect,' and then, 'they say, Who shall see them?' Psalms 64:4-5. Thus Satan lets fly a temptation. Sometimes he useth a wife's tongue to do his errand; another while he gets behind the back of a husband, friend, servant, &c., and is not seen all the while he is doing his work. Who would have thought to have found a devil in Peter tempting his master, or suspected that Abraham should be his instrument to betray his beloved wife into the hands of a sin? Yet it was so. Nay, sometimes he is so secret that he borrows God's bow to shoot his arrows from, and the poor Christian is abused, thinking it is God chides and is angry, when it is the devil that tempts him to think so, and only counterfeits God's voice. Job cries out of 'the arrows of the Almighty,' how 'the poison of them drank up his spirit,' and of 'the terrors of God that did set themselves in array against him,' Job 6:4, when it was Satan all the while that was practicing his malice and playing his pranks upon him. God was friends with this good man,

only Satan begged leave—and God gave it for a time—thus to affright him. And poor Job cries out, as if God had cast him off and were become his enemy.

(2.) Darts or arrows, they make little or no noise as they go. They cut their passage through the air, without telling us by any crack or report, as the cannon doth, that they are coming. Thus insensibly doth temptation make its approach;—the thief is in before we think of any need to shut the doors. The wind is a creature secret in its motion, of which our Saviour saith, 'We know not whence it cometh and whither it goeth,' John 3:8, yet, 'we hear the sound thereof,' as our Saviour saith in the same place. But temptations many times come and give us no warning by any sound they make. The devil lays his plot so close, that the soul sees not his drift, observes not the hook till he finds it in his belly. As the woman of Tekoah told her tale so handsomely, that the king passeth judgement against himself in the person of another before he smelt out the business.

3. Darts have a wounding killing nature, especially when well headed and shot out of a strong bow by one that is able to draw it. Such are Satan's temptations—headed with desperate malice, and drawn by a strength no less than angelical; and this against so poor a weak creature as man, that it were impossible, had not God provided good armour for our soul, to outstand Satan's power and get safe to heaven. Christ would have us sensible of their force and danger, by that petition in his prayer which the best of saints on this side heaven have need to use—'Lead us not into temptation.' Christ was then but newly out of the list, where he had tasted Satan's tempting skill and strength; which, though beneath his wisdom and power to defeat, yet well he knew it was able to worst the strongest of saints. There was never any besides Christ that Satan did not foil more or less. It was Christ's prerogative to be tempted, but not lead into temptation. Job, one of the chief worthies in God's army of saints, who, from God's mouth, is a nonesuch, yet was galled by these arrows shot from Satan's bow, and put to great disorder. God was fain to pluck him out of the devil's grip, or else he would have been quite worried by that lion.

Second. Satan's warlike provision is not only darts, but 'fiery darts.' Some restrain these fiery darts to some particular kind of temptation, as despair, blasphemy, and those which fill the heart with terror and horror. But this, I conceive, is too strait; but faith is a shield for all kind of temptations—and indeed there is none but may prove a 'fiery' temptation; so that I should rather incline to think all sorts of temptations to be comprehended here, yet so as to respect some in an especial manner more than others. These shall be afterwards instanced in.

Question. Why are Satan's darts called fiery ones?

Answer 1. They may be said to be 'fiery,' in regard of that fiery wrath with which Satan shoots them. They are the fire this dragon spits, full of indignation against God and his saints. Saul, it is said, 'breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord,' Acts 9:1. As one that is inwardly inflamed, his breath is hot—a fiery stream of persecuting wrath came as out of a burning furnace from him. Temptations are the breathings of the devil's wrath.

Answer 2. They may be said to be 'fiery,' in regard of the end they lead to, if not quenched; and that is hell-fire. There is a spark of hell in every temptation; and all sparks fly to their element. So all temptations tend to hell and damnation, according to Satan's intent and purpose.

Answer 3. And chiefly they may be said to be 'fiery,' in regard of that malignant quality they have on the spirits of men—and that is to enkindle a fire in the heart and consciences of poor creatures.

The apostle alludes to the custom of cruel enemies, who used to dip the heads of their arrows in some poison, whereby they became more deadly, and did not only wound the part where they lighted, but inflamed the whole body, which made the cure more difficult. Job speaks of ‘the poison of them which drank up his spirits,’ Job 6:4. They have an envenoming and inflaming quality.

Division Second.—The Power and Puissance of Faith over this Enemy.

‘The shield of faith, whereby ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.’

The fiery darts of Satan which the believing soul is able by faith to quench may be described as of two sorts. First. Either those that do pleasingly entice and bewitch with some seeming promises of satisfaction to the creature. Or, Second. Such as affright and carry horror with them. Both are fiery, and quenched by faith, and only faith.

FAITH’S FIRST QUENCHING POWER.

[Satan’s ‘fiery darts’ of pleasing temptations, and faith’s power to quench them.]

We shall begin with the first sort of Satan’s fiery darts, viz. those temptations that do pleasingly entice and bewitch the soul with some seeming promises of satisfaction to the creature. The note is this:— Doctrine. That faith will enable a soul to quench the fire of Satan’s most pleasing temptations. First. We will show you that these enticing temptations have a fiery quality to them. Second. That faith is able to quench them.

[Satan’s pleasing temptations have a ‘fiery’ quality.]

First. We shall show you that Satan’s enticing temptations have a fiery quality in them. They have an inflaming quality. There is a secret disposition in the heart of all to all sin. Temptation doth not fall on us as a ball of fire on ice or snow, but as a spark on tinder, or [as] lightning on a thatched roof, which presently is on a flame. Hence in Scripture, though tempted by Satan, yet the sin is charged on us. ‘Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed,’ James 1:14. Mark! it is Satan tempts, but our own lust draws us. The fowler lays the shrap,[3] but the bird’s own desire betrays it into the net. The heart of a man is marvellous prone to take fire from these darts. ‘Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out,’ Proverbs 26:20. Thus the ‘fiery darts’ on Christ. There was no combustible matter of corruption in him for Satan to work upon. But our hearts being once heated in Adam could never cool since. A sinner’s heart is compared to ‘an oven.’ ‘They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker,’ Hosea 7:4. The heart of man is the oven, the devil the baker, and temptation the fire with which he heats it; and then no sin comes amiss. ‘I lie,’ saith David, ‘among them that are set on fire,’ Psalms 57:4. And, I pray, who sets them on fire? The apostle will resolve us, ‘set on fire of hell,’ James 3:6. O friends! when once the heart is inflamed by temptation, what strange effects doth it produce! how hard to quench such a fire, though in a gracious person! David himself, under the power of a temptation so apparent that a carnal eye could see it—Joab I mean, who reproved him—yet was hurried to the loss of seventy thousand men’s lives; for so much that one sin cost. And if the fire be so raging in a David, what work will it make where no water is nigh, no grace in the heart to quench it? Hence the wicked are said to be ‘mad’ upon their idols, Jer. 1:38—spurring on without fear or wit, like a man inflamed with a fever that takes his head; there is no holding of him then in his bed. Thus the soul possessed with the fury of temptation runs into the mouth of death and hell, and will not be stopped.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. O how should this make us afraid of running into a temptation when there is such a witchery in it. Some men are too confident. They have too good an opinion of themselves—as if they could not be taken with such a disease, and therefore will breathe in any air. It is just with God to let such be shot with one of Satan's darts, to make them know their own hearts better. Who will pity him whose house is blown up, that kept his powder in the chimney corner? 'Is thy servant a dog,' saith Hazael, 2 Kings 8:13. Do you make me a beast, sunk so far below the nature of man as to imbrue my hands in these horrid murders? Yet, how soon did this wretch fall into the temptation, and, by that one bloody act upon his liege lord, which he perpetrated as soon as he got home, show that the other evils, which the prophet foretold of him, were not so improbable as at first he thought. Oh, stand off the devil's mark, unless you mean to have one of the devil's arrows in your side! Keep as far from the whirl of temptation as may be. For if once he got you within his circle, thy head may soon be dizzy. One sin helps to kindle another; the less the greater, as the brush the logs. When the courtiers had got their king to carouse and play the drunkard, he soon learned to play the scorner: 'The princes have made him sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorners,' Hosea 7:5.

Use Second. Hath Satan's darts such an enkindling nature? take heed of being Satan's instrument in putting fire to the corruption of another. Some on purpose do it. Idolaters set out their temples and altars with superstitious pictures, embellished with all the cost that gold and silver can afford them, to bewitch the spectator's eye. Hence they are said to be 'inflamed with their idols,' Isaiah 57:5—as much as any lover with his minion. And the drunkard, he enkindles his neighbour's lust, 'putting the bottle to him,' Habakkuk 2:15. O what a base work are these men employed about! By the law it is death for any wilfully to set fire on his neighbour's house. What then deserve they that set fire on the souls of men, and that no less than hell-fire? But, is it possible thou mayest do it unawares by a less matter than thou dreamest on. A silly child playing with a lighted straw may set a house on fire which many wise cannot quench. And truly Satan may use thy folly and carelessness to kindle lust in another's heart. Perhaps an idle light speech drops from thy mouth, and thou meanest no great hurt; but a gust of temptation may carry this spark into thy friend's bosom, and kindle a sad fire there. A wanton attire, which we will suppose thou wearest with a chaste heart, and only because it is the fashion, yet may ensnare another's eye. And if he that kept a pit open but to the hurt of a beast, sinned, how much more thou, who givest occasion to a soul's sin, which is a worse hurt? Paul 'would not eat flesh while the world stood, if it made his brother offend,' 1 Corinthians 8:13. And canst thou dote on a foolish dress and immodest fashion, whereby many may offend, still to wear it? 'The body,' Christ saith, 'is better than raiment.' The soul, then, of thy brother is more to be valued surely than an idle fashion of thy raiment. We come to the second branch of the point.

[Faith's power to quench Satan's pleasing temptations.]

Second. We shall show you that faith will enable a soul to quench the pleasing temptations of the wicked one. This is called our 'victory that overcometh the world, even our faith,' 1 John 5:4. Faith sets its triumphant banner on the world's head. The same St. John will tell you what is meant by the world: 'Love not the world;... for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world,' 1 John 2:15-16. All that is in the

world is said to be ‘lust,’ because it is food and fuel for lust. Now faith enables the soul to quench those darts which Satan dips and envenoms with these worldly lusts —called by some the worldlings Trinity.

First Dart of pleasing temptations. ‘The lust of the flesh.’ Under this are comprehended those temptations that promise pleasure and delight to the flesh. These indeed carry fire in the mouth of them; and when they light on a carnal heart, do soon inflame it with unruly passions and beastly affections. The adulterer is said to burn in his lust, Romans 1:27. The drunkard to be ‘inflamed with his wine,’ Isaiah 5:11. No sort of temptation works more strongly than those which present sensual pleasure and promise delight to the flesh. Sinners are said to ‘work all uncleanness with greediness’—with a kind of covetousness; for the word imports they never have enough.[4] When the voluptuous person hath wasted his estate, jaded his body in luxury, still the fire burns in his wretched heart. No drink will quench a poisoned man’s thirst. Nothing but faith can be helpful to a soul in these flames. We find Dives in hell burning, and not ‘a drop of water to cool the tip of his tongue’ found there. The unbelieving sinner is in a hell above ground. He burns in his lust, and not a drop of water, for want of faith, to quench the fire. By faith it is said those glorious martyrs ‘quenched the violence of the fire,’ Hebrews 11:1-40. And truly the fire of lust is as hot as the fire of martyrdom. By faith alone this is quenched also: ‘We...were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures,...But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,...he saved us,’ Titus 3:3-4. Never could they shake off these lusts, the old companions, till by faith they got a new acquaintance with the grace of God revealed in the gospel.

[How faith quenches the ‘lust of the flesh.’] Question. How does faith quench this fiery dart of sensual delights?

Answer 1. As it undeceives and takes off the mist from the Christian’s eyes, whereby he is now enabled to see sin in its naked being and callow[5] principles before Satan hath plumed [it]. It gives him the native taste and relish of sin before the devil hath sophisticated it with his sugared sauce. And truly, now sin proves a homely piece, a bitter morsel. Faith hath a piercing eye; it is ‘the evidence of things not seen.’ It looks behind the curtain of sense, and sees sin, before its fiery was on and it be dressed for the stage, to be a brat that comes from hell, and brings hell with it. Now, let Satan come if he please, and present a lust never so enticing, the Christian’s answer is ready. ‘Be not cheated, O my soul,’ saith faith, ‘with a lying spirit.’ He shows thee a fair Rachel, but he intends thee a blear-eyed Leah; he promises joy, but he will pay thee sorrow. The clothes that make this lust so comely are not its own. The sweetness thou tastest is not native, but borrowed to deceive thee withal. ‘Thou art Saul,’ saith the woman of Endor, ‘why hast thou deceived me?’ Thus, faith can call sin and Satan by their own names when they come in a disguise. ‘Thou art Satan,’ saith faith, ‘why wouldst thou deceive me? God hath said sin is bitter as gall and wormwood, and wouldst thou make me believe I can gather the sweet fruits of true delight from this root of bitterness? grapes from these thorns?’

Answer 2. Faith doth not only enable the soul to see the nature of sin void of all true pleasure, but also how transient its false pleasures are. I will not lose, saith faith, sure mercies for transient uncertain pleasures. This made Moses leap out of the pleasures of the Egyptian court into the fire of ‘affliction,’ Hebrews 11:25, because he saw them ‘pleasures for a season.’ Should you see a

man in a ship throw himself overboard into the sea, you might at first think him out of his wits; but if, a little while after, you should see him stand safe on the shore, and the ship swallowed up of the waves, you should then think he took the wisest course. Faith sees the world and all the pleasures of sin sinking: there is a leak in them which the wit of man cannot stop. Now is it not better to swim by faith through a sea of trouble and get safe to heaven at last, than to sin in the lap of sinful pleasures till we drown in hell's gulf? It is impossible that the pleasure of sin should last long.

(1.) Because it is not natural. Whatever is not natural soon decays. The nature of sugar is to be sweet, and therefore it holds its sweetness; but sweeten beer or wine never so much with sugar, in a few days they will lose their sweetness. The pleasure of sin is extrinsical to its nature, and therefore will corrupt. None of that sweetness which now bewitches sinners will be tasted in hell. The sinner shall have his cup spiced there by his hand that will have it a bitter draught.

(2.) The pleasures of sin must needs be short, because life cannot be long, and they both end together. Indeed, many times the pleasure of sin dies before the man dies. Sinners live to bury their joy in this world. The worm breeds in their conscience before it breeds in their flesh by death. But be sure that the pleasure of sin never survives this world. The word is gone out of God's mouth, every sinner shall 'lie down in sorrow and wake in sorrow.' Hell is too hot a climate for wanton delights to live in. Now faith is a provident, wise grace, and makes the soul bethink itself how it may live in another world. Whereas the carnal heart is all for the present; his snout is in the trough, and, while his draught lasts he thinks it will never end. But faith hath a large stride; at one pace it can reach over a whole life of years and see them done while they are but beginning. 'I have seen an end of all perfections,' saith David. He saw the wicked, when growing on their bed of pleasure, cut down, and burning in God's oven, as if it were done already, Psalms 37:2. And faith will do the like for every Christian according to its strength and activity. And who would envy the condemned man his feast which he hath in his way to the gallows.

Answer 3. Faith outvies Satan's proffers by showing the soul where choicer enjoyments are to be had at a cheaper rate. Indeed, 'best is best cheap.' Who will not go to that shop where he may be best served? This law holds in force among sinners themselves. The drunkard goes where he may have the best wine; the glutton where he may have the best cheer. Now faith presents such enjoyments to the soul that are beyond all compare best. It leads to the promise, and entertains it there, at Christ's cost, with all the rich dainties of the gospel. Not a dish that the saints feed on in heaven but faith can set before the soul, and give it, though not a full meal, yet such a taste as shall melt it in 'joy unspeakable and full of glory.' This sure must needs quench the temptation. When Satan sends to invite the Christian to his gross fare, will not the soul say, 'Should I forsake those pleasures that cheered, yea ravished, my heart, to go and debase myself with sin's polluted bread, where I shall be but a fellow-commoner with the beast, who shares in sensual pleasures with man—yea, become worse than the beast—a devil, like Judas, who arose from his Master's table to sit at the devil's?'

Second Dart of pleasing temptations. 'The lust of the eyes.' This is quenched by faith. By 'the lust of the eyes,' the apostle means those temptations which are drawn from the world's pelf and treasure. [It is] called so, in the first place, because it is the eye that commits adultery with these things. As the unclean eye looks upon another man's wife, so the covetous eye looks upon another's wealth to lust after it. In the second place it is called so, because all the good that in a

manner is received from them is but to please the eye. ‘What good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?’ Ecclesiastes 5:11. That is, if a man hath but to buy food and raiment enough to pay his daily shot of necessary expenses, the surplusage serves only for the eye to play the wanton with. Yet we see how pleasing a morsel they are to a carnal heart. It is rare to find a man that will not stoop, by base and sordid practices, to take up this golden apple. When I consider what sad effects this temptation had on Ahab, who, to gain a spot of ground of a few acres, that could not add much to a king’s revenues, durst swim to it in the owner’s blood, I wonder not to see men whose condition is necessitous nibbling at the hook of temptation, where the bait is a far greater worldly advantage. This is the door the devil entered into Judas by. This was the break-neck of Demas’ faith, he embraced ‘this present world.’ Now faith will quench a temptation edged with these.

[How faith quenches the ‘lust of the eyes.’]

1. Faith persuades the soul of God’s fatherly care and providence over it. And where this breast-work is raised the soul is safe so long as it keeps within its line. ‘Oh!’ saith Satan, ‘if thou wouldst but venture on a lie—make bold a little with God in such a command—this wedge of gold is thine, and that advantage will accrue to thy estate.’ Now faith will teach the soul to reply, ‘I am well provided for already, Satan; I need not thy pension; why should I play the thief for that which, if good, God hath promised to give?’ ‘Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,’ Hebrews 13:5. How canst thou want, O my soul, that by the promise hast command of God’s purse? Let him that is ‘without God in the world’ shift and shirk by his wits; do thou live by thy faith.

2. Faith teaches the soul that the creature’s comfort and content comes not from abundance but God’s blessing. And to gain the world by a sin is not the road that leads to God’s blessing. ‘A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent,’ Proverbs 28:20. ‘Shouldst thou,’ saith faith, ‘heap up the world’s goods in an evil way, thou art never the nearer to the content thou expectest.’ It is hard to steal one’s meat and then crave a blessing on it at God’s hands. What thou gettest by sin Satan cannot give thee quiet possession of, nor discharge those suits which God will surely commence against thee.

3. Faith advanceth the soul to higher projects than to seek the things of this life. It discover a world beyond the moon—and there lies faith’s merchandise —leaving the colliers of this world to load themselves with clay and coals, while it trades for grace and glory. Faith fetcheth its riches from on far. Saul did not more willingly leave seeking his father’s asses when he heard of a kingdom, than the believing soul leaves proling for the earth now it hears of Christ and heaven, Psalms 39:6-7. We find, ver. 6, holy David branding the men of the world for folly, that they troubled themselves so much for naught: ‘Surely,’ saith he, ‘they are disquieted in vain; he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.’ And, Psalms 39:7, we have him with a holy disdain turning his back upon the world as not worth his pains: ‘And now, Lord, what wait I for?’ As if he had said, Is this the portion I could be content to sit down with?—to sit upon a greater heap of riches than my neighbour hath? ‘My hope is in thee; deliver me from all my transgressions,’ ver. 8. Every one as they like. Let them that love the world take the world; but, Lord, pay not my portion in gold or silver, but in pardon of sin. This I wait for. Abraham, he by faith had so low an esteem of this world’s treasure that he left his own country to live here a stranger, in hope of ‘a better,’ Hebrews 11:16.

Third Dart of pleasing temptations. ‘The pride of life.’ There is an itch of pride in man’s heart after the gaudy honours of the world; and this itch of man’s proud flesh the devil labours to scratch and irritate by suitable proffers. And when the temptation without and lust within meet, then it works to purpose. Balaam loved the way that led to court; and therefore spurs on his conscience—that boggled more than the ass he rode on—till the blood came. The Jews when convinced of Christ’s person and doctrine, yet were such slaves to their honour and credit, that they part with Christ rather than hazard that. ‘For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God,’ John 12:43. Now faith quenches this temptation, and, with a holy scorn, disdains that all the preferment the world hath to heap on him should be a bribe for the least sin. ‘By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter,’ Hebrews 11:24, though by this adoption he might have been heir, for aught we know, of the crown; yet this he threw at his heels. It is not said, ‘he did not seek to be the son of Pharaoh’s daughter,’ though that would have sounded a high commendation, having so fair an opportunity. Some would not have scrupled a little court flattery, thereby to have cologued[6]From Webster’s. — SDB themselves into further favour—having so fair a stock in the king’s heart to set up with. But, it is said that he ‘refused to be called’ by this name. Honour came trouling in upon him, as water at a flowing tide. Now, to stand against this flood of preferment, and no breach made in his heart to entertain it—this was admirable indeed. Nay, he did not refuse this preferment for any principality that he hoped for elsewhere. He forsook not one court to go to another, but to join with a beggarly reproached people. Yea, by rejecting their favour he incurred the wrath of the king. Yet faith carried him through all those heights and depths of favour and disgrace, honour and dishonour; and truly, wherever this grace is—allowing for its strength and weakness—it will do the like. We find, Hebrews 11:33, how Samuel and the prophets ‘through faith subdued kingdoms.’ This, sure, is not only meant of the conquest of the sword —though some of them performed honourable achievements that way—but also by despising the honour and preferments of them. This indeed many of the prophets are famous for; and in particular Samuel, who, at God’s command, gave away a kingdom from his own house and family by anointing Saul, though himself at present had possession of the chief’s magistrate’s chair. And others, ver. 37, we read, ‘were tempted;’ that is, when ready to suffer, were offered great preferments if they would bend to the times by receding a little from the bold profession of their faith; but they chose rather the flames of martyrdom than the favour of princes on those terms. But, more particularly to show you how faith quenches this temptation.

[How faith quenches ‘the pride of life.’]

1. Faith takes away the fuel that feeds this temptation. Withdraw the oil and the lamp goes out. Now that which is fuel to this temptation is pride. Where this lust is in any strength, no wonder the creature’s eyes are dazzled with the sight of that which suits the desires of his heart so well. The devil now by a temptation does but broach, and so give vent to, what the heart itself is full with. Simon Magus had a haughty spirit; he would be Simon μX("H—some great man, and therefore, when he did but think an opportunity as offered to mount him up the stage, he is all on fire with a desire of having a gift to work miracles, that he dares to offer to play the huckster with the apostle. Whereas a humble spirit loves a low seat; is not ambitious to stand high in the thoughts of others; and so, while he stoops in his own opinion of himself, the bullet flees over his head which hits the proud man on the breast. Now it is faith lays the heart low. Pride and faith are opposed; like two buckets, if one goes up the other goes down in the soul. ‘Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not

upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith,' Habakkuk 2:4.

2. Faith is Christ's favourite, and so makes the Christian expect all his honour from him. Indeed it is one of the prime acts of faith to cast the soul on God in Christ as all-sufficient to make it completely happy; and therefore, when a temptation comes —'soul, thou mayest raise thyself in the world to this place or that esteem, if thou wilt but dissemble thy profession, or allow thyself in such a sin'—now faith chokes the bullet. Remember whose thou art, O my soul. Hast thou not taken God for thy liege-lord, and wilt thou accept preferment from another's hand? Princes will not suffer their courtiers to become pensioners to a foreign prince—least of all to a prince in hostility to them. Now, saith faith, the honour or applause thou gettest by sin makes thee pensioner to the devil himself, who is the greatest enemy God hath.

3. Faith shows the danger of such a bargain, should a Christian gain the glory of the world for one sin.

(1.) Saith faith, Hadst thou the whole world's empire, with all bowing before thee, this would not add to thy stature one cubit in the eye of God. But thy sin which thou payest for the purchase blots thy name in his thoughts; yea, makes thee odious in his sight. God must first be out of love with himself before he can love a sinner as such. Now, wilt thou incur this for that? Is it wisdom to lose a prize, to draw a blank?

(2.) Saith faith, The world's pomp and glory cannot satisfy thee. It may kindle thirstings in thy soul, but quench none; it will beget a thousand cares and fears, but quiet none. But thy sin that procures these hath a power to torment and torture thy soul.

(3.) When thou hast the world's crown on thy head, how long shalt thou wear it? They are sick at Rome, as he said, and die in princes' courts, as well as at the spital; yea, kings themselves are put as naked to their beds of dust as others. In that day all thy thoughts will perish with thee. But the guilt of thy sin, which was the ladder by which thou didst climb up the hill of honour, will dog thee into another world. These and such like are the considerations by which faith breaks off the bargain.

4. Faith presents the Christian with the exploits of former saints, who have renounced the world's honour and applause, rather than defile their consciences, and prostitute their souls to be deflowered by the least sin. Great Tamerlane carried the lives of his ancestors into the field with him, in which he used to read before he gave battle, that he might be stirred up not to stain the blood of his family by cowardice or any unworthy behaviour in fight. Thus, faith peruses the roll of Scripture-saints, and the exploits of their faith over the world, that the Christian may be excited to the same gallantry of spirit. This was plainly the apostle's design in recording those worthies, with the trophies of their faith, Hebrews 11:1-40—that some of their nobleness might steal into our hearts while we are reading of them, as appears, 'Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us,' Hebrews 12:1. Oh, what courage does it put into the soldier to see some before him run upon the face of death! Elisha, having seen the miracles of God wrought by Elijah, smites the waters of Jordan with his mantle, saying, 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?—'and they parted,' 2 Kings 2:14. Thus faith makes use of the exploits of former saints and turns them into prayer. Oh where is the Lord God of Abraham, Moses, Samuel, and those other worthies, who by faith have trampled on

the world's pomp and glory, subdued temptations, stopped the mouths of lion-like lusts? Art not thou, O God, god of the valleys—the meanest saints, as well as of the mountains —more eminent heroes? Do not the same blood and spirits run in the veins of all believers? Were they victorious, and shall I be the only slave, and of so prostrate a spirit, like Issachar, to couch under my burden of corruption without shaking it off? Help me, O my God, that I may be avenged of these my enemies. And when it hath been with God it will also plead with the Christian himself. 'Awake,' saith faith, 'O my soul, and prove thyself akin to these holy men —that thou art born of God as they were—by thy victory over the world.'

[Faith's victory over the world distinguished from that attained by some of the better heathens.]

Objection. But some may say, if this be all faith enables to, this is no more than some heathens have done. They have trampled on the profits, pleasures of the world, who never knew what faith meant.

Answer. Indeed, many of them have done so much by their moral principles, as may make some, who would willingly pass for believers, ashamed to be outgone by them who shot in so weak a bow. Yet it will appear that there is a victory of faith, which, in the true believer, outshoots them more than their moral conquest doth the debauched conversations of looser Christians.

1. Distinction. Faith quenches the lust of the heart. Those very embers of corruption, which are so secretly raked up in the inclination of the soul, find the force and power of faith to quench them. Faith purifies the heart, Acts 15:9. Now none of their conquests reach the heart. Their longest ladder was too short to reach the walls of this castle. They swept the door, trimmed a few outward rooms; but the seat and sink of all, in the corruption of man's nature, was never cleansed by them; so that the fire of lust was rather pent in than put out. How is it possible that could be cleansed, the filthiness of which was never known to them? Alas! they never looked so near themselves to find that enemy within them which they thought was without. Thus, while they laboured to keep the thief out he was within, and they knew it not. For they did either proudly think that the soul was naturally endued with principles of virtue, or vainly imagined it to be but an abrasa tabula—white paper, on which they might write good or evil as they pleased. Thus you see the seat of their war was in the world without them, which, after some sort, they conquered; but the lust within remained untouched, because a terra incognita—an unknown region to them. It is faith from the word that first discovers this unfound land.

2. Distinction. Faith's victory is uniform. Sin in Scripture is called a 'body,' Romans 6:6, because made up of several members, or as the body of an army, consisting of many troops and regiments. It is one thing to beat a troop or put a wing of an army to flight, and another thing to rout and break the whole army. Something hath been done by moral principles, like the former. They have got some petty victory, and had the chase of some more gross and exterior sin; but then they were fearfully beaten by some other of sin's troops. When they seemed to triumph over 'the lust of the flesh' and 'eye'—the world's profits and pleasures—they were at the same time slaves to 'the pride of life,' mere gloriæ animalia—creatures of fame—kept in chains by the credit and applause of the world. As the sea which, they say, loses as much in one place of the land as it gains in another; so, what they got in a seeming victory over one sin they lost again by being in bondage to another, and that a worse, because more spiritual. But now, faith is uniform, and routs the whole body of sin, that not one single lust stands in its unbroken strength. 'Sin shall not have dominion over you:

for ye are not under the law, but under grace,' Romans 6:14. 'Sin shall not'—that is, no sin; it may stir like a wounded soldier on his knees—they may rally like broken troops, but never will they be long master of the field where true faith is seen.

3. Distinction. Faith enables the soul not only to quench these lusts, but, the temptation being quenched, it enables him to use the world itself against Satan, and so beat him with his own weapon by striking his own cudgels to his head. Faith quenches the fire of Satan's darts, and then shoots them back on him. This it doth by reducing all the enjoyments of the world which the Christian is possessed of into a serviceableness and subordination for the glory of God.

Some of the heathens' admired champions, to cure 'the lust of the eyes,' have from a blind zeal plucked them out; to show the contempt of riches, have thrown their money into the sea; to conquer the world's honour and applause, have sequestered themselves from all company in the world—a preposterous way that God never chalked. Shall we call it a victory or rather a frenzy? The world by this time perceives their folly. But faith enables for a nobler conquest. Indeed, when God calls for any of these enjoyments, faith can lay all at Christ's feet. But while God allows them, faith's skill and power is in sanctifying them. It corrects the windiness and flatulent nature of them so, that what on a naughty heart rots and corrupts, by faith turns to good nourishment in a gracious soul. If a house were on fire, which would you count the wiser man—he that goes to quench the fire by pulling the house down, or he that by throwing good store of water on it, doth this as fully, and also leaves the house standing for your use? The heathen and some superstitious Christians think to mortify by taking away what God gives us leave to use; but faith puts out the fire of lust in the heart, and leaves the creature to be improved for God's glory and enjoyed to the Christian's comfort.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. This may be a touchstone for our faith, whether of the right make or no; is thy faith a temptation■quenching faith? Many say they believe. Yes, that they do! They thank God they are not infidels. Well, what exploits canst thou do with thy faith? Is it able to defend thee in a day of battle, and cover thy soul in safety when Satan's darts flee thick about thee? Or is it such a sorry shield that lets every arrow of temptation pierce thy heart through it? Thou believest, but still as very a slave to thy lust as ever. When a good fellow calls thee out to a drunken meeting, thy faith cannot keep thee out of the snare, but away thou goest, as a fool to the stocks. If Satan tells thee thou mayest advantage thy estate by a lie, or cheat in thy shop, thy faith stands very tamely by and makes no resistance. In a word, thou hast faith, and yet drivest a trade of sin in the very face of it! Oh! God forbid that any should be under so great a spirit of delusion to carry such a lie in their hand and think it a saving faith. Will this faith ever carry thee to heaven that is not able to bring thee out of hell? for there thou livest while under the power of thy lust. 'Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely,... and come and stand before me,' Jeremiah 7:9. If this be faith, well fare and honest heathens who escaped these gross pollutions of the world, which you like beasts with your faith lie wallowing in. I had rather be a sober heathen than a drunken Christian, a chaste heathen than an unclean believer.

Oh venture not the life of your souls with such a paper shield. Come to him for a faith that is the faith maker—God I mean. He will help thee to a faith that shall quench the very fire of hell itself, though kindled in thy bosom, and divide the waves of thy lust in which now thou art ever

drowned—as once he did the sea for Israel—that thou shalt go on dry land to heaven, and thy lusts not be able to knock off the wheels of thy chariot. But, if thou attemptest this with thy false faith, the Egyptians' end will be thine. 'By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned,' Hebrews 11:29. Though true faith gets safely through the depths of temptation, yet false faith will drown by the way.

But, perhaps thou canst tell us better news than this, and give us better evidence for the truth of thy faith than so. Let us therefore hear what singular thing hath been done by thee since a believer. The time was thou wert as weak as water; every puff of wind, blast of temptation, blew thee down; thou wert carried as a dead fish with the stream. But, canst thou say [that] since thou hast been acquainted with Christ thou art endued with a power to repel those temptations which before held thy heart in perfect obedience to their commands? Canst thou now be content to bring thy lusts, which once were of great price with thee—as those believers did their conjuring books, Acts 19:19—and throw them into the fire of God's love in Christ to thy soul, there to consume them? Possibly thou hast not them at present under thy foot in a full conquest. Yet have they begun to fall in thy thoughts of them? and is thy countenance changed towards them to {from} what it was? Be of good comfort, this is enough to prove thy faith of a royal race. 'When Christ cometh,' said the convinced Jews, 'will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?' John 7:31. And when Christ comes by faith into the heart, will he do greater works than these thy faith hath done?

Use Second. This helps to answer that objection by which many poor souls are discouraged from believing and closing with the promise. 'Oh,' saith the tempted soul, 'ye bid me believe—alas! how dare I, when I cannot get victory of such a lust, and am overcome by such a temptation? What have such as I to do with a promise?' See here, poor soul, this Goliath prostrated. Thou art not to believe because thou art victorious, but that thou mayest be victorious. The reason why thou art so worsted by thy enemy is for want of faith. 'If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established,' Isaiah 7:9. Wouldst thou be cured before thou goest to the physician? that sounds harsh to thy own reason, and is as if thou shouldst say thou wilt not go to the physician till thou hast no need of him. No; go and touch Christ by faith that virtue may flow from him to thy soul; thou must not think to eat the fruit before thou plantest the tree. Victory over corruption is a sweet fruit; but found growing upon faith's branches. Satan does by thee as Saul did by the Israelites, who weakened their hands in battle by keeping them fasting. Up and eat, Christian, a full meal on the promise, if thou wouldst find thy eyes enlightened and thy hands strengthened for the combat with thy lusts. It is one part of the 'doctrine of devils,' which we read of, 1 Timothy 4:3, to forbid 'meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving.' But the grand doctrine of the devil which above all he would promote is, to keep poor trembling souls from feeding by faith on the Lord Jesus; as if Christ were some forbidden fruit! Whereas, God hath appointed him above all other, that he should be received with thanksgiving of all humble sinners. And therefore, in the name of God, I invite you to this feast. Oh, let not your souls—who see your need of Christ, and are pinched at your very heart for want of him—be lean from day to day from your unbelief; but come, 'eat, and your souls shall live.' Never was child more welcome to his father's table than thou art to Christ's, and that feast which stands on the gospel board.

Use Third. Make use of faith, O ye saints, as for other ends and purposes, so particularly for this, of quenching this kind of fiery darts, viz. enticing temptations. It is not the having of a shield, but

the holding and wielding of it, that defends the Christian. Let not Satan take thee with thy faith out of thy hand, as David did Saul in the cave, with his speak sticking in the ground which should have been in his hand.

[Directions how to use the shield of faith to quench enticing temptations.]

Question. But how would you have me use my shield of faith for my defence against these fiery darts of Satan's enticing temptations?

Answer. By faith engage God to come in to thy succour against them. Now, there are three engaging acts of faith which will bind God—as we may so say with reverence—to help thee, because he binds himself to help such.

Direction 1. The first is the prayerful act of faith. Open thy case to God in prayer, and call in help from heaven—as the governor of a besieged castle would send a secret messenger to his general or prince to let him know his state and straits. The apostle James saith, 'Ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not,' James 4:2. Our victory must drop from heaven if we have any. But it stays till prayer comes for it. Though God had a purpose to deliver Israel out of Egypt, yet no news of his coming till the groans of his people rang in his ears. This gave heaven the alarm, 'Their cry has come up to God,... and God heard their groaning, and remembered his covenant,' Exodus 2:24. Now the more to prevail upon God in this act of faith, fortify thy prayer with those strong reasons which saints have used in like cases. As,

(1.) Engage God from his promise when thou prayest against any sin. Show God his own hand in such promises as these, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you,' Romans 6:14. 'He will subdue our iniquities,' Micah 7:19. Prayer is nothing but the promise reversed, or God's word formed into an argument, and retorted by faith upon God again. Know, Christian, thou hast law on thy side; bills and bonds must be paid, Psalms 119:37. David is there praying against the sins of a wanton eye and a dead heart, 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.' And see how he urgeth his argument in the next words—'Stablish thy word unto thy servant.' A good man is as good as his word, and will not a good God? But where finds David such a word for help against these sins? surely in the covenant; it is the Magna Charta. The first promise held forth thus much, 'The seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head.'

(2.) Plead with God from relation when thou art against any sin. Art thou one God hath taken into his family? Hast thou chosen God for thy God? Oh what an argument hast thou here! 'I am thine, Lord, save me,' saith David. Who will look after the child if the father will not? Is it for thy honour, O God, that any child of thine should be a slave to sin? 'Be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.' 'Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me,' Psalms 119:132.

(3.) Engage God from his Son's bloody death to help thee against thy lusts that were his murderers. What died Christ for but to 'redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people,' Titus 2:14. And shall not Christ be reimbursed of what he laid out? Shall he not have the price of his blood and purchase of his death? In a word, what is Christ praying for in heaven, but what was in his mouth when praying on earth? That his Father would 'sanctify them, and keep them from the evil of the world.' Thou comest in a good time to beg that of God which thou findest Christ hath asked for thee.

Direction 2. A second way to engage God is by faith's expecting act; when thou hast been with God expect good from God. 'I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up,' Psalms 5:3. For want of this many a prayer is lost. If you do not believe, why do you pray? and if you believe, why do you not expect? By praying, you seem to depend on God; by not expecting, you again renounce your confidence and ravel out your prayer. What is this but to take his name in vain, and to play bo■peep with God? as if one that knocks at your door should, before you came to open it to him, go away and not stay to be spoken with. Oh Christian, stand to your prayer in a holy expectation of what you have begged upon the credit of the promise, and you cannot miss of the ruin of your lusts.

Question. O, but, saith the poor soul, shall not I presume to expect when I have prayed against my corruptions that God will bestow on me so great a mercy as this is?

Answer (1.) Dost thou know what it is to presume? He presumes that takes a thing before it is granted. He were a presumptuous man indeed that should take your meat off your table who never was invited. But I hope your guest is not over-bold that ventures to eat of what you set before him. For one to break into your house, upon whom you shut the door, were presumptuous; but to come out of a storm into your house when you are so kind as to call him in, is no presumption, but good manners. And, if God opens not the door of his promise to be a sanctuary to poor humbled sinners fleeing from the rage of their lust, truly then I know none of this side heaven that can expect welcome. God hath promised to be a king, a lawgiver, to his people. Now it is no presumption in subjects to come under their princes' shadow and expect protection from them, Isaiah 33:21-22. God there promiseth he 'will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ships pass thereby.' 'For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us.' God speaks to his people as a prince or a state would to their subjects. He will secure them in their traffic and merchandise from all pirates and pickroons; they shall have a free trade. Now, soul, thou art molested with many pirate lusts that infest thee and obstruct thy commerce with heaven—yea, thou hast complained to thy God what loss thou hast suffered by them; is it now presumption to expect relief from him, that he will rescue thee from them, that thou mayest serve him without fear who is thy liege■lord?

Answer (2.) You have the saints for your precedents, who, when they have been in combat with their corruptions, yea, been foiled by them, have even then acted their faith on God, and expected the ruin of those enemies which for the present have overrun them. Iniquities prevail against me, Psalms 65:3—he means his own sins and others' wrath. But see his faith. At the same time they prevailed over him he beholds God destroying of them, as appears in the very next words, 'As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.' See here, poor Christian, who thinkest thou shalt never get above deck. Holy David has a faith not only for himself, but also [for] all believers—of whose number I suppose thee one—'as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away!' And mark the ground he hath for his confidence, taken from God's choosing act, 'Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts,' ver. 4. As if he had said, 'Surely he will not let them be under the power of sin or want of his gracious succour whom he sets so nigh himself.' This is Christ's own argument against Satan in the behalf of his people. 'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee,' Zechariah 3:2.

Answer (3.) Thou hast encouragement for this expecting act of faith from what God already hath enabled thee to do. Thou canst, if a believer indeed, through mercy say, that sin is not in that strength within thy soul as it was before thy acquaintance with Christ, his word and ways. Though thou art not what thou wouldst be, yet also thou art not what thou hast been. There was a time when sin played rex—king, in thy heart without control. thou didst go to sin as a ship to sea before wind and tide. Thou didst dilate and spread thy affections to receive the gale of temptation. But now the tide is turned, and runs against those motions, though weakly—being but new flood; yet thou findest a secret wrestling with them, and God seasonably succouring thee, so that Satan hath not all his will on thee. Well, here is a sweet beginning, and let me tell thee, this promiseth thee a readiness in God to perfect the victory; yea, God would have thy faith improve this into a confidence for a total deliverance. 'Moses,' when he slew the Egyptian, 'supposed his brethren would have understood,' by that little hint and essay, 'how that God by his hand would deliver them,' Acts 7:25. Oh it is a bad improvement of the succours God gives us, to argue from them to unbelief: 'He smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, can he give bread also?' He broke my heart, saith the poor creature, when it was a rock, a flint, and brought me home when I was walking in the pride of my heart against him; but, can he give bread to nourish my weak grace? I am out of Egypt; but can he master those giants in iron chariots that stand betwixt me and Canaan? He helped me in such a temptation; but what shall I do the next bout? Oh, do not grieve a good God with these heart■aching questions. You have 'the former rain,' why should you question 'the latter?' Benjamin was a good pawn to make old Jacob willing to go himself to Egypt. The grace which God hath already enriched thee with is a sure pledge that more is coming to it.

Direction 3. The expecting act of faith must produce another—an endeavouring act, to set the soul on work in the confidence of that succour it expects from God. When Jehoshaphat had prayed and stablished his faith on the good word of promise, then he takes the field and marches out under his victorious banner against his enemies, 2 Chronicles 20:1-37. Go, Christian, do as he did, and speed as he sped. What David gave in council to his son Solomon, that give I to thee, 'Arise therefore, and be doing, and the Lord be with thee,' 1 Chronicles 22:16. That faith which sets thee on work for God against thy sins as his enemies, will undoubtedly set god on work for thee against them as thine. The lepers in the gospel were cured, not sitting still but walking. 'And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed,' Luke 17:14. They met their cure in an act of obedience to Christ's command. The promiseth saith, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you;' the command bids, 'Mortify your members which are on earth.' Go thou and make a valiant attempt against thy lusts, upon this word of command, and in doing thy duty thou shalt find the performance of the promise. The reason of so many fruitless among Christians concerning the power of their corruptions lies in one of these two miscarriages —either they endeavour without acting faith on the promise (and such indeed go at their own peril, like those bold men, Numbers 14:40, who presumptuously went up the hill to fight the Canaanites, though Moses told them the Lord was not among them, thus slighting the conduct of Moses their leader, as if they needed not his help to the victory; a clear resemblance of those who go in their own strength to resist their corruptions and so fall before them)—or else they pretend to believe, but it is ostiâ fide—an easy faith; their faith doth not set them on a vigorous endeavour. They use faith as an eye but not as a hand; they look for victory to drop from heaven upon their heads, but do not fight to obtain it. This is a mere fiction, a fanciful faith. He that believes God for the event, believes him for the means also. If the patient dare trust the physician for the cure, he dare also follow his prescription in order to it. And

therefore, Christian, sit not still, and say thy sin shall fall, but put thyself in array against it. God, who hath promised thee victory calls thee to thy arms and means to use thy own hands in the battle if ever thou gettest it. ‘Get thee up,’ said the Lord to Joshua, ‘wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face,’ Joshua 7:10. God liked the prayer and moan he made very well; but there was something else for him to do besides praying and weeping, before the Amorites could be overcome. And so there is for thee, Christian, with thy faith to do, besides praying and expecting thy lusts down, and that is searching narrowly into thy heart, whether there be not some neglect on thy part, as an Achan, for which thou art so worsted by sin, and fleest before the face of every temptation.

FAITH’S SECOND QUENCHING POWER.

[Satan’s fiery darts of affrighting temptations, and faith’s power to quench them.]

Having thus despatched the first kind of fiery darts—temptations which are enticing and alluring—we now proceed to the second kind—such as are of an affrighting nature, by which Satan would dismay and dispirit the Christian. And my task [in this] is still the same, to show the power of faith in quenching these fiery darts. Let then the point be this.

Doctrine. That faith, and only faith, can quench the fiery darts of Satan’s affrighting temptations. This sort of fiery dart is our enemy’s reserve. When the other, viz. pleasing temptations, prove unsuccessful, then he opens this quiver and sends a shower of these arrows to set the soul on flame, if not of sin, yet of terror and horror. When he cannot carry a soul laughing to hell through the witchery of pleasing temptations, he will endeavour to make him go mourning to heaven by amazing him with the other. And truly it is not the least support to a soul exercised with these temptations to consider they are a good sign that Satan is hard put to it when these arrows are upon his string. You know an enemy that keeps a castle will preserve it as long as he can hold it; but, when he sees he must out, then he sets it on fire, to render it, if possible, useless to them that come after him. While the strong man can keep his house under his own power, he labours to keep it in peace; he quenches those fire-balls of conviction that the Spirit is often shooting into the conscience; but, when he perceives it is no longer tenable, [when] the mutiny increases, and there is a secret whisper in the soul of yielding unto Christ, now he labours to set the soul on fire by his affrighting temptations. Much more doth he labour to do it when Christ hath got the castle out of his hands, and keeps it by the power of his grace against him. It is very observable that all the darts shot against Job were of this sort. He hardly made any use of the other. When God gave him leave to practice his skill, why did he not tempt him with some golden apple of profit, or pleasure, or such like enticing temptations? Surely the high testimony that God gave to this eminent servant discouraged Satan from this method; yea, no doubt he had tried Job’s manhood before this as to those, and found him too hard; so that now he had no other way left probable to attain his design but this. I shall content myself with three instances of this sort of fiery darts, showing how faith quenches them all—temptations to atheism, blasphemy, and despair.

[Satan’s first affrighting temptation —the fiery dart of atheism.]

First Dart of affrighting temptations. The first of Satan’s affrighting temptations is his temptation to atheism, which, for the horrid nature thereof, may well be called a fiery dart; partly because by this he makes so bold an attempt, striking at the being of God himself; as also because of the

consternation he produceth in a gracious soul wounded with it. It is true the devil, who cannot himself turn atheist, is much less able to make a child of God an atheist, who hath not only in common with other men an indelible stamp of a deity in his conscience, but such a sculpture of the divine nature in his heart, as irresistibly demonstrates a God; yea, lively represents a holy God, whose image it is; so that it is impossible a holy heart should be fully overcome with this temptation, having an argument beyond all the world of wicked men and devils themselves to prove a deity, viz. a new nature in him, 'created after God in righteousness and true holiness,' by which, even when he is buffeted with atheistical injections, he saith in his heart, 'There is a God,' though Satan in the paroxysm of his temptation, clouds his reasoning faculty for the present with this smoke of hell, which doth more offend and affright than persuade his gracious heart to espouse such a principle as it doth in a wicked man; who, when, on the contrary, he is urged by his conscience to believe a God, 'saith in his heart there is no God,' that is, he wisheth there were none. And this may exceedingly comfort a saint—who, notwithstanding such injections to atheism, clings about God in his affections, and dares not for a world allow himself to sin against him, no, not when most oppressed with this temptation—that he shall not pass for an atheist in God's account, whatever Satan makes him believe. As the wicked shall not be cleared from atheism by their naked profession of a deity, so long as those thoughts of God are so loose and weak as not to command them into any obedience to his commands—'The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes,' Psalms 36:1; the holy prophet argues from the wickedness of the sinner's life to the atheism of his heart—so, on the contrary, the holy life of a gracious person saith in mine heart that the fear of God is before his eyes; it appears plainly that he believes a God, and reveres that God whom he believes to be. Well, though a gracious heart can never be overcome, yet he may be sadly haunted and disquieted with it. Now, in the next place, I am to show you how the Christian may quench this fiery dart, and that is by faith alone.

[How faith quenches the fiery dart of atheism.]

Question. But what need of faith? Will not reason serve the turn to stop the devil's mouth in this point? Cannot the eye of reason spy a deity except it look through the spectacles of faith?

Answer. I grant that this is a piece of natural divinity, and reason is able to demonstrate the being of a God. Where the Scriptures never came a deity is acknowledged: 'For all people will walk every one in the name of his god,' Micah 4:5, where it is supposed that every nation owns some deity, and hath a worship for that god they own. Yet in a furious assault of temptation it is faith alone that is able to keep the field and quench the fire of this dart.

1. That light which reason affords is duskish and confused, serving for little more than in general to show there is a God; it will never tell who or what this God is. Till Paul brought the Athenians acquainted with the true God, how little of this first principle in religion was known among them, though that city was then the very eye of the world for learning! And if the world's eye was so dark as not to know the God they worshipped, what then was the world's darkness itself —those barbarous places, I mean, which wanted all tillage and culture of humane literature to advance and perfect their understandings? This is a Scripture notion; and so is the object of faith rather than reason, 'He that cometh to God must believe that he is,' Hebrews 11:6. Mark that, he 'must believe.' Now faith goes upon the credit of the word, and takes all upon trust from its authority. He

‘must believe that he is;’ which, as Mr. Perkins on the place saith, is not nakedly to know there is a God, but to know God to be God’—which reason of itself can never do. Such is the blindness and corruption of our nature, that we have very deformed and misshapen thoughts of him, till with the eye of faith we see his face in the glass of the word; and therefore the same learned man is not afraid to affirm that all men who ever cam of Adam —Christ alone excepted—are by nature atheists, because at the same time that they acknowledge a God, they deny him his power, presence, and justice, and allow him to be only what pleaseth themselves. Indeed it is natural for every man to desire to accommodate his lusts with such conceptions of God as may be most favourable to, and suit best with, them. God chargeth some for this: ‘Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself,’ Psalms 50:21—sinners doing with God as the Ethiopians with angels, whom they picture with black faces that they may be like themselves.

2. Suppose thou wert able by reason to demonstrate what God is, yet it were dangerous to enter the list and dispute it out by thy naked reason with Satan, who hath, though the worst cause, yet the nimbler head. There is more odds between thee and Satan —though the reason and understanding of many the ripest wits were met in thee—than between the weakest idiot and the greatest scholar in the world. Now who would put a cause of so great importance to such a hazard as thou must do, by reasoning the point with him that so far outmatches thee? But there is a divine authority in the word which faith builds on, and this hath a throne in the conscience of the devil himself, he flies at this; for which cause Christ, though he was able by reason to have baffled the devil, yet to give us a pattern what arms to use for our defence in our conflicts with Satan, he repels him only by lifting up the shield of the word. ‘It is written,’ saith Christ, Luke 4:4, and again, ‘it is written,’ ver. 8. And it is very observable how powerful the word quoted by Christ was to nonplus the devil; so that he had not a word to reply to any scripture that was brought, but was taken off upon the very mention of the word and forced to go to another argument. Had Eve but stood to her first answer, ‘God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it,’ Genesis 3:3, she had been too hard for the devil; but letting her hand■hold go which she had by faith on the word, presently she fell into her enemy’s hand. Thus in this particular, when the Christian in the heat of temptation by faith stands upon his defence, interposing the word between him and Satan’s blows—I believe that God is; though I cannot comprehend his nature nor answer thy sophistry, yet I believe the report the word makes of God; Satan may trouble such a one, but he cannot hurt him. Nay, it is probable he will not long trouble him. The devil’s antipathy is so great to the word, that he loves not to hear it sound in his ear. But, if thou throwest down the shield of the word, and thinkest by the dint or force of thy reason to cut thy way through the temptation, thou mayest soon see thyself surrounded by thy subtle enemy, and put beyond an honourable retreat. This is the reason, I conceive, why, among those few who have professed themselves atheists, most of them have been great pretenders to reason—such as have neglected the word, and gone forth in the pride of their own understanding, by which, through the righteous judgment of God, they at last have disputed themselves into flat atheism. While they have turned their back upon God and his word, [and] thought, by digging into the secrets and bowels of nature, to be admired for their knowledge above others, that hath befallen them which sometimes doth those in mines that delve too far into the bowels of the earth—a damp from God’s secret judgment hath come to put out that light which at first hey carried down with them; and so that of the apostle is verified on them, ‘Where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?’ 1 Corinthians 1:20. Indeed it is the wisdom of God that the world by wisdom—their own trusted to —should not know

God.

3. He that assents to this truth, that there is a God, merely upon grounds of reason and not of faith, and rests in that, doth not quench the temptation; for still he is an infidel and a Scripture atheist. He doth not believe there is a God at the report of God's word, but at the report of his reason; and so indeed he doth but believe himself and not God, and in that makes himself a god, preferring the testimony of his own reason before the testimony of God's word, which is dangerous.

Question. But, may some say, is there no use of reason in such principles as this which are within its sphere? May I not make use of my reason to confirm me in this truth that there is a God?

Answer. It is beyond all doubt that there is [use of reason]. Wherefore else did God set up such a light if not to guide us? But it must keep its own place, and that is to follow faith, not to be the ground of it, or to give law and measure to it. Our faith must not depend on our reason, but our reason on faith. I am not to believe what the word saith merely because it jumps with my reason, but believe my reason because it is suitable to the word. The more perfect is to rule the less. Now the light of the word—which faith follows—is more clear or sure than reason is or can be; for therefore it was written, because man's natural light was so defective. Thou readest in the word there is a God, and that he made the world. Thy eye of reason sees this also. But thou layest the stress of thy faith on the word, not on thy reason. And so of other truths. The carpenter lays his rule to the timber, and by his eye sees it to be right or crooked; yet, it is not the eye but the rule that is the measure —without which his eye might fail him. All that I shall say more to such as are annoyed with atheistical injections is this, fix thy faith strongly on the word, by which you shall be able to overcome this Goliath, and when thou art more free and composed, and the storm is over, thou shalt do well to back thy faith what thou canst with thy reason. Let the word, like David's stone in the sling of faith, first prostrate the temptation; and then, as he used Goliath's sword to cut off his head, so mayest thou with more ease and safety make use of thy reason to complete the victory over these atheistical suggestions.

[Satan's second affrighting temptation —the fiery dart of blasphemy.]

Second Dart of affrighting temptations. The second fiery dart with which he frightens the Christian is his temptation to blasphemy. Every sin, in a large sense, is blasphemy; but here we take it more strictly. When a man does, speaks, or thinks anything derogatory to the holy nature or works of God, with an intent to reproach him or his ways, this properly is blasphemy. Job's wife was the devil's solicitor, to provoke her husband to this sin: 'Curse God,' saith she, 'and die.' The devil was so impudent {as} to assault Christ himself with this sin, when he bade him 'fall down and worship him.' But he hath an advantage of making a nearer approach to a saint than he bade to Christ. All that he could do to him was to offend his holy ear with an external motion. It would not stand with the dignity or holiness of Christ's person to let him come any farther. But he can shoot this fiery dart into the imagination of a saint, to the great disturbance of his thoughts, endeavouring thereby to stir up some unworthy thoughts of God in him—though these are commonly no more welcome to a gracious soul than the frogs which crept into the bed-chamber of Pharaoh were to him. Two things Satan aims at by these injections. 1. To set the saint a defaming God, which he loves a life to hear. But if this fails, then, 2. He is content to play at lower game, and intends the Christian's vexation by forcing these unwelcome guests upon him. Now faith, and only faith, can quench these fireballs in both respects.

[How faith quenches the fiery dart of blasphemy, and Satan's double design therein.]

First Design. Satan aims, by the stirring up of unholy thoughts, to set the saint a defaming God. There is a natural disposition in every wicked man to blaspheme God. Let God but cross a carnal wretch in this way, and then suffer Satan to edge his corruption, and he will soon flee in God's face. If the devil's supposition had been true—as it was indeed most false—that Job was a hypocrite, then that tale which he brought against him to God would have been true also—'Put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face,' Job 1:11. Had Job been the man he took him for, the devil had not lied; because it is natural to every wicked man to have base thoughts of God; and, when provoked, the inward rancour of his heart will appear in the foulness of his tongue—'This evil is of the Lord; what should I wait for the Lord any longer?' 2 Kings 6:33—a loud blasphemy, the seed of which is found in every unbeliever. There is but one spirit of wickedness in sinners, as but one spirit of grace in saints. Simon Magus he was 'in the gall of bitterness,' Acts 8:23; that is, in a state of sin. Every unbeliever is of a bitter spirit against God and all that bears his name. There is no trusting of the tamest of them all, though cooped up by restraining grace. Let the lion out of his grate and he will soon show his bloody nature. An unbeliever hath no more in him to quench such a temptation, than dry wood hath to quench the fire that is put to it. But now, let us see what exploits faith can do in quenching this fiery dart, and how faith does it. Generally it is by keeping the soul from entertaining any unbecoming or blasphemous thoughts of God; but,

1. Faith sets God before the soul—within sight and hearing of all its thoughts and ways; and this keeps the soul in awe, that it dares harbour nothing unworthy of God in its most secret thoughts. David gives the reason why the wicked are so bold, 'They have not set thee before them,' Psalms 54:3. Such as defame and asperse the name of others do it commonly behind their backs. Sin, in this life, seldom comes to such a ripeness as to blaspheme God to his face. This is properly the language of hell. There is a mixture of atheism with the blasphemy of sinners while on earth. They do with God as those wretched miscreants did with Christ; they cover his face and then smite him; they draw a curtain by some atheistical principles betwixt God and them, and then they belch out their blasphemies against that God whose omniscience they do not believe. Now faith eyes God eyeing the soul, and so preserves it. 'Curse not the king,' saith Solomon,' 'no not in thy thought,... nor the rich in thy bedchamber; for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter,' Ecclesiastes 10:20. Such kind of language faith useth. Blaspheme not, saith faith, O my soul, the God of heaven; thou canst not whisper it so softly, but the voice is heard in his ear who is nearer to thee than thou to thyself. And thus it breaks the snare the devil lays. Those unbeseeming speeches which dropped from Job's mouth, through the length and extremity of his troubles, though they did not amount to blasphemy, yet, when God presented himself to him in his majesty, they soon vanished, and he covered his face with shame before the Lord for them—'Now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes,' Job 42:5-6.

2. Faith credits no report of God but from God's own mouth; and thus it quencheth temptations to blasphemy. It is impossible that a soul should have any but holy and loyal thoughts of God, who shapes his apprehensions of him by the word of God, which is the only true glass to behold God in, because it alone presents him like himself in all his attributes, which Satan by this sin of blasphemy one way or other asperses. Faith conceives its notions of God by the word, resolves all cases of conscience, and deciphers all providences which God writes in mysterious figures, by the

word; for want of which skill, Satan drives the creature very oft to have hard thoughts of God, because he cannot make presently good sense of his administrations in the world. Thus, there have been [those] who foolishly have charged God's justice, because some outrageous sinners have not been overtaken with such speedy judgment as they deserve. Others have charged as deeply his care and faithfulness in providing no better for his servants, whom they have seen kept long under the hatches of great afflictions; like him, that seeing a company of Christians in poor ragged clothes, said he would not serve that God who kept his servants no better. These, and such like, are the broken glasses that Satan presents God in, that he may disfigure him to the creature's eye; and truly if we will look no further, but judge God to be what he appears to be by them, we will soon condemn the holy One, and be within the whirl of this dangerous temptation.

3. Faith quenches temptations to blasphemy, as it is praiseful. It disposeth the Christian to bless God in the saddest condition that can befall it. Now these two, blessing and blasphemy, are most contrary. By the one we think and speak evil, and by the other good, of God; and therefore [they] cannot well dwell under the same roof. They are like contrary tunes. They cannot be played on the same instrument without changing all the strings. It is past Satan's skill to strike so harsh a stroke as blasphemy is, on a soul tuned and set to praise God. Now faith doth this, 'My heart is fixed,' saith David. There was his faith. Then follows, 'I will sing and give praise,' Psalms 57:7. It was faith that turned his spirit and set his affections praise-way. And would not Satan, think you, have found it a hard task to have made David blaspheme God while his heart was kept in a praising frame? Now, two ways faith doth this.

(1.) Faith espies mercy in the greatest affliction —an eye of white in the saddest mixture of providence; so that when the devil provokes to blasphemy from the evil that the creature receives from God, faith shows more good received than evil.

Thus Job quenched this dart which Satan shot at him from his wife's tongue. 'Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall not we receive evil?' Shall a few present troubles be a grave to bury the remembrance of all my past and present mercies? 'Thou speakest as one of the foolish women.' What God takes from me is less than I owe him, but what he leaves me is more than he owes me. Solomon bids us, 'In the day of adversity consider,' Ecclesiastes 7:14. Our unbeseeming thoughts and words of God are the product of a rash hasty spirit. Now faith is a considering grace; 'He that believeth will not make haste'—no not to think or speak of God. Faith hath a good memory, and can tell the Christian many stories of ancient mercies; and when his present meal falls short, it can entertain the soul with a cold dish, and not complain that God keeps a bad house neither. Thus David recovered himself when he was even tumbling down the hill of temptation. 'This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High. I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old,' Psalms 77:10-11. Therefore, Christian, when thou art in thy depths of affliction, and Satan tempts thee to asperse God as if he were forgetful of thee, stop his mouth with this, 'No, Satan, God hath not forgot to do for me, but I have forgot what he hath done for me, or else I could not question his fatherly care at present over me!' Go, Christian, play over thy old lessons. Praise God for past mercies; and it will not be long before thou hast a new song put into thy mouth for present mercy.

(2.) As faith spies mercy in every affliction, so it keeps up an expectation in the soul for more mercy; which confidence disposeth the soul to praise God for, as if the mercy were then in being.

Daniel, when in the very shadow of death—the plot the plot laid to take away his life—'three times a day he prayed and gave thanks before his God.' To have heard him pray in that great strait would not have afforded so much matter of wonder; but to have his heart in tune for thanksgiving in such a sad hour, this was admirable, and his faith enabled him, Daniel 6:10. Mercy in the promise is as the apple in the seed. Faith sees it growing up, the mercy a coming. Now, a soul under the expectation of deliverance, how will it scorn a blasphemous notion! When relief is known to be on its way for a garrison besieged, it raiseth their spirits; they will not then hearken to the traitorous motion of the enemy. It is when unbelief is the counsellor, and the soul under doubts and suspicions of God's heart to it, that Satan finds welcome upon such an errand. An excellent instance for both we have in one chapter, Isaiah 8:1-22. We find, Isaiah 8:17, what is the effect of faith, and that is a cheerful waiting on God in straits —'I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him;' and, Isaiah 8:21, we have the fruit of unbelief—and that is no less than blasphemy—'And it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward.' Faith keeps the believer in a waiting posture; and unbelief sets the sinner a cursing both God and man. None escapes his lash that crosseth him in his way, no, not God himself.

4. Faith quenches this fiery dart, by purifying the heart of that enmity against God which, in man's corrupt nature, is fuel for such a temptation. 'Backbiters, haters of God, and despiteful,' are joined together, Romans 1:30. No wonder that a man whose spirit is full of rancour against another, should be easily persuaded to revile him he hates so much. Every unbeliever is a hater of God, and so is in a disposition to blaspheme God when his will or lust is crossed by God. But faith slays this enmity of the heart; yea, it works love in the soul to God, and then works by this love. Now it is one property of love 'to think no evil,' 1 Corinthians 13:5. That is, a man will neither plot any evil against him he loves, nor easily suspect any evil to be plotted by him against himself. Love reads the actions of a friend through such clear glasses of candour and ingenuity, as will make a dark print seem a fair character. It interprets all he doth with so much sweetness and simplicity, that those passages in his behaviour towards her, which to another would seem intricate and suspicious, are plain and pleasing to her; because she ever puts the most favourable sense upon all he doth that is possible. The believer dares not himself plot any evil of sin against God, whom, from the report that faith hath made of him to his soul, he loves so dearly. And, as love will not suffer him to turn traitor against a good God, so neither will it suffer him to harbour any jealous thoughts of God's heart towards him, as if he, who was the first lover, and taught the soul to love him by making love to her, could, after all this, frame any plot of real unkindness against it. No, this thought, though Satan may force it in a manner upon the Christian, and violently press for its entertainment, under the advantage of some frowning providence, which seems to countenance such a suspicion, yet it can never find welcome, so far as to be credited in the soul where love to God hath anything to do. And surely there is no fear that soul will be persuaded wickedly to belch out blasphemies against God, who so abominates but the surmising the least suspicion of God in her most secret thoughts.

Second Design. Satan aims by these blasphemous temptations to effect the Christian's trouble and vexation. Though he doth not find the Christian so kind as to take these his guests in and give them lodging for his sake, yet he knows it will not a little disturb and break his rest to have them continually knocking and rapping at his door; yea, when he cannot pollute the Christian by

obtaining his consent to them, even then he hopes to create him no little disquiet and distraction, by accusing him for what he will not commit; and so of a defiler—which rather he would have been—he is forced to turn slanderous reviler and false accuser. Thus the harlot sometimes accuseth the honest man, merely to be avenged on him because he will not yield to satisfy her lust. Joseph would not lie with his mistress and she raiseth a horrible lie on him. The devil is the blasphemer, but the poor Christian, because he will not join with him in the fact, shall have the name and bear the blame of it. As the Jews compelled Simon of Cyrene to carry Christ's cross, so Satan would compel the tempted Christian to carry the guilt of his sin for him. And many time he doth so handsomely, and with such sleight of hand, shift it from himself to the Christian's back, that he, poor creature, perceives not the juggler's art of conveying it unto him, but goes complaining only of the baseness of his own heart. And as it sometimes so falls out, that a true man in whose house stolen goods are found suffers, because he cannot find out the thief that left them there; so the Christian suffers many sad terrors from the mere presence of these horrid thoughts in his bosom, because he is not able to say whose they are—whether shot in by Satan, or the steaming forth of his own naughty heart. The humble Christian is prone to fear the worst of himself, even where he is not conscious to himself; like the patriarchs, who, when the cup was found in Benjamin's sack, took the blame to themselves, though they were innocent in the fact. And such is the confusion sometimes in the Christian's thoughts, that he is ready to charge himself with those brats that should be laid at another door—Satan's, I mean. Now here I shall show you how faith defeateth this second design of the devil in these blasphemous motions. And this it doth two ways. 1. By helping the Christian to discern Satan's injections from the motions of his own heart. 2. By succouring him, though they rise of his own heart.

1. Faith teaches the Christian to discern and distinguish those fireballs of temptations which are thrown in at his window by Satan, from those sparks of corruption which fly from his own hearth and take fire at his own sinful heart. And certainly those blasphemous thoughts, of which many gracious souls make such sad complaint, will be found very often of the former sort, as may the more probably appear if we consider, (1.) The time when they first stir and are most busy. (2.) The manner how they come. And, (3.) The effect they have on the Christian's heart.

(1.) The time when they begin to stir and the soul to be haunted with them; and that is ordinarily when the work of conversion hath newly passed or is passing on him. When the creature falls off from his old sinful course to embrace Christ, and declares for him against sin and Satan, this is the time when these blasphemous suggestions begin to make their apparition, and those vermin are seen to crawl in the Christian's bosom—a strong probability that they do not breed there, but are sent from Satan by way of revenge for the soul's revolt from him. The devil deals by the Christian in this, and not much unlike what his own sworn servants—witches, I mean—are known to do, who to express their spite against those that cross them, sometimes cause them to swarm with lice, or such kind of vermin, to make them loathsome to themselves. And, as one that never found such vermin crawling about him before, might well wonder to see himself so suddenly stocked with a multitude of them—yea, might rather impute it to the witch's malice than to the corruption of his own body that bred them—so in this case. Indeed, it is very improbable to think that the creature should in this juncture of time above all fall so foul with God by sinning against him at such a height as this. Is it likely that he can, while he is in tears for the sins of his past life, commit a greater than any of them he mourns for? or that he dare, while he is crying for pardoning mercy

with a trembling heart, block up the way to his own prayers, and harden God's heart into a denial of them, by such horrid sins as these are? In a word, seems it not strange, that all the while he was a stranger to, yea an enemy against, God, he durst not venture on this sin for the prodigious nature of it, and that now he begins to love God those blasphemies should fit his mouth which were too big and horrid before for him to meddle with?

(2.) The manner how these blasphemies rise in the Christian's thoughts, will increase the probability that they are injections from Satan without, rather than motions of the Christian's own heart within. They are commonly violent and sudden. They come like lightning, flashing into the Christian's thoughts before he hath time to deliberate with himself what he is doing. Whereas that lust, which is the ebullition of our own hearts, is ordinarily gradual in its motion; it moves in a way more still and suitable to man's nature; it doth entice the soul, and by degrees slyly inveigles it into a consent; making first the affections on its side, which then it employeth to corrupt the understanding, and take it off from appearing against it, by putting its eye out with some bribe of sensual pleasure and profit; and so, by these paces it comes at last to have a more easy access to and success over the will, which being now deprived of her guard, yields the sooner to the summons that lust makes. But these sudden dartings of blasphemous thoughts, they make a forcible entry upon the soul without any application used to gain its good-will to come in. Their driving is like the driving of that hellish Jehu. It is the devil that is got into the box; who else could drive so furiously? Yea, not only their suddenness and violence, but incoherence with the Christian's former thoughts and course, do still heighten the probability that they are darts shot from the devil's bow. Peter was once known to be of Christ's company by his voice: 'Thy speech,' say they, 'bewrayeth thee.' He spake like them, therefore he was judged one of them. On the contrary, we may say of these blasphemous motions, 'They are not the Christian's, their language bewrays them to be rather the belching of a devil than the voice of a saint. If they were woven by the soul, they would be something like the whole piece from which they are cut off.' There is ordinarily a dependency in our thoughts. We take the hint for one thought from another. As circle riseth out of circle in the moved water, so doth thought out of thought, till they spread into a discourse.

Now, may not the Christian well wonder to see —may be when he is at he worship of God, and taken up with holy and heavenly meditations—a blasphemous thought on a sudden appear in the midst of such company to which it is so great a stranger? and also how it should get in among them? If a holy thought surpriseth us on a sudden, when we stand as it were with our back on heaven, and there be nothing in the discourse our hearts at present are holding to usher it in, we may take it as a pure motion of the Spirit of Christ. Who, indeed, but he, could be so soon in the midst of the soul when the door is shut, even before the creature can turn his thoughts to open it for him? And probably these blasphemies, which rush upon thee, O Christian, at a time when thy soul is at the farthest distance from such thoughts, yea, sailing to the clean contrary point, in thy praying to and praising of God, are the irruptions of that wicked one, and that on purpose to interrupt thee in that work which of all other he fears and hates most.

(3.) The effect these blasphemous notions have on the heart may make us think they are Satan's brats rather than the birth of the Christian's own heart; —and that is a dismal horror and consternation of the Christian's spirit, which reacheth often to the discomposure of the body. So that an apparition of the devil to their bodily eyes could not affright them more than these

blasphemies do that walk in their imagination. Yea, they do not only cause a horror, but stir up a vehement indignation and abhorrency, in the soul at their presence. If now they be the birth of the Christian's own heart, why this horror? whence this indignation? Those motions which arise from ourselves use to please us better. It is natural for men to love the children of their own loins though black and deformed; and as natural to like the conceptions of their own minds. Solomon found out the true mother by her tenderness to the child. If these blasphemies were the issue of the heart, familiarity with them might be expected rather than horror at the sight of them; favour to them rather than abhorrency of them. Were it not more likely, poor soul, that thou wouldst kiss them, if thy own, than seek to kill them?—draw out thy breast to nurse and suckle them, than the sword of the Spirit to destroy them? And if so, saith faith, that these be Satan's brats, why then art thou troubled because he lays them at thy door? Is the chaste woman the more whore, because some foul tongue calls her so? Have patience a little, poor soul; the judge is at the door, and when he comes thou shalt be called by thy right name. Sit not thou any longer wounding thy soul with his dart, and troubling thyself for the devil's sin, but go and complain of him to thy God; and when thou hast spread his blasphemies before the Lord, as Hezekiah did Rabshakeh's, comfort thyself with this, that God will spread thy cause against this false accuser, and send him away with as much shame and as little success as he did that barking dog who so reviled God and railed on his people. But,

2. Suppose these blasphemous notions to be the Christian's own sins, bred in his own heart, and not the devil's brats falsely fathered on him; yet here faith relieves the Christian when distressed with the guilt of them, and Satan labours most to aggravate them. Now the succour faith brings the soul here is manifold.

(1.) Succour. Faith can assure the soul upon solid Scripture bottom that these blasphemous thoughts are pardonable. 'All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men,' Matthew 12:31. And it were strange if thy fancy should be so wild and melancholy as to think thou seest this only unpardonable blasphemy, which is ever marked on the forehead with final impenitency and desperate hatred against God, in those loose roving thoughts that never yet could gain any consent from thy heart to them, but continues to disavow and protest against them. I say it were very strange That thou couldst long mistake those unwelcome guests for that wicked sin. Now, for thy comfort, thou hearest all manner of blasphemy besides that one shall be forgiven. Pardon for them may be sued out in the court of mercy, how terrible and amazing soever their circumstances are to thy trembling soul. And if the creature believes this, Satan's dart is quenched; for his design is to make use of these temptations as a trap-door by which he may let thy soul down into despair.

(2.) Succour. Faith resolves the soul that the ebullition[7] of such thoughts is not inconsistent with the state of grace; and if the soul be well satisfied in this point, the devil's fiery dart hath lost its envenomed head, which uses so much to drink up the Christian's spirits. The common inference which he makes tempted souls draw from the presence of these thoughts in them is, 'Surely I am not a saint. This is not the spot of God's children.' But faith is able to disprove this, and challenges Satan to show—as well-read as he is in the Scriptures—one place in all the Bible that countenanceth such a conclusion. Indeed there is none. It is true the blasphemy of blasphemies—I mean the sin against the Holy Ghost —with this the evil one shall never touch a true believer. But I know no kind of sin, short of that, from which he hath any such protection or

immunity, as makes it impossible he should for a time be foiled by it. The whole body of sin indeed is weakened in every believer, and a deadly wound given by the grace of God to his corrupt nature, which it shall never claw off, but at last die by it. Yet as a dying tree may bear some fruit, though not so much, nor that so full and ripe, as before; and a dying man may move his limbs, though not so strongly as when he was in health; so original corruption in a saint will be stirring, though but feebly, and showing its fruit, though it be but crumpted and unripe. And thou hast no cause to be discouraged that it stirs; but to be comforted that it can but stir. O be thankful thou hast got thy enemy, who even now was master of the field, and had thee tied to his triumphant chariot, now himself on his knees under the victorious sword of Christ and his grace, ready to drop into his grave, though lifting up his hand against thee to show his enmity continues when his power fails to do execution as he would.

(3.) Succour. Faith can clear it to the soul that these blasphemous thoughts, as they are commonly entertained in a saint, are not so great sins in God's account as some other that pass for less in our account. The Christian commonly contracts more guilt by a few proud, unclean, covetous thoughts than by many blasphemous ones, because the Christian seldom gets a so clear a victory over those as over these of blasphemy. The fiery darts of blasphemy may scare Christians more, but fiery lusts wound sooner and deeper. It was the warm sun made the traveller open his cloak which the blustering wind made wrap closer to him. Temptations of pleasure entice the heart to them, whereas the horrid nature of the other stirs up the Christian to a more valiant resistance of them. O, the Christian is soon overtaken with these; they are like poison in sweet wine, they are down before he is aware, and diffuse apace into his affections, poisoning the Christian's spirits. But these of blasphemy are like poison in some bitter potion; either it is spit out before it is down, or vomited up by the Christian before it hath spread itself far into his affections. Sins are great or small by the share the will hath in the acting of them. And blasphemous thoughts, commonly having less of the Christian's will and affections in them than the other, cannot be a greater sin.

(4.) Succour. Faith tells the soul that God may have, yea, undoubtedly hath, gracious ends in suffering him to be haunted with such troublesome guests, or else they should not be sent to quarter on him. Possibly God saw some other sin thou wert in great danger of, and he sends Satan to trouble thee with these temptations, that he may not overcome thee in the other. And though a plaster or poultice be very offensive and loathsome, yet better endure that a while than a disease that will hazard thy life. Better tremble at the sight of blasphemous thoughts than strut thyself in the pride of thy heart at the sight of thy gifts and privileges. The first will make thee think thyself as vile as the devil himself in thy own eyes; but the other will make thee prodigiously wicked and so indeed like the devil in God's eyes.

(5.) Succour. Faith will put the Christian on some noble exploits for God, thereby to vindicate himself, and prove the devil's charge a lie, as one that is accused for some traitorous design against his prince, to wipe off that calumny doth undertake some notable enterprise for the honour of his prince. This indeed is the fullest revenge the Christian can take either of Satan for troubling him with such injections, or [of] his own heart for issuing out such impure streams. When David preferred Saul's life in the cave above a kingdom, which one hearty blow might have procured him, he proved all his enemies liars that had brought him under a suspicion at court. Thus, Christian, do thou but prefer the honour of God when it cometh in competition with sin and self, and thou wilt stop the devil's mouth, who is sometimes ready to make thee jealous of thyself as if thou wert a

blasphemer. Such heroic acts of zeal and self■denial would speak more for thy purgation before God and thy own conscience than these sudden thoughts can do against thee.

[Satan's third affrighting temptation —the fiery dart of despair.]

Third Dart of affrighting temptations. The third fiery dart which Satan lets fly at the Christian is his temptation to despair. This cursed fiend thinks he can neither revenge himself further on God, nor engrave his own image deeper on the creature, than by this sin; which at once casteth the greatest scorn upon God, and brings the creature nearest the complexion of devils and damned souls, who, by lying continually under the scorching wrath of God, in hell's horrid zone, are blacked all over with despair. This is the sin that of all Satan chiefly aims at. Other sins are but as previous dispositions to introduce that, and make the creature more receptive for such a temptation. As the wool hath a tincture of some lighter colours given it before it can be dyed into a deep grain, so Satan hath his more lightsome and pleasant sins, which he at first entices to, that he may the better dispose the creature to this. But this is kept by him as a great secret from the creature's knowledge. The devil is too cunning a fowler to lay his net in the bird's sight he means to take. Despair is the net. Other sins are but the shrap, whereby he covers it, and so flatters them into it, which done, he hath them safe to eternity. This, above all sins, puts a man into a kind of actual possession of hell. Other sins bind over to wrath, whereby he covers it, but this gives fire to the threatening, and sets the soul on a light flame with horror. As it is faith's excellency to give a being to the word of promise; so it is the cruelty of despair that it gives an existence to the torments of hell in the conscience. This is the arrow that drinks up the spirit, and makes the creature executioner to itself. Despair puts a soul beyond all relief; the offer of a pardon comes too late to him that hath turned himself off the ladder. Other temptations have their way to escape. Faith and hope can open a window to let out the smoke that offends the Christian in any condition, be it at present never so sad and sorrowful; but then the soul must needs be choked, when it is shut up within the despairing thoughts of its own sins, and no crevice left to be an outlet to any of that horror with which they fill him.

How faith quenches the fiery dart of despair drawn from the greatness of sin.]

I might here instance in those many media or arguments Satan useth to dispute souls into despair from, and how able faith, and only faith, is to answer and refel[8] them. But I shall content myself with one to dilate upon—which is the chief of all Satan's strength—and that is taken from all the greatness and multitude of the creature's sins. This when the creature is enlightened to see, and hath the brawniness of its conscience pared off to feel with remorse, and then God but do allow Satan to use his rhetoric in declaiming against the heinousness of them, it must needs be in a doleful condition, and of necessity sink into the depths of despair, for all the help it can find from itself within or any other creature without doors. Perhaps some of you, who have slighty thoughts of your own sins, think it proves but a childish impotent spirit in others to be so troubled for theirs; and in this you show that you never were in Satan's stocks pinched by his temptations. Those who have will speak in another language, and tell you that the sins which are unfelt by you have lain like a mountain of lead upon their spirits. O, when a breach is once made in the conscience, and the waves of guilt pour in amain upon the soul, it soon overtops all the creature's shifts and apologies, as the flood did the old world, that covered the tallest trees and the highest mountains. As nothing then was visible but sea and heaven; so in such a soul, nothing but sin and hell. His

sins stare him on the face, as with the eyes of so many devils, ready to drag him into the bottomless pit. Every silly fly dares creep upon the lion while asleep, whose voice all the beasts in the forest tremble at when he awakes. Fools can make a mock of sin when conscience' eye is out or shut. They can then dance about it, as the Philistines about blind Samson. But when God arms sin with guilt, and causeth this serpent to put forth his sting upon the conscience, then the proudest sinner of them all flees before it. Now it is faith that alone can grapple with sin in its strength; which it doth several ways. First. Faith gives the soul a view of the great God. Second. Faith quenches this fiery dart of despair drawn from the greatness of sin, by opposing to that the greatness of the promises. Third. Faith teaches the soul to oppose the greatness of this one sin of despair to the greatness of all its other sins.

[To the greatness of sin, faith opposes a view of the great God.]

First. Faith gives the soul a view of the great God. It teacheth the soul to set his almightiness against sin's magnitude, and his infinitude against sin's multitude; and so quencheth temptation. The reason why the presumptuous sinner fears so little, and the despairing soul so much, is for want of knowing God as great. Therefore, to cure them both, the serious consideration of God under this notion is propounded. 'Be still, and know that I am God,' Psalms 46:10. As if he had said, 'Know, O ye wicked, that I am God, who can avenge myself when I please upon you, and cease to provoke me by your sins to your own confusion.' Again, 'Know ye, trembling souls, that I am God, and therefore able to pardon the greatest sins; and cease to dishonour me by your unbelieving thoughts of me.' Now faith alone can thus show God to be God. Two things are required to the right conceiving of God.

1. In order to the right conceiving of God, we must give him the infinitude of all his attributes; that is, conceive of him not only as wise—for that may be a man's name—but infinitely wise; not mighty, but almighty, &c.

2. This infinitude which we give to God, we must deny to all besides him, what or whosoever they be. Now faith alone can realize and fix this principle so in the heart that the creature shall act suitably thereunto. Indeed, none are so wicked who will not say, if you will believe them, that they believe that God is infinite in his knowledge, and omnipresent—at their heels wherever they go; infinite in his power, needing no more to effect their ruin than his speaking it. But, would they then in the view of these go and sin so boldly? They durst as well run their heads into a fiery oven, as do it in the face of such a principle. So others; they believe God is infinite in mercy. But, would they then carry a hell flaming in their bosoms with despair, while they have infinite mercy in their eye? No, it is plain God appears not in his true greatness to such. Despair robs God of his infinitude and ascribes it to sin. By it the creature saith his sin is infinite and God is not—too like those unbelieving Israelites: 'They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea,' Psalms 106:7. They could not see enough in God to serve their turn in such a strait; they saw a multitude of Egyptians to kill, and multitude of waters to drown them, but could not see multitude enough of mercies to deliver them. Thus the despairing sees multitude of great sins to damn, but not an infinitude of mercy to save him. Reason, alas! is low of stature, like Zaccheus, and cannot see mercy in a crowd and press of sins. It is faith alone that climbs the promise; then and not till then will the soul see Jesus. Faith ascribes mercy to God with an overplus, 'He will abundantly pardon,' Isaiah 55:7—multiply to pardon, so the Hebrew. He will drop

pardons with our sins which are most. ‘He will subdue our iniquities, and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea’. This is faith’s language; he will pardon with an overflowing mercy. Cast a stone into the sea, and it is not barely covered, but buried many fathom deep. God will pardon thy greatest sins, saith faith, as the sea doth a little pebble thrown into it. A few sins poured out upon the conscience—like a pail of water spilt upon the ground—seems like a great flood; but the greatest poured into the sea of God’s mercy are swallowed up and not seen. Thus, when ‘the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for,’ the Scripture saith, ‘and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found.’ And why so? ‘For I will pardon,’ Jeremiah 50:20. There is the reason.

Objection. ‘O but,’ saith the trembling soul, ‘the consideration of God’s infinitude, especially in two of his attributes, drives me fastest to despair. Of all other my perplexed thoughts, when I think how infinitely holy God is, may I not fear what will become of an unholy wretch? When again, I look upon him as just, yea, infinitely just, how can I think he will remit so great wrongs as I have done to his glorious name?’

Answer. Faith will, and none but faith’s fingers can, untie this knot, and give the soul a satisfactory answer to this question.

1. Attribute.—The holiness of God. For this attribute faith hath two things to answer.

Answer. (1.) That though the infinite holiness of God’s nature doth make him vehemently hate sin, yet the same doth strongly incline his heart to show mercy to sinners. What is it in the creature that makes him hard-hearted but sin? ‘The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel,’ Proverbs 12:10. If wicked then cruel, and the more holy the more merciful. Hence it is that acts of mercy and forgiveness are with so much difficulty drawn, many times, from those that are saints; even like milk out of awarded breast; because there are remainders of corruption in them, which cause some have hardness of heart and unwillingness to that work. ‘Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good,’ Romans 12:21—implying it is a hard work, which cannot be done till a victory be got over the Christian’s own heart; which hath contrary passions, that will strongly oppose such an act. How oft, alas! do we hear such language as this from those that are gracious! ‘My patience is spent; I can bear no longer, and forgive no more.’ But God, who is purity without dross, holiness without the least allay and mixture of sin, hath nothing to sour his heart into any unmercifulness. ‘If ye then, being evil,’ saith Christ, ‘know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?’ Matthew 7:11. Christ’s design in this place is to help them to larger apprehensions concerning the mercifulness of God’s heart; which that he may do, he directs them to the thoughts of his holiness as that which would infallibly demonstrate the same. As if Christ had said, ‘Can you persuade your hearts, distempered with sinful passions, to be kind to your children? how much more easy is it to think that God, who is holiness itself, will be so to his poor creatures prostrate at his feet for mercy?’

(2.) Faith can tell the soul that the holiness of God is no enemy to pardoning mercy; for it is the holiness of God that obligeth him to be faithful in all his promises. And this, indeed, is as full a breast of consolation as I know any to a poor trembling soul. When the doubting soul reads those many precious promises which are made to returning sinners, why doth he not take comfort in them? Surely it is because the truth and faithfulness of God to perform them is yet under some

dispute in his soul. Now the strongest argument that faith hath to put this question out of doubt, and make the sinner accept the promise as a true and faithful word, is that which is taken from the holiness of God, who is the promise-maker. It must be true, saith faith, what the promise speaks; it can be no other, because a holy God makes it. Therefore, God, to gain the more credit to the truth of his promise in the thoughts of his people, prefixeth so often this attribute to his promise, 'I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel,' Isaiah 41:14 That which in the Hebrew is mercies, in the Septuagint is often J■ ÓF\"—holy things. See Isaiah 55:3. Indeed the mercies of God are founded in holiness, and therefore are sure mercies. The reason of man's unfaithfulness in promises proceeds from some unholiness in his heart. The more holy a man is, the more faithful we may expect him to be. A good man, we say, will be as good as his word. To be sure a good God will. How many times did Laban change Jacob's wages after promise? But God's covenant with him was inviolably kept, though Jacob was not so faithful on his part as he ought—and why? but because he had to do with a holy God in this, but with a sinful man in the other, whose passions altered his thoughts and changed his countenance towards him; as we see the clouds and wind do the face of the heavens and temper of the seasons.

2. Attribute. We come to the second attribute which scares the tempted soul, and seems so little to befriend this pardoning act of God's mercy; and that is his justice. This proves often matter of amazement to the awakened sinner rather than encouragement, especially when the serious thoughts of it possess his heart. Indeed, my brethren, the naked consideration of this attribute rent from the other, and the musing on it without a gospel-comment—through which alone it can be safely and comfortably viewed by a sin■smitten soul—must needs appall and dispirit him, whoever he be, yea, kindle a fire of horror in his bosom; for the creature, seeing no way that God hath to vindicate his provoked justice but by the eternal destruction and damnation of the sinner, cannot, without a universal consternation of all the powers of his soul, think of that attribute which brings to his thoughts so fearful an expectation and looking for of judgment. Heman, though a holy man, yet even lost his wits with musing on this sad subject. 'While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted,' Psalms 88:15, 16. But faith can make good work of this also. Faith will enable the soul to walk in this fiery attribute with his comforts unsinged, as those three worthies, Daniel 3:1-30, in the flaming furnace; while unbelieving sinners are scorched, yea, swallowed up into despair, when they do but come in their thoughts near the mouth of it. There is a threefold consideration with which faith relieves the soul when the terror of this attribute takes hold on it. (1.) Faith shows, and this on the best evidence, that God may pardon the greatest sinner, if penitent and believing, without the least prejudice to his justice. (2.) Faith goes farther, and shows that God, in pardoning the believing sinner, doth not only save his justice, but advance the honour of it. (3.) Faith shows that God doth not only save and advance his justice in pardoning a believing soul; but, as things stand now, he hath no other way to secure his justice but by pardoning the believing soul his sins. Be they never so great. These three well digested, will render this attribute as amiable, lovely, and comfortable to the thoughts of a believer, as that of mercy itself.

[A threefold consideration with which faith relieves the soul from terror of God's justice.]

Consideration 1. Faith shows to the soul—and that upon the best evidence—that God may pardon its sins, though never so great and mountainous, with safety to the justice of God. That question is not now to be disputed, whether God can be just and righteous in pardoning sinners. This, saith faith, was debated and determined long ago, at the council■board of heaven by God himself,

before so much as a vote, yea, a thought, could pass from God's heart for the benefit of poor sinners. God expresseth thus much in the promise: 'I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment,' Hosea 2:19. Who is this that God means to marry? one that had played the whore, as appears by the former part of the chapter. What doth he mean by betrothing? No other but that he will pardon their sins, and receive them into the arms of his love and peculiar favour. But how can the righteous God take one that hath been a filthy strumpet into his bosom? —betroth such a whorish people, pardon such high-climbing sins? How? Mark, he will do it 'in judgment and in righteousness.' As if God had said, 'Trouble not your thoughts to clear my justice in the act. I know what I do. The case is well weighed by me. It is not like the sudden matches that are huddled up by men in one day, and repented of on the next; but is the result of the counsel of my holy will so to do.' Now when Satan comes full mouth against the believer with this objection, 'What! such a wretch as thou find favour in the eyes of God?' faith can easily retort, 'Yes, Satan, God can be as righteous in pardoning me as in damning thee. God tells me it is 'in judgment and in righteousness.' I leave thee therefore to dispute this case out with God, who is able to justify his own act.'

Now, though this in the lump were enough to refel Satan, yet faith is provided with a more particular evidence, for the vindication of the justice and righteousness of God in this pardoning act. And this is founded on the full satisfaction which Christ hath given to God for all the wrong the believer hath done him by his sin. Indeed, it was the great undertaking of Christ to bring justice to kiss mercy, that there might not be a dissenting attribute in God when this vote should pass, but the act of pardoning mercy carried clear, nullo contradicente—without a dissentient voice. Therefore, Christ, before he solicits the sinner's cause with God by request, performs first the other of satisfaction by sacrifice. He pays, and then prays for what he hath paid—presenting his petition in the behalf of believing sinners written with his own blood, that so justice might not disdain to read or grant it. I will not dispute whether God could by a prerogative mercy, without a satisfaction, have issued out an act of pardon; but in this way of satisfaction, the righteousness of God, I am sure, may be vindicated in the conscience of the greatest sinner on earth; yea, the devil himself is but a faint disputant when faith pinches him with this argument; it is a trench which he is not able to climb. Indeed, God laid our salvation in this method, that even we weak ones might be able to justify him, in justifying us, to the head of the most malicious devil in hell. Peruse that incomparable place, which hath balm enough in it to heal the wounds of all the bleeding consciences in the world, where there is but faith to drop it in; and for ever to quench the fire of this dart, which is headed with the justice of God. 'Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus,' Romans 3:24-26. O what work will faith make of this scripture! A soul castled with these walls is impregnable.

(a) Observe, Christ is here called a propitiation, or, if you will, a propitiatory—Ê8"FJZD4@<—alluding to the mercy■seat, where God promised to meet his people that he might converse with them, and no dread from his majesty fall upon them, Exodus 25:1-40. Now, you know, the mercy■seat was placed over the ark, to be a cover thereunto, it being the ark wherein the holy law of God was kept, from the violation of which all the fears of a guilty soul arise.

Therefore it is observable that the dimensions of the one were proportioned to the other. The mercy-seat was to be as long and broad to the full as the ark was, that no part thereof might be unshadowed by it, Exodus 25:10, compared with Exodus 25:17. Thus, Christ our true propitiatory covers all the law, which else would come in to accuse the believer; but not one threatening now can arrest him, so long as this screen remains for faith to interpose between God's wrath and the soul. Justice now hath no mark to level at. God cannot see the sinner for Christ that hides him. 'this is not the man,' saith wrath, 'that I am to strike. See how he flees to Christ, and takes sanctuary in his satisfaction, and so is got out of my walk and reach, that being a privileged place where I must not come to arrest any.' It is usual, you know, in battles to wear a riband, hand-kerchief, or some such thing, to distinguish friends from foes. Christ's satisfaction worn by faith is the sign that distinguisheth God's friends from his enemies. The scarlet thread on Rahab's window kept the destroying sword out of her house; and the blood of Christ, pleaded by faith, will keep the soul from receiving any hurt at the hands of divine justice.

(b) Observe what hand Christ hath his commission from: 'whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.' Christ, we see, is the great ordinance of heaven; him the Father hath sealed; he is singled out from all others, angels and men, and set forth as the person chosen of God to make atonement for sinners, as the lamb was taken out of the flock and set apart for the passover. When, therefore, Satan's sets forth the believer's sins in battle■array against him, and confronts him with their greatness, then faith runs under the shelter of this castle into the holes of this rock. Surely, saith faith, my Saviour is infinitely greater than my greatest sins. I should impeach the wisdom of God's choice to think otherwise. God, who knew what a heavy burden he had to lay upon his shoulders, was fully satisfied of his strength to bear it. He that refused sacrifice and burnt■offering for their insufficiency, would not have called him had he not been all■sufficient for the work. Indeed, here lies the weight of the whole building; a weak faith may save, but a weak saviour cannot. Faith hath Christ to plead for it, but Christ hath none to plead for him. Faith leans on Christ's arm, but Christ stood upon his own legs, and if he had sunk under the burden of our sins, he had been past the reach of any creature in heaven or earth to help him up.

(c) Observe the why God chose this way of issuing out his pardoning mercy; and that is 'to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins.' Mark! not to declare his mercy. That is obvious to every eye. Every one will believe him merciful that is forgiving. But, to conceive how God should be righteous in forgiving sinners—this lies more remote from the creature's apprehensions, and therefore it is ingeminated and repeated, 'To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus,' Exodus 25:26. As if God had said, 'I know why it seems so incredible, poor sinners, to your thoughts, that I should pardon all your iniquities, so great and many. You think, because I am a righteous God, that I will sooner damn a thousand worlds of sinners than asperse my justice, and bring my name under the least suspicion of unrighteousness, and that thought is most true. I would indeed damn them over and over again, rather than stain the honour of my justice—which is myself. But I declare, yea, again I declare it, and command you and the greatest sinners on earth, upon pain of damnation, to believe it, that I can be just, and yet the justifier of those sinners who believe in Jesus.' O what boldness may the believer take at this news! Methinks I see the soul that was even now pining to death with despair, and lotting upon hell in his thoughts—as one already free among the dead—now revive and grow young again at these tidings; as Jacob, when he heard Joseph was alive. 'What? Is justice —the

only enemy I feared, and attribute in God's heart which my thoughts fled from—now become my friend! Then cheer up, my soul, who shall condemn if God justifies? And how can God himself be against thee, when his very justice acquits thee?'

Objection. But Satan will not thus leave the soul. Dost thou, poor creature, saith he, believe this strange divinity? Is it just for God to pardon thee for the satisfaction that another makes? One man commit the murder, and another man that is innocent hanged for it!—call, you this just? The law demands the person sinning to be delivered up to justice. We find no mention of a surety to be allowed by the covenant: 'In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.'

Answer (a). Faith teaches the soul to acquiesce in the declaration that God makes of his own mind. Now, though the threatening at first acquaints us with the sinner's name only, yet faith finds a gracious relaxation of that threatening in the gospel covenant, where, to the believer's everlasting comfort, God promiseth to accept the sinner's debt at Christ's hand, whom therefore we find arrested upon our action. 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed,' Isaiah 53:5. Here is bottom strong enough for faith to rest on. And why should we, shallow creatures, ruffle gospel truths, to the ensnarling our own thoughts, by thinking to fathom the bottomless depths of God's justice with the short cordage of our reason, which we see dunced by the meanest piece of God's work of creation? Faith spies a devil in this beautiful serpent, Reason, which, for its smooth tongue, Satan useth on a mischievous design to undermine, as other, so in particular, this one most sweet and fundamental truth of the gospel—I mean the satisfaction of Christ; and therefore faith protests against the illegality of reason's court. What indeed hath reason to call before her lower bench these mysteries of our faith, that are purely supernatural, and so not under her cognizance? And O that those, in this proud age of ours, would consider it, who go to law, as I may so say, with the highest gospel truths, before this heathen judge, Reason! whereby they evacuate one great end of the gospel, which is to sacrifice our shallow reason on faith's altar, that so we might give the more signal honour to the truth of God, in believing the high mysteries of the gospel upon this naked report of them in the word, though our own reason with its little span cannot comprehend them.

Answer (b). The believer can clear God as just in receiving the debt as Christ's hand, from that near union that is betwixt Christ and his people. The husband may lawfully be arrested for his wife's debt, because this union is voluntary; and it is to be supposed he did, or ought to have considered, what her estate was, before he contracted so near a relation to her. A suit may justly be commenced against a surety, because it was his own act to engage for the debt. To be sure Christ was most free in engaging himself in the sinner's cause. He knew what a sad plight man's nature was in; and he had an absolute freedom to please himself in his choice, whether he would leave man to perish, or lend his helping hand towards his recovery. He had also an absolute power of his own life, which no mere creature hath; so that being his own offer—upon his Father's call—to take our nature in marriage, thereby to interest himself in our debt, and for the payment of it, to disburse and pour out his own precious blood to death; how dare proud flesh call the justice of God to the bar, and bring his righteousness in this transaction into question, for which God promised himself the highest expression of love and thankfulness at his creature's hands?

Consideration 2. Faith doth not only bear witness to the justice of God, that he may pardon a poor believing sinner, and yet be just; but it shows that he may advance the honour of his justice by pardoning the believing soul, more than in damning the impenitent sinner. And surely God had no less design in the gospel-covenant than this. He that would not the death of a sinner but to vindicate his justice, would not certainly have consented to the death of his only Son, but for the higher advance and further glorifying of his justice in the eye of his creature. Christ saith he came not only that we sinners 'might have life,' but that we might 'have it more abundantly,' John 10:10—that is, more abundantly than we should have inherited it from innocent Adam. May we not therefore say, that Christ did not die that God might only have his due debt, but that he might have it more abundantly paid by Christ, than he could have had it at the creature's hands? But more particularly the justice of God will appear here clothed with four glorious circumstances, that cannot be found in the payment which the sinner by his own personal sufferings makes unto it.

(a) If we consider the person at whose hand divine justice receives satisfaction. When the sinner is damned for his own sins, it is but a poor sorry creature that is punished; but, when Christ suffereth, the debt is paid by a more honourable hand: God hath it from one who is near to himself, yea, equal with himself. 'Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts,' Zechariah 13:7. Who will not say a judge gives more eminent testimony of his justice, when he condemns his own son, than when he arraigns a stranger? Here God indeed declared his utmost hatred to sin, and inflexible love to justice, in that he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.

(b) If we consider the manner how the debt is paid. When the sinner is damned, it is in a poor beggarly way by retail; now a few pence, and then a few more. He is ever paying, but never comes to the last farthing, and therefore must for ever lie in prison for non-payment. But, at Christ's hands God receives all the whole debt in one lump, so that Christ could truly say, 'It is finished,' John 19:30—as much as if he had said, There are but a few moments, and the work of redemption will be finished. I ave the sum now in my hand to pay God his whole debt, and as soon as I have bowed my head, and the breath is once out of my body, all will be finished. Yea, he hath his discharge for the receipt of the whole sum due to God's justice from the mouth of God himself, in which we find him triumphing. 'He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me?' Isaiah 50:8. Yea, still more, Christ hath not only discharged the old debt, but by the same blood hath made a new purchase of God for his saints; so that God, who was even now the creditor, is become the debtor to his creature, and that for no less than eternal life, which Christ hath paid for, and given every believer authority, humbly to claim of God in his name. See them both in one place. 'But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,' Hebrews 10:12-14. He hath not only crossed the debt-book for believers, but perfected them for ever; that is, made as certain provision for their perfection in glory, as for their salvation from hell's punishment. From which he exhorts them to 'draw near in full assurance of faith,' Hebrews 10:22. Let us not fear but we shall receive at God's hands what Christ hath paid for.

(c) When God damns the sinner, his justice indeed appears—those condemned miscreants have not one righteous syllable to charge their judge withal —but mercy is not seen to sit so glorious on the throne, in this sentence pronounced on the sinner. But when Christ suffered, justice had mercy

met. Indeed justice appears never more orient in God or man than when it is in conjunction with mercy. Now in the Lord Christ's death they shone both in all their glory, and did mutually set off each the other. Here the white and the red—the roses and the lilies—were so admirably tempered, that it is hard to say which presents the face of justice most beautiful to our eye, God's wrath upon Christ for us, or his mercy to us for his sake.

(d) When God damns the sinner, justice is glorified only passively. God forceth his glory from devils and damned souls; but they do not willingly pay the debt. They acknowledge God just, because they can do no other, but at the same time they hate him, while they seem to vindicate him. Now, in the satisfaction that Christ gives, justice is glorified actively, and that both from Christ—who was not dragged to the cross, or hauled to his sufferings, as the damned are to their prison and torment, but 'gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God,' Ephesians 5:2; suffering as willingly for us as ever we sinned against him —and also from believing souls, who now sing praises to the mercy and justice of God that redeemed them, and will for ever in heaven run division on the same note. Now by how much the voluntary sufferings of Christ are better than the forced torments of the damned; and the cheerful praises of the saints in heaven more melodious in God's ear than the extorted acknowledgments of damned souls in hell; by so much the justice of God is more glorified by Christ's sufferings than theirs. O what incomparable boldness may this send the soul withal to the throne of grace —who, when he is begging pardon for Christ's sake, may, without any hazard to his eternal salvation, say, 'Lord, if my damnation will glorify thy justice more, or so much, as the death of Christ for me hath done, and the everlasting praises which my thankful heart shall resound in heaven to the glory of all thy attributes for my salvation, will do, let me have that rather than this.'

Consideration 3. Faith doth not only see justice preserved, yea, advanced in this act of pardoning mercy; but it will tell the soul, and can make good what it saith, that God, as things now stand, cannot be just, if he doth not pardon the sins of a repenting, believing soul, how great soever they have been. One great part of justice consists in a faithful and punctual performance of promises; he is, we say, a just man that keeps his word. And, can God be a just God if he doth not? The word is gone out of his mouth that he will forgive such. Yea, he is willing to be accounted just or unjust by us, as he makes performance thereof. See where he lays this his attribute to pawn upon this very account—'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,' 1 John 1:9. He doth not say merciful, but 'just,' as the attribute which we most fear should vote against us. This he would have us know is bound for the performance of the promise. It was mercy in God to make the promise; but justice to perform what mercy hath promised. 'Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham,' Micah 7:20. God was not bound to make a promise to Abraham and his seed; but having once passed his word to him, it was 'truth to Jacob,' who was heir to that bond which God had left in his father's hand.

[To the greatness of sin faith opposes the greatness of the promises.]

Second. Faith quenches this temptation to despair, drawn from the greatness of sin, by opposing the greatness of the promises to sin's greatness. Faith only can see God in his greatness; and therefore none but faith can see the promises in their greatness, because the value of promises is according to the worth of him that makes them. Hence it comes to pass that promises have so little

efficacy on an unbelieving heart, either to keep from sin, or to comfort under terror for sin. Promises are like the clothes we wear, which, if there be heat in the body to warm them, then they will warm us; but if they receive no heat from the body, they give none to it. Where there is faith to chase the promise, there the promise will afford comfort and peace abundantly; it will be as a strong cordial glowing with inward joy in the creature's bosom; but on a dead unbelieving heart it lies cold and ineffectual; it hath no more effect on such a soul than a cordial which is poured sown a dead man's throat hath on him. The promises have not comfort actually and formally as fire hath heat; then it were only going to them, and we should be warm, taking them up in our thoughts and we should be comforted; but virtually as fire is in the flint, which requires some labour and art to strike it out and draw it forth. Now none but faith can learn us this skill of drawing out the sweetness and virtue of the promise, which it doth these three ways among many others: —1. Faith leads the soul to the spring■head of the promises, where it may stand with best advantage to take a view of their greatness and preciousness. 2. Faith attends to the end of the promises, which gives a further prospect of their greatness. 3. Faith presents the Christian with a cloud of witnesses to which the promise hath been fulfilled, and these as great sinners as himself.

[Three ways by which faith teaches the soul to draw out the virtue of the promises.]

1. Way. Faith leads the soul to the spring■head of the promises, where it may stand with best advantage, to take a view of their greatness and preciousness. Indeed we understand little of things till we trace them to their originals and can see them lying in their causes. Then a soul will know his sins to be great when he sees them in their spring and source flowing from an envenomed nature that teems with enmity against God. Then the sinner will tremble at the threatenings which roll like thunder over his head, ready to fall every moment in some judgment or other upon him, when he sees from whence they are sent; the perfect hatred that God bears to sin, and infinite wrath with which he is inflamed against the sinner for it. In a word, then the poor trembling soul will not count the consolation of the promises small when it sees from what fountain it flows—the bosom of God's free mercy. This indeed is the original source of all promises. The covenant itself, which comprehends them all is called 'mercy,' because the product of mercy. 'To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant,' Luke 1:72. Now, saith faith, if the promises flow from the sea of God's free mercy, then they must needs be infinite as he is, boundless and bottomless as that is; so that to reject the promise, or question the sufficiency of the provision made in it upon this account, because thy sins are great or many, casts a dishonourable reflection on that mercy, in whose womb the promise was conceived; and God will certainly bring his action of defamation against thee, for aspersing this his darling attribute, which he can least endure to see slandered and traduced. God makes account you have done your worst against him, when once you report him to be unmerciful or but scant in his mercy. How great a sin this is may be conceived by the thoughts which God hath of this disposition and frame of spirit in his creature. An unmerciful heart is such an abomination before the Lord that it hath few like it. This lies at he bottom of the heathen's charge, as the sediment and grossest part of all their horrid sins—they were 'implacable, unmerciful,' Romans 1:31. Now, to attribute that to God which he so abhors in his creature, must needs make a heart tender of the good name of God to tremble and exceedingly fear. It was a dreadful punishment that God brought upon Jehoram, king of Judah, whom he 'smote in his bowels with an incurable disease,' that after two years' torment his very bowels fell out, 2 Chronicles 21:18-19. And why did this sore and heavy plague befall him?

Surely to let him know his want of bowels of mercy to his brethren and princes, whom he most cruelly butchered. He had not bowels in his heart, and he shall therefore have none in his body. Now, darest thou, saith faith, impute want of bowels to God, that he will not show mercy to thee, who penitently seeks it in Christ's name, when thou seest what testimony he gives of his incensed wrath against those men who have hardened their bowels against their brethren, yea, their enemies? O, have a care of this. To shut thy own bowels of compassion from thy brother in need is s grievous sin, and brings it into question whether the love of God dwells in thee, 1 John 3:17; but, to asperse the merciful heart of God, as if his bowels of compassion were shut against a poor soul in need, that desires to repent and return, is transcendently the greater abomination, and it puts out of all question—where it is persisted in—that the love of God dwells not in him. It is impossible that love to God should draw such a misshapen portraiture of God as this is.

2. Way. Faith attends to the end of the promises, which give a further prospect of their greatness. Now a word, which is the light faith goes by, discovers a double end of promises, especially of the promise of pardoning mercy.

(1.) End. The exalting and magnifying the riches of free grace, which God would have appear in all its glory—so far, I mean, as it is possible to be exposed to the creature's view; for the full sight of God's glory is an object adequate to his own eye and none else. See this counsel and mysterious design sweetly opened, Ephesians 1:6, Ephesians 1:9, Ephesians 1:11-12. The sums of it all will amount to this, that God in himself hath taken up a purpose of pardoning and saving a company of poor sinners for Christ's sake; and this he hath promulgated in the promises of the gospel. And the plot of all is, that he might gather these all together at last in heaven—some of which are already there, others of them at present on earth, and some yet unborn—and, when they shall all meet together in one glorious choir, that there they may, by their triumphant songs and hallelujahs, fill the heavens with praiseful acclamations of thankfulness to the glory of that mercy which hath thus pardoned and saved them. Now, faith observing the praise of God's mercy to be the end aimed at by him in the promise, comes with good news to the trembling soul, and tells it that if God will be but true to his own thoughts, and keep his eye on that mark where at first he hath set it, impossible it is that he should reject any poor penitent sinner merely for the greatness of the sins he hath committed.

It is the exaltation of his mercy, saith faith, that God hath in his eye, when he promiseth pardon to poor sinners. Now, which exalts this most? to pardon little or great sinners? Whose voice will be highest and shrillest in the song of praise, thinkest thou? Surely his to whom most is forgiven; and therefore God cannot but be most ready to pardon the greatest sinners when truly penitent. A physician that means to be famous will not send away those that most need his skill and art, and only practise upon such diseases as are slight and ordinary. They are the great cures which ring far and near. When one, given over by himself and others as a dead man, is, by the skill and care of a physician, rescued out of the jaws of death that seemed to have inclosed him, and raised to health; this commends him to all that hear of it, and gains him more reputation than a whole year's practice in ordinary cures. The great revenue of praise is paid into God's exchequer from those who have had great sins pardoned. He that hath five hundred pence forgiven will love more than he that hath but fifty, by Christ's own judgment, Luke 7:43. And where there is most love there is like to be most praise;—love and praise being symbolical, the one resolving into the other. The voice of a Manasseh, a Magdalene, and a Paul, will be heard, as I may so say, above all the rest

in heaven's concert. The truth is, greatness of sin is so far from putting a bar to the pardoning of a penitent sinner in God's thoughts; that he will pardon none—how little sinners soever they have been —except they see and acknowledge their sins to be great, before they come to him on such an errand. And therefore he useth the law to make way, by its convictions and terrors on the conscience, for his pardoning mercy, to ascend the throne in the penitent sinner's heart with the more magnificence and honour, Romans 5:20. 'The law entered'—that is, it was promulgated first by Moses, and is still preached —'that the offence might abound:'—that is in the conscience by a deeper sense and remorse. And why so, but that 'where sin abounded, grace might much more abound?' We must needs shape our thoughts of the mercy that pardons our sins, suitable to the thoughts we frame to ourselves of the sins we have committed. If we conceive these little, how can we think the other great? And if we tremble at the greatness of our sins, we must needs triumph and exult at the transcendency of the mercy which so far exceeds their bulk and greatness. He that wonders at the height of some high mountain, would much more wonder at the depth of those waters which should quite swallow and cover it from being seen.

(2.) End. The second end of the promise is the believer's comfort. The word, especially this part of it, was on purpose writ, that 'through patience and comfort of the Scriptures they might have hope,' Romans 15:4. God was willing to give poor sinners all the security and satisfaction that might be, concerning the reality of his intentions, and immutability of that counsel which his mercy had resolved upon from eternity, for the saving of all those who would embrace Christ, and the terms offered through him in the gospel; which, that he might do, he makes publication in the Scripture, where he opens his very heart and exposeth the purposes of his love—that from everlasting he had taken up for the salvation of poor sinners—to their own view in the many precious promises, that run like veins throughout the whole body of the Scriptures, and these with all the seals and ratifications which either his wisdom could find, or man's jealous unbelieving heart desire, and all this on a design to silence the querulous spirit of poor tempted souls, and make their life more comfortable, who, pursued by the hue and cry of their high climbing sins, take sanctuary for their lives in Christ Jesus. As we have it in totidem verbis—in so many words, 'That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us,' Hebrews 6:18. And because that of the greatness and multitude of the creature's sins, is both the heaviest millstone which the devil can find to tie about the poor sinner's neck, in order to the drowning him in despair, and that knife also which is the oftenest taken up by the tempted sinner's own hands for the murdering his faith; therefore the more frequent and abundant provision is made by God against this. Or read for this purpose these choice scriptures, Exodus 34:5; Jeremiah 3:1-25, the whole chapter; Isaiah 1:18; Isaiah 45:7-9, Isaiah 45:12; Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 1:9; these, and such like places, are the strongholds which faith retreats into when this battery is raised against the soul.

Canst thou for shame be gravelled, saith faith, O my soul, with an argument drawn merely from the greatness of thy sins, which is answered in every page almost in the Bible, and to confute which so considerable part of Scripture was written? Thus faith hisseth Satan away with this his argument, that he counts so formidable, as they would do a wrangling sophister out of the schools, when he boldly and ridiculously denies some known principle, acknowledged by all for a truth that have not lost their wits. But I would not be here mistaken. God forbid, that while I am curing despair I should cause presumption in any. These two distempers of the soul are equally mortal

and dangerous, and so contrary, that, like the cold stomach and the hot liver in the same person, while the physician thinks to help nature in the one to a heat for digesting its food, he sometimes unhappily kindles a fire in the other that destroys nature itself. Thus, while we labour to cheer the drooping soul's spirits, and strengthen him to retain and digest the promise for his comfort, we are in danger of nourishing that feverish heat of presumptuous confidence, which is a fire will soon eat out all care to please, and fear to displease, God; and consequently all ground of true faith in the soul. Faith and fear are like the natural heat and radical moisture in the body, which is never well but when both are preserved. 'The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.' Let me therefore caution thee, Christian. As thou meanest to find any relief from the mercy of God in a day of distress, take heed thou dost not think to befriend thyself with hopes of any favour thou mayest find from it, though thou continuest thy friendship with thy lusts. [It were] a design as infecable as to reconcile light and darkness, and bring day to dwell with night. Thou needest not indeed fear to believe the pardon of thy sins—if thou repentest of them—merely because they are great; but tremble to think of sinning boldly, because the mercy of God is great. Though mercy be willing to be a sanctuary to the trembling sinner, to shelter him from the curse of his sin; yet it disdains to spread her wing over a bold sinner, to cover him while he is naught with his lust. What! sin because there are promises of pardon, and these promises made by mercy, which as far exceeds our sins as God doth the creature! Truly this is the antipodes to the meaning that God's mercy had in making them, and turns the gospel with its heels upwards. [It is] as if your servant should get to your cellar of strong waters, and with them make himself drunk, which you keep for them when sick or faint, and then only to be used. O take heed of quaffing thus in the bowls of the sanctuary. It is the sad soul, not the sinning, that this wine of consolation belongs to.

3. Way. Faith presents the Christian with a cloud of witnesses to whom the promise hath been fulfilled; and these as great sinners as himself is. Scripture examples are promises verified. They are book-cases, which faith may make use of by way of encouragement, as well as promises. God would never have left the saints' great blots to stand in the Scriptures, to the view of the world in all succeeding generations, had not it been of such use and advantage to tempted souls, to choke this temptation, which of all other makes the most dangerous breach in their souls—so wide sometimes, that despair itself is ready to enter in at it. Blessed Paul gives this very reason why such acts of pardoning mercy to great sinners are recorded, Ephesians 2:1-22. He shows first what foul filthy creatures himself and other believers contemporary with him were before they were made partakers of gospel grace. 'Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh,' Ephesians 2:3; and then he magnifies the rich mercy of God, that rescued and took them out of that damned desperate state. 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,... hath quickened us together with Christ,' Ephesians 2:4. And why must the world know all this? O, God had a design and plot of mercy in them to more than themselves—'That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus,' Ephesians 2:7. Wherever the gospel comes this shall be spoken of, what great sins he had forgiven to them, that unbelief might have her mouth stopped to the end of the world, and this arrow which is so oft on Satan's string made headless and harmless. God commanded Joshua to take twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan and set them up. And observe the reason, 'That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it passed over

Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever,' Joshua 4:6-7. Thus God hath, by his pardoning mercy, taken up some great notorious sinners out of the very depths of sin, who lay at the very bottom, as it were, of hell, swallowed up and engulfed in all manner of abomination; and these he hath set up in his word, that when any poor tempted souls to the end of the world—who are even overwhelmed with fears from the greatness of their sins—shall see and read what God hath done for these, they may be relieved and comforted with these examples, by God intended to be as a memorial of what he hath done for others in time past, so a sign what he shall do, yea, will, for the greatest sinners to the world's end, upon their repentance and faith. No sins, though as great and many as the waters of Jordan themselves, shall be able to stand before the mercy of God's gracious covenant, but shall all be cut off and everlastingly pardoned to them.

O who can read a Manasseh, a Magdalene, a Saul, yea, an Adam—who undid himself and a whole world with him—in the roll of pardoned sinners, and yet turn away from the promise, out of a fear that there is not mercy enough in it to serve his turn? These are as landmarks, that show what large boundaries mercy hath set to itself, and how far it hath gone, even to take into its pardoning arms the greatest sinners, that make not themselves incapable thereof by final impenitency. It were a healthful walk, poor doubting Christian, for thy soul to go this circuit, and oft to see where the utmost stone is laid and boundary set by God's pardoning mercy—farther than which he will not go—that thou mayest not turn in the stone to the prejudice of the mercy of God by thy own unbelief, nor suffer thyself to be abused by Satan's lies, who will make nothing to remove God's land■mark, if he may by it but increase thy trouble of spirit, though he be cursed for it himself. But if, after all this, thy sins seems to exceed the proportion of any one thou canst find pardoned in Scripture —which were strange—yet faith at this plunge hath one way left beyond all these examples for thy soul's succour, and that is to fix thy eye on Christ, who, though he never had sin of his own, yet laid down his life to procure and purchase pardon for all the elect, and hath obtained it; they are all, and shall, as they come upon the stage, be pardoned. 'Now,' saith faith, 'suppose thy sins were greater than any one saint's; yet are they as great as all the sins of the elect together?' Thou darest not surely say or think so. And cannot Christ procure thy pardon, who art but a single person, that hath done it for so many millions of his elect? Yea, were thy sins as great as all theirs are, the sum would be the same; and God could forgive it if it lay in one heap, as well as now when it is in several. Christ is 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,' John 1:29. See here all the sins of the elect world trussed up in one fardel,[9] and he carries it lightly away into the land of forgetfulness. Now faith will tell thee, poor soul, that the whole virtue and merit of Christ's blood, by which the world was redeemed, is offered to thee, and shall be communicated to thy soul in particular. Christ doth not retail and parcel out his blood and the purchase of it, some to one and some to another; then thou mightest say something; but he gives his whole self to the faith of every believer. All is yours, you are Christ's. O, what mayest thou not, poor soul, take up from the promise, upon the credit of so great a Redeemer?

[To the greatness of all the rest, faith opposes the greatness of this one sin of despair.]

Third. Faith, to quench this fiery dart headed with the greatness of sin, and shot by Satan to drive the poor and penitent soul to despair, teacheth him to oppose the greatness of this one sin of despair to the greatness of all his other sins. 'What,' saith faith, 'would Satan persuade thee, because thou hast been so great and prodigious a sinner, therefore not to believe, or dare to think

the promise hath any good news for thee? Retort thou, O my soul, his argument upon himself, and tell him [that] that very thing by which he would dissuade thee from believing, doth much more deter thee from despairing; and that is the greatness of this sin above all thy other.' Grant to be true what he chargeth thee withal, that thou art such a monster in sin as he sets thee forth—though thou hast no reason to think so upon his bare report, but yield him his saying—dost thou think to mend the matter or better thy condition by despairing? Is this all the kindness he will show thee, to make thee of a great sinner, a desperate sinner like himself? This, indeed, is the only way he can think of to make thee worse than thou art. And, that this is true, faith is able to prove by these four considerations of this bloody horrid sin, which will easily evince more malignity to be in this one sin of despair, than in any other, yea, all other together. 1. Despair opposeth God in the greatest of all his commands. 2. Despair hath a way peculiar to itself of dishonouring God above other sins. 3. Despair strengthens and enrages all other sins in the soul. 4. The greatness of this sin of despair appears in this, that the least sin envenomed by it is unpardonable, and without this the greatest is pardonable.

[Four considerations proving the sin of despair to exceed all others together.]

Consideration 1. Despair opposeth God in the greatest of all his commands. the greatest command without all compare in the whole Bible, is to believe. When those Jews asked our Lord Jesus, 'What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?' mark his answer, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent,' John 6:28-29. As if he had said, The most compendious way that I am able to give you, is to receive me into your hearts by faith; do this, and you do all in one. This is the work that is instar omnium—all in all. All you do is undone, and yourselves also, till this work be done, for which you shall have as much thanks at God's hands as if you could keep the whole law. Indeed, it is accepted in lieu of it: 'To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness,' Romans 4:5; where 'he that worketh not,' is not meant a slothful lazy sinner that hath no list to work, nor a rebellious sinner whose heart riseth against the work which the holy law of God would employ him in; but the humbled sinner, who desires and endeavours to work, but is no way able to do the task the law as a covenant sets him, and therefore is said to have a law■sense not to work, because he doth not work to the law's purpose, so as to answer its demands, which will accept nothing short of perfect obedience. This man's faith on Christ is accepted for righteousness; that is, God reckons him so, and so he shall pass at the great day by the judge's sentence, as if he had never trod one step awry from the path of the law. Now, if faith be the work of God above all other, then unbelief is the work of the devil, and that to which he had rather thou shouldst do than drink or drab. And despair is unbelief at the worst. Unbelief among sins is as the plague among disease, the most dangerous; but when it riseth to despair, then it is as the plague with the tokens that bring the certain message of death with them. Unbelief is despair in the bud, despair is unbelief at its full growth.

Consideration 2. Despair hath a way peculiar to itself of dishonouring God above other sins. Every sin wounds the law, and the name of God through the law's sides. But this wound is healed when the penitent sinner by faith comes to Christ and closeth with him. God makes account, reparations now are fully made through Christ—whom the believer receives —for the wrong done to his law, and his name vindicated from the dishonour cast upon it by the creature's former iniquities; yea, that it appears more glorious because it is illustrious, by the shining forth of one title of honour, not

the least prized by God himself—his forgiving mercy—which could not have been so well known to the creature, if not drawn forth to act upon this occasion. But what would you say of such a prodigious sinner that, when he hath wounded the law, is not willing to have it healed? when he hath dishonoured God, and that in a high provoking manner, is not willing that the dirt he hath cast on God's face should be wiped off? Methinks I see every one of your choler to rise at the reading of this, against such a wretch, and hear you asking, as once Ahasuerus did Esther, 'Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?' Esther 7:5. Would you know? Truly, the adversary and enemy is this wicked despair. The despairing soul is the person that will not let Christ make satisfaction for the wrong that by his sins he hath done to God. Suppose a man should wound another dangerously in his passion, and when he hath done, will not let any chirurgeon come near to cure the wound he hath made. Every one would say his last act of cruelty was worse than his first.

O my soul, saith faith, thou didst ill, yea, very ill, in breaking the holy laws of God, and dishonouring the name of the great God of heaven and earth thereby; let thy heart ache for this. But thou dost far worse by despairing of mercy. In this act thou rejectest Christ, and keepest him off from satisfying the justice of the law that is injured by thee, and from redeeming the honour of his name from the reproach thy sins have scandalized it with. What language speaks thy despair but this? Let God come by his right and honour as he can, thou wilt never be an instrument active in the helping of him to it, by believing on Christ, in whom he may fully have them with advantage. O what shame would despair put the mercy of God to in the sight of Satan his worst enemy! He claps his hands at this, to see all the glorious attributes of God served alike and divested of their honour. This is meat and drink to him. That cursed spirit desires no better music than to hear the soul ring the promises, like bells, backward; make no other use of them than to confirm it in its own desperate thoughts of its damnation, and to tell it hell■fire is kindled in its conscience, which no mercy in God will or can quench to eternity. As the bloody Jews and Roman soldiers exercised their cruelty on every part almost of Christ's body, crowning his head with thorns, goring his side with a spear, and fastening his hands and feet with nails; so the despairing sinner deals with the whole name of God. He doth, as it were, put a mock crown on the head of his wisdom, setting it all to naught, and charging it foolishly, as if the method of salvation was not laid with prudence by the all■wise God. He nails the hands of his almighty power, while he thinks his sins are of that nature as put him out of the reach and beyond the power of God to save him. He pierceth the tender bowls of God through his mercy, of which he cannot see enough in a God that not only hath, but is, mercy and love itself, to persuade him to hope for any favour or forgiveness at his hands. In a word, the despairing soul transfixeth his very heart and will, while he unworthily frames notions of God, as if he were unwilling to the work of mercy, and not so inclined to exercise acts of pardon and forgiveness on poor sinners as the word declares him. No, despair basely misreports him to the soul, as if he were a lame God, and had no feet—affections, I mean—to carry him to such a work as forgiving sin is. Now, what does the sum of all this amount to? If you can, without horror and amazement, stand to cast it up, and consider the weight of those circumstances which aggravate the flagitiousness of this unparalleled fact, surely it riseth to no less than the highest attempt that the creature can make for the murdering of God himself; for the infinitude of God's wisdom, power, mercy, and all his attributes, are more intrinsical to the essence and being of God, than the heart■blood is to the life of a mortal man. Shall he that lets out the heart■blood of a man, yea, but attempts to do it, be a murderer—especially if he be a prince or a king the design is

against—and deservedly suffer as such a one? and shall not he much more be counted and punished as the worst of all murderers that attempts to take away the life of God —though his arm and dagger be too short for the purpose—by taking from him in his thoughts the infinitude of those attributes which are, as I may say, the very life of God? Surely God will neither part with the glory, nor suffer the dishonour, of his name at the hands of his sorry creature; but will engage all his attributes for the avenging himself on the wretch that attempts it. O tremble therefore at despair. Nothing makes thy face gather blackness, and thy soul hasten faster to the complexion of the damned souls, than this. Now thou sinnest after the similitude of those that are in hell.

Consideration 3. Despair strengthens and enrageth all other sins in the soul. None fight so fiercely as those who look for no quarter. They think themselves dead men, and therefore they will sell their lives as dear as they can. Samson despaired of ever getting out of the Philistines' hands—his eyes being now lost, and he unfit to make an escape. What doth he meditate, now his case is desperate, but his enemies' ruin, though it costs him his own? He cares not though he pulls the house on his own head, so it may but fall on the Philistines' also. Absalom, when by the cursed counsel of Ahithophel he had, as he thought, made himself so hateful to David as to put him past all hope of being treated with, then breaks out with a high rage and seeks the ruin of his royal father with fire and sword. So cruel a thing is despair, it teaches to show no respect where it looks for none. But most clearly it appears in the devil himself, who, knowing himself to be excepted from the pardon, sins with a rage as high as heaven. And the same sin hath the same effects in men that it hath in the devil, according to the degrees of it that are found in them. 'They said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices,' Jeremiah 18:11-12. Did you never see a sturdy beggar—after a while knocking at a door, and concluding by the present silence or denial that he shall have nothing given him—fall into a cursing and railing of them that dwell there? Even such foul language doth despair learn the sinner to belch out against the God of heaven. If despair enters it is impossible to keep blasphemy out. Pray, therefore, and do thy utmost to repel this dart, lest it soon set thy soul on a flame with this hell■fire of blasphemy.

Hear, O you souls smitten for sin, that spend your life in sighs, sobs, and tears for your horrid crimes past, would you again be seen fighting against God as fierce as ever? As you would not, take heed of despair. If thou once thinkest that God's heart is hardened against thee, thy heart will not be long hardening against him. And this, by the way, may administer comfort to the thoughts of some gracious but troubled souls, who can find no faith that they have, yea, who are oft reckoning themselves among despairers. Let me ask thee who art in this sad condition, this one thing, Canst thou find any love breathing in thy heart towards God, though thou canst find no breath of love coming at present from him to thee? And art thou tender and fearful of sinning against him, even while thou seemest to thy own thoughts to hope for no mercy from him? If so, be of good comfort; thy faith may be weak, but thou art far from being under the power of despair. Desperate souls do not use to reserve any love for God, or care for the pleasing of him. There is some faith surely in thy soul which is the cause of these motions, though, like the spring in a watch, it be itself unseen, when the other graces moved by it are visible.

Consideration 4. The greatness of this sin of despair appears in this, that the least sin envenomed by it is unpardonable, and without this the greatest is pardonable. That must needs of all sins be most abominable which makes the creature incapable of mercy. Judas was not damned merely for his treason and murder; for others that had their hands deep in the same horrid fact, obtained a

pardon by faith in that blood which through cruelty they shed; but they were these heightened into the greatest malignity possible, from the putrid stuff of despair and final impenitency with which his wretched heart was filled, that he died so miserably of, and now is infinitely more miserably damned for. Such being despair, then, oh, let us shrink from the woful gulf!

[1]see vol. i p. 128 [2]see vol. i p. 129.

[3]Shrap, or shrape, a place baited with chaff to entice birds. Imp. Dict.—Ed.

[4]The following is a series of quotes that refer to what the Rev. Gurnall is stating here. The reason for the Scripture citation is obvious. The next two references are language resources that give fuller information on the word in question. These I have supplied to aid the reader in understanding the point and were not supplied with the book. — SDB.

17This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, 18having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: 19who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness4124.

— Ephesians 4:1-32 4124 B80@<0>\" pleonexia {pleh■on■ex■ee'■ah} from 4123; TDNT 6:266,864; n f AV ■ covetousness 8, greediness 1, covetous practice 1; 10 1) greedy desire to have more, covetousness, avarice gen. pleonexias, fem. noun from pleion (4119), more, and écho (2192) to have. Covetousness, greediness (Luke 12:15; Romans 1:29 [cf. 1 Corinthians 5:10-11]; 2 Corinthians 9:5, "as bounty or blessing on your part, and not as covetousness on ours, not as extorted by us from you" (a.t.); Ephesians 4:19; 1 Thessalonians 2:5; 2 Peter 2:3, 2 Peter 2:14; LXX, Jeremiah 22:7; Habakkuk 2:9). Pleonexia is a larger term which includes philarguria (5365), love of money to hoard away, avarice. It is connected with extortioners (1 Corinthians 5:10); with thefts (Mark 7:22, covetous thoughts, plans of fraud and extortion); with sins of the flesh (Ephesians 5:3, Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5). Pleonexia may be said to be the root from which these sins grow, the longing of the creature which has forsaken God to fill itself with the lower objects of nature. From The Complete Word Study New Testament Dictionary By Spiros Zodhiates © 1992 And Vine notes that this Greek word is used always in the bad or evil sense.

— From Vine's: under "covetousness," no. 3.

[5]Callow, bare, wanting feathers—Ed.

[6]Cologued: intrigue, conspire; to talk privately, confer.

[7]ebullition; violent boiling over. — SDB [8]Refel; an obsolete term meaning to reject, repulse.

— SDB [9]Fardel: bundle or burden. From Webster's — SDB

02.03 - Fifth Piece - The Christian's Helmet

Direction Ninth. The Several Pieces of the Whole Armour of God.

Fifth Piece—The Christian's Helmet.

'And take the helmet of salvation' (Ephesians 6:17).

These words present us with another piece of the Christian's panoply—a helmet to cover his head in the day of battle—the helmet of salvation. It makes the fifth in the apostle's order. And, which is observable, this, with most of the pieces in this magazine, are defensive arms, and all to defend the Christian from sin, none to secure him from suffering.

First. They are most defensive arms. Indeed, there is but one of all the pieces in the whole panoply for offence, i.e. 'the sword.' It may be to give us this hint, that this spiritual war of the Christian lies chiefly on the defence, and therefore requires arms most of this kind to wage it. God hath deposited a rich treasure of grace in every saint's heart. At this is the devil's great spite; to plunder him of it, and with it of his happiness, he commenceth a bloody war against him. So that the Christian overcomes his enemy when himself is not overcome by him. He wins the day when he doth not lose his grace, his work being rather to keep what is his own than to get what is his enemy's. And truly this one thing well heeded, that the saint's war lies chiefly on the defence, would be of singular use to direct the Christian how to manage his combats both with Satan and also his instruments.

First. With Satan. Look, Christian, thou standest always in a defensive posture, with thy armour on, as a soldier, upon thy works, ready to defend the castle of thy soul which God hath set thee to keep, and valiantly to repel Satan's assaults whenever he makes his approach. But be not persuaded out of the line of thy place, and calling that God hath drawn about thee; no, not under the specious pretence of zeal and hope to get the greater victory by falling into the enemies' quarters. Let Satan be the assailant, and come if he will to tempt thee; but go not thou in a bravado to tempt him to do it. It is just he should be foiled that seeks his own danger. This got Peter his fall in the high■priest's hall, who was left therefore cowardly to deny his master, that he might learn humbly to deny himself ever after.

Second. With Satan's instruments. May be they revile and reproach thee. Remember thy part lies on the defence. Give not railing for railing, reproach for reproach. The gospel allows thee no liberty to use their weapons, and return them quid pro quo—stroke for stroke. 'Be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing,' 1 Peter 3:8-9. Thou hast here a girdle and breastplate to defend thee from their bullets—the comfort of thy own sincerity and holy walking, with which thou mayest wipe off the dirt thrown upon thy own face—but no weapon for self-revenge. A shield is put into thy hand, which thou mayest lift up to quench their fiery darts, but no darts of bitter words to retort upon them. Thou art 'shod with peace,' that thou mayest walk safely upon the injuries they do thee, without any prick or pain to thy spirit, but not with pride to trample upon the persons that wrong thee.

Second. As most of the pieces are defensive, so all of them to defend from sin, none to secure the Christian from suffering. They are to defend him in suffering, not privilege him from it. He must prepare the more for suffering, because he is so well furnished with armour to bear it. Armour is not given for men to wear by the fireside at home, but in the field. How shall the maker be praised, if the metal of his arms be not known? And where shall it be put to the proof, but amidst swords and bullets? He that desires to live all his days in an isle of providence, where the whole year is summer, will never make a good Christian. Resolve for hardship, or lay down thine arms. Here is the true reason why so few come at the beat of Christ's drum to his standard; and so many of those few that have listed themselves by an external profession under him, do within a while drop away, and leave his colours; it is suffering work they are sick of. Most men are more tender of their skin than conscience; and had rather the gospel had provided armour to defend their bodies from death and danger, than their souls from sin and Satan. But I come to the words—'and take the helmet of salvation;' in which—after we notice the copulative that clasps this to the former piece of armour, viz. 'and,' showing the connection between the various pieces, we pass to observe—FIRST. The piece of armour itself—the helmet of salvation. SECOND. The use of this 'helmet,' or the offices of hope in the Christian's warfare. THIRD. Several applications of the doctrine of the helmet of salvation, alike to those who have and to those who have it not.

Connection of the Helmet with the Shield, and the previous pieces of the Armour.

Let us notice the copulative 'and.' 'And take the helmet of salvation;' that is, with the shield of faith, and all the other pieces of armour here set down, take this also into the field with you. See here how every grace is lovingly coupled to its fellow; and all at last, though many pieces, make but one suit; though many links, yet make but one chain. The note which this points at is the concatenation of graces.

[The concatenation of graces, in their birth, growth, and decay.]

Note. The sanctifying saving graces of God's Spirit are linked inseparably together; there is a connection of them one to the other, and that in their birth, growth, and decay.

First Connection. In their birth. Where one sanctifying grace is, the rest are all to be found in its company. It is not so in common gifts and graces. These are parcelled out like the gifts Abraham bestowed on the children he had by his concubines, Genesis 25:6. One hath this gift, another hath that, none hath all. He that hath a gift of knowledge may want a gift of utterance, and so of the rest. But sanctifying graces are like the inheritance he gave to Isaac; every true believer hath them all given him. 'He that is in Christ is a new creature.' And, 'Behold all things are become new,' 2 Corinthians 5:17. Now, the new creature contains all. As natural corruption is a universal principle of all sin, that sours the whole lump of man's nature; so is sanctifying grace an universal principle, that sweetly seasons and renews the whole man at once, though not wholly. Grace comes, saith one, into the soul, as the soul into the body at once. Indeed, it grows by steps, but is born at once. The new creature hath all its parts formed together, though not its degrees. Some one grace may, we confess, be perceived to stir, and so come under the Christian's notice, before another. He may feel his fear of God putting forth itself in a holy trembling, and awe upon his spirit, at the thoughts of God, before he sees his faith in the fiduciary recumbency of his soul upon God; yet the one grace is not in its production before the other. One part of the world hath been discovered to us long after the other; yet all the world was made together. Now this connection of graces in their

birth is of double use.

1. Use. To relieve the sincere Christian when in doubt of his gracious state, because some one grace which he inquires for, cannot at present be discerned in his soul by him. Possibly it is faith thou hast been looking for, and it is not at any hand to be heard of. Well, Christian, do not presently unsaint thyself till thou hast made further trial of thyself. Send out therefore thy spies to search for some other grace—as thy love to Christ; may be thou wilt hear some tidings of this grace, though the other is not in view. Hath not thy love to God and Christ been seen by thee in such a temptation, chasing it away with Joseph's answer to his wanton mistress, 'How...can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' Yea, mayest thou not see it all the day long, either in thy sincere care to please him, or hearty sorrow when thou hast done anything that grieves him? in which two veins run the life■blood of a soul's love to Christ. Now, know to thy comfort, that thy love can tell thee news of thy faith. As Christ said in another case, 'He that hath seen me hath seen my Father,' John 14:9; so say I to thee, 'Thou that hast seen thy love to Christ, hast seen thy faith in the face of thy love.'

But, may be, thy love to Christ is also lodged in a cloud. Well, then, see whether thou canst spy no evangelical repentance, loathing thee with the sight of thy sins, as also enfiring thee with revenge against them, as those enemies which drew thee into rebellion against God, yea, were the bloody weapon with which thou hast so oft wounded the name and murdered the Son of God. Behold, the grace thou lookest for stands before thee. What is love to God, if zeal against sin as God's enemy be not? Did not Abishai love David, when his heart boiled so over with rage against Shimei for cursing David, that he could not contain, but breaks out into a passion, saying, 'Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head?' 2 Samuel 16:9. And by thy own acknowledgment it troubles thee as much to hear thy lusts bark against God, and thy will is as good to be the death of them, if God would but say his fiat to it, as ever Abishai's was to strike that traitor's head off his shoulders; and yet art thou in doubt whether thou lovest God or no? Truly then thou canst not see fire for flame, love for zeal. Thus, as by taking hold of one link you may draw up the rest of the chain that lies under water, so by discovering one grace, thou mayest bring all to sight. Joseph and Mary were indeed deceived, when they supposed their son to be in the company of their kindred, Luke 2:44. But so canst thou not here. For this holy kindred of graces go ever together, they are knit, as members of the body, one to another. Though you see only the face of a man, yet you doubt not but the whole man is there.

2. Use. As it may relieve the sincere Christian, so it will help to uncase and put the hypocrite to shame, who makes great pretensions to some one grace when he hates another at the same time—a certain note of a false heart. He never had any grace that loves not all graces. Moses would not out of Egypt with half his company, Exodus 10:1-29. Either all must go or none shall stir. Neither will the Spirit of God come into a soul with half of his sanctifying graces, but with all his train. If therefore thy heart be set against any one grace, it proves thou art a stranger to the rest; and though thou mayest seem a great admirer and lover of one grace, yet the defiance thou standest in to others washeth off the paint of this fair cover. Love and hatred are of the whole kind; he that loves or hates one saint as such, doth the same by every saint; so he that cordially closeth with one grace, will find every grace endeared to him upon the same account; for they are as like one to another, as one beam of the sun is to another beam.

Second Connection. Sanctifying graces are connected in their growth and decay. Increase one grace, and you strengthen all; impair one, and you will be a loser in all; and the reason is, because they are reciprocally helpful each to other. So that when one grace is wounded, the assistance it should and would, if in temper, contribute to the Christian's common stock, is either wholly detained or much lessened. When love cools, obedience slacks and drives heavily, because it wants the oil on its wheel that love used to drop. Obedience faltering, faith weakens apace. How can there be great faith when there is little faithfulness? Faith weakening, hope presently wavers; for it is the credit of faith's report, that hope goes on to expect good from God. And hope wavering, patience breaks, and can keep shop windows open no longer, because it trades with the stock hope lends it. In the body you observe there are many members, yet all make but one body; and every member so useful, that the others are beholden to it. So in the Christian there are many graces, but one new creature. And the eye of knowledge cannot say to the hand of faith, 'I have no need of thee,' nor the hand of faith to the foot of obedience, but all are preserved by the mutual care they have of one another. For, as ruin to the whole city may enter at a breach in one part of its wall, and the soul run out through a wound in a particular member of the body; so the ruin of all the graces may, yea must needs, follow on the ruin of any one. There is indeed a stronger bond of necessity between graces of our souls than there is between the members of our body. It is possible, yea ordinary, for some member to be cut off from the body without the death of the whole, because all the members of the body are not vital parts. But every grace is a vital part in the new creature, and so essential to its very being that its absence cannot be supplied per vicarium—by substitution. In the body one eye can make a shift to do the office of it fellow which is put out; and one hand do the other's work that is cut off, though may not be so exactly; but faith cannot do the office of love, nor love the work of obedience. The lack of one wheel spoils the motion of the whole clock. And if one grace should be wanting, the end would not be attained for which this rare piece of workmanship is set up in the saint's heart.

[Two inferences to be drawn from the connection of graces.]

First Inference. Let it learn thee, Christian, this wisdom, whenever thou findest any grace weakened, either through thy negligence not tending it, or Satan's temptations wounding it, speedily to endeavour to recovery of it; because thou dost not only lose the comfort which the exercise of this one grace might bring, but thou weakenest all the others. Is he a bad husband who hazards the fall of his house by suffering a hole or two in the roof go unmended? What, then, art thou that puttest thy whole gracious state in danger, by neglecting a timely repair of the breach made in any one of thy graces? And so when thou art tempted to any sin, look not on it as a single sin, but as having all other sins in its belly. Consider what thou dost before thou gratifiest Satan in any one motion; for by one sin thou strengthenest the whole body of sin. Give to one sin, and that will send more beggars to your door; and they will come with a stronger plea than the former; another, why mayest thou not do this for them, as well as that? Thy best way is to keep the door shut to all; lest, while thou intendest to entertain only one, all crowd in with it. But if it were possible that thou couldst break this connection of sin, so as to take off one link that pleaseth thee best, and not draw the whole chain after thee by committing this, yet know there is a connection of guilt also. 'Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all,' James 2:10. As he that administereth to the estate of one deceased, though it be never so little that he takes into his hands, becomes liable to pay all his debts, and brings all his creditors upon him; so

by tampering but with one sin, and that a little one, thou bringest the whole law upon thy back, which will arrest thee upon God's suit, as a trespasser and transgressor of all its commands. A man cannot stab any part of the face but he will disfigure the whole countenance, and wrong the whole man. Thus the law is copulative; an affront done to one redounds to the dishonour of all, and so is resented by God the lawgiver, whose authority is equally in all.

Second Inference. This may comfort those who trouble themselves with the thoughts of future changes which may befall them, and so alter the scene of their affairs, as to call them to act a part they never much thought upon; and what shall they do then, say they? Now, blessed be God, they make a shift to serve God in their place. But what if straits come? poverty, sickness, or other crosses, make a breach in their bank? How, alas! shall they then behave themselves? Where is their faith, patience, contentment, and other suffering graces, that should enable them to walk on these waves without sinking? They fear, alas! little of these suffering graces is in their hands for such a time. Well, Christian, for thy encouragement know, that if the graces of thy present condition —those I mean which God calls thee to exercise now in thy prosperous state—be lively, and quit themselves well, thou mayest comfortably hope the other suffering graces, which now stand unseen behind the curtain, will do the same, when God changeth the scene of thy affairs and calls them upon the stage to act their part. The more humble thou art now with thy abundance, the more patient thou wilt certainly show thyself in thy penury. So much as thy heart is now above the world's enjoyments, even so much thou wilt then be above the troubles and sorrows of it. Trees, they say, grow proportionably under ground to what they do above ground; and the Christian will find something like this in his graces.

DIRECTION IX.—FIRST GENERAL PART.

[The Helmet of Salvation, what it is.] 'Take the helmet of salvation' (Ephesians 6:17).

We have done with the connective particle, whereby this piece is coupled to the former, and now come to address our discourse to the piece of armour itself—'take the helmet of salvation.' Though we have not here, as in all the other [pieces], the grace expressed, yet we need not be long at a loss for it, if we consult with another place, where our apostle lends us a key to decipher his meaning in this. And none so fit to be interpreter of the apostle's words as himself. The place is, 1 Thessalonians 5:8, 'And for an helmet, the hope of salvation:' so that, without any further scruple, we shall fasten the grace of 'hope,' as intended by the Holy Ghost in this place. Now, in order to a treatise of this grace, it is requisite that something be said by explication that may serve as a light set up in the entry, to lead us the better into the several rooms of the point which is to be the subject of our discourse; and this I shall do by showing—First. What 'hope' is. Second. Why called 'the hope of salvation.' Third. Why this 'hope' is compared to 'a helmet.'

[The nature of the hope that forms the helmet.]

First Inquiry. What is the nature of the hope that forms the Christian's helmet? A little to open the nature of this grace of hope, we shall do so as it will best be done, by laying down a plain description of it, and briefly explicating the parts. Hope is a supernatural grace of God, whereby the believer, through Christ, expects and waits for all those good things of the promise, which at present he hath not received, or not fully.

First. Here is the author or efficient of hope —God; who is called ‘the God of all grace,’ 1 Peter 5:10 —that is, the giver and worker of all grace, both as to the first seed and the further growth of it. It is impossible for the creature to make the least pile of grass, or being made, to make it grow; and as impossible to produce the least seed of grace in the heart, or to add one cubit to the stature of it. No, as God is the father of the rain, by which the herbs in the fields spring and grow, so also of those spiritual dews and influences that must make every grace thrive and flourish. The apostle, in the former place, teacheth us this when he prays that God would ‘perfect, establish, strengthen, settle them.’ And as of all grace in general, so of this in particular, Romans 15:13, where he is styled ‘the God of hope;’ and ‘by whom we abound in hope’ also. It is a supernatural hope; and thereby we distinguish it from the heathens’ hope, which, with the rest of their moral virtues, so far as any excellency was found in them, came from God—to whom every man that cometh into the world is beholden for all the light he hath, John 1:9—and is but the remains of man’s first noble principles, as sometimes we shall see a broken turret or two stand in the midst of the ruins of some stately palace demolished, that serves for little more than to help the spectator to give a guess what godly buildings once stood there.

Second. Here is hope’s subject—the believer. True hope is a jewel that none wears but Christ’s bride; a grace with which none is graced but the believer’s soul. Christless and hopeless are joined together, Ephesians 2:12. And here it is not amiss to observe the order in which hope stands to faith. In regard of time, they are not one before another; but in order of nature and operation, faith hath preced ency of hope. First, faith closeth with the promise as a true and faithful word, then hope lifts up the soul to wait for the performance of it. Who goes out to meet him that he believes will not come? The promise is, as it were, God’s love■letter to his church and spouse, in which he opens his very heart, and tells all he means to do for her. Faith reads and embraceth it with joy, whereupon the believing soul by hope looks out at his window with a longing expectation to see her husband’s chariot come in the accomplishment thereof. So Paul gives a reason for his own hope from his faith, Acts 24:14-15, and prays for the Romans’ faith in order to their hope, Romans 15:13.

Third. Here is hope’s object.

1. In general, something that is good. If a thing be evil, we fear and flee from it; if good, we hope and wait for it. And here is one note of difference between it and faith. Faith believes evil as well as good; hope is conversant about good.

2. It is the good of the promise. And in this faith and hope agree; both their lines are drawn from the same centre of the promise. Hope without a promise is like an anchor without ground to hold by; it bears the promise on its name. ‘I stand and am judged,’ saith Paul, ‘for the hope of the promise,’ Acts 26:6. So David shows where he moors his ship and casts his anchor. ‘I hope in thy word,’ Psalms 119:81. True hope will trade only for true good. And we can all nothing so that the good God hath not promised; for the promise runs thus, ‘No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly,’ Psalms 84:11.

3. All good things of the promise. As God hath encircled all good in the promise, so he hath promised nothing but good; and therefore hope’s object is all that the promise holds forth. Only, as the matter of the promise hath more degrees of goodness, so hope intends its act, and longs more earnestly for it. God, he is the chief good, and the fruition of him is promised as the utmost

happiness of the creature. Therefore true hope takes her chief aim at God, and makes after all other promises in a subserviency to heave and lift the soul nearer unto him. He is called 'the Hope of Israel,' Jeremiah 17:13. There is nothing beyond God the enjoying of which the believer projects; and nothing short of God that he can be so content with as, for the enjoying of it, to be willing to give God a general and full discharge of what by promise he stands engaged to him for. Now, because God is only enjoyed fully and securely in heaven's blissful state, therefore it is called 'the hope of glory,' Colossians 1:27, 'the hope of eternal life,' Titus 3:7, and 'the hope of salvation,' 1 Thessalonians 5:8.

4. The object of hope is the good of the promise, not in hand, but yet to be performed. 'Hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?' Romans 8:24. Futurity is intrinsical to hope's object, and distinguisheth it from faith, which gives a present being to the promise, and is §8B\>@µX<T< ßB`FJ"F4H—the subsistence of things hoped for, Hebrews 11:1. The good of the promise hath a kind of subsistence by faith in the soul. It is heaven as it were in an interview. It brings the Christian and heaven together, as if he were there already. Hence they are said by faith to kiss and embrace the promise, Hebrews 11:13, as two friends when they meet. Faith speaks in the present tense, 'We are conquerors, yea, we are more than conquerors.' Hope in futuro—in the future, 'I shall.' And lastly, I inserted or not fully performed. Partial performance of the promise intends hope; but, complete, ends hope, and swallows it up in love and joy. Indeed, either the full performance of the promise, or execution of the threatening, shuts out all hope. In heaven the promise is paid and hope dismissed, because we have what was looked for; and in hell the threatening is fully inflicted, and therefore no hope to be found among the damned, because no possibility of release.

Fourth. Hope's aid—by whose help and for whose sake it expects to obtain the promise—and that is Jesus Christ. It waits for all in and through him. He is therefore called 'our hope,' 1 Timothy 1:1, because through him we hope for what is promised, both as the purchaser, by whose death we have hanc veniam sperandi—leave and liberty to expect good from God; and by whose Spirit we have virtutem sperandi—ability to hope; so that both the ¦>@F\" and *b<"µ4H —the authority and strength to hope comes from Christ; the former by the effusion of his blood for us, the latter by the infusion of his Spirit into us.

[Why this hope is called the hope of salvation.]

Second Inquiry. Why is the Christian's hope styled a 'hope of salvation?' A double reason is obvious.

First Reason. Because salvation comprehends and takes within its circle the whole object of his hope. 'Salvation' imports such a state of bliss, wherein meet eminently the mercies and enjoyments of the promises, scattered some in one and some in another; as at the creation, the light which was first diffused through the firmament was gathered into the sun. Cast up the particular sums of all good things promised in the covenant, and the total which they amount unto is, salvation. The ultima unitas—final whole, or unity, gives the denomination to the number, because it comprehends all; so salvation the ultimate object of the Christian's expectation, and that which comprehends the rest, denominates his hope.

Second Reason. It is called ‘a hope of salvation,’ to distinguish it from the worldling’s hope, whose portion, Psalms 16:1-11, is in this life, and so his hope also. It is confessed that many of these will pretend to a hope of salvation; but the truth is, they neither have right to it, nor are they very eager of it. They think themselves so well seated in this world, that if they might have their wish, it should be that God would not remove them hence. Even when they say they hope to be saved, their consciences tell them that they had rather stay here than part with this world in hope to mend themselves in the other. They blow up themselves into a hope and desire of salvation, more out of a dread of hell than liking of heaven. None I think so mad among them but had rather be saved than damned—live in heaven than lie in hell—yet the best of the whole pack likes this world better than them both.

[Why hope is compared to a helmet.] Third Inquiry. Why is hope compared to a helmet? For this conceive a double reason.

First Reason. The helmet defends the head, a principal part of the body, from dint of bullet and sword; so this ‘hope of salvation’ defends the soul, the principal part of man, and the principal faculties of that, whereby no dangerous, to be sure no deadly, impression by Satan or sin be made on it. Temptations may trouble but cannot hurt, except their darts enter the will and leave a wound there, by drawing it to some consent and liking of them; from which this helmet of hope, if it be of the right make, and fits sure on the Christian’s head, will defend him. It is hard to draw him into any treasonable practice against his prince, who is both well satisfied of his favour at present, and stands also on the stairs of hope, expecting assuredly to be called up within a while to the highest preferment that the court can afford or his king give. No, the weapons of rebellion and treason are usually forged and fashioned in discontent’s shop. When subject’s take themselves to be neglected and slighted by their prince—think that their preferments are now at an end, and [that they] must look for no great favours more to come from him—this softens them to receive every impression of disloyalty that any enemy to the king shall attempt to stamp them withal. As we see in the Israelites; thinking the men of Judah, of whose tribe the king was, had got a monopoly of his favour, and themselves to be shut out from sharing, at least equally, with them therein; how soon are they —even at a blast or two of Sheba’s seditious trumpet —made rebels against their sovereign? ‘We have no part in David,’ saith Sheba, ‘neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel!’ 2 Samuel 20:1. And see how this treason runs, even like a squib upon a rope. ‘Every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba,’ 2 Samuel 20:2. Thus, if once the soul fears it hath no part in God, and expects no inheritance from him, I know no sin so great but it may at the sound of the tempter’s trumpet be drawn to commit.

Second Reason. As the helmet defends the soldier’s head from wounding, so his heart also from swooning. It makes him bold and fearless in battle though amidst swords and bullets. Goliath with his helmet of brass and other furniture, how confidently and daringly did the man come on! As if he had been so enclosed in his armour that it was impossible that any we apon could come near to deliver a message of death unto him! This made him carry his crest so high, and defy a whole host, till at last he paid his life for his pride and folly. But here is a helmet that whoever wears it need never be put to shame for his holy boasting. God himself allows him so to do, and will bear him out in this rejoicing of his hope. ‘Thou shalt know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me,’ Isaiah 49:23. This made holy David so undaunted in the midst of his enemies, ‘Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear,’ Psalms 27:3. His

hope would not suffer his heart so much as beat within him for any fear of what they could do to him. He had this ‘helmet of salvation’ on, and therefore he saith, ‘Mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me,’ ver. 6. A man cannot drown so long as his head is above water. Now it is the proper office of hope to do this for the Christian in times of any danger. ‘When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh,’ Luke 21:28. A strange time, one would think, for Christ then to bid his disciples lift up their heads in, when they see other ‘men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth,’ Luke 21:26, yet, now is the time of the rising of their sun when others’ is setting, and blackness of darkness overtaking them; because now the Christian’s feast is coming, for which hope hath saved its stomach so long—‘your redemption draweth nigh.’ Two things make the head hang down—fear and shame. Hope easeth the Christian’s heart of both these; and so forbids him to give any sign of a desponding mind by a dejected countenance. And so much may suffice for explication of the words. I come now to lay down the one general point of doctrine, from which our whole discourse on this one piece of armour shall be drawn.

DIRECTION IX.—SECOND GENERAL PART.

[Use of the Helmet, or the Offices of Hope in the Christian Warfare.] The doctrine now then is, that hope is a grace of singular use and service to us all along our spiritual warfare and Christian course. We are directed to take the helmet of salvation—and this, not for some particular occasion and then hang it by till another extraordinary strait calls us to take it down and use it again—but we must take it so as never to lay it aside till God shall take off this helmet to put on a crown of glory in the room of it. ‘Be sober and hope to the end,’ is the apostle Peter’s counsel, 1 Peter 1:13. There are some engines of war that are of use but now and then, as ladders for scaling of a town or fort; which done, [they] are laid aside for a long time and not missed. But the helmet is of continual use. We shall need it as long as our war with sin and Satan lasts. The Christian is not beneath hope so long as above ground, nor above hope so long as beneath heaven. Indeed when once he enters the gates of that glorious city, then ‘farewell hope and welcome love forever.’ He may say, with the holy martyr, Armour becomes earth, but robes heaven. Hope goes into the field and waits on the Christian till the last battle be fought and the field cleared, and then faith and hope together carry him in the chariot of the promise to heaven door, where they deliver up his soul into the hands of love and joy, which stand ready to conduct him into the blissful presence of God. But that I may speak more particularly of hope’s serviceableness to the Christian, and the several offices it performeth for him, I shall reduce all to these four heads. First. Hope puts the Christian upon high and noble exploits. Second. Hope makes him diligent and faithful in the meanest services. Third. Hope keeps him patient amidst the greatest sufferings. Fourth. Hope composeth and quiets the spirit, when God stays longest before he comes to perform promises.

First of the first.

FIRST OFFICE.

[Hope, as the Christian’s helmet, stirs him to noble exploits.]

Hope of salvation puts the Christian upon high and noble exploits. It is a grace born for great actions. Faith and hope are the two poles on which all the Christian’s noble enterprises turn. As carnal hope excites carnal men to their achievements which gain them any renown in the world, so

is this heavenly hope influential unto the saints' undertakings. What makes the merchant sell house and land, and ship his whole estate away to the other end almost of the world—and this amidst a thousand hazards from pirates, waves and winds—but hope to get a greater by this bold adventure? What makes the daring soldier rush into the furious battle, upon the very mouth of death itself, but hope to snatch honour and spoil out of its jaws? Hope is his helmet, shield, and all, which makes him laugh on the face of all danger. In a word, what makes the scholar beat his brains so hard —sometimes with the hazard of breaking them, by overstraining his parts with too eager and hot a pursuit of learning—but hope but hope of commencing some degrees higher in the knowledge of those secrets in nature that are locked up from vulgar understandings?—who, when he hath attained his desire, is paid but little better for all his pains and study, that have worn nature in him to the stumps, than he is that tears the flesh off his hands and knees with creeping up some craggy mountain, which proves but a barren bleak place to stand in, and wraps him up in the clouds from the sight of others, leaving him little more to please himself with but this, that he can look over other men's heads, and see a little farther than they. Now if these peddling hopes can prevail with men to such fixed resolutions for the obtaining of these poor sorry things, which borrow part of their goodness from men's fancy and imagination, how much more effectual must the Christian's hope of eternal life be to provoke him to the achievement of more noble exploits! Let a few instances suffice. First. This hope raiseth in the Christian a heroic resolution against those lusts that held him before in bondage. Second. This hope ennobles and enables the Christian to contemn the present world with all its pomp, treasure, and pleasure, to which the rest of the sons of men are, every man of them, basely enslaved. Third. This hope, where it is steadfast, makes the Christian active and zealous for God. Fourth. It begets in the Christian a holy impatience after further attainments, especially when it grows to some strength.

[Instances wherein hope has raised the Christian to noble exploits.]

First Instance. This hope raiseth in the Christian heroic resolution against those lusts that held him before in bondage. The Israelites who couched so tamely under the Egyptian burdens, without any attempt made by them to shake off the oppressor's yoke, when once Moses came from God to give them hope of an approaching salvation, and his report had gained some credit to be believed by them, it is strange to see what a mighty change the impression of their new■conceived hope made upon them. On a sudden their mettle returns, and their blood, that with anguish and despair had so long chilled, and been even frozen in their veins, grows warm again. They who had hardly durst let their groans be heard —so cowed were their spirits with hard labour—dare now, fortified with hope, break open their prison doors, and march out of Egypt towards the place of rest promised, maugre [in spite of] all the power and wrath of enraged Pharaoh, who pursued them. Truly, thus it is with a soul in regard of sin's bondage.

O how impotent and poor■spirited is a soul void of this heavenly hope! what a tame slave hath Satan of him! He is the footstool for every base lust to trample upon. He suffers the devil to back and ride him whither he pleaseth, without wincing. No puddle so filthy, but Satan may draw him through it with a twine thread. The poor wretch is well enough contented with his ignoble servitude, because he knows no better master than him he serves, nor better wages than the swill of his sensual pleasures which his lusts allow him. But, let the news of salvation come to the ear of this sin■deluded soul, and a spiritual eye be given him to see the transcendent glory thereof, with a crevice of hope set open to him, that he is the person that shall inherit it, if willing to make an ex-

change of Satan for Christ, and of the slavery of his lusts for the liberty of his Redeemer's service—O what havoc then doth the soul begin to make among his lusts! He presently vows the death of them all, and sets his head at work how he may soonest and most effectually rid his hands of them. 'Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure,' 1 John 3:3. He now looks upon his lusts with no better eye than a captive prince would do on his cruel keepers, out of whose hands could he but make an escape, he would presently enjoy his crown and kingdom; and therefore meditates his utmost revenge upon them. There may be some hasty purposes taken up by carnal men against their lusts, upon some accidental discontent they meet with now and then in the prosecution of them; but, alas! the swords they draw against them are soon in their sheaths again, and all the seeming fray comes to nothing in the end. They, like Esau, go out full and angry in a sudden mood, but a present comes from their lusts that bribes them from hurting them; yea, so reconciles them to them, that, as he did by his brother, they can fall upon the necks of those lusts to kiss them, which a while before they threatened to kill; and all for want of a true hope of heaven to outbid the proffers their lusts make to appease their anger, which would never yield a peace should be patched up with them on such infinite hard terms as it must needs be, the loss of eternal salvation. He that hath a mind to provide himself with arguments to arm him against sin's motions, need not go far to seek them; but he that handles this one well, and drives it home to the head, will not need many more.

What is the sin this would not prostrate? Art thou tempted to any sensual lust? Ask thy hope what thou lookest to be in heaven. And canst thou yield to play the beast on earth, who hopest to be made like the pure and holy angels in heaven? Is it a sin of profit that bewitcheth thee? Is not a hope of heaven a spell strong enough to charm this devil? Can gold bear any sway with thee that hopest to be heir of that city where gold bears no price? Wherefore is that blissful place said to be paved with gold, but to let us know it shall be there trampled upon as of no account? And wilt thou let that now lie in thy heart, that will ere long be laid under thy feet? Is it a sin of revenge? Dost thou not hope for a day when thy dear Saviour will plead thy cause, and what needest thou then take his work out of his hand? Let him be his own judge that hath no hope; the Judge, when he comes, will take his part.

Second Instance. This hope ennobles and enables the Christian to contemn the present world, with all its pomp, treasure, and pleasure, to which the rest of the sons of men are, every man of them, basely enslaved and held by the leg as a prisoner by this chain. When once faith makes a discovery of land that the Christian hath lying in heaven, and, by hope, he begins to lot upon it as that which he shall shortly take up at his remove from earth; truly then the price of this world's felicity falls low in his account; he can sell all his hopes from it very cheap, yea, he can part with what he hath in hand of this world's growth, when God calls him to it, more freely than Alexander did the cities he took; because, when all this is gone, he shall leave himself a better hope than that great monarch had to live upon. The hopes of heaven leave a blot upon the world in the Christian's thoughts. It is no more now to him, than the asses were to anointed Saul.

Story tells us of some Turks who have, upon the sight of Mahomet's tomb, put their eyes out, that they might not defile them, forsooth! with any common object after they had been blessed with seeing one so sacred. I am sure many a gracious soul there hath been, who by a prospect of heaven's glory—the palace of the great God—set before the eye of their faith, have been so ravished with the sight, that they have desired God even to seal up their eyes by death, with

Simeon, who would not by his good■will have lived a day after that blessed hour in which his eyes had beheld the ‘salvation’ of God. Abraham was under the hope of this salvation, and therefore ‘he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country;...for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God,’ Hebrews 11:9-10. Canaan would have liked [pleased] him well enough, if God had not told him of a heaven that he meant to give him, in comparison to which, Canaan is now but Cabul—a dirty land, in his judgment. So Paul tells us not only the low thoughts he hath himself of the world, but as they agree with the common sense of all believers, whose hope is come to any consistency and settlement, ‘for our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour,’ Php 3:20. Mark, he sets the saint with his back upon earth; and draws his reason from their hope—‘from whence we look,’ &c. Indeed, he that looks on heaven must needs look off earth. The soul’s eye can as little as the body’s eye be above and below at the same time. Every man converseth most where he hopes for to receive his greatest gains and advantage. The publican sits at the receipt of custom: there come in his gains. The courtier stands at his prince’s elbow. The merchant, if you will find him, look for him in his warehouse or at the exchange. But the Christian’s hope carries him by all these doors. Here is not my hope, saith the soul; and therefore not my haunt. My hope is in heaven, from whence I look for the Saviour to come, and my salvation to come with him; there I live, walk, and wait.

Nothing but a steadfast well■grounded hope of salvation can buy off the creature’s worldly hopes. The heart of man cannot be in this world without a hope; and if it hath no hope for heaven, it must of necessity take in at earth, and borrow one there such as it can afford. What indeed can suit an earthly heart better than an earthly hope? And that which is a man’s hope—though poor and peddling—is highly prized, and hardly parted with. As we see in a man like to drown, and [who] hath only some weed or bough by the bank’s side to hold by; he will die with it in his hand rather than let go; he will endure blows and wounds rather than lose his hold. Nothing can take him from it, but that which he hopes may serve better to save him from drowning. Thus it is with a man whose hope is set upon the world, and whose happiness [is] expected to be paid in from thence. O how such a one hugs and hangs about the world! You may as soon persuade a fox to come out of his hole, where he hath taken sanctuary from the dogs. Such a one to cast off his hopes! No, he is undone without this pelf and that honour; it is that he hath a lid up his hopes in, and hope and life are ever kept in the same hand. Scare and threaten him with what you will, still the man’s heart will hold its own. Yea, throw hell■fire into his bosom, and tell him this love of the world, and making gold his hope, will damn him another day, still he will hold to his way.

Felix is a fit instance for this, Acts 24:26. Paul preached a thundering sermon before him; and though the preacher was at the bar, and Felix on the bench, yet God so armed the word, that he ‘trembled’ to hear the prisoner speak ‘of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.’ Yet this man, notwithstanding his conscience was struggling with the fears of judgement, and some sparks of divine vengeance had taken fire on him, could at the same time be sending out his heart on a covetous errand, to look for a bribe, for want of which he left that blessed servant of God in his bloody enemies’ hands; for it is said, Acts 24:26, ‘he hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him.’ But he missed his market; for, as a sordid hope of a little money made him basely refuse to deliver Paul, so the blessed hope which Paul had for another world made him more honourably disdain to purchase his deliverance at his hands with a bribe.

Third Instance. This hope of salvation, where it is steadfast, makes the Christian active and zealous for God. It is called ‘a lively hope,’ 1 Peter 1:3. They are men of mettle that have it. You may expect more from him than many others, and not be deceived. Why are men dull and heavy in their service of God? Truly because their hopes are so. Hopeless and lifeless go together. No marvel the work goes hardly off a■hand, when men have no hope, or but little, to be well paid for their labour in doing of it. He that thinks he works for a song, as we say, will not sing at his work—I mean, be forward and cheery in it. The best customer is sure to be served best and first, and him we count the best customer that we hope will be the best paymaster. If God be thought so, we will leave all to do his business. This made Paul engage so deep in the service of the gospel, [as] even to lose his worldly friends, and lay his own life to stake, it was ‘for the hope of the promise,’ Acts 26:6. This made the other Israelites that feared God follow the trade of godliness so close, ‘unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come,’ Acts 26:7. Mark, they are both instant, and constant, ¦< ¦6J,<,\‘. They run with full speed, stretching themselves forth as in a race; and this, at night and day—no stop or halt in their way, but ever putting on. And what is it that keeps them in breath? even the hope that they shall at last come to that salvation promised. Nothing better to expectorate and clear the soul of this dull phlegm of sloth and listlessness of spirit in the service of God, than hope well improved and strengthened. It is the very physic which the apostle prescribes for this disease: ‘We desire that every one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that ye be not slothful,’ Hebrews 6:11-12.

Fourth Instance. Hope begets in the Christian a holy impatience after further attainments, especially when it grows to some strength. The higher our hopes of salvation rise, the more will our hearts widen and distend themselves in holy desires. ‘Not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body,’ Romans 8:23. Methinks rejoicing would better become them for what they have already, than groaning for what they have not. Who may better stay long for their dinner, than they who have their stomachs stayed with a good breakfast? This would hold in bodily food, but not spiritual. No doubt, the sweetness which they tasted from their first■fruits in hand did cheer their spirits; but the thoughts of what was behind made them groan. Hope waits for all, and will not let the soul sit down contented till all the dishes be on the board—till the whole harvest that stands on the field of the promise be reaped and well inned; yea, the more the Christian hath received in partial payments, the deeper groans hope makes the soul fetch for what is behind. And that,

First. Because these foretastes do acquaint the Christian more with the nature of those joys which are in heaven, and so enlarge his understanding to have more raised conceptions of the felicity those enjoy that are arrived there. And the increasing of his knowledge must needs enlarge his desires; and those desires break out into sad groans, to think what sweet wine is drunk in full bowls by glorified saints, and he living where only a sip is allowed, that doth not satisfy but kindle his thirst. It is harder now for him to live on this side heaven than before he knew so much. He is like one that stands at the door within which is a rich feast. He hears them how merry they are. Through the keyhole he sees what variety they have; and by a little which he licks from the trenchers that are brought out is sensible how delicious their fare is. O how such a one’s teeth would water after their cheer; which another misse th not that hears not of it, or only hears, and

tastes not of their dainties! The nearer the soul stands to heaven, and the more he knows of their joys, the more he blesseth them and pities himself. None long for heaven more than those who enjoy most of heaven. All delays now are exceedingly tedious to such. Their continual moan is, 'Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariot?' The last year is thought longer by the apprentice than all his time before, because it is nearer out. And if delays be so tedious, what then are desertions to such a soul, who hath his hopes of salvation raised high by the sweet illapses of the Spirit and foretastes of glory! No doubt Moses' death so nigh Canaan, after he had tasted of the fruit of the land at the spies' hand, was exceeding grievous. To lose a child grown up, when we seem ready to reap our hopes conceived of him, is more than to part with two in the cradle, that have not yet drawn our conceptions far. The Christian indeed, cannot quite lose his hopes. Yet he may have them nipped and set back, as a forward spring, by after■claps of winter weather, which pinches so much the more because the warm beams of the sun had made the herbs come forth and disclose themselves. And so desertions from God do make the saddest impression upon those, above all others, whose expectation had advanced far, and, by the present sense of divine goodness, been unfolded into a kind of rejoicing through hope of glory. Now to meet with a damp from the frowns of the Almighty, and to be benighted by the withdrawing of that light which did so ravish it, O how dreadful must this sudden change be to the soul!

Second. These present attainments of grace or comfort, they do embolden the soul to expect yet more; and so provoke the Christian to press on for the full payment of all. See both these in David: 'Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice,' Psalms 63:7. The present boon he hath got makes him rejoice in hope of what is yet to come, and by this scent he is carried out with full cry to pursue the chase for more, as appears in the very next words, 'my soul followeth hard after thee,' ver. 8. And no wonder, if we consider that God gives his people their experiences with this very notion stamped on them, i.e. to raise their expectations for further mercies at his hand: 'I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope,' Hosea 2:15. God is there speaking to a soul converted and newly taken into covenant, what blessings he will bestow on it, as the happy effects of its reconciliation to God and marriage with Christ, and he alludes to his dealing with Israel, who came out of a desolate wilderness—where they had wandered, and endured unspeakable hardship, forty years —into a pleasant fruitful country, in the very entrance where whereof this Achor lay, which, when God gave them, he would not have them look on it as in itself it was a little spot of ground, and not so much worth, but as the opening of a door through which he would undertake to let them into the possession of the whole land in process of time; which circumstance, believed by them, made Joshua advance his banners with so much courage against the proudest of his enemies, well knowing that man could not shut that door upon them which God had opened to them.

Thus every particular assistance God gives the Christian against one corruption, is intended by God to be an Achor—'a door of hope,' from which he may expect the total overthrow of that cursed seed in his bosom. When he adds the least degree of strength to his grace or comfort he gives us an Achor, or door of hope, that he will consummate both in glory. O what courage this must needs bring to thee, poor heart, in thy fears and faintings! Paul had many enemies at Ephesus to oppose him, but having 'an effectual door opened unto him,' for his encouragement, he went on undauntedly, 1 Corinthians 16:9. As an army, when, after stubborn resistance by the enemy, who labour what they can to keep them out, the door or gate of the city flies open, then the soldiers

press in amain with a shout, ‘the city is our own.’ Thus when, after long tugging, and much wrestling with God for pardon of sin, or strength against sin, the door of the promise flies open, and God comes in with some assisting, comforting presence, now hope takes heart, and makes the soul fall on with double force and zeal.

SECOND OFFICE.

[Hope, as the Christian’s helmet, makes him faithful in the meanest services.] As hope raiseth the Christian’s spirit to attempt great exploits, so it makes him diligent and faithful in the meanest and lowest services that the providence of God calls him to;—for the same providence lays out every one his work and calling, which sets bounds for their habitations on the earth. Some he sets on the high places of the earth, and appoints them honourable employments, suitable to their place. Others he pitcheth down on lower ground, and orders them in some obscure corner, to employ themselves about work of an inferior nature all their life, and we need not be ashamed to do that work which the great God sets us about. The Italians say true, ‘No man fouls his hands in doing his own business.’ Now, to encourage every Christian to be faithful in his particular place, he hath made promises that are applicable to them all. Promises are like the beams of the sun: they shine in as freely at the window of the poor man’s cottage as of the prince’s palace. And these hope trades with, and from these animates the Christian at his work. Indeed, we are no more faithful in our callings than [we are] acted by faith and hope therein.

Now, you shall observe, God lays his promise, so as it may strengthen our hands and hearts against the chief discouragement that is most like to weaken them in their callings. The great discouragement of those high and public employments—magistracy and ministry—is the difficulty of the province, and opposition they find from the angry world. These therefore are guarded and supported with such promises as may fortify their hearts against the force and fury with which the world comes forth to oppose them. ‘I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee: be strong and of a good courage,’ Joshua 1:5, [a promise] which was given to Israel’s chief magistrate. And the minister’s promise suits well with this, as having ordinarily the same difficulties, enemies, and discouragements: ‘Go ye therefore and teach all nations;...and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,’ Matthew 28:19-20. Again, the temptation which usually haunts persons in low and more ignoble callings, is the very meanness of them; which occasions discontent and envy in some, to see themselves on the floor, and their brother preferred to more honourable services; in others, dejection of spirit, as if they were, like the eunuch, but dry trees, unprofitable, and brought no glory to God, while others, by their more eminent places and callings, have the advantage of being highly serviceable to God in their generations. Now, to arm the Christian against this temptation, and remove this discouragement, God hath annexed as great a reward in the promise to his faithfulness in the meanest employment, as the most honourable is capable of. What more mean and despicable than the servant’s employment? yet no less than heaven itself is promised to them if faithful. He is speaking there to such. ‘Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ,’ Colossians 3:23-24. Where observe,

First. What honour he puts on the poor servants’ work. He serves the Lord Christ; yea, in the lowest piece of work that belongs to his office. His drudgery is divine service, as well as his praying and hearing; for he saith, ‘Whatsoever ye do.’ Again observe,

Second. The reward that is laid up for such; and that is as great as he shall receive that hath been faithful in ruling kingdoms, ‘the reward of the inheritance.’ As if God had said, ‘Be not, O my child, out of love with thy coarse homely work. Ere long thou shalt sit as high as he that sways sceptres. Though your employment now be not the same with his, yet your acceptation is the same, and so shall your reward also be.’ Thus we see, as we bestow more abundant honour on those members which we think less honourable; so doth Christ with those members of his body which, by reason of their low place in the world, may be thought to be most despised—he puts an abundant honour upon them in his promise. And where hope is raised, the Christian cannot but take sweet satisfaction from the expectation thereof. The poor ploughman that is a saint, and plows in hope of reaping salvation, would be as well contented with his place and work as the bravest courtier is with his. Think of this, when any of you have a servant to choose; if you would have your work faithfully and heartily done, employ such about it—if they be to be had—as have a hope of salvation. This will not suffer them to wrong you, though they could. Their helmet will defend them from such temptations. Jacob was a true drudge for his master Laban by day and by night, though he used him none of the best in chopping and changing his wages so oft. But Jacob served in hope, and expected his reward from a better master than Laban; and this made him faithful to an unfaithful man. Joseph would not wrong his master, though at the request of his mistress. He chose to suffer his unjust anger, rather than accept of her unchaste love. The evidence of this grace in a servant is better security for his faithfulness than a bond of a thousand pounds.

THIRD OFFICE.

[Hope, as the Christian’s helmet, supports him in the greatest afflictions.] This hope of salvation supports the soul in the greatest afflictions. The Christian’s patience is, as it were, his back, on which he bears his burdens; and some afflictions are so heavy, that he needs a broad one to carry them well. But if hope lay not the pillow of the promise between his back and his burden, the least cross will prove insupportable; therefore it is called ‘the patience of hope,’ 1 Thessalonians 1:3. There is a patience, I confess, and many know not a better, when men force themselves into a kind of quietness in their troubles because they cannot help it, and there is no hope. This I may call a desperate patience, and it may do them some service for a while, and but for a while. If despair were a good cure for troubles, the damned would have more ease; for they have despair enough, if that would help them. There is another patience also very common in the world, and that is a blockish stupid patience, which, like Nabal’s mirth, lasts no longer than they are drunk with ignorance and senselessness; for they no sooner come to themselves to understand the true state they are in, but their hearts die within them. But ‘the patience of hope,’ we are now treating of, is a sober grace, and abides as long as hope lasts; when hope is lively and active, then it floats, yea even danceth aloft the waters of affliction, as a tight sound ship doth in a tempestuous sea; but when hope springs a leak, then the billows break into the Christian’s bosom, and he sinks apace, till hope, with much labour at the pump of the promise, clears the soul again. This was David’s very case. ‘Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul,’ Psalms 69:1. What means he by ‘coming unto his soul?’ Surely no other than this, that they oppressed his spirit, and as it were sued into his very conscience, raising fears and perplexities there, by reason of his sins, which at present put his faith and hope to some disorder, that he could not for a while see to the comfortable end of his affliction, but was as one under water, and covered with his fears; as appears by what follows, ‘I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing,’ Psalms 69:2. He

compares himself to one in a quagmire, that can feel no firm ground to bear him up. And observe whence his trouble rose, and where the waters made their entrance: ‘O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee,’ Psalms 69:5. This holy man lay under some fresh guilt, and this made him so uncomfortable under his affliction, because he saw his sin in the face of that and tasted some displeasure from God for it in his outward trouble, which made it so bitter in the going down; and therefore, when once he hath humbled himself in a mournful confession of his sin, and was able to see the coast clear betwixt heaven and him, so as to believe the pardon of his sin, and hope for good news from God again, he then returns to the sweet temper, and can sing in the same affliction where before he did sink. But more particularly I shall show what powerful influence hope hath on the Christian in affliction, and how. First. What influence it hath. Second. Whence and how hope hath this virtue.

[The influence of hope on the Christian in affliction.] First. What influence hope hath on the Christian in affliction.

First Influence. Hope stills and silenceth the Christian under affliction. It keeps the king’s peace in the heart, which else would soon be in an uproar. A hopeless soul is clamorous. One while it chargeth God, another while it reviles instruments. It cannot long rest, and no wonder, when hope is not there to rock it asleep. Hope hath a rare art in stilling a froward spirit when nothing else can; as the mother can make the crying child quiet by laying it to the breast, when the rod makes it cry worse. This way David took, and found it effectual. When his soul was out of quiet, by reason of his present affliction, he lays his soul to the breast of the promise. ‘Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God,’ Psalms 43:5. And here his soul sweetly sleeps, as the child with the teat in his mouth. And that this was his usual way, we may think by the frequent instances we find to this purpose. Thrice we find him taking this course in two psalms, Psalms 42:1-11 and Psalms 43:1-5. When Aaron and Miriam were so uncivil with Moses, and used him so ill in their foul language, no doubt it was a heavy affliction to the spirit of that holy man, and aggravation of his sorrow, to consider out of whose bow these sharp arrows came; yet it is said, ‘Moses held his peace’—waiting for God to clear his innocency. And his patience made God, no doubt, the more angry to see this meek man wronged, who durst trust him with the righting of his name; and therefore [it was that] with such speed he wiped off the dirt they had thrown on him, before it could soak in to the prejudice of his good name in the thoughts of others. Indeed this waiting on God for deliverance in an afflicted state, consists much in a holy silence. ‘Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation,’ Psalms 62:1—or, as the Hebrew, ‘my soul is silent.’ It is a great mercy, in an affliction that is sharp, to have our bodily senses, so as not to lie raving or roaring, but still and quiet; much more to have the heart silent and patient. And we find the heart is as soon heat into a distemper, as the head. Now, what the sponge is to the cannon when hot with often shooting, that is hope to the soul in multiplied afflictions; it cools the spirit, and meekens it, that it doth not fly apieces, and break out into distempered thoughts or words against God.

Second Influence. This hope fills the afflicted soul with such inward joy and consolation, that it can laugh while tears are in the eye—sigh and sing all in a breath. It is called ‘the rejoicing of hope,’ Hebrews 3:6. And hope never affords more joy than in affliction. It is on a watery cloud that the sun paints those curious colours in the rainbow. ‘Rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and not only so, but we glory in tribulations,’ Romans 5:2-3. Glorying is rejoicing in a ravishment —when it is so

great that it cannot contain itself within the Christian's own breast, but comes forth in some outward expression, and lets others know what a feast it sits at within. The springs of comfort lie high indeed when his joy pours out at the mouth. And all this joy with which the suffering saint is entertained, is sent in by hope at the cost of Christ, who hath provided such unspeakable glory for them in heaven as will not suffer them to pity or bemoan themselves for those tribulations that befall them on the way to it. Dum mala pungunt, bona promissa unguunt—while calamities smite with oppression, the gracious promises anoint with their blessings. Hope breaks the alabaster box of the promise over the Christian's head, and so diffuseth the consolations thereof abroad the soul, which, like a precious ointment, have a virtue, as to exhilarate and refresh the spirit in its faintings, so to heal the wounds and remove the smart which the Christian's poor heart may feel from its affliction, according to the apostle in the aforementioned place: 'Hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts,' Romans 5:5.

There are two graces which Christ useth above any other to fill the soul with joy; and they are faith and hope, because these two fetch all their wine of joy without doors. Faith tells the soul what Christ hath done for it, and so comforts it. Hope revives the soul with news of what Christ will do. Both draw at one tap—Christ and his promise. Whereas the other graces present the soul with its own inherent excellencies —what it doth and suffers for him, rather than what he does for them; so that it were neither honourable for Christ, nor safe for the saint, to draw his joy from this vessel. Not honourable to Christ! This were the way to have the king's crown set on the subject's head, and cry Hosanna! to the grace of Christ in us, which is due only to the mercy of God in us. For thither we will carry our praise whence we have our joy; and therefore upon our allegiance we are only to 'rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,' Php 3:3. And it would be no more safe for us than honourable for him, because of the instability of our hearts, and unconstant actings of our graces, which are as oft ebbing as flowing. And so our joy could not be constant, because our graces are not; but as these springs lie high or low, so would this rise and fall. Yea, we were sure to drink more water than wine —oftener want joy than have it. Whereas now, the Christian's cup need never be empty, because he draws his wine from an undrainable Fountain that never sends any poor soul away ashamed, as the brook of our inherent grace would certainly, at one time or other, do.

[Whence and how hope hath its supporting influence in affliction.]

Second. Whence and how hope hath its virtue; or what are the ingredients in hope's cordial that thus exhilarates the saint's spirit in affliction.

First Answer. Hope brings certain news of a happy issue, that shall shortly close up all the wounds made by his present sufferings. When God comes to save his afflicted servants, though he may antedate their hopes, and surprise them before they looked for him, yet he doth not come unlooked for. Salvation is that they lot upon: 'For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end,' Jeremiah 29:11—that is, an end suitable to the hopes and expectations taken up by you. Hope is a prying grace; it is able to look beyond the exterior transactions of providence. It can, by the help of the promise, peep into the very bosom of God, and read what thoughts and purposes are written there concerning the Christian's particular estate, and this it imparts to him, bidding him not to be at all troubled to hear God speaking roughly to him in the language of his providence. 'For,' saith hope, 'I can assure

thee he means thee well, whatever he saith that sounds otherwise. For as the law, which came hundreds of years after the promise made to Abraham, could not disannul it, so neither can any intervening afflictions make void those thoughts and counsels of love which so long before have been set upon his heart for thy deliverance and salvation.' Now, such a one must needs have a great advantage above others for the pacifying and satisfying his spirit concerning the present proceedings of God towards him; because, though the actings of God on the outward stage of providence be now sad and grievous, yet he is acquainted with heaven's plot therein, and is admitted as it were into the attiring room of his secret counsel, where he sees garments of salvation preparing, in which he shall at last be clad, and come forth with joy. The traveller, when taken in a storm, can stand patiently under a tree while it rains, because he hopes it is but a shower, and sees it clear up in one part of the heavens, while it is dark in another. Providence, I am sure, is never so dark and cloudy but hope can see fair weather a■coming from the promise. 'When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh,' Luke 21:28. And this is as black a day as can come. When the Christian's affairs are most disconsolate, he may soon meet with a happy change. The joy of that blessed day, 1 Corinthians 15:52, comes ¦< •J@µå ¦< Õ4B ÏN2V8µ@Ø—'in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,' we shall be 'changed.' In one moment sick and sad, in the next well and glad, never to know more what groans and tears mean. Now clad with the rags of mortal flesh, made miserable with the thousand troubles that attend it; 'in the twinkling of an eye' arrayed with robes of immortality, embossed and enriched with a thousand times more glory than the sun itself wears in the garment of light which now dazzleth our eyes to look on. 'It is but winking,' said a holy martyr to his fellow■sufferer in the fire with him, 'and our pain and sorrow is all over with.' Who can wonder to see a saint cheerful in his afflictions that knows what good news he looks to hear from heaven, and how soon he knows not? You have heard of the weapon■salve, that cures wounds at a distance. Such a kind of salve is hope. The saints' hope is laid up in heaven, and yet it heals all their wounds they receive on earth. But this is not all. For, as hope prophesies well concerning the happy end of the Christian's afflictions, so it assures him he will be well tended and looked to while he lies under them. If Christ sends his disciples to sea, he means to be with them when they most need his company. The well child may be left a while by the mother, but the sick one she will by no means stir from. 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee,' Isaiah 43:2.

You know what God said to Moses when he was sick of his employment, and made so many mannerly or rather unmannerly excuses from his own inability —and all that he might have leave to lay down his commission: 'Go,' saith God, 'and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say,' Exodus 4:12. And again, 'Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee,' Exodus 4:14. Thus God did animate him, and toll [draw] him on to like that hard province he was called to. Methinks I hear hope, as God's messenger, speaking after the same sort to the drooping soul oppressed with the thoughts of some great affliction, and ready to conclude he shall be able to stem so rough a tide—bear up cheerfully and lift up his head above such surging waves. 'Go, O my soul,' saith hope, 'for thy God will be with thee, and thou shalt suffer at his charge. Is not Christ thy brother? yea, is he not thy husband? He, thou thinkest, can tell how to suffer, who was brought up to the trade from the cradle to the cross. Behold, even he comes forth to meet thee, glad to see thy face, and willing to impart some of his suffering skill unto thee.' That man indeed must needs carry a heavy heart to prison with him, who knows neither how he can be maintained there nor delivered thence. But

hope easeth the heart of both these, which taken away, suffering is a harmless thing and not to be dreaded.

Second Answer. Hope assures the Christian not only of the certainty of salvation coming, but also of the transcendency of this salvation to be such, as the sorrow of his present sufferings bears no proportion to the joy of that. This kept the primitive Christians from swooning while their enemies let out their blood. They had the scent of this hope to exhilarate their spirits: ‘For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day,’ 2 Corinthians 4:16. Is not this strange, that their spirit and courage should increase with the losing of their blood? What rare unheard■of cordial was this? ‘For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,’ 2 Corinthians 4:17. Behold here the difference betwixt hopes of heaven and hopes of the world. These latter, they are fanciful and slighty, seem great in hope but prove nothing in hand; like Eve’s apple, fair to look on as they hang on the tree, but sour in the juice, and of bad nourishment in the eating. They are, as one calls them wittily, ‘nothing between two dishes.’ It were well if men could in their worldly hopes come but to the unjust steward’s reckoning, and for a hundred felicities they promise themselves from the enjoyments they pursue, find but fifty at last paid them. No, alas! they must not look to come to so good a market, or have such fair dealings, that have to do with the creature, which will certainly put them to greater disappointments than so. They may bless themselves if they please for a while in their hopes, as the husbandman sometimes doth in the goodly show he hath of corn standing upon his ground; but by that time they have reaped their crop and thrashed out their hopes, they will find little besides straw and chaff—emptiness and vanity —to be left them. A poor return, God knows, to pay them for the expense of their time and strength which they have laid out upon them! Much less suitable to recompense the loss he is put to in his conscience; for there are few who are greedy hunters after the world’s enjoyments, that do drive this worldly trade without running in debt to their consciences. And I am sure he buys gold too dear, that pays the peace of his conscience for the purchase. But heaven is had cheap, though it be with the loss of all our carnal interests, even life itself. Who will grudge with a sorry lease of a low-rented farm, in which he also hath but a few days left before it expires (and such our temporal life is), for the perpetuity of such an inheritance as is to be had with the saints in light? This hath ever made the faithful servants of God carry their lives in their hands, willing to lay them down, ‘while they look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal,’ 2 Corinthians 4:18.

Third Answer. As hope assures the soul of the certainty and transcendency of heaven’s salvation, so also of the necessary subserviency that his afflictions have towards his obtaining this salvation. ‘Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?’ Luke 24:26. As if Christ had said, ‘What reason have you so to mourn, and take on for your Master’s death, as if all your hopes were now split and split? Ought he not to suffer? Was there any other way he could get home, and take possession of his glory that waited for him in heaven? And if you do not grudge him his preferment, never be so inordinately troubled to see him onwards to it, though through the deep and miry land of suffering.’ And truly the saint’s way to salvation lies in the same road that Christ went in: ‘If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together,’ Romans 8:17; only with this advantage, that his going before hath beaten it plain, so that now it may be forded, which but for him had been utterly impassable to us. Afflictions understood with this notion

upon them—that they are as necessary for our waftage to glory as water is to carry the ship to her port, which may as soon sail without water, as a saint land in heaven without the subserviency of afflictions—this notion, I say, well understood, would reconcile the greatest afflictions to our thoughts, and make us delight to walk in their company. This knowledge Parisiensis calls unus de septem radiis divini scientiæ—one of the seven beams of divine knowledge; for the want of which we call good evil, and evil good—think God blesseth us when we are in the sunshine of prosperity, and curseth when our condition is overcast with a few clouds of adversity. But hope hath an eye that can see heaven in a cloudy day, and an anchor that can find firm land under a weight of waters to hold by; it can expect good out of evil. The Jews open their windows when it thunders and lightens, expecting, they say, their Messiah to come at such a time to them. I am sure hope opens her window widest in a day of storm and tempest: 'I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord,' Zephaniah 3:12, and, Micah 7:7, 'Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.' See what strong hold hope's anchor takes. And it is a remarkable 'therefore,' if you observe the place. Because all things were at so desperate a pass in the church's affairs—as there you will find them to be in man's thinking—'therefore,' saith the saint, 'I will look, I will wait.' Indeed, God doth not take the axe into his hand to make chips. His people, when he is hewing them, and the axe goes deepest, they may expect some beautiful piece at the end of the work.

It is a sweet meditation Parisiensis hath upon 'We know that all things work together for good to them that love God,' Romans 8:28. Ubi magis intrepida magis pensata esse debes, quàm inter cooperarios meos, et coadjutores meos?—Where, O my soul, shouldst thou be more satisfied, free of care and fear, then when thou art among thy fellow■labourers, and those that come to help thee to attain thy so■much desired salvation, which thy afflictions do? They work together with ordinances and other providential dealings of God for good; yea, thy chief good, and thou couldst ill spare their help as any other means which God appoints thee. Should one find, as soon as he riseth in the morning, some on his house■top tearing off the tiles, and with axes and hammers taking down the roof thereof, he might at first be amazed and troubled at the sight, yea, think they are a company of thieves and enemies come to do him some mischief; but when he understands they are workmen sent by his father to mend his house, and make it better than it is—which cannot be done without taking some of it down he is satisfied and content to endure the present noise and trouble, yea thankful to his father for the care and cost he bestows on him. The very hope of what advantage will come of their work makes him very willing to dwell a while amidst the ruins and rubbish of his old house. I do not wonder to see hopeless souls so impatient in their sufferings—sometimes even to distraction of mind. Alas! they fear presently—and have reason so to do —that they come to pull all their worldly joys and comforts down about their ears; which gone, what, alas! have they left to comfort them, who can look for nothing but hell in another world? But the believer's heart is eased of all this, because assured from the promise that they are sent on a better errand to him from his heavenly Father, who intends him no hurt, but rather good—even to build the ruinous frame of a his soul into a glorious temple at last; and these afflictions come, among other means, to have a hand in the work; and this satisfies him, that can say, 'Lord, cut and hew me how thou wilt, that at last I may be polished and framed according to the platform [pattern] which love hath drawn in thy heart for me.' Though some ignorant man would think his clothes spoiled when besmeared with fuller's earth or soap, yet one that knows the cleansing nature of them will not be afraid to have them so used.

FOURTH OFFICE.

[Hope, as the Christian's helmet, quiets his spirit when God delays to perform his promise.] The fourth and last office of hope propounded is, to quiet and compose the Christian's spirit when God stays long before he come to perform promises. Patience, I told you, is the back on which the Christian's burdens are carried, and hope the pillow between the back and the burden, to make it sit easy. Now patience hath two shoulders; one to bear the present evil, and another to forbear the future good promised, but not yet paid. And as hope makes the burden of the present evil of the cross light, so it makes the longest stay of the future good promised short. Whereas, without this, the creature could have neither the strength to bear the one, nor forbear and wait for the other. 'And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord,' Lamentations 3:18; implying thus much, that where there is no hope there is no strength. The soul's comfort lies drawing on, and soon gives up the ghost, where all hope fails. God undertook for Israel's protection and provision in the wilderness, but when their dough was spent, and their store ended, which they brought out of Egypt, they fall foul with God and Moses. And why? but because their hope was spent as soon as their dough. Moses ascends the mount, and is but a few days out of their sight, and in all haste they must have a golden calf. And why? but because they gave him for lost, and never hoped to see him more. This is the reason why God hath so few servants that will stick fast to him, because God puts them to wait for what he means to give, and most are short-spirited, and cannot stay. You know what Naomi said to her daughters, 'If I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons; would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands?' Ruth 1:12-13. The promise hath salvation in the womb of it; but will the unbeliever, a soul without heavenly hope, stay till the promise ripens, and this happiness be, as I may so say, grown up? No, sure, they will rather make some match with the beggarly creature, or any base lust that will pay them in some pleasure at present, than wait so long, though it be for heaven itself. Thus as Tamar played the strumpet because the husband promised was not given her so soon as she desired, Genesis 38:1-30, so it is the undoing of many souls because the comfort, joy, and bliss of the promise is withheld at present, and his people are made to wait for their reward; therefore they throw themselves into the embraces of this adulterous world that is present. 'Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world,' 2 Timothy 4:10. The soul only that hath this divine hope will be found patiently to stay for the good of the promise. Now, in handling this last office of hope, I shall do these three things—

First. I shall show you that God oft stays long before he pays in the good things of the promise.

Second. That when God stays longest before he performs his promises, it is our duty to wait.

Third. That hope will enable the soul to wait when he stays longest.

[God oft stays long before he fulfills his promise.]

First. God oft stays long before he pays in the good things of the promise. The promise contains the matter of all our hopes;—called therefore 'the hope of the promise.' To hope without a promise is to claim a debt that never was owing. Now the good things of the promise are not paid down presently; indeed, then there would be not such use of the promises. What need of a bond where the money is presently paid down? God promised Abraham a son, but he stayed many years for him after the bond of the promise was given him. He promised Canaan to him and his seed, yet

hundreds of years interposed between the promise and performance. Esau was spread into a kingdom before the heirs of promise had their inheritance, or one foot of land [was] given them in it. Yea, all the patriarchs, who were the third generation after Abraham, died, 'not having received the promises,' Hebrews 11:13. Simeon had a promise 'he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ,' Luke 2:26. But this was not performed till he had one foot in the grave, and was even taking his leave of the world. In a word, those promises which are the portion of all the saints, and may be claimed by one as well as by another, their date is set in the book of God's decree, when to be paid in to a day; some sooner, some later; but not expressed in the promise. He hath engaged to answer the prayers of his people, and 'fulfil the desires of those that fear him,' Psalms 145:19. But it proves a long voyage sometimes before the praying saint hath the return of his adventure. There comes oft a long and sharp winter between the sowing time of prayer and the reaping. He hears us indeed as soon as we pray, but we oft do not hear him so soon. Prayers are not long on their journey to heaven, but long a■coming thence in a full answer. Christ at this day in heaven hath not a full answer to some of those prayers which he put up on earth. Therefore he is said to 'expect till his enemies be made a footstool,' Hebrews 10:13. Promises we have for the subduing sin and Satan under our feet, yet we find these enemies still skulking within us; and many a sad scuffle we have with them before they are routed and outed our hearts. And so with others. We may find sometime the Christian—as great an heir as he is to joy and comfort—hardly able to show a penny of his heavenly treasure in his purse. And for want of well pondering this one clause, poor souls are oft led into temptation, even to question their saintship. 'Such promises are the saints' portion,' saith one; 'but I cannot find them performed to me, therefore I am none of them. Many a prayer I have sent to heaven, but I hear no news of them. The saints are conquerors over their lusts; but I am yet often foiled and worsted by mine. There is a heaven of comfort in the promise, but I am as it were in the belly of hell, swallowed up with fears and terrors.' Such as these are the reasonings of poor souls in the distress of their spirits; whereas all this trouble they put themselves to might be prevented, if they had faith to believe this one principle of undoubted truth—that God performs not his promises all at once, and that what they want in hand they may see on the way coming to them.

[Our duty is to wait, when God stays his longest before fulfilling his promise.]

Second. When God stays long before he makes payment of the promise, then it is the believer's duty to wait for it. 'Though it tarry, wait for it,' Habakkuk 2:3. He is speaking there of the good of the promise, which God intended to perform in the appointed time; and because it might tarry longer than their hasty hearts would, he bids them wait for it. As one that promiseth to come to a friend's house sends him word to sit up for him, though he tarry later than ordinary, for he will come at last assuredly. This is hard work indeed! What! wait? When we have stayed so long, and no sight of God's coming after this prayer, and that sermon! So many long looks given at the window of his ordinances and providences, and no tidings to be heard of his approach in mercy and comfort to my soul; and after this, still am I bid wait? This is wearisome work. True, to flesh and blood it is; yea, weak faith is oft out of breath, and prone to sit down, or turn back, when it hath gone long to meet God in the returns of his mercy, and misseth of him; and therefore the apostle ushers in his duty with an affectionate prayer. 'The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ,' 2 Thessalonians 3:5. He had laid down a strong ground of consolation for them in the preceding chapter, in that they were 'chosen to salvation,' and 'called by the gospel

to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ,' 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, and assured them that God, who is 'faithful,' would 'stablish them, and keep them from evil,' 2 Thessalonians 3:3. He means [this] so as they should not miscarry, and at last fall short of the glory promised; but, being sensible how difficult a work it was for them amidst their own present weaknesses, the apostasies of others, and the assaults of Satan upon themselves, to hold fast the assurance of their hope unto the end, he turns himself from them to speak to God for them. 'The Lord direct your hearts.' And, as if he had said, it is a way you will never find, a work you will never be able to do of yourselves—thus to wait patiently till Christ come, and bring the full reward of the promise with him; the Lord therefore direct your hearts into it. And Moses, it seems, before he ascended the mount, had a fear and jealousy of what afterward proved too true, that the Israelites' unbelieving hearts would not have the patience to wait for his return, when he should stay some while with God there out of their sight; to prevent which, he gave express command before he went up that they should tarry there for him, Exodus 14:14. Indeed, a duty more contrary than this of waiting quietly and silently on God, bear our manners, and lackey after us, before we do what he commands: but if the promise comes not galloping full speed to us, we think it will never be at us.

Question. But why doth God, when he hath made a promise, make his people wait so long?

Answer. I shall answer this question by asking another. Why doth God make any promise at all to his creature? This may be well asked, considering how free God was from owing any such kindness to his creature; till, by the mere good pleasure of his will, he put himself into bonds, and made himself, by his promise, a debtor to his elect. And this proves the former question to be saucy and over-bold. As if some great rich man should make a poor beggar that is a stranger to him his heir, and when he tells him this, he should ask, 'But why must I stay so long for it?' Truly, any time is too soon for him to receive a mercy from God that thinks God's time in sending it too late. This hasty spirit is as grievous to God as his stay can be to us. And no wonder God takes it so heinously, if we consider the bitter root that bears it.

First. It proceeds from a selfishness of spirit, whereby we prefer our own content and satisfaction before the glory of God, and this becomes not a gracious soul. Our comfort flows in by the performance of the promise, but the revenue of God's honour is paid into him by our humble waiting on him in the interval between the promise and the performance, and is the main end why he forbears the paying it in hastily. Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and God sure may better make us wait, before the promise is given in to our embraces by the full accomplishment of it. 'For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise,' Hebrews 10:36. It is very fit the master should dine before the man. And if he would not like a servant that would think much to stay so long from his meal as is required at his hands for waiting at his master's table, how much more must God dislike the rudeness of our impatient spirits, that would be set at our meal, and have our turn served in the comfort of the promise, before he hath the honour of our waiting on him!

Second. It proceeds from deep ingratitude; and this is a sin odious to God and man. 'They soon forgat his works; they waited not for his counsel,' Psalms 106:13. God was not behindhand with his people. It was not so long since he had given them an experiment of his power and truth. He had but newly lent them his hand, and led them dry■shod through a sea, with which they seemed to be much confirmed in their faith, and enlarged in their acknowledgments, when they came safe

to shore: ‘then believed they his words; they sang his praise,’ Psalms 106:12. One would have thought that God’s credit now would have gone for a great sum with them ever after. But it proved nothing so. They dare not trust God with so much as their bill of fare—what they shall eat and drink; and therefore it is said, ‘they waited not for his counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness.’ That is, they prevented the wisdom and providence of God, which would have provided well for them, if they could but have stayed to see how God would have spread their table for them. And why all this haste? ‘They forgat his works.’ They had lost the thankful sense of what was past, and therefore cannot wait for what was to come.

[Hope will enable the soul to wait when the promise stays longest.]

Third. Hope will enable the soul to wait when the promise stays longest. It is the very nature of hope so to do. ‘It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord,’ Lamentations 3:26. Hope groans when the mercy promised comes not, but does not grumble. Hope’s groans are from the spirit sighed out to God in prayer, Romans 8:26, and these lighten the soul of its burden of fear and solicitous care; whereas the groans of a hopeless soul are vented in discontented passions against God, and these are like a loud wind to a fire, that makes it rage more. ‘They shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them,’ Jeremiah 25:16. It is spoken of the enemies of God and his people. God had prepared them a draught which should have strange effects—‘they should be moved;’ as a man, whose brain is disturbed with strong drink, is restless and unquiet: yea, ‘be mad.’ As some, when they are drunk, quarrel with every one they meet, so should their hearts be filled with rage even at God himself, who runs his sword into their sides, because they had no hope to look for any healing of their wounds at his hand. But now where there is hope, the heart is soon quieted and pacified. Hope is the handkerchief that God puts into his people’s hands to wipe the tears from their eyes, which their present troubles, and long stay of expected mercies, draw from them. ‘Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy, and there is hope in thine end,’ Jeremiah 31:16-17. This, with some other comfortable promises which God gave his prophet Jeremiah in a vision, did so overrun and fill his heart with joy, that, he was as much recruited and comforted as a sick or weary man is after a night of sweet sleep: ‘Upon this I awaked,...and my sleep was sweet unto me,’ Jeremiah 31:26. When, however, the promise seems to stay long, hope pacifies the Christian with a threefold assurance. First. Hope assures the soul, that though God stays a while before he performs the promise, yet he doth not delay. Second. That when he comes he will abundantly recompense his longest stay. Third. That while he stays to perform one promise, he will leave the comfort of another promise, to bear the Christian company in the absence of that.

[A threefold assurance which hope gives the Christian when God delays to perform his promise.]

First Assurance. Hope assures the soul that though God stays a while before he performs the promise, yet he doth not delay. ‘The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry,’ Habakkuk 2:3. How is this? ‘Though it tarry it will not tarry!’ How shall we reconcile this tarrying and not tarrying? Very well. Though the promise tarries till the appointed time, yet it will not tarry beyond it. ‘When the time of the promise drew nigh,’ it is said, ‘which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt,’ Acts 7:17. As the herbs and flowers which sleep all winter in their

roots underground without any mention of them, when the time of spring approacheth, presently they start forth of their beds, where they had lain so long unperceived. Thus will the promise in its season do. He delays who passeth the time appointed, but he only stays that waits for the appointed time, and then comes. Every promise is dated, but with a mysterious character; and for want of skill in God's chronology, we are prone to think God forgets us, when, indeed, we forget ourselves, in being so bold to set God a time of our own, and in being angry that he comes not just then to us. As if a man should set his watch by his own hungry stomach rather than by the sun, and then say it is noon, and chide because his dinner is not ready. We are over greedy of comfort, and expect the promise should keep time with our hasty desires, which because it doth not we are discontented. A high piece of folly! The sun will not go the faster for setting our watch forward, nor the promise come the sooner for our antedating it. It is most true what one saith, 'Though God seldom comes at our day, because we seldom reckon right, yet he never fails his own day.' That of the apostle is observable. He exhorts the Thessalonian church there, 'that they would not be shaken in mind, or be troubled, as that the day of Christ were at hand,' 2 Thessalonians 2:2-3. But what need of this exhortation to saints, that look for their greatest joy to come with the approach of that day? Can their hearts be troubled to hear the day of their redemption draws nigh, the day of refreshing is at hand? It was not therefore, I conceive, the coming of that day which was so unpleasing and affrighting, but the time in which some seducers would have persuaded them to expect it, as if it had been at the very doors, and presently would have surprised them in their generation, which had been very sad indeed, because then it should have come before many prophecies and promises had received their accomplishment, and by that means the truth of God would have gone off the stage with a slur, which must not, shall not be, as he tells them, 'For that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition,' 2 Thessalonians 2:3. And as that promise stays but till those intermediate truths, which have a shorter period, be fulfilled, and then comes without any possible stay or stop; so do all the rest but wait till their reckoning be out, and what God hath appointed to intervene be despatched, and they punctually shall have their delivery in their set time.

Thou art, may be, bleeding under a wounded spirit, a poor broken■hearted creature that liest steeping in thy tears for sin. The promise tells thee that God is nigh thee to revive thee, thee I say by name, Isaiah 57:15. Yet thou comest from this prayer, and that sermon, but hast no sight of him, nor canst hear more news of his coming than what the promise gives thee. Look now that God suffers no prejudice by his stay in thy thoughts, but conclude that his time is not come, or else he had been ere this with thee; and take heed of measuring God's miles by thy own scale, for his nigh may be thy far. God could have told his people the time when he meant to come with the performance of every promise as easily as set it down in his own purpose, but he hath concealed it in most, as a happy advantage to our faith, whereby we may more fully express our confidence in waiting for that which we know not when we shall receive. Abraham's faith was great and strong to follow God when he concealed the place he meant to lead him to. For he went, 'he knew not whither,' Hebrews 11:8. So it requires great faith to rest satisfied with the promise when the time of payment is hid. But if we consider who we trade with we can have no reason to be the least jealous, no not when he stays longest, that he will fail or delay us a moment longer than the set time of the promise. There are three [why] men break their times of payment, and come not at their day. 1. Forgetfulness. 2. Unfaithfulness. 3. Impotency.

1. Cause. Forgetfulness. Many remember not what they promise. The day comes and it is quite out of their minds. Men seldom forget when they are to receive, but too oft when they are to pay, debts. An extraordinary occasion must be sent to rub up the butler's memory, or else he will never think of his prison promise. But God's promise is never out of his thoughts, 'he remembers his covenant,' Psalms 105:8; his people and their affairs are 'graven on the palms of his hands, and their walls are continually before him,' Isaiah 49:16. Though the preferment of the Pharaoh's court made the butler forget his promise to Joseph, yet all the glory that Christ sees and enjoys in heaven hath not the power to blot the remembrance of his promise to his people who lie in chains of affliction here below. And God would have his saints take notice of this to comfort themselves with, while [i.e. until] he comes. 'I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end,' Jeremiah 29:11.

2. Cause. Unfaithfulness. A promise with some is no more than a collar on an ape's neck. You have them not a whit the faster by it; for they can slip off the obligation at their pleasure. May be they never intended performance, when they passed it, but made use of a promise only as a key, to lock up their intention of deceiving from your present knowledge. Others haply mean at present as they say, but soon grow sick of their engagement, upon sight of some disadvantage which their after-thoughts discover likely to befall them upon the performance, and therefore their wits are set a-work to coin some handsome evasion to delude their engagement, or at least delay the payment. This made Lysander say of some men, that they played with oaths and promises sicut pueri cum astragalis—as children do at nine pins. They will keep them if they can get by the performance; but if it be like to prove a losing game, they will rather run debt to their conscience by breaking them, than to their purse, or any other worldly interest, by their performance. But no fear of God in this matter.

(1.) His name is truth and faithfulness. Now can truth itself lie, or faithfulness deceive? 'In my Father's house,' saith Christ, 'are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go,...I will come again and receive you,' John 14:2-3. See here the candour and nakedness of our Saviour's heart. As if he had said, 'This is no shift to be gone, that so I may by a fair tale leave you in hopes of that which shall never come to pass. No; did I know it otherwise than I speak, my heart is so full of love to you, that it would not have suffered me to put such a cheat upon you for a thousand worlds. You may trust me to go; for as surely as you see me go, shall your eyes see me come again to your everlasting joy.' The promises are none of them yea and nay, but 'yea and amen' in him.

(2.) He is wisdom as well as truth. As he is truth, he cannot wrong or deceive us in breaking his word; and being wisdom, it is impossible he should promise that which should prejudice himself. And therefore, he makes no blots in his purposes or promises, but what he doth in either is immutable. Repentance is indeed an act of wisdom in the creature, but it presupposeth folly, which is incompatible to God. In a word, men too oft are rash in promising; and therefore what they in haste promise they perform at leisure. They consider not before they vow, and therefore inquire afterward whether they had best stand to it. But the all■wise God needs not this after-game. As in the creation he looked back upon the several pieces of that goodly frame, and saw them so exact that he took not up his pencil the second time to mend anything of the first draft; so in his promises, they are made with such infinite judgment and wisdom, that what he hath writ he will stand to for ever. 'I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in

righteousness, and in judgment,' Hosea 2:19. Therefore for ever, because in righteousness and in mercy.

3. Cause. Impotency. Men's promises, alas! depend upon many contingencies. The man haply is rich when he seals the bond, and poor before the day of payment comes about. A wreck at sea, a fire by land, or some other sad accident, intervenes, either quite impoverisheth him, or necessitates him to beg further time, with him in the gospel, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all,' Matthew 18:26. But the great God cannot be put to such straits. 'The Strength of Israel will not lie,' 1 Samuel 15:29. As there is a lie of wickedness, when one promiseth what he will not perform; so there is a lie that proceeds from weakness, when a person or thing cannot perform what they promise. Thus indeed all men, yea, all creatures, will be found liars to all that lean on them, called therefore 'lying vanities.' 'Vanities,' as empty and insufficient; 'lying vanities,' because they promise what they have not to give. But God, he is propounded as a sure bottom for our faith to rest on in this respect. 'Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is strength, or everlasting strength,' Isaiah 26:4. Such strength his is that needs not another's strength to uphold it. One man's ability to perform his promises leans on others' ability to pay theirs to him. If they him, he is forced to fail them. Thus we see, the breaking of one merchant proves the breaking of many others whose estates were in his hands. But God's power is independent. Let the whole creation break, yet God is the same as he was, as able to help as ever. 'Though the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines.' And, 'yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength,' Habakkuk 3:17-19. O how happy are the saints! a people that can never be undone, no, not when the whole world turns bankrupt, because they have his promise whose power fails not when that doth. The Christian cannot come to God when he hath not by him what he wants. 'How great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee,' Psalms 31:19. It is laid up, as a father hath his child's portion, in bags, ready to be paid him when the time comes. The saint shall not stay a moment beyond the date of the promise. 'There is forgiveness with thee,' saith the psalmist. It stands ready for thee against thou comest to claim the promise.

Second Assurance. Hope assures the Christian, that though God stays long, yet, when he does come, he will abundantly recompense his longest stay. As the wicked get nothing by God's forbearing to execute his threatening, but the treasuring up more wrath for the day of wrath; so the saints lose nothing by not having the promise presently paid into them, but rather do, by their forbearing God a while, treasure up more joy against the joyful day, when the promise shall be performed. 'To them who by patient continuance...seek for glory and honour,...eternal life,' Romans 2:7. Mark, it is not enough to do well, but to 'continue' therein; nor that neither, except it be 'patient continuing in well-doing'—in the midst of God's seeming delays; and whoever he be that can do this, shall be rewarded at last for all his patience. Ploughing is hungry work, yet because it is in hope of reaping such an abundant increase, the husbandman faints not. O my soul, saith hope, though thou wantest thy dinner, hold but out a while, and thou shalt have dinner and supper served in together when night comes. The sick fits and qualms which the Christian hath in the absence of the promise are all forgot, and the trouble of them over, when once it comes and he is feasted with the joy it brings. 'Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life;' Proverbs 13:12—that is, when it cometh in God's time after long waiting, then it causeth an overflowing joy. As there is a time which God hath set for the ripening the fruits

of the earth, before which, if they be gathered, it is to our loss; so there is a time set by God for the good things of the promise, which we are to wait for, and not unseasonably pluck, like green apples, off the tree—as too many do, who, having no faith or hope to quiet their spirits while [until] God's time comes, do therefore snatch that by unwarrantable means, which would in time drop ripe into their bosoms. And what get these short-spirited men by their haste? Alas! they find their enjoyments thin and lank, like corn reaped before it is fit for the sickle, wherewith he that bindeth the sheaves, filleth not his bosom. Therefore we find this duty of waiting pressed under this very metaphor. 'Be patient, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord,' James 5:7. Stay God's time, till he comes according to his promise, and takes you off your suffering work, and be not hasty to shift yourselves out of trouble. And why so? 'Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.' The husbandman who, the proverb saith, is, dives in novum annum—rich in hope of the next year's crop —though he gladly would have his corn in the barn, yet waits for its ripening in the ordinary course of God's providence. When the former rain comes he is joyful, but yet desires the latter rain also, and stays for it, though long in coming. And do not we see, that a shower sometimes falls close to the time of harvest, that plumps the ear to the great increase of the crop, which some lose, that, through distrust of providence, put in their sickle too soon? I am sure mercies come fullest when most waited for. Christ did not so soon supply them with wine at the marriage of Cana, as his mother desired, but they had the more for staying a while. There is a double fullness, which the Christian may hope to find in those enjoyments that he hath with long patience waited for, above another that cannot stay God's leisure.

1. A fulness of duration. Enjoyments snatched out of God's hand, and not given by it, are but guests come, not to stay long; like David's child born in adultery, they commonly die in the cradle. They are like some fruit gathered green, which soon rots. Is it riches that is thus got? Some are said to 'make haste to be rich,' Proverbs 28:20. They cannot, by a conscionable diligence in their particular calling, and exercise of godliness in their general, wait upon God. No; the promise doth not gallop fast enough for them; on therefore they spur, and, by sordid practices, make haste to be rich. But God makes as much haste to melt their estate, as they do to gather. No salt will keep that meat long from corrupting which was overheated in the driving, nor any care and providence of man keep that estate from God's curse which is got by so hot and sinful a pursuit. 'Wealth gotten by vanity'—that is, vain, unwarrantable courses —'shall be diminished,' Proverbs 13:11. Like the unsound fat which great drinkers and greedy eaters gain to themselves, it hath that in it that will hasten its ruin. 'The getting of treasure by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death,' Proverbs 21:6. The meaning is, such estates are tossed like a ball, from one to another, and are not to stay long in any hand, till it comes into the godly man's, whom God oft, by his providence, makes heir to such men's riches, as you may see, Job 27:11-23; Ecclesiastes 2:26.

Again, is it comfort and inward joy? Some make too much haste for this. They are not like other Christians, who use to have a wet seed-time, and are content to wait for joy till harvest, or at least till it be in some forwardness, and the seed of grace, which was sown in tears of humiliation, appears above ground in such solid evidences as do in some degree satisfy them concerning the reality and truth of the same. Then indeed the sincere Christian's spirit begins to cheer up, and his

comfort holds, yea increaseth more and more, as the sun that, after a contest with some thick mist, breaks forth, and gets a full victory of those vapours which for a while darkened it. ‘The light of the righteous rejoiceth,’ Proverbs 13:9—that is, over all his fears and doubts. But there are others so hasty that they are catching at comfort before they were ever led into acquaintance with godly sorrow. They are delivered without pain, and their faith flames forth into the joy of assurance, before any smoke of doubtings and fears were seen to arise in their hearts. But alas! it is as soon lost as got, like too forward a snibbing spring, that makes the husbandman weep at harvest; or a fair sunshine day in winter, that is the breeder of many foul ones after it. The stony ground is a clear instance of this, Mark 4:1-41, whose joy was a quickly down as up. A storm of persecution or temptation comes, and immediately he is offended. In a word, take but one instance more, and that is in point of deliverance. Such hasty spirits that cannot wait for the promise to open their prison door, and God to give them a release in his time, but break prison, and by some unwarrantable practice wind themselves out of trouble; do we not see how miserably they befool themselves? For while they think, by the midwifery of their sinful policy, to hasten their deliverance, they kill it in the birth, which, had it come in God’s time, might have stayed many a fair day with them. The Jews are a sad instance of this; who, though God gave them such full security for their deliverance from the Babylonian hand, would yet take their own course, hoping, it seems, to compass it sooner by policy than they could expect it to be effected by providence, and therefore to Egypt they will post in all haste, not doubting but they shall thence bring their deliverance. But alas! it proved far otherwise; for all they got was to have more links added to their chain of bondage, and their lordly masters to use greater rigour upon them, which God, by his prophet, bids them thank their own hasty unbelieving spirits for. ‘Thus saith the Lord God, the holy One of Israel, In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength, and ye would not,’ Isaiah 30:15. Indeed, if we look on such as have quietly waited by hope for God’s coming to their help, we shall find they ever sped well. Joshua, who bore up against all discouragements from God and man, steadfastly believing, and patiently waiting, for the land God had promised, did he not live to walk over their graves in the wilderness that would have turned back to Egypt? and to be witness to their destruction also, who presumptuously went up the hill to fight the enemy and take the land—as they vainly hoped—before God’s time was come? Deuteronomy 1:1-46. Yea, did not he at last divide the land, and lay his bones in a bed of honour, after he had lived to see the promise of God happily performed to his people? So David, whose hope and patience was admirable in waiting for the kingdom after he had the promise of it; especially if we consider what fair opportunities he had to take cruel Saul out of the way, whose life alone did stand betwixt him and the throne. Neither did he want matter to fill up a declaration for the satisfaction and pacifying the minds of the people, if he had a mind to have gone this way to the crown; but he knew those plausible arguments for such a fact, which would have pleased the multitude, would not have pacified his own conscience, and this stayed his hand from any such ripping open the womb of the promise, to come by the crown with which it was big, but left it to go its full time, and he lost nothing by it.

2. There flows in a fulness of benediction, with an enjoyment reaped in God’s full time, which is lost for want of patience to wait thereunto. Now this benediction is paid into the waiting soul’s bosom two ways. (1.) He hath that enjoyment sweetened to him with God’s love and favour for his comfort. (2.) He hath it sanctified to him in the happy fruit it bears for his good.

(1.) He hath it sweetened to him with God's love and favour for his comfort; which he cannot so well expect that carves for himself, and cannot stay for God in his own time to lay it on his trencher. There is guilt ever to be found in the company of impatience and distrust. And where guilt is contracted in the getting of an enjoyment, there can be little sweetness tasted when it comes to be used. O guilt is an embittering thing! It keeps the soul in a continual fear of hearing ill news from heaven; and a soul in fear is not in case to relish the sweetness of a mercy. Such a one may happily have a little tumultuous joy, and warm himself awhile at this rash fire of his own kindling, till he comes to have some serious discourse with his own heart in cold blood, about the way and manner of getting the enjoyment and this is sure to send such a dampness to the heart of the poor creature as will not suffer that fire long to burn clear. O what a stab it is to the heart of an oppressor, to say of his great wealth, as that king of his crown, 'Here is a fair estate, but God knows how I came by it!' What a wound to the joy of a hypocrite! 'I have pretended to a great deal of comfort, but God knows how I came by it!' Whereas the Christian who receives any comfort, inward or outward, from God's hand, as a return for his patient waiting, hath none of these sad thoughts to scare him and break his drought when the cup is in his mouth. He knows where he had his outward estate and inward comfort. He can bring God to vouch them both, that they with his leave and liking. There is a great odds between the joy of the husbandman, at the happy inning of his corn in harvest, and the thief's joy, who hath stolen some sheaves out of another's field, and is making merry with his booty as soon as he is got home. Possibly you may hear a greater noise and outis[1] of joy in the thief's house than the honest husbandman's, yet no compare between them. One knock at the thief's door by an officer that comes to search his house for stolen goods, spoils the mirth of the whole house—who run, one this way and another that. O what fear and shame must then take hold on his guilty heart, that hears God coming to search for his stolen mercies and comforts!

(2.) The waiting soul hath enjoyments sanctified to him for his good; and this another wants with all he hath. And what is the blessing of mercy, but to have it do us good? Hasty spirits grow worse by enjoyments gathered out of season. This is a sore evil indeed, to have wealth for our hurt, and comfort for our hurt. It was the sin of Israel that 'they waited not for his counsel,' Psalms 106:13. God had taken them as his charge, and undertook to provide for them if they would have stood to his allowance; but they could not stay his leisure, 'but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert,' Psalms 106:14. They must have what pleaseth their palate, and when their own impatient hearts call, or not at all. And so they had: 'He gave them their request,' Psalms 106:15. But they had better been without their feast, for they did not thrive by it, 'he sent leanness into their soul,' Psalms 106:15. A secret curse came with their enjoyments, which soon appeared in those great sins they thereupon were left to commit—'they envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the Lord,' Psalms 106:16—as also in the heavy judgments by which God did testify against them for the same, Numbers 11:31. Whereas mercies that are received in God's way and time, prove meat of better juice and purer nourishment to the waiting soul. They do not break out into such botches and plague-sores as these. As the other are fuel for lust, so these food to the saints' graces, and make them more humble and holy. See this in Isaiah 30:18-19, compared with Isaiah 30:22, where they, as a fruit of their patient waiting on God for their outward deliverance, have with it that which is more worth than the deliverance itself, i.e. grace to improve and use it holily. It was a great mercy that Hannah had, after her many prayers and long waiting, 'a son;' but a greater, that she had a heart to give up her son again to God, that gave him to her. To

have estate, health, or any other enjoyment upon waiting on God for the same, is mercy, but not to be compared with that blessing which seasons and sanctifies the heart to use them for God's glory. And this is the ordinary portion of the waiting soul, and that not only in outward comforts, but inward also. The joy and inward peace which the sincere soul hath thus, makes it more humble, holy, heavenly; whereas the comfort which the hypocrite comes so quickly by, either degenerates into pride and self-conceit, or empties itself into some other filthy sink—sometimes even of open profaneness itself—before it hath run far.

Third Assurance. Hope assures the soul, that while God stays the performance of one promise, he shall have the absence thereof supplied with the presence of another. And this is enough to quiet the heart of any that understands himself. God hath laid things in such a sweet method, that there is not one point of time wherein the soul of a believer is left wholly destitute of comfort, but there is one promise or other that stands to minister unto his present wants. Sometimes, haply, he may want what he strongly desires, yet even then care is taken for his present subsistence; one promise bears the Christian company while another comes. And what cause hath the sick man to complain, though all his friends do not sit up with him together, if they take it by turns, and never leave him without a sufficient number to look to him?

We read of a 'tree of life,' Revelation 22:2, 'which bears twelve manner of fruits, and yieldeth her fruit every month,' so that it is never without some hanging on it which is fit for the eater. What can this tree be better conceived to be than Christ, who yields all manner of fruit in his promises, and comfort for all times, all conditions? The believer can never come but he shall find some promise ripe to be eaten, with which he may well stay his stomach till the other—whose time to be gathered is not yet come—hangs for further ripening. Here you see the Christian hath provision for all the year long. When Christ returned to heaven he gave his disciples this to comfort them, that he would come again, and carry them with him unto his father's house, where no he lives himself in glory, John 14:2-3. This is sweet indeed. But, alas! what shall they do in the meantime to weather out those many storms which were to intervene between this promise and the time when it shall be performed? This also our Saviour considered, and tells them he does not mean to leave them comfortless, but gives them another promise to keep house with, in the meantime, i.e. a promise of his Spirit—who should be with them on earth, while [until] he took them to be with him in heaven, John 14:16. The Christian is never at such a loss wherein hope cannot relieve it. 'Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is, for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit,' Jeremiah 17:7-8. These waters are the promises from which the believer draws continual matter of comfort, that as a tree planted by a river flourisheth, however the year goes, so doth he, whatever the temper of God's exterior providence is. Possibly the Christian is in an afflicted state, and the promise for deliverance comes not, yet then hope can entertain him in the absence of that, at the cost of another promise—that though God doth not at present deliver him out of the affliction, yet he will support him under it, 1 Corinthians 10:13. If yet the Christian cannot find this promise paid into such a height as to discharge him of all impatience, distrust, and other sinful distempers—which to his grief he finds too busy in him for all the promise —then hope hath another window to let out the smoke at, and that is by presenting the soul with those promises which assure the weak Christian that pardoning mercy shall cover those defects which assisting

grace did not fully conquer. ‘I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him,’ Malachi 3:1. So, Micah 7:18 ‘Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever.’ And certainly God would not have suffered so much impatience to have broken out in Job, but that he would have something left for pardoning mercy to do at the close of all, to which that holy man should see himself beholden, both for his deliverance, and that honourable testimony also which God himself gave of him before his uncharitable friends, who from his great afflictions, and some discomposure of spirit in them, did so unmercifully burden him with the heavy charge of being a hypocrite.

DIRECTION IX.—THIRD GENERAL PART.

[Application of the Doctrine of the Christian Helmet, alike to those who have, and to those who have it not.]

Having shown now what the helmet of salvation is, and several of its offices to the Christian, we proceed to bring out how its doctrine applies alike to those who have, and to those who have it not, and the several points of improvement which naturally flow from it. These may be classed as four. First. A trial of what metal our helmet of hope is made. Second. An exhortation to those who, upon trial, find it genuine, in which two duties are pressed on them. Third. Arguments why we should strengthen our hope, with directions how we may do so. Fourth. An exhortation to those who want this helmet of hope.

FIRST POINT OF IMPROVEMENT.

[Trial of what metal our helmet of hope is made.] For trial, whether we have this helmet of hope on our heads or no—this helmet, I say, commended to us in the text. As for such paltry ware, that most are contended with for cheapness’ sake, it, alas! deserves not the name of a true hope, no more than a paper cap doth of a helmet. O, look to the metal and temper of your helmet in an especial manner, for at this most blows are made. He that seeks chiefly to defend his own head—the serpent I mean—will aim most to wound yours. None but fools and children are so credulous as to be blown up with great hopes upon any light occasion and slight ground. They who are wise, and have their wits about them, will be as wary as how they place their hopes, especially for salvation, as a prudent pilot, that hath a rich lading, would be where he moors his ship and casts his anchor. There is reason for our utmost care herein, because nothing exposeth men to more shame than to meet with disappointment in their hopes. ‘They were confounded because they had hoped; they came thither and were ashamed,’ Job 6:20; that is, to miss of what they hoped to have found in those brooks. But there is no shame like to that which a false hope for eternal salvation will put sinners to at last; some shall rise ‘to shame everlasting,’ Daniel 10:1-21. They shall awake out of their graves, and out of that fool’s paradise also, wherein their vain hopes had entertained them all their lives, and see, instead of a heaven they expected, hell to be in expectation of them, and gaping with full mouth for them. If the servants of Eglon were so ashamed after their waiting awhile at their prince’s door, from whom they expected all their preferment, to find him, and their hopes with him, dead on the floor, Judges 3:25; O, whose heart then can think what a mixture of shame and horror shall meet in their faces and hearts at the great day, who shall see all their hopes for heaven hop headless, and leave them in the hands of tormenting devils to all eternity! Hannibal’s soldiers did not so confidently divide the goldsmiths’

shops in Rome among themselves —which yet they never took—as many presumptuous sinners do promise themselves heaven's bliss and happiness, who must instead thereof sit down with shame in hell, except they can, before they die, show better ground for their hope than now they are able to do. O what will those fond dreamers do in the day of the Lord's anger, when they shall see the whole world in a light flame round about them, and hear God —whose piercing eyes will look them through and through—calling them forth before men and angels to the scrutiny! Will they stand to their hope, and vouch it to the face of Christ, which now they bless themselves so in? Surely their hearts will fail them for such an enterprise. None then will speak so ill of them as their own consciences shall do. God will in that day use their own tongues to accuse them, and set forth the folly of their ridiculous hope to the confusion of their faces before all the world. The prophet foretells a time when the false prophets 'shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive, but he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman,' &c., Zechariah 13:4-5.

Truly the most notorious false prophet that the world hath, and deceives most, is this vain hope which men take up for their salvation. This prophesies of peace, pardon, and heaven, to be the portion of such as [it] never once entered into God's heart to make heirs thereof. But the day is coming, and it hastens, wherein this false prophet shall be confounded. Then the hypocrite shall confess he never had any hope for salvation but what was the idol of his own fancy's making; and the formalist shall throw off the garment of his profession by which he deceived himself and others, and appear to himself and to all the world in his naked colours. It behooves therefore everyone to be strict and curious in the search of his own heart, to find what his hope is built upon.

Now, hope of the right make, is a rational well-grounded hope. 'Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you,' 1 Peter 3:15. Alas! how can they give an answer to others, that have not any to give to their own consciences to this question, 'Why dost thou hope to be saved, O my soul?' There is no Christian, be he never so weak in grace, but hath some reason bottomed on the Scripture—for other I mean not—for the hope he professeth. Do you think, yea, can you be so absurd as to think, your own bold presumption, without any word of promise to build upon, can entitle your souls to the inheritance in God's kingdom? Should one come and say your house and land were his, and show you no writing under your hand by which you did ever grant him a right thereunto, but all he can say is, he dreamed the last night your house and land were his, and therefore now he demands it; would you not think the man mad, and had more to the bedlam than to your estate? And yet there are many hope to be saved, that can give no better reason than this comes to for the same, and such are all grossly ignorant and profane sinners. As it is enough for a saint to end the trouble which his fears put him into, to ask his soul why it is disquieted within him, would he but observe how little reason his heart can give for the same; so [would it be enough] to dismount the bold sinner from his prancing hopes, if he might be prevailed with to call himself to an account, and thus to accost his soul sometimes, and resolve not to stir without a satisfactory answer. 'In sober sadness tell me, O my soul! what reason findest thou in the whole Bible, for thee to hope for salvation, what livest in ignorance of God, or a trade of sin against God?' Certainly he should find his soul as mute and speechless as the man without the wedding garment was at Christ's question. This is the reason why men are such strangers to themselves, and dare not enter into any discourse upon this subject with their own hearts, because they know they should soon make an uproar in their consciences that would not

be stilled in haste. They cocker their false hearts as much as David did his Adonijah, who in all his life never displeased him so much as to ask him, ‘Why dost thou so?’ Nor they their souls to the day of their death by asking them, ‘Soul, why hopest thou so?’ Or if they have, it hath been as Pilate, who asked Christ what was truth, John 18:38, but had no mind to stay for an answer. May be thou art an ignorant, soul, who knowest neither who Christ is, nor what in Christ hope is to fasten its hold upon; but only with a blind surmise thou hopest God will be better to thee than to damn thee at last. But why thou thus hopest, thou canst give no reason, nor I neither. If he will save thee as now thou art, he must make a new gospel for thy sake; for in this Bible it damns thee without hope or help. The gospel is ‘hid to them that are lost,’ 2 Corinthians 4:3. But if knowledge will do it, thou haply canst show good store of that. This is the breast-work under which thou liest, and keepest off those shot which are made at thee from the word, for those lusts which thou livest and liest in as a beast in his dung, defiling thyself with them daily. And is this all thou hast to prove thy hopes for salvation for hopes true and solid? Indeed, many make no better use of their knowledge of the Scripture, than thieves do of the knowledge they have of the law of the land, who study it not that they mean to keep it, but to make them more cunning to evade the charge of it when called in question by it. So many acquaint themselves with the word—especially those passages in it that display the mercy of God to sinners at the greatest breadth—that with these they may stuff a pillow to lay their wretched heads on, when the cry of the abominations in which they live begins to break their rest. God deliver you, my dear friends, from such a hope as this. Surely you mean to provide a better answer to give unto Christ at the great day than this, why ye hope to be saved by him; do you not? Will thy knowledge, thinkest thou, be as strong a plea for salvation, as thy sins which thou wallowest in, against that knowledge, will be for thy damnation? If there be hope for such as thee, then come Judas and Jezebel, yea devils, and all ye infernal spirits, and strike in for this good company for a part with them, for some of you can plead more of this than any of them all. But may be thou hast more yet to say for thyself than this comes to. Thou art not only a knowing person but a reformed also; the pollutions in which once thou layest, now thou hast escaped; yea, thy reformation is embellished and set forth with a very gaudy profession of religion, both which have gained thee a very high opinion in the thoughts of all thy neighbours; so that if heaven might be carried by thy hands, thou couldst haply have a testimonial for thy unblamable and saint-like behaviour among them; yet, let me tell thee, if thou meanest to be faithful to thy own soul, thou must not rest in their charitable opinion of thee, nor judge of thy hopes for heaven by what comes under their cognizance, to wit, the behaviour of thy outward man—for further their eye and observation reacheth not—but art to look inward to thy own bosom, and inquire what spring thou canst find thereto have been the cause of this change and new motion that hath appeared in thy external conversation. This, and this alone, must decide the controversy, and bring thy thoughts to an issue, what to judge of thy hope, whether spurious or legitimate. It is not a new face that colours our outward behaviour, but a new principle that changeth the frame of the heart within, will evince thy hope to be good and genuine. ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope,’ 1 Peter 1:3. The new birth entitles to a new hope. If the soul be dead, the hope cannot be alive. And the soul may be dead, and yet put into a very handsome dress of external reformation and profession, as well as a dead body may be clad with rich clothes. A beggar’s son got into the clothes of a rich man’s child, may as well hope to be heir to the rich man’s land, as thou, by an external reformation and profession, to be God’s heir in glory. The child’s hopes are from his own

father, not from a stranger. Now, while thou art in a natural estate —though never so finished—old Adam is thy father; and what canst thou hope from him who proved worse than nought, and left his poor posterity nothing, except we should put a crazy mortal body, a sinful nature, and a fearful expectation of death temporal and eternal from the wrathful hand of a provoked God—which indeed he left all his children —into his inventory? O sirs, how can you give way that any sleep should fall upon your eyes, till you get into this relation to God! Hannah was a woman of a bitter spirit till she got a child from God; and hast not thou more reason to be so, till thou canst get to be a child of God? Better a thousand times over that thou shouldst die childless than fatherless; my meaning is, that thou shouldst leave no child to inherit thy estate on earth, than to have no father to give thee an inheritance in heaven when thou art taken hence.

SECOND POINT OF IMPROVEMENT.

[Exhortation to those who have this helmet of hope.] For exhortation of you, believers, who upon trial are found to have this helmet of hope. Several duties are to be pressed upon you as such. First. Be thankful for this unspeakable gift. Second. Live up to your hopes.

[Duties which possession of the helmet of hope involves.]

First Duty. Be thankful for this unspeakable gift. I will not believe thou hast it if thy heart be not abundantly let out in thankfulness for it. Blessed Peter cannot speak of this but in a doxology. ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which hath begotten us again unto a lively hope,...to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,’ 1 Peter 1:3-4[2]. The usual proem to Paul’s epistles is of this strain, Colossians 1:5; Ephesians 1:3. Hast thou hope in heaven? It is more than if thou hadst the whole world in hand. The greatest monarch the earth hath will be glad, in a dying hour, to change his crown for thy helmet. His crown will not procure him this helmet, but thy helmet will bring thee to a crown, when he shall have none to wear—a crown, not of gold, but of glory, which once on shall never be taken off, as his is sure to be. O remember, Christian, what but a while since thou wert—so far from having any hope of heaven, that thou wert under a fearful expectation of hell and damnation. And are those chains of guilt with which thy trembling conscience was weighed down unto despair, taken off, and thy head lift up to look for such high preferment in the celestial court of that God whose wrath thou hadst, by thy horrid treasons, most justly incensed against thee? Certainly, of all the men in the world, thou art deepest in debt to the mercy of God. If he will be thanked for a crust, he looks, sure, thou shouldst give him more for a crown. If food and raiment, though coarse and mean—suppose but roots and rags—be gratefully to be acknowledged; O with what ravishment of love and thankfulness are you to think and speak of those rarities and robes with which you hope to be fed and clad in this heavenly kingdom! especially if you cast your eye aside, and behold those that were once your fellow-prisoners—in what a sad and dismal condition they continue—while all this happiness has befallen you! It could not, sure, but affect his heart into admiration of his prince’s mercy and undeserved favour to him, who is saved from the gibbet only by his gracious pardon, if, as he is riding in a coach towards his prince’s court—there to live in wealth and honour —he should meet some of his fellow■traitors on sleds, as they are dragging full of shame and horror to execution for the same treason in which they had as deep a hand as any of them all. And dost thou not see, Christian, many of thy poor neighbours, with whom haply thou hast had a partnership in sin, pinioned with impenitency and unbelief, driving apace to hell and destruction, while thou, by

the free distinguishing mercy of God, art on thy way for heaven and glory? O down on thy knees, and cry out, ‘Lord, why wilt thou show thyself to me, and not to these?’ How easy had it been, and righteous for God, to have directed the pardon to them, and the warrant for damnation unto thee! When thou hast spent thy own breath and spirits in praising God, thou hadst need beg a collection of praises of all thy friends that have a heart to contribute to such charitable work, that they would help thee in paying this debt; and get all this, with what in heaven thou shalt disburse thyself to all eternity, in better coin than can be expected from thee here—where thy soul is embased with sinful mixtures—it must be accounted rather an acknowledgment of what thou owest to thy God, than any payment of the least part of the debt.

Second Duty. Live up to thy hopes, Christian. Let there be a decorum kept between thy principles and thy practices, thy hope of heaven and walk on earth. The eye should direct the foot. Thou lookest for salvation; walk the same way thy eye looks. This is so often pressed in the word, as shows both its necessity and difficulty. Some times we are stirred up to act ‘as becometh saints,’ Romans 16:2; Ephesians 5:3. Sometimes ‘as becometh the gospel of Christ,’ Php 1:27. Sometimes ‘as becometh those who profess godliness,’ 1 Timothy 2:10. There is a JÎ BDXB@<—a decorum, and comely behaviour, which, if a Christian doth not observe in his walking he betrays his high calling and hopes unto scorn and contempt. To look high, and to live low, O how ridiculous it appears to all men! When a man is dressed on purpose to be laughed at and made a jeering■stock, they put on him something of the king and something of the beggar, that, by this patchery of mock■majesty with sordid baseness together, he may appear the greater fool to all the company. And certainly, if the devil might have the dressing of a man, so as to cast the greatest shame and ignominy upon him, yea, upon Christ and the profession of his gospel, he could not think of a readier way than to persuade a wretch to pretend to high and glorious hopes of heaven, and then to have nothing suitable to the high■flown hopes in his conversation, but all base and unworthy of such royal claims. If ye should see one going into the field with a helmet of brass on his head, but a wooden sword in one hand, and a paper shield on the other, and the rest of his armour like to these, you would expect he was not likely to hurt his enemies, except they should break their sides with laughing at him. Such a goodly spectacle is the brag professor, who lifts up his head on high with a bold expectation of salvation, but can show never a grace beside to suit with the great hope he hath taken up; he may make the devil sport, but never do him any great hurt, or himself good.

Question. But may be you will ask, How is the Christian to live up to his hopes?

Answer. I answer, in general, he is to be careful to do nothing in which he may not freely act his hope, and from the promise expect that God will, for Christ’s sake, both approve the action, and reward his person for it. Ask thy soul this question seriously before thou engagest in any work, ‘May I hope that God will bid me good speed? Can I look for his countenance in it, and his blessing on it?’ It is very unworthy of a Christian to do anything sneakingly, as if he were afraid God or his conscience should be privy to his work. ‘Whatsoever is not of hope is sin, because it cannot be of faith.’ O how would this hedge in the Christian’s heart from all by-paths! Possibly thou hast a grudge against thy neighbour. The fire is kindled in thy heart, though it flames not presently out into bitter words and angry behaviour; and thou art going to pray. Ask now thy soul, whether God will accept that sacrifice which is kindled with such strange fire? Yea, bid thy soul bethink herself how thy hopes of pardoning and saving mercy from God can agree with thy wrathful unforgiving

spirit towards thy brother? Certainly, as the sun cannot well be seen through a disturbed air, so neither can the eye of hope well see her object—heaven's salvation—when the soul is tumultuous and roiled with anger and unchristian passion.

But, to instance in some particulars wherein you must comport with your hopes of salvation.

[Instances wherein the Christian should live up to his hopes.]

First Instance. In your company. Man is a sociable creature—made for fellowship. And what company is fit for thee to consort with, but those of the same breeding and hopes with thyself? The saints are a distinct society from the world. 'Let ours also learn to maintain good works,' Titus 3:14. 'Ours,' i.e. of our fellowship. And it becomes them to seek their company among themselves. That of Peter and John is observable, 'being let go, they went to their own company,' Acts 4:23. When among the ungodly world they made account they were not in their own company, and therefore stayed no longer than needs must among them. There were enough surely in the land of Canaan with whom Abraham might have associated; but he knew they were not company for him to be linked to in any intimacy of acquaintance, and therefore it is said of him, that 'he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise,' Hebrews 11:9. We find him indeed confederate with Mamre, the Amorite, and Eshcol, and Aner, his brethren, Genesis 14:13, which presupposeth more than ordinary acquaintance. But these, in all probability, were proselytes, and had, by Abraham's godly persuasions, renounced their idolatry, to worship with him the true God. And we may the rather be induced to think so, because we find them so deeply engaged with Abraham in battle with those idolatrous neighbour princes, which, had they themselves been idolaters, it is like they would not have done for a stranger, and him of a strange religion also. We find how dearly some of the saints have paid for their acquaintance with the wicked, as Jehoshaphat for his intimacy with Ahab, and many others. And if, knowing this, we shall yet associate ourselves with such, we cannot in reason look to pay less than they have done; yea, well, if we come off so cheap, because we have their follies recorded to make us wiser.

O consider, Christian, whither thou art going in thy hopes! Is it not to heaven? and do not men seek for such company as go their way? And are the wicked of thy way? When heaven's way and hell's meet in one road, then, and not till then, can that be. And if thy companion will not walk in heaven-way, what wilt thou do that walkest with him? It is to be feared thou must comply too much in his way. In a word, Christian, thy hope points to heaven; and is it not one thing thou hopest for, when thou comest there, to be delivered from all company with the wicked? and what thou then hopest for, doth thou not now pray for? Sure enough thou dost, if a true saint. Whatever is the object of a saint's hope is the subject of his prayer. As oft as thou sayest, 'Thy kingdom come,' thou prayest thus much. And will hoping and praying to be delivered from them, stand with throwing thyself upon them, and intimate familiarity with them?

Second Instance. Then thou comportest with thy hopes of salvation, when thou labourest to be as holy in thy conversation as thou art high in thy expectation. This the apostle urgeth from the condescency of the thing: 'What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God,' 2 Peter 3:11-12. Certainly it becomes such to be holy even to admiration, who look for such a blessed day! We hope then to be like the angels in glory, and therefore should, if possible, live now like angels in holiness. Every

believing soul is Christ's spouse. The day of conversion is the day of espousals, wherein she is contracted and betrothed by faith to Christ; and as such, lives in hope for the marriage-day, when he shall come and fetch her home unto his Father's house—as Isaac did Rebecca into his mother's tent —there to cohabit with him and live in his sweet embraces of love, world without end. Now, would the bride have her bridegroom find her, when he comes, in her fluttery and vile raiment? No, sure. 'Can a bride forget her attire?' Jeremiah 2:32. Was it ever known that a bride forgot to have her wedding■clothes made against the marriage■day? or to put them on when she looks for her bridegroom's coming? Holiness is the 'raiment of needle-work,' in which, Christian, thou art to be 'brought unto thy king and husband,' Psalms 45:14. Wherefore is the wedding-day put off so long, but because this garment is so long a making? When this is once wrought, and thou ready dressed, then that joyful day comes: 'The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready,' Revelation 19:7.

Thou hast not, Christian, a weightier argument to knock down all temptations to sin, nor a more honourable way to get the victory of them, than by setting thy hope to grapple with them. I confess it is well when this enemy is worsted, what hand soever he falls by; though it be the fear of hell that clubs it down in the lives of men, it is better than not at all. Yet I must tell you, that as the Israelites' state was poor and servile, when they were fain to borrow the Philistines' grindstone 'to sharpen every man his axe and mattock,' 1 Samuel 13:20, so it speaks the Christian to be in no very good state as to his spiritual affairs when he is fain to use the wicked man's argument to keep him from sinning, and nothing will set an edge upon his spirit to cut through temptation, but what the uncircumcised world themselves use. Thou, Christian, art of a nobler spirit, and more refined temper than these, I trow. And as we have a finer stone to sharpen a razor with that we use for a butcher's knife, so, certainly, a more spiritual and ingenuous argument would become thee better, to make thee keen and sharp against sin, than what prevails with the worst of men sometimes to forbear at least acting their wickedness. Go thou, Christian, to thy hope, and while the slavish sinner scares and terrifies himself from his lust with fire and brimstone, do thou shame thyself out of all acquaintance with it from the great and glorious things thou lookest for in heaven. Is it a sin of sensual pleasure that assaults thy castle? Say then to thy soul, 'Shall I play the beast on earth, that hope to be such a glorious creature in heaven?' Shall that head be found now in a Delilah's lap, that ere long I hope to be laid in Abraham's bosom? Can I now yield to defile that body with lust and vomit, which is the garment my soul hopes to wear in heaven? O no! Avaunt, Satan! I will have nothing to do with thee, or anything that will make me unmeet for that blessed place and holy state I wait for.

Third Instance. Let thy hope of heaven moderate thy affections to earth. 'Be sober, and hope,' saith the apostle, 1 Peter 1:13. You that look for so much in another world, may very well be content with a little in this. Nothing more unbecomes a heavenly hope than an earthly heart. You would think it an unseemly thing for some rich man, that hath a vast estate, among the poor gleaners at harvest■time, as busy to pick up the ears of corn that are left in the field, as the most miserable beggar in the company. O how all the world would cry shame of such a sordid■spirited man! Well, Christian, be not angry if I tell thee that thou dost a more shameful thing to thyself by far; if thou, that pretendest to hope for heaven, beest as eager in the pursuit of this world's trash as the poor carnal wretch is who expects no portion but what God hath left him to pick up in the field of this world. Certainly thy hope is either false, or at best very little. The higher that the summer

sun mounts above the horizon, the more force it bears both to clear and also heat the air with his beams. And if thy hope of salvation were advanced to any ordinary pitch and height in thy soul, it would scatter these inordinate desires after this world with which now thou art choked up, and put thee into a greater heat of affection after heaven, than now thou feelest to things below.

I remember Augustine, relating what sweet discourse passed once between his mother and himself concerning the joys of heaven, breaks forth into this apostrophe, 'Lord, thou knowest quàm viluit nobis in illo die hic mundus—how vile and contemptible this sorry world was in our eye in that day when our hearts were warmed with some sweet discourse of that blessed place.' And I doubt not but every gracious person finds the same by himself; the nearer to heaven he gets in his hopes, the further he goes from earth in his desires. When he stands upon these battlements of heaven, he can look down upon this dunghill world as a nigrum nihil, a little dust■heap next to nothing. It is Scultetus' observation, that though there are many blemishes by which the eminent saints and servants of God recorded in Scripture are set forth as instances of human frailty, yet not one godly man in all the Scripture is to be found, whose story is blotted with the charge of covetousness. If that hold true, which, as yet, I am not able to disprove, we may wonder how it comes about that it should, now■a■days, be called the professors' sin, and become a common charge laid by the profane upon those that pretend to heaven more than themselves. O woe to those wretched men who, by their scandalous practices in this kind, put the coal into wicked men's hands, with which they now black the names of all the godly, as if to be covetous were a necessary consequent of profession.

Fourth Instance. Let thy hope of heaven master thy fear of death. Why shouldst thou be afraid to die, who hopest to live by dying? Is the apprentice afraid of the day when his time comes out?—he that runs a race, of coming too soon to his goal?—the pilot troubled when he sees his harbour?—or the betrothed virgin grieved when the wedding■day approacheth? Death is all this to thee. When that comes, thy indenture expires, and thy jubilee is come. Thy race is run, and the crown won—sure to drop on thy head when thy soul goes out of thy body. Thy voyage, how troublesome soever it was in the sailing, is now happily finished, and death doth but this friendly office for thee, to uncover and open the ark of thy body, that it may safely land thy soul on the shore of eternity at thy heavenly Father's door—yea, in his sweet embraces, never to be put to sea more. In a word, thy husband is come for thee, and knocks with death's hand at thy door, to come forth unto him, that he may perform his promise, which, in the day of thy betrothing, he made to thee; and thou lovest him but little, if thou beest not willing to be at the trouble of a remove hence, for to enjoy his blissful presence, in his Father's royal palace of heaven, where such preparation is made for thy entertainment, that thou canst not know here, though an angel were sent on purpose to inform thee.

O what tongue can express that felicity which infinite mercy bespeaks, infinite wisdom deviseth, infinite merit purchaseth, and infinite power makes ready! I have read that the Turks say, 'They do not think we Christians believe heaven to be such a glorious place as we profess and talk of; for if we did, we would not be so afraid to go thither, as we see many that profess themselves Christians to be.' It cannot be denied, but all inordinate fears of death betray great unbelief and little hope. We do not look upon death under a right notion, and so we start at it; which, were we by faith but able to see through, and assure ourselves it comes to do us a good turn, we should feel as comfortably on the thoughts of it, as now we are scared at the apparition of it. The horse eats

that hay in the rack, which he is afraid of when a little lies at a distance on the road; because there he knows it, but on the way he doth not. Christian, understand aright what message death brings to thee, and the fear of it will be over. It snatcheth thee indeed from this world's enjoyments, but it leads thee to the felicities of another incomparably better. And who, at a feast, will chide the servant that takes away the first course, of which enough is eaten, to make room for the second to be set on, that consists of far greater delicacies?

Fifth Instance. Then thou comportest with thy hope when thou livest in the joy of thy hope. A sad uncheerful heart does not become a lively hope. Let him follow his master with a heavy countenance, that looks to get nothing by his service. Thou art out of this fear, and therefore wrongest both thyself and thy God too by thy disconsolate spirit. 'Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end,' Hebrews 3:6. Christ takes no more delight to dwell in a sad uncheerful heart, than we in a dark melancholy house. Open thy shuts therefore, and let in the light which sheds its beams upon thee from the promise, or else thy sweet Saviour will be gone. We do not use to entertain our friends in a dark room, or sit by those that visit us, mopish and melancholic, lest they should think we are weary of their company. Christ brings such good news with him, as may bespeak better welcome with thee than a dejected countenance and a disconsolate spirit. I tell thee, Christian, could such a message be carried to the damned as might give them any hope—though never so little—of salvation, it would make hell itself a lightsome place, and tune those miserable souls into a rejoicing temper in the midst of their present torments. Blush then, and be ashamed, O ye drooping saints! that a few thin clouds of some short afflictions, coming over your heads, should so wrap you up in the darkness of your spirits, as that the hope of heaven, whither you look at last to come, should not be able, in a moment, to dispel and turn your sorrow into a ravishment of joy and comfort.

Sixth Instance. Thou livest up to thy hopes when, with thy rejoicing of hope, thou preservest an awful fear of God. 'The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy,' Psalms 147:11. We too often see that children forget to pay that respect and reverence which is due to their parents, when once the estate is made sure into them. And truly, though the doctrine of assurance cannot be charged with any such bitter fruit to grow naturally from it, as the Remonstrants and Papists would have us believe; yet we are too prone to abuse it; yea, the best of saints may, after they have the love of God with eternal life passed over to them under the privy-seal of hope's assurance, be led so far into temptation, as to fall foully, and carry themselves very undutifully. Witness David and Solomon, whose saddest miscarriages were after God had obliged them by opening his very heart to them in such manifestations of his love to them, as few are to be found that had the like. Both father and son are checked by God for this, and a blot left upon their history, on purpose to show what a sad accent this gave to their sin—that they fell after such discoveries of divine love made to them—and also to leave us instances not barely of human frailty, but of grace's frailty in this life (and that in the most eminent saints, such as were penmen of holy writ), that when our hope grows into greatest assurance, and this assurance spreads itself into highest rejoicing from the certainty of our expected glory, we should yet nourish a holy fear of God in our hearts, lest we grow crank[3] and forget God in the abundance of our peace. This holy fear will be to our joy as the continual dropping of water on the iron work in the fuller's wheel—which keeps it from firing; or, as the pericardium with which the God of nature hath moated about the heart in our bodies, that by the water of it, the heart, which is perpetually in motion, might

be kept from being inflamed into a distempered heat. The devil is pleased if he can at any time get a saint to sin, but he glorieth most when he can lay them in the dirt in their holiday clothes, as I may so say, and make them defile themselves when they have their garments of salvation on, I mean those which God hath in some more than ordinary discovery of himself clothed them withal. If at such a time he can be too hard for them, then he hath, he thinks, a fair occasion given him to go, and insultingly show God what pickle his child is in, and hold up the Christian's assurance and comfort mockingly—as they their brother's coat to their father—besmeared with the blood and filth of some beastly sin he hath thrown him into, and ask God, 'Is this the assurance thou hast given him of heaven? and this the garment of salvation which thou didst put on him? See where he hath laid it, and what a case he hath made it in.' O what gracious soul trembles not at the thought of putting such blasphemy into the mouth of the devil to reproach the living God by! That, Christian, is the beloved child, and shall be most made of by his heavenly Father, who sits not down to loiter in the sunshine of divine love, but gathers up his feet the nimbler in the way of duty, because his God is so kind to make his walk more cheerful and comfortable than others find it, and who loseth not his reverential fear of God in God's familiarity with him. Moses is a rare instance for this. Did ever the great God treat a mortal man, a saint in flesh, with the like familiarity and condescension, as he did that holy man, with whom he spake mouth to mouth, and before whom he caused all his goodness to pass? Exodus 34:6. And how bears he this transcending act of grace? Doth he grow bold, and forget his distance between God and him, by this low stoop of the divine Majesty to converse with him in such a humble manner, if I may so say? No; his heart was never in all his life more filled with the reverence of God than now. He trembled, indeed, and quaked more, it is very likely, on Mount Sinai; but his filial fear was as conspicuous now as then. It is true, this extraordinary manifestation of those soul-ravishing attributes of God's love and goodness—especially his pardoning mercy to him that knew himself a sinner, and at that time made much more sensible thereof by the terror which the dreadful promulgation of the law had left on his spirit—could not but exceedingly heighten his joy, and overrun his soul with a sweet love to so gracious a God. Yet, was not Moses' awful fear of God drowned or lost in the high tide of these sweeter affections; for it follows, 'and Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped,' Exodus 34:8. This favourite of heaven, mark how he shows his fear of God most, when God expresseth his love to him most.

THIRD POINT OF IMPROVEMENT.

[Arguments why we should strengthen our hope, with directions how.]

Labour, O ye saints! to strengthen your hope. There is, as a weak faith, so a wavering unsteadfast hope. This you are by the diligent use of all means to establish and consolidate. Now, then, hope is firm and solid when the Christian doth not fluctuate formidine opposti—with the fear of being opposed, but, by this anchor■hold that hope hath on the promise, is kept from those dejections and tumultuous fears with which they that have no hope are swallowed up, and they whose hope is but weak are sadly discomposed and shaken. Solidum est quod sui solius est plenum—that is a solid body which is compact and free from heterogeneal mixtures. The more pure gold is from dross, and whatever is of a different nature to itself, the more solid it is. So hope, the more it is refined from groundless presumption on the one hand, or slavish fear and distrust on the other, the more solid and strong it is. This in Scripture is called 'the assurance of hope.' Now to provoke you to a holy zeal in your endeavour after this, consider, First. It is thy duty so to do. Second. If thou do

not thou wilt show thou little esteemest Christ and his salvation. Third. Thou knowest not what stress thy hope may be put to before thou diest.

[Arguments why we should strengthen our hope.]

First Argument. Consider it is thy duty so to do. Indeed by the Papist's doctrine, no man is bound to labour for such an assurance. But whether we should believe God or them, judge ye. What saith the Spirit of God, 'We desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.' Observe,

First. The thing he exhorts to endeavour for, BDÎH J¬< B80D@N@D\"< J0H ²8B*@H –PD4 JX8@LH —'to the full assurance of hope.' They whose hope is weak sail with but a scant side-wind. The apostle would have them go before the wind, and be carried with a full gale to heaven, which then is done when the soul, like a sail spread to the wind, is so filled with the truth and goodness of the promise, that it swells into an assured hope of what is promised, and rejoiceth in a certain expectation of what it shall have when it comes to the shore of eternity, though it be now tossed and weather-beaten with a thousand temptations and trials in its passage thither.

Second. Observe whom he presseth this duty upon; not some few choice Christians, as an enterprise laid out for them above the rest of their fellow-soldiers, but every person that will prove himself a Christian. 'We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence,' &c. In our civil trade, and particular worldly calling, it were sinful for every poor man to propound such a vast estate to himself in his own desires as he sees some few—the wealthiest merchants in a city—have got by their trade, so as no less shall content him. But in the spiritual trade of a Christian it is very warrantable for every Christian to covet to be as rich in grace as the best. Paul himself will not think himself wronged if thou desirest to be as holy man as himself was, and labourest after as strong a faith and steadfast a hope as he had; yea, thou oughtest not to content thyself with what thou hast, if there were but one degree of grace more to be had than what at present thou hast obtained. And,

Third. Observe what he imputes the weakness of the saints' grace to; not an impossibility of attaining to more, but their sloth and laziness. And therefore he opposeth this to that blessed frame of heart he so much wisheth them, 'That ye be not slothful,' Hebrews 6:12. Indeed it is the diligent hand makes rich; as in this world's goods, so in this heavenly treasure also.

Second Argument. Labour to strengthen thy hope of salvation, or thou wilt show thou little esteemest Christ and his salvation. As we prize any good, so we labour more or less to assure ourselves of it. If a prince should lose a pin from his sleeve, or a penny out of his purse, and one should bring him news they are found; the things are so inconsiderable that he would not care whether it were true or not. But if his kingdom lay at stake in the field, and intelligence comes that his army hath got the day and beat the enemy, O how he would long to have his hope, that is now raised a little, confirmed more strongly by another post! Is heaven worth so little that you can be satisfied with a few probabilities and uncertain maybees you shall come thither? Thou basely despiseth that blessed place if thou beest no more solicitous to know the truth of thy title to it. When Micaiah seemed to give Ahab—now advancing his army against Ramoth-gilead—some

hope of a victory, by bidding him ‘go up and prosper,’ the thing being passionately desired by the king, he fears the worst—as indeed he had reason, for the prophet’s speech was ironical—and therefore cannot rest till he know more of this matter. ‘And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the Lord?’ 1 Kings 22:16.

Maybe thou hast some loose wavering hopes of heaven floating in thy soul. If now, thou didst think thy eternal woe lay in the truth or falsehood of that hope, certainly thou wouldst search thy heart by the word, and adjure thy conscience after an impartial review to tell thee the naked truth, what thy state is, and whether thou mayest in God’s name, and with the leave of his word, hope it shall be thy portion or not; and this thou wouldst do, not hypocritically, as that wretched king did—who adjured Micaiah to tell him the truth, and then would not believe him though he did it faithfully—but with great plainness of heart; it being about a business of no less importance than what shall become of thee to eternity. Peter, when surprised with the tidings of Christ’s resurrection, though the report did not find such credit with him as it might, yet, by his speedy running to, and looking into, the sepulchre, he showed both how dearly he loved his Lord, as also how joyful a man he should be, if the news held true that he was alive. Thus, Christian, though the promise of eternal life hath not hitherto produced such an assurance of hope that thou art the person that shalt undoubtedly enjoy it, yet show what appreciating thoughts thou hast of that blissful state, by endeavouring to strengthen thy hope and put thee out of doubt thereof.

Third Argument. Consider this also in the last place, that thou knowest not what stress thy hope may be put to before thou diest. The wise mariner doth victual his ship for the longest day. He reckons on foul weather and cross winds which may retard his voyage, and make it more troublesome, though some find it a shorter cut and fairer passage, and therefore he stores himself accordingly, knowing well it is easier carrying provision to sea than getting it there. Non facilè inveniuntur in adversitate præsidia, quænon fuerint in pace quæsita—protection is not readily found in adversity, which has not been sought out in time of peace—a good speech of Austin. God himself tells us we have ‘need of patience;’ he means great store of patience, ‘that after we have done the will of God, we may receive the promise,’ Hebrews 10:36. And if of patience, then of hope; because patience bears all on hope’s back. Now, because we know not the certain degree of hope that will serve our turn—God having purposely concealed the weight of affliction and temptation he intends to lay on us—therefore we should never cease our endeavour to strengthen it. There are hard duties to be performed, and strong trials to be endured, and these require a hope proportionable. We are to ‘hold fast...the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end,’ Hebrews 3:6. Now, will the Christian of weak hope do this? He, alas! is like a leaky ship with a rich lading; the fear of sinking before she gets the port takes away the owner’s joy of the treasure she carries. Bid such a one rejoice in his inheritance that is laid up in heaven for him, and he will tell you he questions whether ever he shall come there. Patient waiting for mercy prorogued and deferred is another hard duty, ‘It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord,’ Lamentations 3:26. Now weak hope is short-breathed, and cannot stay long with any quietness. Omne invalidum est querulum—weak persons are commonly hardest to please; soon peevish and froward if they have not what they would, and that when they desire it also. When David’s faith and hope were under a distemper, then he falls out with all. The prophet himself that brought him the news of a kingdom cannot escape his censure, and all because the promise

stayed longer before it was delivered than he expected —'I said in my haste, All men are liars,' Psalms 116:11 —whereas the promise went not a day beyond its due time, but he missed of its true reckoning through his inordinate desire. But take David in his healthful temper—when his faith and hope are strong—and he is not so hasty then to call for a mercy out of God's hands; but thinks his estate in God's hands as safe as if it were paid into his own. 'Praise waiteth for thee, O God,' or, 'praise is silent for thee,' so the Hebrew, %-%(%*/$ (dumiyah thehillah), will bear it, Psalms 65:1. As if the holy man had said, 'Lord, I do quietly wait for a time to praise thee. My soul is not in an uproar because thou stayest. I am not murmuring, but rather stringing my harp, and tuning my instrument with much patience and confidence, that I may be ready to strike up when the joyful news of my deliverance first comes.' You have much ado to make the child quiet till dinner, though he sees preparations for a great feast; but one that is grown up will be soon pacified when he is kept a little longer than ordinary for his meal upon such an occasion. O Christian, it is our childishness and weakness of grace—especially of our hope—that makes us so soon out of patience to wait God's leisure. Strengthen hope, and patience will grow with it. In a word, Christian, thou hast great trials and strong temptations to conquer before you enter heaven gates and be clothed with your garments of salvation there. Now defend thy hope, and that will defend thee in these; strengthen that, and that will carry thee through them. The head, every member is officious to preserve it. The hands are lift up to keep off the blow, the feet run to carry the head from danger, the mouth will receive any unsavoury pill to draw fumes and humours from the head. Salvation is to the soul what the head is to the body—the principal thing it should labour to secure; and hope is to our salvation what the helmet is to the head. Now if he be unwise that ventures his head under a weak helmet in the midst of bullets at the time of battle, then much more unwise he that hazards his salvation with a weak hope. Know, O Christian, the issue of the battle with thy enemy depends on thy hope; if that fail all is lost. Thy hope is in conflicts with temptations and sufferings, as a prince is amidst his army, who puts life into them all while he looks on and encourageth them to the battle, but if a report of the king's being slain comes to their ears, their courage fails and hearts faint. Therefore Ahab would be held up in his chariot to conceal his danger from the people, the knowledge of which would have cast a damp on their courage.

Thy hope is the mark Satan's arrows are leveled at. If possible keep that from wounding. Or if at any time his dart reacheth it, and thy spirit begins to bleed of the wound which he hath given thee by questioning 'Whether such great sins can be pardoned as thou hast committed? such old festered sores as thy lusts have been can be ever cured? or afflictions that are so heavy and have continued so long can possibly be either endured or removed?' Now labour, as for thy life, to hold up thy hope though wounded in the chariot of the promise, and bow not by despairing to let the devil trample on thy soul. So soon as thy hope gives up the ghost will this cursed fiend stamp thee under his foul feet, and take his full revenge of thee, and that without any power of thy soul to strike a stroke for thy defence. This will so dispirit thee that thou wilt be ready to throw up all endeavour and attendance on the means of salvation; yea, desperately say, 'To what purpose is it to think of praying, hearing, and meditating, when there is no hope?' What! should we send for the physician when our friend is dead? What good will the chafing and rubbing the body do when the head is severed from it? The army broke up, and every one was sent to his city, as soon as it was known that Ahab was dead. And so wilt thou cast off all thought of making any head against sin and Satan when thy hope is gone, but fall either into Judas' horror of conscience, or with Cain, turn atheist, and bury the thoughts of thy desperate condition in a heap of worldly projects.

I come now to give a few words of counsel, how a Christian may best strengthen his hope. Take them in these six particulars following. 1. If thou meanest thy hope of salvation should rise to any strength and solidness, study the word of God diligently. 2. Keep thy conscience pure. 3. Resort to God daily, and beg a stronger hope of him. 4. Labour to increase your love. 5. Be much in the exercise of your hope. 6. File up thy experiences of past mercies, and thy hope will grow stronger for the future.

[Six directions how we may strengthen our hope.]

First Direction. If thou meanest thy hope of salvation should rise to any strength and solidness, study the word of God diligently. The Christian is bred by the word, and he must be fed by it also, or else his grace will die. That is the growing child that lies libbing oftenest at the breast. Now as God hath provided food in his word to nourish every grace, so in the composition of the Scriptures he had a particular respect to the welfare and growth of the saint's hope, as one principal end of their writing. 'That we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope,' Romans 15:4. The devil knows this so well, that his great labour is spent to deprive the Christian of the help which the word is stored with; and indeed therein he is not mistaken, for so long as this river is unblocked up which makes glad the City of God, with the succours which are brought in to them on the stream of its precious promises, he can never besiege them round or put them to any great straits. Some, therefore, he deprives of their relief by mere sloth and laziness. They make a few fruitless complaints of their doubts and fears, like sluggards crying out of their wants and poverty as they lie in bed, but are loath to rise and take any pains to be resolved of them by searching of the word for their satisfaction; and these sell their comfort of all others the cheapest. Who will pity him, though he should starve to death, that hath bread before him, but loath to put his hand out of his bosom to carry it to his mouth! Others he abuseth by false applications of the word to their souls, partly through their weak understandings, and troubled spirits also, which discolour the truths of God and misrepresent them to their judgments, whereby they come to be beaten with their own staff —even those promises which a skilful hand would knock down Satan's temptations withal. The devil is a great student in divinity, and makes no other use of his Scripture-knowledge than may serve his turn by sophistry to do the Christian a mischief, either by drawing him to sin, or into despair for sinning; like some wrangling barrister, who gets what skill he can in the law merely to make him the more able to put honest men to trouble by his vexatious suit. Well, if Satan be so conversant in the word to weaken thy hope, and deprive thee of thy inheritance, what reason hast thou then to furnish thyself with a holy skill to maintain thy right and defend thy hope? Now, in thy study of the word, propound these two ends, and closely pursue them till thou hast obtained them.

1. End. Labour to clear up thy understanding from the word, what are the conditions required by God of every soul that hath his grant and warrant to hope assuredly for life and salvation in the other world. Some conditions there are required to be found in all such is without all doubt, or else it were free for all, be they what they will, and live how they list, actually to lay claim to a right in heaven and salvation. If God had set no bounds at Sinai, and said nothing who should come up the mount, and who not, it had been no more presumption in any of the company to have gone up than in Moses; and if God requires no conditions in the person that is to hope, then heaven is a common for one as well as other to crowd into; then the beastly sinner may touch God's holy mount as well as the saint, and fear no stoning for his bold adventure. But this sure is too fulsome doctrine for any judicious conscience to digest. Well, having satisfied thyself that if ever thou hast

true hope thou must also have the conditions, inquire what they are. Now the word holds forth two sorts of conditions according to the two different covenants.

(1.) There is a covenant of nature, or law-covenant, which God made with innocent Adam; and the condition of this was perfect obedience of the person that claimed happiness by it. This is not the condition now required; and he that stands groping in at this door in hope to enter into life by it, shall not only find it nailed up and no entrance that way to be had, but he also deprives himself of any benefit of the true door which stands open, and by which all pass that get thither. 'Whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace,' Galatians 5:4. You must therefore inquire what the other covenant is; and that is,

(2.) A covenant of grace, as that other was of nature; of reconciliation to make God and man friends, as that was a covenant to preserve those friends who had never fallen out.

Now the condition of this covenant is, repentance and faith. See for this Luke 24:47; John 3:36; Acts 2:38; Acts 5:31; Acts 20:21; Galatians 5:5. Labour therefore to give a firm assent to the truth of these promises, and hold it as an indisputable and inviolable principle, that 'whoever sincerely repents of his sins, and with a 'faith unfeigned' receiveth Christ to be his Lord and Saviour, this is the person that hath the word and oath of a God that cannot possibly lie, for the pardon of his sins and the salvation of his soul.' What service a strong assent to this will do thee towards exerting thy hope thou wilt by and by see. It is the very basis thereof. The weight of the Christian's whole building bears so much on it that the Spirit of God, when he speaks in Scripture of evangelical truths and promises, on which poor sinners must build their hopes for salvation, doth it with the greatest averment of any other truths, and usually adds some circumstance or other that may put us out of all doubt concerning the certainty and unalterableness of them. 'Surely he hath borne our griefs,' Isaiah 53:4. There is no question to be made of it; but it was our potion he drank, our debt he paid. What end could he have besides this in so great sufferings? Was it to give us a pattern of patience how we should suffer? This is true, but not all; for some of our fellow-saints have been admirable instances of this. 'He carried our sorrows,' and 'was wounded for our transgressions.' This, this was the great business worthy of the Son of God's undertaking, which none of our fellow-saints could do for us. So, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,' 1 Timothy 1:15. As if he had said, 'Fear no cheat or imposture here; it is as true as truth itself; for such is he that said it.' If you believe not this you are worse than a devil. He cannot shut this truth out of his conscience, though the unwelcomest that ever came to his knowledge. 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,' 1 John 1:9. What can the poor penitent fear when that attribute is become his friend that first made God angry with him. Yea, so fast a friend as to stand bound for the performance of the promise, which even now was so deeply engaged to execute the threatening on him? 'Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath,' Hebrews 6:17. What security could we have asked more of a deceitful man, than the faithful God of his own accord gives? The Romans did not give their magistrates oaths—supposing the dignity and honour of their persons and place were bond strong enough to make them true and righteous. Surely then God's word would have deserved credit, though it had not an oath to be its surety, yet God condescends to this, that he may sink the truth of what he saith deeper into our minds, and leave the print fairer and fuller in our assents to the same when set on with the weight of asseverations[4] and oaths.

2. End. Having found what is the condition of the covenant, rest not satisfied till thou findest this condition to be wrought in thy own soul, and art able to say thou art this repenting and believing sinner. A strong hope results from the clear evidence it hath for both these. We read in Scripture of a threefold assurance. (1.) An assurance of understanding, Colossians 2:2. (2.) An assurance of faith, Hebrews 10:22. (3.) An assurance of hope, Hebrews 6:11. And it is a good note which an acute doctor of our own hath upon them, 'That these three make up one practical syllogism; wherein knowledge forms the proposition, faith makes the assumption, and hope draws the conclusion' (D. A. Tac. Sa. p. 126). 'I do,' saith the Christian, 'assuredly know from the word, that the repenting believing sinner shall be saved; my conscience also tells me that I do unfeignedly repent and believe; therefore I do hope firmly that I shall, however unworthy otherwise, be saved.' Now we know there can be no more in the conclusion than is in the premises; so that, as the force is, which the Christian puts forth in his assent to the truth of the promise, and the evidence which he hath, that the condition of the promise—viz. faith and repentance—is wrought in his soul, so will his hope be, weak or strong. Indeed it can be no otherwise. If his assent to the truth of the promise be weak, or his evidence for the truth of his faith and repentance be dark and uncertain, his hope that is born—as I may so say—of these, must needs partake of its parent's infirmities, and be itself weak and wavering, as they are from that which it results.

Second Direction. Wouldst thou have thy hope strong? then, keep thy conscience pure. Thou canst not defile this, but thou wilt weaken that, 'Living godly in this present world,' and 'looking for that blessed hope' laid up for us in the other, are both conjoined, Titus 2:12-13. A soul wholly void of godliness needs be as destitute of all true hope, and the godly person that is loose and careless in his holy walking, will soon find his hope languishing. All sin is aguish meat; it disposeth the soul that tampers with it to trembling fears and shakings of heart. But such sins as are deliberately committed and plotted, they are to the Christian's hope as poison to the spirits of his body, which presently drinks them up. They, in a manner, exanimate the Christian. They make the thoughts of God terrible to the soul; which, when he is in a holy frame, are his greatest joy and solace. 'I remembered God, and was troubled,' Psalms 77:3. They make him afraid to look on God in a duty, much more to look for God in the day of judgment. Can the servant be willing his master should come home when he is in his riot and excess? Mr. Calvin, when some wished him to forbear some of his labours, especially his night studies, asked those his friends, 'whether they would have his Lord find him idle when He came?' O, God forbid! Christian, that death should find thee wanton and negligent in thy walking; that he should surprise thee lying in the puddle of some sin unrepented of! This would be a sad meeting! O how loath wouldst thou then be to die, and go to the great audit where thou must give up thy accounts for eternity! Will thy hope then be in case to carry thee up with joy to that solemn work? Can a bird fly when one of her wings is broke? Faith and a good conscience are hope's two wings. If, therefore, thou hast wounded thy conscience by any sin, renew thy repentance, that so thou mayest act faith for the pardon of it, and, acting faith, mayest redeem thy hope, when the mortgage that is now upon it shall be taken off. If a Jew had pawned his bed■clothes, God provided mercifully, it should be restored before night: 'For,' saith he, 'that is his covering, wherein shall he sleep?' Exodus 22:27. Truly, hope is the saint's covering, wherein he wraps himself when he lays his body down to sleep in the grave. 'My flesh,' saith David, 'shall rest in hope,' Psalms 16:9. O Christian! bestir thyself to redeem thy hope before this sun of thy temporal life go down upon thee, or else thou art sure to lie down in sorrow. A sad going to the bed of the grave he hath, that hath no hope of a resurrection to life.

Third Direction. Resort to God daily, and beg a stronger hope of him. That is the way the apostle took to help the saints at Rome to more of this precious grace. ‘Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost,’ Romans 15:13. God, you see, is the God of hope; and not only of the first seed and habit, but of the whole increment and abounding of it in us also. He doth not give a saint the first grace of conversion, and then leave the improvement of it wholly to his skill and care; as sometimes a child hath a stock at first to set up, and never hath more help from his father, but, by his own good husbandry, advanceth his little beginnings into a great estate at last; but rather as the corn in the field, that needs the influences of heaven to flower and ripen for harvest, as much as to quicken in the clods when first thrown in. And therefore, be sure thou humbly acknowledgest God by a constant waiting on him for growth. ‘The young lions,’ are said to, ‘seek their meat from God,’ Psalms 104:21. That is, God hath taught them, when hungry, to express their wants by crying and lifting up their voice, which, did they know God to be their Maker, they would direct to him for supply; as we see the little babe that at first only expresseth its wants by crying, doth, so soon as it knows the mother, directs his moan to her. Thou knowest, Christian, that thou art at thy heavenly Father’s finding. He knows indeed what thou wantest, but he stays his supplies till thou criest, and this will make him draw forth his breast presently. Doth God take care for the beasts in the field? Surely then much more will he for thee his child in his house, and for thy soul above all. Thou mayest possibly pray for more riches, and be denied; but a prayer for more grace is sure to speed.

Fourth Direction. If you would strengthen your hope, labour to increase your love. There is a secret, yet powerful, influence that love hath on hope. Moses, we will easily grant, greatly befriended the Israelite, when he slew the Egyptian that fought with him. Love kills slavish fear—one of the worst enemies hope hath in the Christian’s heart—and thereby strengthens hope’s hand. He that plucks up the weeds helps the corn to grow, and he that purges out the disease makes way for nature’s strengthening. It is slavish fear oppresseth the Christian’s spirit that he cannot act hope strongly. Now, ‘love casteth out fear,’ 1 John 4:18. The free■woman will cast out the bond-woman. Slavish fear is one of Hagar’s breed —an affection that keeps all in bondage that hath it. This love cannot brook. ‘Shall I,’ saith the loving soul, ‘fear he will hurt me, or be hard to me, that loves me, and I him so dearly? Away, unworthy thoughts, here is no room for such company as you are in my bosom.’ ‘Love thinketh no evil,’ 1 Corinthians 13:5. That is, it neither wisheth evil to, nor suspects evil of, another. The more thou lovest Christ, the less thou wilt be jealous of him; and the less jealous thou art of him, the more strongly thou wilt hope in him, and comfortably wait for him. Hence, these two graces are so often mated in Scripture. ‘The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ,’ 2 Thessalonians 3:5. Love him, and you will wait for him. So, ‘keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life,’ Jude 1:21.

Fifth Direction. Be much in the exercise of your hope. Repeated acts strengthen habits. Thus the little waddling child comes to go strongly by going often. You have no more money in your chest at the year’s end than when you laid it there; nay, it is well if rust or thieves have not made it less. But you have more by trading with it than your first stock amounted unto. ‘Thou oughtest to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury,’ said Christ to the ‘slothful servant,’ Matthew 25:27. Now the promises are hope’s object to act upon. A man can as well live without air, as faith and hope without a promise; yea, without

frequent sucking in the refreshment of the promises. And, therefore, be much in meditation of them; set some time apart for the purpose. You that love your healths, do not content yourselves with the air that comes to you as you sit at work in your house or shop, but you will walk out into the fields sometimes, to take the air more fresh and full. And if thou beest a wise Christian, thou wilt not satisfy thyself with the short converse thou hast by the by with the promises, as now and then they come into thy mind in thy calling, and when thou art about other employments, but wilt walk aside on purpose to enjoy a more fixed and solitary meditation of them. This were of admirable use; especially if the Christian hath skill to sort the promises, and lay aside the provision made in them suitable to his case in particular.

Sometimes the Christian is at a stand when he remembers his past sins, and his hope is quite dashed out of countenance while they stare on his conscience with their grim looks. Now it were excellent for the Christian to pick out a promise where he may see this objection answered and hope triumphing over it. This was David's very case, Psalms 130:1-8. He grants himself to be in a most deplored condition, if God should reckon with him strictly, and give him quid pro quo—wages suitable to his work. 'If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?' Psalms 130:3. But then, he puts his soul out of all fear of God's taking this course with poor penitent souls, by laying down this comfortable conclusion as an indubitable truth. 'But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared;' Psalms 130:4, that is, 'there is forgiveness in thy nature; thou carriest a pardoning heart in thy bosom; yea, there is forgiveness in thy promise, thy merciful heart doth not only incline thee to thoughts of forgiving, but thy faithful promise binds thee to draw forth the same unto all that humbly and seasonably lay claim thereunto. Now, this foundation laid, see what superstructure this holy man raiseth, 'I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope,' Psalms 130:5. As if he had said, 'Lord, I take thee at thy word, and am resolved by thy grace to wait at this door of thy promise, never to stir thence till I have my promised dole—forgiveness of my sins—sent out unto me.' And this is so sweet a morsel, that he is loath to eat it alone, and therefore he sets down the dish, even to the lower end of the table, that every godly person may taste with him of it—'Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities,' Psalms 130:7-8. As if he had said, 'That which is a ground of hope to me, notwithstanding the clamour of my sins, affords as solid and firm a bottom to any true Israelite or sincere soul in the world, did he but rightly understand himself, and the mind of God in his promise. Yea, I have as strong a faith for such as my own soul, and durst pawn the eternity of its happiness upon this principle—that God shall redeem every sincere Israelite from all his iniquities.' This, this is the way to knock down our sins indeed. And Satan, when he comes to reproach us with them, and, by their batteries, to dismount our hope, sometimes a qualm comes over the Christian's heart merely from the greatness of the things hoped for. 'What!' saith the poor soul, 'seems it a small thing for me to hope, that of an enemy I should become a son and heir to the great God! What! a rebel? and not only hope to be pardoned, but prove a favourite, yea such a one, as to have robes of glory making for me in heaven, where I shall stand among those that minister about the throne of God in his heavenly court, and that before I have done him any more service here on earth? O, it is too great good news to prove true.' Thus the poor soul stands amazed—as the disciples, when the first tidings of the Lord's resurrection surprised them—and is ready to think its hope but an idle tale with which Satan abuseth it, ut præsumendo speret et sperando pereat —that he may presume to hope, and perish with his presumption.

Now, Christian, that thou mayest be able to stride over this stumbling■block, be sure to observe those prints of God's greatness and infinitude that are stamped upon the promise. Sometimes you have them expressed, on purpose to free our thoughts, and ease our hearts of this scruple. When God promised what great things he would do for Abraham, to make them more credible, and easily believed, he adds, 'I am the Almighty God,' Genesis 17:1; and so, Isaiah 55:7, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' But how can this possibly be done, that in the turn of a hand, as it were, such a great favour can be obtained, which among men could hardly be done in a lifetime spent suing for it? O that is easily answered. He tells you he is not a sorry man, but a God, and hath a way by himself in pardoning wrongs, which none can follow him in; for it is as far above our ways as the heavens are above the earth. This, Christian, observe, and it will be a key to unlock all promises, and let you in unto the untold treasures that are in them; yea, [will] make the greatest promise in the Bible easy to be believed. Whenever you read any promise, remember whose bond it is—the word of no other than God. And when you think of God, be sure you do not narrow him up in the little compass of you finite apprehensions, but conceive of him always as an infinite being, whose center is everywhere, and circumference is nowhere. When you have raised your thoughts to the highest, then know you are as far yea infinitely farther, from reaching his glory and immensity, than a man is from touching the body of the sun with his hand when got upon a hill or mountain. This is to ascribe greatness to God,' as we are commanded, Deuteronomy 32:3. And it will admirably facilitate the work of believing.

Suppose a poor cripple should be sent for by a prince to court, with a promise to adopt him for his son and make him heir to his crown, this might well seem incredible to the poor man, when he considers what a leap it is from his beggar's cottage to the state of a prince. No doubt if the promise had been to prefer him to a place in a hospital, or some ordinary pension for his maintenance, it would be more easily credited by him, as more proportional to his low condition; yet, the greatness of the prince, and the delight such take to be like God himself, by showing a kind of creating power to raise some as it were from nothing unto the highest honours a subject is capable of—thereby to oblige them as their creatures to their service—this, I say, might help such a one think this strange accident not altogether impossible. Thus here. Should a poor soul spend all his thoughts on his own unmeetness and unworthiness to have heaven and eternal life conferred on him, it were not possible he should ever think so well of himself as that he should be one of those glorious creatures that were to enjoy it. But, when the greatness of God is believed, and the infinite pleasure he takes to demonstrate that greatness this way—by making miserable creatures happy, rather than by perpetuating their miseries in an eternal state of damnation—and what cost he hath been at to clear a way for his mercy to freely act in, and, in a word, what a glorious name this will gain him in the thoughts he thus exalts; these things —which are all to be found in the word of promise —well weighed, and acknowledged, cannot but open the heart, though shut with a thousand bolts, to entertain the promise and believe all is truth that God there saith, without any more questioning the same. A taste I have given in one or two particulars, you see, how the promises may be suited to answer the particular objections raised against our hope. It were easy here to multiply instances, and to pattern any other case with promises for the purpose; but this will most effectually be done by you who know your own scruples better than another can. And be such true friends to your own souls, as to take a little pains therein. The

labour of gathering a few simples in the field, and making them up into a medicine by the direction of the physician, is very well paid for, if the poor man finds it doth him good and restores him to health.

Sixth Direction. File up thy experiences of past mercies, and thy hope will grow stronger for the future. Experience worketh hope, Romans 5:4. He is the best Christian that keeps the history of God's gracious dealings with him most carefully, so that he may read in it his past experiences, when at any time his thoughts trouble him and his spiritual rest is broken with distracting fears for the future. This is he that will pass the night of affliction and temptation with comfort and hope; while others that have taken no care to pen down—in their memories at least—the remarkable instances of God's love and favour to them in the course of their lives, will find the want of this sweet companion in their sorrowful hours, and be put to sad plunges; yea, well, if they be not driven to think their case desperate, and past all hope. Sometimes a little writing is found in a man's study that helps to save his estate; for want of which he had gone to prison and there ended his days. And some one experience remembered keeps the soul from despair —a prison which the devil longs to have the Christian in. 'This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope,' Lamentations 3:21. David was famous for his hope, and not less eminent for his care to observe preserve, the experiences he had of God's goodness. He was able to recount the dealings of God to him. They were so often the subject of his meditation and matter of his discourse, that he had made them familiar to him. When his hope is at a loss, he doth but rub his memory up a little and he recovers himself presently, and chides himself for his weakness. 'I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High,' Psalms 77:10. The hound, when he hath lost the scent, hunts backward and so recovers it, and pursues his game with louder cry than ever. Thus, Christian, when thy hope is at a loss for the life to come, and thou questionest thy salvation in another world, then look backward and see what God hath already done for thee in this world.

Some promises have their day of payment here, and others we must stay to receive in heaven. Now the payment which God makes of some promises here, is an earnest given to our faith, that the other also shall be faithfully discharged when their date expires; as every judgment inflicted here on the wicked is sent as a penny in hand of that wrath the full sum whereof God will make up in hell. Go therefore, Christian, and look over thy receipts. God hath promised 'sin shall not have dominion over you;' no, not in this life, Romans 6:14. It is the present state of a saint in this life that is intended there. Canst thou find this promise made good to thee? is the power of sin broken and the sceptre wrung out of this king's hand, whom once thou didst willingly obey as ever subject his prince? yea, canst thou find he hath but begun to fall by thy unthroning him in thy heart and affections? Dost thou now look on sin not as thou wert wont, for thy prince, but as a usurper, whose tyranny, by the grace of God, thou art resolved to shake off, both as intolerable to thee and dishonourable to God, whom thou now acknowledgest to be thy rightful Lord, and to whose holy laws thy heart most freely promiseth obedience? This, poor soul, may assure thee that thou shalt have a full dominion over sin in heaven ere long, which hath begun already to lose his power over thee on earth. It is observable how David rears up his hope to expect heaven's perfect state of holiness from his begun sanctification on earth. First, he declares his holy resolution for God, and then his high expectation from God. 'As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness,' Psalms 17:15. Hast thou found God's supporting hand

in all thy temptations and troubles, whereby thou art kept from sinking under them? A David would feed his hope for eternal salvation with this, 'thou hast holden me by my right hand,' Psalms 73:23. Now observe hope's inference, 'Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory,' Psalms 73:24. And as experiences carefully kept and wisely improved, would conduce much to strengthening the Christian's hope on its chief object—salvation; so also would they lift up its head above all those distracting fears which arise in the Christian's heart, and put him to much trouble from those cross and afflicting providences that befall him in this life. Certainly David would have been more scared with the big looks and brag deportment of that proud Goliath, had not the remembrance of the bear and the lion which he slew brought relief to him and kept them down. But he had slain this uncircumcised Philistine in a figure when he tore in pieces those unclean beasts. And therefore when he marches to him, this is the shield which he lifts up to cover himself with, 'The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine,' 1 Samuel 17:37. If experiences were no ground for hope in future straits —temporary now I mean—then they would not have the force of an argument in prayer. But saints use their experiences to do them service in this case, and make account they urge God very close and home when they humbly tell him what he hath already done for them, and expect he should therefore go on in his fatherly care over them. 'Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns,' Psalms 22:21. And no doubt a gracious soul may pray in faith from his past experience, and expect a satisfactory answer to that prayer wherein former mercies are his plea for what he wants at present. God himself intends his people more comfort from every mercy he gives them, than the mercy itself singly and abstractly considered amounts to. Suppose, Christian, thou hast been sick, and God hath, at thy humble prayer, plucked thee out of the very jaws of death, when thou wert even going down his throat almost; the comfort of this particular mercy is the least God means thee therein; for he would have thee make it a help to thy faith, and a shore [support] to thy hope, when shaken by any future strait whatever. 'Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness,' Psalms 74:14. God in that mercy at the Red Sea, we see, is thinking what Israel should have to live on for forty years together, and looked that they should not only feast themselves at present with the joy of this stupendous mercy; but powder it up in their memories, that their faith might not want a meal in that hungry wilderness all the while they were to be in it. Experiences are like a cold dish reserved at a feast. Sometimes the saint sits down with nothing else on his table but the promise and his experience; and he that cannot make a soul■refreshing meal with these two dishes deserves to fast. Be sure, Christian, thou observest this in every mercy—what is the matter of present thankfulness, and what is ground of future hope. Achor is called 'a door of hope,' Hosea 2:15. God, when he gives one mercy, opens a door for him to give, and us to expect more mercy through it. God compares his promise to 'the rain,' which maketh the earth 'bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater,' Isaiah 55:10. Why shouldst thou, O Christian, content thyself with half the benefit of a mercy? When God performs his promise, and delivers thee out of this trouble and that strait, thou art exceedingly comforted, may be, with the mercy, and thy heart possibly enlarged at present into thankfulness for the same. It is well. Here is 'bread for the eater'—something at present feasts thee. But where is the 'seed for the sower?' The husbandman doth not spend all his corn that he reaps, but saves some for seed, which may bring him another crop. So, Christian, thou shouldst feast thyself with the joy of thy mercy, but save the remembrance of it as hope-seed, to strengthen thee to wait on

God for another mercy and further help in a needful time.

[An objection answered, with some practical reflections.]

But, you will possibly say, how can a saint's past experience be so helpful to his hope for the future, when God, we see, often crosseth the saint's experiences? He delivers them out of one sickness, and takes them away, may be, with the next; he saves them in one battle without a scratch or hurt, and in another a while after they are killed or wounded; how then can a saint ground and bottom his hope from a past deliverance to expect deliverance in the like strait again?

Answer 1. There is the same power still in God that was then. What he did once for thee he can with as much ease do again; and this is one way thy experiences may help thee. Thou hast seen God make bare his arm, so that except thou thinkest that he since hath lost the strength or use of it, and is become at last a God with a lame hand, hope hath an object to act upon, and such one as will lift thy head above water. Indeed, the soul never drowns in despair till it hath lost its hold on the power of God. When it questions whether God will deliver, this is a sad leak, I confess, and will let in a thousand fears into thy soul; yet so long as the Christian can use this pump —I mean, act faith on the power of God, and believe that God can deliver when he pleases—thou gh it will not clear the ship of his soul of all its fears, yet it will keep it from quite sinking, because it will preserve him in a seeking posture. 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean,' Mark 1:40. And for thee to say God cannot deliver, who hast been an eyewitness to what he hath done, were not only to betray thy great unbelief, but to forfeit thy reason as a man also. But,

Answer 2. To give a more close answer to the question, the saint, from his former experiences, even of temporal salvations, may, yea ought, not only believe that God can, but also that he will, save him in all future straits and dangers of this nature; only, he cannot conclude that he will do it in the same way as in former deliverances. And none I hope will say, if he hath deliverance, that his experiences are crossed because God doth use another method in the conveyance of it to him. A debt may be fully satisfied, as with money, so with that which is money worth, except the bond restrains the payment otherwise. Now there is no clause to be found in any promise for temporal mercies, that binds God to give them in specie or in kind. Spiritual mercies—such I mean as are saving and essential to the saint's happiness—these indeed are promised to be given in kind, because there is nothing equivalent that can be paid in lieu of them; but temporal mercies are of such an inferior nature, that a compensation and recompense may be easily given in their stead; yea, God never denies these to a saint, but for his gain and abundant advantage. Who will say the poor saint is a loser whose purse God denieth to fill with gold and silver, but filleth his heart with contentation? or the sick saint, when God saves him not by restoring to former health, but by translating to heaven? And so much may suffice for answer to the objection propounded. I shall wind up this head with two or three reflections to be used by the Christian for his better improving past experiences when he is at a plunge.

(1.) Reflection. Look back, Christian, to thy past experiences, and inquire whether thou canst not find that thy God hath done greater matters for thee than this which thou now hast so many disquieting fears and despairing thoughts about. I suppose thy present strait great; but wert thou never in a greater, and yet God did at last set thy feet in a large place? Thou art now in a sad and mournful posture; but hath not he brightened a darker cloud than this thou art now under, and let thee out of it into a state of light and joy? Surely thy staggering hope may prevent a fall by catching

hold of this experience. Art thou not ashamed to give thyself for lost, and think of nothing but drowning, in a less storm than that out of which God hath formerly brought thee safe to land? See David relieving his hope by recognizing such an experiment as this, ‘Thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling,’ Psalms 56:13. Hast thou given me the greater, and wilt thou stand with me for the less? Haply thy present fear, Christian, is apostasy. Thou shalt one day fall by the hand of thy sins; this runs in thy thoughts, and thou canst not be persuaded otherwise. Now it is a fit time to recall the day of God’s converting grace. Darest thou deny such a work to have passed upon thee? If not, why then shouldst thou despair of perseverance? That was day wherein he saved thy soul. ‘This day,’ saith Christ to Zacchaeus, ‘is salvation come to this house,’ Luke 19:9. And did God save thy soul by converting grace, and will he not keep thy feet from falling by his sustaining grace? Was it not both more mercy and power to take thee out of the power of sin and Satan, than it will cost him to preserve thee from falling into their hands again? Surely the Israelites would not so often have feared provision in the wilderness, had they remembered with what a high hand God did bring them out of Egypt. But, may be it is some outward affliction that distresseth thee. Is it greater than the church’s was in cruel bondage and captivity? yet she had something to recall that put a new life into her hope. ‘The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him,’ Lamentations 3:24. See, she makes a spiritual mercy—because incomparably greater of the two—a ground of hope for temporal salvation, which is less. And hast not thou, Christian, chosen him for thy portion? Dost thou not look for a heaven to enjoy him in for ever? And can any dungeon of outward affliction be so dark that this hope will not enlighten? Recall thy experiences of his love to thy soul, and thou canst not be out of hope for thy body and outward condition. He that hath laid up a portion in heaven for thee, will lay out surely all the expenses thou needest in thy way thither.

(2.) Reflection. Remember how oft God hath confuted thy fears and proved thy unbelief a false prophet. Hath he not knocked at thy door with inward comfort and outward deliverances, when thou hadst put out the candle of hope, given over looking for him, and been ready to lay thyself down on the bed of despair? Thus he came to Hezekiah, after he had peremptorily concluded his case desperate, Isaiah 38:10-11. Thus to the disciples in their unbelieving dumps, ‘We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel,’ Luke 24:21. They speak as if now they were in doubt whether they should own their former faith or no. Hath it not been formerly thus with thee? wert thou never at so sad a pass—the storm of thy fears so great—that the anchor of hope even came home, and left thee to feed with misgiving and despairing thoughts, as if now thy everlasting night were come, and no morning tale more expected by thee? yet even then thy God proved them all liars, by an unlooked for surprise of mercy with which he stole sweetly upon thee? If so, press and urge this experience home upon thyself, to encourage thy hope in all future temptations. What, O my soul! thou wouldst say, wilt thou again be seared with these false alarms?—again lend an ear to thy distrustful desponding thoughts, which so oft thou hast found liars, rather than believe the report of the promise, which never put thy hope to shame as these have done? The saints are oft feeding their hopes on the carcass of their slain fears. The time which God chose, and the instrument he used, to give the captive Jews their jail-delivery and liberty to return home, were so incredible to them—who now looked rather to be ground in pieces by those two millstones, the Babylonians within, and the Persians without the city—that when it came to pass, like Peter whom the angel had carried out of prison, Acts 12:1-17, it was some time before they could come to themselves, and resolve whether it was a real truth or but a pleasing dream, Psalms

126:1.

Now, see what effect this strange disappointment of their fears had upon their hope for afterward. It sends them to the throne of grace for the accomplishment of what of what was so marvellously begun. ‘The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. Turn again our captivity, O Lord,’ Psalms 126:3-4. They have got a hand-hold by this experiment of his power and mercy; and they will not now let him go till they have more. Yea, their hope is raised to such a pitch of confidence, that they draw a general conclusion from this particular experience for the comfort of themselves or others in any future distress. ‘They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him,’ Psalms 126:5-6.

(3.) Reflection. Remember what sinful distempers have broke out in thy afflictions and temptations, and how God hath, notwithstanding these, carried on a work of deliverance for thee. So that thou mayest say, in respect of these enemies in thy bosom, what David spake triumphantly in regard of his enemies without, that ‘God hath prepared a table before me in the presence of thy enemies,’ yea, of his enemies. While thy corruptions have been stirring and acting against him, his mercy hath been active for thy deliverance. O what a cordial-draught this would be to thy fainting hope! That which often sinks the Christian’s heart in any distress, inward or outward, and even weighs down his head of hope that it cannot look up to God for help and succour at such a time, is the sense of those sinful infirmities which then discover themselves in him. ‘How,’ saith the poor soul, ‘can I look that God should raise me out of this sickness, wherein I have bewrayed so much impatience and frowardness? Or out of that temptation in which I have so little exercised faith, and discovered so much unbelief? Surely I must behave myself better before any good news be sent from heaven to me.’ It is well, poor Christian, thou art sensible of thy sins as to be thy own accuser, and prevent Satan’s doing it for thee; yet be not oppressed into discouragement by them. Remember how God hath answered the like objections formerly, and saved thee with a ‘notwithstanding.’ If these could have hardened his bowels against thee, hadst thou been alive, yea, out of hell this day? Didst thou ever receive a mercy of which God might not have made stoppage upon this very account that makes thee now fear he will not help thee? Or, if thou hast not an experience of thy own at hand—which were strange—then borrow one of other saints. David is an instance beyond exception. This very circumstance with which his deliverance was, as I may say, enamelled, did above all affect his heart: ‘I said in my haste, All men are liars. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?’ Psalms 116:11-12. He remembered his sinful and distempered carriage; and this he mentions, as to take shame for the shame, so to wind up his heart to the highest peg of thankfulness. He knows not how to praise God enough for that mercy which found him giving the lie to God’s messenger—even Samuel himself—that was sent to tell him it was a coming. And he doth not only make this circumstance an incentive to praise for what is past, but lays it down for a ground of hope for the future. ‘I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee,’ Psalms 31:22. As if he had said, ‘When I prayed with so little faith, that I as it were unprayed my own prayer, by concluding my case in a manner desperate; yet God pardoned my hasty spirit, and gave me that mercy which I had hardly any faith to expect.’ And what use doth he make of this experience, but to raise every saint’s hope in a time of need? ‘Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord,’ Psalms 31:24.

FOURTH POINT OF IMPROVEMENT.

[Exhortation to them that want this helmet of hope.] Be you exhorted that are yet without this helmet, to provide yourselves with it. Certainly if you be but in your right wits, it is the first thing you will go about, and that with sober sadness—especially may but three considerations take place in your thoughts. First. How deplored a thing it is to be in a hopeless state. Second. It is possible that thou who art now without hope, mayest by a timely and vigorous use of the means obtain a hope of salvation. Third. Consider the horrid cruelty of this act—to pull down eternal destruction on thy own head.

[Three considerations to make all provide themselves with this helmet.]

First Consideration. How deplored a thing it is to be in a hopeless state. The apostle makes him to be 'without God' that is 'without hope'—'having no hope, and being without God in the world,' Ephesians 2:12. God, to the soul, is what the soul is to the body. If that be so vile and noisome a thing, when it hath lost the soul that keeps it sweet; what is thy soul when nothing of God is in it? 'The heart of the wicked is little worth,' saith Solomon. And why? but because it hath not God to put a value on it. If God, who is light, be not in thy understanding, thou art blind; and what is an eye whose sight is out fit for but to help thee break thy neck? If God be not in thy conscience to pacify and comfort it, thou must needs be full of horror or void of sense; a raging devil or a stupid atheist. If God be not in thy heart and affections to purify them, thou art but a shoal of fish, a sink of sin. If God be not in thee, the devil is in thee; for man's heart is a house that cannot stand empty. In a word, thou canst not well be without this hope neither in life nor death. Not in life—what comfort canst thou take in all the enjoyments thou hast in this life without the hope of a better? A sad legacy it is which shuts the rebellious child from all claim to the inheritance. Thou hast an estate, it may be, but it is all you must look for. And is it not a dagger at the heart of thy joy to think thy portion is paid thee here, which will be spent by that time the saint comes to receive his? Much less tolerable is it to be without this hope in a dying hour. Who can without horror think of leaving this world, though full of sorrows, that hopes for no ease in the other? The condemned malefactor, as ill as he likes his smokey hole in the prison, had rather be there, than accept of deliverance at the hangman's hand; he had rather live still in his stinking dungeon than exchange it for a gibbet. And greater reason hath the hopeless soul—if he understands himself—to wish he may spend his eternity on earth, though in the poorest hole or cave in it—and that under the most exquisite torment of stone or gout —than to be eased of that pain with hell's torment. Hence is the sad confusion in the thoughts of guilty wretches when their souls are summoned out of their bodies. This makes the very pangs of death stronger than they would be, if these dear friends had but a hopeful parting. If the shriek and mournful outcry of some friends in the room of a dying man may so disturb him as to make his passage more terrible, how much more then must the horror of the sinner's own conscience under the apprehensions of that hell whither it is going, amaze and affright him? There is a great difference between a wife's parting with her husband, when called from her to live at court under the shine of his prince's favour, whose return after a while she expects with an accumulation of wealth and honour; and another whose husband is taken out of her arms to be dragged to prison and torment. Is this thy case, miserable man, and art thou cutting thy short life out into chips, and spending thy little time upon trifles, when the salvation of thy soul is yet to be wrought out? Art thou tricking and trimming thy slimy carcass, while thy soul is dropping into hell? What is this but to be painting the when the house is on fire? For a man to be

curious about trimming his face, when he is not sure his head shall stand a day on his shoulders! It was an unseasonable time for Belshazzar to be feasting and quaffing when his kingdom lay at stake and an enemy at the gates. It would have become a wise prince to have been fighting on the wall than feasting in his palace, and fatting himself for his own slaughter, which soon befell him, Daniel 5:30. And it would become thee better to call upon thy God, poor sinner, and lie in tears for thy sins at his foot, if yet haply thy pardon may be obtained, than by wallowing in thy sensual pleasures, to stupify thy conscience, and lay it asleep, by which thou canst only gain a little ease from the troublesome thoughts of thy approaching misery.

Second Consideration. Consider it is possible—I do not mean in the way thou art in, for so it is as impossible that thou shouldst get to heaven, as it is that God should be found a liar—but it is possible that thou who art now without hope, mayest by a timely and vigorous use of the means obtain a hope of salvation; and certainly a possible hope carries in it a force of strong argument to endeavour for an actual hope. There is never a devil in hell so bad but if he had a thousand worlds at his dispose—and every one better than this we dote on—would exchange them all for such a may be, yea count it a cheap pennyworth too. It was but a possibility that brought that heathen king of Nineveh from his throne to lie grovelling at God's foot in sackcloth and ashes, and that king will rise up in judgment against thee if thou dost not more. For that was a possibility more remote than thine is. It was spelled out, not from any express promise that dropped from the preacher to encourage them to humble themselves and turn to the Lord —for we read of nothing but desolation denounced —but from that natural theology which was imprinted on their minds. This taught them to hope that he who is the chief good would not be implacable. But you have many express promises from God's faithful lip, that if you in his tie and way seek unto him, as sure as God is now in heaven, you shall live there with him in glory. 'Your heart shall live that seek God,' Psalms 69:32. Yea there are millions of blessed ones now in heaven experimenting the truth of this word, who once had no more right to heaven than yourselves now have; and that blissful place is not yet crowded so full but he can and will make room for you if indeed you have a mind to go thither. There is one prayer which Christ made on earth that will keep heaven-gate open for all that believe on him unto the end of the world. 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word,' John 17:20. This is good news indeed. Methinks it would make your souls leap within your breasts, while you sit under the invitations of the gospel, as the babe once did in Elizabeth's womb, upon the virgin Mary's salutation. Say not then, sinners, that ministers put you upon impossibilities, and bid you climb a hill inaccessible, or assault a city that is unconquerable. No; it is the devil, and thy own unbelieving heart—who together conspire thy ruin—that tell thee so. And as long as you listen to these counsellors you are like to do well, are you not? Well, whatever they say, know, sinner, that if at last thou missest heaven—which God forbid—the Lord can wash his hands over your head and clear himself of your blood; thy damnation will be laid at thine own door. It will then appear there was no cheat in the promise, no sophistry in the offer of the gospel. What God did tender he was willing to give, but thou didst voluntarily put eternal life from thee, and thy heart, whatever thy lying lips uttered to the contrary, did not like the terms. 'But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me,' Psalms 81:11. So that when the jury shall go on thy murdered soul, to inquire how thou camest to thy miserable end, thou wilt be found guilty of thine own damnation: nemo amittit Deum nisi qui dimittit eum—none loseth God but he that is willing to part with him.

Third Consideration. Consider the horrid cruelty of this act, for thee, by thy incorrigible and impenitent heart, to pull down eternal destruction on thy own head. O what a sad epitaph is this to be found on a man's grave■stone! Here lies one that cut his own throat, that unnaturally made away himself! this the man, that the woman, who would not be reclaimed! They saw hell before them, and yet would leap into it, notwithstanding the entreaties of Christ by his Spirit and ministers to the contrary! And the oftener thou hast attempted to do it, and God hath been staying thy hand by his gracious solicitations, the greater will be thy shame and confusion before God, men, and angels, at the last day. God hath set a brand upon those acts of cruelty which a man commits upon himself above all other. It would speak a man of a harsh currish nature, that could see a horse in his stable or hog in his sty starve, when he hath meat to lay before him; more cruel to hear his servant roar and cry for bread and deny it; yet more horrid if this were done to a child or wife; but of all—because nature cries loudest for self-preservation—the greatest violence that can possibly be done to the law of nature is, to forget the duty we owe to out own life. O what is it then for a sinner to starve his soul by rejecting Christ 'the bread of life,' and to let out his soul's blood at this wide sluice! This is matchless cruelty! Indeed, that which makes the self-murder of the body so great a crime is, because it doth so eminently—I will not say unavoidably—hazard the destruction of the soul. O how unworthy then art thou to have so noble a guest as thy soul dwell in thy bosom, who preparest no better lodgings than hell for it in another world!—that soul whose nature makes it being capable of being preferred to the blissful presence of God in heaven's glory, if thou hadst not bolted the door against thyself by thy impenitency. But alas! this which is the worst murder is the most common. They are but a few molesters that we now and then hear of who lay violent hands upon their bodies, at the report of which the whole country trembles; but you can hardly go into any house one day of the week, in which you shall not find some attempting to make away their souls; yea, that carry the very knife and halters in their bosoms—their beloved sins I mean—with which they stab and strangle them; even those that are full of natural affections to their bodies, so as to be willing to spend all that they are worth, with her in the gospel, on physicians when the life of it is in danger; yet are so cruel to their dying damning souls, that they turn Christ their physician out of doors, who comes to cure them on free cost. In a word, those that discover abundance of wisdom and discretion in ordering their worldly affairs, you would wonder how rational they are, what an account they will give why they do this, and why that; when it comes to the business of heaven and the salvation of their souls, they are not like the same men. So that, were you to judge them only by their actings herein, you could not believe them to be men. And is it not sad, that the soul, which furnisheth you with reason for the despatch of your worldly business, should have no benefit itself from the very reason it lends you to do all your business with. This, as one well saith, is as if the master of the house, who provides food for all his servants, should be himself kept by them from eating, and so remain the only starved creature in the house. And is not this the sad judgment and plague of God, that is visibly seen upon many, and those that go for wise men too, stilo mundi —after the manner of the world? Are not their souls, which give them understanding, to provide for back and belly, house and family, themselves starving in the meantime? being kept by the power of some lust from making use of their understanding and reason so far as to put them upon any serious and vigorous endeavour for the salvation of them. How then can souls that are so treated prosper?

[1]Outhees, i.e. outcry.—Chaucer.

[2]The text has the “Blessed Paul,” and cites, 1 Peter 1:3-4. However, correcting it to read Peter creates problems in the rest of the paragraph. For he then continues to cite the beginnings of Paul’s epistles for his examples. All that I can do, for continuity’s sake, is to change Paul to Peter here, and in the next sentence change the word ‘his’ to Paul. This should make it more uniform and clear up the misunderstanding that is bound to arise because of it. Also, this has the advantage of making the fewest changes to Gurnall’s text.

— SDB [3]Crank, in this case, bold, self■confident.—Ed.

[4]Asseverate: to state seriously or positively. — SDB

02.04 - Sixth Piece - The Christian's Sword

Direction Tenth. The Several Pieces of the Whole Armour of God.

Sixth Piece—The Christian's Sword.

'And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God' (Ephesians 6:17).

Here we have the sixth and last piece in the Christian's panoply brought to our hand—a sword; and that of the right make—'the sword of the Spirit.' The sword was ever esteemed a most necessary part of the soldier's furniture, and therefore hath obtained a more general use in all ages, and among all nations, than any other weapon. Most nations have some particular weapons or arms proper to themselves; but few or none come into the field without a sword. A pilot without his chart, a scholar without his book, and a soldier without his sword, are alike ridiculous. But, above all these, is it absurd to think of being a Christian, without knowledge of the word of God and some skill to use this weapon. The usual name in Scripture for war is 'the sword.' 'I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth,' Jeremiah 25:29; that is, I will send war. And this because the sword is the weapon of most universal use in war, and also that whereby the greatest execution is done in the battle. Now such a weapon is the word of God in the Christian's hand. By the edge of this his enemies fall, and all his great exploits are done. 'They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony,' Revelation 12:11. There are two observables we may take notice of, before we fall to the closer discussion of the words. The first from the kind or sort of arms here presented for the Christian's use. The other from the place or order it stands in. two observables drawn from the words.

First Observable. Mark the kind or sort of arms here appointed for the Christian's use. It is a weapon that is both defensive and offensive. Such is the sword. All the rest in the apostle's armoury are set out by defensive arms, girdle, breastplate, shield, and helmet—such as are of use to defend and save the soldier from his enemy's stroke. But the sword doth both defend him and serves to wound his enemy also. Of like use is the word of God to the Christian.

First. It is for defence. Easily might the soldier be disarmed of all his other furniture, how glistering and glorious soever, had he not a sword in his hand to lift up against his enemies' assaults. And with as little ado would the Christian be stripped of all his graces, had he not this sword to defend them and himself too from Satan's fury. 'Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction,' Psalms 119:92. This is like the flaming sword with which God kept Adam out of paradise. The saint is oft compared to Christ's garden and orchard. With the sword of the word he keeps this his orchard from robbing. There would not long hang any of their sweet fruit—either graces or comforts—upon their souls, were not this great robber Satan kept off with the point of this sword. O, this word of God is a terror to him; he cannot for his life overcome the dread of it. Let Christ but say, 'It is written,' and the foul fiend runs away with more confusion and terror than Caligula at a crack of thunder. And that which was of such force coming from Christ's blessed lips to drive him away, the saints have always found the most successful instrument to

defend them against his fiercest and most impetuous temptations. Ask David what was the weapon with which he warded off the blows this enemy made at him, and he will tell you it was the word of God. ‘Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer,’ Psalms 17:4. That is, by the help of thy word I have been enabled to preserve myself from those wicked works and outrageous practices, to which others, for want of this weapon to defend them, have been harried.

Second. It is for offence. The sword, as it defends the soldier, so it offends his enemy. Thus the word of God is, as a keeping, so a killing sword. It doth not only keep and restrain him from yielding to the force of temptations without, but also by he kills and mortifies his lusts within, and this makes the victory complete. A man may escape his enemy one day, and be overcome by him at another time. We read of some that for a while escaped the pollutions of the world, yet because their lusts were never put to the sword, and mortified in them by the power of the word applied to their hearts, were at last themselves overcome and slain by this secret enemy that lay skulking within their bosoms, 2 Peter 2:20, compared with 2 Peter 2:22. Absalom, notwithstanding his being hanged by the hair of his head, might have lived to have taken revenge afterwards on them by whom he was then beaten, had not Joab come in timely and sped him, by sending his darts with a message of death to his heart. We have daily sad experiences of many that wriggle themselves out of their troubles of conscience—by which for a time they are restrained, and their sins, as it were, held by the hair—to rush afterwards into more abominable courses than they did before; and all for want of skill to use, or courage and faithfulness to thrust this sword by faith into the heart of their lusts.

Second Observable. Observe the order and place wherein this piece of armour stands. The apostle first gives the Christian all the former pieces, and when these are put on, he then girds this sword about him. The Spirit of God, in holy writ, I confess, is not always curious to observe method; yet, methinks, it should not be unpardonable if I venture to give a hint of a double significancy in this very place and order that it stands in.

First. It may be brought in after all the rest, to let us know how necessary the graces of God’s Spirit are to our right using of the word. Nothing more abused than the word. And why? but because men come to it with unsound and unsanctified hearts. The heretic quotes it to prove his false doctrine, and dares be so impudent as to cite it to appear for him. But how is it possible they should father their monstrous births on the pure chaste word of God? Surely it is because they come to the word and converse with it, but bring not the girdle of sincerity with them, and being ungirt, they are unblest. God leaves them justly to miss of truth, because they are not sincere in their inquiry after it. The brat is got upon their own hearts by the father of lies, and they come to the word only to stand as witness to it. Another reads the word and is worse after it, more hardened in his lusts than he was before. He sees some there canonized for saints by the Spirit of God, the history of whose lives is notwithstanding blotted with some foul falls, possibly into those very sins in which he lies wallowing, and therefore is bold to put himself into the saints’ calendar. And why so impudent to do this? Truly because he comes to the word with an unholy heart, and wants the breastplate of righteousness to defend him from the dint of so dangerous a temptation. Another, for want of faith to give existence to the truth of the threatening in his conscience, runs boldly upon the point of this sword, and dares the God of heaven to strike him with it. Thus we find those wretches mentioned by the prophet playing with this edge■tool: ‘Where is the word of the Lord? let

it come now,' Jeremiah 17:15. As if they had said mockingly , 'Thou scarest us with strange bugbears—judgments that in the name of God thou threatenest are coming on us. When will they come? we would fain see them. Is God's sword rusty that he is so long getting it out of the scabbard?' And the despairing soul, for want of a helmet of hope, deals little better with the promise than the presumptuous sinner with the threatening. Instead of lifting it up to defend himself against the fears of his guilty conscience, he falls upon the point of it, and destroys his own soul with that weapon which is given him to slay his enemy with. Well, therefore, may the apostle first put on the other pieces, and then deliver this sword to them to use for their good. A sword in a madman's hand, and the word of God in some wicked man's mouth, are used much alike—to hurt only themselves and their best friends with.

Second. It may be commended after all the rest, to let us know [that] the Christian, when advanced to the highest attainments of grace possible in this life, is not above the use of the word; nay, cannot be safe without it. When girded with sincerity—his plate of righteousness on his breast, the shield of faith in his hand, and the helmet of hope covering his head, that his salvation is out of doubt to him at present; yet even then he must take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. This is not a book to be read by the lowest form in Christ's school only, but beseeming the highest scholar that seems most fit for a remove to heaven's academy. It is not only of use to make a Christian by conversion, but to make him perfect also, 2 Timothy 3:15. It is like the architect's rule and line—as necessary to lay the top-stone of the building at the end of his life as the foundation at his conversion. They therefore are like to prove foolish builders that throw away their line before the house be finished.

I come now to take up the weapon laid before us in the text, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.' In which words these three parts. FIRST. The weapon itself; that is, 'the word of God.' SECONDLY. The metaphor in which it is sheathed—'the sword,' with he person whose it is—'the sword of the Spirit.' THIRDLY. An exhortation to make use of this weapon, and directions how—'and the sword,' &c. That is, take this with all the other before-named pieces. So that to whom he directs the former pieces, to these he gives the sword of the word to use. Now those you shall find are persons of all ranks and relations; husbands and wives, parents and children masters and servants. He would have none be without this sword any more than without the girdle, helmet, and the rest, &c., though this I know will not please the Papists, who would have this sword of the word, like that of Goliath, laid up out of their reach, and that in the priest's keeping also.

DIRECTION X.—FIRST GENERAL PART.

[What is here meant by the Word of God.] 'The Word of God' (Ephesians 6:17).

I begin with the weapon itself—'the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.' I shall first hold forth the sword naked, and the put it again into its sheath, to handle it under the metaphor of a sword. There is a twofold word of God. First. A substantial or subsisting word, and that is the eternal Son of God. Second. There is a declarative word of God, differing according to the sundry times and diverse manners in which he hath been pleased to reveal his will to man.

[Twofold reference of the expression 'the word of God.']

First. There is a substantial or subsisting word, and that is the eternal Son of God. ‘The Word was with God, and the Word was God,’ John 1:1. ‘And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God,’ Revelation 19:13. This is spoken of a person, and he is no other than Christ the Son of God. But he is not the word of God in the text. The Spirit is rather Chr ist’s sword, than Christ the sword of the Spirit; in the 15th verse of the forenamed chapter, ‘Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations.’

Second. There is a declarative word of God, and this is manifold, according to the divers ways and manners whereby the Lord hath been pleased to declare his mind to the sons of men. At first, while the earth was thin sown with people, and the age of man so voluminous as to contain many centuries of years, God delivered his mind by dreams and visions, with such like immediate revelations unto faithful witnesses, who might instruct others of their present generation therein, and transmit the knowledge of the same to after ages. They lived so long that three holy men were able, from the death of Adam, to preserve the purity of religion by certain tradition, till within a few years of the Israelites’ going down to Egypt. For, as a reverend and learned pen calculates the chronology, Methuselah lived above two hundred years with Adam, and from him might receive the will of God revealed to him. Shem lived almost a hundred years with Methuselah, and Shem was alive to the fiftieth year of Isaac’s age, who died but a few years before Israel’s going into Egypt. Thus long did God forbear to commit his will to writing, because it, passing through so few, and those trusty hands, it might safely be preserved. But when the age of man’s life was so contracted, that from eight and nine hundred years—the then ordinary duration of it—it shrank into but so many tens, as it was in Moses time, Psalms 90:1-17; and when the people of God grew from a few persons to a multitude in Egypt—and those corrupted with idolatry —God now intending at their deliverance thence, to form them into a polity and commonwealth, thought it fit, for the preventing of corruption in his worship, and degeneracy in their lives, that they should have a written law to be as a public standard to direct them in both. And accordingly he wrote the ten commandments with his own finger on tables of stone; and commanded Moses to write the other words he had heard from him on the mount, Exodus 34:27; yet so, that he still continued to signify his will by extraordinary revelations to his church, and also to enlarge this first edition of his written word, according to the necessity of the times; reserving the canon of the sacred writ to be finished by Christ the great doctor [teacher] of the church, who completed the same, and by the apostles, his public notaries, consigned it to the use of his church to the end of the world. Yea, a curse from Christ’s mouth cleaves to him that shall add to or take from the same, Revelation 22:18-19. So that now all those ways whereby God directly made known his mind to this people, are resolved into this one of the Scriptures, which we are to receive as the undoubted word of God, containing in a perfect rule of faith and life, and to expect no other revelation of his mind to us. Such is the meaning of Hebrews 1:1: ‘God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.’ Therefore called the ‘last days,’ because that we are to look for no other revelation of God’s will. And therefore for ever let us abhor that blasphemy of Joachim, Abbas, Wigelians, and others that have fallen into the same frenzy with them, who dream of a threefold doctrine flowing from the three Persons of the sacred Trinity —the law from the Father, the gospel from the Son, which we have in the New Testament, and a third from the Spirit, which they call evangelium eternum —the everlasting gospel. Whereas, the Spirit of God himself, by whom the Scriptures were indited, calls the doctrine in them ‘the everlasting gospel,’ Revelation 14:6. Thus much to show what is here meant by the

word of God. From whence the doctrine follows.

[The divinity of the Scriptures, and the sufficiency of their own testimony in proof of the same.]

Doctrine. That the holy Scriptures are the undoubted word of God. By the Scripture I mean the Old and New Testaments contained in the Bible; both {of} which are that one foundation whereupon our faith is built: 'Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,' Ephesians 2:20. That is the doctrine which God by them hath delivered unto his church, for they were under the unerring guidance of the Spirit: 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God,' 2 Timothy 3:16, 2,@B<,LFJ@H—breathed by God; it came as truly and immediately from the very mind and heart of God, as our breath doth from within our bodies. Yea, both matter and words were indited by God; for the things which they spake were 'not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth,' 1 Corinthians 2:13. God did not give them a theme to dilate and enlarge upon with their own parts and abilities; but confined them to what he indited. They were but his amanuenses to write his infallible dictate; or as so many scribes, to transcribe what the Spirit of God laid before them. This is given as the reason why no scripture is to be sensed by our private fancy or conceit. We are to take the meaning of it from itself, as we find one place clears another; because it came not from the private spirit of any man at first, 'but holy men of God spake as they were moved,' or carried, 'by the Holy Ghost,' 2 Peter 1:20 and 2 Peter 1:21 compared. Now ejusdem est condere et interpretari—the power that makes the law, that must expound it.

Question. But it may be some will say, Do you bring Scripture to bear witness for itself? The question is, whether the Scripture be the word of God? and you tell us the Scripture saith so, and is that enough?

Answer. This would carry weight, if it were the word of some sorry creature that stood upon the trial; but a greater than man is here. Humana dita argumentis ac testibus egent; Dei autem sermo ipse sibi testis est, quia necesse est quicquid incorrupta veritas loquitur incorruptum sit veritas testimonium: so Salvan (De Gub. Dei, lib. iii)—men need arguments and witnesses to prove and vouch what they say to be true; but the word of God is a sufficient witness to itself, because what truth itself, which is pure, saith, can be no other than a sincere and true testimony. Christ, who thought it derogatory to the dignity of his person to borrow credit from man's testimony, did yet refer himself to the report that the Scripture made of him; and was willing to stand or fall in the opinion of his very enemies, as the testimony thereof should be found concerning him, John 5:34, compared with John 5:39. And therefore their testimony may well pass for themselves. He that cannot see this sun by its own light, may in vain think to go find it with candle and lantern of human testimony and argument. Not that these are wanting, or useless. The testimony of the church is highly to be reverenced, because to it are these oracles of God delivered, to be kept as a sacred depositum and charge. Yea, it is called 'the pillar and ground of truth,' 1 Timothy 3:15, and 'the candlestick, Revelation 1:12, from whence the light of the Scriptures shines forth into the world. But who will say, that the proclamation of a prince hath its authenticity from the pillar it hangs on in the market cross? or that the candle hath its light from the candlestick it stands on? The office of the church is ministerial—to publish and make known the word of God; but not magisterial and absolute—to make it Scripture, or unmake it, as she is pleased to allow or deny her stamp. This were to send God to man for his hand and seal, and to do by the Scriptures, as Tertullian saith in his Apology the heathens did with their gods, who were to pass the senate, and gain their

good■will, before they might be esteemed deities by the people. And does not the church of Rome thus by the Scriptures? sending us to the pope for leave to believe the Scripture to be Scripture? The blasphemous speech of Hermanus is notoriously known, who said, that the Scriptures did tantum valere, quantum Æsopi fabulæ, nisi accedat ecclesiæ testimonium—that they are of no greater force than the fables of Aesop, unless the testimony of the church be added. O how like is Rome to Rome! Superstitious Rome to pagan Rome! But we need not travel so far to be determined in this case. The Scripture itself will save us the pains of this wearisome journey to so little purpose, being more able to satisfy us of its own divine extraction, than the pope, sitting in his porphyry chair with all his cardinals about him. Neither is there any necessity to ask for a messenger to ascend on high, who may from heaven bring down their letters testimonial unto us; seeing they bear heaven's superscription so fairly writ upon their own forehead, as denies them to proceed from any but God himself. May a particular man be known from a thousand others by his face, voice, or handwriting? Certainly then it cannot seem strange that the God of heaven should be discerned from his sorry creature, by his voice and writing in the sacred Scriptures. Do we not see that he hath interwoven his glorious name so in the works of creation, that they speak his power and Godhead, and call him Maker in their thoughts, who never read the Bible, or heard of such a book?—so that they could not steal the notion thence, but had it from the dictate of their own consciences, exhorting the acknowledgment of a deity. And much more will an enlightened conscience and sanctified heart be commanded by the overpowering evidence that shines forth in the Scriptures to fall down and cry, It is the voice of God, and not any creature that speaks in them. Indeed the grand truths and chief notions found in the Scriptures, are so connatural to the principles of grace, which the same Holy Spirit, who is the inditer of them, hath planted in the hearts of all the saints, that their souls ever spring and leap at the reading and hearing of them, as the babe did in Elizabeth's womb at the salutation of the virgin Mary. The lamb doth not more certainly know her dam in the midst of a whole flock (at whose bleating she passeth by them all to come to be suckled by her), than the sheep of Christ know his voice in the saving truths of the Scriptures—the sincere milk whereof they desire, and are taught of God to taste and discern from all other. Indeed, till a soul be thus enlightened and wrought upon by the Spirit of God, he may have his mouth stopped by such arguments for the divinity of them, as he cannot answer; but he will never be persuaded to rest on them, and cordially embrace them as the word of God. As we see in the scribes and Pharisees, who oft were nonplussed and struck down speechless by the dint of Christ's words, yet, as those wretches sent to attack the person of Christ, rose up from the earth—where the majesty of Christ's deity, looking out upon them, had thrown them grovelling—to lay violent hands on him; so those obdurate Pharisees and scribes, after all their convictions, returned to oppose the doctrine he preached, and that most of them unto death. Yea, that part of the Scripture they seemed to cry up so highly, the law of Moses, and made the ground of their quarrel against Christ, our Saviour is bold to tell them, that as great admirers as they were thereof, they did not so much as believe it to be the word of God. How could they indeed have a true divine faith on it who wanted the Spirit of God that alone works it? 'Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me,' John 5:46. Erasmus tells his friend in a letter, that he met with many things charged on Luther by the monks for heresies, which Augustine passed among them for sound truths. But certainly they did not really believe them to be truths in Augustine which they condemned in Luther. Neither did the Pharisees in truth believe what Moses wrote, because they opposed Christ, who did but verify what Moses before from God's mouth had spoke. But

because, when the Spirit of God comes to raise the heart to a belief of the word of God, he doth it by putting his own weight and force to those arguments which are couched in the word, and so doth sigillare animum charactere illorum—leave the print or character of them sealed upon the soul; therefore I shall draw out an argument or two among many that are to be found in the Scripture itself, proving the parentage thereof to be divine. I know it is a beaten path I am now walking in, and I shall speak •88äH—otherwise, than •88"—other things; the same things for substance which you may meet in many others, only a little otherwise shaped on my private forge. For my own part, I think it more wisdom to borrow a sword of proved metal at another's hands, than to go with a weak leaden one of my own into the field, and so come home well beaten for my folly and pride. The two general heads from which I deduce my demonstrations, are these: First. The matter of the Scriptures. Second. The supernatural effects produced by them.

FIRST GENERAL HEAD.

[Proof of the divinity of the Scriptures from their subject■matter.] The very matter contained in the holy Scriptures demonstrates their heavenly descent; it being such as cannot be the birth or product of a creature. Let us search the Scriptures a little, and consider the several parts thereof, and see whether they do not all bear the image of God upon them. Consider, First. The historical part of Scripture. Second. The prophetical. Third. The doctrinal. Fourth. The preceptive, with its appendices of promises and threatenings to enforce the same. And see if a print of a Deity be not stamped upon them all.

[The historical Scriptures bear the impress of Deity.]

First Part. The historical part of the Scriptures. In this let us consider, First. The antiquity of the matter related. Second. The simplicity and sincerity of the penmen relating what concerns themselves.

First. The antiquity of the matter related. There are some pieces that could not possibly drop from a creature's pen. Where should or could he have his reading and learning to enable him to write the history of the creation? The heathen, it is confessed, by the inquiry of natural reason, have made a discovery thus far, that the world had a beginning, and could not be from eternity, and that it could be the workmanship of none but God; but what is this to the compiling of a distinct history, how God went to work in the production thereof? what order every creature was made in? and how long God was finishing the same? He that is furnished for such an enterprise, must be one that was pre■existent to the whole world, and an eye■witness to every day's work, which man, that was made the last day, cannot pretend unto. And yet there is history more ancient than this in the Scripture, where we find what was done at the council-table of heaven, before the world began, and what passed there in favour of man, whom afterwards he would make. Who could search these court■rolls, I wonder, and bring us intelligence of the everlasting decrees then resolved on, and promises made by the Father to the Son of eternal life in time to be conferred on his elect? Titus 1:2.

Second. The simplicity and sincerity of holy penmen, in relating what most concerns themselves, and those that were near and dear to them. We may possibly find among human authors, some that carry their pen with an even hand in writing the history of others, the making known whose faults casts no dishonourable reflection upon him that records them. Thus, Suetonius spared not

to tell the world how wicked great emperors were, who therefore is said ‘to have taken the same liberty in writing their lives that they took in leading them.’ But where is the man that hath not a hair upon his pen, when he comes to write of the blemishes of his own house or person? Alas! here we find that their pen will cast no ink. They can rather make a blot in their history than leave a blot on their own name; they have, like Alexander’s painter, a finger to lay upon these scars; or, if they mention them, you shall observe they learn their pen on a sudden to write smaller than it was wont. But in the history of the Scripture, none of this self-love is to be found, the penmen whereof are as free to expose their own shame and nakedness to the world’s view as any others. Thus Moses brands his own tribe for their bloody murder on Shechem, Genesis 34:1-31. An enemy could not have set the brand heavier on their name than himself doth it; his own brother is not favoured by him, but his idolatry set upon the file, Exodus 32:1-35. The proud behaviour of his dear sister, and the plague of God which befell her, escapes not his pen, Numbers 12:1-16. No, not the incest of his own parents, Exodus 6:20. So that we must say of him, concerning the impartiality of his pen in writing, what himself saith of Levi in the execution of justice, that he ‘said unto his father, and to his mother, I have not seen him, neither did he acknowledge his brethren,’ Deuteronomy 33:9. In a word, to despatch this particular, he is no more tender of his personal honour than he is of his house and family, but doth record the infirmities and miscarriages of his own life: as his backwardness to enter upon that difficult charge, Exodus 3:1-22; Exodus 4:1-31—wherein he discovered so much unbelief and pusillanimity of spirit, notwithstanding his clear and immediate call thereunto by God himself; hid neglect of a divine ordinance in not circumcising his child, and what the sin had like to cost him; his frowardness and impatience in murmuring at the troubles that accompanied his place wherein God had set him, Numbers 11:11-13; and his unbelief after so many miraculous seals from heaven set to the promise of God, for which he had his leading staff taken from him, and the honour of conducting Israel into Canaan denied him—a sore and heavy expression of God’s displeasure against him, Numbers 20:12. Certainly we must confess, had not his pen been guided by a spirit more than human, he could never have so perfectly conquered all carnal affections, so as not the least to favour himself in reporting things thus prejudicial to his honour in the world. And the same spirit is found to breathe in the evangelists’ history of the gospel—they being as little dainty of their own names as Moses was; as may be observed in their freedom to declare their own blemishes and their fellow apostles’. So far were they from wronging the church with a lame mutilated story of Christ’s life and death, to save their own credits, that they interweave the weaknesses of one another all along their relations. Hence we read of the sinful passion and revenge working the sons of Zebedee; Peter acting the devil’s part to tempt his Master at another time; the ignorance of all the twelve in some main principles of Christianity for awhile; their ambition who should be greatest, and their wrangling about it; their unbelief and cowardice, one denying his Lord, and the rest fleeing their colours, when they should have interposed their own bodies betwixt their Master and the danger, as resolved wither to die for him, or at least with him, and not save their lives with so dishonourable a flight;—these, and such like passages, declare them to be acted in their writings by a spirit higher than their own, and that by no other than by God himself, for whom they so willingly debase themselves in the eyes of the world, and lay their names in the dust, that the glory of his name might be exalted in this their free acknowledgment.

[The prophetical Scriptures bear the impress of Deity.]

Second Part. The prophetic part of the Scriptures; which contains some wonderful predictions of things to come, as could drop from no pen but one guided by a divine hand; all of which have had their punctual performance in the just periods foretold. Indeed from whom could these come but God? 'The secret things belong unto the Lord our God,' Deuteronomy 29:29. And predictions surely may pass very well for secrets; they are arcana ejus imperii—secrets of his government; such secrets, that God offers to take him —whoever he is—and set him with himself in his own throne, that is able to foretell things to come. 'Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods,' Isaiah 41:23. This must be confessed to be a flower of the crown, and an incommunicable property and prerogative of the only true God, who stands upon the hill of eternity, and from thence hath the full prospect of all things, and to whose infinite understanding they are all present; for his will being the cause of all events, he must needs know them, because he knoweth that. The devil, indeed, is very ambitious to be thought able to do this, and to gain the reputation hereof, hath had his mock■prophets and prophecies in all ages, with which he hath abused the ignorant credulous world. But alas! his predictions are no more true prophecies, than his miracles are true miracles. He puts a cheat upon the understandings of silly souls in the one, as he doth on their senses in the other. For his predictions are either dark and dubious, cunningly packed and laid, that, like a picture in plicis—folds, they carried two faces under one hood; and in these folds the subtle serpent wrapped himself, on purpose to save his credit, which way soever the event fell out. And this got Apollo the name of Loxias, of 8@>ÎH, obliquus; propter obliqua et tortuosa responsa ejus—because he mocked them that consulted his oracle with such ambiguous answers, that sent them as wise home as they came to him. Indeed, the devil found it necessary thus to do. Had he not with this patch of policy eked out the scantiness of his own understanding, the nakedness thereof would have been seen by every vulgar eye, to his shame and to the contempt of his oracles. Or, if his predictions were more plainly delivered, they were,

First. Of such things as he spelled out by the help of nature's alphabet, and came to the knowledge of by diving into the secrets of natural causes, before they discovered themselves unto the observation of man's duller understanding; and this made them cried up for wonderful predictions, and supernatural, by those who could not see this clue in Satan's hand that guided him. If a man should meet you in the street, and tell you such a friend of yours will die within a few months, whom you left well, to your thinking, but a few minutes before, and the event should seal to the truth of what he said, you might possibly begin to think this a wonderful prophecy. But, when you afterwards know that he who told you this was a physician rarely accomplished, and had upon much study and strict observation of your friend's bodily state, found a dangerous disease growing insensibly upon him, you would alter your opinion, and not think him a prophet, but admire him for a skilful physician. Thus, did we but consider the vastness of Satan's natural parts—though limited, because created—and the improvement he hath made of them, by the study and experience of so many thousand years, we shall not count his predictions for prophecies, but rather as comments and explications of the short and dark text of natural causes, and acknowledge him a learned naturalist, but not deserving the name of a true prophet.

Second. If he hath not his hint from natural causes, then he gathers his inferences from moral and political causes, which, compared together by so deep a pate as his, give him great help and advantage to infer many times what in very great probability, and all likelihood of reason, will come to pass. Thus what the devil told Saul would become of him, his army, and kingdom, was nothing

but what he might rationally conclude from those premises which lay before him, in his being rejected of God, and another anointed by God's own command to be king in his stead, together with the just height, and full measure, to which Saul's sins might now be thought to have arrived—by his going to a witch for counsel—and a puissant army of the Philistines preparing against him, whose wonted courage now so failed him, that he went rather like a malefactor pinioned and bound with the terrors of his accusing conscience, to meet an executioner that should give the fatal stroke to him, than like a valiant captain, to adorn and enrich himself with the spoils of his enemies. All these laid together make it appear the devil, without a gift of prophecy, might tell him his doom.

Third. God may, and doth, sometimes reveal future events to Satan, as when god intends him to be his instrument to execute some of his purposes, he may, and doth, acquaint him with the same some time before. And you will not say the hangman is a prophet, that can tell such a man shall, on such a day, be beheaded or hanged, when hath a warrant from the king that appoints him to do that office. Thus Satan could have told Job beforehand what sad afflictions would certainly befall him in his estate, servants, children, and his own body; because God had granted him a commission to be the instrument that should bring all these upon him. But neither Satan nor any creatures else are able of themselves to foretell such events as neither arise from natural causes, nor may be rationally concluded to follow from moral and political probabilities; but are locked up in the cabinet of the divine will, how they shall fall out. And such are the prophecies which we find in the holy Scriptures, by which they plainly prove their heavenly extraction. They must needs come from God that tell us what God only knew, and depended on his will to be disposed of. Who but God could tell Abraham where his posterity should be, and what should particularly befall them, four hundred years after his death? —for so long before was he acquainted with their deliverance out of Egypt, Genesis 15:1-21, which accordingly came to pass punctually on the very day foretold, Exodus 12:41. How admirable are the prophecies of Christ the Messiah, in which his person, birth, life, and death, even to the minute, and circumstances of them, are as exactly and particularly set down, many ages before his coming upon the stage, as by the evangelists themselves, who were upon the place with him, and saw all that was done with their own eyes. And though some things foretold of him may be thought, because small and inconsiderable in themselves, not to deserve a mention in so high and sacred a prophecy—as our Saviour's riding on an ass, Zechariah 9:9; the thirty pieces given for him, and the purchase of the potter's field afterwards with them, Zechariah 11:12-13; and the preserving his bones whole, when they that had suffered with him had theirs broken—these, I say, and such like, though they may seem inconsiderable passages in themselves, yet upon due weighing the end for which they are mentioned, we shall find that our weak faiths could not well have spared their help to strengthen it in the belief of the prophecy. Indeed, a great weight of the argument to prove the truth and divinity of the prophecy, moves upon these little hinges; because, the less these are in themselves, the more admirably piercing and strong must that eye be that could see such small things at so great a distance. None but an infinite understanding could do this! And now I hope none will dare ask 'But how may we be sure that such prophecies were extant so long before their fulfilling, and not foisted in after these things were done?'—seeing they were upon public record in the church of the Jews, and not denied by those that denied Christ himself. And truly this one consideration cast into the scale after all the former, doth give an overweight to the argument we are now upon—I mean, that these prophecies were so long, and that so openly, read and known. And consequently [it

were] impossible that Satan should be ignorant of them, and not take the alarm from them to do his utmost to impede their accomplishment, seeing his whole kingdom lay at stake, so as either he must hinder them, or they would ruin it; and that notwithstanding all this, together with his restless endeavour against them, they should be all so fairly delivered in their full time; yea, many of them by the midwifery of those very persons that would, if possible, have destroyed them in the womb, as we see, Acts 4:27. Here breaks out the wisdom and power of a God, with such a strong beam of light and evidence, that none of the Scriptures' enemies can wishly look against it.

[The doctrinal part of Scripture bears the impress of Deity.]

Third Part. The doctrinal part of the Scriptures; by which, in this place, I mean only those grounds and principles of faith that are laid down in Scripture, and proposed to be believed and embraced of all that desire eternal life. There is a divine glory that is to be seen on the very face of them, being so sublime, that no creature can be the inventor of them. To instance but in a few for all. First, God himself, who is the prime object of our faith. Who but God could tell us who and what his nature is? That there is a God, we confess is a notion that natural reason hath found the way to search out. Yea, his Godhead and power are a lesson taught in the school of nature, and to be read in the book of the creatures. But how long men who have no higher teaching are learning the true knowledge of God, and how little progress they make therein, we see in the poor heathen, among whom the wisest philosophers have been such dunces, groping about this one principle one age after another, and yet not able to find the door; as the apostle tells us when he saith that 'the world by wisdom knew not God,' 1 Corinthians 1:1-31. But, as for the trinity of persons in the Godhead, this is such a height as the heart of man never could take aim at, so much as to dream or start a thought of it; so that, if God had not revealed it, the world of necessity must have for ever continued in the ignorance thereof. And the same must be said of all gospel truths, Jesus Christ, God■man, justification by faith in his blood, and the whole method of grace and salvation through him. They are all such notions as never came into the heart of the wisest sophists in the world to conceive of; and therefore it is no wonder that a little child, under the preaching of the gospel, believes these mysteries which Plato and Aristotle were ignorant of, because they are not attained by our parts and industry, but communicated by divine and supernatural revelation. Yea, now they are revealed, how does our reason gaze at them as notions that are foreign, and mere strangers to its own natural conceptions, yea, too big to be grasped and comprehended with its short span, which makes it so malapert—where grace is not master to keep it in subjection—as to object against the possibility of their being true, because itself cannot measure them? As if the owl should say the sun had no light, because her weak eyes cannot bear to look on it. These are truths to be believed on the credit of him that relates them, and not to be entertained or rejected as they correspond to, or differ from, the mould of our reason. He that will handle these with his reason, and not his faith, is like to be served as the smith—it is Chrysostom's comparison—that takes up the red-hot iron with his hand, and not with his tongs, what can he expect but to burn his fingers with them?

[The preceptive part of Scripture bears the impress of Deity.]

Fourth Part. The fourth and last part in our division is the preceptive part of the Scriptures, or that which contains commands and precepts. And this will be found to carry the superscription of its divinity on its forehead, and that with as legible and fair characters as any of the former, if we do

but consider, First. The vast extent of Scripture commands; and Second. Their spotless purity.

First. The vast extent of Scripture commands. This is such as never any human laws, though of the greatest monarch that ever swayed a scepter, could pretend unto. Where is the prince, among the sons of men, that ever went about to give laws to all mankind, and did not rather, in his royal edicts and laws, respect that particular people, and those nations, whose lot fell within the circle of their empire? Of all the empires the world ever had, the Roman was without compare the greatest; and yet when the Roman eagle's wings were best grown, they could not overspread more than the third part of this lower world. And how vain and ridiculous had it been for the emperor to have attempted to make a law for those nations which neither knew him, nor he them? But in the Scripture we find such laws as concern all mankind, wherever they live, and which have been promulgated, where the Bible was never seen. Their sound has gone into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. Many of the laws in sacred writ, they are but a second, and that fairer, edition of what was found written in the consciences of men and women before the Scripture came forth. So that, if those laws that are cut with so indelible a character in the consciences of all the sons of Adam, be of God, then the Scripture must be confessed to proceed from God also.

Yet further. As the Scripture takes all mankind to task, and lays its bonds on all, high and low, rich and poor; so its laws bind the whole man. The heart with its most inward thoughts is laid in these chains, as well as the outward man. Indeed, the heart is the principle subject, whose loyalty is most provided for in the precepts of Scripture. Those commands that contain our duty to God, require that all be done with the heart and soul. If we pray, it must be 'in the spirit,' John 4:23, or else we had as good do nothing, for we transgress the law of prayer. If it be a law that respects our carriage to man, still the heart is chiefly intended: 'Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart,' Leviticus 19:17; 'Curse not the king, no not in thy thought,' Ecclesiastes 10:20. And accordingly the promises and threatenings, which attend the commands of Scripture—as the arteries do the veins in man's body—to inspirit and enforce them, are suitable to the spiritual nature of those commands; the rewards of the one, and punishments of the other, being such as respect the spiritual performance or neglect of them. 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God,' Matthew 5:8. Not blessed are they whose hands are clean, though their hearts are foul and filthy. So, 'But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing,' Malachi 1:14. The deceiver there is the hypocrite, that gives God the skin of the sacrifice, the shape of the duty for the substance, the lean of an outside obedience instead of the fat of the inward man, viz. the obedience of the heart. And as the principle object that these are levelled to and against, is the obedience or disobedience of the heart; so the subject or vessel into which the one emptieth its blessings, and the other its curses, is chiefly the soul and spirit: 'They shall praise the Lord that seek him: your heart shall live for ever,' Psalms 22:26. 'I comfort you...and your heart shall rejoice,' Isaiah 66:13-14. 'Give them sorrow of heart, thy curse O God!' Lamentations 3:65.

Now I would fain know the man that ever went about to form such laws as should bind the hearts of men, or prepare such rewards as should reach the souls and consciences of men. Truly, if any mortal man—be he the greatest of the world's monarchs —should make a law that his subjects should love him with all their hearts and souls, and not dare, upon peril of his greatest indignation, to bid a traitorous thought against his royal person welcome in their souls, but presently confess it

to him, or else he would be avenged on him; he would deserve to be more laughed at for his pride and folly, than Xerxes for casting his fetters into the Hellespont to chain the surly waves with them into his obedience, or Caligula, that threatened the air, if it durst rain when he was at his pastimes, who yet, poor sneak, durst not himself so much as look into the air when it thundered. Certainly a bedlam would be fitter for such a madman than a king's throne and palace, that should so far forfeit his reason, as to think that the thoughts and hearts of men were within his territories and jurisdiction. Who need fear such a law, when none but the offender himself can bring in evidence of the fact? There have been indeed some that, intending to take away the life of their prince by a bloody murderous knife, have been attached by their own conscience, and forced by it to blab and confess their own wicked thoughts, before any other could be their accuser, so sacred are the persons of God's anointed ones; but not from the power of man or his law making them do so, but the dread of God arresting their conscience for violating his law, which indeed not only binds up subjects' hands from killing, but hearts also from cursing, kings in our very thought. This, this the law which rules in the consciences of the worst of men; a bit that God rides the fiercest sinners with, and so curbs them, that they can never shake it out of their mouths. Enough to prove the divinity thereof.

Second. The spotless purity of Scripture commands do no less evince their divine extraction. God is 'the holy One,' Isaiah 43:1-28. He alone is perfectly holy: 'The heavens are not clean in his sight,' Job 15:15. He can charge the angels themselves—who may be the heavens in the forementioned place—'with folly,' Job 4:18, because, though they never sinned, yet they are sinable. It is possible they might sin, as some of their order have done, if not kept from it by confirming grace. And as God is the only holy person, so the Scripture is the only holy book. All besides this have their errata, which are corrected by this, 'The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever,' Psalms 19:9. That is, the word of the Lord is 'clean'—called 'the fear of the Lord,' because it teacheth it; as God is called the fear of Isaac, because the object of his fear. The word is clean, and mark, it 'endureth for ever;' that is, it ever continues, and shall be found so. There are dregs and sediment that will appear in the holiest writings of the best men, when they have stood awhile under the observation of a critical eye; but the Scripture hath been exposed to the view and censure of all sorts of men, yet could never have the least impurity charged justly upon it. It is so clean and pure, that it makes filthy souls clean: 'Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth,' John 17:17. That which is itself filthy may make our clothes and bodies clean, but that which makes our souls pure and clean must be itself without all defilement. And such is the Scripture. Nothing there that gratifies the flesh or affords fuel to any lust. No, it puts every sin to the sword, and strikes through the loins of all sinners great or small: 'To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace,' Romans 8:6. So that, as Athenagoras well said, 'No man can be wicked that is a Christian, unless he be a hypocrite.' For the Scripture which he professeth to be his rule of faith and life, will not allow him to embrace any doctrine that is false, or practice that is filthy and unholy. This is that which Christianity can alone glory in. The heathen were led into many abominations by their religion and gods whom they worshipped. No wonder they were so beastly and sensual in their lives, when they served drunken and filthy gods; and the very mysteries of their religion were so horribly unclean that they durst not let them be commonly known, as having a scent too strong and stinking to be endured by any that had not their senses quite stopped, and their foolish minds, by the judgment of God upon them, wholly darkened. But the Christian can charge none of his sins upon his God—who tempteth none to evil, but hateth

perfectly both the work and also worker of iniquity; nor upon his Bible, which damns every sin to the pit of hell, and all that liveth therein: ‘Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile,’ Romans 2:9-10. O who could be author of this blessed book but the blessed God? If any creature made it, he was either a wicked creature or one that was holy.

1. No wicked creature could do it, neither angel nor man. Surely they would never have taken so much pains to pull down their own kingdom of darkness—the great plot which runs through the Bible from one end of it to the other. And if it were the birth of their brain, no doubt, as every one loves his own child, so would they have shown more love to it than yet they have done. The implacable wrath which the devil and his party of wicked ones in the world have shown in all ages to the Scripture, declare sufficiently that it never came from them. No, no, it cannot stand with the interest of unclean spirits or wicked men to advance holiness in the world. The devil, though bold enough, durst never be so impudent as to lay claim to this holy, heavenly piece. But, if he should, the glorious beauty of holiness which shines on the face of it, would forbid any man in his wits to believe that black fiend to be the father of it. Naturalissimum est opis omnis viventis generare sibi simile—it is natural for every creature to beget his like. And what likeness there is betwixt light and darkness, it is easy to judge.

2. Neither can any holy creature be the author of it, be he angel or man. Can we think that any having the least spark of love to God, or fear of his majesty dwelling their breast, durst counterfeit his dreadful name by setting it to their work, and abuse the world with such a blasphemy and prodigious lie, as to say, ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ and prefix his name all along, when, not God but themselves are the authors? Could this impudence and audacious wickedness proceed from any holy angel or man? Doubtless it could not. Nay further, durst any holy creature put such a cheat upon the world, and then denounce the wrath and vengeance of God against those who shall speak in God’s name, but were never sent of him, as the Scripture mentions? Certainly, that earth which swallowed up Korah and his ungodly rout, for pretending to an authority from God as good as the priests’, to offer incense, would not have spared Moses himself if he had spoke that in God’s name which he had not from him, but which was the invention of his own private brain. Thus we see that no creature, good or bad, angel or man, can be the author of Scripture. So that none remains but God to own it; which he hath done with miracles enough to convince a very atheist of their divinity.

SECOND GENERAL HEAD.

[Proof of the divinity of the Scriptures from their supernatural effects.] The second argument I shall choose to demonstrate the divine extraction of the Scriptures, shall be taken from the supernatural effects they produce. Nothing can be the cause of an effect higher or greater than itself. If therefore we can find such effects to be the product of the Scriptures, as are above the sphere of any creature’s activity, it will then be evident that the Scripture itself is supernatural, not the word of a mere creature, but of God himself. What the psalmist saith of thunder, that loud voice of nature from the clouds, we may apply to the voice of God speaking from heaven in the Scripture, ‘It is a mighty voice and full of majesty; it breaketh cedars’—kings and kingdoms; ‘it divideth the flames of fire.’ The holy martyrs have with one bucket of this spiritual water quenched the

scorching flames of that furious element into which their persecuting enemies have thrown them. ‘It shaketh the wilderness’ of the wild wicked world, making the stout hearts of the proudest sinners to tremble like the leaves of the trees with the wind; and bringeth the pangs of the new■birth upon them whose hearts before never quailed for the most prodigious crimes. ‘It discovereth the forests,’ and hunts sinners out of their thickets and refuges of lies, whither they run to hide themselves from the hue and cry of divine vengeance. But, to speak more particularly and distinctly, there are four powerful and strange effects, which the word puts forth upon the hearts of men; all which will evince its divine original. First. It hath a heart■searching power, whereby it ransacks and rifles the consciences of men. Second. It exercises a power on the conscience to convince and terrify it. Third. It has power to comfort and raise a dejected spirit. Fourth. It hath the power of conversion, which none but God can effect.

[The heart■searching power of the word attests to its divine origin.]

First Effect. The word of God hath a heart-searching power, whereby it ransacks and rifles the consciences of men. It looks into the most secret transactions of the heart and tells us what we do in our bed-chamber—as Elisha did by the king of Syria, 2 Kings 6:12. It cometh where no prince’s warrant can empower his officer to search, I mean the heart. We read that Christ came to his disciples ‘when the doors were shut, and stood in the midst of them,’ John 20:19. Thus the word—when all doors are shut, that men have no intelligence what passeth within the breasts of men—comes in upon the sinner without asking him leave, and stands in the midst of his most secret plots and counsels, there presenting itself to his view, and saith to him as Elisha to Gehazi, ‘Went not my eye with thee when thou didst this and that?’ How often doth the sinner find his heart discovered and laid out of all its folds by the word preached, as if the minister had stood at his window, and seen him what he did within doors, or some had come and told tales of him to the preacher? Such I have known, that would not believe to the contrary, but that the minister had been informed of their pranks, and so leveled his discourse particularly at their breasts, when he hath been as ignorant of their doings as of theirs that live in America, and only shot his reproofs like him that smote Ahab, who drew his bow at a venture, without taking aim at the person of any. From whence can this property come but [from] God, who claims it as his own incommunicable attribute, ‘I the Lord search the heart?’ Jeremiah 17:10. God is in the word, and therefore it findeth the way to get between the joints of the harness, though sent at random out of man’s bow. If any creature could have free ingress into this retiring room of the heart, the devil, being a spirit, and of such a piercing, prying eye, were the most likely to be he; yet even he is locked out of this room, though indeed he can peep into the next.

Now if God can only search the heart, then the word which doth the same can come from no other but God himself. Who indeed can make a key to this lock of the heart, but he that knoweth all the wards of it? Suppose you did lock up a sum of money in a cabinet, and none but one in all the world besides yourself besides yourself were privy to the secret place where you lay this key. If you then should find the key taken away, and the cabinet opened and rifled, you would soon conclude whose doing it was. Why thus, when you find your heart disclosed, and the secret thoughts therein laid open unto you in the word, you may easily conclude that God is in it. The key that doth this is of his making who is the only one besides yourselves that is privy to the counsels of your hearts, that seeth all the secret traverses of your inward man. Who but he can send a spy so directly to your hiding-place, where you have laid up your treasures of darkness out of the

world's sight? There are two secrets that the word discloseth:—

First. What a man's own heart knoweth, and no creature besides. Thus Christ told the woman of Samaria what her neighbours could not charge her with; from which she concluded him to be a prophet—a man of God. And may we not conclude the Scripture to be the word of God, that doth the same?

Second. Those things which a man's own heart is not privy to. God is said to be 'greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things,' 1 John 3:20. He knows more by us than we by ourselves. And doth not the word dive to the bottom of the heart, and fetch up that filth thence, which the eye of the conscience never had the sight of before, nor ever could without the help of the word? 'I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet,' Romans 7:7. And if the word findeth that out which escapeth the scrutiny of man's own heart, doth it not prove a Deity to be in it? So argueth the apostle, 1 Corinthians 14:25, speaking of the power the word preached hath to lay open the heart: 'Thus are the secrets,' saith he, 'of his heart made manifest; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.'

[The conscience■touching power of the word attests its divine origin.]

Second Effect. The second effect the Scripture hath upon the spirits of men, by which its divine pedigree may be proved, is the power it exerciseth on the conscience to convince and terrify it. Conscience is a castle that no batteries but what God raiseth against it can shake. No power can command it to stoop but that which heaven and earth obey. He that disarms the strong man must be stronger than he. He that masters the conscience must be greater than it, and so God only is, 1 John 3:20[1]. Now the word being able to shake and shatter this power of the soul, which disdaineth to stoop to any but God, must needs be from him. And that the word exerts such a power upon the conscience who will doubt? Do we not see it daily chastising the proudest sinners, even to make them cry and whine under its convictions, like a child under the rod? Yea, doth it not slay them outright, that they fall down dispirited at one thunder-clap of the law let off by God upon them? 'When sin revived, I died,' saith Paul. He who before was a jolly man—as well provided in his own opinion for his spiritual estate, as Job was for his outward, when he had his flocks and herds, sons and daughters, health and prosperity, all as yet untouched by the hand of God—upon him, it stripped his conscience as naked as Job afterward was in his outward condition. The man's eyes are opened now to see how naked and void of all holiness he is. Yea his fair skin of pharisaical strictness, with the beauty of which he was formerly so far in love as if he had been another Absalom, without mole or wart, he now judgeth to be but odious deformity, and himself a most loathsome creature, by reason of those plague-sores and ulcers that he sees running on him. Yea, such power the word hath upon him, that it laid him trembling over the bottomless pit, in a despair of himself and his own righteousness.

Hath any creature an arm like this of the word? or can any book penned by the wit of man command the heart to tremble at the rehearsal thereof, as this can do? Even a Felix on the bench, when a poor prisoner preacheth this word at the bar to him, is put into a shaking fit. Who but a God could make those monsters of men, that had paddled in the blood of Christ, and who had scorned his doctrine so as to count the professors of it fools and idiots, yet come affrighted in their own thoughts, at a secret prick given them in Peter's sermon, and cry out in the open assembly, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?' Doth not this carry as visible a print of Deity, as when

Moses clave the rock with a little rod in his hand?

Question. But haply you will say, If there be such a conscience-shaking power in the word, how comes it to pass, that many notorious sinners sit so peaceably and sleep so soundly under it? They read it at home, and hear it preached powerfully in the public, yet are so far from feeling any such earthquake in their consciences, that they remain senseless and stupid; yea, can laugh at the preacher for his pains, and shake off all the threatenings denounced, when sermon is done, as easily as the spaniel doth the water when he comes out of the river.

Answer First. I answer, many sinners who seem so jocund in your eyes, have not such merry lives as you think for. A book may be fairly bound and gilded, yet have but sad stories writ within it. Sinners will not tell us all the secret rebukes that conscience from the word gives them. If you will judge of Herod by the jollity of his feast, you may think he wanted no joy; but at another time we see that John's ghost walked in his conscience. And so doth the word haunt many a one, who to us appear to lay nothing to heart. In the midst of their laughter their heart is sad. You see the lightning in their face, but hear not the thunder that rumbles in their conscience.

Answer Second. It is enough, that the word doth leave such an impression upon the conscience of any 'though not of all' to prove its divinity. One affirmative testimony speaketh louder for the proof of a thing, than many negatives do to the contrary. The word is not a physical instrument, but a moral, and works not by a virtue inherent in it, but [by a] power impressed on it by the Spirit of God that first indited it. And this power he putteth forth according to his own good pleasure; so that the same word sets one man a trembling, and leaves another 'in the same seat may be' as little moved by it as the pillar he leaneth on. Thus as two at a mill, so at a sermon, one is taken, and the other left; one is humbled, and another hardened; not from any impotency in the word, but [from the] freeness of God's dispensing it. His message it shall do to him it is sent, and none else. It is as a man strikes with a sword, back or edge, a strong or weak blow, that makes it cut or not, gives a slight wound or deep. The word pierceth the conscience according to the force and divine power that is impressed on it. The three children walked in the fire, and were not singed, others were consumed as soon as they came within the scent of it. Shall we say, 'That fire is not hot,' because one was burned and the other not? Some, their consciences do not so much as smell of the word, though the flames of the threatening fly about their ears, others are set all on fire with the terrors of it.

Answer Third. The senseless stupidity of some under the stroke of the word, is not to be imputed to its impotency, but to the just judgement of God, wherewith he plagueth them for sinning against the convictions thereof. For commonly they are of that sort, whose consciences are so impenetrable 'the withering curse of God having lighted upon them' that there is no wonder their judgments are darkened and their consciences seared. It was as great a manifestation of Christ's power 'and his disciples judged it so' when with two or three words the fig■tree was blasted, as if he had caused it to spring and sprout when withered and dry. The power of God is as great in hardening Pharaoh's heart as in melting Josiah's.

[The comforting power of the word attests its divine origin.]

Third Effect. The word of God hath a power to comfort and raise a dejected spirit. Conscience is God's prison in the creature's own bosom, from whence none can have his release, except by his

warrant that made the mittimus, and committed him thither. Indeed he is a weak prince that hath no prison to commit offenders into but what another can break open. This, where God lays sinners in chains, is not such. ‘A wounded spirit,’ saith Solomon, ‘who can bear?’ Yea, and who can cure? If any creature could, surely then the devils were as able as any to do it. But we see they have not to this day found the way to shake off those fetters which God keepeth them in; but lie roaring under the unspeakable torment of God’s wrath. And they who cannot cure their own wounds, are like to be but poor physicians to help others. Indeed they acknowledge it beyond their skill and power: ‘Wherefore then dost thou ask of me,’ said the devil to Saul, ‘seeing the Lord is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?’ 1 Samuel 28:16. The distress of an afflicted conscience ariseth from the dismal sense of divine wrath for sin. Now none can remove this but he that can infallibly assure the soul of God’s pardoning mercy; and this lies so deep in God’s heart, that God alone ‘who only knoweth his own thoughts’ can be the messenger to bring the news; and therefore the word which doth this can come from none but him. And, that is able not only to do this, but also to fill the soul with ‘joy unspeakable and full of glory,’ is a truth so undoubted, that we need not ascend up to heaven for further confirmation. That Spirit which first indited the word, hath sealed it to the hearts of innumerable believers.

Indeed all the saints acknowledge their comfort and peace to be drawn out of these wells of salvation. ‘In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul,’ Psalms 94:19. Nay, he doth not only tell us his own experience, whence he had his joy, but also to have had theirs from the same tap. ‘Fools, because of their transgressions, are afflicted’ Psalms 107:17. And what then can ease them? Will all the rarities that can be got by sea or land make a diversion to their thoughts, and ease them of their pain? No; for ‘their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death,’ Psalms 107:18. What cordial then have they left to use, or way to take for their relief? Truly none, but to betake themselves to prayers and tears, ‘Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses,’ Psalms 107:19. And with what key doth God open their prison door? It follows, ‘He sent his word, and healed them,’ Psalms 107:20. If you shall say all this is meant of outward trouble; yet surely you must grant in holds more strong concerning that which is inward. What but a word from God’s mouth can heal a distressed spirit, when the body pineth and languisheth till God speaketh a healing word unto it?

Great and mighty things are spoken of thee, and done by thee, O holy Word! Thou outviest the world’s joy, and makest the soul that hath but tasted thy ‘strong consolations’ presently to disrelish all sensual delights, as flashy and frothy. So pure and powerful is the light of that joy which thou kindlest in the saint’s bosom, that it quencheth all sinful carnal joy with its beams, as the sun doth the fire on the hearth. Thou conquerest the horror of death, that it is not feared. Thou vanquishest the pains thereof, that they are not felt. Thou treadest on scorpions and serpents, and they have no power to sting or hurt those that believe in thee. Devils know thee, and flee before thee, quitting, at sight of thee, their holds, and leave those consciences which they had so long under their power and tyranny, for thee to enter with thy sweet consolations. Thou quenchest the flames of hell itself, and makest the soul that even now was thrown bound by despair into the fiery furnace of God’s wrath, to walk comfortably and unsinged amidst the thoughts thereof. Thou bringest heaven down to earth, and givest the believing soul a prospect of that heavenly Jerusalem which is so far off, as if he were walking in the blessed streets thereof; yea, thou entertainest him with the same delicacies which glorified saints—though more fully—feed on; so that sometimes he

forgetteth he is in the body, even when pains and torments are upon him. This have the saints experienced, and more than my pen or their own tongue can express; so that we may say to him that yet questions whence the Scriptures came, as the blind man cured by Christ did to the Pharisees, ‘this is a marvellous thing,’ saith he, ‘that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes,’ John 9:30. So here, this is marvellous, yea ridiculous, to say we know not whence the Scripture is, when it can do all this. Since the world began was it not heard, that the word of a mere creature could remove mountains of despairs, and fill the souls of poor sinners with such joy and peace, in spite of hell and the creature’s own unbelief, under the weight of which, as a heavy gravestone, he lay buried and sealed.

[The converting power of the word attests its divine origin.]

Fourth Effect. The word of God hath the power of conversion, which none but God—who is the ‘God of all grace’—can produce. When John’s disciples came to Christ to be resolved who he was, whether the Messiah or not, Christ neither tells them he was, or was not he; but sends them to take their answer from the marvellous works he did. ‘Go,’ saith he, ‘and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them,’ ,Û"((,8\.@<J"4—are gospellized, Matthew 11:4-5—that is, they are transformed into the very nature of the gospel, and acted by the spirit which breathes in the gospel. By all these instances Christ’s drift was to give an ocular demonstration of their faith, that he, who did such miracles, could be no other than he whom they sought. And that which brings up the rear, is the converting power of the word —not set last because the least among them, but rather because it is the greatest wonder of them all, and comprehends in it all the other. When souls are converted, ‘the blind receive their sight.’ You were ‘darkness,’ but now ‘light in the Lord.’ ‘The lame walk,’ in that the affections—the soul’s feet—are set at liberty, and receive strength to run the ways of God with delight. Lepers are cleansed, in that filthy lusts are cured, and foul souls are sanctified. And so of the rest. Now, though the former miracles cease, yet this, which is the greatest, still accompanying the word, affords such a demonstration of its divinity, as reason itself cannot oppose. Is it not beyond he skill and strength of the mightiest angel to make the least pile of grass in the field? Much more the new creature in the heart, the noblest of God’s works. That therefore which doth thus new■mould the heart, and make the creature as unlike to his former self as the lamb is to the wolf, and the ox to the lion —the one meek and harmless, the other fierce and ravenous—that must needs be from God. And such changes are the daily product of ‘the word.’ How many have you known—once under the power of their lusts, throwing like madmen their firebrands about, possessed with so many devils as sins, and hurried hither and thither by these furies—yet at the hearing of one gospel sermon, have you not seen them quite metamorphosed, and, with him in the gospel, out of whom the devil was cast, sitting at Jesus’ feet in their right mind, bitterly bewailing their former course, and hating their once beloved lusts, more than ever they were fond of them? I hope some of you that read these lines can say thus much concerning yourselves, as the apostle doth of himself and others of his brethren: ‘We ourselves were also sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures,’ &c. ‘But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration,’&c., Titus 3:3-4. And can you, who are the very epistle of Christ, writ not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, in the fleshly tables of your hearts, stand yet in doubt whether that

word came from God, which is thus able to bring you home to God? How long might a man sit at the foot of a philosopher, before he should find such a commanding power go forth with his lectures of morality, [as] to take away his old heart, full of lusts as the sea is of creeping things innumerable, and put a new and holy one in the room of it? Some indeed in their school have been a little refined from the dregs of sensuality, as Polemo, who went a drunkard to hear Plato, and returned a temperate man from his lecture; and no wonder, if we consider what violence such broad and beastly sins offer to the very light of a natural conscience—that lesser light appointed by God to rule the night of the heathen world. But take the best philosopher of them all, and you shall find sins that are of a little finer spinning—such as spiritual wickednesses and heart■sins are—that are acted behind the curtain in the retiring room of the inner man. These were so far from being the spoils of their victorious arms, that they could never come to the sight of them. But 'the word' treads on these 'high places' of spiritual wickednesses, and leaves not any stronghold of them untaken. It pursues sin and Satan to their bogs and fastnesses; it digs the sinner's lusts like vermin out of their holes and burrows, where they earth themselves. The heart itself is no safe sanctuary for sin to sit in. The word will take it thence—as Joab from the horns of the altar—to slay it. Those corruptions that escaped the sword of the moralist and honest heathen, even these fall by the edge of the word.

I cannot give a better instance of the converting power of the word, than by presenting you with the miraculous victories obtained by it over the hearts of men, when the apostles were sent out first to preach, the grace of Christ, and, as it were, to begin the combination of the gospel ministry. Wherever they came, they found the world up in arms against them, and the black prince of it, the devil, at the head of their troops, to make their utmost resistance against them; yet what unheard■of victories were got by them? Was it not strange that without drawing any other sword than 'the everlasting gospel,' they should turn the world upside down, as their enemies themselves confessed?—slighting the devil's works, casting down his holds wherever they came, and overcoming those barbarous heathens whom the devil had held in his peaceable possession so many thousand years! To [make them] renounce their idolatries in which they had been bred and trained up all their days; receive a new Lord, and him a crucified Jesus; and this at the report of a few silly men, loaden with the vilest reproaches that the wit of man could invent, or malice rake together, to besmear their persons, and render their doctrine they preached odious to the world, this, I say, is such an unheard■of conquest, as could not be obtained by any less than the arm of the Almighty —especially if we cast in two or three circumstances to give a further accent to the heightening of this consideration. As,

First Circumstance. The meanness of the persons employed to preach this doctrine. They were mean in their condition and rank, being of the floor and lowest of the people, and many of them as mean in their intellectual accomplishments as external port and garb in the world, having no help from human learning to raise their parts, and set a varnish upon their discourses. Men very unfit for such an enterprise, God knows, had the stress and success of their works depend on their own furniture. This put their very enemies to a stand, whence they had their wisdom, knowing well how low their parentage and unsuitable their breeding were to give them any advantage toward such a high undertaking, Acts 4:13. Surely these poor men could contribute no more, by anything that was their own, to that wonderful success which followed their labours, than the blowing of the rams' horns could to the laying of Jericho's walls flat with the ground, or the sounding of

Jehoshaphat's musical instruments to the routing of so formidable an army of his enemies; so that we must attribute it to the breath of God, by which they sounded the trumpet of the gospel, and his sweet Spirit charming the hearts of his hearers, that such mighty works were done by them.

Second Circumstance. If we consider the nature of the doctrine they held forth and commended to the world, which was not only strange and new—enough to make the hearers shy of it—but so contrary to the humour of man's corrupt nature, that it hath not one thought in the sinner's heart to befriend it. No wonder indeed, that Mahomet's spiced cup went down so glib, it being so luscious and pleasing to man's carnal palate. We are soon wooed to espouse that for truth which gratifies the flesh, and easily persuaded to deliver up ourselves into the hands of such opinions as offer fair quarter to our lusts, yea, promise them satisfaction. Indeed, we cannot much wonder to see Christianity itself generally and readily embraced, when it is presented in Rome's whorish dress, with its purity adulterated, and its power emasculated. But, take the doctrine of the gospel in its own native excellency, before its falls into these hucksters' hands, and it is such as a carnal heart cannot like, because it lays the axe to the root of every sin, and bids defiance to all that take part with it. It will suffer no religion to set her threshold by its. This may make us step aside—as Moses once to behold the bush—to see this great wonder—a doctrine believed and embraced that is pure nonsense to carnal reason, teaching us to be saved by another's righteousness, wise with another's wisdom, to trust in him as a God that was himself a child, to rely on him to deliver us from the power of sin and Satan that fell himself under the wrath of men. O how great a gulf of objections which reason brings against this doctrine, must be shot before a man come to close with it! And yet this doctrine to find such welcome, that never any prince at the beat of his drum had his subjects flock more in throngs to list themselves in his muster■roll, than the apostles had multitudes of believers offering themselves to come under baptism—the military oath given by them to their converts. Add but one more.

Third Circumstance. Consider how little worldly encouragement this word they preached gave to its disciples; and you will say, 'God was in it of a truth.' Had it been the way to thrive in the world to turn Christian, or had it won the favour of kings and princes to have been their disciple, and taught them how to climb the hill of honour, we could not have wondered to have seen so many to worship the rising sun. But, alas! the gospel which they preached comes not with these bribes in its hand. No golden apples thrown in the way to entice them on. Christ bids his disciples stoop not to take up crowns for their heads, but a cross for their backs; 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me,' Luke 9:23. They must not dream of getting the world's treasure, which they have not, but prepare to part with what they have. To be sure, when the apostles preached it, the way it led to was not to princes' palaces with their preferments, but have aimed at their own honour, and pleased themselves with the renown that they should win by their sufferings, and that their names should be writ and read in the leaves of fame when they were dead and gone, some Roman spirit, haply, might have been found to have endured as much. Or, if it had taught them that they should have ascended in their fiery chariot of martyrdom, to receive heaven's glory as the purchase of their patience and prowess, this might have hardened some popish shaveling against the fear of those bloody deaths they met with. But the doctrine they preached allows neither, but teaches them when they have done their best, and suffered the worst that their enemies' wrath can inflict for the cause of God, then to renounce the honour of all, and write themselves unprofitable servants. All these considerations twisted

together, make a strong cord to draw any that have staggered in this particular to a firm belief of the divine parentage of the Scriptures.

DIRECTION X.—SECOND GENERAL PART.

[Why the word of God is called the Sword of the Spirit.] ‘The sword of the Spirit’ (Ephesians 6:17).

Having despatched the first part, which presented us with the weapon itself, commended to the Christian’s use—i.e. ‘the word of God’—the second part of the text now comes under our consideration, and that is the notion under which this weapon is commended, or the metaphor in which it is sheathed—‘the sword of the Spirit.’ And here a double inquiry would be made. First. Why the word of God is compared to a ‘sword.’ Second. Why this sword is attributed to the Spirit, and bears his name, ‘the sword of the Spirit.’

[Two inquiries as to the expression, ‘the sword of the Spirit.’]

First Inquiry. Why is the word of God compared to a ‘sword?’ For this inquiry let this suffice. The sword, being both of general and constant use among soldiers, and also that weapon with which they not only defend themselves, but do the greatest execution upon their enemies, it most fitly sets forth the necessity and excellent use of the word of God, by which the Christian both defends himself, and offends, yea cuts down before him all his enemies.

Second Inquiry. Why is the sword attributed to ‘the Spirit?’ Some take the abstract here to be put for the concrete, B<,bµ" for B<,Lµ"J46ÎH, sword of the Spirit for the spiritual sword, as if it were no more but ‘take the spiritual sword, which is the word of God,’ according to that of the apostle, ‘The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty’—that is, spiritual, 2 Corinthians 10:4. Indeed, Satan bring a spirit, must be fought with spiritual arms. And such is the word, a spiritual sword. But this, though true, reacheth not the full sense of the place, where B<,bµ" is taken personaliter—personally, for the person of the Holy Spirit. And in these three respects the written word is the sword of the Spirit.

First. He is the Author of it. A weapon it is which his hand alone formed and fashioned; it came not out of any creature’s forge, ‘holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,’ 2 Peter 1:21.

Second. The Spirit is the only true interpreter of the word. Hence that known passage of Bernard: quo spiritu factæ sunt Scripturæ, eo spiritu legi desiderant, ipso etiam intelligendæ sunt—the Scriptures must be read, and can be understood, by that Spirit alone by whom they were made. He that made the lock can alone help us to a key that will fit its wards and open its fence. ‘No prophecy of the scripture is of private interpretation,’ 2 Peter 1:20. And why not? It follows—because it came not from any private spirit at first. ‘For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man,’ &c., ver. 21. And who knows the mind of the Spirit so well as himself?

Third. It is only the Spirit of God can give the word its efficacy and power in the soul. It is his office, as I said, sigillare animum charactere rerum creditarum—to seal the soul with the impress of things believed. Except he lays his weight on the truths we read and hear, to apply them close, and as it were cut the very image in our minds and hearts, they leave no more impression than a seal set upon a stone or rock would do;—still the mind fluctuates, and the heart is unsatisfied, notwithstanding our own and others’ utmost endeavours to the contrary. It was not the disciples’

rowing, but Christ's coming, that could lay the storm or bring them to shore. Not all our study and inquiry can fix the mind, or pacify the heart in the belief of the word, till the Spirit of God comes. 'Do you now believe?' saith Christ to his disciples, John 16:31. How oft, alas! had the same things sounded in their ears, and knocked at their door for entertainment, but never could be received, till now that the Spirit put in his finger to lift up the latch! B. Davenant on Colossians tells us a story out of Gerson, concerning a holy man whom himself knew to be sadly beaten and buffeted with frequent doubts and scruples, even so as to call into question an article of faith, but afterward was brought into so clear a light and full evidence of its truth, that he doubted no more of it than of his own being alive. And this certainty, saith Gerson, did not arise ex nova aliquâ ratione et demonstratione, sed ex humiliatione, et captivitate intellectûs, atque admirabili quadam Dei illuminatione à montibus æternis—did not come from any new argument he had found out to demonstrate the truth of it, but from the Spirit of God humbling and captivating his proud understanding, and admirably irradiating the same. The words thus opened present us with this important doctrinal conclusion.

[The written word is the sword by which the Christians overcome.]

Doctrine. That the written word, or if you will, the Scripture, is the sword by which the Spirit of God enables his saints to overcome all their enemies. The Spirit will do nothing for them without the word, and they can do nothing to purpose without him. The word is the sword, and the Spirit of Christ the arm which wields it in for the saints. All the great conquests which Christ and his saints achieve in the world are got with this sword. When Christ comes forth against his enemies, this sword is girded on his thigh, 'Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty,' Psalms 45:3. His victory over them too is ascribed to it, Psalms 45:4, 'And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth,'—that is, the word of truth. We find, Revelation 1:6, Christ holding 'seven stars in his right hand,' intimating the choice care he hath over his people, particularly the ministers, who are more shot at than any other. And how doth he protect them, but by this 'sharp two■edged sword coming out of his mouth?' This is the great privilege which the poorest believer in the church hath by the covenant of grace —such a one as Adam had not in the first covenant. He, when fallen, had a flaming sword to keep him out of paradise, but had no such sword, when innocent, to keep him from sinning, and so from being turned out of that happy place and state. No, he was left to stand upon his own defence, and by his own vigilancy to be a lifeguard to himself. But now the word of God stands between the saints and all danger. This will the better appear if we single out the chief enemies with whom the saint's war is waged, and show how they all fall before the word, and receive their fatal blow from this one sword, as Abimelech slew the threescore sons of Jerubbaal 'upon one stone,' Judges 9:5. First. The bloody persecutor who breathes slaughter against the saints, and pursues them with fire and faggot. Second. The seducer and heretic. Third. Our own lusts. Fourth. An army of afflictions, both outward and inward.

[Persecutors are overcome by 'the word of God.']

First Enemy. The bloody persecutor, who breathes slaughter against the saints, and pursues them with fire and faggot. Such a race of giants there ever was, and will be as long as the devil hath any kindred alive in the world, who, when it lies in their power, to maintain their father's kingdom of darkness, will not fear to trample under their feet those stars of heaven whose light acquaints the world with their horrid impieties, and so hazards the weakening of the devil's interest in the minds

of men. Hence those bloody wars raised, cruel fires of martyrdom kindled, and massacres practised on the saints—with many devilishly witty inventions of torments, that these innocent souls might linger in their pains, and stay the longer in the jaws of death, thereby to 'feel themselves to die,' as one of them barbarously and inhumanly said! Well, what ladders doth God use to scale these mountains of pride? Where are the weapons with which the people of God resist and overcome these monsters of men that thus defy the Lord and his hosts? Wouldst thou know where? Truly, they are to be seen in the tower of David, builded for an armoury—the word of God, I mean. Here hang the shields and bucklers, the swords and darts, by which the worthies of God have in all ages defended themselves stoutly against the rage of persecutors, and also triumphed gloriously over their greatest force and power. Out of this 'brook' they take those 'smooth stones' by which they prostrate these Goliaths. This sort of the church's enemies are overcome two ways: —either by their conversion or destruction. Now, the word of God is the sword that effects both. It hath two edges, Hebrews 4:12, and so cuts both sides.

1. Way. The sword of the Spirit hath application to the elect, who, for a time, through ignorance and prejudice, are joined with the saints' enemies, as busy sticklers and bloody persecutors as the worst of the pack. The word of God is a sacrificing knife, to rip open their hearts, and let out the hot putrefied blood of their sins, which made them so mad against the church of God, yea, and to prepare them also, by converting grace, as an offering acceptable unto God, as the apostle excellently showeth, Romans 15:16. Thus the murderers of our blessed Lord, we find them by one sermon of Peter so strongly wrought upon that they presently vomit up his blood, as sick of it as ever they were for it, and, at one prick that the point of this sword gave them, crying for quarter at God's hands, yea throwing down their persecuting arms, and most freely entering their names into his muster■roll, whose life but a few days before they had so cruelly taken away, about three thousand of them at one clip being baptized in his name, Acts 2:41. Yea, Paul himself, whom I may call, as Erasmus doth Augustine, before his conversion, 'the great whale,' that did so much mischief to the church of Christ, what hook did he use to strike him with but the word? Never had Christ a more furious enemy in the world than this man. His heart was so inflamed with a rage against the saints, that the fiery steam thereof came out of his lips, as from the mouth of a hot furnace, breathing slaughter against them wherever he went, Acts 9:1. Now what force of arms, besides the word preached, did Christ send to take in the castle of this bloody man's heart? First. Christ himself took him immediately to task, preaching such a thundering sermon from his heavenly pulpit, as dismounted this proud rider, and sent him bound in the fetters of his own troubled soul, prisoner even to that place where he thought to have clapped up others, and then left his Spirit to carry on the work of his conversion, by applying and keeping the plaster of the word close to his heart. How powerfully this wrought on him he himself tells us, 'When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died,' Romans 7:9. That is, when the law came by the convictions of the Spirit to rake in his soul, and pierce his conscience, then sin revived those lusts which like a sleepy lion slumbered in him. Now, however, in his awakened conscience they roared so dreadfully that he was as it were struck dead with the terror of them as a poor damned creature; and would have undoubtedly gone away in that swoon of horror and despair, had not the joyful news of gospel grace been by the same word and Spirit applied seasonably, to bring him to the life of hope and comfort again. Thus was this boisterous furious enemy of the saints chained and tamed by the terrors of the law, changed and renewed by the gentleness and mercy of the gospel, and he became no more like himself than a ravening wolf is to the innocent lamb, more ready to

lay down his own life now for the defence of the gospel, than before conversion to take away their lives that professed it.

2. Way. The sword of the Spirit hath application to the saints' persecuting enemies, when ruined and destroyed. Indeed, if they continue impenitent, and harden themselves against the truths and servants of God, that is the end they must all look to come to. They are like ravenous beasts—'made to be taken and destroyed,' 2 Peter 2:12, and they may know beforehand, as the certainty of their ruin, so what shall procure it, and that is the word of God. 'And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed,' Revelation 11:5. It is spoken of those that shall dare to oppose and persecute the faithful preachers of the gospel —that fire comes out of their mouths to destroy them. Though they have their will on the bodies of the saints, butchering and burning them, yet the word they preach will be their destruction. That lives and stays behind, to pay the saints' debts and avenge them on their enemies. God is resolved they must and shall in this manner be killed, the word must give them the fatal stroke. Julian confessed as much, when bleeding under his deadly wound, though the arrow came out of a Persian bow, yet the wretch knew it was sent by a higher than a Persian hand, vicisti Galileæ—O Galilean, thou hast overcome and been too hard for me. His conscience told him that his spite against the truth of Christ was his death; and many more besides him have acknowledged as much when under the hand of justice. The face of the word of God which they have opposed, hath appeared to them as engraven upon their judgments.

O this sword of the word, it hath a long reach; it is at the breast of every enemy God and his saints hath in the world, and though at present they cannot see whence their danger should come (they are so great and powerful, so safe and secure, as they think), yet the word of God having set down their doom already, God will sooner or later open one door or other to let in their destruction upon them. When the prophet would express the indubitable ruin of the Philistines impending, mark what prognostics he gives, 'Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea coast,... the word of the Lord is against you,' Zephaniah 2:5. As if he had said, You are a lost undone people; the whole world cannot save you; for 'the word of the Lord is against you.' The threatening of the word, like lightning or mildew, blasts wherever it goes, and its curse burns to the very root. Hence all the seven nations of Canaan fell into the mouth of the Israelites like ripe fruit into the mouth of him that shakes the tree. The word of the Lord cursing them, had gone before them to make their conquest certain and easy. This Balak knew, and therefore would have given so much for a few words out of Balaam's mouth to have cursed Israel in God's name. The truth is, though we look upon the monarchs of the world, and their armies, as those which have the sway of the affairs of the world, yet these are no more than the fly on the wheel. It is the word of God that hath the great stroke in all that is done on the world's stage. 'I have set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down,...to build, and to plant,' Jeremiah 1:10. Indeed, the whole earth is God's ground; and who hath power to build on his ground, or pull down, but himself? And in his word he hath given his mind what he will have done to his enemies, and for his saints, and therefore all the mercies they have, they receive and acknowledge them as gracious performances of the promise, so all the judgments executed on all their enemies as accomplishments of the threatenings of the word, called therefore 'the judgment written,' Psalms 149:9.

[Heretics are overcome by the 'word of God.']

Second Enemy. The seducer is another enemy the Christian hath to cope with, and no less dangerous than the other: nay, in this respect, far more formidable—the persecutor can kill only the body, but the seducer comes to poison the soul. Better to be slain outright by his sword, than to be ‘taken alive,’ as the apostle phraseth it, ‘in this snare of the devil,’ which these whom he sends forth abirding for souls privily lay, even where they are oft least suspected. When Paul fell into the mouth of the persecutor, he could yet glory, and rejoice that he had escaped the latter: ‘I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,’ 2 Timothy 4:7-8. See how this holy man triumphs and flourisheth his colours, as if the field were fought and the day won; whereas, good man, he was now going to lay his head on the block under the hand of bloody Nero’s headsman, as you may perceive, ‘I am now ready to be offered up,’ ver. 6, alluding to the kind of death, it is like, he was shortly to undergo. But you will possibly say, What great cause had he then to cry victoria —victory, when his affairs were in such a desperate and deplored condition? Yes, this made him triumph, he had ‘kept the faith;’ and that was a thousand times more joy and comfort to him than the laying down his life was trouble. If he had left the faith by cowardice, or chopped it away for any false doctrine, he had lost his soul by losing of that; but having kept the faith, he knew that he did but part with his life to receive a better at God’s hands than was taken from him by man’s. The locusts mentioned, Revelation 9:1-21—which Mr. Mede takes to be the Saracens, who were so great a scourge and plague to the Roman world, newly Christianized—we find ‘they had tails like unto scorpions, and their were stings in their tails,’ ver. 10: which the learned writer fore-named interprets to be the cursed Mahometan doctrine with which they poisoned the souls of the people wherever their conquering sword came.

It seems, though the sword of war in the hand of a barbarous bloody enemy be a heavy judgment to a people, yet the propagation of cursed errors is a greater. This is the ‘sting in the tail’ of that judgment. I do not doubt but many that were godly might fall by the sword of that enemy in such a general calamity, but only those that were not among God’s sealed ones felt the sting in their tail by being poisoned with their cursed imposture; and therefore they alone are said to be ‘hurt’ by them, ver. 4. We may be cut off by an enemy’s sword and not be hurt; but we cannot drink in their false doctrine, and say so. Now, the word of God is the sword whereby the Spirit enables the saints to defend themselves against this enemy; yea, to rout and ruin this subtle band of Satan. We read of Apollos, Acts 18:28, that ‘he mightily convinced the Jews.’ He did, as it were, knock them down with the weight of his reasoning. And out of what armoury fetched he the sword with which he so prevailed? See Acts 18:28. ‘Showing by the Scriptures’—not their cabala —‘that Jesus was Christ;’ and therefore he is said to be ’mighty in the Scriptures,’ Acts 18:24, a mighty man of valour, and so expert, through his excellent knowledge in them, that the erroneous Jews could no more stand before him holding this sword in his hand, than a child with a wooden dagger can against a giant formidably armed with killing weapons. When Paul warns Timothy to stand upon his defence carefully against seducers, which snapped so many everywhere, he can devise no better counsel how he might keep out of their hands, than by sending him to the Scriptures, and bidding him shut himself up within these, as in a town of war. ‘But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned,’ 2 Timothy 3:14; and in the next verse he opens himself, and shows what lesson he means that he had learned, by telling him, that from a child he had known the holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation; and by consequence, wiser than all his enemies, if he stuck close to them. Other arms we may load ourselves with, by tumbling over

many authors; but he that hath this sword, and hath been but taught of the Spirit the use of this weapon, is provided well enough to meet the stoutest champions for error the devil hath on his side, in an encounter. With this, poor women have been able to disarm great doctors of their studied arguments, ruffling all their art and logic with one plain place of Scripture, as she who brained Abimelech, that great commander, by tumbling a piece of millstone on his head. Out of this armoury came those weapons Paul tells us are so ‘mighty through God, casting down imaginations,’ or reasonings, 8T(4Fµ@×H 6"2"4D@Ø<J,H, by which an ancient will have the Greek Philosophers’ syllogisms to be meant. Indeed, he that hath the word on his side, and a holy skill to use it, hath as much advantage of his adversary that comes with other armour —let him be never so good a fencer—as a man with a good sword hath over him that comes forth only with a bulrush in his hand.

All error dreads the light of the word, and fears more to be examined by that, than a thief does to be tried before a strict judge. Hereticorum sententias prodidisse est superasse—to have expounded the doctrines of heretics is to have overcome them, saith Hieron. Unfold them, or bring them and the word face to face, and, like Cain, they hang down their head; they are put to shame. This is the only certain ordeal to try suspected opinions at. If they can walk upon this fiery law unhurt, unreproved, they may safely pass for truths, and none else. Paul tell us of some that ‘will not endure sound doctrine,’ 2 Timothy 4:3. Alas! how should they, when their minds are not sound? It is too searching for them. Gouty feet cannot go but on soft way that gently yields to them. Such must have doctrine that will comply with their humour, which the word will not do, but rather judge them, and this they think it will do too soon at the great day; therefore now they shun it so much, lest it should torment them before their time. Thus the Quakers, they have their skulking hole to which they run from the Scripture, at whose bar they know their opinions would be cast undoubtedly, and therefore [they] appeal to another where they may have a more favourable hearing—the light within them, or, in plain English, their natural conscience; a judge which is known too well to be corrupt and easily bribed to speak what the lusts of men will oft have him do. Ah, poor creatures, what a sad change they have made!—to leave the word that is 6"<ã< J0H B\FJ,TH •684¬H, an inflexible rule of faith, and can no more lie or deceive them than God himself can do—to trust the guidance of themselves to themselves, a more ignorant, sottish, unfaithful guide than which the devil could not have chosen for them. ‘He that is his own teacher,’ saith Bernard, ‘is sure to have a fool for his master.’ And Solomon, yea a greater then Solomon, God himself by Solomon, saith, ‘The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise,’ Proverbs 12:15. But he is most wise that makes the word of God the man of his counsel. The Papist he hath his thicket and wood also—antiquity and traditions—to which he flees before the face of the Scripture for sanctuary, as Adam did to a bush when God came walking to him. As if any antiquity were so authentic as God’s own oracles; and any traditions of men to be laid in the balance with the Scripture. To name no more, the Socinian, he folds up himself in his own proud reason, and takes such state on him, that the Scripture must come to that to be sensed, and not that stoop to it. He must have a religion and Scripture that fits the model his own reason draws, or [he] will have neither. This forms the root of many prodigious errors and heretics; like those of whom Tertullian speaks, qui Platonicum et Aristotelicum Christianismum procuderunt—who went to the philosopher’s forge to shape a Christianity. What is this but to carry gold to be weighed at the chandler’s scales, and to look for the sun by the light of the moon. A modern divine saith, ‘Most heresies have sprung either ex Samo Satani fastu, vel ex Ætii

ignorantiâ, vel ex Arrii dialectiâ—from pride, Aetian ignorance, or the Arian sophistry of reason'—the last of which seems to be the shelf on which Paul himself observes some to have split, 'and to have erred concerning the faith,' 1 Timothy 6:21; and therefore so affectionately exhorts Timothy to keep off this dangerous shore, and steer his course by the word, 'O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust,' &c., 1 Timothy 6:20. For this which is here committed to him, I take for no other than 'the form of sound words' he exhorts him to hold fast in 2 Timothy 1:13.

Objection. But we see heretics quote Scripture for their most prodigious errors, and draw this sword for their defence, as well as the orthodox; how then is it such a powerful instrument and engine against error?

Answer. What will not men of subtle heads, corrupt hearts, and bold faces, dare to do for the carrying on their wicked party, when once they have espoused an error or any sinful way? Korah and his ungodly company dare give out that 'the Lord is among them,' and they have as much to do with the priesthood as Aaron himself, on whom the holy oil was poured, Numbers 16:3. And Zedekiah, that arch■flatterer, fears not to father his lie on the God of truth himself. He 'made him horns of iron: and he said, Thus saith the Lord, With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou have consumed them,' 1 Kings 22:11; whereas God never spake such a word. It is no marvel then, to see any lay their bastard brats at God's door, and cry they have Scripture on their side. By this impudence they may abuse credulous souls into a belief of what they say, as a cheater may pick the purses of ignorant people by showing them something like the king's broad seal, which was indeed his own forgery. Yea, God may suffer them to seduce others of more raised parts and understanding, as a just judgment on them for rebelling against the light of their own consciences. As Pharaoh, by the false miracles of the magicians, was set off further from any compliance with Moses. And those of the antichristian faction, who 'because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, and for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie,' 2 Thessalonians 2:10, 11. But sincere souls that search humbly for the truth, and have no other designs in their inquiry after it but that they may know the will of God and obey it, shall find on their faithful prayers to God, a light most clear shining from the Scripture, to guide them safe from those pitfalls of damning errors into which others fall, towards whom the dark side of this cloud stands. 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: Psalms 111:10. The fox, they say, when hard put to it, will fall in subtly with the dogs and hunt with them as one of their company, but even then his strong scent, which he cannot leave behind him, bewrays him.

Thus heretics, for to shelter their errors, will crowd in among Scripture truths, and by their fair colours and false glosses, make them seem to be of their company, but they cannot so perfume their rotten opinions but their rank scent and savour will be smelt and discerned by those who have their senses exercised. Never any heretic got by appealing to the Scriptures. What Christ saith in another case, 'All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword,' Matthew 26:52, is most true of all heretics. They are confounded and confuted by that very sword of the word which they lift up to defend them withal.

[Corruptions and lusts are overcome by the 'word of God.']

Third Enemy. Our own lusts make the next adversary we have to grapple with. Thus the further we go the worse the enemy we meet. These are more formidable than both the former, partly because they are within us—men of our own house, lusts of our own bosom that rise up against us, and partly because they hold correspondence with a foreign foe also—the devil himself—who, as he did beat man at first with his own rib, so he continues to do us the worst mischief with our own flesh. The fire of lust is ours, but the flame commonly is his, because his temptations are the bellows that blow it up. And when such a fire meets with such a strong wind to spread and carry it on its wings, whither will it fly? O how hard to slake and quench it! A whole legion of devils are as soon cast out of the body, as one lust out of the soul; yea, sooner. Satan likes his lodging better in the heart than in the house, and is loather out. He came more willing out of the man into the swine, Matthew 8:31, because by coming out of his body, and contenting himself a while with a meaner house—the swine I mean—he hoped for a fairer way thereby to get fuller possession of their souls; which indeed he obtained, Christ leaving them most justly to his rule that were so soon weary of his sweet company. Now the word is the only weapon. Like Goliath's sword, none to this for the hewing down and cutting off this stubborn enemy. The word of God can master our lusts when they are in their ruff[2] and pride. If ever lust rageth more than other, it is when youthful blood boils in our veins. Youth is heady, and lust then hot and impetuous. Our sun is climbing higher still, and we think it a great while to night; so that it must be a strong arm that brings a young man off his lusts, who hath his palate at best advantage to taste sensual pleasures with; the vigour of his strength to take in more of the delights of the flesh than crippled age can do, and further from fear of death's gunshot (as he thinks) than old men, who are upon the very marches of the grave, and carry the scent of the earth about them into which they are sure suddenly to be resolved. Well, let the sword of God meet this young gallant in all his bravery, with his feast of sensual delights before him, and but whisper a few syllables in his ear, give his conscience but a prick with the point of its sword, and it shall make him flee in as great haste from them all, as Absalom's brethren did from their feast, when they saw their brother Amnon murdered at the table. When David would give the young man a receipt to cure him of his lusts—not one, but all—how he may cleanse his whole course and way, he bids him only wash in this Jordan, Psalms 119:9. By what means or 'wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word?' It is called 'the rod of his strength,' Psalms 110:2. God, we know, wrought those great miracles, whereby he plagued the Egyptians and saved the Israelites, with the rod in Moses' hand. By that he tamed proud Pharaoh, making him and his people at last to let go their hold of the Israelites, yea, in a manner, to thrust them out from them, and be as glad of their room as before they were of their company. By that he divided the sea for Israel's passage, and covered the Egyptians in its waves. By that he smote the rock. And by this rod of his word he doth as great wonders in the souls of men as these. By this he smites their consciences, cleaves the rocks of their hard hearts, divides the waves of their lusts, and brings poor sinners from under the power of sin and Satan.

Never could Austin get a jail■delivery from his lusts till he heard that voice, tolle lege, tolle lege —take, read; upon which, as himself tells us (Lib. Confess. 8), he presently took up the Bible, and that one place, Romans 13:1-14, to which his eye was directed, once read, like a mighty earthquake did so shake all the powers of his soul that the prison doors of his heart immediately flew open, and those chains of lusts which, with all his skill and strength, he could never file off, did now on a sudden fall off, and he became so strangely metamorphosed, that quas amittere metus erat, jam dimittere gaudium fuit—those lusts, to lose which was one all his fear, now to pack them

away was his joy. Never man, by his own confession, was more slave to his lusts, and tied with a stronger chain of delight to them, than himself was. He did, as he saith, volutare in cæno tanquam cinamonis et unguentis pretiosis—he tumbled in the puddle of his filthy lusts with as much delight as if he had been rolling in a bed of spices, and anointing himself with the most precious ointments; yet this one word came with such a commanding power to him, that it tore them out of his very heart, and turned his love into a cordial hatred of them, who before would have let his heart sooner been plucked out of his bosom than these taken out of his heart. And as the word is the weapon by which he, with a strong hand, brings poor sinners out of the power of Satan and sin into a state of freedom, so he useth it to defend his saints from all after■storms of temptations, by which Satan, now thrown out of his kingdom, endeavours to recover the same. Those kingdoms indeed that are got by the sword must be kept by the sword. David will tell us how he stood upon his guard, and made good his ground, against this enemy. ‘Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer,’ Psalms 17:4. As if he had said, ‘Would you know how it comes to pass that I escape those ungodly works and practices which men ordinarily take liberty to do? I must ascribe it to the good word of God. It is this I consult with, and by am kept from those foul ways whereinto others, that make no use of the word for their defence, are carried by Satan, the destroyer of mankind.’ Can we go against sin and Satan with a better weapon than Christ used to vanquish the tempter with? And certainly Christ did it per modum exempli —by way of example, to set us an example how we should come armed into the field against them; for Christ could with one beam shot from his Deity (if he had pleased to exert it), have as easily laid the bold fiend prostrate at his foot, as afterwards he did them that came to attach him; but he chose rather to conceal the majesty of his divinity, and let Satan come up closer to him, that so he might confound him with the word, and thereby give a proof of that sword to his saints which he was to leave with them for their defence against the same enemy. The devil is set out by the ‘leviathan,’ Isaiah 27:1, him God threatens to punish with his ‘strong sword;’ alluding to that great fish, the whale, which fears no fish like the sword■fish, [and] by whom this great devourer of all other fish is oft killed; for, receiving one prick from his sword, he hasteth to the shore, and beats himself against it till he dies. Thus the devil, the great devourer of souls, who sports himself in the sea of this world, even as the leviathan in the waters, and swallows the greatest part of mankind without any power to make resistance against him, is himself vanquished by the word. When he hath to do with a saint armed with this sword, and instructed how to use this weapon, he then, and not till then, meets his match.

[Afflictions, outward and inward, are overcome by the ‘word of God.’]

Fourth Enemy. A fourth enemy that meets the Christian, is an army made up of many bands of afflictions, both outward and inward, sometimes one, sometimes another, yea, of a whole body of them pouring their shot together upon them. This was Paul’s case, ‘without were fightings, within were fears,’ 2 Corinthians 7:5. He endured a great fight of external afflictions and buffetings within his own bosom at once. And that is sad indeed, when a city is on fire within at the same time that an enemy is battering its walls from without. Yet this is oft the condition of the best saints, to have both the rod on their backs, and rebukes from God in their spirits, at once. ‘When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth,’ Psalms 39:11.

God sometimes corrects with outward crosses, but smiles with inward manifestations; and then he whips them, as I may so say, with a rosemary rod. The one sweetens and alleviates the other. At another time he sends a cross, and incloseth a frown in it. He whips with outward affliction, and, as an angry father, every lash he gives his child, tells him, 'this is for that fault, and that for this,' which exceedingly adds to the smart of the correction, and is the very knot on the whip, to see his father so much displeased with him. And when the poor Christian lies thus under the hand of an afflicting God, or under the rebukes of a frowning God, Satan will not be long from the Christian, or wanting to throw his salt and vinegar into the wounds that God hath made in his flesh or spirit, thereby to increase his dolour, and so lead him further into temptation one way or other, if he can have his will. Indeed, God often sends so many troops of various afflictions to quarter upon some one Christian, that it puts him hard to it to bid them all welcome, and entertain them with patience; yea, it would pose any one—that knows not what service the word of God doth the Christian, and the supplies it brings him in—to conceive how his spirit should be kept, and his faith from being eaten up, and swallowed into despair by them. But the word of God, this bears all the charge he is at. This is his counsellor and comforter. David tells us plainly his heart had died within him but for it: 'Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction,' Psalms 119:92. The word was his spiritual Abishag, from which his soul got all its warmth. All the world's enjoyments heaped on him would have left him cold at heart if this had not lain in his bosom to bring him a kindly heat of inward peace and comfort: 'This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me,' Psalms 119:50. Not the crown in hope —for some think it was not, when this psalm was penned, on his head—but the word in his heart, to which he was beholden for his comfort. A word of promise is more necessary at such a time to a poor soul, than warm clothes are to the body in cold weather. When Adam was thrust naked out of paradise into the cold blasts of a miserable world—where, from his own guilty conscience within, and crosses without, he was sure to meet with trouble enough —then God gave him a word of promise, as you may observe, to fence his soul, before he taught him to make coats to clothe his body, Genesis 3:15, compared with Genesis 3:21. The Lord knew full well how indispensably necessary a word of promise was to keep him from being made a prey the second time to the devil, and from being swallowed up with the dismal sight of those miseries and sorrows in which he had thrown himself and posterity; and therefore, he would not suffer him to lie open to the shock of their assaults one day, but presently puts the sword of a promise into his hand, that with it he might defend and comfort his sorrowful heart in the midst of all his troubles. It was the speech of a holy man, after God had made that sweet place: 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,' &c., Matthew 11:28, the messenger to open his dungeon of soul■trouble, and bring him into the light of inward joy—'that he had better be without meat, drink, light, air, earth, life, and all, than without this one comfortable scripture.' If one single promise, like an ear of corn rubbed in the hand of faith, and applied by the Spirit of Christ, can afford such a full satisfying meal of joy to a hunger■bitten, pining soul, O what price can we set on the whole field of the Scripture, which stands so thick with promises, every way as cordial as this!

Love is witty, and sets the head on work to devise names for the person we love dearly—such names as may at once express how highly we prize them, and also yet more endear them to us by carrying on them the superscription of that sweetness which we conceive to be in them. Thus many holy persons have commended the promises to us with their appreciating names—the saints' legacies—the breasts of God full of milk of grace and comfort—the saints' plank to swim

upon to heaven. Indeed, we might rob the world of all her jewels, and justly hang them on the ear of the promise; apply all the excellencies she boasts of unto the promises. There is more riches and treasure to be had in one promise than all the gold and silver of the Indies are worth; ‘exceeding great and precious promises,’ 2 Peter 1:4; by them a poor believer may lay claim to heaven and earth at once; for godliness hath the promise of this life and the other also. But that which in this place I would commend their excellency from, is the admirable service they do, and succour they afford a poor soul in the day of his greatest distress. They are the granary of spiritual provision, whereby our Joseph, our dear Lord Jesus, nourisheth and preserveth alive his brethren in a time of famine. They are the ‘hive of sweetness,’ where the believing soul in the winter of affliction—when nothing is to be gathered abroad from the creature—both lies warmly, and lives plentifully on the stock of comfort there laid up. They are, in a word, ‘the fair havens’ and safe road into which the tempted soul puts his weather■beaten ship, where it lies secure till the heavens clear, and the storm is over, which the world, sin, and Satan raise upon him. Yea, when death itself approacheth, and the devil hath but one cast more for the game, one skirmish more to get or lose the victory for ever, then faith on the promise carries the Christian’s soul out of the garrison of his body—where he hath endured so hard a siege—with colours flying, and joy triumphing to heaven, leaving only his flesh behind in the hands of death, and that also with an assured hope of having it redeemed out of its power ere it be long, at the day of resurrection and restitution of all things.

USE OR APPLICATION.

[Cruelty and presumption of the Church of Rome, in disarming the people of this spiritual sword.]

Use First. Is the word the sword of the Spirit whereby the Christian vanquisheth his enemies? Then we may justly charge the Church of Rome of cruelty to the souls of people, in disarming them of that weapon with which they alone can defend themselves against their enemies, that seek their eternal ruin. It is true, they have some fig-leaves with which they would fain hide this their shameful practice, making the world believe they do it in mercy to the people, lest they should cut their fingers and wound themselves with this weapon. ‘We see,’ say they, ‘how many errors and heresies the world swarms with, by the mistakes of the vulgar.’ Yea, Peter himself they dare subpœna as a witness on their side, who saith that there ‘are some things hard to be understood’ in Paul’s epistles, ‘which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction,’ 2 Peter 3:16. And therefore the Scripture, which is so dangerous for ordinary people to meddle with, they judge it safest to lay out of their reach, as we do a sword or edge■tool from children, though they cry never so much for it. See what a fair glove they draw over so foul a hand. But did Peter, because some unlearned and unstable souls wrested the Scripture, forbid them, or any other, how weak soever, to read the Scripture? This had carried some weight with it indeed. But we find just the contrary. For in the following verses, the counsel he gives Christians, that they may not be led away with the error of the wicked, is to ‘grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,’ ver. 18. Lumen est vehiculum influentiæ —light is the chariot that conveys the influences of the sun. So the knowledge of Christ brings with it the influences of his grace into the heart. And how did Peter mean they should grow in the knowledge of Christ, if he would not have them read the Scriptures, which is the only book where it is to be learned? But the Papists would have their people learn their knowledge of Christ from their preaching of him, and not from the Scriptures, which they cannot so safely converse

with. But,

1. How shall they be assured that what they preach is true, except they have the Scripture, to which, as unto the true touch■stone, they may bring their doctrine to be tried? Thus did the Bereans by Paul's sermon, Acts 17:11—a preacher as good, I trow, as any of theirs. And,

2. Suppose they preach the truth, can they warrant that their words shall not be perverted and mistaken by their hearers? And if they cannot, why then are they suffered to preach in a vulgar tongue, when the word of God, for the same reason, is forbidden to be read by the people in a known tongue? Truly, I am of that learned man's mind, who saith, 'that, if God himself may not speak in a vulgar tongue, I see far less reason that a friar should, and so the people should know nothing at all of Christ' (Mede on Jeremiah 10:11). No, the true reason why they forbid the Scripture to be read, is not to keep them from errors and heresies, but to keep them from discovering those which they themselves impose upon them. Such trash as they trade in would never go off their hand roundly, did they not keep their shop thus dark; which made one of their shavelings so bitterly complain of that unlucky Luther for spoiling their market, saying, 'But for him they might have persuaded the people of Germany to have ate hay.' Anything indeed will go down a blind man's throat. I do not wonder that their people thus nustled[3] in ignorance, do so readily embrace their fopperies, and believe all their forgeries so confidently. The blind man must either sit still, or go whither he pleaseth that leads him. We read of a whole army, when once smitten with blindness, carried out of their way by one single man that had his eyes in his head, 2 Kings 6:1-33. But this we may well wonder at, that men who know the Scriptures —as many of their leaders do—and acknowledge their divinity, dare to be so impudent and audacious [as] to intercept this letter sent from the great God to the sons of men, and not suffer them—except a few whom they think fit—to look on it, though it be superscribed and directed by God himself not to any party or sort of men, but to every man where it comes, Romans 1:17, 2 Corinthians 1:1. This is such a piece of impudence as cannot be paralleled. Wherefore are laws made, but to be promulgated?—Scripture written, but to be read and known of all men? I am sure the apostle by the same authority with which he wrote his epistles, commands them to be read in the church, Colossians 4:16. And did the ministers of those churches pocket them up, and conceal them from the people's notice, lest they should, by perverting them, be made heretics?

It is too true some 'wrest' the Scriptures 'to their own destruction.' And so do some, for want in care of eating, choke themselves with their bread. Must all therefore starve for fear of being choked? Some hurt themselves and friends with their weapons; must therefore the whole army be disarmed, and only a few chief officers be allowed to wear a sword by their sides? Truly, if this be argument enough to seal up the Bible from being read, we must not only deny it to the meaner and ore unlearned sort, but also to the great rabbis and doctors of the chair, for the grossest heresies have bred in the finest wits. Prodigious errors have been as much beholden to Arrius as the ignorance of Ætius: so that the upshot of all will be this—the unlearned must not read the Scripture, because they may pervert them through ignorance; nor the learned, because they may wrest them by their subtlety. Thus we see, when proud men will be wiser than God, their foolish minds will darken, till they lose the reason and understanding of men.

[Reproof of the Church of Rome for the insufficiency it imputes to the Scriptures].

Use Second. This falls heavy upon them that charge the holy Scriptures with insufficiency, as not containing all things necessary to salvation. What a horrid blasphemy is this, and reproach to the great God, that he should send his people into the field, and put such a wooden sword into their hand as is not sufficient to defend them and cut their way through their enemies' powers to heaven, whither he orders them to march. Would any gracious prince, that loves the lives of his subjects, give them arms that are not fit to oppose such an enemy as comes out against them, if he knows how to furnish them with better? Nay, would he give them such weak and insufficient weapons for their defence, and then charge them to use no other? This were to unworthily to send them as sheep to the shambles, and could signify nothing but that he had a mind either their throats should be all cut by their enemies. And doth not God himself highly commend this sword of the Scripture to his people, when he tells Timothy it is 'able to make thee,' as a Christian, 'wise unto salvation,' 2 Timothy 3:15, and as a 'man of God,' or minister of the gospel, 'perfect,' and 'thoroughly furnished unto all good works?' 2 Timothy 3:17. Yea, doth he not also forbid us the use of any other weapon but what the Scripture furnisheth us withal? 'To the law and to the testimony' he sends us, Isaiah 8:20, and makes it a renouncing our allegiance to him to go anywhere else for counsel or protection than to his written word: 'Should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?' Then follows, 'To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,' Isaiah 8:19-20. It seems then God doth not count we seek to him, except we inquire for him at 'the law and the testimony,' and bring all we hear to their test and touch.

Surely, that which is intended by God to be to his people what the standard and town-bushel are to the market, a rule to measure all doctrines by, is itself exact and sufficient. But the world, by this time, knows where the insufficiency of the Scriptures lies. Sufficient they are enough for God's ends, but not for the pope's ends. They are able to furnish every true Christian in the world with wisdom enough how he should save his soul. But the pope finds himself grieved, that they are not so useful to help him to save the triple crown on his head, and do not furnish him with grounds from which he may defend the lordly power and godlike infallibility he claims, with the other doctrines held forth by him. And this is the only defect he can charge the Scriptures with, to supply which, the rabble■rout of traditions is brought into the church; all taught to speak the pope's sense before they see the light. And, that reputation may be gained to these unknown witnesses, this way with the devil's help—who owes the Scripture an old spite ever since the first promise rescued Adam, his prisoner out of his hand—have taken, that the Scriptures be declared insufficient and uncertain;—minima particula veritatis revelatæ—the least particle of revealed truth, as one of them impudently writes, and so needs the patchery of these to make it perfect Just as Andronicus served the emperor Alexius, who gave out he was weak and insufficient to govern alone, and so first got a joint power with him, and at last an absolute power over him to unthrone him. And whether their traditions have dealt better by the Scripture, the world may judge. When traditions go up, the written word is sure to go down. Ye have made, saith Christ to the Pharisees, the commandment of none effect by your tradition, Matthew 15:6, ²6LDTF"J,—you have unlorded it, and supplanted its authority in the minds of men, who leave the word to hearken to your traditions.

[Wickedness of those who uplift the sword of the Spirit in defence of any sin.]

Use Third. This condemns those of prodigious wickedness, that, instead of using this sword to defend them against sin and Satan, lift it up audaciously for their defence in their wicked and

abominable practices. Thus the heretic, he takes up the word to justify his corrupt tenets, forcing it, in favour of his way, to bear witness against itself. And many wretches we meet with, who, to ward off a reproof, will dare to seek protection for their ungodly courses from the word, which they have at their tongue's end, and interpose to break the blow that is made at them. Tell the sensualist of his voluptuous, brutish life, and you shall have him sometimes reply, Solomon was not so precise and scrupulous, who saith, 'A man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry,' Ecclesiastes 8:15. As if Solomon, yea God himself that directed his pen, meant to fill the drunkard's quaffing■cup for him, and were a friend of gluttons and wine-bibbers! Whereas, 'to eat and drink, and be merry' in Solomon's mouth there, amounts to more than to serve God with gladness in the abundance of those good things which God gives us to enjoy, in the mouth of Moses, Deuteronomy 28:47.

Such is the desperate wickedness of man's heart, that the sweetest and comfortablest portions of Scripture are most wrested by many to serve their lusts. The declarations of God's free■grace, made on purpose to melt sinners' hearts, and draw them from their lusts to Christ, how oft are they abused to wedge and harden them in their sins, and keep them from him! Examples of holy men's falls, recorded merely to make them fear that stand, and to preserve hope of mercy alive in those that have fallen, whereby they are in danger of being swallowed up with despair, how are they perverted by many, who lie like beasts wallowing in their own dung, and think all is well because such eminent saints fell so foully, and yet came off so fairly at last, with their sins pardoned and souls saved! The good success that late repentance hath now and then had in a few, yea very few Scripture-instances, it is strange to think what use and advantage Satan makes of them, to beg time of the sinner, and make him linger still in the Sodom of his sins. 'The eleventh hour,' saith he, 'is not yet come; why will you repent so long before you need?' Why should he set out in the morning, who may despatch his journey well enough an hour before night? The penitent thief, that, as one saith, stole to heaven from the cross, hath, I fear, been an occasion—though on God's part an innocent one—to bring many a sinner to the gallows; yea, well, if not to a place of a longer execution in another world! O, take heed of this, sinners, as you love your souls! Is it not enough to have your lusts, but you must also fetch your encouragement from the word, and forge God's hand to bear you out? The devil indeed thus abuseth Scripture, Matthew 4:4, thinking thereby to make Christ more readily hearken to his accursed motion; and wilt thou tread in his steps? By this thou makest one sin two, and the last the worst. to be drunk was a fearful sin in Belshazzar; but to quaff in the bowels of the sanctuary was far worse. No sin is little, but the least sin amounts to blasphemy when thou committest it on a Scripture pretence. The devil cannot easily desire a greater occasion of glorying over God, than thus to wound his name with his own sword. When Julian the Apostate saw the Gentile philosophers confuted by the human learning of some Christians, he said J@ÃH "LJä< BJ,D@4H •84F6@µ,2"—we are taken by our own wings; looking upon it as a great disgrace for them to be beaten and worsted at that which they counted their own weapon. The word is the Holy Spirit's sword. O, for shame, let not Satan make his boast over thy God, Christian, by thy means, which he will, if he can persuade thee to wound his name with this his own weapon. He that fetcheth an argument from the holy Scriptures to countenance any corrupt opinion or practice, what doth he but go about to make God fight against himself? He shoots at him with an arrow out of his won quiver. He sins, and then doth as it were say, God bids him do it. If there be a man on the face of the earth that God will single out as a mark for his utmost wrath, this is he who shelters his wickedness under the wing of the holy Scriptures, and so makes

God patron of his sin.

[Twofold exhortation in regard to the word of God.]

Use Forth. Let us be exhorted to thankfulness to God for the word, and incited also to the study of it. 1. Let us bless God for furnishing us with this sword for our defence. 2. Let us study the word, so that we may make use of this weapon to defend ourselves against the many potent enemies that are in the field against us.

[Exhortation to thankfulness for the word.]

1. Exhortation. Let us be excited and provoked to bless God for this sword, with which he hath furnished us so graciously, whereby we may stand on our defence against all our bloody enemies. If a man had a kingdom in his possession, but no sword to keep the crown on his head, he could not expect to enjoy it long. This is a world that there is no living or holding anything we have in safety, without the help of arms. Least of all, could our souls be safe if naked and unarmed, which are here in the mouth of danger, and can no way pass to the place of bliss and happiness in heaven prepared for them, but through their enemies' quarters. When Israel took their march out of Egypt towards the promised land, few or none would trust them to travel through their country, but all rose up in arms against them. The Christian will find his march much more troublesome and dangerous to heaven. Satan is not grown tamer than he used to be, nor the wicked world better affected than it was wont to the people of God. O what a mercy is it, that we have this sword by our side, which puts us out of danger from any of them all! This is thy hand, Christian, as the rod was in Moses'. What though an army of devils be behind thee, and a sea of sins before thee roaring upon thee, with this sword, by faith wielding it, thou mayest cut thy way through the waves of the one, and set thyself out of the reach of the other. Truly, the Scripture is a mercy incomparably greater than the sun in the heavens. That might be better spared out of its orb, than this out of the church. If that were gone, we should be but knocked off our worldly business, and be only in danger to lose our bodily life, by missing our way, and stumbling on this pit and tumbling into that pond. But, if deprived of the word, salvation work would be laid aside, or gone about to little purpose, and our souls must needs miss the right way to happiness, and stumble inevitably upon hell, while we think we are going to heaven, unless a miracle should interpose to prevent the same. But more particularly, bless God for these three mercies in reference to the Scriptures.

(1.) For their translation into vulgar tongues.

(2.) For the ministry of the word.

(3.) For the efficacy of the word and its ministry hath had upon thy heart.

(1.) Bless God for the translation of the Scriptures. The word is our sword. By being translated, this sword is drawn out of its scabbard. What use, alas! could a poor Christian, that hath but one tongue in his head—that understands but one language, I mean, which his mother taught him—make of this sword when presented to him as it is sheathed in Greek and Hebrew? Truly, he might even fall a weeping with John at the sight of the sealed book, because he could not read it, Revelation 5:4. O bless God that hath sent not angels, but men, furnished by the blessing of God on their indefatigable labours and studies, with ability to roll away the stone from the mouth of this fountain! And were it not sad to see the water of life brought to you with the expense of their spirits

and strength (wasted in the work), to be spilled on the ground, and basely undervalued by you, so as hardly to be put into the catalogue of mercies which you praise God for? O God forbid! It cannot be, if ever you had but the sweetness of any one promise in it milked out unto you, or the power of one of its divine truths impressed on your hearts. Melchior Ad. tells us that Bugenhagius—whom Luther used, with others, for his help in translating the Bible—when the work was brought to a happy period, he was so affected with the incomparable mercy therein to the churches of Christ in Germany, that every year he invited his friends to a solemn feast that day whereon the work was finished, which they called, 'The feast of the translation of the Bible.' When Queen Elizabeth, our English Deborah, opened the prisons at her coming to the crown—as at such times is {it} usual to scatter acts of grace—one as piously as ingeniously told her, that there were yet some good men left in prison undelivered, and desired they might also partake of her princely favour, meaning the four evangelists, and Paul, who had been denied to walk abroad in the English tongue when her sister swayed the scepter. To this she answered, 'They should be asked, whether they are willing to have their liberty;' which soon after appearing, they had their jail-delivery, and have ever since had their liberty to speak to you in your own tongue at the assemblies of your public worship; yea, to visit you in your own private houses also. Now is that happy day come, and long hath been, which holy Mr. Tyndal told a popish doctor of, when a poor ploughman should be able to read the Scriptures, and allowed to as freely converse with them, as any doctor of them all! A blessed day indeed it is to the souls of men!

Now, Christian, when thou art prisoner to God's providence, and kept by his afflicting hand at home, thou hast the word of God to bear thee company in thy solitude; and so, though thou canst not sit up with thy brethren and sisters at thy Father's table in the public ordinances, yet thou dost not wholly go without thy meal. Thou canst not, it is like, carve so well for thyself as the minister useth to do for thee, yet it is an incomparable mercy thou hast liberty to pick up out of the word for thy present counsel and comfort, as thou art enabled by the Spirit of God upon thy humble prayer for his assistance. Admirable hath been the support the saints have found from this holy book in their confinements. God hath graciously ordered it, that the most useful and necessary truths for afflicted saints hang, as I may so say, on the lower boughs of this tree of life, within the reach of a poor Christian who is of but an ordinary stature in knowledge. O think, and think again, of those sad times when the bloody sword of persecutors was drawn to keep off the people of God from coming near this tree, and then you will the better conceive of your present privilege. Yea, look back unto those times of popish ignorance, when this cellar of cordial waters was locked up in the original tongues, and not one in a whole town could be found that had a key, by whom poor souls in their fainting fits and agonies of spirit could have it opened, so as to come by any of their sweet consolations to restore their swooning souls; and then you will surely bless God, who hath given you so free an access unto them, when others cannot have access to you to communicate their help unto you.

(2.) Bless God for the ministry of the word, which is the public school he opens to his people, that in it they may learn the use of this their weapon. It is a sad fruit that grows upon the little smattering knowledge that some have got from the word, to puff them up with a conceit of their own abilities, so as to despise the ministry of the word as a needless work. The Corinthians were sick of this disease, which the apostle labours to cure by a sharp reproof: 'Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us,' 1 Corinthians 4:8. Paul, it seems, was nobody now

with these high proficients. The time was, when Paul came to town he was a welcome man. The sucking child was not more glad to see his mother come home, nor could cry more earnestly to be laid to the breast, than they did to partake of his ministry; but now, like the child when it hath sucked its bellyful, they bite the very teat they so greedily awhile before took into their mouths, as if they should never want another meal. So high did their waxen wings of pride carry them above all thoughts of needing his ministry any more. And hath not the pride of many in our days carried them as far into a contempt of the ministry of the word, though their knowledge comes far short of the Corinthians' knowledge? Well, take heed of this sin. Miriam's plague, yea a worse, a spiritual scab and leprosy, apparently cleaves to those, as close as a girdle to the loins, who come once to scorn and despise their ordinance, that they make all afraid to come near their tents. What prodigious errors are they left unto, whereby God brands them! Yea, what sensual lusts hath the once forward profession of many among them been quite swallowed up with! If once a man thinks he needs no longer go to the Spirit's school, he shall find, whoever he is, that he takes the ready way to deprive himself of the Spirit's teaching at home. 'Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings,' 1 Thessalonians 5:19-20. They are coupled together. He that despiseth one loseth both. If the scholar be too proud to learn of the usher, he is unworthy to be taught by the master. But I turn to you humble souls, who yet sit at the feet of Jesus in your right minds. Speak the truth and lie not; are you not well paid for your pains? Dare you say of your waiting on the ministry of the word, what a wretch—though a learned one, Politianus by name—said of his reading the Scripture, 'That he never spent time to less purpose!' Do you count it among your lost time and misplaced hours that are bestowed in hearing the word? I trow not. Thou keepest thy acquaintance with the word at home if thou beest a Christian, and eatest many a sweet bit in a corner while thou art secretly meditating thereon. But does this content thee, or make thee think the word preached a superfluous meal? I am sure David knew how to improve his solitary hours as well as another, yet in his banishment, O how he was pinched and hunger-bitten for want of the public ordinance! And sure we cannot think he forgot to carry his Bible with him into the wilderness, loving the word so dearly as he did. 'My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is,' Psalms 63:1. Why, David? what is the matter thou thus complainest? Hast thou not the word to read in secret? Canst thou not let down thy bucket, and by meditation draw what thou wilt out of the well of the word? Why then dost thou say thou art in a 'thirsty land where no water is?' He means, therefore, comparatively. The sweetest refreshings he enjoyed in his private converse with the word, were not comparable to what he had met in public. And can you blame a sick child for desiring to sit up with his brethren at his father's table, though he is not forgot in his chamber where he is prisoner, but hath something sent him up? It was the sanctuary —there to 'see God, his power and glory, as of old' —that David's heart longed for, and could not well live without.

God threatens to bring 'a famine of hearing the words of the Lord,' Amos 8:11. Mark, not a famine of reading the word, but of hearing the word. If the word be not preached, though we have the Bible to read in at home, yet it is a famine; and so we ought to judge it. 'And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision,' 1 Samuel 3:1. The strongest Christians would find a want of this ordinance in time. We see in a town besieged, though it be well laid in with corn, yet when put to grind with private hand■mills all they spend, what straits they are soon put to. And so will the best grown saints, when they come to have no more from the word for their souls to live on, than what they grind with their own private meditation and labour, then they will

miss the minister, and see it was a mercy indeed to have one whose office it was to grind all the week for him. And if the stronger Christian cannot spare this office, because yet not perfect; what shift shall the weaker sort make, who need the minister to divide the word, as much as little children their nurse's help to mince their meat and cut their bread for them? To leave them to their own improving the word, is to set a whole loaf among a company of little babes, and bid them help themselves. Alas! they will sooner cut their fingers with the knife than fill their bellies with the bread.

(3.) Bless God for the efficacy of the word upon thy soul. Did ever its point prick thy heart? its edge fetch blood of thy lusts, and cut off any rotten member of the body of sin? Bless God for it. You would do as much for a surgeon for lancing a sore, and severing a putrefied part from thy body, though he put thee to exquisite torture in the doing of it. And I hope thou thinkest God hath done thee a greater kindness than so. Solomon tells us, 'faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful,' Proverbs 27:6. The wounds that God thus gives are the faithful wounds of a friend; and the kisses sin gives come from an enemy. God's wounds cure, sin's kisses kill. The Italians say that, 'play, wine, and women consume a man laughing.' It is true of all pleasurable sins; and as sin kills the sinner laughing, so God saves poor souls weeping and bleeding under the wounds his word gives them. Happy soul, thou that hast made such an exchange to get out of the enchanting arms of thy lusts that would have kissed thee to death, and to fall into the hands of a faithful God, that means thee no more hurt by all the blood he draws from thee than the saving of thy soul's life! How far mightst thou have gone, and not met with such a friend and such a favour! There is not another sword like this in all the world that can cure with cutting; not another arm could use this sword to have done thus much with it, besides the Spirit of God. The axe does nothing till the hand of the workman lifts it up; neither can every one—may be none else —do with his tools what himself can. None could do such feats with Scanderberg's sword as himself. To be sure, none can pierce the conscience, wound the spirit, and hew down the lusts that there lie skulking in their fastness, but God himself. And this he doth not for every one that reads and hears it, which still greatens thy mercy. There were many widows in Israel when God sent his prophet to her of Sarepta. And why to her? Was there never a drunkard, swearer, or unbeliever, beside thee in the congregation at the same time that God armed his word to smite thee down, and graciously prick thy heart? O cry out in admiration of this distinguishing mercy, 'Lord, how is it thou wilt manifest thyself to me and not unto the world!'

[Exhortation to the study of the word.]

2. Exhortation. Let this provoke you to the study of the word, that you may thereby have a familiar acquaintance with it. For this the Bereans obtained a mark of honour as a nobler sort of people than others, because they 'searched the Scriptures,' Acts 17:11. Shall God leave but one book to his church's care and study, and shall it not be read? Shall we be told there is so rich a treasure laid up in this mine, and we continue so beggarly in our knowledge rather than take a little pains by digging in it to come by it? The canker and rust of our gold and silver, which is got with harder labour than here is required, will rise up in judgment against many, and say, 'You could drudge and trudge for us that are now turned to rust and dust, but could walk over the field of the world, where an incorruptible treasure lay, and would lose it rather than your sloth!' O where is to be found—in what breast doth the ancient zeal of former saints to the word lodge! Have they not counted it above rubies and precious stones? Have they not trudged over sea and land to get the

sight of it? —given the money out of their purse, the coat off their backs, to purchase a few leaves of it, and parted with their blood out of their veins rather than forego the treasure which they had found in it? And is the market now fallen so low that thou desirest not acquaintance with it when it is offered at a far lower rate! Either they must be charged for very fools to buy the knowledge of it so dear, or you that refuse it who may have it so cheap. But, lest you should think I set you upon a needless work, you are to understand there is an indispensable necessity of Scripture knowledge; and that is double: necessitas præcepti et necessitas medii—a necessity of command and a necessity of means.

(1.) There is a necessity of command: 'Search the Scriptures,' John 5:39. Indeed, were there not such an express word for this duty, yet the very penning of them, with the end for which they are written considered, would impose the duty upon us. When a law is enacted by a prince or state, for their subjects to obey, the very promulgation of it is enough to oblige the people to take notice of it. Neither will it serve a subject's turn that breaks this law, to say he was ignorant of any such law being in force: the publication of it bound him to inquire after it. What other end have lawgivers in divulging their acts, but that their people might know their duty? Christ fastens condemnation on the ignorance of men where means for knowledge is afforded: 'This is the condemnation, and men loved darkness,' John 3:19. They will not know the rule, because they have no mind to walk by it. Now if ignorance of the word be condemned where its light shines, then sure he commands us to open our eyes, whereby we may let in the knowledge it sheds forth; for a law must be transgressed before a condemning sentence be pronounced. It is the heathen that shall be judged without the written word; but thou that livest within its sound shalt be judged by it; whether thou wilt know it or not, 2 Thessalonians 1:8. And if thou shalt be judged by it, then surely thou art bound to be instructed by it. The Jews once had the word deposited in their hands, 'unto them were committed the oracles of God,' and do you think they had well discharged their trust by locking them up safely in the ark, and never looking into them? Surely, you cannot but think God intended another chest, even that in their own breasts, where he would principally have them bestowed. They were committed to them, and now to us, as a dying father doth his will and testament to his son whom he makes his executor, not to throw it aside among his waste papers, but carefully and curiously to read and observe it, that thereby nothing therein contained might be left unperformed. It is called 'the faith once delivered unto the saints,' Jude 1:3, that is, delivered to their study and care. If any of us had lived when Christ was here in the flesh, and he—when taking his farewell of the world—should have left to us some one thing in special charge to be done for his sake after he was gone to heaven, would we not religiously have performed the will of our dying Saviour, as did St. John, to whom he left the care of his mother, who therefore took her home to his own house? Behold here a greater charge deposited in his saints' hands—'the faith which was once delivered to them,' that is, 'once' for all, to be by them kept and transmitted from one generation to another while this world lasts. So that, if thou takest thyself to be one of the saints' number, thou art concerned with the rest to take it home with thee, and see that it dwells in the richly, as becomes such a guest bequeathed by so dear a friend.

(2.) There is a necessity of means. The word contains the whole counsel of God for the bringing of poor sinners to eternal life, and none besides this —only as they borrow their notions out of it. If you will not search the Scripture, and sit here at the feet of the Spirit—who fits his scholars for heaven by this one book—where wilt thou meet another master? In whose works else wilt thou

find the words of eternal life? Of Apollos, who was a man ‘mighty in the Scriptures,’ it is said, that Aquila and Priscilla ‘expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly,’ Acts 18:26. An exposition presupposeth a ‘text.’ The meaning is, they opened the Scripture more perfectly to him. This is ‘the way of God’ to lead us to God; yea, the only way. In other journeys we may miss the right way, and yet come at last to the place we intended, though not so soon; but no way will bring us to God but this of the word; neither can we walk in this way of God, if we be ignorant of it. A man may in his other journeys be in his right way, and, though he knows not he is right, may yet come safe home. But we can have no benefit from this way of God if wholly ignorant of it, because we can do nothing in faith. O labour therefore to study this book, though thou beest a dunce in all besides! What is it thou wouldst learn? Is it the true knowledge of God? thou mayest tumble over all the philosophers that ever wrote, and, when thou hast done, not be able to frame a right notion of him. The best of them all were but brutish in their highest knowledge of God. Indeed, God left the wise world to run into a thousand follies and vanities, while they were by their own wisdom shaping a religion to themselves, that, having proved them dunces, he might send them and the whole world to learn this lesson in another school, and that is the ministry of the gospel, which is naught else but the explication and application of the word. ‘After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe,’ 1 Corinthians 1:21.

Wouldst thou come to the true knowledge of sin? This also is a notion to be found nowhere else. The Scripture alone dissects the whole body of sin, and reads to us a perfect anatomy lecture upon its most minute and secret parts. This discovers the ulcers of our wicked hearts, which thousands die of, and through ignorance of the Scriptures can never come to know what their disease is. If lust comes not out in spots and sores, to be seen in the outward conversation, the philosopher pronounceth him a clear man. The plague of the heart, though an old disease and epidemical, yet never was found out, or treated of, but by this sacred book, and this doth it fully, yea, acquaints us where and from whom we got this infection: even from Adam, by whom the whole world was tainted and turned into a pesthouse[4]. Which of the wise ones of the world ever dreamed of this genealogy? Poor man, till the Scripture informs him of this, he lies in the pit of sin, and knows not who threw him in! In a word, wouldst thou be helped out? Thou must then be beholden to the Scripture to do this kind office for thee. Thy own cordage is too short to reach, and too weak to draw thee thence. If thou takest not hold of this cord of love which God lets down unto thee in his word, thy case is desperate. And now, having set life and death before thee, I leave thee to thy choice. If yet thou beest resolved to reject the knowledge of the Almighty, and put thy soul in launch into eternity without this chart to direct thee, not caring whether thou sinkest or swimmest, at what port thou arrivest at in another world, heaven or hell; then prepare to take up thy lodgings among the damned, and harden thy stout heart, if thou canst, against those endless flames which are kindled for all those ‘that know not God, and that obey not his gospel,’ 2 Thessalonians 1:8. And to thy terror know that, in spite of thy now wilful ignorance, thou shalt one day understand the Scriptures to the increase of thy torment. Here thou shuttest out their light, but then it will shine full on thy face, when it would give thee some ease if thou couldst forget that ever thou didst hear of such a book as the Bible is, but then against thy will thou shalt carry the remembrance thereof to hell with thee, that thy scornful neglect of it on earth may be continually pouring new horror—as so much fire and brimstone—into thy guilty conscience. How must it needs then fill thee with amazement to think of thy folly and madness, to sell thy soul for a little ease and sloth?

Hell from beneath would be moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming thither. It will stir up the dead for thee; and the poor heathens, whom thou shalt find prisoners there, will come flocking about thee, and with their taunts reproaching thee, saying, ‘Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us? Thou perish for thy ignorance, who hadst the key of knowledge at thy girdle, and at so easy a rate might have been instructed in the way of life! We, poor heathens, cannot bring an action against God for false imprisonment, though we never heard of such a thing as the gospel, for we did not walk up to our little light; and might have known more of God had we not darkened our own foolish minds by rebelling against the light we had; but never were we at such cost to damn our souls as you, who have rejected the word of God, and broke through all the threatenings and promises thereof, to come hither!’

[Carnal objections to the study of the word removed.]

Objection First. But you will say, ‘If we had so much time to spare as others, we would not be so unacquainted with the Scriptures. But alas! we have so much business to do, and our hands so full with our worldly callings, that we hope God will excuse us, though we have not so much knowledge of his word as others.’

Answer. Is this thy plea that thou indeed meanest to use when thou comest to the bar, and art called to give thy answer to Christ thy judge upon this matter? Does not thy heart quake within thy breast to think how he will knit his brow, and throw this thy apology with disdain and wrath upon thy face? Did so much anger sit on the countenance of meek Jesus when on earth, and such a dreadful doom proceed from his sweet lips against those that made their farms and oxen as a mannerly excuse for not coming to his supper, sentencing them never to taste thereof? O what then will glorious Christ say—when, mounted on his tribunal, not to invite, but to judge sinners—to such an excuse as this? Could God find heart and time to pen and send this love-letter to thee, and thou find none to read and peruse it? The sick man no time to look on his physician’s bill! The condemned malefactor to look on his prince’s letter of grace, wherein a pardon is tendered to him! Poor wretch! must the world have all thy time, and swallow thee up quick? A curse not less than that of Corah! Art thou such a slave to thy pelf as to tie thy soul to thy purse■strings, and take no more time for the saving of thy soul than this cruel master will afford thee? Thou and thy money perish with thee! His soul is in an ill ease which hath an allowance from so base a lust. This is so far from mending the matter, that thou dost but cover one sin with another. Who gave thee leave thus to overlade thyself with the encumbrance of the world? Is not God the Lord of thy time? Is it not given by him to be laid out for him? He allows thee indeed a fair portion thereof for the lower employments of this life; but did he ever intend to turn himself out of all? This is as if the mariners, who are allowed by the merchant some small adventure for themselves, should fill the ship, and leave no stowage for his goods that pays the freight. Will it suffice for him to say, ‘There is no room left for his commodities?’ Or, as if a servant, when his master asks why he neglected such a business committed to his care for despatch, should answer, ‘He was drunk, and therefore could not do it.’ Why did you not read my word and meditate thereon? will Christ say at that day. Darest thou then to be so impudent as to say, ‘Lord, I was overcharged with the cares, and drunk with the love, of the world, and therefore I could not?’ Well, if this be the thief that robs thee of thy time, get out of his hands as soon as thou canst, lest it also rob thee of thy soul. The devil can desire no greater advantage against thee. He hath thee sure enough in his trap. He may better boast over thee than Pharaoh could over Israel. ‘He is entangled, in the wilderness of the world, and shall not

escape my hands.'

If a friend should tell you that you kept so many servants and retainers as would beggar you, would you not listen to his counsel, and rather turn them out of doors, than keep them still to eat you out of them? And wilt thou not be as careful of thy soul? Wilt thou keep such a rout of worldly occasions, as will eat up all thoughts of God and heaven? Certainly thou must either discharge thyself of these, or else fairly dismiss thy hope of salvation. But why should I speak so much to these? This ordinarily is but a cover to men's sloth. If they had hearts, they would find time to converse with the word in the greatest throng of their worldly occasions. These can find time to eat and sleep, to sport and recreate themselves, but no time for God and his word. Would they but allow their souls those broken ends of time to search the Scripture, which they spend in pastimes, idle visits, reading of empty pamphlets, it would not be long but they might give a happy account of their proficiency in their spiritual knowledge. What calling more encumbering than a soldier's? And of all soldiers the general's, to whom all resort? Such a one was Joshua, yet a strict command to study the Scripture: 'This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night,' Joshua 1:8. Must Joshua, in the midst of drums and trumpets, and distractions of war, find time to meditate on the law of God? And shall thy shop or plough, a few trivial occasions in thy private calling, discharge thee from the same duty? Dost thou think that the closet is such an enemy to thy shop, and the time spent with God a thief to thy temporal estate? God, I am sure, intends his people better; as appears in the former place, 'Then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.'

Objection Second. But I cannot read; how can I search the Scriptures?

Answer. It is sad, I confess, that parents, who are God's trustees, to whom the nurture of their children is committed, should take no more care for their souls than the ostrich doth of her eggs, not caring what becomes of them. What do these but throw them into the devil's mouth, by sending them out into a sinful world without the knowledge of God and his word, to become a prey to every lust that meets them? To hell they must needs swim, if God show no more pity to them than their bloody parents have done! But shall thy parents negligence be a plea for thy ignorance? Wilt not thou be merciful to thyself because they were cruel? In the fear of God be persuaded to supply their defect by thy diligence. I hope thou dost not think it a shame to learn that, now thou art old, which thou shouldst have been taught when thou wert young. Had not thy parents learned thee a trade to get thy temporal living with, wouldst thou therefore have lived thee a beggar, rather than have applied thyself, though late, to some calling? There are many, for thy encouragement, who have begun late, and, by God's blessing on their diligence, have conquered the difficulty of the work. If thou wert in prison, thou hadst rather learn to read thy neck■verse, than lose thy life for want thereof. Now, though ability to read the word be not of absolute necessity for the salvation of thy soul, yet knowledge of its saving truths is, and few better private means to obtain this than reading. But if thou beest not capable of this, thou hast not by it an excuse for thy ignorance so long as thou hast an ear to receive instruction from others. As God sometimes recompenses the defect of one sense with the quickness of another, so may be thou shalt find thy inability to read supplied with a tenacious memory, to hold what thou hearest read or preached unto thee. Some martyrs we find mighty in the Scriptures, able to defend the truth against learned doctors, and yet not book■learned. One amongst the rest who could not read, 'yet carried always some part of the Scripture about with him, and when he met any Christian that could, he would get him to read

some portion or other thereof to him,' whereby he attained to such a measure of knowledge and faith, as made him wiser than his enemies, and a stout champion for the truth, even to resist to blood.

Objection Third. 'O but,' saith a third, 'though I can read, yet I am of so weak an understanding that I fear I shall make no work with such deep mysteries as are there contained.'

Answer. Take heed this objection comes not from thy sluggish heart, which gets this fair pretence to ease thee of a duty thou fearest will be troublesome unto thee. Didst thou ever make a trial, and set about the work, conscientiously using all means that might conduce towards thy instructing in the mind of god? If not, lay not the blame on thy weak head, but wicked heart. When thou wentest first to be an apprentice, what skill hadst thou in thy trade? Didst thou therefore despair and run away? No, but by thy diligence didst learn the mystery of it in a few years, so as to maintain thyself comfortably upon it; and will not thy industry to learn that, condemn thy sloth in not studying the word, which is able to bring in a better livelihood to thy soul than thy trade can do for thy body?

But, poor soul, if what thou sayest indeed ariseth from the deep sense thou hast of thy own weakness, then ponder upon this twofold encouragement.

1. Encouragement. God is able to interpret his own word unto thee. Indeed none can enter into the knowledge thereof, but he must be beholden unto his Spirit to unlock the door. If thou hadst a riper head and higher parts than thou canst now pretend to, thou wouldst, without his help, be but like the blind Sodomites about Lot's house, groping, but not able to find the way into the true saving knowledge thereof. He that hath not the right key is as far from entering the house as he that hath none, yea in some sense further off. For he that hath none will call to him that is within, while the other, trusting to his false key, stands pottering without to little purpose. The Pharisees, who were so conversant in the Scriptures, and obtained the name for the admired doctors of the chair, called, 'the princes of the world,' 1 Corinthians 2:8,—because so renowned and adored among the people, yet even these missed the truth which lay before them almost in every leaf of Moses and the prophets, whom they were, in their every■day's study, tumbling over —I mean that grand truth concerning Christ, of whom both Moses and the prophets speak. And at the same time the people whom they counted so base, yea accursed, as those that understood not the law, could see him whom they missed. None so knowing that God cannot blind and infatuate; none so blind and ignorant whose eyes his spirit cannot open. He who, by his incubation upon the waters at the creation, hatched that rude mass into the beautiful form we now see, and out of that dark chaos made the glorious heavens, and garnished them with so many orient stars, can move upon thy dark soul, and enlighten it, though now it be as void of knowledge as the evening of the world's first day was of light. The school■master sometimes sends home and bids the father put him to another trade, because not able, with all his art, to make a scholar of him. But if the Spirit of God be the master, thou shalt learn, though a very dunce: 'The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple,' Psalms 119:130. No sooner is a soul entered into the Spirit's school, but he becomes a proficient. Thence we are commanded to encourage those that discourage themselves: 'Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees,' Isaiah 35:3. Why? what good news shall we tell them? 'The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped,' Isaiah 35:5. 'An highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the

wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein,' Isaiah 35:8.

2. Encouragement. The deeper sense thou hast of thy own weakness, the more fit thou art for the Spirit's teaching. A proud scholar and a humble master will never agree; Christ is 'meek, and lowly,' and so 'resisteth the proud,' but 'giveth grace unto the humble.' Though he cannot brook him that is proud, yet he can bear with thee that art weak and dull, if humble and diligent; as we see in the disciples, whom our Saviour did not disdain to teach the same lesson over and over again, till at last they say, 'Lo, now speakest thou plainly,' John 16:29. The eunuch was no great clerk when in his chariot he was reading Isaiah's prophecy; yet because he did it with an honest heart, Philip is despatched to instruct him.

DIRECTION X.—THIRD GENERAL PART.

[How to use the Sword of the Word.] 'And the sword of the Spirit,' &c. (Ephesians 6:17). But haply some may say, 'You have said enough to let us know how necessary a weapon this sword is to defend our souls, and of what admirable use in all the conflicts the Christian hath with any of his enemies. But we hope you will not leave us thus. It is a word of counsel we now listen to hear from you, how we poor Christians may wield and use this sword for our own defence, and the vanquishing of the several enemies whose approach you have alarmed us to expect; some whereof we already, to our great terror, see in the field against us, and how soon the other may appear we know not. What will a sword by our side, a Bible in our hand, yea mouth, do us good, if we be not instructed how we may ward off their blows, and make them feel the impression of ours therewith?' Your request is reasonable, and for your better satisfaction I shall sort the directions into several branches, suited to the several kinds of enemies you have to grapple with; for their assaults being of a different nature, do require a resistance suitable to their way of fight. first. How we are to use the spiritual sword against the persecutor. second. Against the heretic. third. Against the army of lusts lodged within our own bosoms. fourth. Against the bands of afflictions which from without invade, from within distress, him.

BRANCH FIRST.

[Directions how to use the sword of the word against persecutors.]

We shall begin with the persecutor. Now, wouldst thou, Christian, stand the shock of his furious assault, when he hangs out his bloody flag, breathing slaughter to the church and flock of Christ, if they will not let him trample upon all their glory, by defiling their consciences, and renouncing their faith at the lust of his imperious command. Then, First. Let it be thy care to get clear Scripture ground for those principles and practices of thine which stir up the persecutor's rage against thee. Second. Improve those scriptures which teach us to dread God more and fear man less. Third. Be sure thou givest up thy lusts to the sword of the Spirit, before thy life is in any danger from the sword of the persecutor. Fourth. Fortify thy faith on those promises which have an especial respect to persecution.

Direction First. Let it be thy first care to get clear Scripture grounds for those principles and practices of thine which stir up the persecutor's rage against thee. A man had need be well assured of that which brings life and dear enjoyments—that go all away with it—into hazard. It is enough to weaken the courage of a valiant man to fight in a mist, when he cannot well discern his foes from his friends; and to be a damp upon the Christian's spirit in a suffering hour, if he be not clear in his

judgement, and fixed in his principles that he is to suffer for. Look, therefore, to put that out of question in thy own thoughts for which the persecutor calls thee into question. And the rather because it ever was, and still will be the policy of persecutors to disfigure what they can the beautiful face of those truths and practices for which the servants of Christ suffer, that they may put a colour of justice upon their bloody cruelties, and make the world believe they suffer as evil-doers. Now thou wilt never be able to bear up under the weight of this their heavy charge except thou beest fully persuaded in thy own conscience that thou sufferest for righteousness' sake. But if thou standest clear in thy own thoughts concerning thy cause, thou wilt easily wipe off the dirt they throw upon thee, and sweetly entertain thyself with the comfort which thy own conscience will bring to thee through the reproaches of thy enemies. Nemo est miser sensu alieno, saith Salvian—what others say or think of us makes not miserable. One reproof from a man's own thoughts wounds ore than the reproaches do of all the world besides. When the Thessalonians were once satisfied of the certain truth of Paul's doctrine—for the gospel, it is said, came to them 'in much assurance,' 1 Thessalonians 1:5—then they could open their door 'with joy' to receive it, though afflictions and persecutions came along with it, 1 Thessalonians 1:6.

Direction Second. Improve those scriptures which teach us to dread God more and fear man less. Every man is most loath to fall into his hands whom he fears most. So that, if God hath once gained the supremacy of thy fear, thou wilt rather skip into the hottest fire the persecutor can make, than make God thy enemy. 'Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word,' Psalms 119:161. David had put, it seems, man's wrath and that which God threatens in his word into the scales, and finding God's hand to be without compare the heavier, trembles at that, and ventures the worst that the other can do against him. Hence it is the Scripture is so much in depressing the power of man, that we may not be scared at his big looks or threats; in depressing the power of man, and representing his utmost rage to be so contemptible and inconsiderable a thing, as none that knows who God is needs fear the worst he can do. 'Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?' Isaiah 2:22. 'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell,' Matthew 10:28. Pueri timent larvas, sed non timent ignem —children are afraid of bugbears that cannot hurt them, but can play with fire that will burn them. And no less childish is it to be frighted into a sin at the frowns of a sorry man, who comes forth with a vizard of seeming dread and terror, but hath no power to hurt us more than our own fear gives him, and to play with hell-fire, into which God is able to cast us for ever. Truly this is to be scared with painted fire in the picture, and not in the furnace where it really burns. What was John Huss the worse for his fool's cap that his enemies put on his head, so long as under it he had a helmet of hope which they could not take off? Or how much the nearer hell was the same blessed martyr for their committing his soul to the devil? No nearer than some of their own wicked crew are to heaven for being sainted in the pope's calendar. Melancthon said some are anathema secundum dici —to be doubly cursed, as Luther and other faithful servants of Christ whom the pope cursed. But what saith David? 'Let them curse, but bless thou,' Psalms 109:28. He that hath God's good needs not fear the world's bad. The dog's barking doth not make the moon change her colour. Nor needs the saint change his countenance for the rage of his persecutors.

Direction Third. Be sure thou givest up thy lusts to the sword of the Spirit before thy life is in any danger from the sword of the persecutor. He is not likely to be free of his flesh for Christ, when

called to suffer at man's hand, that is dainty of his lusts, and cannot bear the edge of the Spirit's sword, when he comes to mortify them. Canst thou be willing to lay down thy life for Christ, and yet keep an enemy in thy bosom out of the hand of justice, that seeks to take away the life of Christ? Persecutors tempt as well as torture, Hebrews 11:1-40. They promise the honours of the court as well as threaten the hardship of the prison and cruelty of the devouring fire. Now, if thy love to the world be not mortified, it is easy to tell what choice thou wilt make, even the same that Demas did, thou wilt embrace the 'present world,' and leave Christ in the plain field. Or if thou shouldst through a natural stoutness bear up under sufferings, even to give thy body to be burned, rather than renounce the true religion thou professest, yet if any lust should at last be found to have been fostered by thee, thou shalt have no more thanks at Christ's hands than he who in the law offered up an unclean beast to God. It is possible for one to die in the cause of Christ and not be his martyr. Thy heart must be holy thou sufferest with as well as the cause holy thou sufferest for. Thy behaviour must be gracious in suffering, as well as the cause just that brings thee to suffer. He alone is Christ's martyr that suffers for Christ as Christ himself suffered. For he hath not only left us his truth to maintain to blood when called thereunto, but his example to follow also in our sufferings. 'If when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God; for even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps;...who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not,' 1 Peter 2:20-21, 1 Peter 2:23. This is hard work indeed, in the very fire to keep the spirit cool, and clear of wrath and revenge towards those that throw him so unmercifully into the devouring flames! But it makes him that by grace from above can do it, a glorious conqueror. Flesh and blood would bid a man call for fire from heaven, rather than mercy to fall upon them that so cruelly handle them. He that can forgive his enemy is too hard for him, and hath the better of him: because his enemy's blows do but bruise his flesh, but the wounds that love gives pierce the soul and conscience. Saul was forced to confess that David, persecuted so furiously by him, was the better man, 'Thou art more righteous than I,' 1 Samuel 24:17. And the people went from the execution of Christ, whom they were so mad to have crucified, sick of what they had done, shaking their heads as if all were not right {what} they had done against so good a man, Luke 23:1-56. Now, when two contraries are in a contest, that overcomes which preserves its own nature, and turns the other into some likeness unto itself; as we see fire transfuseth its own heat into the water, forcing it to assimilate and yield to it. Thus a holy charitable spirit, by forgiving an enemy, if it doth not prevail to turn an enemy's heart to him in love, yet then it turns an enemy's conscience against himself, and forceth him to condemn himself, and justify him whom he persecutes wrongfully.

Direction Fourth. Fortify thy faith on those promises which have an especial respect to such a condition as persecution. This is the saints' victory over the world, even their faith. Thus David, when Saul seemed to have him under his foot, and had driven him from living in a court to earth himself for his safety in a cave of the wilderness, yet by faith triumphed over his proud enemy, and sung as pleasantly in his grot and earth■hole as the merriest bird in the wood, 'My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise,' Psalms 57:7. Saul had his body higher fed, but not his heart fixed as David's was, and therefore could not sing David's tune. A thousand thoughts and fears distracted his head and heart, while David lives without fear and care, even when his enemies are in the field a hunting for his life. Faith on the promise will, like the widow's oil, not only set thee out of debt to all thy worldly fears and cares which by thy troubles thou mayest contract, but afford thee enough to live comfortably besides, yea, with joy unspeakable and glorious. There

are two sorts of sorrows that do usually distress gracious souls most in their sufferings for Christ. First. They are prone to be troubled for their own persons and private affairs. Second. For the cause of Christ which they bear testimony unto, lest that should miscarry. Now there is abundant provision laid up in the promises to ease the Christian's heart of both these burdens.

[Provision in the promises for the two sorts of sorrows to which believers are prone.]

First. Believers are at times prone to be troubled for their own persons and private affairs. To meet this there is in the promises an ample provision. Acquaint thyself with those promises that concern thyself as a sufferer for Christ, and see where any crevice is left unstopped, if thou canst, that may let in the least air of suspicion in thy mind to disturb thy peace and discompose thy joy. The promises are so many, and fitted so exactly to every particular query of which the soul can desire satisfaction, that it will require thy study and diligence to gather them. God having chosen rather to scatter his promises here and there promiscuously than to sort them and set every kind in a distinct knot by themselves, we may think on purpose that we might be drawn into an acquaintance with the whole Scripture, and not leave any one corner unsearched, but curiously observe it from one end to the other. And let not the present peace of the church cause thee to think it needless work. The apothecary gathers his simples in the summer which haply he may not use [i.e. until] winter. And how soon persecution may arise thou knowest not. The church ever hath had, and shall have, its vicissitudes of summer and winter. Yea, sometimes winter strikes in before it is looked for; and then who is the man most likely to be offended? Surely he that received the word with joy in the prosperous estate of the church, but laid not in for foul weather. Well, what is thy fear? whence comes thy discouragement? Art thou scared with the noisomeness of the prison? or doth the terror of the fire, and torture of the rack, affright thee? Know for thy comfort, if thy strength be too weak to carry thee through them, thou shalt never be called to such hot service and hard work. The promise assures thee as much, he 'will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able,' 1 Corinthians 10:13.

God who gives the husbandman his discretion with what instrument to thrash his corn, as it is harder or softer, will not let the persecutor's wheel come upon thee that art not able to bear it. God gives us this very account why he led his people the further way about—at their first coming out of Egypt—rather than by the land of the Philistines—the far shorter cut of the two—'for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt,' Exodus 13:17. See here God considers their weakness. They cannot yet bear war, and therefore they shall not be tried with it until more hardened for it. But if thou beest called into the field to encounter with these bloody fiery trials, the promise takes the whole care and charge of the war off thy hands: 'When they deliver you up, take no thought'—that is, disquieting, distrustful—'how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak,' Matthew 10:19; and, it is 'the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you,' Matthew 10:20. There is no mouth that God cannot make eloquent; no back so weak which he cannot make strong. And he hath promised to be with thee wherever thy enemies carry thee; fire and water shall not part thee from his sweet company. These promises make so soft a pillow for the saints' heads that they have professed, many of them, never to have lain at more ease than when most cruelly handled by their merciless enemies. One dates his letter 'from the delectable orchard his prison;' another subscribes herself, 'Your loving friend, as merry as one bound for heaven.' They have been so far from pitying themselves in their sufferings, that their chief sorrow hath been, that they could be no more thankful for them.

And whence had they their strength? Where drew they their joy? Had they not both from the same Spirit applying the promises to them?

Second. Believers are at times prone to be troubled for the cause of Christ which they bear testimony unto, lest that should miscarry. As for this trouble, though God takes the good-will to his cause and church very kindly, from which those thy fears arise, yet there is no need of tormenting thyself, believer, with that which is sure never to come to pass. The ark may shake, but it cannot fall; the ship of the church may be tossed, but it cannot sink, for Christ is in it, and will awake time enough to prevent its wreck. There is therefore no cause for us, when the storm beateth hard upon it, to disturb him, as once the disciples did, with the shrieks and outcries of our unbelief, as if all were lost. Our faith is more in danger of sinking at such a time than the cause and church of Christ are. They are both by the promise set out of the reach of men and devils. The gospel is an 'everlasting gospel,' Revelation 14:6. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one iota of this shall perish, Matthew 5:18. 'The word of the Lord endureth for ever,' 1 Peter 1:25, and shall be alive to walk over all its enemies' graves, yea, to see the funeral of the whole world, when, at the great day of the Lord, it must be everlastingly buried in its own ruins. And for the church, that is built upon a rock, impregnable. 'The gates of hell shall not prevail against it,' Matthew 16:18. It hath been oft in the sea, but never drowned; seldom out of the fire, but never consumed; sometimes swallowed up to reason, but, like Jonah in the whale's belly, cast up again, as too heavy a charge for the strongest stomach that ever persecutor had to digest. The faith of this hath carried the blessed martyrs to the grave, when they swam to it in their own blood with joy, because they knew the church should have the day at last, and that they left others behind in pursuit of the victory on earth, while themselves were taken out of the field to triumph in heaven. Yea some, by prophetic spirit have foretold the very time when the persecuted truths, that were then buried with so much ignominy and scorn, should have a happy resurrection and victory over their proud enemies. Thus John Huss cited his enemies to answer him a hundred years after, comforting himself, that though they then 'burned the goose'—alluding to his own name—'a swan' would come in his stead, that should fill the air with his sweet singing, which was fulfilled in Luther, whose doctrine went far and near, and charmed the hearts of multitudes everywhere. And Hiltenius, another German divine, alleviated the miseries he endured in his stinking prison—where he died for rubbing the monks sores too hard—with this, that another, naming the very time, 1516, should arise after him, that would ruin the monks' kingdom—whose abuses he had but gently reproved—and that they should not be able to resist his power, nor so much as fasten a chain upon him; which came to pass in Luther; for, to a miracle, he was kept out of the hands of his bloody enemies, though never man's blood more thirsted for.

BRANCH SECOND.

[Directions how to use the sword of the word against heretics.]

Now the second enemy that comes forth against the Christian is the heretic or seducer, who is so much more to be feared than the former by how much it is worse to part with God's truth than our own life; to be corrupted in our minds than to be tortured in our members; in a word, to have our souls damned by God than our bodies killed by man. If the martyrs had feared death more than heresy, they would not have leaped into the persecutors' flames rather than consent to their doctrine. Now, that thou mayest be able to lift up this sword of the Spirit—the only weapon to

defend thee—with victory against this dangerous enemy, apply thyself in the use of the best means with thy utmost care to find out the true sense and meaning of the Spirit in his word. This sword in another's hand will defend thee not. No, it must be in thy own, or else thou canst not have the benefit of it. The phrase and outward expression are but the shell, the sense and meaning is the pearl, which thou, like a wise merchant, shouldst seek for. To tumble over a chapter and not reach the mind of God therein held forth, and to tumble over a prayer in an unknown tongue, are both alike, 'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; Revelation 2:7. We are to listen what the Spirit saith in the word as we hear or read it. And he that hath an ear for the Spirit will not have an ear for the seducer.

Now to help thee in thy search for the sense and meaning of the word, these directions, I hope, may stand thee in some stead. First. Take heed thou comest not to the Scriptures with an unholy heart. Second. Make not thy own reason the rule by which thou measurest Scripture truths. Third. Take heed thou comest not with a judgment preengaged to any party or opinion. Fourth. Go to God by prayer for a key to unlock the mysteries of his word. Fifth. Compare scripture with scripture. Sixth. Consult with thy faithful guides which God hath set over thee in his church.

Direction First. Take heed thou comest not to the Scriptures with an unholy heart. If ever you know the mind of God in his word, the Spirit must impart it to you. And will he that is so holy take thee by thy foul hand, thinkest thou, to lead thee into truth? No, thy doom is set: 'None of the wicked shall understand,' Daniel 12:10. The angel who took Lot's daughters into the house smote the Sodomites with blindness, that they might grope for the door and not find it. And so are those like to be served that come with unclean hearts to the word. 'Without are dogs:' not only without heaven at last, but without the true knowledge of God on earth. The wicked have the word of God, but the holy soul hath 'the mind of Christ,' 1 Corinthians 2:16. Therefore the same apostle exhorts us that we 'be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God,' Romans 12:2. And what amounts this to, but if we will have truth for our guest, and be acquainted with the mind and will of God, we must prepare a holy heart for its lodging? They commonly are taken captive by seducers who were before prisoners of their lusts, 'and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,' 2 Timothy 3:6-7. When David would beg understanding in the word, he makes his purpose for a holy life the argument with which he urgeth God: 'Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart,' Psalms 119:33-34.

Direction Second. Make not thy own reason the rule by which thou measurest Scripture truths. Is that fit to try the revelations of the word by, which is dunced and posed with so many secrets in nature? Doth not the word reveal such things to us as are not only above sense, for eye hath not seen them, nor ear heard them; but also above the ken of reason? being such as never 'entered into the heart of man,' 1 Corinthians 2:9. Indeed the whole system of gospel truths speaks in a foreign and outlandish tongue to reason; it can make no sense of them, except faith be the interpreter. The Scriptures are like the Red Sea, through which the Israelites by faith passed safely, but the Egyptians attempting to do it, for want of that guide were drowned. A humble believer passeth through the deep mysteries of the word safely, without plunging into any dangerous mistakes; whereas those sons of pride, who leave faith and take reason for their guide, we see how they are drowned in many damnable errors, Arianism, Pelagianism, Socinianism, and what not. The most

dangerous errors fathered upon the Scriptures have sprung from this womb. This was the Sadducees' ground on which they went for their denying the resurrection of the dead. They owned the book of Moses for the word of God, and yet denied the resurrection asserted therein; because it seemed so impossible a thing to their reason that our bodies, after so many alterations into slime and dust, should stand up in life. This their reason laughed at; for so our Saviour's answer plainly shows, 'Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God,' Matthew 22:29.

Direction Third. When thou consultest with the word, take heed thou comest not with a judgment pre-engaged to any party and opinion. He is not like to hold the scales even whose judgment is bribed beforehand. A distempered eye sees the object of that colour with which itself is affected; and a mind prepossessed will be ready to impose its own sense upon the word, and so loseth the truth by an overweening conceit of his own opinion. Too many, alas! read the Scriptures not so much to be informed by them, as confirmed in what already they have taken up! They choose opinions, as Samson his wife, because they please them, and then come to gain the Scriptures' consent. Thus the Jews first made up the match with their idols, and then ask counsel of God what they should do, Ezekiel 14:4. It is a just judgment of God, that such should not see the truth when it lies fair before them, but be given up to an injudicious heart, to believe the word favours their fancies, and chimes as they think. 'I the Lord will answer him...according to the multitude of his idols: that I may take the house of Israel in their own heart,' Ezekiel 14:4-5. And when is a man taken in his own heart, if not when ensnared in the fancies and follies which his erroneous mind hath weaved?

Direction Fourth. Go to God by prayer for a key to unlock the mysteries of his word. It is not the plodding but the praying soul that will get this treasure of Scripture-knowledge. St. John got the sealed book opened by weeping, Revelation 5:5. God oft brings a truth to the Christian's hand as a return of prayer, which he had long hunted for in vain with much labour and study; there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, Daniel 2:22. And where doth he reveal the secrets of his word but at the throne of grace? 'From the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words,' i.e. for thy prayer, Daniel 10:12. And what was this heavenly messenger's errand to Daniel but to open more fully the Scripture to him? as appears by ver. 14, compared with ver. 21. This holy man had got some knowledge by his study in the word, and this sets him a praying, and prayer fetched an angel from heaven to give him more light. If ever we know the mind of God, we must be beholden to the Spirit of God for it. 'When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth,' John 16:13. And the Spirit is the fruit of Christ's intercession: 'I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter,' &c. Now there must be a concurrence of our prayers with his intercession. While our High-priest is offering incense within the vail, we are to be praying without for the same thing that he is interceding within. Now to quicken thee up to pray with more fervent importunity for this manuduction of the Holy Spirit to lead thee into truth, [Means to quicken us to pray with more fervour for the leading of the Holy Spirit.]

First Means. Let the dread of those scriptures which set forth the danger of errors and false doctrines fall upon thee, that thou mayest not think thou goest upon a slighty errand, when praying to be preserved from them, as if the odds were not great, whether thou hast thy request or hast it not. It is one of the devil's master-policies, by sinking the price of errors in the thoughts of men, to make them thereby the more vendible. Many think they shall not pay so dear for an error in

judgment as for a sin in practice. Yea, some have such a latitude, that they fancy a man may be saved in any religion—a principle that must needs tend to make them that hold it careless and incurious in their choice. That sin shall not want customers which men think they shall pay little or nothing for. Some can be content to be drunk on free cost, that would not, were they assured their own purse should pay soundly for the reckoning. How comes fornication to abound so much among the Romish clergy, but because it is counted so petty a sin by them? And I wish that error and heresy—which are the fornication of the mind—were not by many among ourselves sized as low. But woe to those clerks of the devil's market, that tempt and toll men on to sin by setting cheaper rates on their head than the word of God hath done. If once the dread of a sin be word off the conscience, no wonder then if we see men as boldly leap upon it, as the frogs in the fable on the log, that lay so still and tame at the bottom of the river. Fear makes the body more apt to take infection, but it preserveth the soul from the infection of sin.

Now that thou mayest the more stand in fear of drinking in the poison of any corrupt and unsound doctrine, let thy mind ponder on a few scriptures, which show both their detestable, and also damning nature of them. Galatians 5:19, there heresy is called 'a work of the flesh,' and reckoned among those sins which shut the doors of them out of heaven; 'they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God,' Galatians 5:21. They are called 'doctrines of devils,' 1 Timothy 4:1. And if they come from the devil, whither must they lead but to hell? Such as are against the fundamental principles of the gospel are inconsistent with the love and favour of God. He that 'abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God,' 2 John 1:9. And who, think you, shall have him that hath not God? Were there no other scripture against this kind of sin, but that one, 2 Peter 2:1, it were enough to strike the heretic through his loins, and make the knees of every seducer, like Belshazzar's at the sight of the 'handwriting on the wall,' to knock one against the other. 'But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.' So that if a man hath a mind to get the start of other sinners, and desires to be in hell before them, he need do no more than open his sails to the wind of heretical doctrine, and he is like to make a short voyage to hell of it; for these bring upon their maintainers 'swift destruction.' Nay, the Spirit of God, the more to aggravate their deplored state brings in three most dreadful instances of divine vengeance that ever was executed upon any sinners, viz. the detrusion of the apostate angels from heaven to hell, the drowning of the old world, and the conflagration of Sodom and Gomorrah by raining hell, as it were, out of heaven upon them. I say, he brings these as patterns and pledges of that vengeance which shall certainly befall this kind of sinners. And by this time I hope thou wilt be warm in thy prayer against this dangerous enemy. But,

Second Means. When thou hast thus possessed thy heart with the dread of being led into any corrupt opinion, then strengthen then thy faith from those comfortable scriptures which assure thee that no sincere saint shall be left to fall finally into any soul-damning error. Christ is as able for, and faithful in, his prophetic and kingly offices, as his priestly. Surely he will not have the least care of his people's understanding, which is guide to their whole man, and is that faculty which he first practiseth upon in the work of conversion. Thou hast therefore as strong ground to believe he will preserve thee from damnable principles as damnable practices. It would be little advantage to be kept from one enemy, and left open to the will and power of another. Christ's hedge comes round

about his people. Solomon tells us, ‘The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein,’ Proverbs 22:14. And so is the mouth of the seducer, who comes with strange doctrines—whorish opinions. Now who is this pit digged for? Indeed, if we look at Satan’s design, it is a trap chiefly laid to catch the saint; he would, if possible, ‘deceive the very elect.’ His greatest ambition is to spread his banners in this temple of God, and defile them whom God hath washed. But if we eye God’s intention, it is a pit he suffers to be made for hypocrites and false gospellers—such who would never heartly close with Christ and his truth. These are they whom God abhors, and therefore they are left by him to become a prey to those that go a birding for souls with their corrupt doctrines. ‘Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; and for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness,’ 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12. These, like the outsetting deer, are shot, while they within the pale are safe; or, like the suburbs, taken by the enemy, but those within the city escape their fury. It is the outward court that is left to be trampled underfoot, Revelation 11:2. And in the fore-quoted place in the epistle to the Thessalonians —though he gives up hypocrites to be deceived by false teachers, as once Ahab by those knights of the post his false prophets—yet, Revelation 11:13 he speaks comfortably to the elect, and shows that the same decree which appointed them to salvation provided also for their embracing the truth, as the necessary means leading thereunto. ‘But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.’ And if God had got possession of the head by his truth, and of the heart by his sanctifying grace, he will keep them out of Satan’s clutches.

Go, therefore, and plead the promise for thy preservation. The promise improved by faith at the throne of grace will be thy best antidote in these times of general infection. Never fear speeding when the promise bids thee ‘go and prosper.’ The mercy is granted before thou askest it; only God will have thee by prayer lay claim to it, before thou beest possessed of it. And for thy help I have set down some sweet promises of this nature, with which, if thou acquaintest thyself, thou mayest be furnished both with grounds for thy faith, and arguments for thy prayer in this case, Matthew 24:24; John 7:12; John 10:5, John 10:29; 1 Corinthians 11:19; Php 3:15; 1 John 2:19-20.

Direction Fifth. Compare scripture with scripture. False doctrines, like false witnesses, agree not among themselves. Their name may be called ‘Legion, for they are many.’ But truth is one; it is homogeneal. One scripture sweetly harmonizeth with another. Hence it is, though there were many penmen of sacred writ, and those of several ages, one after another, yet they all are said to have but one mouth; ‘As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began,’ Luke 1:70. All had one mouth, because they accord so perfectly together. The best way, therefore, to know the mind of God in one text is to lay it to another. The lapidary useth one diamond to cut another. So should we one place of Scripture to interpret another. Scriptures compared, like glasses set one against another, cast a light each to the other. ‘They (i.e. the Levites) read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading,’ Nehemiah 8:8. Et exponendo sensum dabant intelligentiam per Scripturam ipsam—so Tremelius reads the words—they gave them the meaning of what they read, by the Scripture itself.

Now, in comparing scripture with scripture, be careful thou interpretest obscure places by the more plain and clear, and not the clear by the dark. Error creeps into the most shady obscure places, and there takes sanctuary. ‘Some things hard to be understood, which they that are unstable wrest.’ No wonder they should stumble in those dark and difficult places, when they turn their back on that light which plainer scriptures afford to lead them safely through. ‘He that is born of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not,’ 1 John 5:18. This is a dark place, which some run away with, and from it conclude there is a perfect state free from all sin attainable in this life; whereas a multitude of plain scriptures testify against such a conclusion, 1 Kings 8:38; Proverbs 20:9; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Job 9:20; Php 3:12; 1 John 1:8-10, with many more. So that it must be in a limited and qualified sense that he ‘that is born of God sinneth not.’ He sins not finally or comparatively, not as the carnal wretch doth. ‘And the wicked one toucheth him not,’ i.e. non tactá qualitativo, as Cajetan saith—not so as to transfuse his own nature and disposition into him; as the fire toucheth the iron or wood it comes near, assimilating them to its own nature. This rule of using plain scriptures to be a key for to unlock obscure, will hold in all other instances. And blessed be God, though to tame our pride he hath inserted some knotty passages, yet the necessary saving truths are of easy access even to the weakest understanding. Salubritèr Spiritus Sanctus ita, modificavit, ut locis apertioribus fami occurreret, obscurioribus fastidia detergeret (Aug. de Doc. Ch. lib. ii. c. 6)—there is enough in the plain places of Scripture to keep the weak from starving, and in the obscure to lift them above contempt of the strongest.

Direction Sixth. Consult with thy faithful guides which God hath set over thee in his church. Though people are not to pin their faith on the minister’s sleeve, yet they are to ‘seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts,’ Malachi 2:7. Christ directs his kids for their safety, that they turn not aside into by■paths of error, and fall not into the hands of false teachers—those cheating companions—that they go ‘go forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed...beside the shepherds’ tents,’ Song of Solomon 1:8. The devil knows too well—‘send away the shepherd and he may soon catch the sheep.’ And these times prove sadly that he is not mistaken. When were people’s affections more withdrawn from their ministers? And when were their judgments more poisoned with error? Of what sort, I pray, are those that have been trapanned[5] into dangerous errors in our late unhappy times? Have they not most this brand upon them? Are they not such who would sooner hearken to a stranger—may be a Jesuit in a buff■coat or with a blue apron before him?—seek to any mountebank that comes they know not whence, is here to■day and gone tomorrow, than to their own ministers, who from God have the rule over them, and watch for their souls as they that must give account to God for them; yea, who from many years’ experience in life and doctrine they have found able and faithful? In the fear of God consider this. They are not your ministers—I speak as to the most—in their pulpits and public ministry, but these hucksters and quack-salvers in corners practicing upon you, that privily have brought in damnable doctrines, and leavened so great a lump of people in the nation with sour and unsound doctrine. If thou wouldst therefore be preserved from error, make use, as of the sword of the word in thy own hand, so of the holy skill that God hath given thy faithful minister for thy defence. Wait on his public ministry, praying for divine assistance to be poured down on him, and a divine blessing from his labours to fall on thyself. If at any time thou art in the dark concerning his message, resort to him, and I dare promise thee—if he answers his name, and be a faithful minister of the gospel—an easy access and hearty welcome to him. Only come to learn, not cavil; to have thy conscience satisfied, not any itch of vain curiosity rubbed. Our Saviour, who was so willing to satisfy his

disciples concerning the doctrine he publicly preached, that in private he opened it to them more fully, yet when they came with nice and curious questions, did rather choose to repel that humour by a reproof than cherish it by a satisfying answer. ‘It is not for you to know the times or the seasons;’ and at another time, ‘If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.’ He takes Peter off from a profitable question to ind a necessary duty.

BRANCH THIRD.

[Directions how to use the sword of the word against lusts.] The third enemy we are to fight is made up of an army of lusts lodged within our own bosoms, which have Satan to head and lead them forth against us. And who that believes he hath a soul to lose or save can be unwilling to engage against this cursed combination of lusts and devils? The Romans were said, when in war with other nations, to fight for honour and glory; but against the Carthaginians for their very life and being. In this war against sin and Satan both lie at stake. This, this is the most noble war of all other.

It is noble, because just. It is too true, I fear, what one saith of the wars which the great monarchs of this world wage one against another, ‘that the cause is very seldom so clear for which they take arms but there is some ground of scruple left in the conscience of the undertaker.’ But here we are put out of all doubt. This, without abusing the name, may be called, ‘the holy war.’ For it is against the only enemy that the holy God hath in the world, who hath himself taken the field, and set up his royal standard in defiance of it; to which he calls all mankind, some by the voice of a natural conscience, and others by the loud sound of his word, to repair, and upon our allegiance to him, our sovereign Lord and Creator, to help him ‘against the mighty;’ not because he needs our help, but [because he] expects our duty, and had rather reward our loyalty than punish our rebellion. Some have been found who for shame have killed themselves, that their prince through their cowardice had lost the victory. O what confusion then will one day fill our faces if we, by our faintness or treachery, do what lies in us [to] help Satan and sin to triumph over God himself! But again, it is a noble war, because hard and difficult. This is an enemy stout and stubborn, such as will try both our skill and strength to the uttermost. Never did coward overcome in this war. What sin loseth is by inches, and what it gains hardly lets go. They who follow this war closest will find a life’s work at least of it. O you that love brave exploits, and hunt for enterprises that only a few generous spirits dare undertake, here is that you look for. Fighting with men and storming of castles is but children’s play to this encounter, where devils and lusts are to be repelled. ‘He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city,’ Proverbs 16:32. ‘Better,’ because he overcomes a worse enemy, infinitely more potent and puissant. Few, alas! of the world’s swordsmen, so famed for their conquests, but have lived and died slaves to sin!—cowardly submitting the neck of their souls to draw the iron chariot of a base lust, while they have proudly sat to be drawn in triumph by those whom they have taken prisoners in war. Thus as Hannibal was beaten at home in his own country, who was a victor in his foreign expeditions; so too, many that do great feats in arms abroad, which makes them famous in this world, are miserably beaten and shamefully trampled upon by their own corruptions at home, that will make them much more infamous in the other world. But be not you, O ye saints, dismayed at the report of your enemies’ strength and number. The greater will be your victory, and the more your captives to draw your triumph and chariot. Neither let your hearts faint to see the conquering Cæsars despoiled of their ensigns of honour by this enemy, which themselves had won from

others, and to die in chains slaves to their lusts, that had lived conquerors over men. Remember, for your comfort, it is but the unbelieving world—such as are without spiritual arms, and so abandoned of God—that are left thus to become a prey to sin and Satan. But you have a God on your side, who gives you the consecrated sword of his word for your defence—a weapon whose edge Satan hath already felt, and therefore trembles whenever faith draws it forth. He that made this leviathan, as is said of the other, Job 40:19, can make this his sword to approach to him, and the heart of all thy lusts also. But I forbear; my task in this place being not to excite you to, but direct you in, the management of your fight with this your enemy, and that also only by teaching you the use of this one weapon, the word of God, in order to repelling motions to sin from within, or temptations to it from Satan without. First, therefore, Take some pains to collect out of the word the several lineaments with which the Spirit of God doth paint out the deformity of sin, that so thou mayest make it the more odious and hateful to thy thoughts. Second. Provide thyself with Scripture answers to Satan's false reasonings. Third. Hide the word in thy heart. Fourth. Plead the promise against sin at the throne of grace.

[We are to collect out of the word the several lineaments of sin's deformity.]

Direction First. Take some pains to collect out of the word the several lineaments with which the Spirit of God doth paint out the deformity of sin, that so thou mayest make it the more odious and hateful to thy thoughts, when, by laying them together, thou shalt see in its true picture and portraiture—drawn by so skilful and faithful a hand—the fair face of this goodly lady, whose beauty Satan doth so highly commend to thy wanton embraces. Poor man sins upon Satan's credit, and receives it into his bosom, as Jacob did his wife into his bed—before he sees its face, or knows well what it is—and therefore, as he in the morning found her to be, not that beautiful Rachel as was promised, but a blear■eyed Leah; so the sinner, too late—when his conscience awakes—sees himself miserably cheated, and disappointed of what he looked for, and finds a purgatory where he expected a paradise. Now, that thou mayest, Christian, the better see the ugly shape of this monster sin, observe from the word of God these four particulars concerning it. First. The birth and extraction of it. Second. The names given it. Third. Its nature. And, Fourth. Its properties.

[Four particulars concerning sin, taken from the word of God.]

First Particular. The birth and extraction of sin. Who is its father, and from whom is it descended? The holy God disowns it. The sun can as soon beget darkness, as God, who is 'the Father of lights,' be the author of sin. From him comes 'every good and perfect gift,' James 1:17. But, O sin, whence art thou? Thou art not his creature; he neither made thee, nor ever moved any to thy production. Certainly if it were from him he would like and love it. Every one loves his own child, though never so black. Much more doth God like what is his. We find him looking back upon every day's work of the creation, and upon all at last, pleased with what he had done, all 'was very good,' Genesis 1:31. But of sin what he thinks, see Deuteronomy 7:25-26; Proverbs 6:16; Revelation 2:6, Revelation 2:15, where he expresseth his detestation and hatred of it, from which hatred proceed all those direful plagues and judgments thundered from the fiery mouth of his most holy law against it. Nay, not only the work, but the worker also, of iniquity, becomes the object of his hatred, Psalms 5:5. So that if God were the author of sin, he would be a hater of himself. Well, at whose door then doth God lay this brat to find a father? Surely at the devil's: 'Ye are of your father the

devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do,' John 8:44. And again in the same place, 'When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.' Sin is a brat which calls the devil both father and mother. For of himself, even of his own free will—the womb wherein it was conceived—did he beget it; and having begot it, put it out to nurse to man. And is not man, who was made to serve and enjoy the great God his Maker, highly set up, to suckle and carry this his infernal child about in his arms? Ah, poor man, whence art thou fallen? It is strange that the very remembering whose offspring thyself wert doth not strike thee into a horror, to see thy precious soul debased unto such servitude as to fulfil the lusts of that cursed spirit. Never let us spit at the witch for suffering the devil's imps to suck on her body, while we can prostitute our souls to any of his lusts.

Second Particular. The names and titles with which the word stigmatizeth sin. And God, to be sure, miscalls none. If a thing be sweet, he will not say it is bitter; if good, he will not call it evil. For he claps a woe upon his head that doth so, Isaiah 5:20. Never think to find honey in the pot when God writes poison on its cover. We may say of every sin in this respect what Abigail of her husband—as is its name in Scripture, so is it. If God call it folly, then there is no wisdom to be found in it. The devil indeed teacheth sinners to cover foul practices with fair names. Superstition must be styled devotion; covetousness, thrift; pride in apparel, handsomeness; looseness, liberty; and madness, mirth. And truly there is great need for sinners to do thus, to make this fulsome dish go down with less regret. There are some have made a hearty meal of horseflesh, or the like carrion, under a better name, whose stomachs would have risen against it if they had known what it was. Therefore as persecutors of old wrapped the Christians in the skins of those beasts which would render them the most desirable prey to those they were cast; so Satan and our false hearts present sins to us under those names that will sharpen our appetites to them, or at least take away the abhorrence our consciences else would show against them. But canst thou be content, poor soul, to be so easily cheated? Will the fire burn thee the less, into which thou art emboldened to put thy finger, because a knave that owes thee and ill turn tells thee that it will not hurt thee? Hear rather what the God of truth saith of sin, and by what names he calls it, and you shall find that whatever is dreaded by us, or hated, feared, or loathed, in all the world, they are borrowed, and applied to sin—the vomit of dogs; the venom of serpents; the stench of rotten sepulchres; dunghills and jakes; the deadliest diseases and sores, gangrenes, leprosies, and plague, attributed to it, 2 Peter 2:22; Luke 3:7; Romans 3:13; 2 Timothy 2:17; 1 Kings 8:38; yea, hell is raked for an expression to set it out—it being compared to the very fire of hell itself, James 3:6. And because of their penury and straitness of these appellations —therefore it is called by its own name, as the worst that God himself can say thereof, 'sinful' sin, Romans 7:13. Now what shall be done to the thing that the great God thus loathes, and loads with such names of dishonour, thereby to signify his abhorrence of it? What? Every gracious heart will soon resolve, that he should pursue it with fire and sword, till we have executed upon it the judgement written in its utter ruin and destruction.

Third Particular. The nature of sin, as the word defines it. See its description, 'sin is the transgression of the law,' 1 John 3:4—a few words, but of weight enough to press the soul that commits it to hell, yea to press sin itself to death in the heart of a saint, if laid on with these considerations—

1. Whose law it is by sinning we break. It is not that of some petty prince—and yet such conceive their honour so deeply concerned in their laws, that they take vengeance on the violators of them—but of the great God, whose glorious name is in every attribute assaulted and reproached by the sinner, yea the very life and being of God is endeavoured to be destroyed. Peccatum est deicidium—sin is deicide. For he that would rob God of his honour is an enemy to his very being; because God's being is so wrapped up in his glory, that he cannot outlive the loss of it. These, it is true, are above the reach of the sinner's short arm, but that is no thanks to him, because his sin aims at these, though it cannot carry its shot so far as to hurt him.

2. What law it is; not cruel, written with the blood of his creatures, as the laws of some tyrant princes are, who consult their own lust, and not their people's good, in their edicts. But this law is equal and good; in {the} keeping of which is life. So that no provocation is given by any rigour of unnecessary taxes imposed upon us to rise up against it. 'What iniquity,' saith God, 'have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me?' Jeremiah 2:5. He that put away his wife was to give her a bill of divorce, declaring the cause of his leaving her. Thus God condescends to expostulate with sinners, and asks what evil they can charge upon him or his government that they forsake him. But, alas! no more cause can be given than why a beast, in a fat sweet pasture, should break the hedge to get into a barren heath or a dirty lane, where nothing but starving is to be had.

3. At whose notion the poor creature transgresseth the good law of God, and that is of a cursed spirit the devil, no less our enemy than God's enemy. Now for a child at the solicitation of his father's greatest enemy, and his own also, to take up rebellious arms against a dear loving parent, adds to the monstrosity and unnaturalness of the fact. This thou dost, Christian, when by sin thou transgressest the law of God. And now, by this time, methinks I see thy blood to rise and boil with anger in thee, while thy God points to thy sin and tells thee, 'This, O my child, is the enemy that would take away my glory and life too by thy means—who by debt both of nature and grace owest thy whole self to live and die for the maintaining of my honour!' Art thou not as ready to fall upon thy sin, and drag it to execution, as the servants of Ahasuerus were to lay hold of Haman, and cover his face as a son of death, when their prince did but vent his wrath conceived against him? Esther 7:8. Certainly, were but the love of God well kindled in our bosoms, we should even spit fire on the face of any that durst tempt us to sin against him.

Fourth Particular. The properties of sin discovered by the word of God. I shall content myself with three. It hath, 1. A defiling property. 2. A disturbing property. 3. A damning property.

1. Sin hath a defiling property, called 'filthiness of flesh and spirit,' 2 Corinthians 7:1. It besmears both. 'The whole world' is said to, 'lie in wickedness,' as a beast in his dung and ordure, or as a rotten carcass, in its slime and putrefaction, 1 John 5:19. It is that leprosy which infects man, and the very house he lives in also. Wherefore did God send the flood in Noah's time, but to wash away that filthy generation as dung from the face of the earth? But, because this pest-house of the world is not cleared sufficiently, it is reserved for a more thorough purgation by fire at the last day. Do but think, Christian, what a beauty man was till he was pock-broken—if I may say so—by sin, and what a glory shined upon the whole creation before sin, by its poisonous breath, had dimmed and blasted it; and then guess what a filthy thing it is—what a strong poison it is that not only diffused its malignity through the soul and body of man, but had such direful effects upon the

whole compages and frame of the visible creation, that it will never come to its first beauty, till, like a battered, cankered piece of plate, it be melted and refined by a universal conflagration. And is not your soul yet loathed with the thoughts of sin? Some beasts, they say, the ermine for one, will die before she will be got in the dirt to defile her beautiful skin. And wilt thou, Christian—and that after it hath cost Christ his blood to purchase his Spirit for thy cleansing—bedabble thyself in sin's puddle? God forbid! Did Ezekiel so abhor to eat man's dung imposed on him by God that he cries out, 'Ah Lord God! behold, my soul hath not been polluted?'&c., Ezekiel 4:14. And is any unclean lust, which God himself compares to no better thing, so dainty a bit as to be desired by thee, Christian, who has sat at Christ's table, and knowest what entertainment there is to be had? Methinks thou shouldst rather cry out with the prophet, 'Ah, Lord God! my soul hath not been (or at least let it not be) polluted with this abominable thing.'

2. Sin hath a disturbing property. Sin, it breaks the peace of the soul, yea of the whole world. It brings confusion with it, and makes the place a seat of war wherever it comes. An army of evils are at its heels to set down where it is lodged: 'If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door,' Genesis 4:7. 'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked,' Isaiah 57:21. Here is God's hand, we see, to the warrant sentencing the sinner to the rack of a self-torturing conscience. Who is able to express the anguish which an accusing conscience feels, and those dreadful fits of convulsion with which it rends and tears itself? One you hear roaring and crying out, 'There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither...any rest in my bones because of my sin,' Psalms 38:3. Another, 'while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted,' Psalms 88:15. A third, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear,' Genesis 4:13. And a fourth, so unable to stand under the clamour of his guilt, that he runs to the halter and hangs himself to get out of the din and dolour it makes in his ears, Matthew 27:5. And is not he like to be well cured of his torment that throws himself into hell-fire to find ease? And as sin disturbs the inward peace of the soul, so the outward peace of the world. What else but sin hath put the world in an uproar, and set all the creatures together by the ears? 'From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?' James 4:1. This sets nearest relations at bitter feud, firing the house over their heads, so that husband and wife, parents and children, cannot abide together under one roof. Delilah, she betrays her husband into his bloody enemies' hands. And Absalom riseth up to take away the life of his dear father. This is the whisperer that 'separates chief friends,' and makes those that have drunk of our cup to lift up the heel upon us; and with whom we have 'taken sweet counsel together,' to plot our ruin, and give counsel against our very life. In a word, such a kindle-fire sin is, that the flames it kindles fly not only from one neighbour's house to the other, but from one nation to another. All the water in the sea that runs between kingdom and kingdom, cannot quench the wars it raiseth; but it makes men that live at one end of the world thirst for the blood and treasure of those that live at the other. So that the earth is but as a cockpit, where there is little else but fighting and killing one another. And is this the guest thou canst find in thy heart to bid welcome within thy bosom?

3. Sin hath a damning property. If all the mischief sin did us was in this world, it were bad enough; but considering our short stay here, it would give some ease to our thoughts, that we should have done with it and this life together. But to be worried here by it, and damned for it also to eternal torments in another world, this is intolerable! Methinks that place, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,' Matthew 25:41, should make us sit down and consider, whether any sin be so

pleasurable or desirable, as should make it worth lying in endless torments to obtain and enjoy it a few fleeting days and months, that are at an end almost as soon as their beginning commenceth. Thou knowest, sinner, already the best of thy sinful pleasure, but not the worst of thy punishment, which is so great as loseth its chief emphasis by translating into our language, and clothing it with expressions borrowed even from those things that most dread us in this life. Alas! what is the fire and brimstone we see and fear so much here, to that which burns in the infernal lake? Truly, little more than painted fire in the wall is to that which burns on our hearth. This in our chimney was made for our use and comfort chiefly, but the fire in hell—whether material or not is not material to know—is for no other end than to torment sinners in. This in our kitchen is kindled by a little puff of wind, and quenched by a little water; but 'the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle that,' Isaiah 30:33. And where shall we find buckets to quench that which God kindles? They say smelling of the earth is healthful for the body, and taking in the scent of this sulfurous pit by frequent meditation cannot but be as wholesome for the soul. If many had descended thus into hell while on earth, their souls had not, it is like, dropped into hell when their bodies fell into the grave. O Christian! be sometimes walking in the company of those places of Scripture which set out the state of the damned in hell, and their exquisite torments there. This is the true 'house of mourning,' and the going into it by serious meditation is a sovereign means to make 'the living lay it to heart,' and, laying it to heart, there is the less fear that thou wilt throw thyself by thy impenitency into this so uncomfortable a place, who art offered so fairly a mansion in heaven's blissful palace, upon thy faith and repentance.

[We are to provide ourselves with Scripture answers to Satan's false reasonings.]

Direction Second. Provide thyself with Scripture answers to Satan's false reasonings with which he puts a fair colour on his foul motions, the better to gain thy consent. He is wily. Thou hadst need be wary. He doth not only propound the sinful object, but also sets a fair gloss upon it, and urges the soul with arguments to embrace his offer. And when sin comes thus forth Goliath-like, it is not Saul's armour, but the 'smooth stones of the brook,' not thy own resolution, but the divinity of Scripture-arguments, that can preserve thee, or prostrate thy enemy. Now, thou wilt find in the word an answer put into thy mouth to refel[6] all Satan's sophistry. And this indeed is to be an Apollos, 'mighty in the Scripture,' when we can stop the devil's mouth, and choke his bullets with a word seasonably interposed betwixt us and the temptation. It will not therefore be amiss to give a few instances whereby this direction may be made more easily practicable in the hand of weaker Christians. First. Sometimes Satan insinuates himself into a soul by endeavouring to make one sin appear of no account. Second. By giving an opportunity of committing a sin in secret. Third. By the example of others.

[Satan tempts to sin by making one sin of no account.]

First Instance. Sometimes Satan thus insinuates himself into a soul—'what, man, will one sin, if yielded to, so much hurt thee? One mole doth not mar the beauty of the face, nor can one sin spoil the beauty of thy soul; and it is no more than I am a suitor for. If I bade thee wallow in every puddle, thou mightst well abhor the motion; but why art thou so afraid of one spot being seen on thy garment? The best jewel hath its flaw, and the holiest saint his failing.' Now to refel this motion, when so mannerly and modestly proposed

1. Answer. The word will tell thee that no sin is single. It is impossible to embrace or allow one sin, and be free of others. For,

(1.) He that yields to one sin casts contempt upon the authority that made the whole law, and upon this account, breaks it all. ‘Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all,’ James 2:10. And he gives the reason in the next words, ‘for he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill.’ Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill thou art a transgressor of the law. Not that he is guilty of all distributively. but collectively, as Estius well notes. For the law is one copulative. One commandment cannot be wronged, but all are interested in the same; as the whole body suffers by a wound given to one part: ‘God spake all these words,’ Exodus 20:1-26. They are ten words, but one law.

(2.) By allowing one sin we disarm and deprive ourselves of having a conscientious argument to defend ourselves against any other sin. He that can go against his conscience in one, cannot plead conscience against any other. For, if the authority of God awes him from one, it will from all. ‘How can I do this,...and sin against God?’ said Joseph. I doubt not but his answer would have been the same if his mistress had bid him lie for her, as now when she enticed him to lie with her. The ninth commandment would have bound him as well as the seventh. Hence the apostle exhorts not to ‘give place to the devil, Ephesians 4:27—implying, that by yielding to one we lose our ground, and what we lose he gains; and let him alone to improve advantages. The little wimble once entered, the workman can then drive a great nail. One sin will widen thy swallow a little, that thou wilt not so much strain at the next.

(3.) Allow one sin and God will give you over to other sins. ‘Wherefore God also gave them up unto uncleanness,’ Romans 1:24. The Gentiles gave themselves to idolatry, and God gave them up unto other beastly lusts, ver. 22. When Judas began to play the thief, I question whether he meant to turn traitor. No, his treason was a punishment for his thievery. He allowed himself in a secret sin, and God gave him up to one more open and horrid. But,

2. Answer. Suppose thou couldst—which is impossible—take one sin into thy bosom, and shut all the rest out, yet the word will tell thee that thou art a servant to that one sin, and that thou canst not be so and a servant to God at the same time.

(1.) That thou wouldst be a servant to that one sin. ‘His servants ye are to whom ye obey,’ Romans 6:16; and consequently the devil’s servants, whose kingdom you endeavour to hold up by defending though this one castle, against God your Maker. Neither will it excuse thee to say thou intendest not so. Haply, covetousness is thy sin, and it is thy profit thou aimest at, not siding with the devil against God. Though this is not thy express end who sinnest, yet it is the end of the sin which thou committest, and of Satan that puts thee upon the work, and so will be charged upon thee at last. The common soldier ordinarily looks no higher than his pay. This is it draws him into the field. Yet they make themselves traitors by assisting him that leads them on against their prince; and it will not serve the turn for them to say they fought for their pay, and not to dethrone him. Ahab sold himself ‘to work evil in the sight of the Lord,’ 1 Kings 21:20. And yet we read not that he made any express covenant with the devil. But the meaning is, he did that which in effect amounted to no less. He knew that if he sinned he should pay his soul for it, and he would have his lust, notwithstanding he was acquainted with its price; and therefore, interpretatively, he sold his soul that he might enjoy his sin.

(2.) Thou mayest learn from the word that thou canst not be a servant to any one sin and to God at the same time. ‘No man can serve two masters; ye cannot serve God and mammon,’ Matthew 6:24. By mammon is meant one particular lust, covetousness. One body may as well have two souls, as one soul two masters. One soul hath but one love, and two cannot have the supremacy of it. I have heard, indeed, of a wretch that said, ‘He had one soul for God, and another for the devil also.’ But, if he hath one soul in hell, I am afraid he will not find another for heaven. And one sin will certainly send thee thither as a thousand. ‘Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters,’ &c., ‘shall inherit the kingdom of God.’ He doth not only exclude him that is all these, but any of these. It is certain that all men shall die, but all do not die of the same disease. And as certain all impenitent sinners shall be damned, but one is damned for one sin, and a second for another. But all meet at last in the same hell.

[Satan tempts to sin by opportunity given for committing it in secret.]

Second Instance. May be thou art tempted to sin by an opportunity of committing it in secret —where thou shalt not pay the loss of thy credit for the purchase of thy pleasure. This was the snare the simple young man’s foot was taken in, Proverbs 7:19. His strumpet tells him, ‘the good man was from home;’ the coast was clear. They might drink their stolen waters without fear of being indicted for the theft. Too many, alas! whom the shame of the world keeps from knocking at the fore-door, are easily persuaded to sin if they may slip in at the postern. Saul himself, though ashamed to go to a witch in his princely robe, because he had possessed the world with an opinion of his hatred of that sin by putting such to death, yet is not afraid to go incognito to one. Therefore, as it added much to the weight of the temptations with which the devil assaulted Christ, that he came to him in the wilderness and solicited him but to a private, yea secret, acknowledging of him, where none could tell tales what passed between them; so it doth to the glory of that complete victory which Christ got over Satan in them all. And how got Christ it, but by the sword of the word? Take thou, Christian, therefore the same weapon up to defend thyself against the same enemy.

1. The word will tell thee that God is privy to thy most secret sins. ‘Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance,’ Psalms 90:8. They are as plainly seen by him as anything can be by us at noonday. Nay, he doth not only see and know them, but he sets them before him as a mark to shoot his arrows of vengeance at. So, Proverbs 15:3, ‘the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.’ As he sees when thou shuttest thy closet to pray in secret, and will reward thy sincerity; so he seeth when thou dost it to sin in secret, and will reward thy hypocrisy. Now, if a king sitting on his throne ‘scattereth away all evil with his eyes,’ Proverbs 20:8, how much more powerfully would the eye of God, if seen looking on us, chase away the most secret motion that stirreth in our heart to sin! Better all the world to see thee, than God, who hath the wrong done him by the sin, and therefore concerned in justice to do himself right upon thee. He cannot let any sin go unpunished, because a righteous judge. But there are some sins which require a more immediate hand of divine vengeance than other, and therefore called ‘crying sins.’ And they are such which, either by the place and power of the offender, man dares not punish, or else so secretly committed, that man cannot take cognizance of the fact: as Cain’s bloody murder of his brother—‘Thy brother’s blood crieth,’ Genesis 4:10.

2. The word will inform thee of an informer that thou hast in thy own bosom—thy conscience, I mean, which goes along with thee, and is witness to all thy fine-laid plots, and what it sees it writes down, for it is a court of record. Thou canst not sin so fast but it can write after thee. And the pen with which conscience writes down our sins hath a sharp nib; it cuts deep into the very heart and soul of the sinner. The heathens, their thoughts are said to accuse them, Romans 2:15. And no torment in the world comparable to an accusing conscience. 'The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?' Proverbs 18:14. Who? Not men, not angels. Nullus oculus molestior cuique suo: non est aspectus quem tenebrosa conscientia suffugere magis velit, minus possit (Bern.)—no eye affrights a sinner more than his own; it is that which he most desires to run from, but least can. Such a poor wretch is like Regulus in his barrel stuck with nails, which way soever he turns himself, in vulnus inclinat, he is pricked and wounded. O read those sad instances of Cain, Saul, and Judas, with others upon Scripture record, who have been on this rack, and thou wilt be afraid to sin where conscience stands by.

3. Consult 'the word,' and thou wilt find that God usually hath put them to shame in this world, that have promised themselves most secrecy in their sinning. It is one of God's names to be a 'revealer of secrets,' Daniel 2:47. And among other secrets, he forgets not to 'bring to light' these 'hidden things of darkness, 1 Corinthians 4:5—those sins that are forged in a darker shop than others—and that often in this world. In these men speak what base thoughts they have of God, as if he were a God of the day and not of the night; therefore to vindicate this attribute, and to strike an inward fear thereof into the hearts of men, he doth dig these foxes out of their holes wherein they earth themselves, and expose their sins to the view of the world, which they thought none should have known besides themselves and their partners in the sin. Such an effect had the discovery of Ananias and Sapphira's secret sin. 'And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things,' Acts 5:11, Acts 5:13.

See therefore how God hath befooled men when they have arted it most in packing their sins, to hide them from the world's eye. No art was wanting in the patriarchs to conceal their unnatural sin against their brother. What a fair probable tale do they tell the old man their father, who believed all, and inquired no further! How true were they among themselves, though so many in the plot; that none of them should blab it out, at one time or another, was strange. How long did this sleep before discovered? And what a strange providence to bring their wickedness to light! So Gehazi played his part cunningly enough, one would think, which made him so bold to come before his master, and impudently lie to his head, not dream the least that he was privy to his sin. Yet this man is found out, and for the garments he got of Naaman by a lie, he had another given of the Lord, which he was to wear as a livery of his sin—for he was clothed with a leprosy—a garment not as others, to hide his shame, but to discover it to all the world—a garment more lasting than the two change of suits he had from the Syrian; for this lasted him all his life; neither was it then worn out, but to be put on by his children after him, 2 Kings 5:27. In a word, be he never such a saint, yet if he goes about to save himself from the shame of a sin by any secret plot of wickedness, he takes the direct way to bring that upon him which he contrives to keep off. Uriah's blood was shed only as a sinful expedient to save David's credit, that would have suffered if his folly with Bathsheba should become a town-talk. And how sped he with this his plot? Ah, poor man! all comes out to his greater shame. David shall know that God will be as tender of his own honour, as he is of his credit; 'for thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and

before the sun,' 2 Samuel 12:12. Yea, David himself at last is sick of his own plot, and was not at first more studious to hide his sin, than he was afterwards willing to acknowledge it; and therefore we find him, Psalms 51:1-19, standing as it were in a white sheet, and doing voluntary penance for his sin in all the churches of God so long as the Scriptures shall be read in their assemblies to the end of the world.

[Satan tempts to sin, by the example of others.]

Third Instance. May be thou art tempted to sin, by the example of others. Indeed, though example be an inartifical argument, yet it is of great force with many, especially if the persons quoted in favour of a sin be either the most, or thought to be the best. When most, they carry presently with them those that are false-hearted or weak-headed—as dead fishes and light straws swim with the stream; for which such, shame strikes the greatest stroke, and a multitude to bear one company in a sin, takes away the shame of it. Where all go naked, few will blush. They rather are exposed to shame that will be singular, and not do as the rest; as Micaiah, who was made a scorn because he would not tune his pipe to Ahab's ear, nor join with the whole college of his flattering chaplains in their judgment. Or, if they be such who have the reputation for wisdom and piety, then it oft proves a snare to them that are none of the worst; which should make all of high place or eminent grace very circumspect what opinion or practice they espouse. The devil is very brag when we can get such to set their hand to his testimonial. The country will soon ring of this, and their example be shown everywhere to draw in others. Why, such a one is of this opinion, he holds this and doth that, and I hope he is one you reverence and honour. Now, in this case, consult with the word, and it will bring thee off this temptation.

1. The word commands, that we bring the examples of men—be they who they will—to the test of the word. Is it their opinion that is quoted? 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,' Isaiah 8:20. It is the light which a man carries in his lantern for which we follow him. That gone we leave him. Now, we see by this scripture, he hath no light that hath not the word to vouch his opinion. So that, neither knows he whither himself goes, nor we whither such a one will lead us. Again, is it the practice of another that is laid before thee for thy copy to write after? What saith the word? 'Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil,' Exodus 23:2. Examples are not our warrant, but precepts. Neither will it procure a man a discharge, because he had a precedent in his sin. Adam, indeed, said the woman gave him the apple; but it did not excuse him from paying the reckoning with her. She was indeed the first in the transgression, yet both met in the punishment. Wouldst thou eat poison because another dares be so bold to be thy taster? Surely his example cannot make the poison less deadly to thee that dost pledge him.

2. The word will tell thee that the best of saints do not always foot it right; but too oft are found to tread awry. 'In many things we offend all,' James 3:2. And that is himself subject to step awry, may also lead thee aside. Therefore Paul, as holy a man as lived, when he calls others after him, would have them follow him with their eyes open, to see whether he followed Christ. 'Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ,' 1 Corinthians 11:1. The holiest life of the best saint on earth is but an imperfect translation of the perfect rule of holiness in the word, and therefore must be tried by it. Hence it is the character of sincerity to look to the way rather than the company. 'The highway of the upright is to depart from evil,' Proverbs 16:17. He consults with the word, whether the way be

good or evil. If he finds it evil, he will not go into it to bear another company, no, though he be a saint. Indeed, God suffers some to step awry, for the proof of others. Thus heresies come, 'that they who are approved may be made manifest,' 1 Corinthians 11:19; Deuteronomy 13:1. 'Thou shalt not hearken to the words of that prophet,...for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord you God with all your heart.' Thus I have given a few instances by which you may see how this sword of the word—as that in the cherubim's hand—may preserve the Christian from venturing to sin upon any pretence whatever it be.

[We are to hide the word in our heart, for our defence against the temptations to sin.]

Direction Third. Hide the word in thy heart. This was David's preservative. 'Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee,' Psalms 119:11. It was not the Bible in his hand to read it; not the word on his tongue to speak of it; nor in his head to get a notional knowledge of it; but the hiding it in his heart, that he found effectual against sin. It is not meat in the dish, but [in the] stomach, that nourisheth; not physic in the glass, but taken into the body, that purgeth. Now 'heart' in Scripture, though it be used for all the faculties of the soul, yet, principally, it is put for the conscience, and the affections.

First. Heart in Scripture, is often put for the conscience. 'For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things,' 1 John 3:20. That is, if our conscience condemn us justly, to be sure our case is sad, because God knows by us more than we by ourselves, and can charge us with many sins that conscience is not privy to.

Now thus, Christian, labour to hide the word in thy heart—that is, in thy conscience; let it there have a throne, and it will keep thee in a holy awe.

1. Look upon the word as stamped with divine authority, the law which the great God gives thee his poor creature to walk by. This impressed on thy conscience would make tremble at the thought of a sin, which is the traitor's dagger that strikes at God himself, by the contempt it casts upon his law. And if some assassins, intending to stab a prince, have been so overawed by a few beams of majesty shot from his mortal brow, that their hearts would not serve them to make the horrid attempt, how much more must the dread of the great God's majesty, darted from his word into the creature's conscience, deter him from practicing any treason against his Maker? 'Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word,' Psalms 119:161. As if he had said, I had rather incur their wrath for my holiness, than make thy word my enemy by my sin.

2. Look upon the word of God as that law by which thou art to be judged at the great day. 'God shall judge the secrets of men...according to my gospel,' Romans 2:16. Then the book of thy conscience shall be opened and compared with this, and accordingly will sentence of life or death be pronounced by Christ thy Judge. Thou mayest know beforehand how it will go with thee at that day. If now thou canst not stand before the word as opened by a poor minister, and applied to thy own conscience, what will you do when it is opened by Christ? Now thy conscience from the word condemns thee, but not finally; for by thy timely repentance and faith, the sentence of this private court may be reversed, and the word which even now bound thee over to death, will acquit and justify thee. But at that great day of assize there will be a final decision of thy cause. If then the judgement goes against thee, thou art a lost man for ever. No reversing the sentence, not so much

as a reprieve to stay the execution. But as the word goeth out of the Judge's mouth, the sinner's face is covered to be immediately delivered into the tormentor's hands. And darest now thou, O man, bid any lust welcome, while thou seest the gibbet set up, and the everlasting chains prepared, in which the word of God dooms every sinner to hang? Canst thou read thy sentence, and yet like thy sin that brings it inevitably upon thy head?

Second. Heart, in Scripture, is most frequently taken for the will and affections. 'My son, give me thine heart, Proverbs 23:26, that is, thy love. So, Deuteronomy 10:12, 'to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart.' And thus, Christian, to hide the word in thy heart would be a rare antidote against the poison of sin. The chains of love are stronger than the chains of fear. Herod's love of Herodias was too hard for his fear of John. He had some hold of his conscience that awed him, and bound his hands awhile. But his minion had his affections, and the heart can unbind the hands. His love to her made him shake off his respect to him, and at last embrue his hands in his blood. He that is only prisoner to the command, and bound to his good behaviour by the chains of terror which the threatening claps upon his conscience, may have these knocked off, and then he will shake off his obedience also. But he that loves the word, and the purity of its precepts, cannot turn traitor. When such a one sins, he makes as deep a wound in his own heart as in the law, and therefore trembles at displeasing God. 'I love thy testimonies; my flesh trembleth for fear of thee,' Psalms 119:119-120. O that is the blessed fear which is the daughter of love. Now, to inflame thy heart with love to the word, consider that it is the faithfullest monitor and the sweetest comforter thou hast in all the world.

1. It is thy faithfullest monitor. It tells thee plainly of all thy faults, and will not suffer sin to lie upon thee, but points to the enemy that hunts for the precious soul's life; it discovers all the designs and plots Satan and thy beloved lusts have against thee. This made David love it so dearly, 'Moreover by them is thy servant warned,' Psalms 19:11. Besides all its other good offices it doth for thee, it warns thee of every danger, and shows thee how to escape it. O how should this endear it to thee! Did Ahasuerus heap such abundant honour upon Mordecai, who had but once been a means to save his life by discovering a treason plotted against his person? How much more shouldst thou honour and love the good word of God, which hath so oft saved thy soul out of thy spiritual enemies' hands, and doth daily give thee warning how to escape the snares of sin, without which it were impossible for thee to find them out or avoid them. Was David so affected with the wisdom and love of Abigail in the advice she gave him, whereby he was kept from shedding blood in his fury, that he took her into his bosom to be his wife, as a reward of her kindness to him? And shall not the counsel the word hath given thee make thee in love much more with it?

2. The word is thy sweetest comforter. When the poor soul is distressed with guilt, and conflicteth with the terrors of divine wrath for his sins, O what miserable comforters then are this world's pleasures and treasures! How little can any creature contribute to the ease of such a one! No more than he who, standing upon the shore, and sees his friend drowning in the sea, but knows not how to reach any help to him. It is the word alone that can walk upon those waves, and come to the soul's relief. This is able to restore the soul, and buoy it up from the bottom of the sea of despair. Though the soul be, with those mariners, 'at its wits' end,' and knows not what to do, yet then the word stands up—as Paul before them—and, as it were, thus speaks to him, 'Poor soul, thou shouldst have hearkened to my voice, and not have loosed from thy harbour by sinning against God, to come to this harm and loss. But, be of good cheer; do thus and thus; repent of thy folly,

and speedily turn to thy God in Christ Jesus, and there shall be no loss of thy life.' There is forgiveness with the Lord, therefore he may be feared. And so, in all other troubles, this sends in the saint's comfort. When the world gives him gall, this brings wine; when it meets with nothing but crosses and vexations from that, this sweetly recreates and cheers his spirits. Here the Christian hath those cooling waters with which he quencheth and allays all his sorrows. And you know what a treasure a spring or fountain is accounted in dry or hot countries. Surely, Christian, when thou considerest how many a sweet draught thou hast had from the wells of salvation, thou wilt cry out with David, 'I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me,' Psalms 119:93. I do not wonder to see thy enemy endeavour to stop thy well at which thou shouldst draw thy comfort, but that he should be able to persuade thee to do it thyself is strange.

[We are to plead the promise against sin at the throne of grace.]

Direction Fourth. Plead the promise against sin at the throne of grace. He that hath law on his side, we say, may sue the king; and he that hath a promise on his side may, with a humble boldness, commence his suit with God. As the veins in the body have arteries to attend them with spirits, so precepts in the word have promises to inspirit the Christian, and empower him with strength for his duty. Is there a command to pray? There is also a promise to enable for prayer, Zechariah 12:10; Romans 8:26. Doth God require us to give him our heart? 'My son, give me thine heart,' Proverbs 23:26. The promise saith, 'A new heart also will I give you,' Ezekiel 36:26. Doth he command us to mortify our corruptions? And doth he not promise, 'Sin shall not have dominion over us?' Romans 6:14. Now, to obtain this promise, thou must plead and press it believingly at the throne of grace. Quod lex imperat, fides impetrat—what the precept commands, the prayer of faith begs and receives. Look, therefore, thou takest God in thy way. First besiege heaven, and then fear not overcoming sin and hell, when thou hast conquered heaven. Now thou warrest at God's cost, and not thy own. He that sets thee on will bring thee off. David was a man at arms, and could handle his weapon against this enemy as well as another, yet dares not promise himself success till he hath made God his second. 'Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me,' Psalms 119:133. But if thou thinkest to steal a victory by the strength of thy own resolution, expect an overthrow. And it will be a mercy thou shouldst be so served; for a foil will learn thee humility for the future, but a victory would increase thy pride. And that is a sad victory, when one sin carries away the spoils which thou hast taken from another. Jehoshaphat took the right course to speed, who, though he had almost a million men he could draw into the field—and that without draining his garrisons—yet bespeaks God's help, as if he had not a man to fight for him: 'We have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee,' 2 Chronicles 20:12. If an Alexander, or a Cæsar, had been at the head of such an army, I warrant you they would not have known what to have done, and not doubted all before them. But Jehoshaphat, a holy humble man, was better instructed. He knew a host signifieth nothing which hath not the Lord of hosts with them; and that the most valiant can find neither heart nor hand in the day of battle without his leave who made both. Nor wilt thou, Christian, be able to use thy grace in an hour of temptation, without new grace from God to excite and enforce what thou hast already received from him. And if thou expectest this from him, he expects to hear from thee. Neither speaks it God unwilling to give what he hath promised, because he pays not the debt of the promise until it be sued for at the throne of grace. No, God takes this method, only to secure his own glory in the giving, and also to greaten our comfort by receiving it

in this way of prayer, which is a fit expedient to attain both.

BRANCH FOURTH.

[Directions how to use the sword of the word against afflictions, outward or inward.]

I come now to give some little help, by way of direction, how the Christian may use this sword of the word for his defence against the fourth enemy and the last, but not the least—an army made up of many bands of afflictions, which from without invade, and from within distress, him. The Christian in this world stands not as you may see some houses, so fenced and shadowed with hills or woods that the wind beats but upon one side of them. No, he lies open to storms and tempests from all quarters of the heaven. We read of a strange kind of wind that at once 'smote the four corners of the house' in which Job's children were. Truly, thus the Christian's afflictions beset him round: no corner left unassaulted. And very often he is smitten on all sides at once; crossed in his estate, feeble in his body, and afflicted in his spirit all at once. And when so many seas of sorrows meet, it is no easy work for the poor Christian's heart to stand unbroken amidst the concurrent violence of their waves. Though this is most certain, that those dejections and perturbations with which the minds of the best saints are so discomposed and ruffled, yea sometimes dismayed and distressed, cannot be charged upon any deficiency of the gospel's principles for their support and comfort; but rather on their own impotence and unskillfulness to apply them in their several exigencies. My present task is to drop a few words of counsel to the weak Christian —how he may use and wield this sword of the word for his defence and comfort in any affliction without, or distress of spirit from within, that may assault him. And here I must not descend to particular cases —that were a voluminous work, and not so proper for this place—but only content myself with some general rules, that may be applicable to all. Now the cordial and restorative part of the word—that, I mean, which principally prepared and provided for the soul's comfort in all its discomforts and distresses—is contained in the promises. These well studied and improved, can alone make thee a comfortable Christian. Now, if thou wouldst improve the promises, so as not to be run down and trampled upon by Satan in any day of distress that comes upon thee, but comfortably lift up thy head in hope and confidence above the waves of thy present sorrows, then hearken to what follows in a few general rules or directions, prepared for thy help. First. Let it be thy first and chief care to get thy interest in and right to the promises cleared up. Second. Take some pains to sort the promises and reduce them to their proper heads. Third. Observe the latitude of the promises. Fourth. Be much in meditation on the promises. Fifth. Plead the promises at the throne of grace. Sixth. When thou hast sued the promise, act thy faith on the power and truth of God for the performance of it.

[We must see to have our interest in the promises made clear to us.]

Direction First. Let it be thy first and chief care to get thy interest in and right to the promises cleared up. For this is the hinge on which the great dispute betwixt between thee and Satan will move in the day of trouble, except the case can be resolved before that overtakes thee. O, it is sad for a poor Christian to stand at the door of the promise in the dark night of affliction afraid to draw the latch! Whereas, he should then come as boldly for shelter as a child into his father's house. 'Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast,' Isaiah 26:20. He that hath his title to the promise proved from the word to his own conscience, will not be wrangled easily out of his

comfort. Naboth would not part with his inheritance for the pleasure or displeasure of a king; but stands up in the defence of his right to death. And so resolves Job: ‘Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me,’ Job 27:5. This was his evidence for heaven. And therefore Satan used his best wits to make him throw it up, but never could effect it. His title was clear, and he will not be disputed out of it by Satan; no, nor afraid to vouch it before God himself, when God in his providence seemed most to disown him, and to handle him as an enemy: ‘Thou knowest that I am not wicked!’ Job 10:7. He saith not that he hath no sin, but in a humble appeal to God defends his state, that he is ‘not wicked.’ And this kept the chariot of his hope on its wheels all along his sad sufferings; that it was never quite overthrown, though sometimes it seemed to totter and shake.

[How our interest in the promises may be made clear to us.] Question. But how shall I know whether I have a right to the promises?

Answer First. Inquire whether thou art united to Christ by faith or no. The promises are not a common for swine to root in; but Christ’s sheep-walk, for his flock to feed in. ‘And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise,’ Galatians 3:29. The promise is the jointure, and cannot be had but by taking the person of Christ in marriage. And faith is the grace by which the soul gives his consent to take Christ as he is offered in the gospel. It is called, therefore, a receiving of Christ, John 1:12. There is no doubt but thou hast often been wooed in the ministry of the word by Christ’s spokesmen, and that question hath been put to thee for Christ, which was once to Rebekah, concerning her taking Isaac to husband, ‘Wilt thou go with this man?’ They have from the word set him forth in his glories before thee, who he is, and what he brings. Thou hast heard the articles upon which he is most willing to proceed to marriage, and take thee as his beloved into his bed and bosom. As,

1. That thou send away all other lovers which have had any pretensions to thee. For he will endure no competitor or partner with him in thy affections. The names of Baalim must be taken out of Israel’s mouth, and then God marries himself to her, Hosea 2:17-18.

2. That thou like his law as well as his love. Christ will not be husband where he may not be master also.

3. That thou take him for better and for worse, with his cross as well as with his crown—to suffer for him as well as to reign with him. Now, what entertainment hath this motion found with thee? Dost thou, upon the discovery made of Christ, take liking in his person? Is he transcendently amiable in thy eye, and precious to thy soul, so as to inflame thee with an insatiable desire of him? Canst thou freely pack away thy once darling lusts to gain him? and leap out of the arms of all thy carnal delights and sinful pleasures, to be taken into his embraces? Art thou as willing he should be thy Lord, as thy love? and as content to bow to his sceptre as lie in his bosom? In a word, art thou so enamoured with him, that thou now canst not live without him, nor enjoy thyself except thou mayest enjoy him? Thy heart is wounded with the darts which his love and loveliness have shot into it, and he himself carries the balm about him which alone can heal it. Let him now require what he will at thy hands, nothing he commands shall be denied. If he bids thee leave father and father’s house, thou wilt go after him, though it be to the other end of the world. If he tells thee though must be base and poor in the world for his sake, thou art resolved to beg with him rather than reign without him, yea die for him than live without him. Come forth, thou blessed of the Lord, and put on the bracelets of the promises; they are the love-tokens which I a from Christ’s hand to

deliver, and in his name to promise marriage to thee. Thou art the happy soul, if there be one on earth, that Christ betroths to himself. Languish no longer in thy unbelieving fears. For thy comfort know it is not Christ's custom to entangle soul's affections, and when he hath got their love, then to deny his to them, and cast them off.

Answer Second. Inquire what effect the promises have on thy soul. All who have right to the promises are transformed by the promise. As Satan shed his venomous seed into the heart of Eve by a promise, 'Ye shall not surely die,' Genesis 3:4—whereupon she presently conceived with sin, and was assimilated into the likeness of his diabolical nature, wicked as was the devil himself—so God useth the promises of the gospel—called therefore the 'incorruptible seed'—to beget his own image and likeness in the hearts of his elect. 'Exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature,' 2 Peter 1:4, that is, be partakers of such heavenly holy qualities and dispositions as will make you like God himself. The promises of the gospel have in them a fitness, and, when by the Spirit of God applied, a virtue to purify the heart, as well as to pacify the conscience. 'Now ye are clean,' saith Christ to his disciples, 'through the word which I have spoken unto you,' John 15:3. Lay, therefore, thy hand upon thy heart, and speak freely, poor soul. Have the promises had a sanctifying transforming virtue upon thee? What of God dost thou find in thy heart more since thy acquaintance with the promises than before? Some use promises as a protection for sin rather than an argument against it. As sin takes occasion by the commandment to work in the carnal heart all manner of concupiscence, so many are from the promise emboldened to sin more freely—like mountebanks that drink poison in confidence of their antidote. Now which way works the promise upon thy heart? If the seal of the promise leaves not the impress of God's image on thee, it ratifies no good to thee. If it produceth no holiness in thee, it brings no joy to thee. In a word, if the promise be not to thee a seed of grace, it is no evidence for glory. But if thou canst find it leaves the superscription of God upon thee, then it assures the love and favour of God to thee.

Answer Third. Inquire in what posture thy heart stands to the word of command. The promise, may be, is sweet to thy palate. This thou rollest like a lump of sugar under thy tongue, but are not thy teeth set against the command as if it were gall and wormwood? Thou smilest on the promise, but when put in mind of thy duty to the command, then haply thy countenance is changed, and a frown sits on thy brow, as if God were some austere master that breaks his servants' backs with heavy burdens. And thou couldst wish, with all thy heart, that a dispensation might be procured for thee to break now and then a command without forfeiting thy claim to the promise; but, because that is not to be hopes for, thou art so kind to thyself, as to give thyself leave to bow down to some idol of pleasure or profit that thou hast set up in thy heart, and hopest God will be merciful to thee, because it is only in this or that one way thou makest bold with him in. If this shoe fit thy foot—this be the true character of thy heart—which God forbid! thou hast no one lot belongs to thee in the lap of the promise. We have a comfortable promise, Psalms 50:15 but a guard is set about it, that no disobedient wretch should gather its sweet fruit: 'But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do,...that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee,' Psalms 50:16-17. On the other hand, if thou canst in truth say that it is not the holy command thou art offended with, but with thyself, because thou canst obey it no more perfectly—that it is not grievous to thee to keep, but break the laws of God; and, though thy foot too often slips, yet thy heart cleaves to them, and will not let thee lie where thou fallest, but up

thou gettest to mend thy pace, and mind thy steps better—for thy comfort know, poor soul, this sincere respect thou hast to the commandment is a most comfortable evidence for thy true title to the promise. When David was able to vouch his love to the command he did not question his title to the promise; Psalms 119:113, there he asserts his sincere affection to the precepts: ‘I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.’ Mark, he doth not say he is free from vain thoughts, but he hates them. He likes their company no better than one would a pack of thieves that break into his house. Neither saith he that he fully kept the law; but he loved the law, even when he failed exact obedience to it. Now from this testimony his conscience brought in for his love to the law, his faith acts clearly and strongly on the promise in the next words, ‘thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word,’ Psalms 119:114.

Answer Fourth. If thou questionest thy right to one promise, inquire whether thou canst not discern thy interest in a second, which, if thou canst, thou mayest conclude thou hast a right to that other thou didst doubt of, yea and to all the rest. For, as there is a concatenation of graces—he that finds one hath all —so of promises, he that is heir to one hath right to all. May be, when thou readest that promise, ‘Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God,’ Matthew 5:8, the remainders of corruption, not yet fully mortified in thy heart, scare thee from applying it to thyself as thy portion. But, for its next■neighbour promise, ‘Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled,’ Matthew 5:6, haply thou feelest such a pinching sense of thy guilt, and want of holiness, as will enforce the to acknowledge, that if ever man in a burning fever thirsted for drink, or one half■starved desired food, then dost thou crave and cry for the righteousness of Christ to justify thy person, and grace from Christ to sanctify thy nature, —so that thou canst not but see this promise spoken to thee. And if this belongs to thee, then the former, and all the other with it. For they are branches in the same covenant, which God doth not dismember, but gives it entire with all the branches growing on it to be the believer’s portion. Hence it is they are called ‘heirs of promise,’ Hebrews 6:17. Not heirs of this promise or that, but ‘of promise’—that is, of the covenant, which comprehends all the promises of the gospel. So that, as he hath hold of the man’s whole body that hath fast hold of his hand—though it be but one member of it—because it is knit to the rest, and by it he may draw the rest to him; so, if thou hast hold of any one promise thou hast hold of all other, and mayest infer thy right from this to them. And as one may draw out the wine of a whole hogshead at one tap, so may a poor soul derive the comfort of the whole covenant to himself through one promise which he is able to own and apply. ‘We know,’ saith Saint John, ‘that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren,’ 1 John 3:14. Eternal life is the cream and top of all covenant■blessings. Now, a poor Christian may, upon the inward feeling of this one grace of love in his heart—being the condition annexed to this promise—know that he is in a state of life and happiness. And why? Because wherever this grace is in truth there are all other saving graces. Christ is not divided in these, and consequently he that can apply this promise hath a right to all.

[We must sort the promises under their proper heads.]

Direction Second. Take some pains to sort the promises, as thou readest the Scriptures, and reduce them to their proper heads. There is great multiplicity of trials and temptations which God is pleased to exercise his saints with: ‘Many are the afflictions of the righteous,’ Psalms 34:19. And there is variety of promises provided to administer suitable comfort to their several sorrows. The Scriptures are a spiritual physic-garden, where grows an herb for the cure of every malady. Now it

were of admirable use tot he Christian if he would gather some of every sort, such especially as he hath found most to affect his heart, of which he can say with Origen, ‘hæc est scriptura mea,’—this portion of Scripture is mine, and then to write such down, as the physician doth his receipts for this and that disease, by themselves. May it not shame the Christian to see a scholar know every book in his great library, and what it treats on, so that he can presently go to any one of them all, and make use of their notions as he hath occasion; and that the Christian, who hath but one book to advise with, and that none of the greatest bulk, but sufficient as to make him wise unto salvation, so to make him comfortable in every condition that can befall him, should not be acquainted, if not with all, yet with some choice promises of every sort, to which he may be able to resort for counsel and comfort in the day of his distress? Now the best time for this work is when thou art yet at ease, in the lap of health and prosperity. The apothecary gathers his simples in the spring which he useth in winter. The mariner provides his tackling in the harbour before he puts forth to sea. And the wise Christian will store himself with promises in health for sickness, and in peace for future perils. It is too late for a man to think of running home for his cloak when on his way he is caught in a storm. ‘A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished,’ Proverbs 22:3.

[We must observe the comprehensiveness of the promises.]

Direction Third. Observe the full latitude of the promises. The covenant of grace comprehends the weak Christian as well as the strong, ‘if children, then heirs,’ Romans 8:17. Not if children grown to this age, or that stature, but ‘if children.’ Christ hath in his family children of all sizes, some little, and others tall Christians. If thou beest a child, though in the cradle, the promise is thy portion. ‘All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen,’ 2 Corinthians 1:20. ‘There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,’ Romans 8:1. See here, it is the state and relation the creature stands in, that gives him his title to the promise. Some saints have more grace from Christ than others, and so have more skill to improve these promises than their weaker brethren, whereby their present profits and incomes from the promise are greater. But they have no more interest in Christ than the other, and consequently the title of the weak Christian is as true to the promise as [that] of the strong. Shall the foot say, ‘Because I am the lowest member of the body, therefore the tongue will not speak for me, or the head take care of me?’ We will grant thee to be of the least and lowest rank of Christians; yet thou art in Christ, as the foot is in the body. And Christ hath made provision in the promise for all that are in him. We disfigure the promises when we make them look asquint, with an eye upon one saint and not on another, whereas they belong to all: ‘He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life,’ John 3:36. Who now is there meant? Only he that believes above doubting? I trow not. He that bids us receive the ‘weak in faith,’ will not himself reject them.

[We must be much in meditation of the promises.]

Direction Fourth. Be much in meditation of the promises. Whence is it that the poor Christian is so distressed with the present affliction that lies upon him, but because he museth more on his trouble than on the promise? There is that in the promise which would recreate his spirit, if he could but fix his thoughts upon it. When the crying child once fastens on the teat, and begins to draw down the milk, then it leaves wrangling, and falls asleep at the breast. Thus the Christian ceaseth complaining of his affliction when he gets hold on the promise, and hath the relish of its

sweetness upon his heart. ‘In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul,’ Psalms 94:19. When a swarm of bees dislodge themselves they are all in a confusion, flying here and there without any order, till at last they are hived again. Then the uproar is at an end and they fall to work peaceably as before. Truly, even so the Christian will find it in his own heart. God, in the promise, is the soul’s hive. Let the Christian dislodge his thoughts thence, and presently they run riot, and fly up and down as in an affright at the apprehension of the present affliction or temptation lies upon him, till he can recollect himself, and settle his heart again upon the promise, and then he recovers his former peace and composure. Hence the Spirit of God sounds a retreat to the troubled thoughts of afflicted saints, and calls them off from poring on that which roils them, into God, where alone they can be quiet and at ease. ‘Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him,’ Psalms 37:7. And David, finding his soul, like the dove while flying over the waters, without all repose, calls it back into the meditation of God and his promise, as the only ark where it could find rest. ‘Return unto thy rest, O my soul,’ Psalms 116:7. The Christian’s heart is of that colour which his most abiding constant thoughts dye into. Transient flitting thoughts, be they comfortable or sad, do not much work upon the soul, or alter its temper into joy or sorrow. Neither poison kills, nor food nourisheth, that doth not stay in the body. No, then the affliction soaks into the heart, and embitters the Christian’s spirit into perplexing fears and disconsolate dejections, when his thoughts lie steeping in his sorrows from day to day—when, like her in the gospel, he is ‘bowed down with a spirit of infirmity,’ that he cannot raise his heart from the thought of his cross and trial to meditate on any promise that should refresh him. Such there are, God knows, whom Satan and their own pensive hearts keep such close prisoners, that no comfortable meditation is suffered to speak or stay with them. And again, on the other hand then the promise works effectually, when it is bound upon the Christian’s heart, when he wakes with it and walks with it. No pain he feels, no danger he fears, can pluck him from his breast; but, as Samson went on his way eating of the honeycomb, so he feeding on the sweetness of the promise. Here is a Christian that will sing when another sighs, will be able to spend that time of his affliction in praising God, which others—whose thoughts are scattered and split upon what they suffer —too commonly bestow on fruitless complaints of their misery, and discontented speeches which reflect dishonourably upon God himself. Let it be thy care therefore, Christian, to practice this duty of meditation. Do not only exchange a few words with the promise, as one does with a friend passing by at his door. But invite the promise, as Abraham did the angels, Genesis 18:1-33, not to pass away till thou hast more fully enjoyed it. Yea, constrain it as the disciples did Christ, to stay with thee all the night of thy affliction. This is to ‘acquaint’ ourselves indeed with God, the ready way to be at peace. This is the way the saints have taken to raise their faith to such a pitch, as to triumph over the most formidable calamities. ‘My beloved,’ saith the spouse, ‘shall lie all night between my breasts.’ That is, when benighted with any sorrowful afflicting providence, she shall pass away the night comfortably in the meditation of his love and loveliness, his beauty and sweetness. Never will the Christian come to any kindly heat of comfort in his spirit, till he takes this Abishag of the promise into his bosom to cherish him. And this will do it indeed. A soul that hath learned this heavenly art of meditation will feel no more the extremity of any affliction, than you do the sharpness of the cold weather when you are sitting by a good fire, or lying in a warm bed. It was a notable speech of Julius Palmer, an English martyr: ‘To them,’ saith he, ‘that have their mind fettered to the body as a thief’s foot is to a pair of stocks, it is hard to die. But if any be able to separate his soul from his body, then by the help of God’s Spirit, it is no more mastery for such a one than to drink this cup.’ He meant, if the

creature be able to elevate his mind and thoughts above his sufferings by heavenly meditation on the ‘great and precious promises,’ then it were nothing to suffer. Such a one, his soul is in heaven; and a soul in heaven feels little what the flesh meets with on earth. Here, O ye Christians, is the most glorious prospect to be seen on this side heaven! When the soul stands upon this Pisgah of meditation, looking by an eye of faith through the perspective of the promise upon all the great and precious things laid up by a faithful God for him, it is easy to despise the world’s love and wrath. But alas! it is hard for us to get up thither, who are so short-breathed and soon tired with a few steps up this mount of God. O let us all cry out, as once David, ‘Lead me to the rock that is higher than I!’ And with him in another place, ‘Who will bring me into the strong city?...wilt no thou, O God?’ So, who will lift us up to this high, holy hill of meditation, higher than all the surging waves that dash upon us from beneath, where we may see all our creature-enjoyments drowned, yet ourselves not wetshod? Wilt not thou, O God? Yes, our God would do this for us, would we but shake off our sloth, and show, by parting with our mandrakes to purchase his company, that we highly prize the same. My meaning is—would we but frequently retire from the world, and bestow some of that time in secret waiting upon God which we lavish out upon inferior pleasures and entertainments of the creature, we should invite God’s Holy Spirit to us. Let a wicked man set up a lust for his thoughts to dally with, and the devil will soon be at his elbow to assist him. And shall we not believe the Holy Spirit as ready to lend his helping hand to a holy meditation? Doubtless he is. Spread thou thy sails and the Spirit will fill them with his heavenly breath. Be but thou the priest to lay the wood and sacrifice in order, and fire from heaven will come down upon it. Be thou but careful to provide fuel—gather from the promises matter for meditation, and set thy thoughts awork upon it—and the Spirit of God will kindle thy affections. ‘While I was musing,’ saith David, ‘the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue,’ Psalms 39:3. Isaac met his bride in the fields; and the gracious soul her beloved, when she steps aside, to walk with the promise in her solitary thoughts.

[We must plead the promises at the throne of grace.]

Direction Fifth. Plead the promises at the throne of grace. This must not be disjointed at the former. Indeed, as the ingredients of an excellent receipt do not work the cure severally, but as tempered together; so these directions, being social means, must not be severed, but jointly observed. And this direction I am now speaking to, besides a universal influence it hath upon all the other, is linked by an especial affinity to the former. In vain do we charge the gun, if we intend not to let it off. Meditation filleth the heart with heavenly matter, but prayer gives the discharge and pours it forth upon God, whereby he is overcome to give the Christian his desired relief and succour. The promise is a bill or bond, wherein God makes himself a debtor to the creature. Now, though it is some comfort to a poor man that hath no money at present to buy bread with, when he reads his bills and bonds, to see that he hath a great sum owing him, yet this will not supply his present wants and buy him bread. No, it is the putting his bond in suit must do this. By meditating on the promise thou comest to see there is support in, and deliverance out of, affliction engaged for. But none will come till thou commencest thy suit, and by the prayer of faith callest in the debt. ‘Your heart shall live that seek God,’ Psalms 69:32. ‘They looked unto him, and were lightened,’ Psalms 34:5. God expects to hear from you, before you can expect to hear from him. If thou restrainest prayer, it is no wonder the mercy promised is retained. Meditation, it is like the lawyer’s studying the case in order to his pleading it at the bar. When, therefore, thou hast viewed the

promise, and affected thy heart with the riches of it, then ply thee to the throne of grace, and spread it before the Lord. Thus David, ‘Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope,’ Psalms 119:49.

[We must act our faith on the power and truth of God for the performance of the promises.]

Direction Sixth. When thou hats sued the promise, act thy faith on the power and truth of God for the performance of it; and that against sense and reason, which rise up to discourage thee. For, as thy faith is feeble or strong on these, so wilt thou draw little or much sweetness from the promises. The saints’ safety lies in the strength and faithfulness of God who is the promiser; but the present comfort and repose of an afflicted soul is fetched in by faith relying on God as such. Hence it is, though all believers are out of danger when in the saddest condition that can befall them, yet too many, alas! of them are under fears and dejections of spirit, because their faith acts weakly on a mighty God, timorously and suspiciously on a faithful God. ‘Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?’ Matthew 8:26. You see the leak at which the water came in to sink their spirits; they had ‘little faith.’ It is not what God is in himself, but what our apprehensions at present are of God, that pacifies and comforts a soul in great straits. If a man fear the house will fall on his head in a storm, though it be as unmovable as a rock, yet that will not ease his mind till he thinks it so. Were a man under the protection of never so faithful a friend, yet so long as his head is full of fears and jealousies to the contrary, that he will at last leave and cast him off, this man must needs have an uncomfortable life, though without cause. You see then of what importance it is to keep up the vigour and vivacity of thy faith on the power and truth of the promises. And if thou meanest to do this, banish sense and reason from being thy counsellors. How came Abraham not to stagger in his faith, though the promise was so strange? The apostle resolves us: ‘He considered not his own body now dead,’ Romans 4:19. And what made Zacharias reel? He made sense his counsellor, and thought he was too old for such news to be true. This is the bane of faith, and consequently of comfort in affliction. We are too prone to carry our faith, with Thomas, at our fingers’ ends; and to trust God no further than our hand of sense can reach. It is not far that sense can reach; and but little further that reason’s purblind eye can see. God is oft on his way to perform a promise and bring joyful news to his afflicted servants, when sense and reason conclude their case is desperate.

These three, sense, reason, and faith, are distinct, and must not be confounded. Some things we know by sense which we do not understand the reason of, as the sympathy of the lodestone with iron —why it draws that the baser metal, and not gold; and why the mariner’s needle espouses the north point rather than any other. Some things we apprehend by reason that are not discerned by sense—as the magnitude of the sun’s body to exceed the circumference of the earth, which, the eye being judge, may be almost covered with one’s hat; and other things clear to faith, that dunce and pose both sense and reason. Paul knew by faith, in that dismal sea-storm where all of being saved was taken away—that is, sense and reason being judges—not a man should lose his life. ‘Be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me,’ Acts 27:25. When the angel smote Peter on the side, and bade him ‘arise up quickly...and follow me,’ he did not allow sense and reason to reply and cavil at the impossibility of the thing. How can I walk that am in fetters? Or to what purpose when an iron gate withstands us? But he riseth, and his chains fall off —he follows, and the iron gate officiously opens itself to them.

Say not, poor Christian, ‘It is impossible to bear this affliction, or pass that temptation.’ Let faith follow the promise, and God will loose these knots that sense and reason tie. Luther bids, crucifige illud verbum, quare?—crucify that word, wherefore? Obey the command, and ask not a reason why God enjoins it. It is necessary to bid the Christian, in great afflictions and temptations, to crucify the word quomodo? —how shall I go through this trouble—hold out in that assault? Away with this ‘how shall I?’ Hath not the great God who is faithful given thee promises enough to ease thy heart of these needless fears and cares, in that he tells thee, ‘He will never leave thee or forsake thee, his grace shall be sufficient for thee?’ Nothing ‘shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.’ And a hundred more comfortable assurances from the lip of truth to stand betwixt thee and all harm. Why then dost thou trouble thyself about this improbability and that mountainous difficulty that sense and carnal reason heave up and interpose to eclipse thy comfort from thy approaching deliverance? ‘Shut the windows, and the house will be light,’ as the Jewish proverb saith. Judge not by sense, but by faith on an omnipotent God; and these bugbears will not scare thee. Credere improbabilia vigoris est intellectus, sicut amare damnosa et ignominiosa vigoris est affectus. (Parisiensis, De Fide)—it is the highest act of our understanding to believe those things which seem most improbable; as it is the highest act of love, for Christ’s sake to take pleasure in those things that bring pain and shame with them. For as in the latter we deny ourselves the satisfaction of our carnal desires, which goes near to flesh and blood; so, in the former, we deny our carnal reasonings, that would be disputing against God’s power and strength.

USE OR APPLICATION.

[Exhortation to ministers, to whom this sword is specially committed.] To the ministers—into your hand this sword of the word is given in an especial manner. Unto you the ministry of it is committed. God hath not left it at random to all; that who will may publicly preach the gospel. That which is everybody’s work is nobody’s. He hath therefore set up a standing office with officers in his church, on whom he hath laid this burden, and from whom he expects an account. He ‘hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation,’ 2 Corinthians 5:19—as a prince commissionates this or that man to be his ambassador—‘O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust,’ 1 Timothy 6:20. See here, and tremble at the charge which is deposited in your hands. You are ambassadors from the great God to treat with poor sinners concerning their eternal peace upon those articles which are contained in the gospel. You are his under-workmen, to rear up his temple in the hearts of men, and to lay every stone by the line and rule of this word. His stewards, to give his family their portions in due season, and all your provision to be taken out of this store■house. In a word, you are his shepherds, to lead and feed his flock, and that in no other than these ‘green pastures.’ Now, if the peace be not concluded, the ambassador is sure to be called to an account where the fault lies. If the house be not built, or go to decay, woe to the negligent workman. If the family starve, what reckoning will the steward make? If the sheep wander, or die of the rot through thy neglect, who shall pay for the loss but the idle shepherd? Now, in order to the discharge of this your public trust, I shall only point at two duties incumbent on you both, with a reference to this word left in your hands—one to be performed in your study, the other in your pulpit.

First Duty. In your study acquaint yourselves with the word of God. That which may pass for diligence in a private Christian’s reading and search into the Scripture, may be charged as negligence upon the minister. The study of the Scriptures is not only a part of our general calling in

common with him, but of our particular also, in which we are to be exercised from one end of the week to the other. The husbandman doth not more constantly go forth with his spade and mattock, to perform his day labour in the field, than the minister is to go and dig in this mine of the Scripture. He is not to read a chapter now and then as his worldly occasions will permit; or steal a little time from his other scholarly studies to look into the Bible in transitu—in passing, and bid it farewell. But it must be his standing exercise—his plodding work. All other must stoop to this. Suppose thou shouldst know what Plato, Aristotle, with the rest of the princes of worldly learning, have written, and hadst encircled all the arts within thy circumference, but art unskilful in the word of righteousness, thou wouldst be Paul's unlearned person—as unfit to be a minister as he that hath read all the body of the law is to be a physician if ignorant of this art. I do not here intend to nourish the vain conceit of those sons of ignorance who think human learning unnecessary for a minister's furniture. Truly, without this, we should soon come to our old mumpsismus, and run into the barbarism of former times. I have read of one Beda, that dissuaded Francis I., a French king—and that when learned Budæus was present—from his princely resolution of setting up professors of languages in is university, saying, 'The Greek tongue was the fountain of all heresies;' but the man was found to understand not a word of Greek himself. Indeed, few or none will speak against learning but those that have not so much of it as to make them understand its use. I dare not bid our ministers, as some fanatics have done, burn all their books but the Bible. No; but I would exhort them to prefer it above all their other books, and to direct all their other studies to furnish them with Scripture knowledge. As the bee that flies over the whole garden, and brings all the honey she gets from every flower therein into her hive; so should the minister run over all his other books, and reduce their notions for his help in this. As the Israelites offered up the jewels and ear-rings borrowed of the Egyptians to the service of the tabernacle, benedicta philosophorum sunt peculia Christianorum—the good saying of philosophers are the property of Christians. And certainly there are such jewels to be borrowed even from them, as may become the ear of the Christian, so they be refined and gospellized. Thus the captive virgin, Deuteronomy 21:1-23, when her head was shaved, her nails pared, and her garment changed, might be taken into an Israelite's bosom. Religion and learning revived together. The light which Erasmus brought into the schools helped Luther's labours in the church.

But, to return to the exhortation in hand. O, let us that are ministers of the gospel give up ourselves to the study of the word. We are, as one well calls us, but 'younger brethren' to the apostle. Ministerial gifts were left them by Christ, as the inheritance by the father to his eldest son and heir. But we must work for our living. They had their knowledge of the word, as Jacob his venison, brought to their hand without hunting; but if we will know the mind of God, we must trace it out by our diligence; but ever taking prayer in our company. This I am sure was Paul's charge to Timothy, 'Give attendance to reading,' 1 Timothy 4:13. Follow thy book close, O Timothy, and 'Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them,' 1 Timothy 4:15. z+< J@bJ@4H ÆF24, in his totus sis—be wholly taken up therewith. And mark why: 'That thy profiting may appear to all;' that is, that thou mayest appear to be a growing preacher to those that hear thee. O how shall the people grow if the minister doth not? And how shall he grow, if he doth not daily drink in more than he pours out? That minister must needs spend upon the stock that hath no comings in from a constant trade in his study. If the nurse doth not feed, and that more than another, she may soon bring herself and child into a consumption. As we would not therefore see the souls that hang on our breasts languish for want of milk, or ourselves faint in our work, let us endeavour our recruits be suitable to

our expense. Study and pray: pray and study again. Think not your work is done for all the week when the Sabbath is past. Take a little breath, and return to thy labour; as the seedsman sits down at the land's end to rest himself a while, and then rises up to go before the plough again. We have reason to be more choice of our time then others, because it is less our own. There is none in thy parish but have a share in it. We are thieves to our people's souls when we do not husband it to their best advantage. 'All...are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas;' yours for the service of your faith. Is the parent bound to husband his estate and time for the provision of his children? And should not the spiritual father have as natural affection to his people? How great a labour this must needs be both to mind and body, did they understand, they would both more pity, and encourage, his minister in his work. God move your hearts to it whom he hath blessed with faithful labourers. Help them in their study for you, by easing them of their worldly cares for themselves. Some people may thank themselves that their provision is so mean, by being accessory to the minister's distractions in his work and diversion from his calling. For, by their oppression or purloining his livelihood, they force him in a manner to turn worldling; and the time which he should spend in providing bread for their souls is laid out to get bread for his family's bodies.

Second Duty. In the pulpit use no other sword but this, and handle it faithfully. Remember whose errand thou bringest, and deliver it, 1. Purely. 2. Freely.

1. Use the sword of the word purely. And that in a threefold respect: (1.) Pure from error. (2.) Pure from passion. (3.) Pure from levity and vanity.

(1.) Pure from error. Think it not enough your text is Scripture, but let your whole sermon be also such—I mean agreeable to it. Thou art an ambassador, and as such bound up in thy instructions. Take heed of venting thy own dreams and fancies in God's name. 'He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully,' Jeremiah 23:28—that is, purely, without embasing or mingling it with his own dreams. So he expounds himself, 'What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.' All is chaff besides the pure word of God; and what hath it to do to be blended with it? Such a one may fear lest God from heaven should give him the lie while he is in the pulpit. O stamp not God's image on thine own coin. We live in high-flown times. Many people are not content with truths that lie plain in the Scripture. And some, to please their wanton palates, have sublimated their notions so high, till they have flown out of the sight of the Scripture, and unawares run themselves with others into dangerous errors. Be well assured it is a truth, before thou acquaintest thy people with it. If thou wilt play the mountebank, choose not the pulpit for thy stage. Make not experiments upon the souls of thy people, by delivering what is doubtful and hath not abode the trial of the furnace. Better feed thy people with sound doctrine, though plain meal; than that thou shouldst, with an outlandish dish, light on a wild gourd that brings death into their pot.

(2.) Pure from passion. The pulpit is an unseemly place to vent our discontent and passions in. Beware of this strange fire. The man of God must be gentle and meek, and his words with meekness of wisdom. The oil makes the nail drive without splitting the board. The word never enters the heart more kindly, than when it falls most gently. 'Ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness,' Psalms 45:4. Be as rough to thy people's sins as thou canst, so thou beest gentle to their souls. Dost thou take the rod of reproof into thine hand? Let them see that love, not wrath, give the blow. Nurses are careful that they do not heat their milk, knowing that it will breed ill blood in the child that sucks it. The word preached comes indeed best from a warm heart, but if there

goes a feverish heat withal, it breeds ill blood in the hearers' thoughts, and prejudice to the person makes him puke up the milk. God knows I speak not against the minister's zeal, so it be from above, 'pure' and 'peaceable.' Save all thy heat for God, spend it not in thine own cause, and it was enough God heard it. But when a sin was committed immediately against God, this meek man can be all of a flame: 'Who is on God's side? who?' He may take most liberty in reproving his people's sins against God, that takes least liberty in his own cause, and who hath a grave ready to bury injuries done to himself in.

(3.) Pure from levity and vanity. The word of God is too sacred a thing, and preaching too solemn a work, to be toyed and played with, as is the usage of some, who make a sermon nothing but a matter of wit, and to flaunt it forth in a garish discourse. What is this to the business of preaching? Their sermon is too like a child's baby, from which if you take the dressing, the rest is worth nothing. Unpin this story, take off that gaudy phrase, and nothing is left in the discourse. If we mean to do good, we must come not only in word, but with power. Satan budges not for a thousand such squibs and witcracks. Draw thou therefore this sword out of thine own fine scabbard, and strike with its naked edge. This you will find the only way to pierce your people's consciences, and fetch blood of their sins. I do not here speak against the use of those parts which God hath given unto any; nor against the fitting and laying our discourse so as it may most insinuate into our people's affections, and steal into their hearts, by the gratefulness it finds with their ear. This is our duty. 'Because the preacher was wise,...he sought to find out acceptable words,' Ecclesiastes 12:9. Not rude, loose, and indigested stuff, in a slovenly manner brought forth, lest the sluttery of the cook should turn the stomachs of the guests. The apothecary mixeth his potion so as his patient may take it down with less regret, if not with some delight; but still he hath a care that he weakens not its purging operation by making it over-pleasant to the palate. As they were 'acceptable words,' so upright, 'words of truth,' Ecclesiastes 12:10.

2. Use the sword of the word, as purely, so freely. O take heed of enslaving the word of God to thy own lust or another's will, though the greatest in thy parish. In a steward it is required that he be 'faithful,' 1 Corinthians 4:2. Now the preacher's faithfulness stands in relation to him that intrusts him. It is very unlikely that a steward, in giving out provision, should please all the servants in the house. Such officers have least thanks when they do their work best! He that thinks to please men, goes about an endless and needless work. Man's word's will not break thy bones. A wise physician seeks to cure, not please, his patient. He that chides when he is sick for the bitterness of the potion, will con thee thanks for it when he is recovered. The apostle passeth by the thoughts of men as a thing inconsiderable, not worthy the interrupting him in his work. 'With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you,' 1 Corinthians 4:3 of the fore-quoted place. As if he had said, 'It shall be known at the great audit, when my Master comes to reckon with me, whether I have been faithful; and it is time enough to have my name righted when he will vindicate his own.' No doubt it was a great temptation to Micaiah, when Ahab's messenger, by colleaguing with him, endeavoured to bring him in his message over unto the king's sense; but mark his noble answer—'As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith, that will I speak.'

Some think that Micaiah was that disguised prophet that denounced judgment against Ahab for Benhadad's dismission, and that now he was fetched out of prison; for the king bids, 'carry him back unto Ammon the governor,' 1 Kings 22:26. If so, then Micaiah had the advantage by one flattering sermon to have gotten his liberty and the king's favour to boot. Yet to the dungeon he will

go again, rather than prostitute the word to Ahab's lust. Blessed Paul was of the same mind: 'Wherein,' speaking of the gospel, 'I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound,' 2 Timothy 2:9. As if he had said, 'They shall never make me enslave that neither in prison nor at the block.' No doubt Paul might have been free, could he have been content the word should have been bound. But he was too faithful to procure his liberty with imprisonment of the truth by a sinful silence. If ever it was a time of temptations to ministers—and there were need to stir them up in it to keep the word of God's patience—it is in these last dreggy days of the world, of which it is prophesied, 'men shall not endure sound doctrine.' Now therefore, to bear witness to the truth, and to make full proof of their ministry in such a perverse and froward generation, needs more greatness of spirit than flesh and blood can help them to. It is no trial for a minister to speak truth freely among its friends, but among those that despise it, and are enraged with the messenger for delivering his errand. This made the confession of our Lord so glorious, 1 Timothy 6:13. It was before Pontius Pilate, a bloody enemy against him and the truth he witnessed to. Therefore our people may well bear with us when we speak freely in God's name; yea, though we come upon their ground, and our message rifles their consciences. We have it in our commission: 'I have set thee for a tower and a fortress among my people, that thou mayest know and try their way,' Jeremiah 6:27. If a warrant lies but in a constable's hand to search your house, you cannot be angry with him for doing his office, because you dare not stand betwixt him and the displeasure of his prince, should he neglect it.

[1]The book cites 1 John 3:12; but that appears to be in error, hence the correction. — SDB
[2]Ruff, dignity, elevation; as e.g. 'princes in the ruff of all their glory.'—Ed.

[3]Nusled or nustled, fondled, cherished.—Ed.

[4]Pesthouse, [Archaic]; a shelter or hospital for those infected with a pestilential or contagious disease. — SDB.

[5]Trapan, to ensnare, to catch by stratagem.—Imp. Dict.

[6]Refel, reject, repulse.—Webster's

Chapter 17

02.05 - The Necessary Duty of the Christian, as Clothed in the Whole Armour of God

Direction Eleventh. The necessary duty of the Christian, as clothed in the Whole Armour of God: or, how the Spiritual Panoply may alone be kept furbished.

‘Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints’ (Ephesians 6:18).

We have at last set before you the Christian in his armour; and now he wants nothing to furnish him for the battle, or enable him for the victory, but the presence of his general to lead him on, and bring him honourably off again by the wisdom of his conduct; which, that he may obtain, the apostle sets him to prayer—‘praying always,’ &c. As if he had said, ‘You have now, Christian, the armour of God; but take heed thou forgettest not to engage God of this armour by humble prayer for your assistance, lest for all this you be worsted in the fight. He that gives you the arms, can only teach you to use them, and enable you to overcome by their use.’ I am not ignorant that some make this of ‘prayer,’ a piece of armour, and to be reckoned as a part of the panoply. The truth is, it matters not much in what notion we handle it, whether as a distinct piece of armour, or as a duty and means necessarily required to the use of our armour. The latter I shall follow; partly because it hath no piece of material armour, as the other all have, allotted to it for a resemblance; as also, because by the connection it hath, not with the last preceding words only, but with the whole discourse of the armour, it seems to be superadded as a general duty influential upon all the pieces forenamed; and may be read with every piece:—Take the girdle of truth, praying with all prayer, &c.; having on the breastplate of righteousness, praying with all prayer, &c., and the same of the rest. The Christian’s armour will rust except it be furbished and scoured with the oil of prayer. What the key is to the watch, that [is] prayer to our graces—it winds them up and sets them agoing. In the words observe,

FIRST. The duty commanded, ‘prayer;’ with the end for which it is appointed, viz. as a help to all his graces and means to carry on his war against sin and Satan: BD@F,LP`µ,<@4—‘praying.’

SECOND. A directory for prayer; wherein we are instructed how to perform this duty in six distinct divisions of the subject. First. The time for prayer—‘praying always.’ Second. The kinds and sorts of prayer—‘with all prayer and supplication.’ Third. The inward principle of prayer from which it must flow—‘in the Spirit.’ Fourth. The guard to be set about the duty of prayer—‘watching thereunto.’ Fifth. The unwearied constancy to be exercised in the duty—‘with all perseverance.’ Sixth. The comprehensiveness of the duty, or persons for whom we are to pray—‘for all saints.’

DIRECTION XI.—FIRST GENERAL PART.

[The duty commanded, and its connection with the whole discourse.] ‘Praying’ (Ephesians 6:18).

We begin with the first, the duty in general, together with the connection it hath with the whole preceding discourse of the armour, implied in the participle BD`F,LP`µ,<@4—‘praying.’ That is,

furnish yourselves with the armour of God, and join prayer to all these graces for you defence against your spiritual enemies. Let us take the three following branches of the subject. First. Prayer as a necessary duty to the Christian. Second. Why it is so necessary a means, with our other armour, for our defence. Third. Satan's designs against prayer. So that the point deducible from this is—

BRANCH FIRST.

[Prayer a necessary duty to the Christian in his spiritual warfare.] We lay down as the point deducible from what we have said the following doctrine.

Doctrine. That prayer is a necessary duty to be performed by the Christian, and used with all other means in his spiritual warfare. This is the 'silver trumpet,' by the sound of which he is to alarm heaven, and call in God to his succour, Numbers 10:9. The saints' enemies fall till God riseth; and God stays to be raised by their prayers. 'Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered,' Psalms 68:1. Prayer, it is a catholic duty, and means to be made use of in all our affairs and enterprises. What bread and salt are to our table, that prayer is to the Christian in all his undertakings, enjoyments, and temptations. Whatever our meal is, bread and salt are set on the board; and whatever our condition is, prayer must not be forgot. As we dip all our morsels in salt, and eat them with bread; so we are to act every grace, season every enjoyment, mingle every duty, and oppose every temptation, with prayer. It hath been the constant practice of the saints in all their dangers and straits, whether from enemies within or without, from sin, devils, or men, to betake themselves tot he throne of grace, and draw a line of prayer about them; accounting this the only safe posture to stand in for their defence. When God called Abraham from Haran into a strange country, where he wandered from place to place amidst strangers, who could not but have him in some suspicion —considering the train and retinue he had—and this their suspicion create many dangers to this holy man from the kings round about, it is observable what course Abraham takes for his defence. You shall find in his removes from place to place, the memorable thing recorded of him is, that 'he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord,' Genesis 12:7-8; Genesis 13:3-4. This was the breastwork he raised and entrenched himself in. When he had once by prayer cast himself into the arms of God for protection, then he made account that he was in his castle. But what need Abraham have put himself so often to this trouble? Had he not the security of God's promise when he set forth, that God would bless them that blessed him, and curse them that cursed him? And had he not faith to believe God would be a God of his word to perform what he had promised? We confess both. But neither God's promise, nor Abraham's faith thereon, gave any supersedeas[1] to his duty in prayer. The promise is given as a ground of faith, and faith as an encouraging help in prayer; but neither [are] intended to discharge us of our duty, and save us the labour of that work. And what Abraham did, the same have all the saints ever done. The great spoils which they ever got from their enemies was in the field of prayer. If Moses sent Joshua into the valley against Amalek, himself will be on the mount to storm heaven by his prayer, while he is engaged in fight with the enemy below; and the victory it is plain was not got by Joshua's sword, so much as Moses' prayer. Jehoshaphat, when he had near a million of men mustered for the field, besides his garrisons that were all well appointed, yet we find him as hard at prayer as if he had not had a man on his side: 'We know not what to do, but our eyes upon thee,' 2 Chronicles 20:12. Now if these worthies when they had but flesh and blood—men like themselves—to contest with, did yet fetch in their help from heaven, and make such use of prayer's auxiliary force—and

that when other helps were not wanting—lest they should be found under the neglect of an indispensable duty and prevalent means in order to their defence, how much more doth it behove the Christian, both in point of duty and prudence, to take the same course in his spiritual war against principalities and powers! For the saint's graces, when best trained and exercised, are, without prayer, far less able to stand against Satan than they, with their military preparation, were to repel the force of men like themselves. 'Watch and pray,' saith our Saviour, 'that ye enter not into temptation,' Matthew 26:41. The not keeping this pass gave the enemy Satan a fair occasion to come in upon them. For we see, not taking Christ's counsel, they were all, though holy men, shamefully foiled. Most of them shifted for themselves by a cowardly flight, while they left their Lord in his enemy's hands. And he that thought to show more courage than his fellows, at last came off with deeper guilt and shame than them all, by denying his Master, who was even then owning him in the face of death, yea his Father's wrath. And it is observable that, as they were led into temptation through their own neglect of prayer, so they were rescued and led out of it again by Christ's prayer, which he mercifully laid in beforehand for them. 'I have prayed...that thy faith fail not,' Luke 22:32. But that which above all commends this duty to us, is Christ's own practice; who, besides his constant exercise in it, did, upon any great undertaking wherein he was to meet opposition from Satan and his instruments, much more abound in it. At his baptism, being now to enter the stage of his public ministry, and to make his way thereunto through the fierce and furious assaults of Satan—with whom he was to grapple as it were hand to hand after his forty days' solitude—we find him at prayer, Luke 3:21. Which prayer had a present answer, heaven opening, and the Spirit descending on him, with this voice, saying, 'Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased,' Luke 3:22. And now Christ marcheth forth undauntedly to meet his enemy, who waited for him in the wilderness. Again, when he intended to commission his apostles, and send them forth to preach the gospel —which he knew would bring the lion fell and mad out of his den, as also derive the world's wrath upon those his messengers—he first sets his disciples on praying, Matthew 9:38, and then spends the whole night himself in the same work before their mission, Luke 6:12. But above all, when he was to fight his last battle with the prince of this world, and also conflict with the wrath of his Father, now armed against him, and ready to be poured upon him for man's sin—whose cause he had espoused—on the success of which great undertaking depended the saving or losing his mediatory kingdom, O how then did he bestir himself in prayer! It is said, 'He prayed more earnestly.' As a wrestler that strains every vein in his body, so he put forth his whole might, 'with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard,' Hebrews 5:7, so that he won the field, though himself slain upon the place. The spoils of this glorious victory believers do now divide, and shall enjoy it to all eternity. And what is the English of all this, but to show us both the necessity and prevalency of prayer? Without this, no victory to be had, though we have our armour; but this, with that, will make us conquerors over all.

BRANCH SECOND.

[Why prayer is necessary to the Christian in his spiritual warfare.]

Now, to proceed and show why prayer is so necessary a means with our other armour for our defence, let us set forth these reasons in order. First. Because of the co■ordination of this duty with all other means for the Christian's defence, and that by divine appointment. Second. Because of the influence that prayer hath upon all our graces. Third. Because of the great prevalency prayer hath with God.

[The co■ordination of prayer with other means for the Christian's defence makes it necessary.]

Reason First. The first reason is taken from the co-ordination of this duty of prayer with all other means for the Christian's defence, and that by divine appointment. He that bids us take the girdle of truth, breastplate of righteousness, &c., commands also not to neglect this duty. Now what God joins we must not sever. The efficacy of co■ordinate means lies in their conjunction. The force of an army consists not in this troop, or that one regiment, but in all the parts in a body. And if any single troop or company shall presume to fight the enemy alone, what can they expect but to be routed by the enemy and punished by their general also? Let not any say they use this means and that. If any one duty be willingly neglected, the golden chain of obedience is broke. And bonum non nisi ex integris—nothing is really good that is not so in all its parts. As to a good action, there is required a concurrence of all the several ingredients and causes; so to make a good Christian, there is required a conscientious care to use all appointed means. He must follow the Lord 'fully;' not make here a balk and there a furrow. It is not the least of Satan's policy to get between one duty and another, that the man may not unite his forces, and be uniform in his endeavour.

Few so bad as to use no means; and not many so faithful to God and themselves as conscientiously to use all. One, he pretends to sincerity, and dares appeal to God that he means well, and his heart is good. But, for 'the breastplate of righteousness,' it is too heavy and cumbersome for him to wear. Another seems very just and righteous, so that he would not wrong his neighbour, no, not of one penny, to gain many pounds. But, as for faith in Christ, this he never looks after. A third boasts of his faith and hope, as if he did not doubt of his salvation. But, as for the word of God that should beget and increase it, he cares not how seldom he looks on it at home,or hears it in the public. And a fourth, he hath this to say for himself, 'That he is a constant hearer, his seat at church is seldom found empty, and at home the Bible often in his hands.' But, as for prayer, his closet, could it speak, would bear witness against him, that he seldom or never performs it. This half doing will prove many a soul's whole undoing. Samuel asked Jesse, 'Are here all thy children?' Though but a stripling wanting, he must be sent for before he will sit down. So may I say to many that are very busy and forward in some particular duties and means, 'Is here all that God hath given thee in charge?' If but one be wanting, God's blessing will be wanting also. And as that son was wanting of Jesse's which God did intend to set the crown upon, so that duty and means which is most neglected, we have cause to think is the means which God would especially crown with his blessing upon our faithful endeavour.

[The influence of prayer upon Christian graces makes it a necessary duty.]

Reason Second. The second reason is taken from the influence that prayer hath upon all our graces. And that in a double respect. It will help to evidence the truth of grace, and also advance its growth.

First. The duty of prayer, frequently and spiritually performed, will be a means to evidence the truth of our graces. And this is of no small importance to the Christian, when he hath to do with the tempter. For that which he mainly drives at, is to bring the Christian into a suspicion of himself as to the work of grace in him, thereby to overturn the very foundation of his hope, and put him to a stand in his endeavours. He, indeed, will have little list to go on that fears he is not in his right way. I have heard that politicians can make use of a state lie—though the credit of it lasts but a little while—for great advantage to their designs. And he that learns them this art makes much more

use of it himself to further his designs against the Christian. Because he could not keep Christ in the grave, therefore he raiseth a lie, to hinder the belief of his resurrection in the world. And when he cannot hinder the production of grace, he misreports the work of the Christian, as if all were but a cheat put upon him by his own deceitful heart; which the poor creature is prone enough, God knows, to believe. And so, though the fear be false and groundless; yet, being believed, [it] produceth as sad a confusion to his thoughts, and distress to his spirit, as if it were true. Jacob could not have mourned more if Joseph had indeed been slain, than he did when there was no such matter. Nor could a wicked wretch easily endure more terror and horror than some precious saints have felt, for the time that Satan's false report—slandering the truth of their grace—hath found credit with them. Now, in prayer, the Christian stands at great advantage to find out the truth of his state, and that upon a double account.

1. God doth commonly take this season, when his people are pouring out their souls to him, to open his heart to them, and to give his testimony both to their persons and graces. God hath his sealing hours, in which his Spirit comes and bears witness to his children's state and grace. And this of prayer is a principal one. Where was it that God so marvellously dignified, and if I may so say, knighted Jacob with that new title of honour, 'Thou shalt be called Israel,' but in the field of prayer? What was the happy hour in which the angel knocked at Daniel's door to let him know how God loved him? was it not when he was knocking at heaven door by his prayer? 'At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved,' Daniel 9:23. When got the woman of Canaan the sight of her faith, not only that it was true, but also strong—'O woman, great is thy faith!' but when her heart was carried forth so vehemently in prayer? Yea, Christ himself heard that miraculous voice from heaven, 'This is my beloved Son,' when he was lifting up his eyes in prayer to heaven, Luke 3:21.

2. The duty of prayer affords a demonstrative argument for the truth of that soul's grace which spiritually performs it. The Spirit of God, when he testifies to the truth of a saint's grace, useth to join issue with the saint's own spirit, 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit,' Romans 8:16. Now the testimony which the Christian's own spirit gives for him, is taken from those vital acts of the new creature that operate in him—such as sincerity, godly sorrow for sin, love of holiness, and other of this nature are. Now, no way do these and other graces more sensibly discover themselves to the Christian's view than in prayer. Here sincerity shows itself in the Christians' plain■heartedness to confess all his sins freely, without extorting, and nakedly, without extenuation or reservation—when there is no false box in the cabinet of the soul to lock up a darling sin in. Holy David, Psalms 32:1-11, having, ver. 1, pronounced him 'blessed' that had no sin imputed to him, and, 'in whose spirit there is no guile,' gives Psalms 32:5, this instance of his own sincerity, that he 'acknowledged his sin, and did not hide his iniquity;' as also how well he sped thereby, 'And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.' Again, here [i.e. in prayer] doth the Christian give vent to his heart, aching with inward grief for sin. Prayer is the channel into which godly sorrow pours forth itself, and runs down in brinish tears, while the Christian is accusing himself of, and judging himself for, his abominations, with deep shame and self■abhorrency. In a word, here the soul's love to holiness flames forth in his fervent vehement desires and requests for grace that can bear no denial, but even breaks for the longing it hath to it.

Thus we see spirit of prayer is both an argument of true grace, and a means to draw out that true grace into act, whereby its truth may be the better exposed to view. A 'spirit of grace and of

supplications' are both joined together, Zechariah 12:10. The latter doth indicate the former. What is prayer but the breathing forth of that grace which is breathed into the soul by the Holy Spirit? When God breathed into man the breath of life, he became a living soul. So, when God breathes into the creature the breath of spiritual life, it becomes a praying soul. 'Behold he prayeth,' saith God of Paul to Ananias, Acts 9:11. As if he had said, 'Be not afraid of him; he is an honest soul; thou mayest trust him for he prays.' Praying is the same to the new creature as crying is to the natural. The child is not learned by art or example to cry, but instructed by nature; it comes into the world crying. Praying is not a lesson got by forms and rules of art, but flowing from principles of new life itself.

Second. The duty of prayer, as it is a means to evidence, so to increase, grace. The praying Christian is the thriving Christian; whereas he that is infrequent or slothful in praying, is a waster. He is like one that lives at great expense, and drives little or no trade to bring wherewithal to maintain it. Now prayer helps toward the increase and growth of grace in these two ways:—1. As it draws the habits of grace into act, and exerciseth them. 2. As it sets the soul nigh to God.

1. As it draws the habits of grace into act, and exerciseth them. Now as exercise brings a double benefit to the body, so this to the soul.

(1.) Exercise doth help to digest or breathe forth those humours that clog the spirits. One that stirs little, we see, grows pursy, and is soon choked up with phlegm, which exercise clears the body of. Prayer is the saint's exercise■field, where his graces are breathed. It is as the wind to the air to sweep the soul; as bellows to the fire, which clears the coals of those ashes that smother them. The Christian, while in this world, lives but in an unwholesome climate. One while the delights of it deaden and dull his love to Christ; another while, the troubles he meets in it damp his faith on the promise. How now should the poor Christian get out of these his distempers, had he not a throne of grace to resort to, where, if once his soul be in a melting frame, he, like one laid in a kingly sweat, soon breathes out the malignity of his disease, and comes into his right temper again. How oft do we find the holy prophet, when he first kneels down to pray, full of fears and doubts, who yet before he and the duty part, grows into a sweet familiarity with God and repose in his own spirit? He begins his prayer, as if it were come to that pass that he thought that God would never give him a kind look more: 'How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever?' Psalms 13:1. But by that time he hath exercised himself a little in duty, his distemper wears off, the mists scatter, and his faith breaks out as the sun in its strength. 'I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation, I will sing unto the Lord,' Psalms 13:5. Thus his faith lays the cloth, expecting a feast ere long to be set on. He that even now questioned whether he should ever hear good news from heaven, is so strong in faith, as to make himself merry with the hopes of that mercy which he is assured will come at last. Abraham began with fifty, but his faith got ground on God every step, till he brought down the price of their lives to ten.

(2.) Exercise whets the appetite to that food which must be taken before strength can be got. And causa causæ est causa causati—the remoter cause of an immediate one is, in a certain sense, the cause of that which flows as an effect from the more immediate. The hone that sets the edge on the husbandman's scythe, helps him to mow the grass. None comes so sharp■set to the word—which is the saint's food to strengthen his grace—as the Christian that takes prayer in his way to the ordinance. The stronger natural heat is, the better stomach the man hath to his meat.

Love in the soul is what natural heat is in the body. The more the soul loves the word, the more craving it has after it. Now, as exercise stirs up the natural heat of the body, so prayer excites this spiritual heat of love in the saint's bosom to the word. Cornelius is an excellent instance for it. We find him hard at prayer in his house, when behold a vision that bids him send for Peter, who should preach the gospel to him—a happy reward for his devotion! Now, see what a sharp appetite this praying soul hath to the word. He upon this presently posts away messengers for Peter, and before he comes, gathers an assembly together—no doubt all of his friends that he could get. There he sits with a longing heart waiting for the preacher. As soon as ever he sees his face, he falls down at his feet, receiving him with that reverence and respect as if he had been an angel dropped out of heaven. Presently he sets Peter to work, though some may think he passed good manners in putting him to labour after so long a journey, before he had refreshed him with some collation or other; but the good man was so hungry to hear the message he brought, that he could not well pacify his soul to stay any longer, and like a man truly hunger-bit, he is ready to catch at any truth—though never so bitter—which shall be set before him. 'Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God,' Acts 10:33. And when the sermon is done, so savoury and sweet was the meal, that he is loath to think of parting with Peter before he gets more from him; and therefore beseeches him to stay some days with him. One sermon did but make his teeth water for another. O how unlike are they who come reeking out of the world to a sermon, to Cornelius that riseth from prayer to wait for the preacher?

2. Prayer helps our graces, as it sets the soul nigh to God. In prayer we are said to 'draw nigh to God,' James 4:8—to 'come before his presence,' Psalms 95:2. In it we have 'access by one spirit unto the Father,' Ephesians 2:18, as one that brings a petition to a prince is called into his presence■chamber—one of the nearest approaches to God which the creature is capable of on this side heaven, which was signified by the incense altar, that stood so high even within the vail. Prayer, it is called, 'The throne of grace.' We come in prayer to the throne of God, and put our petition into the very hand of God, as he sits on his throne in all his royalty. Now, as prayer is so near an approach to God, it hath a double influence into the growth of the saint's grace.

(1.) By this near access to God, the soul is put the more into a holy awe and fear of that pure and piercing eye of God which he sees looking on him. It is true, God is ever near us. Pray or not pray, we cannot rid ourselves of his presence. But never hath the soul such apprehensions of his presence as when it is set before God in prayer. Now the soul speaks to God as it were mouth to mouth; and considering how holy that majesty is with whom he hath to do in prayer, he must needs reverence and tremble before him. Now the natural issue of this holy fear, what can it be but a care to approve itself to God? And this care cherishes every grace. They are carried in its arms, as the child in its nurse's. It keeps the girdle of truth buckled close about his loins. 'O,' saith the soul, 'I must either leave praying, or leave doubling and juggling with God by hypocrisy!' It will strengthen the breastplate of holiness. It is not possible that a Christian should walk loosely all day, and be free and familiar with God at night. He that waits on the person of a prince will be careful to carry nothing about him that should be offensive to his eye; yea, afraid lest anything should come to his ear, that should bring him under a cloud in his prince's thoughts, and remove him from his place about him. And courtiers have those that will be always undermining then if they can; and the Christian wants not such an adversary—for Satan is at his right hand at every miscarriage to accuse him unto God, saying, 'This is your favourite. Though he be so devout in

prayer, he can do this or that, when the duty is over.' And therefore, if any in the world have a tie upon them more than others to walk exactly, it is they that minister before the Lord in this duty. Princes are more curious of their attendants than of others at further distance from them. When David showed some distraction of mind before king Achish, he bids away with him. 'Have I need of madmen, that ye have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence?' And does a poor mortal man that sits on a throne of dust, only heaped up and raised a little above his fellows, take such state on him as not to bear the discomposure of any before him? How much less will the great God—though we wink for a time at the foul sins of others—brook any unholy behaviour in those that wait so nigh upon him! This, no doubt, made Cain run so fast from the presence of God, because he knew that it was no standing so nigh God with such an unholy heart as he carried in his bosom.

(2.) By the soul's near access to God in prayer, it receives sweet influences of grace from him. All grace comes from the God of grace; not only the first seed of grace, but its growth and increment; and God usually sheds forth his grace in a way of communion with his people. Now, by prayer the Christian is led into most intimate communion with God. And from communion follows communication. As the warmth the chicken finds by sitting under the hen's wings cherisheth it, so are the saints' graces enlivened and strengthened by the sweet influences they receive from this close communion with God. The Christian is compared to a tree, Psalms 1:1-6. And those trees flourish most, and bear sweetest fruit, which stand most in the sun. The praying Christian is, as they say of the Rhodians, in sole positus—placed in the sun. He stands nigh to God, and hath, God nigh to him in all that he calls upon him for. And therefore you may expect his fruit to be sweet and ripe, when another stands as it were in the shade, and at a distance from God (through neglect of, or infrequency in, this duty), will have little fruit found on his branches, and that but green and sour. 'Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing,' Psalms 92:13-14.

[The prevalency of prayer with God makes it a necessary duty.]

Reason Third. The third reason the Christian should join prayer to all other means, is taken from the great prevalency prayer hath with God. He will do no great matter for a saint without prayer, and nothing is too great for him to do at his request. Prayer, like Jonathan's bow, when duly qualified as to the person and act, never returns empty. Never was faithful prayer lost at sea. No merchant trades with such certainty as the praying saint. Some prayers indeed have a longer voyage than others; but then they come with the richer lading at last into the port. In trading, he gets most by his commodity that can forbear his money longest. So does the Christian that can with most patience stay for a return of his prayer. Such a soul shall never be ashamed of his waiting. The promise is an assuring office to secure him his adventure, 1 John 3:22. O who can express the powerful oratory of a believer's prayer! Vocula Pater formaliter dicta in corde, est eloquentia, quam Demosthenes, Cicero, et eloquentissimi in mundo nunquam possunt exprimere (Luther)—this little word Father, lisped forth in prayer by a child of God, exceeds the eloquence of Demosthenes, Cicero, and all other so famed orators in the world.

We read of taking heaven 'by force,' Matthew 11:12. If ever this may be said to be done it is in prayer. Cælum tundimus et misericordiam extorquemus, saith Tertullian—we knock at heaven, and the merciful heart of God flies open, which we bring away with us. And in the same apology he

speaks of Christians, how they went to pray, as an enemy doth to besiege a town, and take it by storm—coimus in coetum et congregationem, ut ad Deum quasi manufactuâ præcationibus ambiamus orantes. And then he adds, hæc vis Deo grata est—this holy violence we offer to God in prayer is very pleasing to him. Surely, if it were not, he would neither help the Christian so in the work, nor reward him for it when it is done. Whereas he doth both. He helped Jacob to overcome: 'By his strength he had power with God,' Hosea 12:3. That is, not by his own, but by the strength he had from God. And then he puts honour upon him for the victory, 'Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed,' Genesis 32:28. It were easy here to expatiate into a large history of the great exploits which prayer is renowned for in holy writ. James 5:17; Isaiah 37:1-38; Daniel 2:18; 2 Samuel 15:31; Esther 4:16; Acts 12:5; John 11:41; Jonah 2:2; Joshua 10:12, Joshua 10:14; 2 Kings 20:10; Psalms 106:23; Ezekiel 22:30. This is the key that hath opened and again shut heaven. It hath vanquished mighty armies, and unlocked such secrets as passed the skill of the very devil himself to find out. It hath strangled desperate plots in the very womb wherein they were conceived, and made those engines of cruelty prepared against the saints recoil upon the inventors of them; so that they have inherited the gallows which they did set up for others. At the knock of prayer, prison doors have opened, the grave hath delivered up its dead; and the sea's leviathan, not able to digest his prey, hath been made to vomit it up again. It hath stopped he sun's chariot in the heavens, yea made it go back. And that which surpasseth all, it hath taken hold of the Almighty, when on his full march against persons and people, and hath put him into a merciful retreat. Indeed, by the power prayer hath with God, it comes to prevail over all the rest.

He that hath a key to God's heart cannot be shut out, or stopped at the creature's door. Now prayer moves God and overcomes him, not by causing any change in the divine will, and making God to take up new thoughts of doing that for his people which he did not before intend. No, God is immutable, and what good he doth in time for his people he purposed before any time was. But prayer is said to more than overcome God; because he then gives, what from eternity he purposed to give upon their praying to him. For when God decreed what he would do for his saints, he also purposed that they should pray for the same. 'I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them,' Ezekiel 36:37. Prayer's midwifery shall be used to deliver the mercies God purposeth and promiseth. Hezekiah understood this when he calls the prophet to the church's labour, and bids because 'the children'—that is, deliverance —stuck in her birth, that he should therefore 'lift up a prayer,' Isaiah 37:3-4. And when Daniel had found the full reckoning of the promise—how long it had to go with the deliverance promised for their return from captivity—perceiving it hastened, he therefore falls hard to prayer, knowing God's purpose to give doth not discharge us from our duty to 'ask,' Daniel 9:3.

[Why Christians are to pray for what God hath purposed and promised to give.]

Question. But why doth God impose this upon the saints, that they should pray for what he hath purposed and promised to give? First. That they may be conformable to Christ. Second. That he may give the good things of the promise with safety to his honour. Third. To show the great delight he takes in his saints' prayers.

Answer First. That they may be conformable to Christ. The design of God is to make every saint like Christ. This was resolved from eternity Romans 8:29. Now, as the limner looks on the person

whose picture he would take, and draws his lines to answer him with the nearest similitude that may be; so doth God look on Christ as the archetype to which he will conform the saint, in suffering, in grace, and in glory: yet so that Christ hath the pre-eminence in all. Every saint must suffer because Christ suffered: Christ must not have a delicate body under a crucified head. Yet never any suffered, or could, what he endured. Christ is holy, and therefore shall every saint be, but in an inferior degree. An image cut in clay cannot be so exact as that which is engraved on gold. Now, as in other things, so in this our conformity to Christ appears—that as the promises made to him were performed on his prayer to his Father, so promises made to his saints are given to them in the same way of prayer. 'Ask of me,' saith God to his Son, 'and I shall give thee,' Psalms 2:8. And the apostle tells us, 'Ye have not because ye ask not.' God had promised support to Christ in all his conflicts: 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold,' Isaiah 42:1. Yet he prays 'with strong crying and tears,' when his feet stood within the shadow of death. A seed is promised to him, and victory over his enemies; yet, for both these, he is at prayer now in heaven. Christ towards us acts as a king, but towards his Father as a priest. All he speaks to God is on his knee by prayer and intercession. In like manner the saints. The promise makes them kings over their lusts, conquerors over their enemies; but it makes them priests towards God, by prayer humbly to sue out those great things given in the promise.

Answer Second. That God may give the good things of the promise with safety to his honour. Secure God but his glory, and the saint may have what he will. The very life of God is bound up in his glory. The creature's honour is not intrinsical to his being. A prince is a man when his crown and kingdom are gone. But God cannot be a God, except he be glorious; neither can he be glorious, unless he be holy, just, merciful, and faithful, &c. Now, that this his glory may be seen and displayed, is the great end he propounds both in making and ordering of the world: 'The Lord hath made all things for himself,' Proverbs 16:4. If there were any one occurrence in the world which could no way be reducible to the glory of God, it would make the being of a deity to be questioned. But the all■wise God hath so made, and doth so order, all his creatures with their actions, that the manifestation of his glory is the result of all. Indeed, he forceth it from some, and takes it by distress, as princes do their taxes from disobedient subjects. Thus the very wrath of his enemies shall praise him, Psalms 76:10. But he expects the saints should be active instruments to glorify him, and, like loyal loving subjects, pay him the tribute of his praise freely, with acclamations of joy and gratitude; which, that they may do, he issueth out his mercies in such a way as may best suit with this their duty. And that is to give the good things he hath purposed and promised to them upon their humble address in prayer to him. Now two ways the glory of God is secured by this means.

1. The saint, in the very duty of prayer—when he performs it in a qualified manner—doth highly glorify God. Prayer, as it is medium gratiæ—a channel of grace, for the conveying and deriving blessings from God, the fountain, into the cistern of our bosoms; so it is medium cultus—a means of worship, whereby we are to do homage to God, and give him the glory of his deity. By this we give him 'the glory of his power.' Prayer is a humble appeal from our impotency to God's omnipotence. None begs that at another's door which he can pleasure himself with at home. And if we thought not God able, we would go to another, not to him. We give him the glory of his sovereignty and dominion and acknowledge that he is not only able to procure for us what we ask, but can give us a right to, and the blessing of, what he gives. Therefore Christ closeth his prayer

with, ‘Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,’ &c., as a reason why we direct our prayers to God; because he alone is the sovereign Lord that can invest us in, and give us title to, any enjoyment. So that it is high treason against the crown and dignity of God, when we wither attempt to possess ourselves of any enjoyments without praying to him; or when we pray religiously to any other besides him. By the first we usurp his sovereignty ourselves, in their language, ‘We are lords; we will come no more unto thee,’ Jeremiah 2:31. And by the second we give away his kingdom and sovereignty to another. This was the devil’s drift when he would have had Christ fall down and worship him, that thereby he might acknowledge him to have the rule of the world. Again, by prayer give him the glory of his free mercy. Men demand a debt, but beg an alms. When we pray we renounce merit. See them opposed, ‘Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer, but I would make supplication to my judge,’ Job 9:15. We might show the same in all the other attributes. But this taste from a few may suffice. And as God, essentially considered, receives by prayer an acknowledgement of his deity; so every person in the sacred Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in prayer are honoured. By directing our prayers to God the Father, we honour him as the source and fountain of all grace and mercy. We honour the Son in presenting our prayers in his name to the Father, thereby acknowledging him the purchaser of the mercies we beg. And the Holy Ghost, he receives the honour of that assistance which we acknowledge to receive from him for the duty of prayer. For as we pray to the Father through the Son, so by the help of the Spirit.

2. As God is honoured in the very act and exercise of his duty duly qualified, so by it the Christian is deeply engaged, and also sweetly disposed, to praise God for, and glorify him with, the mercies he obtains by prayer.

(1.) Prayer engageth to praise God because of his mercies. In prayer we do not only beg mercy of God, but vow praise to God for the mercies we beg. Prayers are called ‘vows,’ ‘Thou, O God, hast heard my vows;’ Psalms 61:5; that is, my prayers, in which I solemnly vowed praise for the deliverance I begged. It is no prayer where no vow is included. We must not think to bind God and leave ourselves free. God ties himself in the promise to help us; but the condition of the obligation on our part, is, that we will glorify him. And upon no other terms doth God give us leave to ask any mercy at his hands. ‘Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me,’ Psalms 50:15. Now, what a strong tie doth this lay upon the praying Christian’s heart, to use the mercies he receives holily, and to wear with thankfulness what he wins by prayer! The Christian who would be loath to be taken in a lie to man, will much more fear to be found a liar to God. ‘Surely they are my people,’ saith God; ‘children that will not lie; so he was their Saviour,’ Isaiah 63:8.

(2.) Prayer is a means to dispose the heart to praise. Prayer and praise, like the symbolical qualities in the elements, are soon resolved each into the other. When David begins a psalm with prayer, he commonly ends it with praise. From whence things have their original, thither they return. From the sea the riverwater comes, and no mountains can hinder, but back again to the sea it will go. That spirit which leads the soul out of itself to God for supply, will direct it to the same God with his praise. We do not use to borrow money of one man and pay it to another. If God hath been thy ‘strength,’ surely thou wilt make him thy ‘song.’ The thief comes not to thank a man for what he steals out of his yard. And I as little wonder that they do not glorify God for or with his mercies, who did not ask his leave by prayer for them. What men do by themselves they ascribe to

themselves. Mercies ill got are commonly as ill spent: because they are not sanctified to them, and so become fuel to feed their lusts. Hence it is, the more enjoyments they have the more proud and unthankful they are. But by prayer the Christian's enjoyments are sanctified, and the flatulency of them, which puffs up others into pride, is corrected; and the same mercies received by prayer, become nourishment to the saints' graces, that putrefy and turn to noisome lusts in the prayerless sinner.

Answer Third. God will have his people pray for what he hath purposed and promised, to show the great delight he takes in their prayers. As a father, though he can send to his son who lives abroad the money he hath promised for his maintenance, yet let him not have it except he comes over at set times for it. And why? Not to trouble his son, but delight himself in his son's company. God takes such content in the company of his praying saints, that to prevent all strangeness on their part, he orders it so that they cannot neglect a duty but they shall lose something by it. 'Ye have not, because ye ask not.' And the more they abound in prayer the more they shall with blessings. The oftener Joash had 'smote upon the ground,' the fuller his victory over Syria had been. As the arrows of prayer are that we shoot to heaven, so will the returns of mercy from thence be. Yet must it not be imputed to any loathness in God to give, that he makes them pray often and long before the mercy comes, but rather to the content he takes in our prayers. He doth all this on a design to draw out the graces of his Spirit in his children, the voice and language of which in prayer makes most sweet melody in the ear of God. The truth is, we are in this too like musicians playing under our window; they play while the money is thrown out to them, and then their pipes are put up. And were our wants so supplied by the answer of one prayer, that we did not suddenly need a new recruit, we would be gone, and God should not hear of us in haste.

USE OR APPLICATION.

[Reproof to prayerless souls, with the dismal state of such.]

Use First. A word to those who live in the total neglect of this duty, that are prayerless creatures. Such ruins of mankind there are to be found, who pass their wretched days like so many swine; they never look up to heaven till God lays them on their back; nor are heard to cry in prayer till this knife is at their throat. What shall I say to these giants and sons of the earth, that have renounced their allegiance to the God of heaven!—these kine of Bashan, who, like so many metamorphosed Nebuchadnezzars, have lost the heart of a man, and live like as very brutes, as the beasts themselves, who, while they feed, take no notice of him that clothes the field with grass for them! Can I hope they will hear man who will not acknowledge the God of heaven by praying to him? Surely your case is deplored. What! not pray? Can you do less than by this homage to own God for your Maker? O less for your own souls, than to beg their life of God, whose hand of justice is lift up against you? Are you resolved thus to throw yourselves into the devil's mouth, without so much as striking one stroke for your defence? If God had required a greater matter at your hands than this, the salvation of your souls would have deserved it. And will you stick at this?

God does not put us to the cost of laying down the price of our ransom; no, not so much as to pay our prison fees. Only, he bids thee pray, and he will pay: 'Your heart shall live that seek God,' Psalms 69:32. O, what salt and vinegar will this pour into thy wounds, when in hell thy conscience shall fly in thy face, and tell thee thou hadst not been there if thou wouldst in time have humbled thy soul before God, and sought his favour in that way which cost Christ his blood to procure.

Either thou must be dispossessed of this dumb devil, or undoubtedly it will be thy damnation! And who dies with less pity than that malefactor that stouts it before the judge, and will not so much as down on his knees, or open his mouth to cry for mercy, though the judge on purpose stays to pronounce the sentence and break up the court, to see whether his stomach will fall, and his proud spirit stoop to ask his life at his hands? You know how angry Pilate was when Christ was silent: 'Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?' John 19:10, though, alas! poor creature, as Christ told him, he could do nothing for or against him; and therefore Christ neither feared him, nor ought him so much service as to bestow a word upon him. The warrant for Christ's death was sealed in heaven, and he, with the rest of Christ's enraged enemies, were but God's servants to do the execution according to the determinate counsel of God. But how much more reason hath the great God to be provoked by this irreligion, and say, 'Wilt thou not speak to me? pray to me? Dost thou not know I have the power to save or damn? to deliver thee to the tormentor, or keep thee out of his hands?' Or, dost thou look that God is bound to save thee whether pray or not pray? If he doth, I promise you he shall do more for thee than for others; yea, than for his own Son, who made strong cries and supplications to be saved by him. God hath laid the method of salvation and think not that he will alter it, and so make a blot in the counsel of his will, for thy pleasure. What he hath written he hath written, and it shall not be reversed. Yea, though others should be so kind as out of pity to thy soul to pray for thee, yet if thou beest thyself a prayerless creature, thou shalt die the death. If they were Noah, Samuel, and Daniel, that stood up to beg thy life they should not be heard for thee. Proxy prayers in this case will not prevail. And therefore, when the Israelites came a begging to Samuel for his prayers—which, good man, he easily promised; indeed, durst not have forgot them in that, though they had not remembered him of it—mark what caveat he annexeth, 'Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart,' 1 Samuel 12:24. As if he had said, 'Do not set me to do for you {that} which you will not do for yourselves.' It is not all the interest my prayers have in heaven {that} will keep the wrath of God from falling on you, if you be wicked and atheistical; therefore 'fear the Lord, and serve him.' That is, pray and obey him.

Fear oft denotes the worship of God, Genesis 31:53. God is called 'the fear of Isaac;' i.e. the God whom he feared and worshipped. So, 'Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? Jeremiah 10:7, that is, worship thee, rather than the stocks and stones; because the worshipping of God results from our reverence and fear we have of him. Christ 'was heard in that he feared him,' Hebrews 5:7—•BÎ JH ,Û8"$X4"H; that is, his religious fear, expressed in those his strong cries which he groaned forth to God in his agony. And therefore, so long as you are prayerless, you live without the fear of God. And what will not such a wretch dare to do? Even anything that Satan shall command him, though it be to go to a wizard. When Saul had given over inquiring after God, we hear him by and by knocking at the devil's door, and asking counsel of a witch. Oh! take heed of living so near the tempter! If Satan might have his wish, surely it would be this—that the creature might live prayerless; for by this he should do the greatest spite possible to God; in that he makes the creature set him at nought in all his attributes, and have the greatest advantage against the sinner himself. Now he hath thee as sure as the thief hath the traveller, when he hath thrown him into a ditch fast bound, and stopped his mouth, that he cannot cry to others for help. In a word, thou art free booty for Satan, who may now satisfy his lust upon thee. He that prayeth invites God into his further acquaintance, and soon shall have it; as we see in Paul, who had Ananias sent from God to him. But he that lives in the neglect of this duty, gives the devil fuller possession of

him. Thou art the man of all others most fit for him to make an atheist of. I should not wonder that the devil persuades thee there is no God, who already livest in such defiance against him as cannot but make the belief of a deity dreadful to thy thoughts. Herod was soon persuaded to cut off John's head, because, when he was alive, he so troubled and nettled his conscience. And it is to be feared thou wilt easily be drawn to attempt the stifling all thoughts of a deity, from whom thy criminous conscience expects to hear nothing that can please thee. Yea, it is probable thou hast too much of the atheist in thee already, or else thou durst not deny God that part of natural worship which they that know him least give unto him. I am sure the Scripture lays this brat of irreligion at the door of atheism, Psalms 14:1: 'The fool' there would fain persuade himself 'there is no God,' and when he hath got so far the mastery of his conscience as to blot God out of his creed, he then soon leaves him out of his paternoster, Psalms 14:2.

Question. But, it may be, some will ask me whether I think that any do, where the gospel is preached, neglect prayer on this account of atheism?

Answer. Truly I do; and which is more, I think there are worse atheists to be found under the meridian light of the gospel, than in the darkest nook in America, where yet this day never broke. As weeds grow rankest in richest grounds, and fruits ripest in hottest climates; so do sins grow to the greatest height where the gospel■sun climbs highest. 'Who is blind, but my servant?...and blind as the Lord's servant?' Isaiah 42:19. Who such atheists as those that have their eyes put out by the light of the gospel? The poor Indian's little knowledge of a God is for want of light; which may be cured, when it is brought to them. But if a judiciary atheism—as that in gospel times and places commonly is—falls upon a soul for rebelling against the light, this is incurable. Here the very visive faculty is perished, and the eye bored out.

[Exhortation to saints to abound in prayer.]

Use Second. To the saints. Be you provoked to ply this oar more diligently than ever. If this be neglected, a universal decay of all your graces follows. When the ports and havens of a kingdom are blocked up, that the merchant can not go forth, there follows a damp on all the inland trade, so that an enemy needs not strike a stroke, but only stand still to see them eat up one another. The psalmist tells of a stream which 'makes glad the city of God,' Psalms 46:4. The promise is this stream, upon which the saints have all their livelihood brought up to their very doors. If this be kept open, Satan cannot much distress them; which then is done, when they can send out their prayers on this stream to heaven. But if once this trade be stopped, then they are hard put to it. It is observed of our neighbours the Netherlands, that whereas other nations used to be made poor by war, they have grown rich with it; because, with their wars, they have enlarged their trade and traffic abroad. And if thou, Christian, wouldst thrive by all thy temptations, thou must take the same course. Whatever thou dost, starve not thy trade with heaven. God hath—to make thee more diligent in this duty—so ordered things, that all the treasure of the promise is to be conveyed to thee in this bottom of prayer. This is like the merchant's ship, it 'bringeth her food from afar,' Proverbs 31:14. If thy mercies were of the growth of thy own country, thou mightest spare a voyage to heaven. But alas! poor creature, when thou art best laid in, and thy storehouse fullest, if no foreign supplies should come unto thee from heaven, how soon wouldst thou be brought, with the poor widow, to eat thy last cake and die! It was not her little meal in her barrel, nor oil at the bottom of her cruse, but God's blessing multiplying them, that make them hold out so long. So, not

thy present grace, strength, or comfort, but God's feeding these with a new spring, that thou must live upon. Now cease praying, and the oil of grace will cease running: 'Ye have not, because ye ask not.' And when the store is spent the city must yield. As thou wouldst not therefore fall into Satan's hands, lose not thy interest in God, thy best ally, for want of preserving a good correspondence with him at the throne of grace.

Now, for the better pursuit of this exhortation, some counsel would not be amiss in order to thy driving this trade of prayer more successfully. Satan hath received so many shameful overthrows by the saints' prayers, that he trembles at the force of this great ordnance of heaven. This is the voice, the mighty voice of God in his saints, which shakes those mountains of pride, divides the flames of fiery temptations, and makes them cast forth their abortive counsels to their shame and disappointment. 'O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness,' 2 Samuel 15:31. This one prayer made both Ahithophel a fool, and him that set him on work also—defeating the wisdom both of man and devil. Satan hath such an impression of dread upon him—from the remembrance of what he hath suffered from the hands of prayer—that he will turn every stone, and try every way, to obstruct thee in it. 'What do we,' said the Pharisees concerning Christ, 'for this man doeth many miracles?...if we let him thus alone, the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.' Satan cannot deny but great wonders have been wrought by prayer. As the spirit of prayer goes up, so his kingdom goes down. It is of the royal seed. He can no more stand before it than falling Haman before rising Mordecai. And therefore, seeing this is like to do thee such great service against him, it behooves thee the more to defend it from his stratagems. Because the great artillery of an army is so useful to it, and formidable to the enemy, therefore it hath a strong guard set about it.

BRANCH THIRD.

[Satan's designs against prayer.]

Now Satan's designs against prayer are of three kinds. First. If he can, he will keep thee from prayer. If that be not feasible, Second. He will strive to interrupt thee in prayer. And, Third. If that plot takes not, he will labour to hinder the success and return of thy prayer.

[Satan strives to keep from prayer.]

First Design. Satan's first design upon the Christian will be to keep him from prayer. To effect this he wants not his stratagems; many objections that he will start, and discouragements he will throw in thy way to this duty; hoping that if thou stumblest not at one, yet he may make thee fall by another, and be sick of thy enterprise before thou settest upon it. And, which is worst, thou wilt find a party in thy own bosom too ready to listen to what he saith, yea, to take up his arguments and maintain the dispute against thy engaging in this work. We shall pick up a few among many, and put an answer into thy mouth against he comes.

Satan keeps from prayer by charging the Christian with hypocrisy.]

First Stratagem. 'What! thou pray! If thou dost, thou wilt but play the hypocrite; and better not pray at all, than never the better!' Nay, possibly thy own misgiving heart may suggest the same, or at least so far credit his charge, as to make thee waver in thy thoughts what thou shouldst do—pray or not. Now, to arm thee against this, consider,

1. Thou art but afraid thou shouldst play the hypocrite, if [you] pray; but thou wilt certainly prove thyself an atheist if thou dost not. And that is it which he would have. I hope thou art wiser than to neglect a known duty upon a jealousy thou hast of miscarrying in it; to lie down in a known sin—yea, so broad a one as brands him for an atheist that continues in it—for fear of meeting a lion, may be but a bugbear, in the way of thy obedience to an indispensable command.

2. Thou art in the less danger of playing the hypocrite, because of thy fear. Some bodily diseases indeed are caught with a fear and fancy. He is most like to have the plague or pox that fears most he shall have them. But none are so safe from sin as they that fear the falling into it most. The truth is, I would desire no better argument to prove thee sincere than this—to fear thy hypocrisy. Believe it, if this be the great trouble of thy soul, the devil hath more reason to fear thy sincerity than thou thy hypocrisy. And in all likelihood this it is that makes him to scare thee from prayer—because thou scare him so much by thy praying. If thou wert a hypocrite, as he pretends, himself would invite thee to it; yea, make a lane for thee, rather than that thou shouldst not come to the work; and when thou art risen from thy knees, he would thank thee for thy pains, because he knows God would not. The hypocrite does him more service than God. You do not believe, sure, that the devil was any great enemy to Jezebel's fasting. Nay, I doubt not but he put it into her head, that she might thereby mock both God and man. Her fast was the devil's feast. But,

3. If thou findest more cause to fear thy playing the hypocrite than I who am a stranger to thy heart have reason to do—who indeed can know so well how thy own heart beats as thyself?—I say, if thou fearest this be the sin which is most likely to make a breach upon thee in thy duty, do as Moses, who slew the Egyptian to rescue the Israelite—destroy the sin, that thou mayest rescue thy soul from the neglect of a duty. Thou hast a very fair advantage, by the intelligence God graciously gives thee whence thy danger is most likely to come, of falling on thy enemy, and taking the fuller revenge on him, before thou settest about the work of prayer. Get but thy heart into a hatred of this odious sin, and fixed resolution against it, and, with God's blessing, it shall neither be able to hurt thee, nor hinder thy prayer from finding welcome with God.

[Satan keeps from prayer by undervaluing the Christian's gift for it.]

Second Stratagem. 'O but,' saith Satan, 'thou hast no gifts for prayer. Leave that for them that can perform this duty after a better fashion.'

What meanest thou by 'gifts?' If a rowling, flowing tongue which some have, whereby they are able on a sudden, with a long-continued discourse, to run over all the heads of prayer in a clear method, and clothe every petition with apt and moving expressions, we will suppose thou hast not this gift. But, God forbid that want of this should keep thee from praying, or make thee go the less comfortably to the duty. The want of these, show only thou hast not so good a head, but doth not the least hinder thy heart to be as gracious as theirs. And better of the two, that the defect should be found in thy head than in thy heart. Thy invention indeed in prayer by this will be more barren, but thy heart may be as fruitful over the few broken disjointed sentences that by piecemeal fall from thee, as theirs with their eloquent oration. Thy language will not be so trim and gaudy but thy soul and spirit may be as sound yea more upright, than many of those will be found who charm the ears of those that join with them by the music their words make. It is possible a man may have a rotten body under a gorgeous suit; and sub hâc purpurâ linguæ pannosam conscientiam—under the bravery of language a poor ragged conscience. Who had not rather be the healthful man in

plain clothes, than unsound and diseased under rich apparel?—sincere with mean gifts, rather than rotten-hearted with raised parts. We do not count him the best patriot in the parliament—house that plays the orator, and makes more rhetorical speeches than others, but he that takes with the best side, and whose vote is sure not to be wanting to carry on a righteous cause.

It is not the rhetoric of the tongue, but the hearty ‘amen’ which the sincere soul seals every holy request withal, that God values; and this thy honest heart will help thee to do, which his head cannot do for him that wants this sincerity. It is not the fairness of the hand that gives the force to the bond, but the person whose hand and seal it is. If it could, a scrivener might make all the country his debtors. Gifts may make a fair writing—which the hypocrite can do—but faith and sincerity make a valid prayer; and this alone can lay claim to the good things of the promise. In a word, sincere soul—for so I take thee to be—and if such, though thou hast not these praying gifts as others, yet thou hast as much interest in Christ, the ‘unspeakable gift,’ 2 Corinthians 9:15, as any of them all. And, for thy everlasting encouragement, know, it is not those gifts in them, but this gift of God to thee and all believers, which is the key that must open God’s heart, if any mercy be got thence. Yea, this gift must sanctify their glistering gifts, as the altar did the gold upon it, or else they will be an abomination to the Lord.

[Satan keeps from prayer, through present indisposition to it.]

Third Stratagem. Satan and the flesh too have their dilatory excuses to take thee off this duty, when thy stated usual time comes about for the performance of it. Dost thou never, Christian, when thou art addressing thyself to the throne of grace, hear Satan and thy flesh whispering in thine ear, ‘Christian, what art thou going to do? This is not a fit time for thy praying. Stay for a more convenient season.’ Here the devil seems modest. He saith not, Pray not at all, but ‘not now’—not dissolve, but ‘adjourn’ the court for a fitter time.

Answer. Now beware, Christian, thy foot is near a snare. If thou takest the devil’s counsel, and waitest for his convenient season, may be it will prove like Felix’s ‘convenient season’ for calling Paul to a further hearing; which, for aught we find, never came about. When the flesh or Satan beg time of thee, it is to steal time from thee. They put thee off duty at one time, on a design to shut thee out at last from this duty at any time. The devil is a cunning sophist; he knows a modest beggar may sooner obtain the little he asks, than he that saucily asks that which carries more unreasonableness in the request. Jephthah, who yielded to his daughter’s desire for a few months reprieve, would, it is like, not have heard her had she begged a full release from her father’s vow. A gracious soul is under a vow to call upon God. He knows such a motion would be flung back with the saint’s abhorrency upon his face, should he at the first dash bid him never pray more, and wholly leave his acquaintance with God. Therefore he would seem very willing he should pray. ‘Aye! by all means,’ saith he, ‘I would not have you turn your back on your best friend; but now is not so fit a season.’

[Two pleas Satan hath to cheat the Christians of their seasons of prayer.] 1. The Christian’s present indisposition to prayer. 2. Some worldly business that then stays to be despatched.

1. Plea. The Christian’s present indisposition to pray. ‘Stay, Christian,’ saith the tempter, ‘till thou art in a better temper for duty, and thou wilt pray to more purpose. Better not write that

scribble—leave the work undone, than go about it when thy hand is out.' Now there is a double indisposition, which both Satan and the flesh make use of to colour their pretence with.

(1.) Indisposition of body. Some distemper lies on at present on that, and Scripture, say these, tells thee God loves mercy rather than sacrifice. And it cannot be denied but the Scripture will reach as far as the body, for God's commands are not cruel to it.

Answer. But, to help thee out of this snare, tell me plainly, how great is this distemper of thy body? Haply thou art not so ill but thou canst go about thy worldly business, though with some groans and complaints in the same. But when thou shouldst pray, then thy head aches and shoots more than before. Art thou well enough to go into thy shop, and not to pray in thy closet? Canst thou waddle so far as to the market, and not pray at home? Canst thou overcome thy distemper so far as to traffic with the world, and not to trade with heaven? Surely all is not right. God is but little beholden to thee. May not God say, I deserve thy company as well as the world? But, suppose thou beest right-down sick, and quite laid up from meddling in thy worldly employments; yet, will this excuse thee from visiting the throne of grace? God takes thee out of the shop to show thee the way into the closet. He knocks thee off thy worldly trade, that thou mayest follow thy heavenly the more close. Thou art not, indeed, able to pray in a continued discourse as in health. Neither doth God expect it. Here that Scripture, which the devil would have thee abuse, is pat, and suitable to thy present state: God loves mercy rather than sacrifice. Yet now, if ever, is the time for thee to shoot those jacula præcatoria—darts of ejaculatory prayer to God. When our body breathes shortest, it breathes quickest and oftenest. Though thou canst not pray long, yet thou mayest pray much in these pathetical sallies of thy soul to heaven. The Christian should have his quiver full of these arrows, which, though short, go with a force. Christ never prayed more earnestly than in his agony; which prayer was of this nature, 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt,' Matthew 26:39. And after a little pause—for nature to take some breath, by reason of that unspeakable burden which then lay upon it—he shoots the same dart again to heaven thrice, one after another, Matthew 26:44. In a word, Christian, though thou canst not pray as thou wert wont, yet thou canst desire others to pray for thee and with thee. We are bid to send for the elders, yea and beg prayers of others too. So pitiful is God to us, that when, through our own weakness, we are disabled from delivering our own conceptions in prayer, that then we may bring forth as Bilhah on others' knees. When we cannot go ourselves as we were wont to the work, we may be carried on the shoulders of their prayers, and fly on the wings of their faith to heaven.

(2.) Indisposition of heart. O but, secondly, thou mayest say, It is not the sickness of thy body, but the deadness of thy heart, and indisposition of thy soul, that keeps thee from duty. Thou wouldst fain have that in a better frame, and then thou wouldst not be long a stranger to it.

Answer (a). Let me ask thee, Christian, what thou hast found—in the observation of thy own heart—to be the fruit that hath grown from such put■offs and excuses;—hath neglect of duty at one time fitted thee for it at another? I believe not. Sloth is not cured with sleep, nor laziness with idleness. If our leg be numb, we walk, and so it wears off. Satan knows if thou playest the truant to■day thou wilt be more loath to go to school tomorrow. Give the flesh a little scope and liberty by thus unlacing thyself, and it will endure less to be straitened afterwards. There is something to do to bridle a wanton beast, when hath got the bit once out of his mouth. The spouse's coat sat very

easy on her back, and unwilling no doubt she was to be stripped; but when once, by a wile of Satan, she was persuaded to put it off, how loath was she then to get it on again! And therefore, whenever you are turning from this or any other duty merely upon this account, consider well what is like to follow. One of these two will come of it. Either thou wilt see thy sin, and return with shame and sorrow for thy neglect. And is it not less trouble to pray now than upon such terms afterwards? A heathen could say, 'He would not sin to buy repentance.' And shouldst not thou have more wisdom to know which is a bad bargain for thy soul than he? Or, if not that, it will follow, secondly, that this neglect will beget another, and that a third, and so thou wilt run further in arrears with thy conscience, till at last thou givest over all thoughts of renewing thy acquaintance with God because thou hast discontinued it so long.

Answer (b). Examine from whence this present indisposition comes, and probably thou wilt find reason to charge it either upon some sinful miscarriage in thy Christian course, or on thy neglect of those preparatory means through which thou art to pass into the performance of this duty.

[1.] See whether thou hast not been tampering with some sin knowingly. There is an antipathy betwixt sinning and praying, partly from guilt, which makes the soul shy of coming into God's sight, because conscious of a fault. The child that hath misspent the day in play abroad, steals to bed at night, or plays least in sight, for fear of a chiding, or worse, from his father. And also there is this antipathy between those two lines of acting, as the same doth roil and disorder the heart. Sin and prayer are such contraries, that it is impossible at one stride to step from one to another. It is an ill time when the fountain is stopped or muddied, to go to draw water thence. If the workman's tools be blunt or gapped, no work an be well done till a new edge be set on them. It is the devil's policy thus to disturb and unfit the Christian for duty that he may leave it undone. And therefore, let thy first care be to keep the fountain of thy heart clear all the day long, as remembering that from it those holy affections which in prayer thou art to pour forth to God must be drawn. Look thou lendest not any power of thy soul to be Satan's instrument in sin's coarse foul work, lest thou find it out of case when thou art to use it in this spiritual service. A good servant will not have her dishes or pots foul when they should be used, but stand clean and bright upon the shelf, to be ready against they are called for. And so is the true Christian characterized. 'If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work,' 2 Timothy 2:21. But again, if thou findest guilt to be contracted and thence a fear to come so nigh God, as this duty will bring thee, yea an estrangement also upon thy heart from this work, thy best way is to speedily to renew thy repentance, and so thy faith both for pardoning mercy and purging grace. New breaches are made up better than long quarrels; green wounds healed easier than old sores; spots washed out sooner when newly got than when ingrained by long continuance. Ply thee to the throne of grace. Water the earth, if thou canst, with thy tears, and fill heaven with sorrowful sighs for thy sin; but by no means shift off the duty on this pretence; for that is not the way to mend the matter, but make it worse. Jonah did ill to consult his credit rather than the exaltation of God's mercy; and how he should come honourably off with this embassage, than how the name of the great God his Master that sent him might be magnified. But he did worse than these sinful thoughts stirred in him—which he should have humbled himself for—made him run away from his Master's work also. Thus, Christian, it is ill done of thee to make a breach in thy holy course by tampering with any sin; but thou wilt commit a greater if thou turnest thy back on God also in that ordinance where

thou shouldst humble thyself for thy former sin. Can one sin be a good argument for committing another? Thou hast fallen into sin in the day; wilt thou not therefore pray at night? Surely it were better to beg of God forgiveness of this, and more grace, that thou mayest not do the like or worse to■morrow. Neglect of duty is not the way to help thee out of the pit thou art in, nor keep thee from falling into another. Take heed thou runnest not thyself further into temptation. Now is the time for the devil to set upon thee, when this weapon is out of thy hand. The best thou canst look for is a storm from God to bring back thee, his runaway servant, to thy work again. And the sooner it comes, the more merciful he is to thee.

[2.] If, upon thy faithful inquiry, thou findest not thy heart reproach thee to have indisposed thyself for duty by any known sin in the course of thy life, and yet thy heart continues lumpish and unfit for prayer, then probably thou wilt take thyself tardy in thy actual preparation to the duty. Hast thou therefore solemnly endeavoured, by suitable meditations, to blow the coal of thy habitual grace? which though not quenched by any gross sin, yet may be deadened, and covered with some ashes, by thy being over■busy in thy worldly employments. The well is seldom so full that water will, at first pumping, flow forth. Neither is the heart commonly so spiritual after our best care in our worldly converse—much less when we somewhat overdo therein—to pour itself into God's bosom freely, without some labour to raise and elevate it. Yea, oft the springs of grace lie so low, that only pumping will not fetch the heart up to a praying frame, but arguments must be poured into the soul —like so many pails of water into the pump—before the affections rise. Hence are those soliloquies and discourses, which we find holy men use with their own hearts to bring them into a gracious temper, suitable for communion with God in ordinances. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits,' Psalms 103:1-2. It seems David either found or feared his heart would not be in so good a frame as he desired, that he redoubles his charge. He found sure his heart somewhat drowsy, which made him thus rub his eyes, and rouse up himself, now going to God in this duty. Sometimes calling and exciting the heart will not do, but the heart must be chid, and taken up roundly. So David was fain to deal with himself at another time. 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?' Psalms 42:11. Heavy birds must take a run before they can get upon the wing. It is harder to get a great bell up, than to ring it when it is raised. And so it is with our hearts. Harder work we shall find it to prepare them for duty, than to perform it when they are got into some order. Now, hast thou endeavoured this? If not, how canst thou make this a pretence to waive the duty because thou art indisposed, when thou hast not used the means to have thy clog taken off? This is as if one should excuse himself for not coming to the feast unto which he was invited, because forsooth he was not dressed, when indeed he never went about to make ready. But if thou canst answer to the former question, and in some uprightness say that thou hast not neglected preparatory means, but yet thy indisposition and deadness of heart remains, then we present you with another consideration. Though it be not so ordinary, yet it is possible, that a Christian may walk on those coals of meditation, which at one time would set his soul all on fire, and put his graces into a flame, yet at another he may find little warmth from them. We will suppose this to be thy case. Therefore,

Answer (c). Consider that God may, and doth, sometimes conceal his enlivening presence, till the soul be engaged in the work. And would it not grieve thee to lose such an opportunity? How oft hast thou found thyself at the entrance into a duty becalmed, as a ship which at first setting sail

hath hardly wind to swell its sails—while under the shore and shadow of the trees—but meets a fresh gale of wind when got into the open sea? Yea, didst thou never launch out to duty as the apostles to sea, with the wind on thy teeth, as if the Spirit of God, instead of helping thee on, meant to drive thee back, and yet hast found Christ walking to thee before the duty was done, and a prosperous voyage made of it at last? Abraham saw not the ram which God had provided for his sacrifice till he was in the mount. In the mount of prayer God is seen; even when the Christian does oft go up the hill towards duty with a heavy heart, because he can as yet have no sight of him. Turn not therefore back; but on with courage. He may be nearer than thou thinkest on. 'In that same hour,' saith Christ, 'it shall be give unto you,' Matthew 10:19. 'In the day,' said David, 'when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul,' Psalms 138:3. It is no more than the promise gives us security for: 'The way of the Lord is strength.' Just as it is with a man, who at first going out on a journey feels a lassitude and feebleness in his limbs; but the farther he goes, the more strength he gathers, as if there arose strength out of the ground he walks on. Truly the saints find this in God's way: 'I have remembered thy name, O Lord, in the night, and have kept thy law. This I had, because I kept thy precepts,' Psalms 119:55-56. His meaning is, by doing his best endeavour to keep them, he got this by the hand, to be able to keep them better, and he thinks himself so well paid in for this his pains, that he glories in it—'This I had.' So the saint hath this for praying —he gets his heart in tune to pray better.

We may observe those children in Scripture which came of barren wombs were the greatest comforts to their parents when they had them. Witness Isaac, Samuel, and John. The greater deadness and barrenness thy heart, to thy own sense, lay under, and the less hope thou hadst to get out of the indisposition, the more joyful will the quickening presence of God be to thee. The assistance that thus surpriseth thee beyond thy expectation will be a true Isaac —a child of joy and laughter. And a double reason is obvious why God doth thus. You see it in the great delight the Lord takes in pure obedience. 'To obey is better than sacrifice,' 1 Samuel 15:22. To pray in obedience is better than barely to pray. This is the jewel in the ring of prayer. Now, to pray in pure obedience is to set upon the duty when there is no assistance visible or encouragement sensible—to go to duty not because God puts forth his hand to lead me, but because he holds forth his precept to command me. As when a general commands his army to march, if then the soldiers should stand upon terms, and refuse to go except they have better clothes, their pay in hand, or the like, and then they will march; this would not show them an obedient disciplined army. But if, at the reading of their orders, they presently break up their quarters, and set forth, though it be midnight when the command come, and they without money in their purse, clothes on their back—leaving the whole care of themselves for these things to their general, and they only attend how they may best fulfil his command—these may be said to march in obedience. Thus, when a soul, after a faithful use of means, finds his heart dead and dull, yet in obedience to the command kneels down—though the sense of his inability is so great that he questions whether he shall have power to speak one word to God as he ought, yet had rather be dumb and dutiful, than disobedient in running away from his charge —here is an obedient soul, and he may hope to meet God in his way with that which he cannot carry with him—as the lepers, who, when they went, in obedience to Christ's command, to 'show themselves to the priest,' were cured by the way, though they saw nothing of it when they set forth.

Another fetch that Satan hath to make the Christian put off the duty of prayer as unseasonable at present, is—

2. Plea. Some worldly business or other that then is to be despatched; and therefore suggests such thoughts as these to divert him:—'I have no leisure now to pray; this business is to be done, and that necessary occasion calls for my attendance. I will therefore adjourn the performance till I can come with more freedom and leisure.'

Now to arm thee, Christian, against such dilatory pretences, I shall lay down a few directions.

[Five Directions to preserve against interference with seasons of prayer.]

(1.) Take heed of overcharging thyself with worldly business, which then is done when thou graspest more thereof than will consist with thy heavenly trade and Christian calling. God allows thee to give to the world that which is the world's, but he will not suffer thee to pay the world that which is due to him; rob Mary to lend to Martha, steal from thy closet to pay to thy kitchen. Thy particular calling is intended by God to be a help to thy general. It will therefore be thy sin to make that an encumbrance which is given as an advantage. And that which is itself a sin cannot be a plea for the neglect of a duty. that servant would mend a matter but little, who excuseth his not doing a business his master commanded, by telling him he had drunk too much when he should have gone about it. Nor will thy apology for passing thy time of prayer be better, that sayest thou hadst so much to do in the world that thou couldst not find time to pray in.

(2.) Labour to time thy seasons for prayer with discretion in the things of the world. If we have two businesses to despatch in the same day, we contrive, if possible, that they may not interfere. And certainly a holy providence to forecast how we may reconcile daily the demands of our closet and shop, our devotions and worldly employments, by laying out each its portion of time, would ordinarily prevent much disorder and confusion in our walking. The prophet speaks of 'the liberal man devising liberal things.' We could not easily want time to pray in, if our hearts would but persuade our heads to devise and study how our other affairs might be disposed of without prejudice to our devotions. That cloth which a bungler thinks too little for a garment, a good workman can make one of it, and leave some for another use also. O there is a great deal of art in cutting out time with little loss.

(3.) Be sure thou keepest a right notion of prayer in thy thoughts. Some look upon every minute of time spent in the closet lost in the shop. And no wonder such are easily kept from prayer upon any pretended business, who think it a prejudice to their other affairs. But I hope, Christian, thou art better taught. Does the husbandman mow the less for whetting his scythe? Doth a good grace before meat spoil the dinner? No. Nor doth prayer hinder the Christian either in his employments or enjoyments, but expedites the one and sanctifies the other. All agree that to the despatch of a business—as to the winding of a skein of silk—nothing conduceth more than to begin at the right end of it. And to be sure the right end of any business is to begin with God, and engage him to help us. 'In all thy ways acknowledge God,' and 'lean not unto thine own understanding,' Proverbs 3:5-6.

(4.) The more straits and difficulties thou conquerest to keep up thy communion with God, the more kindly it is taken of God. No more friend is more welcome to us than he who breaks through many occasions to give us a visit. There is little cost, and so little love, in an idle man's visit—he

that comes to see us because he hath nothing else to do. Mary was Christ's favourite, who trode the world under her feet, that she might sit at his feet. And the Bethshemites, who in their zeal—I confess their case is extraordinary—came out of their very harvest-field, when they were reaping, to offer a sacrifice to the Lord, 1 Samuel 6:13.

(5.) Be faithful and impartial in considering the importance and necessity of that business which is propounded as an apology for not performing this duty at thy usual season. It cannot be denied but such a necessary occasion may emerge and fall out, for which the Christian may, without sin, adjourn the solemn performance of his devotions to another more fit time. Who doubts but a Christian may, when he riseth, go to quench his neighbour's house on fire, though by this he be kept out of his closet, and detained from offering to God that solemn morning sacrifice of praise and prayer he was wont? Yea, though the occasion be not extraordinary, if it be, (a) About that which is lawful in itself.

(b) Of importance.

(c) Necessarily then to be despatched. And,

(d) If it surpriseth us, and we do not bring it upon ourselves by our own fault, then the duty of prayer may without sin be adjourned for a fitter time. But let us take heed of stamping a pretended necessity on things and actions, only to gratify our lazy hearts with a handsome excuse, whereby we may both save the pains of performing a duty, and also escape a chiding from our conscience for the non-performance of it. Of all fools he is the worst, that is witty to put a cheat on himself, and especially on his soul. Such a one must expect that the less his conscience barks at present, the more it will bite when it shall be unmuzzled.

Again, if the occasion be, as is said, important and necessary, whereby thou art called off from the solemn performance of this duty at present, then lift up thy heart in an ejaculatory prayer to God, to guide and guard thee. This is the short dagger thou art to use for thy defence against temptation, when thou hast not time to draw the long sword of solemn prayer. Thus thou mayst pray in any place, company, or employment. A short parenthesis interrupts not the sense of discourse, but gives an elegancy to it. And a short ejaculation to heaven will not interrupt any business thou art about, but advantage it much.

Again, be careful to recover this loss which thy worldly business hath put thee to in thy communion with God, by more abounding in the duty upon thy next opportunity. The tradesman who is kept from his dinner on the market-day, goes the sooner to his supper, and eats the freer meal at night. If you be hindered of your rest one night by business, you will take it up the next. O that we were as wise for our souls—what we are prevented of at one tie, to recover with advantage at another, by a double enlargement of our hearts in our prayers and meditations!

[Satan discourages from prayer because of the greatness of the requests.]

Fourth Stratagem. Satan discourages sometimes the Christian, when on his way to this duty, from the greatness of those requests which he hath to put up to the throne of grace. Thou art going to pray, Christian, will he say, and will nothing serve thee less than pardon of sin, love and favour of God, with eternal life, &c.? Surely thou art too free of another's purse, and too kind to thyself, if thou thinkest to be welcome at God's door with so bold an errand. This is a boon reserved for

some few favourites, and darest thou think so well of thyself that thou art one of them?

Now to arm thee, Christian, against this, that thou mayest neither be kept from the duty, nor go misgivingly to it upon this account, the greatness of thy request, ponder upon these five considerations, which will amount to a full answer to this cavil. 1. Oppose the greatness of that God thou art going to make thy address unto, against the greatness of thy request. 2. Oppose the promise to thy fears. 3. The valuable consideration on which they are made. 4. The greatness of the request cannot hinder, because they are most welcome that ask most. 5. God exceeds his people's asking.

[Fivefold answer to Satan's discouragement to prayer from the greatness of the request.]

Answer 1. Oppose the greatness of that God thou art going to make thy address unto, against the greatness of thy request. We are bid to 'ascribe greatness to our God,' Deuteronomy 32:3. And if ever, especially when kneeling down to pray. Wert thou to put up thy request to some puny prince, or petty creature, thou hadst reason to consider whether thy pitcher were not too great that thou wouldst have filled. Possibly thou mayest ask such a one more at one clap than he is worth. 'Help, my lord, O king,' said the woman in the famine of Samaria, yet she had no relief: 'If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee?' 2 Kings 6:26-27. Or possibly, if he hath power, he may want a heart to part with so much as will serve thy turn. There are many of Nabal's name in the world—such churls, who think every bit of bread lost that they eat not themselves; yea, some who grudge their own belly its necessary food. Wert thou at the door of such as those, what couldst thou expect but cold welcome? But remember he is a great God, great in power. Thou canst not overask. Thou mayest draw thine arrow to the head, and yet not overshoot the power of God. Even when thou hast drawn thy desires to the highest pitch, he shall be above thee; 'for he is able to do exceedingly above what we can ask or think.'

Wouldst thou have thy sins pardoned? Yes, if they were not too great, thou sayest. But can God at once discount such a sum, and discharge so vast a debt, that hath been gathering many years by a full trade of constant sinning, with so great a stock of means and mercies as I have had; and thereby the unhappy advantage of making the greater return? Yes, he is able 'abundantly to pardon,' without any wrong to himself or control from any other. The sovereign power of life and death being in his hands, he is accountable to none;—as not for acts of justice, so neither of mercy. 'It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? Romans 8:33-34. If, indeed, a man forgive a wrong done unto him, thou canst not think thyself therefore acquitted by God; his wrath may still chide on thee. Man cannot give away God's right. Were a man so kind as to forgive a thief that robbed him, yet it is not in his power to discharge him of the penalty of the law. But if the prince, who is the lawgiver, will do it, none can gainsay. If God will pass an act of mercy, thou art free indeed; for the power lies in his hands. Is it any masterly lust, from whose tyranny thou wouldst beg deliverance? The God thou prayest to is able to break open thy prison door, and make thee, a poor captive, go out free. He can give these thine enemies as dust to thy sword, and as driven stubble to thy bow; yea, destroy them with a cast of his eye: 'The Lord looked unto the Egyptians...and troubled their host,' Exodus 14:24. His very look was as heavy as a millstone about their necks. Presently they sank, horse and rider, like lead to the bottom of the sea. And sin and Satan are no more before God than were Pharaoh and his host. In a word, is it comfort thou wouldst ask if it might be had? O, know he is a Creator thou prayest to! Though thy heart were as

void of comfort as the chaos was of light, yet can he with a word cause a new heaven of joy to arise out of thy confused soul, and make in one moment to step out of darkness into light. Neither is his mercy less than his power. O, launch therefore into this bankless, bottomless sea, by thy faith! Behold the wonders of God in these depths, and do not stand reasoning thyself into unbelief by any uncomely comparisons between God and the narrow-hearted creature. ‘He is God and not man.’ None of these defects are to be found in his mercy which we impotent creatures find in ourselves. The paleness we see sometimes is not in the sun, but from the clouds that interpose. The stars do not blink nor twinkle, as is thought; but we—because of their vast distance, and our weak organ—cannot behold them with a fixed eye. Nor have the jealousies and fears entertained by tempted souls, to the disparagement of the mercy of God, any foundation in the divine nature, but are mere entia rationis—bugbears, which, through the darkness of their troubled spirits, and distemperature of a melancholy fancy, Satan hath the advantage of affrighting them with. O, beware therefore thou dost not disfigure the sweet lovely face of God’s mercy—which smile alike upon every poor, penitent, praying soul—while thou fanciest God to have a cast of this his eye, and to look more favourably upon one than another, lest by this you do betray the glorious name of God to be rent in pieces by your cruel unbelief! If you once come to wrap up God in your hard thoughts as slow to hear—hard to be wrought on with your prayers and tears; truly then Satan may easily persuade you to commit any sin against him, because you expect no mercy from him.

Answer 2. Oppose the promise to thy fears. There is no mercy thou canst desire but is promised beforehand unto the prayer of faith. The mercy thou wouldst have is already voted in heaven, and the grant passed; only God stays for thy coming over to the throne of grace, there to lay thy claim to the promise before he issueth it forth. The mercy lies in the womb of the promise, but stays for thy prayer of faith to obstetricate, and give it a fair deliverance. ‘The children are come to the birth,’ said Hezekiah—the promise is big—wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left, Isaiah 37:1-38. That is, if anything will help, it must be that. What can a petitioner desire more in his address to a prince for some great favour, than to be assured not only a prince is of a gracious merciful nature, but also that he hath obliged himself to give that which he hath in his thoughts to desire? And shall only the promises of God be counted light and little worth? Have you not heard of such a promise: ‘Ask, that your joy may be full?’ Did ever a vain word drop from the lips of truth? Doth he make an order one day, and reverse it another? Are his words yea and nay? and not rather ‘yea and amen’ for ever? 2 Corinthians 1:20. Beggars use to be quick-sighted. Benhadad’s servants saw light at a little hole; and gathered from a few kind words which dropped from Ahab’s mouth, that there was mercy raked up in his heart towards their master, which they soon blew up. Joab saw David’s bowels working towards Absalom through the casement of his countenance, and therefore lets down the widow’s parable as a bucket to draw out that mercy which lay in his heart like water in a deep well. How much more encouragement hast thou, Christian, to plead with thy God, who art not put to guess at God’s thoughts, but hast the assurance of plain promises for thy good speed?

O what fools, and how slow of heart are we to believe the good word of God! If Moses supposed his brethren would have understood, by the kind visit he gave them, and his friendly office in rescuing one single Israelite from his oppressor’s hand, that God would by him deliver them all; how much more may God expect that his people should understand his purposes of love towards them, when he exposeth his heart to so open a view of their faith by his promise, and hath sealed

the truth thereof with so many examples to whom already full payment hath been made of the same? And do we yet read them, as once the eunuch that sweet promise, Isaiah 53:1-12, and understand not the meaning of them? Do we yet sit so near our comfort, as Hagar by the well, and our eyes held not to see it? Can we yet walk over the promises as barren ground, when, with a little digging into them, we might find a treasure to pay all our debts and supply all our wants?

Answer 3. Oppose to thy fears not only the greatness of the promises, but also the valuable consideration upon which they are made. Christ pays for what thou prayest. Thou, indeed, beggest alms, but Christ demands that same as debt. God is merciful to thee, but just to him. And therefore, Christian, though it becomes thee to sink thyself beneath the least mercy in thy own thoughts, yet it behooves thee to be tender of Christ's credit, whose merit is far above the greatest mercy thou canst beg as thou art beneath the least. The Father will give you little thanks for casting any dishonourable reflection upon his Son, on whom himself hath heaped so much glory; yea, with whose honour his own is so interwoven, that whoever dishonours the Son dishonours the Father that sent him. Now there are three privileges purchased for every believer; and none of them can be lost by us without dishonour to him.

(1.) He hath purchased a liberty to pray. It had been death to come on such an errand to God till he had by his blood paved a way and procured a safe conduct, Hebrews 10:17.

(2.) An ability to pray as he purchased the Spirit for us; called therefore 'the Spirit of promise.'

(3.) The safe return of our prayers. 'Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you,' John 16:23. Indeed, it is his business now in heaven to own our cause there in open court, and to present his blood as ready money to be laid down for all his saints beg, that no demur be made to their requests. So that, either thou must blot this article of Christ's intercession out of thy creed, or else put thyself to shame for questioning thy entertainment with God when thou hast so good a friend at court to speak for thee.

Answer 4. The greatness of thy request cannot hinder thy speeding, because thou art most welcome that ask most. Who are the persons frowned on at the throne of grace but those who lay out the strength of their desires, and bestow their greatest importunity for mercies of least weight and worth? 'And they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds,' Hosea 7:14. Mark! the Lord did not account that they had prayed at all for all their loud cry; and why? but because he disdained their low and drossy spirit in crying loudest for that which they deserved least, as the following words will resolve us, 'They assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me,' they would have a good crop with a full vintage; and these scraps should serve them, so as not to trouble God for any more. God, his love and favour, are quite left out of the story. May they but have their bellies crammed they have all their wish, and leave the other for those that like them better. O how God abhors these prostrate souls and carnal prayers! When men 'tithe mint and cummin' in their prayers, but neglect the weightier things of the promises, such are an interest in Christ, forgiveness of sin, a new heart, grace here and glory hereafter! Or, when they aim at low and base ends in praying for these things that in themselves are noble and high! And therefore fear not the greatness of thy request. God had rather give thee heaven than earth. He can more willingly bestow himself on thee that art in love with him, than a crust of bread on another that regards him not. The greater the mercy is thou askest, the greater the rent and revenue wilt thou pay him for it. The less he gives the less he receives. By low

requests thou wrongest two at once. Thou art a thief to thyself, in wanting what thou mayest have for asking—in bringing a little vessel when thou mightest have a great one filled. Neither art thou so good a friend to thy God as thou shouldst; for the less grace thou hast from him, the less glory thou wilt return unto him. The reflex beams are proportionable to the lightsome body they come from. When grace is weak, the reflection it makes of praise and glory to God can be but weak and dark.

Answer 5. God is so free and redundant in communicating his mercy, that he exceeds his people's modesty in asking. He gives them commonly their prayers with an overplus more than they have faith or face to ask; as Naaman, when Gehazi asked one talent, would need force two upon him. Abraham asked a child of God when he wanted an heir in whom he might live when dead. Now God promises him a son, and more than so, a numerous offspring; yea, more still, such an offspring, that in his offspring 'all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.' Jacob, he desired but God's pass, under the protection of which he might go and return safely, with food and raiment enough to keep him alive, Genesis 28:20. Well, this he shall have. But God thinks it not enough; and therefore sends him home with two bands, who went out a poor fugitive with little besides his pilgrim's staff. Solomon prays for wisdom, and God throws in wealth and honour, 2 Chronicles 1:10. The woman of Canaan begs a crumb—as much as we would cast to a dog—and Christ gives her a child's portion. She came to have her sick child made well, and with it she hath the life of her own soul given her. Yea, Christ puts the key of his treasure into her own hand, and leaves her as it were to serve herself: 'Be it unto thee even as thou wilt,' Matthew 15:28.

[Satan strives to interrupt from prayer.]

Second Design. A second design Satan hath against the Christian is, to interrupt him in the act of prayer, when he can by no means keep him from it. It is hard to steal a prayer and the devil not know what thou art going about. He watches thy motions, Christian, and is at thy heels wherever thou turnest. If thou art about any evil action, he is at thy elbow to jog thee on, or before thee to remove every stone out of the way, that the bowl may go the more smoothly on, and thou mayest not be sick of the enterprise by the rubs thou meetest in the way. Ahab had but a plot hatching in his thoughts of going up to Ramoth-Gilead, and presently Satan hath his knights of the post whom he sends to bid him go up and prosper. David himself had but some proud thoughts stirring him up to number the people; Satan takes the advantage, and works with the humour now moving, whereby it soon ripened into that sore which God lanced with so sharp a judgement as the loss of seventy thousand men. Now he is as skilful and ready at hand to disturb a holy action as to promote a wicked. When the sons of God some to present themselves before the Lord, Satan forgets not to be among them. He is no recusant, scruples not to be present when you worship God; indeed he is first there and last thence. Sometimes thou shalt find him injecting motions of his own, sometimes wire-drawing thy own. When he sees a vain thought, a sin sprung by thy wanton fancy, he will help thee to pursue the chase. To be sure, he will be at one end of every inordinate motion of thy heart; either the father to beget, or the nurse to bring them up. These are so many and diverse, that we may as well tell the atoms we see in a sunbeam, as number and sort this miscellaneous heap of roving thoughts which are incident to the Christian in prayer. Sometimes he will inject such as are sinful, proud, filthy, yea blasphemous thoughts. Not that he hopes to find entertainment in the Christian's heart for such guests—much less to make a settlement of them there with the gracious soul's consent; but to make a hurly-burly and confusion

in his spirit, whereby—as upon some sudden scare in our assemblies—the holy exercise he is now about may be hindered. Sometimes he will prompt thoughts holy in themselves but impertinent, which, at another time, himself would oppose with all his might, but now presents them, because most likely to find welcome, and fit enough to serve his present purpose, being, though good fruit, yet brought forth in a bad season. I believe none that have any acquaintance with this duty, and their hearts in it, are altogether strangers to Satan's slights of this nature. Now he hath a double plot; one levelled against God himself, another against the Christian thereby.

[The double plot of Satan in interrupting prayer.]

First Plot. In interrupting prayer Satan hath a plot against God. The devil knows very well that not the least part of his tribute of honour is paid by the Christian upon his knees in this solemn act of divine worship, to intercept which is both his great ambition and endeavour. Nay, he despairs not—if his design takes—to make the Christian dishonour him most, where God looks his name should be above all sanctified. Indeed, those have the unhappy opportunity of casting the greatest indignities on God who are admitted to stand nearest to him. Should he who hath the honour to set the crown on his prince's head, bring it in a filthy case, and so clap it on—or, instead of the king's own royal crown bring some ridiculous one of straw, or such like stuff contrived on purpose to make laughter—what greater scorn could such a one possibly invent to throw upon his prince? The attributes of God are his royal diadem, and it is no small honour that the great God puts upon the Christian, by admitting him as it were to set this crown upon his head, which he doth when in prayer he gives him the glory of his majesty and holiness, power and mercy, truth and faithfulness, &c., with such humble adoration, and holy ravishment of affection, as may comport with the indefinite perfections of his deity. But if our present thoughts in prayer be not of God, or not suitable to God and these his glorious excellencies, we pollute his name, and not honour it. We mock him, not worship him. In a word, we pull off his crown as much as in us lies, rather than set it on. Now doth not thy heart tremble, Christian, in thy bosom, to think thou should be Satan's instrument to offer such an indignity as this unto thy God and King? Thou art, if a saint, the temple of the Holy Ghost; prayer, the spiritual sacrifice which from the altar of a humble heart thou art to offer; wilt thou now suffer Satan to sit in this temple of God, and exalt himself there—by any vain, much less vile, thoughts—above God himself, whom thou art worshipping? Suppose, while a prince is at dinner, a company of impudent ruffians should rush into the room through the negligence of the prince's servants that are waiting on him, and they should throw the dishes, one this way, another that way, would not these servants deserve a severe rebuke that looked no better to the door? Ordinances of worship are God's table, the sacrifices under the law called God's food and bread. When the saint is praying the King of heaven sits at his table, Song of Solomon 1:12. The dishes served up are the graces of his Spirit in the saint. Now wandering thoughts, they come in and turn the table as it were upside down; they spill the spikenard which thou wouldst pour forth. How ill may thy God take it that thou lookest no better to the door of thy heart!

Second Plot. In interrupting prayer Satan hath a plot against thee, Christian.

1. If he can get thee to sport with these, or sluggishly yield to them without making any vigourous resistance, that prayer, he knows, will neither do him hurt nor thyself good. Dost [thou] think God will welcome that prayer to heaven which hath not thy heart to bear it company thither? And how

can thy heart go with it when thou hast sent it another way? It were a vain thing to expect that ship should make a prosperous voyage which is set adrift to sea to be carried whither every wave it meets will drive it, without any pilot to steer it to a certain haven, or such a one that hath no skill or care to hold the helm with a steady hand. Such are the prayers that come from a roving heart. Will God hear thee when thou mockest him? And if this be not to mock him, what is? Like children that give a knock at a door and then run away to their play again, thus thou rearest up thy voice to God, and then art gone in thy roving thoughts to hold chat with the world or worse, forgetting whom thou spakest last to. Is not this to play bo■peep with God? Magnam injuriam Deo facio, cum precor, ut meas preces exaudiat, quas ego qui fundo, non exaudio; deprecor illum, ut mihi intendat, ego vero, nec mihi, nec mihi, intendo. Thus the holy man complains of himself how injurious and unworthy of God his carriage was in prayer—'I would have God,' saith he, 'hear my prayer which myself doth not, when I put it up; I would have God's ear attentive to me, when I neither mind God nor myself when I pray.'

2. He disturbs thee in praying, that he may make thee weary of praying. Indeed, he is not likely to miss his mark if thou lettest these vermin go on to breed in thy heart; for these will rob thee of the sweetness of the duty; and when the marrow is once out, thou wilt easily be persuaded to throw the bone away. Omnis vita gustu ducitur—he is in danger to forsake his meat who hath lost his relish of it. Prayer is a tedious work to him that hath no pleasure in performing of it; and weariness in it stands next door to being weary of it.

3. Thou provokest the Spirit of God—that alone can carry you through the work—to withdraw his assistance. Who will help him that minds not what he does? You know what Joab said to David when he indulged his inordinate passion for the loss of Absalom, 'If thou go not forth, there will not tarry one with thee this night: and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that befell thee,' 2 Samuel 19:7. Truly, either thou must speedily rouse thyself out of thy sloth and non-attendance, or else the Spirit will be gone; and he departed, it will be worse with thee than ever. Who hast thou then to help thee in thy work? And thou wilt find it harder to bring him back, than to keep him from going. The necessary infirmities which cleave to thy imperfect state, if protested against, shall not drive him away; but if thou lettest them nestle in thy heart, he takes it as thy giving him warning to be gone. An affront done to an ambassador by the baser sort of people as he walks in the street—while resident in a foreign state—may be passed over; but when such shall find countenance from the prince, it then makes a breach. Take heed, therefore, of showing favour to such disturbers of the league betwixt God and thy soul. Thy heart, which should be a house of prayer, Christ will not endure to have it a place of merchandise. Either thou must whip these buyers and sellers out, or the Spirit will go. We read of an 'abomination of desolation standing in the holy place,' Matthew 24:15, which some interpret to be the Roman ensigns there displayed when Jerusalem was taken. This abomination ushered desolation. What dost thou, by thy roving thoughts, but set up an abomination in the temple of thy heart? O! down with these, as thou wouldst not be left desolate, and wholly void of God's gracious presence with thee.

Question. But, it may be, now you will ask, 'What counsel can you give to arm us against both these incursions of Satan and bubblings of our own vain hearts in prayer? How can we keep either our hearts in, or these out?'

{Answer.} Impossible, indeed, it may be wholly to prevent them, they come so suddenly and secretly —even as lightning in at the window. We may as well keep the wind out of our house—which gets in at every crevice, though the doors be shut—as wholly free our hearts from their disturbance. Yet this will not disoblige us from our utmost care and endeavour to hinder the prevalency of them. Humours, while rouling here and there, do not endanger us so much as when they gather to a head, and settle in some joint and part of the body. I have read of some eastern parts of the world, where such multitudes of locusts and caterpillars are seen, that they almost darken the air as they fly, and devour every green thing where they light. The inhabitants, therefore, when they perceive this army hovering over them, by making fires in their fields, keep them from lighting with the smoke that ascends therefrom. Thou canst not hinder these roving thoughts from flying now and then over thy head, but surely thou mayest do something that may prevent their settling. Towards which good work take these directions, which I shall endeavour to suit to these several causes from whence they proceed. The wanderings in prayer may be referred to four causes. First. The natural vanity and levity of our minds. Second. A dead and inactive heart in him that prayeth. Third. Encumbrance of worldly cares. Fourth. Non■observance of the heart in the act of prayer.

[Four causes of wandering thoughts in prayer.]

First Cause. The first cause, and indeed original of all other, is the natural vanity and levity of our minds, which are as inconsistent as quicksilver, that hath, they say, principium motus, sed non quietis —the principle of motion, but not of rest. They are as unstable as water, which fluid element—as we see in a little of it poured on the ground—diffuseth itself hither and thither, and so is soon drunk up and lost. Thus do our vain minds scatter themselves into impertinencies; but never so much as when we are conversant about spiritual duties. Then, above all, we discover the lightness of our spirits. And this is not the least part of that evil which followed man's degeneracy, who by his fall wounded both head and heart. Now, though there be a cure in part made by the grace of God as to both these in a saint, yet there still remains a craze in his soul, whereby he is not able to dwell long upon spiritual things without some dissipation of his thoughts, as innocent Adam could —who, before his fall, might have walked through the whole world, and not have had one thought of his heart misplaced, or turned from its right point by the diversity of objects he met, they being all to the eye of his soul a clear medium, through which it passed to terminate itself in God, as the air is now to our bodily eye, through which it pierceth, and stays not till it comes at the body of the sun. But, alas! it is with us as with one that hath had his skull broke by some dangerous fall, who, when recovered, finds his brain so weakened that, when he goes about any serious business, he cannot intend much, or persist long, but is off and on, out and in. Such vagaries and cross steps do our hearts take in duty. And this gives Satan advantage enough to work upon. If the ship be light for want of ballast, and a strong gust of wind arises too, O how hard then is it to make it sail trim, or keep from toppling over! A vain heart, and a strong temptation together, makes sad work, when God stands by and gives Satan leave to practice upon it. Be therefore careful to take in thy ballast before thou puttest to sea. Labour to poise thy heart before thou goest to pray. Which, that thou mayest do, improve the following directions.

[Directions against levity in prayer.]

1. Direction. Innure thyself to holy thoughts in thy ordinary course. The best way to keep vessels from leaking—when we would use them for some special occasion—is to let them stand full. A vain heart out of prayer will be little better in prayer. The more familiar thou makest holy thoughts and savoury discourse to thee in thy constant walking, the more seasoned thou wilt find thy heart for this duty. A scholar, by often rubbing up his notions when alone, and talking of them with his colleagues, makes them his own; so that, when he is put upon any exercise, they are at hand, and come fresh into his head. Whereas another, for want of this filling, wants matter for his thoughts to feed on, which makes him straggle into many impertinencies before he can hit of that which suits his occasion. The carnal liberty which we give our hearts in our ordinary walking, makes our thoughts more unruly and unsuitable for duties of worship. For such thoughts and words leave a tincture upon the spirit, and so hinder the soul's taking a better colour when it returns into the presence of God. Walk in the company of sinful thoughts all the day, and thou wilt hardly shut the door upon them when thou goest into thy closet. Thou hast taught them to be bold; they will now plead acquaintance with thee, and crowd in after thee; like little children, who, if you play with them, and carry them much in your arms, will cry after you when you would be rid of their company.

2. Direction. Possess thy heart with a reverential awe of God's majesty and holiness. This, if anything, will 'gird up the loins of thy mind' strait, and make thee hoc agere —mind what thou art about. Darest thou toy and trifle with the divine majesty in a duty of his worship! carry thyself childishly before the living God! to look with one eye upon him, as it were, and with the other upon a lust! to speak one word to God, and chat two with the world! Does not thy heart tremble at this? Sic ora, saith Bernard, quasi assumptus et præsentatus ante faciem ejus in excelso throno, ubi millia millium ministrant ei—so pray as if thou wert taken up and presented before God sitting on his royal throne on high, with millions of millions of his glorious servitors ministering to him in heaven. Certainly the face of such a court would awe thee. If thou wert but at the bar before a judge, and hadst a glass of a quarter of an hour's length turned up—being all the time thou hadst allowed thee to improve for the begging of thy life, now forfeited and condemned—wouldst thou spare any of this little time to gaze about the court, to see what clothes this man had on, and what lace another wears? God shame us for our folly in misspending our praying seasons. Is it not thy life thou art begging at God's hand; and that a better, I trow, than the malefactor sues for of his mortal judge? And dost thou know whether thou shalt have so long as a quarter of an hour allowed thee when thou art kneeling down? And yet wilt thou scribble and dash it out to no purpose upon impertinencies? If thou dost, why no better? Why no closer and compact in thy thoughts? Will God judge us for 'every idle word' that is spoken in our shop and house, at our work, yea sport and recreation? And shall thy idle words in prayer not be accounted for? And are not those idle words that come from a lazy heart, a sleepy heart, that minds not what it says? What procured Nadab and Abihu so sudden and strange an death? Was it not their strange incense? And is not this strange praying, when thy mind is a stranger to what thy lips utter? Behave thyself thus to thy prince if thou darest. Let thy hand reach a petition to him, and thine eye look or thy tongue talk to another; would he not command this clown, or rather madman, to be taken from before him? 'Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this fellow to play the mad man in my presence?' 1 Samuel 21:15, said Achish when David behaved himself discomposedly. O! could you but look through the keyhole, and see how glorious angels in heaven serve their Maker, who are said to 'behold the face of God continually,' surely thou wouldst tremble to think of thy slightly performing this duty.

3. Direction. Go not in thy own strength to this duty, but commit thyself by faith to the conduct of the Spirit of God. God hath promised to prepare, or establish, as the word is, the heart. Indeed, then the heart is prepared when established and fixed. A shaking hand may soon write a right line as our loose hearts keep themselves steady in duty. Shouldst thou, with Job, make a covenant with thine eye, and resolve to bung up thine ear from all by■discourse, how long, thinkest thou, shouldst thou be true to thine own self, who hast so little command of thine own thoughts? Thy best way were to put thyself out of thine own hands, and lay thy weight on him that is able to bear thee better than thy own legs. Pray with David, 'Uphold me with thy free spirit,' Psalms 51:12. The vine leaning on a wall preserves itself and its fruit, whose own weight else, without this help, would soon lay it in the dirt.

Second Cause. A second cause of these wandering roving thoughts in prayer, is a dead and unactive heart in him that prayeth. If the affections be once down, then the Christian is as a city whose wall is broken down. No keeping then the thoughts in, or Satan out. The soul is an active creature. Either it must be employed by us, or it will employ us, though to little purpose. Like our poor, find them work and they keep at home. But let them want for it, and you have them roving and begging all the country over. The affections are as the master-workmen, which set our thoughts on work. Love entertains the soul with pleasant and delightful thoughts on its beloved object. Grief commands in the soul to muse with sorrowful thoughts on its ail and trouble. So that, Christian, as long as thy heart bleeds in the sense of sin, they will have no leisure, when thou art confessing sin, to rove and wander. If thy desires be lively, and flame forth in thy petitions, with a holy zeal for the graces and mercies prayed for, this will be as 'a wall of fire' to keep thy thoughts at home. The lazy prayer is the roving prayer. When Israel talked of travelling three days' journey in the wilderness, Pharaoh said, 'Ye are idle, ye are idle; therefore ye say, Let us go.' As if he had said, 'Surely they have little to do, or else they would not think of gadding.' And therefore, to cure them of this, he commanded more work to be given, Exodus 5:1-23. We may truly say thus of our wandering hearts, 'They are idle.' We pray, but our affections are dead and dull. The heart hath little to do in the duty for the setting of its thoughts on work—only to speak or read a few words, which is so easy a task that a man may do it and spare whole troops of his thoughts to be employed elsewhere at the same time. But now, when the affections are up, melting into sorrow in the confession of sin, sallying forth with holy panting and breathing in its supplications, truly this fixeth the thoughts. The soul intended can no more be in two places together than the body. And as these holy affections will prevent the soul's wandering disposition, so also make it more difficult for Satan to throw in his injections. Flies will not so readily light on a pot seething hot on the fire as when it stands cold in the window. Baalzebub is one of the devil's names—that is, the god os a fly—an allusion to the idolatrous sacrifices, where flies were so busy. This fly will not so readily light on thy sacrifice when flaming from the altar of thy heart with zeal.

Now, to preserve thy affections in prayer warm and lively, let it be thy care to chase and stir up the natural heat that is undoubtedly in thee, if a Christian, by the serious consideration of thy sins, wants, and mercies. While thou art pondering on these, thine eye will affect thine heart. They will, as Abishag did to David, by laying them in thy bosom, bring thy soul to a kindly heat in those affections which thou art to act in the several parts of prayer. Thy sins reviewed, and heightened with their aggravations, will make the springs of godly sorrow to rise in thy heart. Canst thou choose but mourn when thou shalt read thy several indictments to thy guilty soul, now called to

hold up its hand at the bar of thy conscience? Canst thou hear how the holy law of God hath been violated, his Spirit grieved, and his Son murdered by thy bloody hands, and this when he hath been treating thee mercifully, and not mourn? Surely, should a man walk over a field after a bloody battle hath been fought, and there see the bodies, though of his enemies, lying weltering in their blood, his heart could not but then relent, though in the heat of battle his fury shut out all thoughts of pity. But what if he should spy a father or a dear friend dead upon the place, of the wounds which his unnatural hand had given, would not his bowels turn? Yes, surely, if he carried the heart of a man in his bosom. Thou mayest guess, Christian, by this, what help such a mediation would afford toward the breaking of thy heart for thy sins. Certainly it would make thee throw away that unhappy dagger which was the instrument to give those deep stabs to the heart of Christ—and this is the best mourning of all. Again, thy wants well weighed would give wings to thy desires. If once thou wert possessed with the true state of thy affairs—how necessary it is for thee to have supplies from heaven, or to starve and die. And so in the rest, &c.

Third Cause. A third cause of roving thoughts, is encumbrance of worldly cares. It is no wonder that man can enjoy no privacy with God in a duty, who hath so many from the world rapping at his door to speak with him when he is speaking with God. Periclitatur pietas in negotiis—religion never goes in more danger than when in a crowd of worldly business. If such a one prays, it is not long before something comes in his head to take him off. ‘Isaac went out to meditate,...and behold the camels.’ The world is soon in such a one’s sight. He puts forth one hand to heaven in a spiritual thought, but soon pulls it back, and a worldly one steps before it, and so makes a breach upon his duty. ‘A dream,’ Solomon tells us, ‘cometh through a multitude of business.’ And so do dreaming prayers. They are made up of heterogeneous independent thoughts. The shop, barn, warehouse are unfit places for prayer—I mean the shop in the heart, and the barn in the heart. I have read of one who was said to be a walking library, because he left not his learning with his books in his study, but carried it about with him wherever he went, in his memory and judgment, that had digested all he read, and so made it his own. And have we not too many walking shops and barns, who carry them to bed and board, church and closet? And how can such pray with a united heart, who have so many sharers in their thoughts? O anima sancta sola esto, anne nescis verecundum habes Sponsum!—O, holy soul, get thee alone, if thou wouldst have Christ give thee his loves. Knowest thou not thou hast a modest husband? Indeed he gives the soul not his embraces in a crowd, nor the kisses of his lips in the market. Jacob sends away his company to the other side of the river, and then God gave him one of the sweetest meetings he had in all his life. Let him now pray even a whole night if he will, and welcome. Now, Christian, for thy help against these—

[Directions against the encumbrance of worldly cares in prayer.]

1. Direction. Labour to keep thy distance to the world, and that sovereignty which God hath given thee over in its profits and pleasures, or whatever else may prove a snare to thee. While the father and master know their place and keep their distance, so long will servants and children will keep theirs, by being dutiful and officious. But, when they forget this—the father grows fond of the one, and the master too familiar with the other—then they begin to lose their authority, and the other to grow saucy and under no command. Bid them go, and it may be they will not stir. Set them a task, and they will bid you do it yourself. Truly thus it fares with the Christian. All the creatures are his servants. And so long as he keeps his heart at a holy distance from them, and maintains his lordship over them, not laying them in his bosom which God hath put under his feet, Psalms 8:1-9,

all is well. He marches to the duties of God's worship in a goodly order. He can be private with God, and these not be bold to crowd in to disturb him. But when we grow fond of, and too familiar with, them, alas! how are we pestered with them! We read of no undutifulness of Hagar towards her mistress while a servant; but when Sarah gives her into Abraham's bosom, and admits her to share with herself in conjugal privileges, truly then she begins to justle with her mistress, and carries herself saucily to her. Yea, and Abraham himself, who would not have stuck to have put her away before, yet now he hath taken her into his bed, can hardly persuade his heart to yield to it, till God joins with Sarah in the business, bidding him 'hearken unto his wife.'

Thus, Christian, use the world as a servant —which it was made for—and you may go to prayer, as Abraham up the mount, leaving his servants below. Thou shalt find they will not have that power to disturb thee. But, let either profits or pleasures share with Christ in thy conjugal affection, and thou wilt find thy heart loath to send this Hagar away, though at the request of Christ himself, when he is calling thee into communion with himself. Either use the world as if thou usedst it not, or you will pray as if you prayed not. The smoke and sparks that rise from a furnace are carried that way the wind lies. If thy heart be to the world, thou canst not then keep thy thoughts from driving thither. Then, and not till then, will thy prayer ascend like a pillar of incense, when there is a holy calmness on thy spirit, and this boisterous wind of inordinate affections to the world be laid. I must not take thee off from diligence in thy worldly calling; this never spoils a good prayer, only watch thy heart that thou prostitute it not to the wanton embraces of it. That is the pure metalled sword or knife which bends this way and that way, but returns to its straightness again, and stands not bent. That heart is of the right make, and hath heaven's stamp upon it, which can stoop and bend to the lowest action of his worldly calling, but then returns to his fitness for communion with God, and his heart stands not bent to the creature, but in a direct line to God and his worship.

2. Direction. Strengthen thy faith on the providence of God for the things of this life. A distrustful heart is ever thoughtful. Whatever he is doing, his thoughts will be on that he fears he shall lose. When the merchant's adventure is insured—that whatever comes he cannot lose much—his heart then is at rest, he can eat his bread with quiet, and sleep without dreaming of shipwrecks and pirates. While another, whose estate is at sea, and fears what will become of it, O how is this poor man haunted wherever he is going, whatever he is doing, with disquieting thoughts! If he hears the wind but a little loud, he cannot sleep for fear of his ship at sea. Truly thus a soul by faith rolled on the promise will find a happy deliverance from that disturbance which another is pestered with in prayer. Wherefore God in particular directs us to lay this burden from our shoulders on his, when we go to pray, that no by■thoughts arising from these our cares may disturb us. 'Be careful for nothing, but...let your requests be made known unto God,' Php 4:6. As if he had said, 'Leave me to take care of your work, and mind you to do mine. If things go amiss in your estates, names, families, I will take the blame, and give you leave to say God was not careful enough of you.' When the males of Israel went to worship God at Jerusalem, that they might not carry distracted minds with them—from the fear of their families left naked behind without a man to fight for them if an enemy should come—God takes the special care of their families in their absence, Exodus 34:24. If we have but a faithful servant, who we believe will look to our business as carefully as our own selves, this makes us go forth with a free and quiet spirit, and not trouble ourselves what is done at home when we are abroad. O then, let us be ashamed if our faith on God's providence be not much more able to ease us of the burden of distracting cares.

Fourth Cause. These wandering thoughts are occasioned by the Christian's non■observance of his heart in the act of prayer. Let him be at never so much cost of preparatory pains before duty, yet if he doth not watch himself narrowly in the duty itself, his heart will give him the slip, and run into a thousand vanities and impertinencies. The mind of man is a nimble creature; in one moment you shall have it in heaven, and in the very next you shall find it on the earth. Like Philip, who being joined to the eunuch's chariot, on a sudden was carried out of his sight, and found at Azotus, a place far distant thence; thus our hearts are soon gone away from the duty in hand, and taken a vagary to the furthest part of the world in their wild imagination. Yea—which is worse—sometimes the mind is off and gadding, but the Christian goes on with his lip-labour and takes no notice that his thoughts are gone astray; as Joseph and Mary were gone a day's journey before they missed their child, who stayed behind with other company. Thus the Christian loses his heart in duty, and goes on with a careless formality, that sometimes the prayer is almost done before he observes his heart's seat to be empty, or considers that his soul and spirit hath not borne him company all the way; who, had he but at the first stepping aside of his thoughts been aware, might have recovered and rescued them out of the hands of those vanities which stole them, as David did his wives and children from the Amalekites, without any great trouble or loss. And therefore, Christian, keep thy heart with all diligence; observe whether it doth its part in the duty, or be as a string that sounds not in the concert. As you do with your children, so you had need do with your childish mind. Haply they wait on you to church, but when you are set, if not awed by your eye, they are gone, and may be playing all sermon time in the fields, and you miss them not; to prevent which, you set them before you that you may see their carriage and their behaviour. If thou didst thus pray, observing and watching thy thoughts, where, and what about, thou wouldst find more composure in thy spirit than thou dost.

Nay, do not only observe thy thoughts in duty, but call them to review after duty. Many go from prayer too much like boys from school, that think no more of their lesson till they return again—leave praying, and all thoughts how they behaved themselves in prayer, together. For shame do not thus. If thou neglectest to take account of thyself, consider that thou must give an account both of it and this thy neglect after it before thy betters. God himself will have the full hearing thereof. He sets not any about a work, of which he means not to take cognizance how it was done. And were it not better that the audit should be in thy more private court, than thou be called to give up thy account at his dreadful tribunal? Resolve therefore to commune with thy heart upon this point; and the sooner thou goest about it the better it is like to be done, because then the circumstances of the action will be freshest in thy memory. Go not then out of thy closet till thou hast examined thy heart. If thy thoughts in prayer shall be found to have been in any measure free and entire, thy affections warm and lively, matter of joy will arise to thee, and thanksgiving to God that thou hast escaped the hands of so many rovers and freebooters that lay in wait to make prize of thee. But, take heed thou applaudest not thyself for thine own care and circumspection. Alas! thou wert not thine own keeper. He that lent his ear to thy prayer gave thee thy heart to pray, and also keep it up in duty. Say rather with David, 'Who am I, that I should be able to offer so willingly?' If thy heart upon the review be found to have played the truant, take shame, that thou beest not put to shame before the Lord. O blush to think thou shouldst be so unfaithful to God and thine own soul, yea so foolish, to run up and down on every idle errand which Satan sends thee, and in the meanwhile neglect thy own work of so great an importance! The spouse's complaint may fit thy mouth: 'They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept.'

He is an unwise messenger who, being sent to market to provide food, is drawn by every idle companion to spend both his time and money in vain, and at night comes home without bread for the hungry family. O! Christian, was not thy errand to the throne of grace to get new supplies from heaven for thy poor soul? And doth it not grieve thee to think that now thy soul must pinch, for thy playing away thy praying time and talent, which, as market money, was put into thy hand to procure a new store? Yea, that thou hast been injurious to thy God by taking his name in vain? Thou appearedst in a praying posture; thy hand voice were lift up to heaven, as if thou meantest to pray; but—like him who said he would go into the vineyard, and did not—thou hast turned a contrary way, and set thy thoughts to work in another field. Will not this affect thy heart? Yes, surely, and afflict it also. And this affliction of thy spirit will be a sovereign means to excite thy care for the future. The faults which are unobserved are also uncorrected in the scholar's exercise, and so not like to be mended in the next. Wandering thoughts in prayer are like vagrants. No such way to rid the country of one, and the heart of the other, as by giving both the law—the lash, I mean.

Question. O! but, saith the Christian, I have used this means, and yet, to the grief of my heart, I am still pestered with them.

Answer. Take a few consolatory words to ease thy aching heart, that groans under the burden of these thy wandering thoughts.

[Consolatory thoughts for the Christian too much downcast through wanderings in prayer.]

1. Thought. The affliction of thy spirit for them speaks more comfort to thee, than the presence of them discomfort. That thou art annoyed with such troublesome guests is no more than the best of saints have found and acknowledged. Wherefore did David pray that God would 'unite his heart to fear his name,' but that he found it gadding? What means Paul by his complaint, 'When I would do good, evil is present with me,' but that he had not yet got the full mastery of his unruly thoughts? Thou seest it is no new disease thou art troubled with, but such as is common, not only to the sons of men, but the children of God—a spot that may be seen on a saint's coat. But thy being afflicted for them, speaks one of these two things—and both of them have comfort in their mouth for thee. It proves that they are either Satan's injections, and not the birth of thine own heart; or, if they stream from thy own heart, yet the Spirit of God is the indweller, and these but intruders.

(1.) The moan thou makest for being yoked to such company is a sign they are rather sent in by Satan, than called in by thee—his injections, rather than the suggestions of thy own heart. Our own thoughts commonly are more taking with and pleasurable to us. The mother does not more love the fruit of her own body, than we do the product of our minds. Hence our 'own ways,' words, and thoughts are called our 'pleasure,' Isaiah 58:13, and therefore they may be possibly shot from his bow—thy heart being so affrighted at them, and wounded for them. Or,

(2.) If they prove the offspring of thine own mind, yet thy afflicted soul shows that the Spirit and grace of God is the indweller, and these but intruders and involuntary motions, such as in thy deliberate thoughts thou abhorrest. Were they, as I may so say, of thy own house and family, thou wouldst not show this zeal to shut the door upon them, or shriek out when they come in upon thee. The wife does not cry out when husband, children, or servants come into the room, but when thieves and cutthroats, from whom she looks for nothing but cruelty. It seems they are neither of thine acquaintance, nor likest thou their company, by thy behaviour before them. Be not therefore

over■troubled; for Satan, if he can but disquiet thy mind with false fears, he hath one part of his errand done for which he sends them. These wicked thoughts are upon no other terms with thee than holy thoughts are in the wicked. As those profit not them, because not entertained; so, for the same reason, shall not these hurt thee.

2. Thought. Know these be the necessary infirmities of thy imperfect state; and, so long as thou art faithful to resist and mourn for them, they rather move God's pity to thee than wrath against thee. It is one thing for a child, employed by his father, willingly or negligently to spoil the work he sets him about; and another, when through natural weakness he fails in the exact doing of it. Should a master bid his servant give him a cup of wine, and he should willingly throw both glass and wine on the ground, he might expect his master's just displeasure. But if, through some unsteadiness—it may be palsy in his hand—he should, notwithstanding all his care, spill some of it in the bringing, an ingenuous master will rather pity him for his disease, than be angry for the wine that is lost. And did God ever give his servants occasion to think him a hard master? Hath he not promised, 'that he will spare us as a father his child that serves him?' From whence come all the apologies which he makes for his people's failings if not from his merciful heart, interpreting them candidly to proceed rather from their want of skill than will, power, or desire? 'Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?' Zechariah 3:2, is Christ's answer in the behalf of Joshua, whom Satan accused for his filthy garments. 'The Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak,' Matthew 26:41, was his favourable gloss for his disciples' drowsiness in prayer.

3. Thought. Believers' prayers pass a refining before they come into God's hands. Did he indeed read them with their impertinences, and take our blotted copy out of our hand, we could not fear too much what the issue might be. But they come under the corrector's hand. Our Lord Jesus hath the inspection of them, who sets right all our broken requests and misplaced petitions. He washes out our blots with his blood. His mediation is the fine searce[2] through which our prayers are bolted. All that is coarse and heterogeneous he severs from the pure. What is of his own Spirit's breathing he presents, and what our fleshly part added he hides, that it shall not prejudice us or our prayers. This was the sweet gospel truth wrapped up in the priest's bearing the sins of their holy offerings, Exodus 28:38.

4. Thought. Though the presence of these be a great affliction to thee, yet God will make them of singular use to thee. (1.) To humble thee, and take all glorying from thee, that thou shalt not pride thyself in thy other assistances, which thou wouldst be prone to do if thy prayer had not this lame foot to humble thee. (2.) To keep thee wakeful and circumspect in thy Christian course. By thy disturbance from these thou seest the war is not yet quite done. The Canaanite is yet in the land. Though not master of the field, he is yet skulking in his holes and fastnesses, out of which he comes like an adder in the path, that by these sudden surprises and nibbling at thy heel he may make thee, like the rider, fall backward, and so steal a victory unawares of thee, whom he despairs to overcome in a pitched battle by sins more deliberate. And truly, if he dare be so bold as to set upon thee when in communion with God—so nigh thy rock and castle—doth it not behoove thee, Christian, to look about thee, that he gets no greater advantage of thee when thou art at further distance from him in thy worldly employments? (3.) God will make thee by these more merciful to, and less censorious of, thy brethren of greater failings.

5. Thought. In thy faithful conflict with them thou mayest promise thyself, at last, victory over them. But expect this gradually to be done; not at once, nor hastily, to be delivered into thy hands, as God said of Israel's enemies. Therefore, maintain the fight: faint not at their stubborn resistance; pray, and mourn that thou canst pray no better; mourn and fight again; fight and believe them down, though sometimes they get thee under their feet. God made a promise to Noah after the flood, in which he gave him a sovereignty over the creatures. 'The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth,' Genesis 9:2. But we see many beasts are fierce, savage, and cruel to mankind. Yet thus it is fulfilled —that none are so fierce and unruly but, by man's art and industry, they have been and still are taken and tamed, as the apostle hath it, James 3:7. Thus God hath given his saints by promise, a sovereignty over sin and Satan; he will subdue both under your feet. The dread of the saints shall fall on the proudest devil, and his foot shall be set on the neck of the fiercest lust. Yet this will cost hot work before the one or other be effected.

[Satan strives to hinder the success of prayer.]

Third Design. The third and last design that Satan hath against the saint in this great undertaking of prayer, is to hinder his success therein. He will have thee, Christian, if he can, one way or other, outwards or homewards; and it comes all to one whether the ship be taken as it goes forth or as it returns home. Nay, of the two it is the greater loss to be defeated of our expectations when we look for our prayers to come richly fraught with mercies from heaven. Now, two ways he labours to hinder the success of prayer.

First. He endeavours to hinder the welcome of their prayers with God, that they may be cast as a petition out of court which God will not look on.

Second. If he cannot prevail in this, then he plays an after-game, and will so handle the matter, if possible, that though the prayers have a welcome with God, and find gracious reception in heaven, yet that this be not believed by the saint on earth, but that he gives them up for lost and looks no more after them. Now though this be not a total and final miscarriage of the prayer, yet the devil hath hereby a great advantage, depriving him of the present comfort and benefit which his fight might pay him in before a return is made of his prayer.

[Satan would hinder the success of the saints' prayers, by getting them to be such as would be unwelcome with God.]

First way of Hinderance. Satan endeavours to hinder the welcome of the saints' prayers with God, that they may be cast as a petition out of court which God will not look on. He labours to hinder even the entertainment of our prayers in heaven. Now our prayers may several ways be stopped at heaven's door, and denied that gracious access which God useth to give. I speak now of saints' prayers. As for the prayers of the wicked, there is one law for them all —to be cast over the bar and the door shut upon them. The tree must be good before the fruit it bears can be sweet on God's palate. Now the stoppage which the saint's prayer meets withal, springs not from any unwillingness in God to give out his mercy, or any dislike to have beggars at his door. Adeo placet Deo dare, ut propter hoc omnia creavit, volebat enim habere quæ et quibus dare—God is so delighted with acts of mercy, that therefore he made the world, and all in it, that he might have suitors to beg and alms to give those suitors. But from ourselves we put the stones into the lock, which hinders the turning of prayer's key in it, and so indeed we shut the door of mercy upon

ourselves. The devil himself could not immediately hinder a saint's welcome. He hath not such command of God's ear, did we not put words into his mouth, and help him to a charge against us. The lies which he, as a false accuser carries to God, shall not prejudice us in God's thoughts or make our prayers less acceptable; but if the accusation be true, God will hear it, though he be a wicked spirit that tells the tale, and we his dear children of whom it is told. A father, when he hears of some wicked prank his child hath played, will chide and frown on him, though it be an enemy that told him of it. Now, to instance what miscarriages in a saint hinder their audience at the throne of grace. 1. When the thing prayed for is not according to the will of God. 2. When the end the saint aims at is not levelled right. 3. When with his prayer he joins not a diligent use of the means. 4. When some secret grudge is lodged in his heart against his brother. 5. When there is a want of faith.

[Miscarriages in a praying saint which hinder his audience in heaven.]

1. Miscarriage. When the thing prayed for is not according to the will of God. We have not a liberty to pray at random for what we will. The throne of grace is not set up that we may come and there vent our sudden distempered passions before God, or make any saucy motion to him that comes in our head. Truly then God would have work enough. If we had promised to sign all our petitions without any regard to the subject■matter of them, he should too oft set his hand against himself, and pass that away which would be little for his glory to give. Herod was too lavish when he gave his minion leave to ask what she would, even to half of his kingdom. And he paid dearly for it; he gave her that head which was more worth than his whole kingdom—for the cutting off his head lost him his crown. No, we have to do with a wise God, who, to stop the mouth of all such bold beggars, that would ask what unbeseems us to desire, or him to give, hath given a law of prayer, and stinted us to the matter thereof: 'When ye pray, say, Our Father,' &c. That is, learn here what you may pray for in faith to receive. 'And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us,' 1 John 5:14.

Faith, without a promise, is like a foot without any firm ground to stand upon. It was well Luther interpreted himself, when he said, fiat voluntas mea —my will be done—mea, Domine, quia tua—my will, Lord, because thine. Now, the promise contains this will of God. Be sure thou gatherest all thy flowers of prayer out of this garden, and thou canst not do amiss. But take heed of mingling with them any wild gourd of thine own. Remember the check our Lord gave his disciples when venting their vindictive passion in their prayer: 'Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?...And he said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of,' Luke 9:54-55. They had here an example to countenance their act. But that heroicus impetus, and extraordinary spirit by which Elijah and other of the prophets were acted, is not our standing rule for prayer. That came in them from the Spirit of God, which in us may proceed from the spirit of the devil, which is implied in our Saviour's question, 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.' As if he had said, 'You little think who stirred you up. You had your coal, not from God's altar, but from Satan's furnace.'

O! let us beware that we be not the devil's messengers in going to God upon his errand; which we do when we pray against the rule or without a warrant. Belch not out thy unruly passions of anger there, presently to have thine enemies confounded—the disciples' case; nor vent thy intemperate sorrow through impatience—as Job in the paroxysm of his trouble begs of God to take away his

life in all haste. Take counsel of the word, and ‘let not thy lip be hasty to utter a matter before the Lord.’ Daniel’s method was the right, Daniel 9:2. First, he goes to the Scripture and searches what the mind of God was concerning the time when he had promised his people a return out of their captivity, which having found, and learned thereby how to lay his plea, then away he goes to besiege the throne of grace. ‘And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer,’ &c., Daniel 9:3. Art thou sick or poor?—in want of any temporal mercy? Go and inquire upon what terms these are promised, that thy faith may not jet beyond the foundation of the promise by a peremptory and absolute desire of them, for then thy building will fall, and thou be put to shame, because thou askest more than God ever promised.

2. Miscarriage. Though the subject■matter of a saint’s prayer be bottomed on the word, yet if the end he aims at be not levelled right, this is a second door at which his prayer will be stopped, though it pass the former. ‘Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.’ Take, I confess, a Christian in his right temper, and he levels at the glory of God. Yet as a needle is touched with a lodestone may, being shaken, be removed from its beloved point, to which nature hath espoused it, though trembling till it again recovers it; so, a gracious soul may, in a particular act and request, vary from this end, being jogged by Satan, yea disturbed by an enemy nearer home, his own unmortified corruption. Truly he is a rare archer that ever hits the white. Do you not think it possible for a saint, in distress of body and spirit, to pray for health in the one, and comfort in the other, with too selfish a respect had to his own ease and quiet? Yes sure, and to pray for gifts and assistance in some eminent service, with an eye asquint to his own credit and applause, to pray for a child with too inordinate a desire that the honour of his house may be built up in him—I know none so seasoned with grace as not to be subject to such warpings of spirit. And this may be understood as the sense, in part, of that expression: ‘If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me, but verily the Lord hath heard me,’ Psalms 66:18. For, to desire our own health, peace, and reputation, be not an iniquity —when contained in the banks that God hath set —yet, when they overflow, and are to such a height lift up as to overtop the glory of God, yea to stand but in a level with it, they are a great abomination. That which in the first or second degree is wholesome food, would be rank poison in the fourth or fifth.

Therefore, Christian, catechise thyself before thou prayest, O my soul, what sends thee on this errand? Know but thy own mind, what thou prayest for, and thou mayest soon know God’s mind how thou shalt speed. Secure God his glory, and thou mayest carry away the mercy with thee. Had Adonijah asked Abishag out of love to her person, and not rather out of love to the crown, it is like Solomon would not have denied the banns between them; but this wise prince observed his drift, to make her but a step to his getting into the throne, which he ambitiously thirsted for, and therefore his request was denied with so much disdain. Look that, when thy petition is loyal, there be not treason in thy end and aim. If there be, he will find it out.

Question. When shall I know that I aim at God or self in prayer?

Answer. This will commonly appear by the posture of our heart when God delays or denies the thing we pray for. A soul that can acquiesce, and patiently bear a delay or denial—I speak now of such mercies as are of an inferior nature, not necessary to salvation, and so not absolutely promised—gives a hopeful testimony that the glory of God weighs more in his thoughts than his own private interest and accommodation. A selfish heart is both peremptory and hasty. It must

have the thing it cries for, and that quickly too, or else it faints and chides, falls down in a swoon, or breaks out into murmuring complaints, not sparing to fall foul on the promises and attributes of God himself. ‘Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not?’ Isaiah 58:3. Now, from whence come both these, but from an overvaluing of ourselves? —which makes us clash with God’s glory, that may be more advanced by these delays and denials, than if we had the thing we so earnestly desire. God was more glorified in denying Christ himself his life, than if he had let that bitter cup pass without his tasting of it, which Christ, understanding fully, resigned himself thereunto, saying, ‘Father, glorify thy name; not my will, but thy will be done,’ John 12:28[3]. As if he had said, I would not save my life to lose thee the least of thy glory. This is the copy we should all write after. Indeed, if our distempered hearts be so wilful and hasty as not to be content with what, and that when it pleaseth God also, he should not love us in gratifying such desires, for thereby he would but nourish such distemper, which is better cured by starving than feeding it.

3. Miscarriage. The Christian’s prayer may miscarry when, with his prayer, he joins not a diligent use of the means. We must not think to lie upon God, as some lazy people do on their rich kindred; to be always begging of him, but not putting forth our hand to work in the use of means. God hath appointed prayer as a help to our diligence, not as a cloak for our sloth. Idle beggars are welcome neither to God’s door nor man’s. What! wilt thou lift up thy hands to God in prayer, and then put them in thy pocket? Doth not God forbid our charity to him that worketh not? ‘We commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat,’ 2 Thessalonians 3:10. And will he encourage that idleness in thee which he would have punished by us? It is a good gloss of Bernard upon that of Jeremiah, ‘Let us lift up our hearts with our hands unto God in the heavens,’ Lamentations 3:41—qui orat et laborat, ille cor levat ad Deum cum manibus—he that prayeth, and is diligent in the use of means, is the person that lifts up his heart with his hands to God. Look therefore, Christian, thou minglest thy sweat with thy tears, thy labour with thy prayers. If thy prayer doth not set thee on work, neither will it set thy God at work for thee. Is it a lust thou art praying against? And dost thou sit down idle to see whether it will now die alone? Will that prayer slay one lust that lets another—thy sloth, I mean —live under its nose? As God will not save thy soul, so neither will he destroy thy sin, unless thy hand also be put to the work. See how God raised Joshua from off the earth, where he lay praying and mourning for Israel’s defeat, Joshua 7:10-11: ‘Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned,’ &c.; Joshua 7:12, ‘Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies,’ &c.; Joshua 7:13, ‘Up, sanctify the people.’

O how oft may God rouse us up from our knees, and say, ‘Why lie ye here with your lazy prayers? You have sinned in not taking my counsel and obeying my orders. I bade you watch as well as pray; why do you not one as well as the other? My command obliges you to flee from the snare that Satan lays for you, as well as pray against it: therefore it is you cannot stand before your lusts.’ Moses durst not go to God with a prayer in behalf of sinning Israel till he had shown his zeal for God against their sin, and then he goes and speeds; see Exodus 32:25, compared with Exodus 32:31. Dost thou think to walk loosely all day, yielding thyself, and betraying the glory of the God, into the hands of thy lust, and then mend all with a prayer at night? Alas! thy cowardice and sloth will get to heaven before thy prayer, and put thee to shame when thou comest on such an errand.

4. Miscarriage. The saint’s prayer may miscarry from some secret grudge that is lodged in his heart against his brother. Anger and wrath are strange fire to put to our incense. It is a law writ upon every gate of God’s house—every ordinance, I mean—at which we are to enter into

communion with God, that we must ‘love our brethren.’ When we go to hear the word, what is the caveat, but that we should ‘lay aside all malice, envy, and evil■speaking, and as new■born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word?’ The gospel will not speak peace to a wrathful spirit. Anger and malice, like a salt corroding humour in the stomach, makes us puke and cast up the milk of the word, that it cannot stay with us for nourishment. Is it the gospel supper thou sittest at? This is a love-feast, and though it may be eaten with the bitter herbs of sin’s sorrow, yet not with the sour leaven of wrath and malice. ‘When ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you,’ &c., 1 Corinthians 11:18. Now mark what follows, ‘this is not the Lord’s supper,’ 1 Corinthians 11:20. Christ will not communicate with a wrangling jangling company. When such guests come, he riseth from his own table, as David’s children did from Absalom’s upon the murder of their brother Amnon, 2 Samuel 13:29. And for prayer, you know the law thereof, ‘Lift up holy hands, without wrath and doubting,’ 1 Timothy 2:8—implying, that it is impossible to pray in faith and wrath. Duobus modis oratio impeditur, si ad huc homo mala committit aut si committenti in se ex toto corde non dimittit—our prayer may be hindered two ways—by lying in any sin we commit against God; or, in wrath, by not forgiving our brother’s committed against us. Those two in our Lord’s prayer cannot be divorced—‘forgive us, as we forgive.’ This is that ferrum in vulnere—iron in the wound, as the same father hath it, which makes our prayers as ineffectual to us, as the plaster is to the wound in which the bullet still remains.

Now, the reason why God is so curious in this point, in because himself is so gracious; and being ‘love,’ can bid none welcome that are not ‘in love.’ The heathens had such a notion that the gods would not like the sacrifice and service of any but such as were like themselves. And therefore to the sacrifices of Hercules none were to be admitted that were dwarfs. To the sacrifice of Bacchus, a merry god, none that were sad and pensive, as not suiting their genius. An excellent truth may be drawn from this their folly. He that would like and please God must be like to God. Now our God is a God of peace, our heavenly Father merciful; and therefore to him none can have friendly access but those that are children of peace, and merciful as their Father is. O! watch then thy heart, that Satan’s fireballs—which upon every little occasion he will be throwing in at thy window—take not hold of thy spirit, to kindle any heart-burning in thee against thy brother. If at any time thou seest the least smoke, or smellest the least scent of this fire in thy bosom, sleep not till thou hast quenched it. Be more careful to lay this fire in thy heart aside, when thou goest to bed, than the other that is on thy hearth. How canst thou by prayer commit thyself into God’s hands that night wherein thou carriest a spark thereof smothered in thy breast? Irasci, hominis, iram non preficere, Christiani est (Jerome)—as a frail man thou canst not hinder but such a spark may light on thee, yet if thou wilt prove thyself a Christian, thou must quench it. Nay more, if thou wilt show thyself a Christian, and have thy prayer find God’s ear or heart open to it, thou must do thy utmost to quench it in thy brother’s heart as well as thy own. It is not enough that thou carriest peace in thy heart to him, except thou endeavourest that he may be at peace with thee also. ‘If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee,’ Matthew 5:23.

Hierome brings in the Christian here expostulating his cause with God, why he will not hear his prayer: Domine, quare nonvis susicpere munus meum? quid ad me attinet? non est in meâ potestate, si frater meus habet aliquid contra me—‘What is it to me, Lord, that my brother is offended with me? I cannot help that; wilt thou not receive my gift for his fault?’ To whom he brings

God thus answering—Et quid dicis male serve? Intelligo animum tuum? Nihil habes? Amas eum? Quare ergo salvari eum nonvis? Vade, roga eum, ne ille contra te habeat ut salvari possit—'What is it, naughty servant, that thou sayest? I understand thy meaning. What is it to thee? Hast thou nothing against him? Dost thou love him? Wherefore then wouldst not thou save his soul? Go and beg of him to be at peace with thee, that thy brother's soul may be saved.' I speak the more of this particular, being sensible of what an hour, or rather age, of temptation we live in, by reason of the sad differences of judgment among Christians, which have distilled upon their affections so great a distaste one to another as exulcerates them into wrath and bitterness; yea, a wonderful cure it will be, if it can be prevented from ending in an irrecoverable consumption of love among a great part of this generation —especially considering what malignity is dropped into these church■contentions by those national divisions also that have fallen in with them, and which drew so sad a sword among us, as for many years could find no other sheath but the bowels of this then miserable nation. O what grudges, animosities, and heart■burnings have these two produced! The sword, blessed be God! is at last got into its scabbard of peace; but have we not cause to wish it had been cleaner wiped when put up, and not such an implacable spirit of revenge and malice to be found remaining among many of us, as, alas! is too common to be met with everywhere? The storm without us is over, blessed be God! but is t not too high within some of our breasts? The flood of national calamities is assuaged; but now the tide is down and gone, is there not a deal of this filth—to name no other—uncharitable jealousies, bitterness, wrath, and revenge, left behind upon our hearts? Enough to breed another plague and judgment among us if a flood of national repentance does not wash away what the sea of war and other confusions have cast up! But, if this were all the mischief they are like to do us, our case is sad enough; they will hinder our prayers. For God will not accept such sacrifices as are kindled with the fire of wrath.

5. Miscarriage. The Christian's prayer may miscarry for want of faith. Prayer is the bow, the promise is the arrow, and faith the hand which draws the bow, and sends this arrow with the heart's message to heaven. The bow without the arrow is of no use, and the arrow without the bow as little worth; and both without the strength of the hand, to no purpose. Neither the promise without prayer, nor prayer without the promise, nor both without faith, avails the Christian anything. So that what was said of the Israelites, that they 'could not enter Canaan because of unbelief;' the same may be said of many of our prayers, they cannot enter heaven with acceptation, because they are not put up in faith. Now faith may be considered with a respect to the person praying, or to the prayer put up.

[What it is to pray in faith.] First Requisite. The person must be a believer. But this is not enough.

Second Requisite. There must be an act of faith exerted in the prayer, as well as the habit of faith dwelling in the person. 'What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them,' Mark 11:24. If the thing be not to be found in the promise that we desire, it is a sin to pray for it; if it be, it is a sin not to believe, when we pray for it, and that no small one, because thereby we both profane and ordinance and asperse the name of the great God.

Question. But what is it to pray in faith?

Answer 1. Negatively. It is not to believe that the very thing in specie—or in its proper kind, that we pray for, shall be always given. Christ prayed in faith and was heard, Hebrews 5:1-14. He believed not the thing in kind to be given neither was it; yet his prayer was answered. Therefore, be sure

thou learnest the right method of acting thy faith in prayer, which must be taken from the nature of the promise thou puttest in suit. As water receives its figure—round or square —from the vessel it is poured into; so our faith is to be shaped by the promise. If that be absolute—as things necessary to salvation are—then thy faith may expect the very thing promised; if otherwise, then thou art not to limit thy faith to the thing itself, but expect money or moneyworth; health, or as good as health; deliverance, or better than deliverance. An absolute faith on a conditional promise—without an immediate revelation, which we must not look for—is fancy, not faith. To commit a sin, not act a grace, this is to be free on God's purse without a grant; for we put more in the conclusion of our faith than is in the premises of the promise; and this is as bad divinity as logic.

Answer 2. Positively. To pray in faith is to ask of God, in the name of Christ, what he hath promised, relying on his power and truth for performance, without binding him up to time, manner, or means.

(1.) We must ask what God hath promised, or else we choose for ourselves and not beg; we subject God's will to ours, and not ours to his; we forge a bond and then claim it as debt, which is a horrible presumption! He that is his own promiser must be his own paymaster.

(2.) To pray in faith is required that we pray in Christ's name. As there can be no faith but on a promise, so no promise can be claimed but in his name, because they are all both made to him and performed for him. They are made to him, the covenant being struck with him: 'In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began,' Titus 1:2. And there was none then existing but Christ to whom the promise could be made. So that, as the child claims his estate in right of his father that purchased it; so we come to our right in the promise, as heirs of and co■heirs with Christ. And as the promise was made to him, so it is performed for him, because his blood shed was the condition of the obligation upon which God acknowledged the debt to Christ, and bound himself to perform all the articles of the covenant to his heirs' orderly claiming them at his hands in his name. It is not therefore enough boldly to urge God with a promise: 'Pardon, Lord, for thou hast promised it; grace and glory, for thou hast promised them;' but we must, if we mean to lay our plea legally—I mean according to the law of faith—plead for these under the protection of his name. Thus Daniel, that holy man, laid the stress of his prayer on Christ: 'Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake,' Daniel 9:17.

(3.) To this praying in faith is required a relying on God, through Christ, for a gracious answer. Let the former be done, and the creature fail in this, he prays not in faith, but takes the name of God and Christ in vain. This act of relying is the taking hold on God in prayer, Isaiah 64:1-12. When mariners in a storm cast out their anchor, and it comes home again without taking hold on the firm ground, so as to stay the ship and bear it up against the violence of the waves, it gives them no help. So neither doth a handless prayer that takes no hold on God. Therefore you shall find that when a Christian speeds well in prayer, his happy success is attributed, not to naked prayer, but as clothed and empowered with this act of recumbency upon God. 'They cried unto the Lord,' 2 Chronicles 13:14. Now see, 'The children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers,' ver. 18. He doth but lie in prayer that doth not rely on God after praying. What he seems to give with one hand to God he takes from him with another, which is no better than a

mocking of God. By praying we pretend to expect good from him; by not relying we blot this out and declare we look for no such matter.

Now this reliance of the soul hath a twofold way whereby it fastens on God like the anchor's double hook.

(a.) It takes hold on the power of God. Thus Christ in his agony 'offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death,' Hebrews 5:7. In prayer we open our case to God, declare how sinful, weak, shiftless creatures we are, and then we commit our cause to God. Now as none will put that to another's keeping which he thinks safe in his own hands; so neither will any deliver it to another whose ability he is not first persuaded to effect that which himself is unable to do. See Eliphaz's counsel to Job, 'I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause,' Job 5:8. As if he had said, 'If I were in your case I will tell you what course I would take, I would not look this way or that, but speedily haste me to the throne of grace, and when once I had told God my very heart, I would trouble myself no more, but commit my cause to him, and discharge my heart of the burden of all its troublesome thoughts.' But under what notion would he do all this? The next words will tell us, 'Unto God would I commit my cause, which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number.' First he would bottom his faith on God as able to do great things; and then, leaving his request lodged in the arms of such power, he doubted not but he should cast all care away and enjoy the serenity of his mind whatever his condition was. Indeed, this is the first stone faith lays in her building. And an error in the foundation will make the whole house stand weak. Be sure, therefore, thou layest this bottom stone with thy greatest care. O how unbecoming is it to have a great God, and a little faith on this great God!—a strong God, and a weak faith on his almighty power! Unbelief here ravisheth and offereth violence to the very light of nature, for 'his eternal power and Godhead' are known by 'the visible things' of the creation, Romans 1:20. What is not he able to do that could make so goodly a fabric without materials, tools, or workmen? Crucifige illud verbum potest ne?—obliterate that word 'Is he able?' Away with the question which so grates the ears of the Almighty: Can he pardon? Can he purge? What cannot he do that can do what he will?

(b.) It takes hold on the faithfulness of God to perform the promise. We are directed, in committing ourselves to him, to eye his faithfulness: 'as unto a faithful Creator,' 1 Peter 4:19. The saints' faith hath been remarkable in staying themselves on this, while yet the mercy they prayed for lay asleep in its causes: 'Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed,' Psalms 65:1. See, he stands with his instrument strung and tuned, ready to strike up and bring God in with the music of his praise when he shall come with an answer to his prayer, not the least doubting but that he shall use it upon that joyful occasion; for he speaks without ifs and ands—'Unto thee shall the vow be performed, O thou that hearest prayer!' And yet that good day was not come; for even then he cries out, 'Iniquities prevail against me!' So, 'I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor,' Psalms 140:12. Why? how comes he so confident? 'Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name,' ver. 13. As if he had said, 'Thou hast a name for a gracious and faithful God in thy promise, and this thou wilt never suffer to be blotted by failing thy word.' Christian, thou mayest venture all thou art worth on the public faith of heaven. 'His words are pure as silver tried seven times in a furnace.' He that will not suffer a liar or covenant■breaker to set foot on his holy hill, will much less suffer any one thought of falseness or unfaithfulness to enter into his own most holy heart.

Question. But how may I know when I thus act faith in prayer?

[Four rules whereby to know if we act faith in prayer or no.]

(1.) Rule. We may know if we have acted faith by the serenity and composure of our spirits after prayer. Faith may live in a storm, but it will not suffer a storm to live in it. As faith rises, so the blustering wind of discontented troublesome thoughts go down. In the same proportion that there is faith in the heart there is peace also. They are joined together, ‘quietness and confidence,’ Isaiah 30:15: ‘In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.’ Therefore called ‘peace in believing,’ Romans 15:13. Even where it is weakest it will not let the unquietness of the heart pass without a chiding. ‘Why art thou disquieted, O my soul! trust still in God,’ Psalms 42:5, Psalms 42:11. What! soul no sooner off thy knees, but clamorous! Hast not thou made thy moan to a God able to help thee, and will not that ease thee? Faith disburdens the soul in prayer of that which oppresses it; whereas the unbelieving soul still carries about it the cause of its trouble, because it had not strength to cast forth it sorrows, and roul its cares upon God in the duty. Christian, dost thou carry away the same burden on thy back from prayer which thou didst bring to it? surely thou didst want faith to lift it off thy shoulder. Had faith been there, and that been active and lively, it would have bestowed this elsewhere, and brought thee away with a light heart: as Hannah, who rose from praying ‘to eat, and her countenance was no more sad;’ and as Christ, who kneeled down with as sorrowful a heart as ever any, but comes off with a holy courage, to go and meet his approaching death, and his bloody enemies now on the way to attack him. ‘Rise,’ saith he to his disciples, ‘let us be going, behold he is at hand that doth betray me,’ Matthew 26:46. May it not put us to the blush to think that we could come less satisfied from God’s presence than we do sometimes from a sorry man’s? If you were poor, and had a rich friend that bids you send your children to him, and he will provide for them; would not this ease your mind of all your cares and distracting thoughts concerning their maintenance? And doth not God promise more that this comes to when he bids us ‘be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God?’

(2.) Rule. Dost thou continue praying even when God continues to deny? An unbelieving heart may have some mettle at hand, but will be sure to jade in a long journey. Faith will throw in the net of prayer again and again, as long as God commands and the promise encourageth. The greyhound hunts by sight, when he cannot see his game he gives over running; but the true hound by scent, he hunts over hedge and ditch though he sees not the hare he pursues all the day long. An unbelieving heart, may be, drawn out, upon some visible probabilities and sensible hopes of a mercy coming, to pray, but when these are out of sight his heart fails him; but faith keeps the scent of the promise and gives not over the chase.

(3.) Rule. Dost thou stint God, or canst thou trust him to answer thy prayer in his own way without thy prescription? When we deal with a man whose ability or faithfulness we have in doubt, then we labour to make sure of him by tying him up to our terms. But if we stand assured of their power and truth, we leave them to themselves. Thus the patient sends for the physician, desires his help, but leaves him to write his own bill. The merchant sends over his goods to his factor, and relies on him to make such returns as his wisdom tells him will come to the best market. Thus the believing soul, when he hath opened his heart to God in prayer, resigns himself to the goodness, wisdom, and faithfulness of God to return an answer: ‘Remember me, O my God,’ said Nehemiah, ‘concerning

this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy,' Nehemiah 13:22. See here, this good man makes bold to be God's remembrancer, but dares not be his counsellor or prescriber. He remits the shaping of the answer to 'the greatness of his mercy.' Hence it follows, that whatever way God cometh in, the believing soul bids him welcome.

Doth he pray for health, and miss of that? yet he blesseth God for support under sickness. Doth he pray for his children, and they notwithstanding prove a cross? yet he finds an answer another way, and satisfies himself with it. After many a prayer that David had put up no doubt for his family, we find him entertaining an answer to those prayers with a composed spirit, though they came not in at the fore door, buy having mercy in the letter: 'Though my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant,' &c.; and this, he tells us, is 'all his desire,' 2 Samuel 23:5. Indeed, a believer cannot miss his desires, 'He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him,' Psalms 145:19. Because they disown those desires which clash with God's will. Who could pray more fervently for their children than Job did for his? He was with God for them every day; but, after all his religious care of them, he meets with heavy tidings, and hears them to be made a sacrifice by death for whom he had offered up so many sacrifices to God; yet he doth not foolishly charge God, or say it was in vain that he prayed: no, that ointment was not lost the savour whereof was poured into his own soul, from the posture of which we might read a gracious answer, in the supporting grace that enabled him to love and bless God over the gravestone of his slain children.

(4.) Rule. By the soul's comporting itself towards the means used for obtaining the mercy prayed for.

(a.) If thou prayedst in faith, it will set thee to use other means besides prayer. Mark how the apostle joins these together, 'Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer,' Romans 12:11-12. As faith useth her wings of prayer to fly to heaven; so she useth her feet of duty and obedience, with which she walks and bestirs herself on earth.

(b.) Faith will make thee, as use means, so to be choice of the means thou usest for the obtaining what thou bespeakest of God in prayer. Faith is a working grace, but it will be set on work by none but God. Am I in God's way, saith faith? Is this the means he hath appointed? If it be not, away he turns from it, disdaining to work with any of the devil's tools. God can never answer my prayer, saith the believer, without the help of my sin. If riches be good for me, I need not be at the cost to purchase them with a lie or a cheat. If health be a mercy, he can send me it, though I advise not with the devil's doctors. If joy and comfort, there is no need to take down the devil's music. If times be evil, he can hide me without running under the skirt of this great man and that by base flattery and dissimulation. When Ezra had committed himself and his company to God—now on their march towards Jerusalem—by a solemn day of fasting and prayer, and had made a holy boast of his God, what he would do for them that seek him, he thought it unbeseeming his professed faith, and also dishonourable to his God, whom he had so magnified in the hearing of the Persian king, to beg armed troops for a convoy to them in their way, lest his faith should be brought into suspicion for an empty bravado and groundless confidence: 'I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him;' Ezra 8:22.

(c.) If thou actest faith in prayer, thy faith will not only make thee choice of the means thou usest, but curious and careful in using the means that God chooseth for thee. Thou wilt be afraid lest it should stand in God's light, by stealing thy confidence in him to trust in it. Faith will teach thee to use means as God's ordinance, but rely on God to bless it. While faith's hand is on the plow, her eye is to heaven. Annus non ager facit fructum—the influences of heaven, not the tillage of the husband, make it a fruitful year. Sometimes the physician appoints a powder to be taken in wine or beer. Now it is not the beer or wine that does the cure, but the powder, which they are only used to convey and carry into the stomach. Thus mercy is handed over to us by the blessing of God in the use of means, yet think not the means do it, but the blessing of God mingled with it and infused into it.

(d.) If thou actest faith in prayer, as thou wilt be careful to improve means when God provides them, so thou wilt not suspend thy faith when God denies them. The believing soul dares not trust to the means when he hath them, therefore he dares not distrust God when he wants them. Faith knows, though God useth means, yet he needs none. The sun and showers are the means he useth for the growth of the grass and herbs; yet he made these to grow out of the earth before there was sun or rain, Genesis 1:11. Ploughing and sowing are the ordinary means whereby man is provided with bread; but he fed Israel with bread without their pains and husbandry. Ships [are] the means to waft us over the seas; but God carried Israel through the Red Sea without ship or boat. May be times are hard, and thou art poor; thy charge is great, and thy comings in little; with the widow in the prophet, thou art making the last cake of the little meal that is left. To reason and sense thou must either beg, steal, or die. Canst thou now, upon praying to thy God, wait upon his promise which tells thee, 'verily, thou shalt be fed,' Psalms 37:3; and on his providence, which records his care of the sparrows on purpose to assure us he will much more provide for his children? Or, at least, dost thou chide thy heart for its distrustful fears after praying, charging it to hope in God, to whom thou hast made thy moan? Truly, if thy heart hath not some hold on God after duty to stay it, more than before in this thy strait; either thou hast no faith, or if thou hast faith, thou didst not act it in that prayer. True faith will either expel these dejections of heart, or at least protest against them.

[Satan would hinder the success of prayers, by preventing the saint's belief that they were heard.]

Second Way of Hinderance. Now we come to the second stratagem that Satan useth to hinder the success of the Christian's prayer, which I called a partial hinderance or miscarriage thereof, when the prayer itself is not lost—which comes to pass only when it finds not acceptance with God —but when the Christian doth not believe on earth that his prayer is heard in heaven, though indeed it is. By his questioning thereof, however, he loseth the revenue of that present peace which otherwise would be paid unto him from the expectation of its certain return with a joyful answer. As a merchant that gives his ship for castaway, when indeed it is safe and richly laden (only stays for a fair wind); he not knowing or believing this, puts himself to as much trouble and sorrow as if it were in truth as he feared. Fancy and imagination, even when without ground and reason, are able to produce real effects and sad consequences in the minds of men. The false news of Joseph's death caused as much sorrow to old Jacob, yea more, than if he had seen him laid out, and had followed him to the grave. The jailer, from a fear his prisoners were gone, and he accountable for them, had foredone himself, by falling on his own sword, if Paul had not seasonably cried out, 'Do thyself no harm, for we are all here.' And truly our unbelieving fears have no less power upon our

hearts. They rob the Christian of the joy of his life—and man is but a sour piece of clay when that is gone. It is not praying, but believing prayer heard, that will make a glad heart and a cheerful countenance. Hannah often prayed; she was acquainted with the work many years, yet never had the burden of her spirit taken off till she had faith she should speed. Yea, moreover, they [unbelieving fears] weaken the spirit of prayer. He that expects little from prayer, will not be much in prayer. That trade is best tended which it is hoped will pay a man best for his pains in it. 'Who is there among you,' saith God, 'that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought,' Malachi 1:10. The husbandman throws his seed freely, because he sows in hope; and his preciousest seed on his fattest soil, because there he looks to find it again with the greatest increase. This made David like praying work so well that he will never leave it: 'I have prayed, and the Lord hath heard, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.' As a merchant, finding his sweet gain come trouling in, converts his whole estate into stock; so David devotes himself wholly to prayer: 'For my love they are my adversaries,' %-/% *"!$, Psalms 109:4, 'but I was prayer.' This was the only weapon I lift up for my defence against all their darts. Whereas, unbelief betrays the soul unto many uncomely thoughts of God, which reflect sadly upon his name, so as to weaken his reputation in the creature's thoughts, and bring him either to a disuse of this duty, or hopeless performance of it, and this Satan loves alife. When a merchant thinks his goods miscarry, he grows presently jealous of his factor, questioning his care, faithfulness, or ability to despatch his business. Such whisperings we shall hear, if we listen to our unbelieving hearts sometimes, when our prayers make not so short an quick a voyage as we desire. It was a high charge that Job brought against God—though he lived to see he had little reason to do it; yea, afterward charged himself for charging God—'I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me: I stand up, and thou regardest me not,' Job 30:20. This holy man was now as deep in God's books, and as great a favourite with him, as ever; yet so far had Satan wound into him, as to make him listen to those false reports which he brought unto him of God—taking the advantage of his present cloudy providence to colour his calumnies, insomuch that he began to give credit unto this liar. Now if this may become a stone of offence to Job, how much more mayest thou fear dashing thy foot against it? Let it be thy care to countermine Satan in this his spiteful plot against God and thee. Surely it should not be a little matter that makes thee throw up thy prayers, and give away so rich an adventure as thou hast swimming in this bottom. Esau hath the brand of a 'profane person,' for so cheaply parting with his inheritance. If thou beest a believer, thou art an heir of promise, and, amongst promises, this is not the least —that what thou askest in Christ's name, believing, thou shalt receive. Now, it is too like Esau's profaneness to part with this piece of thy heritage—which thou canst not do without impeaching the faithfulness of God that gave thee an estate in the promise.

We highly commend Job for his heroic resolution at another time: 'God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me,' Job 27:5. How much more shouldst thou say to Satan, 'God forbid that I should justify thee, thou wicked fiend, or thy false charge against my God; I will hold fast his integrity and faithfulness till I die.' Surely Daniel, who ventured his life rather than not pray, would have parted with a thousand lives rather than have given is prayers for lost, and thereby have blotted the good name of God, whose faithfulness stands bound to return every prayer of faith with a gracious answer into the saint's bosom.

But, the more to fortify you against this design of Satan, let us inquire into a few of those arguments with which Satan—abusing the Christian's credulity —leads him into this temptation, if not absolutely to conclude, yet unbelieving to dispute and question it in his heart, whether his prayer be heard or no. I shall reduce them to three heads. First. The first argument by which he scruples the Christian, and nourishes his unbelieving fears, is taken from those sinful infirmities that cleave to his person and prayer. Second. Another argument is taken from the deportment of God to him in and after prayer. Third. The last is taken from the common providence of God, that dispenseth the same things to the wicked without praying, which the saints receive praying.

[Satan's arguments to make the believer doubt whether his prayer is heard.]

Argument 1. The first argument by which Satan would make the Christian out of love with himself and his duty, is taken from those sinful infirmities cleaving to both—his person and prayer alike. Thereby he would quash the saint's hope of any favourable reception that his prayer hath found in heaven. What! thy stammering prayers make music in God's ear! Will the Lord foul his fingers with thy besmeared duties? If thou wert a Samuel or Daniel, and couldst claim thy place among those worthies that are renowned for the eminent service they have done God in their generation, then thou mightest hope to have the ear of God to thy suit; but thou, alas! art a puny stripling, a froward child, in whom there is more sin than grace to be found, and dost thou think to be heard? Truly, though this argument weighs little, having no countenance from the tenor of the covenant, whose privileges are not impropriated to a few favourites, more eminent in grace than their brethren, but stand open to the whole family—it being 'a common salvation,' and 'like precious faith,' that all the saints partake of; yet it is the great bugbear with which many of them are scared. A word or two therefore to arm thee against this argument. Only this premised—which I must take for granted—that these sinful infirmities are lamented and not cockered by thee—that indeed would turn infirmity into presumption; as also that thou neglectest not to apply the most effectual means for their cure—though, as in hereditary diseases, all the physic thou takest will not here perfectly rid thee of them: this granted, for thy comfort know thy prayers are not so offensive to God as to thyself. Thy prayers pass such a refining in Christ's mediation, that their ill scent is taken away.

Doth thy scruple arise from the sinful failings of thy daily conversation and Christian course? To remove this, observe how the Spirit of God, when he instanceth in Elias as a person whose prayers are exceedingly prevalent with God, doth not describe him by the transcendency of his grace above others, but by his infirmities like unto them: 'Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not,' James 5:17. As if God should say, Were I so curious in my scrutiny, as you fear, Elias's prayer would have been stopped, for he was not without his infirmities. How many failings do we find in David's unseemly carriage before Achish, for which he was turned out of the king's presence under the notion of a madman? Yet his prayer at that time, when he betrayed so many unbelieving fears, found favour with God. 'I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears,' Psalms 34:4. Read the title, and you shall find it, 'A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed.' Are they the sinful infirmities which escape thee in the duty of prayer? Canst thou find more in any prayer thou puttest up, than were in the disciples', for one so short?—where they exercised so little faith that Christ calls it 'no faith,' Mark 4:40. 'Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?' Yea, they pray to Christ, and chide him in the same breath, 'Master, carest thou not that we perish?' Yet Christ could find sincerity hid, like Saul, in this stuff of

their infirmities, and granted their request. It is true he rebuked them, but it is as true that he rebuked the wind also. God's promise for hearing of prayer shall not be made void by the saint's weakness in prayer. Yea, for thy further comfort, know, that the less power these have to shake or disturb thy spirit in expecting a gracious answer, the more kindly God will take it at thy hand. 'Abraham,' it is said, 'believed, not considering his own body, or the deadness of Sarah's womb;' and for this was highly commended, because he thereby did signally glorify the power of God, to which he believed their bodily indisposition should not be any obstacle. Truly thus it will be highly pleasing to God, if thou canst rely—staggering not at thy spiritual indispositions, and that deadness of thy heart which rises up as a great objection in thy thoughts against the success of thy prayer; for by this thou givest Christ both the honour of his death, by which he purchased this free access for thy weak prayers to the throne of grace, and also of his intercession, which clarifies them from all their sinful mixtures.

Argument 2. Satan draws his argument from God's deportment to the soul in and after prayer. In this argument there are three things he commonly insists upon—by them to create trouble to the Christian's thoughts. (1.) His silence, which he would have the Christian interpret to be God's slighting or disregarding of him and his prayer. (2.) His frowns, from which he would have him conclude neither he nor his duty are accepted. (3.) His not giving the mercy in kind; and this he tells the Christian amounts to a denial.

[What in God's deportment to a Christian after prayer Satan falsifies.]

(1.) His silence after prayer. As wicked men sometimes sin, and God keeps silence, which makes them bold to think God approves of them and their way; so, sometimes a gracious soul prays, and God holds his peace here also; and the poor soul begins to fear that neither his person nor his duty are approved of God. Now Satan, knowing what thoughts are like to rise in the Christian's own heart, falls in and joins issue with the Christian's bosom enemy, labouring to confirm him in these his unbelieving fears. To disentangle and help thee out of this brier, take these directions:—

(a.) Learn to distinguish betwixt God's hearing and his answering the saint's prayer. Every faithful prayer is heard, and makes an acceptable report in God's ear as soon as it is shot; but God doth not always speedily answer it. The father, at the reading of his son's letter—which comes haply on some begging errand—likes the motion; his heart closeth with it, and a grant is there passed; but he takes his own time to send his despatch, and let his son know this. Princes have their books of remembrance, wherein they write the names of their favourites whom they intend to prefer, haply some years before their gracious purpose opens itself to them. Mordecai's name stood in Ahasuerus' book some while before his honour was conferred. Thus God records the names of his saints and their prayers. 'The Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name,' Malachi 3:16. But they hear not of God in his providential answer, haply, a long time after. Abraham prays for a child, and is heard, but how many years interpose before he hath him in his arms? Truly so many that he goes into Hagar—partly by his wife's counsel and his own weakness—to obtain that with a by■blow for which God himself had undertaken.

Take heed, Christian, thou beest not led into this temptation, to question whether God hears thee, because thou hearest not from him presently. Be patient, and thou shalt find, the longer a mercy goes before its delivery, the more perfect it will come forth at last. God gave a speedy answer to

Abraham for his son Ishmael, ‘O that Ishmael might live!’ ‘I have heard thee,’ saith God concerning Ishmael, Genesis 17:20. Indeed he flourished and spread into a great nation before Isaac’s stem almost budded. What a small number was the family of Jacob at their going down into Egypt! but when the date of God’s bond was near expiring, and the time of the promise drew nigh, then God paid interest for his stay. None gain more at the throne of grace than those who trade for time, and can forbear the payment of a mercy longest.

(b.) Consider, when thou findest the deepest silence in God’s providence concerning the thing prayed for, then thou hast a loud answer in the promise. Say not therefore, ‘Who shall ascend to heaven, to bring thee intelligence whether thy prayer hath got safe thither, and had favourable audience in God’s ear?’ God himself hath saved thee this labour: the promise will satisfy thee, which assures thee that if it be duly qualified it cannot find the heart of God shut against it. ‘The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,’ James 5:16. So assured have the saints been of this, that they, before any inkling from providence hath been heard—to bring them the news of a mercy coming—have taken up joy upon the credit of the naked promise, and feasted themselves with the hopes of what they expected, but had not yet received at the cost and charge of God’s faithfulness, with which the promise is sealed, ‘In God I will praise his word,’ Psalms 56:4. Mark the phrase. He had not as yet the desired mercy, only a word of promise that it should come. Now, considering the power and truth of God the promiser, he is as merry as if he were put in possession of it, and pays his praises before God performs the promise.

(2.) The second thing which Satan gathers from God’s deportment towards the Christian, thereby to bring the hearing of his prayer into question in his anxious thoughts, is, his frowns against the Christian. It cannot be denied but sometimes a dear saint of God may go away from duty with an aching heart, by reason of the sad impressions of an angry God left upon his spirit. And when thus it fares with the Christian, Satan’s time is come, he thinks, to lead him into this temptation, by persuading him he may read what entertainment his prayer had at God’s hands in the language of his countenance and his carriage towards him. If God, saith he, had heard thy prayer, would he handle thee thus? No sure; he would rather have taken thee up into his arms, and kissed thee with the kisses of his mouth, than thus trample thee under is feet. Thou shouldst have had darts of love shot from his pitiful eye, to imitate the purposes of his grace, and not arrows headed with his wrath, to stick in thy soul, and thus drink up thy very spirits. Can these be the wounds of a friend?—this the deportment that means thee well? This was the temptation which ruffled Job’s thoughts, and embittered his spirit, Job 9:17. He could not believe God answered his prayer, ‘because he broke with his tempest.’ As if God’s mercy came always in the still voice, and never in the whirlwind! Now in this case take this double word of counsel.

Counsel (a). Inquire whether this tempest comes to find any Jonah in thy ship; whether it takes thee sinning, or soaking in any past sin unrepented; or whether thy conscience, diligently listened to, doth witness that thou art sincere in thy course, though compassed with many failings. If it overtakes thee in a runaway voyage, with Jonah, or rambling course with the prodigal from thy father’s house, then indeed thou hast reason to question, yea it is beyond all question, that an acceptable prayer in this posture cannot drop from thy lips. What! run from God, and then send to him thy prayers! This is to desire mercy to spend upon thy lust. But if, upon thy faithful search, thou findest this storm overtakes thee in the way of duty and exercise of thy sincerity, like the tempest that met the disciples at sea—when at Christ’s command they launched forth—then be not

discouraged. For it is ordinary with God to put on the disguise of an angry countenance, and to use rough language, when his heart is resolved upon ways of mercy, and mediates love to his people. Jacob, you know, wrestled hard and long before victory inclined to his side. And the woman of Canaan was kicked away like a dog with harsh language, who at last was owned of Christ for a dear child, and sent away to her heart's content. Sincerity needs fear no ill from God. This very consideration kept Job's head as another time above water, Job 16:12. There we find God taking him by the neck, shaking him as it were to pieces, and setting him up for his mark. But, Job 16:17, this upheld his troubled spirit—that all this befell him walking in obedience—'Not for any injustice in mine hands: also my prayer is pure.' Wherefore he rears up his confidence, 'Also now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high. My friends scorn me: but mine eye poureth out tears unto God,' Job 16:19-20. The holy man was not, for all this, scared from the throne of grace, but still looked on God, though with tears in his eyes, expecting good news at last after so much bed. And we have warrant to do the same. 'If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God,' 1 John 3:21. And this brings me to the second word of counsel I have to give thee.

Counsel (b). Inquire whether under these frowns from God there be yet a spirit of prayer working in thee. Haply thou canst not deny but that thy heart is rather stirred up from these to lament after the Lord with more restless sighs and groans, to pray with more feeling and fervency, than driven away from duty. The spirit of prayer upheld in thee may assure of these two things:—

[1.] That the cloud of anger which seems to sit on God's brow is not in his heart. It is but a thin veil, through which thy faith might see the working of his bowels towards thee. The presence of the Spirit of God at work thus in a soul cannot stand with his real anger. If his wrath were up, this in thee would be down. Thou shouldst have him soon calling back this his ambassador of peace, at least suspending and withdrawing his assistance. When that sad breach was made between God and David in the matter of Uriah, David's heart was presently out of tune; his 'right hand had forgot its cunning,' and the spirit of prayer had received a sad damp in his heart. Where is the psalm to be found that was penned by David in that interregnum, as I may so say, of his grace? I do not say he did never pray all the time he lay soaking in that sin; but those prayers were not fit to be joined with the holy breathings of that spirit which acted him before his fall and after his recovery. And therefore, good man, when by repentance he came to himself, like one recovering out of a dangerous sickness —which had for a time taken away his senses—he begins to feel himself weak, and how much the Spirit of grace was by his sin enfeebled in him, which makes him so vehemently beg that God would 'renew a right spirit in him,' and 'not take his Holy Spirit from him,' Psalms 51:10-11. The Spirit is so choice and peculiar a mercy, that if thou canst find lively actings of his grace in thee—and where are they more sensibly felt than in prayer, helping the soul to sighs and groans which cannot be uttered?—thou canst not in reason think God is not friends with thee, though it were at present as dark as midnight with thy soul.

[2.] It may assure thee that his ear is open to thy cry when his face is hid from thine eye. For, consider but who this Spirit is that thus helps thee in prayer, and furnisheth thee with all thy spiritual ammunition with which thou so pliest and batterest the throne of grace. Is he not one that knows the mind of God? and that would not have a hand in that petition which should not be welcome to heaven? Having therefore this assistance from the Spirit, doubt not thy acceptance with the Father. In a word, the Spirit that helps thee to thy groans and sighs in prayer is no other than that

God thou prayest to; and will God deny himself? This I conceive part, if not the principal part, of the scripture's meaning, 'I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain,' Isaiah 45:19. That is, whenever I stir up a soul to pray, and empower him with my Spirit to perform it feelingly, fervently, and after a holy manner, it is always to purpose. God never said thus to any, 'Seek ye me in vain.'

(3.) The third thing from which Satan takes his advantage to breed scruples in the Christian's mind concerning the acceptance of his prayer, is the denial of mercy in kind which is prayed for. We are prone enough to have such thoughts ourselves, and Satan will not be wanting to feed any bad humour that is stirring in us. Or, if our hearts seem pacified with this dealing of God, he hath his ways and wiles to conjure up this evil spirit of discontent and unbelief. On this errand he sent Job's wife, to make him think and speak evil of God: 'Dost thou still retain thy integrity?' As if she had said, 'What! art thou at thy old work?—still praying and praising God? Dost thou not see how much he regards thee, or thy serving of him? What hast thou got by all thy devotion? Is not thy estate gone?—thy children slain and buried in one grave, and thyself left a poor loathsome cripple? —thy life serving for nothing but to make thee feel thy present misery and feed on thy past crosses?'

Indeed, it requires a good insight into the nature of the promises, and the divers ways God takes to fulfil them, to enable us to spell an answer out of a denial of the thing we pray for. Yet, such a 'good understanding have all they that do his commandments,' Psalms 111:10. They can clear God and justify his faithfulness in all his dealings, though, when he comes to answer their prayers, he chooseth not to enter in at that door which they set open in their own thoughts and hopes for him, nor treads in the very steps of their express desires. The whole psalm contains a testimony given to the faithfulness of God in his providential works, at which, though a carnal cursory eye—from the mysteries hid therein—is scandalized and takes offence, yet the gracious soul, by his more curious observance of and inquiry into them, finds a sweet harmony between them and the promise, and therefore concludes, 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.' They, having a key to God's character, can read the hand of his providence, and so are able to praise him —knowing him faithful—when others are ready to curse him.

But, to help thee out or keep thee from falling into this temptation, thou art in the first place to consider what mercy it is that God denies thee. Is it not of that sort of blessings which are not necessary unto thy happiness as a saint? Such all temporal mercies are. The kingdom of God consists not in meat and drink. Thou wilt find an absolute denial for no other; he hath bid us take no denial for his love and favour, grace and glory: 'Seek the Lord, and his strength: seek his face evermore,' Psalms 105:4—that is, be not put off for these, but live and die at God's door till he brings this alms to thee. Well, we will take this for granted it is a temporal mercy thou art denied. Now, when thou art tempted to question the love of God, or acceptance of thy prayer, let me desire thee to weigh this threefold consideration.

Consideration (a). Consider how ill God may take this at thy hand; and that in a double respect. [1.] That thou dost suspect his love on so slight and trivial a matter as the temporal enjoyments of this life are, which he thinks are not worth enough to be put into the promise any otherwise than they are subservient to the spiritual and eternal blessings of the covenant: 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you,' Matthew 6:33—that is, as you need them. He casts them into the other more grand blessings, as a trades-

man would do thread or paper, or a skein of silk, into a parcel of rich commodities that a customer buys of him. Suppose a child should ask his father for money to buy some toy or trifle that pleaseth his green head, but the father denies him the thing. If, now, the child should go and make proclamation in the open street, to the disgrace of his father, that his father did neither love nor regard him—though he wants neither food nor raiment—would this be well taken at the child's hand? This thou dost, Christian, in this case, though thou thinkest not so much; and hath not thy heavenly Father more reason to question thy love for taking away his good name, than thou to suspect his for his denial? But again, [2.] He may take it ill that thou hast aspersed his wisdom. Is there no way but this for the wise God to show his love and answer thy prayer? Cannot he deny health and give patience?—take away thy estate and turn it into contentation?—teaching thee to be abased, and to bless God thou art made low. He that will make thee so happy in heaven, where few of this world's enjoyments shall be seen, cannot he make thy life comfortable on earth without some of them?

Consideration (b). Consider how thou prayedst when thou didst meet with this denial. Didst thou pray peremptorily and absolutely, or conditionally, with submission to the will of God? If peremptorily, thou wert beside the rule, and art the cause why thy prayer came back without its errand. God will not hear, or bear, commanding prayers. He that must have a temporal mercy, if he gets it, he may have a spiritual curse, but is sure to have a temporal cross. So Delilah proved to Samson, who would not take his parents' counsel, but must have her whatever comes of it: 'Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well,' Judges 14:3. But he paid dearly for his choice. May be such an employment pleaseth thee well. Thy carnal heart is in love with it; and that sets the a praying inordinately for it. Alas! poor creature, if thou hadst it, what wouldst thou do with it? Thou wouldst fondly lay thy head in its lap and let it rock thy grace asleep, and then betray thee into the hand of some sin and judgment! But, if thou sayest that thou prayedst with a submissive spirit, on condition it liked God as well as thyself; if so, why then dost thou now recant thy prayer, seeing God hath declared his will that it is not good for thee to have thy desire? Wilt thou not be determined by him to whom thou didst refer thyself? Hast thou not reason to think that God takes the best way for thee? There is never a prayer put up but God doth, as it were, weigh and ponder it, and then his love sets his wisdom on work to make such a return as may be most for his own glory and his child's good. Now, it being the product of such infinite wisdom and love, thou oughtest to acquiesce in it, yea to praise God for it. Thus did David in a great strait, 'O my God, I cry in the daytime, and thou hearest not,' Psalms 22:2. Well, what hears God from him now he hears nothing from God (as to the deliverance prayed for)? No murmuring nor cavilling at God's proceedings —nay, he hears the quite contrary; for he justifies and praises God, 'But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel,' Psalms 22:3.

Consideration (c). Observe whether thou canst not gather something from the manner of God's denying the thing prayed for, which may sweeten it to thee. Haply thou shalt find he denies thee, but it is with a smiling countenance, and ushers it in with some expression of grace and favour that may assure thee his denial proceeds not from displeasure. As you would do with a dear friend, who, may be, comes to borrow a sum of money of you—lend it you dare not, because you see plainly it is not for his good. But, in giving him the denial, lest he should misinterpret it, as proceeding from want of love and respect, you therefore preface it in with some kind of language of you hearty affection to him, as that you love him, and therefore deny him, and shall be ready to

do for him more than that comes too. Thus God sometimes wraps up his denials in such sweet sugared intimations of his love as prevent all jealousies from arising in the hearts of his people. When David was denied to build a temple for God, as was in his heart to do, God gave him a large testimony of his affection, how highly he accepted his good-will therein. Though he should not build a temple for him, yet his desire was so kindly taken that God would build a house for him that should last forever.

Thus, sometimes a faithful minister prays earnestly that God would bless his labours to the converting of his people, and is denied; yet intimations of God's love to his person are dropped, with a promise that, however, 'his reward is with the Lord.' So that his prayer, though denied as to them, is returned with peace into his own bosom. Another prays passionately, 'O that I might see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, and that truth and peace might flourish in his days!' This, may be, is not granted, because his desire antedates the period which God hath fixed in his purpose for the fulfilling of his promise to his church: but he withal manifests his love to him, and expresseth how highly he resents[4] his love to the church. Thus God did by Daniel, to whom an angel was sent to let him know what kind entertainment his prayer had, and that he was a man 'greatly beloved of God,' Daniel 9:21. So in temporal mercies. Haply thou art pleading with God for deliverance out of this trouble and that affliction, and it is denied thee, but a message [is] with the denial that recompenseth it double. May be some sweet illapses of his love he drops into thy bosom, or assurance of seasonable succours that shall be sent in to enable thee to charge through them with faith and victory. So God dealt by Paul, 'My grace is sufficient for thee.' I hope now thou wilt not say thy prayer is lost. When Saul sought his father's asses, was he not shrewdly hurt to find a kingdom instead of them? The holy women that went to the sepulchre to anoint the body of Jesus with their spices, did not lose their labour though they found him risen. Were they, thinkest thou, sorry for that? What are all the enjoyments of the world to the spiritual mercies and comfort of the promises which thou findest in thy attendance on God? Not so much as the dead body of our risen Saviour. Thou findest not some dead creature-comfort, but thou meetest with embraces from a living God.

Argument 3. The third and last thing that Satan abuseth the Christian with, to make him doubtful of the acceptance of his prayer, and also to question, when a mercy is given in after prayer, whether it comes as a gracious answer to it or no, is taken from the common providence of God, that dispenseth the same things to the wicked without praying which the saints receive praying. Now, with Satan, how knowest thou that thy mercies come to thee as an answer to thy prayer, and not at the door of common providence with them? For the extricating thee out of this snare thou must know, that we are not to expect the extraordinary ways to determine this, but must satisfy ourselves with what light the word of God affords, which is able to resolve, not only this, but all our cases of conscience. It is true that God doth sometimes cast in some such circumstances as bring an evidence with them that the mercy flies to us on the wings of prayer. As when, upon Abraham's servant's praying at the well for God's gracious conduct and help to despatch his master's business prosperously, that Rebecca should presently come forth, and, by her kind carriage and invitation, so fitly answer the mould of his prayer, even as the lock doth the key made for it. Here heaven declared to his very sense, that his prayer found the right way to heaven. When, upon prayer, the mercy is thus cast in strangely and suddenly without the concurrence of second causes—yea, when they all lie under a visible sentence of death, and the thing is put beyond the

activity of their sphere to work—here there is no rival to stand in competition with prayer. Thus, when the apostles healed the sick upon a short prayer darted up to heaven—not so much as a doctor's advice asked in the cure. When Peter knocked at the door where the church was praying for him, what but prayer bound his keeper's senses so fast in the chains of sleep, and made those with which Peter was bound to fall off without any kind hand to help, but heaven's? What made the iron gate so officious to open to him that had no key in his hand to unlock it? Surely we must confess, prayer opened heaven door, and heaven, at the church's prayer, opened the prison door.

Yet it is as true, that more commonly mercies that are won by prayer come not with this pomp and observation. But, as converting grace oft steals into the hearts of some with less terror and noise of humiliation than it doth into others; so, truly, do answers in prayer—and that more commonly—come with more silence, and in the ordinary road by the concurring help of second causes. As, the Christian praying for the temporal provisions of this life, God answers his prayer by blessing his diligence in his calling. The sick Christian praying, hath his food and physic thoroughly sanctified, and so recovers. Now, though God hath left himself at liberty, either to send his mercies by secondary hands, or, when he pleaseth, to be the messenger himself, and bring them in an extraordinary way with his immediate hand; yet hath he not left us at liberty to leave the ordinary road, and neglect the means, under a pretence of expecting extraordinary ways to have our desires. Now as to this ordinary way of giving in mercies in answer to prayer, these two things are to be inquired for:—

(1.) Inquire whether thou who didst put up the prayer beest in a covenant state. When God gives a mercy in answer to prayer, he is said to 'remember his covenant,' Psalms 105:34 compared with ver. 8, and to be 'mindful of his covenant,' Psalms 111:5. His eye is first on the person, taking notice who he is, whether his child or no, and then his ear is open to his cry: 'The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry,' Psalms 34:15. 'Who art thou, my son?' said Isaac to Jacob, before he gave him the blessing. If God sees thou art not his child—and his eyes are not dim, like old Isaac's, that he can be deceived—thy prayer is not accepted. Indeed, neither canst thou, in that state, pray in a gospel sense, nor God graciously bid thy prayer welcome; for the spirit of prayer is a covenant grace, and interest in the mediation of Christ a covenant privilege, without both which no prayer is accepted. God hears not any that have not his Spirit to pray in them, and his Son to pray for them; and none have these but such as are in a covenant state.

(2.) Inquire what thy frame of heart was in the duty of prayer, and also after its performance. Thy not being in a covenant state will prove thy prayer was not heard, and consequently that the mercy received came not as a gracious answer to it; but thy being in a covenant state is an insufficient ground for thee to conclude that this particular prayer that now thou puttest up is accepted, because there may intervene something to hinder the present benefit of this privilege which is annexed to thy covenant state. For, though thy state be good, yet thy present frame and behaviour may be naught. Thou mayest, though a child of God, be under fresh guilt and defilement as yet unrepented of. Now in this case God can shut his door upon his own child. Thou hast indeed jus in re, but not aptitudinem ad rem—as a saint, thou hast a right to all the promises of the covenant, and to this, of having God's ear open to thy prayers among the rest; but as thou art a saint under guilt, or the defilement of any sin that thou hast not yet repented of, thou art not fit to enjoy what thou hast a right to as a saint. God doth not disinherit thee indeed, but he sequesters the promise

from thee, and the rents of it shall not be paid to thee, till thou renewest thy repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus for the pardon of it. Thy God will choose a fitter time than this is to signify his love to thee. The leper under the law was to stand off while purified; and so will thy God turn his back of thy prayer, till thou beest cleansed of thy sin.

Again, suppose thou art a saint, and hast not thus defiled thyself with any gross sin, yet thy graces might not be exercised in the duty of prayer; haply thou didst pray, but no faith or fervency were exerted in it. There may be grace in the heart, but none in the duty; and such a prayer shall not speed. The promise is to the saint acting his faith and fervency in prayer. 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,' James 5:16. 'Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart,' Jeremiah 29:13.

Lastly, Though thou wert stirred up in prayer, yet may be thy heart was not raised up to rely on God after prayer for the answer. Then we pray in faith when we so take hold of God by faith in prayer, as to wait and stay ourselves on God for a return of mercy from him. Now by putting all these together, thou mayest come to the resolution of the question in hand. If thou beest in a covenant state, and liest not in any known sin unrepented of—if thou prayest fervently, and actest faith on God, so as to stay thy soul upon God for an answer, though accompanied with many weaknesses and staggerings—truly thou mayest, without presumption, conclude the mercy which finds thee in this orderly manner waiting upon God comes in a gracious answer to thy prayer. We do not fear to break open a letter when we find our name in the superscription directing it to us. Search the promises, and thou shalt find them directed by name to thee who prayest thus.

[1]Supersedeas, — a legal document issued to halt or delay the action of some process of law. Webster's.

[2]Searce, v. t. sers. To shift; to bolt; to separate the fine part of meal from the coarse. [Little used.] Searce, n. sers. A sieve; a bolter. [Little used.] — From Webster's 1828 Dictionary.

[3]Note: The actual quotation in the text appears to be a blending of John 12:28, and Matthew 26:39, Matthew 26:42. — SDB

[4]Note: — Could it be that this is a typo here and that what was meant was the word respects? or, represents? or, presents? While that would not clear up the entire tenor of this paragraph, which seems fraught with problems, it would help to alleviate them to a certain extent. — SDB

02.06 - How to Perform the Duty Commanded - A Directory for Prayer

DIRECTION XI.—SECOND GENERAL PART.

[How to perform the duty commanded—a directory for prayer.] ‘Praying always with all prayer and supplication,’ &c. (Ephesians 6:18).

Having despatched the duty of prayer in general, we now come to give an account of the several branches in the exhortation; which together make up an excellent directory to the Christian for his better performing of this duty. Indeed, the apostle here not only teacheth the Christian how to pray, but the minister how to preach, in that he doth not nakedly tell them what is their duty—and so leave them to their own skill in the management of it; but that he may facilitate the duty unto them, he annexeth such directions, and so rules their copy for them, that they shall not easily miscarry in the performance thereof. That preacher that presseth a duty—though with never so much zeal—but doth not chalk out the way how it is to be done, is like one that brings a man to a door that is locked, and bids him go into the house; but gives him no key to open it. Or, that sends a company to sea, but lends them no chart by which they should steer their course. But to come to the directions. They are six.

First. The time for prayer—‘praying always.’

Second. The kinds or sorts of prayer—‘with all prayer and supplication.’

Third. The inward principle of prayer from which it may flow—‘in the Spirit.’

Fourth. The guard to be set about the duty of prayer—‘watching thereunto.’

Fifth. The unwearied constancy to be exercised in the duty—‘with all perseverance.’

Sixth. The comprehensiveness of the duty or persons for whom we are to pray—‘for all saints.’

We shall begin with the first.

Division First.—The Time for Prayer.

‘Praying always.’

We shall begin with the first direction, which points to the time of performing the duty of prayer—‘always.’ This word ‘always’ hath a threefold importance. First. To pray ‘always’ is as much as if he had said, ‘pray in everything,’ according to that of the same apostle in another epistle—‘In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.’ Second. To pray ‘always’ may import as much as to pray in all conditions. Third. To pray ‘always’ is to pray daily.

[Threefold import of the expression ‘praying always.’]

First. To pray always is to pray in everything. Prayer is a catholic duty, with which, like a girdle, we are to compass in all our affairs. It is to be as bread and salt on our table; whatever else we have to our meal, these are not forgot to be set on: whatever we do, or would have, prayer is necessary, be it small or great. Not as the heathen, who prayed for some things to their gods, and not for other. If poor, they prayed for riches; if sick, for health; but as for the good things of the mind, such as patience, contentment, and other virtues, they thought they could carve well enough in these for themselves, without troubling their gods to help them. The poet it seems was of this mind—

Hoc satis est orare Jovem, qui donat et aufert.

Det vitam, det opes; animum mî æquum ipse parabo—

It is enough, To pray of Jove who gives and takes away That he may give me life and wealth:

I will myself prepare the equal soul.

O how proud is ignorance! let God give the less, and man will do the greater. But their folly is not so much to wondered at, as the irreligion of many among ourselves, who profess to know the true God, and have the light of his word to direct them what worship to give him. Some are so brutish in their knowledge, that they hardly pray to God for anything others for everything. May be they look upon pardon of sin, and salvation of their souls —as fruit on the top branches of a tree—out of the reach of their own arm, and therefore now and then put up some slighty prayers to God for them. But as for temporals, which seem to hang lower, they think they can pluck them by their own industry, without setting up the ladder of prayer to come at them. They that should see some—how busy they are in laying their plots, and how seldom in prayer—could not but think they expected their safety from their own policy, and not God's providence. Or, should they observe how hard they work in their shop, and how seldom and lazy they are at prayer for God's blessing on their labour in their closet, they must conclude these men promise themselves their estates more from their own labour than the divine bounty. In a word, it is some great occasion that must bring them upon their knees before God in prayer. May be, when they have an extraordinary enterprise in hand, wherein they look for strong opposition or great difficulty, in such a case God shall have them knocking at his door—for now they are at their wits' end and know not how to turn them; but the more ordinary and common actions of their lives they think they can please their master at their pleasures, and so pass by God's door without bespeaking his presence or assistance. Thus, one runs into his shop, and another into the field, and takes no notice that God is concerned in their employments. If to take a long journey by the sea or land, where eminent dangers and hazards present themselves unto their thoughts, then God hath their company; but if to stay at home, or walk to and fro in their ordinary employments, they bespeak not the providential wing of God to overshadow them. This is not to 'pray always.' If thou wilt, therefore, be a Christian, do not thus part stakes with God, committing the greater transactions of thy life to him, and trusting thyself with the less: but 'acknowledge God in all thy ways, and lean not to thine own understanding' in any. By this thou shalt give him the glory of his universal providence, with which he encircles all his creatures and all their actions. As nothing is too great to be above his power, so nothing is too little to be beneath his care. He is the God of the valleys as well as of the mountains. The sparrow on the hedge and the hair on our head are cared for by him; and this is no more derogatory to his glorious majesty than it was to make them at first. Nay, thou shalt, by this, not only give God his glory, but secure thyself, for there is no passage in thy whole life so minute and

inconsiderable, which—if God should withdraw his care and providence—might not be an occasion of a sin or danger to thee. And that which exposeth thee to these calls upon thee to engage God for thy defence.

First. The least passage in thy life may prove an occasion of sin to thee. At what a little wicket, many times, a great sin enters, we daily see. David's eye did but casually light on Bathsheba, and the good man's foot was presently in the devil's trap. Hast thou not then need to pray that God would set a guard about thy senses wherever thou goest? and to cry with him, 'Keep back mine eyes from beholding vanity?' Dinah went but to give her neighbours, 'the daughters of the land,' a visit—which was but an ordinary civility—and we may imagine that she little thought, when she went out, of playing the strumpet before she came home; yet, alas! we read how she was deflowered! What need then hast thou, before thou goest forth, to charge God with the keeping of thee, that so thou mayest be in his fear from morning till night!

Second. No passage of thy life so small wherein thou mayest not fall into some great danger. How many have been choked with their food at their own table?—received their deadly wound by a beam from their own house? Knowest thou what will be the end of any action when thou beginnest it? Joseph was sent by his father to see his brethren in the field, and neither of them thought of a longer journey; yet this proved the sad occasion of his captivity in a strange land. Job's servants were destroyed with lightning from heaven when they were abroad about their master's business. Where canst thou be safe if heaven's eye be not on thee? A slip of thy foot as thou walkest, or a trip of thy horse as thou ridest, may break thy bones, yea thy neck. O what need, then, of a God to make thy path plain before thee! It is he that 'preserveth man and beast;' and canst thou have faith to expect his protection when thou hast not a heart to bespeak it in thy humble prayers at his hand? What reason hath God to care for thy safety, who carest no more for his honour?

Second. To pray always may import as much as to pray in all conditions; that is, in prosperity as well as in adversity. So Calvin takes it: omni tempore perinde valet, atque tam prosperis quâm adversis—it holds at all times equally, and as much in prosperity as in adversity. Indeed, when God doth afflict, he puts an especial season for prayer into our hands; but when he enlargeth our state, he doth not discharge us of the duty, as if we might then lay it aside, as the traveller doth his cloak when the weather is warm. Prayer is not a winter garment. It is then to be warn indeed; but not to be left off in the summer of prosperity. If you would find some at prayer you must stay till it thunders and lightens; not go to them except it be in a storm or tempest. These are like some birds that are never heard to cry or make a noise but in or against foul weather. This is not to pray always; not to serve God, but to serve ourselves of God; to visit God, not as a friend for love of his company, but as a mere beggar for relief of our present necessity; using prayer as that pope is said to have used preaching, for a net to compass in some mercy we want, and when the fish is got then to throw away the duty. Well, Christian, take heed of this; thou hast arguments enough to keep this duty always on its wheels, let thy condition be what it will.

[Why we should pray in all conditions.]

First. Pray in prosperity, that thou mayest speed when thou prayest in adversity. Own God now, that he may acknowledge thee then. Shall that friend be welcome to us that never gives us a visit but when he comes to borrow? This is a right beggar's trick, but not a friend's part.

Second. Pray in prosperity, to clear thyself that thou didst not pray in hypocrisy when thou wert afflicted. One prayer now will be a better evidence for thy sincerity than a whole bundle of duties performed in adversity. Colours are better discerned and distinguished by daylight than by the candle in the night. I am sure the truth and plainness of our hearts in duty will be best discovered in prosperity. In affliction, even gracious souls have scruples upon their spirits that they seek themselves. Smart and pain, they fear, makes them cry till they remember that their acquaintance with God did not begin in their affliction, but that they took delight in his company before these straits drove them to him.

Third. Pray in prosperity, that thou mayest not be ensnared by thy prosperity. Ephraim and Manasseh were brethren, and so are plenty and forgetfulness —the signification of their names. Prosperity is no friend to the memory; therefore we are cautioned so much to beware when we are full, lest then we forget God: magnus vir est cui præsens fælicitas si arrisit non irrisit (Bern.)—he is a holy man indeed whose present prosperity doth not mock and abuse him when it smiles most pleasingly on him. O how hard it is to be pleased with it and not be ensnared by it! 'Wine,' Solomon saith, 'is a mocker;' it soon puts him that is too bold with it to shame. Prosperity doth the same. A little of it makes us drunk, and then we know not what we do. This hath proved often an hour of temptation to the best of men. You shall find in Scripture the saints have got their saddest falls on the evenest ground. Noah, who had seen the whole world drowned in water, no sooner was he almost come to safe shore but himself is drowned in wine. David's heart was fixed in the wilderness; but his wanton eye rouled and wandered when upon the terrace of his palace. Health, honour, riches, and pleasures, with the rest of this world's enjoyments, they are like luscious wine. We cannot drink little of them, they are so sweet to our carnal palate; and we cannot bear much of them, because they are strong and heady, fuming up in pride and carnal confidence. Now prayer is an excellent preservative against the evil of this state.

1. As it spiritualizes our joy into thankfulness. It is carnal joy that is dreggy, and therefore soon putrefies. Now, as prayer in affliction refines the Christian's sorrow by breathing it forth into holy groans to God, whereby he is kept from sinful complaints of God and murmurings against him, thus here the Christian, by giving a spiritual vent to his joy in thanksgiving and praises to his God, is preserved from the degeneracy of carnal joy, that betrays the soul to many foul sins, if itself be not one. For this purpose it is that the apostle James cuts out this twofold channel for this double affection to run in: 'Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms,' James 5:13. As if he should say, 'Let the afflicted soul pray, that he may not murmur. Let the joyous saint sing psalms, that his joy turns not sensual.' A carnal heart can easily be merry and jocund when he prospers; the saint alone is praiseful. The psalmist, speaking of the mariners delivered from storms at sea, which threatened their wreck, saith, 'Then are they glad because they be quiet,' Psalms 107:30. But this they may be and yet not thankful. Wherefore he adds his holy option, 'O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness!'

2. By prayer the soul is led into the acquaintance of higher delights than are to be found in all his temporal enjoyments, and thereby is taken off from an inordinate valuation of them, because he knows where better are to be had. The true reason why men are puffed up with too high an opinion of worldly felicities is their ignorance of {the} spiritual.

3. Prayer is God's ordinance to sanctify our creature-comforts. Everything is 'sanctified by the word of God and prayer,' 1 Timothy 4:5. Now, this obtained, the Christian may safely drink of these streams. The unicorn hath now put in his horn to heal them; Satan shall not have such power to corrupt him in the use of them as another that bespeaks not God's blessing on them. There is a vanity and flatulency in every creature, which, if not corrected by prayer, breeds indigested humours in him that feeds on it.

Fourth. In thy prosperity, Pray to show thy dependance on God for what thou enjoyest. Thou holdest all thy mercies in capite—he that gave thee thy life holds thy soul in life. 'Thou hidst thy face,' saith David, 'and I was troubled.' Truly it is time for God to withdraw his hand when thou goest about to cut off his title. That enjoyment comes but as a guest which is not entertained by prayer. Solomon tells us of wings that our temporal mercies have. Now if anything can clip these and keep them from fleeing away, it is prayer. God would often have destroyed Israel, but Moses stood in the gap; their mercies were oft upon the wing, but that holy man's prayers stayed their flight. God's heart would not serve him to come over the back of his prayer and put that to shame. No; they shall live. But let them say, Moses' prayer begged their life. Now, if the prayer of a holy person could avail for others, and obtain a new lease for their lives, that were, many of them, none of the best; surely, then, the prayer of a saint may have great power with God for his own. Long life is promised to him that honours his earthly father. Prayer gives our heavenly Father the greatest honour. If, therefore, thou wouldst have thy life, or the life of any mercy, prolonged, forget not to pay him this tribute. Yea, would you transmit what God hath blessed you with to your posterity, the best way thou canst take is to lock thy estate up in God's hand by prayer. Whatever will thou makest, God is sure to be thy executor. Man may propose and purpose, but God disposeth. Engage him, and the care is taken for thy posterity.

Fifth. Pray now, that thou mayest outlive the loss of thy prosperity. When prayer cannot prevail to keep a temporal mercy alive with thee, yet it will have a powerful influence to keep thy heart alive when that dies. O it is sad when a man's estate and comfort are buried in the same grave together! None will bear the loss of an enjoyment so patiently as he that was exercised in prayer while he had it. When Job was in his flourishing estate, his children alive, and all his other enjoyments, then was he a great trader with God in this duty. He 'sanctified' his children every day. He did not bless himself in them, but sought the blessing of God for them; and see how comfortably he bears all: 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' The more David prayed for his child while alive the fewer tears he shed for it when it was dead.

Third. To pray always is to pray daily. When the Christian keeps a constant daily exercise of this duty, prayer is not a holiday, but everyday work: 'Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever,' Psalms 145:2. This was typified by 'the daily sacrifice,' called therefore 'the continual burnt offering,' Exodus 29:38; whereby was signified our daily need of seeking mercy at God's hands through Christ. When our Lord taught his disciples to pray, he bade them not to ask bread for a week, no, not for a morrow, but for the present day: 'Give us this day our daily bread'—plainly signifying our duty to seek our bread every day of God. This surely was also the end why God gave the manna in such a portion as should not stuff their cupboards, and furnish them with a store for a month or a week, but be a just demensum —measure and sufficient allowance for a day, that so they might be kept in a daily dependence on God, and look up to him daily who carried the key of their pantry for them. And have not we the same necessities upon us

with them? Our bodies are as weak as theirs, and cannot be preserved without a daily repast. Do we not depend on him for the bread of the day and the rest of the night? And he hath too good an opinion of his soul's constitution, who thinks it can live or thrive with yesterday's meal, without renewing his communion with God to-day. The mother would think her sucking child not well, if it should forsake the breast a whole day; so mayest thou conclude thy soul is not right, that can pass a day without craving any spiritual repast in prayer. If thy wants be not sufficient to keep the chariot of this duty on its wheels, yet the sins which thou daily renewest would drive thee every day to confess and beg pardon for them.

We are under a law not to let the sun go down upon our wrath against our brother. And dare we, who every day deserve God's wrath, let the sun go down before that controversy is taken up between God and us? In a word, every day hath its new mercies. 'His compassions fail not; they are new every morning,' Lamentations 3:23. These new mercies contract a new debt, and God hath told us the way of payment, viz. a tribute of praise. Without this, we cannot expect a sanctified use of them. He is branded by all for a profane person that eats his meat and gives not thanks. And it would be thought a ridiculous excuse, should he say he gave thanks yesterday, and that should serve for this meal also. We have more mercies every day to bless God for than what is set on our tables. We wear mercies; we breathe mercies; we walk upon mercies; our whole life is but a passage from one mercy, to be entertained by another. As one cloth is drawn, another is laid for a new feast to be set on. Now, doth God every day anoint our head with fresh oil, and shall not we crown him with new praises? I will not enter into a discourse how oft a Christian should in a day pray. At least it must be twice, i.e. morning and night. Prayer must be the key of the morning and lock of the night. We show not ourselves Christians, if we do not open our eyes with prayer when we rise, and shut them again with the same key when we lie down at night. This answers to the morning and evening sacrifice in the law, which yet was so commanded as to leave room for those other free■will offerings which their zeal might prompt them to. Pray as oft as you please besides, so that your devotions justle not with the necessary duties of your particular callings; the oftener the more welcome. We read of David's 'seven times a day.' But be sure thou dost not retrench and cut God short of thy stated hours. 'It is a good thing,' saith the psalmist, 'to give thanks unto the Lord, to shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night,' Psalms 92:1-2. God is alpha and omega. It is fit we should begin and end the day with his praise, who begins and ends it for us with his mercy.

Well, Christian, thou seest thy duty plainly laid before thee. As thou wouldst have God prosper thy labour in the day, and sweeten thy rest in the night, clasp them both together with thy morning and evening devotions. He that takes no care to set forth God's portion of time in the morning, doth not only rob God of his due, but is a thief to himself all the day after, by losing the blessing which a faithful prayer might bring from heaven on his undertakings. And he that closeth his eyes at night without prayer, lies down before his bed is made. He is like a foolish captain in a garrison, who betakes himself to his rest before he hath set the watch for the city's safeguard. God is his people's keeper; but can he expect to be kept by him, that chargeth not the divine providence with his keeping? The angels, at his command, pitch their tents about his saints' dwellings. But as the drum calls the watch together, so God looks that, by humble prayer, we should beg of him their ministry and attendance about us. I shall shut up this discourse with one caution to be observed in your daily exercise of this duty.

Caution. Beware that thy constant daily performance of this duty doth not degenerate into a lifeless formality. What we do commonly, we are prone to be but ordinary and slighty in the doing. He is a rare Christian that keeps his course in prayer, and yet grows not customary to pray of mere course. The power of religion cannot be preserved without an outward form and order observed in its exercises; and yet very hard it is not to grow formal in those duties which we are daily conversant with. Many that are very neat and nice when their holiday suit is on their back, are yet too slovenly in wearing their everyday apparel. Thus, at a fast or on a Sabbath, our hearts haply are stirred up to some solemnity and spirituality becoming the duty of prayer, as being awed with the sacredness of the time and extraordinary weight of the work; but alas! in our everyday duties we are too slighty and slovenly.

Now, set thyself, Christian, with all thy might, to keep up the life and vigour of thy spirit in thy daily approaches to God. Be as careful to set an edge on thy graces before thy prayer, as on thy stomach before thy meal. Labour to come as hungry to this duty, as to eat thy dinner and supper. Now no expedient for this like a holy watch set about thy heart in the whole course of thy life. He that watcheth his heart all day, is most likely to find it at hand and in time for prayer at night. Whereas, loose walking breeds lazy praying. Be oft in the day putting thyself in mind what work waits for thee at night. Thou art to draw near unto thy God, and this will make thee afraid of doing anything in the day that will indispose thee, or make thee fear a chide from thy God, when thou appearest before him. That of the apostle is observable: ‘If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear,’ 1 Peter 1:17. As if he had said, ‘Do you mean to pray? then look to the whole course of your walking, that it be in the fear of God, or else you will have little heart to go about that work, and as little hope that he will bid you welcome, for he judgeth all persons that pray, not only by their prayers, but by their works and walking.’

Division Second.—The Kinds of Prayer.

‘With all prayer and supplication.’ The second branch in the apostle’s directory for prayer follows, which hath respect to the kinds of prayer that are to be taken into the Christian’s exercise. As for the season, he must ‘pray always;’ so for the kinds of prayer, ‘with all prayer and supplication.’ Now, there is a double ‘all’ to be observed, as we shall make clear under two branches. First. There is all manner of prayer. Second. There is all matter of prayer.

BRANCH FIRST.

[‘All prayer’ is viewed as to diversity in manner.]

I shall begin with the first branch mentioned, viz. the modus orandi—the manner of praying: and that falls under several divisions, and distinctions. First. Prayer is sudden and ejaculatory, or composed and fixed. Second. That which is composed, is either solitary, or social—performed jointly with others. Third. Social and joint prayer is either private in the family or public in the church. Fourth. Solitary and social, private or public prayer, are either ordinary or extraordinary.

[Prayer distinguished as ejaculatory or composed.] First Distinction. Prayer is sudden and ejaculatory, or composed and fixed.

First. Sudden or ejaculatory prayer, which is nothing else but the lifting up of the soul to God upon a sudden emerged occasion, with some short but lively expression of our desires to him. Sometimes it is vocal, sometimes only groaned forth from the secret workings of a secret heart. These darts may be shot to heaven without using the tongue's bow. Such a kind of prayer that of Moses was, which rang so loud in God's ear that he asked Moses, 'Wherefore criest thou unto me?' Exodus 14:15; whereas, we read of never a word that he spake. It was no season for Moses then to retire and betake himself to the duty of prayer, in a composed and settled way, as at other times he was wont, for the enemy was at his back, and the people of Israel flocking about him, murmuring and charging him with the guilt of blood, in that he had enticed them out of Egypt to fall into such a trap, wherein they expected no other than to lose their lives, either in the sea or by the Egyptians. This no doubt made Moses presently despatch his desires to heaven by the hand of some short ejaculation, the surest and quickest post in the world, which brought him back a speedy and happy return, as you may see, ver. 16.

Thus, Nehemiah also, upon the occasion of the king's speech to him, interposeth a short prayer to God between the king's question and his answer to it: 'Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven, and I said unto the king,' &c., Nehemiah 2:4. So soon was this holy man at heaven and back again—even in a trice —without any breach of manners in making the king wait for his answer. Sometimes you have the saints forming their desires into a few smart and passionate words, which fly with a holy force from their lips to heaven, as an arrow out of a bow. Thus old Jacob, when he was despatching his sons back again to Egypt, and had with the greatest prudence provided for their journey, by furnishing them with double money, and a choice present in their hand to appease the governor of the land, that now he might engage heaven on their side, he breathes forth into this ejaculatory prayer, 'God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin,' Genesis 43:14. And David, when intelligence came that Ahithophel was of Absalom's council, let fly that dart to heaven, 'O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness,' 2 Samuel 15:31. This kind of praying David might mean when he saith, 'Seven times a day do I praise thee,' Psalms 119:164. Not as if he had seven set hours for this duty every day, as the Papists would have it, to countenance their seven canonical hours, but rather a definite number is here put for an indefinite. And so it amounts to no more than this—he did very often in a day praise God, his holy heart taking the hint of every providence to carry him to heaven on this errand of prayer and praise.

Now, to despatch this kind of prayer, I shall only, first, show why the Christian, beside his stated hours for prayer, wherein he holds more solemn commerce with God, should also visit God occasionally, and step into his presence over and anon—whatever he is about—with these ejaculatory breathings of his heart; for this is a kind of prayer that needs not interrupt the Christian, nor break any squares in his other enjoyments. Is he on a journey? He may go to heaven in these short sallies of his soul, and make no less speed in his way for them. Is he in the field at work? His plough needs not stand still for this. As the meadow is not the worse for what the bee sucks from its flowers, so neither doth a man's worldly occasions suffer any loss from that spiritual improvement which a gracious soul thus makes of them.

[Four reasons why the Christian should use ejaculatory prayers.]

Reason 1. The first reason may be taken from God, who, to show his great delight in his children's prayers, lets his door stand always wide open, that whenever we have but a heart, and will be so kind as to step in to visit him with a prayer at what hour of the day or night soever it be, we shall be welcome. Nay, he doth not only give us a liberty, but he lays it as a law upon us, to let him hear from us as oft as possibly we can, and therefore commands us to 'pray without ceasing,' 1 Thessalonians 5:17, and 'whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him,' Colossians 3:17. What do these and such like places signify, but that we should take every occasion that his Spirit and providence bring to our hand to the lifting our hearts up to him in prayer? And an we suppose that a prayer at our first setting forth in the morning, with never thinking of God any more till we come to our round for prayer at night again, will pass for a praying continually? When a father chargeth his son, that lives abroad, to let him as oft as may be hear from him, though he doth not expect a long epistle from him by every messenger that comes that way, yet he looks for some short remembrance of his duty by word of mouth, and that is accepted, till he hath more leisure to write his full mind. God bids pray continually. Now, he knows we cannot be always on our knees in the solemn performance of this duty. But, therefore, he expects to hear the oftener from us in these occasional remembrances of him—hinted to us all along the day by emerging providences—which the Holy Spirit stands ready as our messenger to convey unto him.

Reason 2. The second reason may be taken from the excellent use of ejaculatory prayers in the Christian's whole course of life.

(1.) They are of excellent use to be set against those sudden injections of Satan, which he will be darting into our minds. It were strange if the best of saints should not find the devil busy with them in this kind. None so pure whose chastity of mind this foul spirit dares not to assault. And when his temptations have once coloured our imagination, it is hard wiping them off before they soak so deep as to leave some malignant tincture on our affections. Now, when any such dart from hell is shot in at thy window, no such way to wind out of the temptation as to shoot thy darts to heaven in some holy ejaculation. Our Saviour taught his disciples the use of this weapon: 'Pray that ye enter not into temptation.' Now when thou canst not draw out the long sword of a solemn prayer, then go to the short dagger of ejaculatory prayer; and with this—if in the hand of faith—thou mayest stab thy enemy to the heart. He that at one short prayer of David could infatuate Ahithophel, an oracle for policy, can befool the devil himself, and will at thy prayer of faith. 'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan,' said Christ. It is time now for Satan to be gone, when heaven takes the alarm; as when thieves are about a house to rob it, and they within beat a drum, or give a sudden shriek to call in help, presently they flee. And if God for thy trial should not come at first call, to rid thee of these unwelcome guests, yet thy very crying out—if affectionate and cordial—will clear thee from consenting to their villainy.

(2.) They are a sovereign means to allay the Christian's affections to the world—one of the worst enemies he hath in the field against him; for it chokes the soul, thickens the Christian's spirit, and changes his very complexion. Who but dying men smell of the earth and carry its colour in their countenance? Grace dieth apace where the heart savours much of the earth. Now, prayer, what is it, but the lifting of the soul from earth to heaven? Were we oftener in a day sucking in, as it were, fresh air and new influences of grace from God, our spirits could not possibly be so much poisoned with worldly affections. When one was asked, 'Whether he did not admire the goodly

structure of a stately house?' he answered, 'No. For,' saith he, 'I have been at Rome, where more magnificent fabrics are to be seen.' Thus, when Satan presents the world's pleasures or treasures to the Christian—that he may inveigle his affections to dote on them—a gracious soul can say, 'I have been at heaven; there is not an hour in the day wherein I enjoy not better than these in communion with my God.'

Reason 3. Ejaculatory prayers keep the Christian's heart in a holy disposition for the more solemn performance of his duty. He that is so heavenly in his earthly employments will be the less worldly in his heavenly. It was a sweet speech of a dying saint, 'That he was going to change his place but not his company.' A Christian that is frequent in these ejaculations, when he goes to pray more solemnly, he goes not from the world to God, but from God to God—from a transient view of him to a more fixed; whereas, another discontinues his acquaintance with God, after his morning visit, and comes not in his company till called in by his customary performance. O! how hard a business will such a one find it to pray with a heavenly heart! What you fill the vessel with, you must expect to draw thence. If water be put in, we cannot without a miracle think to draw wine. What! art thou all day filling thy heart with earth —God not in all thy thoughts—and dost thou look to draw heaven thence at night? If you would have fire for your evening sacrifice, expect not new from heaven to be dropped, but labour to keep what is already on thine altar from going out; which thou canst not better do than by feeding it with this fuel.

Reason 4. Ejaculatory prayers are of excellent use to alleviate any great affliction that lies heavy upon soul or body. While others sit disconsolate, grinding their souls and wasting their spirits with their own anxious thoughts; these are his wings with which he flieth above his troubles, and in an instant shoots his soul to heaven, out of the din and noise of his afflictions. How can he be long uncomfortable, who, when anything begins to disquiet him, lets it not lie boking and belking in his mind—as a thorn in the flesh—but presently gives vent to it, by some heavenly meditation or heart-easing prayer to God? Those heavenly tidings which came to Job, one upon the neck of another, it was not possible for him to have stood under, had his thoughts been employed on no other subject than his affliction. But, being able to lift up his heart to God—'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord'—this one devout meditation or ejaculation gave him incomparable ease. Indeed, in afflictions that are very sharp and violent, it is no time for long discourses; the poor creature cannot hold out in a continued duty of prayer, as at another time. When the fight grows hot, and the army comes to grapple hand to hand with their enemy, they have not leisure to charge their great artillery, then their short swords do them most service. Truly thus it is in this case. The poor creature, may be, finds his body weak, and his spirit oppressed with temptations, which Satan pours like so much shot upon him, that all he can well do is to pray quick and short—now fetch a groan for the pain he feels, and then shoot a dart to heaven to call God in to his help. And blessed is the man who hath his quiver full of these arrows. We see Christ in his agony chose to pray oft, rather than long: 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine be done.' This short ejaculation he sends to heaven thrice, with some little pause of time between prayer and prayer. 'And was heard in that he feared,' Hebrews 5:7.

USE OR APPLICATION.

[Reproof to those who either do not use ejaculatory prayer at all, or not rightly.]

Use First. A reproof to those that use not this kind of prayer, or do it in a profane manner; or that use this, but neglect other kinds of prayer.

1. For reproof of those that are wholly unacquainted with ejaculatory prayer—not such a dart to be found in all their quiver. Their heart is as a bow bent indeed, and their quiver full of arrows. But all are shot beside this mark. The world is their butt; at this they let fly all their thoughts. God is so great a stranger with them, that they hardly speak to or think of him from morning to night, though they travel all day in his company. And is it not strange that God, who is so near his creature, should be so far from his thoughts? Where canst thou be, or what can thy eye light upon, that may not bring God to thy remembrance, and give thee a fair occasion to lift up thy heart to him? He is present with thee in every place and company. Thou canst use no creature, enjoy no mercy, feel no affliction, and put thy hand to no work, which will not prompt thee either to beg his counsel, seek his blessing, crave his protection, or give him praise for his gracious providence over thee. The very beast thou ridest on, could it speak—as once Balaam's ass did—would reprove thy atheism, who goest plodding on thy way, and takest no notice of him that preservest both man and beast. But God speaks once, yea twice, and brutish men perceive it not. Well may Solomon say, 'The heart of the wicked is of little worth,' when God is not in all his thoughts. What can that heart be worth, that is stuffed with that which is worth naught? at least within a while will be so? for within that moment wherein these poor wretches die, all their thoughts perish and come to nothing. Truly, though ye were so many kings and emperors, yet, if the stock of your thoughts be spent all the day long upon earthly projects—never flying so high as to lead you into communion with God—you are but like those vermin that are buried alive in some stinking dunghill. The food your souls live upon is low and base, and such must the temper of your souls also needs be.

O! how many are there in the world, whose backs are bravely clad with scarlet, while their souls embrace the dunghill—whose bellies are high fed and deliciously pampered, but their souls set at coarse fare! The body, which is the beggar, is mounted on horseback, and the soul, which is the prince, walks on foot—preferred to no higher employment than to hold her slave's stirrup—being made to bestow all his thoughts and care how to provide for that, an allowed nothing for itself. Yet these must be cried up for the only happy men in the world! Whereas, some poor creatures are to be found though their outward port and garb in the world renders them despicable—who enjoy more of heaven and true comfort, by the frequent commerce they have with God, as they are at their loom or wheel, in one day, than the other do in all their lives, for all their pomp and fanciful felicities. What account will such give to God for the expense of their thoughts, the first■born of their souls? What pity is it that strangers should devour them,—the highest improvement whereof is to send them in embassies to heaven, and to converse with God! He who gave man a countenance erect, to walk—not creep on all four, as some other creatures, with their back upon heaven and mouth to the earth—never intended his soul should stoop so below itself, and lick the dust for its food; but rather, that it should look up to God, and enjoy himself in enjoying communion with him that is the Father of spirits. If it be so bad a spectacle to behold a man bowed down through the deformities or infirmities of his body, as to go like a beast on all four, hands and feet; much more, to see a soul so crippled with ignorance and sensual affections, that it cannot look up from the earth where it lies a roveling, to converse with God its Maker.

2. It reproves those who do indeed shoot now and then to heaven some of these darts of ejaculatory prayers, but in so profane a way as makes both God and gracious men to nauseate

them. Did you never hear a vile wretch interlace his discourse with a strange medley of oaths and prayers?—rap out an oath, and then send out a vain prayer, in the midst of his carnal discourse? ‘God forgive us!’ ‘God bless us!’ ‘God be merciful to us!’ Such forms of speech many have got, and they come tumbling out when they do not mind what they say. Now, which do you think is like to get first to heaven—their oaths or their prayers? It is hard to say whether their swearing or their praying is the worst. What base and low thoughts have those wretches of the great God, to make so bold with his holy and reverent name, which should not be thought or spoken of without fear and trembling! ‘The legs of the lame are not equal, so is a parable in the mouth of fools;’ that is, it is uncomely. The name of God doth not fit a profane mouth; the discourse is not equal. One step in hell and another in heaven is too great a stride at once to be taken. To shoot one dart at God in an oath, and another to him in a prayer, what can you make of this but a toying with that which is sacred? Religion and the eye are too tender to be played with. Such prayers as these are shot out of the devil’s bow, and are never to reach heaven, except it be to bring back a curse for him that put them up.

3. A reproof to those who content themselves with this kind of prayer. They will now and then cast a transient glance upon God in a short ejaculation, but never set themselves to seek God in a more solemn way. And is this all thou canst afford? No more than to look in at God’s door, and away presently! Dost thou not think that he expects thou shouldst sometimes come to stay longer with him in a more settled communion? It is true, these occasional visits, when joined with the conscientious performance of the other, is an excellent symptom of a heavenly heart, and speaks grace to be very lively when they are frequent. As when a man between his set meals is so hungry that he must have something to stay his stomach, and yet, when dinner when dinner or supper come, can feed as heartily as if he had eaten nothing—this shows indeed the man to be healthy and strong. But, if a bit by the by takes away his stomach, that he can eat little or nothing at his ordinary meal, this is not so good a sign. Thus here: if a Christian, between his set and solemn seeking of God morning and night, finds an inward hunger upon his spirit, so strongly craving communion with God that he cannot stay till his stated hour for prayer returns, but must ever and anon be refreshing himself with the beverage of ejaculatory prayer, and then comes sharp set to duty at his ordinary set time, this speaks grace to be in statu athletico—strong and thriving; but, on the contrary, it shows a slighty and naughty spirit to make these an excuse or plea for the neglect of the other. Thou tastest, sure, little sweetness, and findest little nourishment from these, or else they would excite thy soul to hunger for further communion with God. As soon as David opened his eyes in the morning, his heart was sallying forth to God—‘When I awake I am still with thee.’ And as he walked abroad in the daytime, every occasion led him into the presence with God: ‘Seven times a day do I praise thee;’ that is, often—as it is said, The righteous fall seven times in a day. But, did these short glances of David’s heart steal from the more solemn performance of his duty? No; we find he had his set seasons also: ‘Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud,’ Psalms 55:17. Mr. Ainsworth interprets this place of solemn stated prayer; and it seems to have been the practice of more devout Jews to devote three seasons in a day for that duty. I can no more believe him to be frequent and spiritual in ejaculatory prayer who neglects the season of solemn prayer, than I can believe that he keeps every day in the week a Sabbath who neglects to keep that one which God hath appointed.

[Exhortation to the believer’s frequent use of ejaculatory prayer.]

Use Second. To the saints. Be ye excited to the frequent exercise of this duty of ejaculatory prayer. I know you are not altogether strangers to it—if you answer your name and be such as you go for; but it is a more intimate and familiar acquaintance with this kind of prayer that I would gladly lead you into. Such an art it is that, were we but skilful traders in it, we should find a blessed advance in our spiritual estate and soon have more money in our purse—grace and comfort, I mean, in our hearts—than now most Christians can show. We might, by a spiritual alchemy, turn all we touch into gold, extract heaven out of earth, and make wings of every creature and providence that meet us to help us in our flight to God. Our whole life would be—what I have read of a holy man—but one communion■day with Christ. Then neither friends nor foes, joys nor woes, callings nor recreations—or whatever else we have in this world to do with—should be able to interrupt our acquaintance with him. Whereas now, alas! everything interposeth, as an opaque body, to hide God and heaven from our eye. We who now walk—like travellers in some bottom or low swamp—with our thoughts of heaven so overtopped by the world, that we hardly get a sight of that glorious city to which we are going from morning to night—and thereby lose much of the pleasure of our journey—should then have it in a manner always before us, as a joyful prospect in our eye, to solace us in the difficulties of our pilgrimage, and make us gather up our feet more nimbly in the ways of holiness when we shall see whither they lead us. We count them pleasantly situated who live in a climate where the sun is seldom off their horizon. Truly, none have such a constant light of inward joy and peace shining upon their souls as those who are familiarly conversant with this duty. They are in sole positi—placed in the sun, as is said of the Rhodians; they stand at the best advantage of any other to have, if not a continual, yet a frequent, intercourse with God, from whom both the influences of comfort and grace also do all come. And if those trees must needs have the fairest and sweetest which stand most in the sun, then, surely, they are most likely to excel others both in comfort and grace who are most with God. Every little that the bee brings to the hive—as she flies in and out, though she stays not long on any flower—adds to the stock. Though the soul makes no long stay with God in this kind of prayer, yet the frequent reiterations thereof conduce much to the increase of its grace. Light gain, with quick returns, makes a heavy purse. Little showers, often following one upon another, plump the corn and fill the bushels. So do these short spurts—sallies of the soul to heaven—enrich and increase grace in the heart exceedingly. Now, if thou shouldst ask how thou mayest make this kind of ejaculatory prayer more familiar unto thee, take these few words of counsel:—

[Some helps to ejaculatory prayer.]

1. Help. Keep thy heart with all diligence—thy affections, I mean. The very reason why we sally out so seldom toward God in these occasional prayers is because the weight of our affections poise us another way. The bowl runs as its bias inclines, the stream flows as the fountain empties itself. If our affections be carnal, to earth we go, and God hath little of our company. Adam, it is said, ‘begat a son in his own likeness,’ Genesis 5:3, and so doth the heart of every man. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; as is the heavenly, such they also that be heavenly. Labour, therefore, to get and keep thy heart heavenly; especially look to these three affections—thy love, fear, and joy.

(1.) Thy Love. If this fire burn clear, the more of these sparks will from it mount up to God. Love is a great friend to memory. The adulterer is said to have his ‘eyes full of the harlot,’ and holy love will be as mindful of God. Such a soul will be often setting God in its view: ‘I have set the Lord always

before me,' Psalms 16:8. And by often thinking of God the heart will be enticed into desires after him. 'The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee,' Isaiah 26:8. And see what follows, 'With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early,' Isaiah 26:9. Love sets the soul on musing, and musing on praying. Meditation is prayer in bullion, prayer in the ore—soon melted and run into holy desires. The laden cloud soon drops into rain, the piece charged soon goes off when fire is put to it. A meditating soul is in proximâ potentiâ to prayer. 'While I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue, Lord, make me to know mine end,' Psalms 39:3-4. This was an ejaculatory prayer shot from his soul when in the company of the wicked.

(2.) Thy Fear. Even wicked men, thought they be great strangers to prayer, yet we shall hear them knocking at God's door in a fright; much more will a holy fear direct the Christian, upon all occasions, to lift up his heart to God. Art thou in thy calling? Fear a snare therein, and this will excite thee oft in a day to bespeak counsel of God how to behave thyself therein. Art thou in company? Fear lest thou should st do or receive hurt, and thou wilt be lifting up thy heart to him that can only keep thee from both. We cannot have a more faithful monitor to mind us of this duty than a holy fear. 'They that feared the Lord thought upon his name,' Malachi 3:16. 'At what time I am afraid,' saith David, 'I will trust in thee.' Fear makes us think where our safety lies, and leads us to our refuge. Had not Noah feared a storm the ark had not been built. Men fear no sin nor danger, and therefore God hears not of them all the day long: the ungodly world, who walk with their back upon heaven and look not up to God from morning to night. We may tell the reason—'The fear of God is not before their eyes.'

(3.) Thy joy and delight in God. O cherish this. As fear disposeth to pray, so joy to praise. Now, and not till now, the instrument of thy heart is in tune. One hint now from the providence of God, and touch from his Spirit, will set such a soul on work to bless God. Carnal men, when they are frolic and upon the merry pin, then they have their catches and songs as they sit in their house or ride on the way: how much more will the gracious soul, that walks in the sense of God's love, be often striking up his harp in holy praises to God? 'Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee,' Psalms 63:3. 'I will bless thee while I live,' Psalms 63:4. And again, 'My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips,' Psalms 63:5. See how he goes over and over again the same note. Joy can no more be hid than ointment. As that betrayeth itself by its hot and sweet perfumes, so doth holy joy make its own report in the praises it sounds forth to God. It behooves thee therefore, Christian, to be as chary and choice of thy joy as thou wouldst be of the blood in thy veins; for in this runs the spirits of praise and thanksgiving. Now, would you nourish your joy? Do it by sucking the promises—those breasts of consolation. these are a food of pure juice and strong nourishment; they soon turn into blood—joy and peace, I mean—and with this a spirit of praise must needs also grow.

2. Help. Possess thy heart with strong apprehensions of God's overruling providence in all thy enterprises, great or small; that he doth what pleaseth him in heaven and earth, so that all thy labour and toil in any business is in vain while [until] this main wheel begins to stir—his providence gives countenance to the action. O, how would this raise thy heart up to God, and send thee with many an errand into his presence! Suppose a man was going about some important business, and had him in his company that alone {which} could help or hinder the despatch of it; were it not strange that he should travel all day with him and not apply himself to this person to make him his

friend? This is thy very case, Christian. Thou and all thy affairs are at the absolute disposure of the great God, to bless or blast thee in every enterprise. If thou hast not his vote, thy business is stopped in the head. Now, this God is always in thy company, whether at home or abroad, in thy bed or at thy board. Surely thou didst believe this firmly, thou wouldst oft in a day turn thyself to him, and beg his good■will to favour thy undertaking and facilitate thy business for thee.

3. Help. Look thou compliest with the motions of the Holy Spirit. The Christian shall find him, as his remembrancer to mind him of the more solemn performance of this duty of prayer, so his monitor, to suggest many occasional meditations to his thoughts —even amidst worldly employments—as a hint that now it is a fit time to give God a visit in holy some ejaculation, by thus setting the door, as it were, open for him into God's presence. Sometimes he will be recalling a truth thou hast read or heard, a mercy thou hast received, or a sin thou hast committed. And what means he by all these but to do thee a friendly office, that by these—thy affections being stirred—thou mayest be invited to dart thy soul up to God in some ejaculation suitable to his motion? Now, take the hint he gives, and thou shalt have more of his company and help in this kind. For, as the evil spirit, where he finds welcome to his wicked suggestions, grows bold to knock oftener at that door because it is so soon opened to him; so the Holy Spirit is invited, where his motions are kindly entertained, to be more frequent in these his approaches; where was thy neglect of them may cause him to withdraw and leave thee to thy own slothful spirit. When Christ had thrice made an attempt to take away his drowsy disciples by calling them up to watch and pray, and they fell to nodding again, truly then he bids them 'sleep on.'

[Composed prayer distinguished as secret or social.]

Second Distinction. What we have called composed prayer may be distinguished as either solitary, or social—performed jointly with others. It is designated composed, because the Christian composeth himself more solemnly to the work by setting some considerable time apart from his other occasions, for his more free and full communion with God in prayer. We begin with the first of these.

First. Secret Prayer. When the Christian retireth into some secret place, free from all company, and there pours out his soul into the bosom of God, none being witness to this trade he drives with heaven but God and himself. I shall here, 1. Prove this to be a duty incumbent upon us; and, 2. Give the reasons why.

[Secret prayer a duty, and the reasons why.]

1. I shall prove secret or closet prayer to be a duty incumbent upon us. That is it is the Christian's duty secretly and solitarily to hold intercourse with God in prayer, I believe will be granted of more than practise it. Even those that are strangers to the performance thereof carry in their own bosom that which will accuse them for their neglect, except by long looking on the light, and rebelling against the same, their foolish minds be darkened and have lost all sight and sense of a deity. If any prayer be a duty, then secret prayer needs be one. This is to all the other as the carina or keel is to the ship—it bears up all the rest. If we look into the practice of Scripture saints, we shall find them all to have been great dealers with God in this trade of secret prayer. Abraham had his 'grove,' whither he retired to 'call on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God,' Genesis 21:33. Neither was Rebekah a stranger to this duty, who, upon the babes struggling in her womb, 'went to

inquire of the Lord,' Genesis 25:22, which, saith Calvin, was to pray in secret. Jacob is famous for his wrestling, as it were hand to hand, with God in the night. Holy David's life was little else, he 'gave himself to prayer,' Psalms 109:4. Allow but some time spent by him for nature's refection and the necessary occasions of his public employment—which yet came in but as a parenthesis—and you will find most of the rest laid out in meditation and prayer, as appears, Psalms 119:1-176. We have Elias at prayer under the juniper tree, Peter on the leads, Cornelius in a corner of his house; yea, our blessed Saviour—whose soul could have fasted longest without any inward impair through the want of this repast—yet none more frequent in it. Early in the morning he is praying alone, Mark 1:35, and late in the evening, Matthew 14:23. And this was his usual practice, as may be gathered from Luke 22:39 compared with Luke 21:37. Thus Christ sanctified this duty by his own example. Yea, we have a sweet promise to the due performance of it—and God doth not use to promise a reward for that work which he commandeth us not to do—but 'when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly,' Matthew 6:6. Where our Saviour takes it for granted that every child of God will be often praying to his heavenly Father; and therefore he rather encourageth them in the work he seeth them about, than commands them to it. 'I know you cannot live without prayer.' Now, when you would give God a visit, 'enter into thy closet,' &c. But why must the Christian maintain this secret intercourse with God?

2. I shall give the reasons why secret or closet prayer is incumbent upon us.

(1.) In regard of God. He hath an eye to see our secret tears, and an ear to hear our secret groans; therefore we ought to pour them out to him in secret. It is a piece of gross superstition to bind this only to place or company: 'I will,' saith the apostle, 'that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands,' &c., 1 Timothy 2:8. God is everywhere to be found, at church and at home, with our family and our closet; and therefore we are to pray everywhere. O what a comfort it is to a gracious soul, that he can never be out of God's sight or hearing, wherever he is thrown, and therefore never out of his care! for it is out of sight out of mind. This comforted holy David. His friends and kinsmen, they, alas! were afar off. He might lie upon his sick-bed, and cry till his heart ached, and not make them hear. But see how he pacifies himself in this solitude, 'Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee,' Psalms 38:9. Little thought Jacob that he had a son prisoner in Egypt, laden there with irons that entered into his soul. But he had a God that was nigh unto him all the time of his distress, and heard the cry of the poor prisoner, though his earthly father never dreamed of any such matter.

Great and rich are the returns which in Scripture we find to be sent from heaven upon the solitary adventure of the saints in this bottom. 'This poor man cried,' said David, 'and the Lord...saved him out of all his troubles,' Psalms 34:6. As if he had said, Haply you are afraid to be so bold to go alone and visit God in secret. Though you dare venture to join with others in prayer, and hope to find welcome when you go with such good company, yet you are ready to say, Will God look upon me, or my single prayer? Yes, behold me, saith David, who am newly come from his door, where I lay praying in as poor a condition, and as sad a plight, as ever beggar was at man's—a poor exile, in the midst of enemies that thirsted for my blood. Yet I—and that when I betrayed so much dastardly unbelief as to scrabble on the wall like a madman—cried, and God heard. Who then need be afraid, either from his outward straits or inward infirmities, if sincere, to go with a humble

boldness unto God? Nay, further, as God hath a pitiful eye to see when we pray in secret, so also an angry eye, that sees when we do not. I have read of a prince that would, in the evening, walk abroad in a disguise, and listen under his subjects' windows, whether they talked of him, and what they said. To be sure God's eye and ear watcheth us, 'the Lord hearkened, and heard it,' Malachi 3:16. And he that hath a book of remembrance for his saints that fear him and think upon his name, hath also a black bill for their names who shut him out of their hearts and closets. 'The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.' Though his seat be in heaven, yet his eye is on earth; and what doth he observe but whether men 'understand and seek after God?'

(2.) In regard of ourselves—the more to prove our sincerity. I do not say that to pray in secret amounts to an infallible character of sincerity—for hypocrisy may creep into our closet when the door is shut closest, as the frogs did into Pharaoh's bed-chamber. Yet this is not the hypocrite's ordinary walk. And though his heart may be naught that frequently performs secret duty, yet, to be sure, his heart cannot be good whose devotion is all spent before men, and is a mere stranger to secret communion with God; or else our Saviour, in drawing the hypocrite's picture, would not have made this to be the very cast of his countenance, 'When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues,' &c. 'But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet,' Matthew 6:5-6. The command sends us as well to the closet as to the church; and he is a hypocrite that chooseth one and neglects the other; for thereby it appears he makes conscience of neither. He likes that which may gain him the name of religious in the opinion of men, and therefore puts on a religious habit abroad, but in the meantime lives like an atheist at home. Such a one may for a time be the world's saint, but God will at last uncase him, and present him before the eyes of all the world for a hypocrite. The true lover delights to visit his friend when he may find him alone, and enjoy privacy with him; and I have read of a devout person who, when the set time for his private devotions were come, would, whatever company he was in, break from them with this handsome speech, 'I have a friend that stays for me, farewell!' It is worth parting with our best friends on earth, to enjoy communion with the God of heaven. One called his friends thieves, because they stole time from him. None worse thieves than they who rob us of our praying seasons.

(3.) In regard of the duty itself, and the influence which the holy management of it would have upon the Christian's life. This duty is a main pillar to uphold the whole frame of our spiritual building. Without this the Christian's house—as Solomon saith of the sluggard's—will drop out at the windows. That which is most necessary to keep the house standing is underground—I mean the foundation. That which keeps the man alive is the heart in his breast, that is unseen. Cease your secret communion, and you undermine your house—you stab godliness to the heart. If the tree grow not in the root, it will ere long wither in the branch. He that declines this way, can be a gainer in no other. How zealous soever he may appear, all, without this, is but a distempered heat, as when the outward parts burn but the inward chill. Such a one may pray to the quickening and comforting of others, but he will get little of either himself. The truth is, this is the first step toward apostasy. Backsliders grow first out of acquaintance with God in secret. Their delight in this duty declines by little and little. then are they less frequent in their visits. Upon which follows a casting off of the duty quite—and yet they may appear great sticklers and zealots in public ordinances. But, if they recover not what they have lost in their secret trade, they will ere long break here also.

USE OR APPLICATION.

[What communion with God in secret prayer, or the neglect of it, implies.]

Use First. Let us here admire the condescending love of God, in stooping to hold any communion with his poor creatures, while they are clad with rags of mortality, and those besmeared also with many sinful pollutions. It is not enough that in heaven, when we shall put on our robes of glory—befitting the attendance of so great a King—that then he will take us into his royal presence, and give us places with those that stand above him; but will he even now, while our garments smell of the prison, and before our grave-cloth es be quite thrown off, admit us to be so near an accession? 'What manner of love is this,' that we should now be 'called the children of God,' and as such have liberty to speak our gibberish and broken language, and that with delight to him who continually hath the praises of blessed angels and glorified saints sounding in his ears! Nay, yet more, this liberty to be indulged us, not only when we come together and make up a choir in our public worship, but in our solitary and secret addresses! That a poor creature, whenever himself hath but a heart to step aside, and give God a visit in any corner of his house, should find the arms of so great a majesty open to embrace him!—this is so stupendous that we may better admire than express it. Should we see a poor beggar speaking familiarly with a great king—who, while all his courtiers stand bare before him, takes him into his embraces, and lets him familiarly whisper in his ear —might it not draw forth our wonderment at such an act of grace from majesty to beggary? This is the glorious privilege of every saint on earth, who, when he prays, hath liberty to come up to the throne of God surrounded with glorious angels, and into his bosom to pour out his soul as freely as the child may speak to his indulgent father. O thank our good friend and brother, the Lord Jesus Christ, for this! It is he that brings us into the presence of God, and sets us before his face—as Joseph his brethren before Pharaoh. Whose face need a saint fear to look upon, that may thus boldly speak to God? Comfort thyself with this, Christian, when thou goest with thy petition to any great man on earth, and he will not be seen of thee —or such a rich kinsman, and he will not own thee —turn thy back of them both, and go to thy God, he will look on thee, and in his Son own thee for his child. Thou hast his ear that can command their heart and purse too. Jacob's prayer altered his brother's purposes, that he who meant to kill him falls on his neck to kiss him. Nehemiah had a boon to beg of the Persian king, and he goes—a carnal heart would think—the farthest way about to obtain it. He knocks first at heaven door: 'Prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man,' Nehemiah 1:11. And now to court he goes, where, behold, he finds the door open before he knocks. For the king said unto him, 'For what dost thou make request?' Nehemiah 2:4. We may, you see, open two doors with this one key. At the prayer of this holy man, God and man both give their gracious answer. The Christian surely cannot long be in want if he can but pray. As one said, the pope would never want money so long as he could hold a pen in his hand. It is but praying in faith, and the thing is done which the Christian would have. Be careful for nothing; but... let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts,' &c., Php 4:6-7. 'Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass,' Psalms 37:5. the saints' bills are received at first sight, whatever the sum is. Christ is our undertaker to see it paid; and his credit holds still in his Father's bosom, and will, to procure welcome for all his saints, even to the least and last of them that shall be found on earth.

Use Second. This blots their names from among the number of saints that were never acquainted with this duty. What! a saint, and content with what thou hast of God, in joint communion with others, at church or family, so as never to desire any privacy between God and thyself! Canst find no errand to invite thee to speak with God alone? Thou bringest thy saintship into question. When a prince passeth by in the street, then all—even strangers themselves—will come in a throng to see him. But his child thinks not this enough, but goes home with him, must live with him, and be under his eye daily. Hypocrites and profane ones will crowd into public ordinances, but a gracious soul cannot live without more retired converse with him.

Use Third. Be exhorted, O ye saints, to hold up your secret acquaintance with God. 'I am persuaded' —as Paul said to Festus in another case—that none of these things' which I have spoken concerning this duty, 'are hidden from thee,' if a saint. 'Believest thou' that this is thy duty? 'I know that thou believest.' Dost thou pray in secret? I dare not question it; the Spirit of Christ which is in thee will not suffer thee to be wholly a stranger from it. But I would provoke thee to be more abounding therein. 'These things have I written,' saith John, 'unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God,...that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God,' 1 John 5:13 —that is, that you may believe more. And these things do I now write to you that call upon the name of God in secret, that you may call oftener; and this you need, except you lived further from Satan's quarters than the rest of your brethren do. No duty more opposed by Satan or our own slothful hearts than this. The devil can allow you your church prayers, your family duties, and now and then a formal one in your closet too, and yet make his market of you. Therefore take along with you these three or four directions for your better managing thereof.

[Directions for secret prayer.]

1. Direction. Let it be your constant trade. Rolling stones gather no moss. Unstable and unconstant hearts will never excel in this or any other duty. The spirit of prayer is a grace infused, but advanced to further degrees by daily exercise. Frequency begets familiarity, and familiarity confidence. We go boldly into his house whom we often visit.

2. Direction. Let it be true secret prayer, and not have its name for naught. Take heed no noise be heard abroad of what thou dost in secret. 'Enter into thy closet,' said Christ, 'and when thou hast shut thy door, pray.' Be sure thou shuttest it so close that no wind of vainglory comes in. Rather than there should, shut the door of thy lips as well as of thy closet; God can hear though thy mouth delivers not the message. It is true, when Daniel prayed he 'opened his window,' but it was to show his faith, not his pride—that he might let the world know how little he feared their wrath, not that he coveted their praise. God curiously observes which way the eye turns, and it is a dishonour he will not bear that thou shouldst be pensioner to the world in expecting thy reward from man and not himself. Lose not God's euge —well done! for man's plaudite—applause. This is to change heaven for earth, and that is a bad bargain.

3. Direction. Be free and open. Come not to God in secret and keep thy secrets from him; speak thy very heart, and hide nothing from him. To be reserved and close is against the law of friendship. 'I have called you friends,' saith Christ, 'for all things which I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.' Is Christ so open■hearted not to conceal anything he knows for our good? and wouldst thou have any secret box in thy cabinet, that he—if thou couldst help it—should not see? Art thou confessing sins? Strip thy soul naked, and shuffle not with God. If

thou dost, it speaks one of these two things—thou hast some secret design of sin for the future; or harbourest an ill opinion of God in thy breast concerning thy past sins, as if he would not be faithful to forgive what thou art free to confess; like some prodigal child who, though his father promiseth to pay all his debts, and forgive him also, yet because the sum is vast, dares not trust his father with the whole truth, but conceals some in his confession. The first of these is not the spot of God's children; but into the latter they sometimes fall, and, for a while, may be held by Satan's policy and their own unbelief. But consider, Christian, whatever thy sin is, and how great soever, yet the way to obtain pardon is by confessing, not concealing it. Neither is it concealed from God, though thou confess it not. But God likes a confession out of thy own mouth so well, that as soon as thou dost lay open thy own shame, he hath obliged himself faithfully to cover it with the mantle of pardoning mercy. 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,' 1 John 1:9. Again, art thou making thy requests to God? carry no burden away upon thy spirit, through a foolish modesty and fear of troubling God too much, or asking too deep, so long as the promise is on thy side. Christ never complained that his saints opened their mouths, or enlarged their desires, too wide in prayer; nay, he bids his disciples open them wider, and tells them, 'they had asked nothing;' that is, nothing proportionable to the large heart in his breast to give.

4. Direction. It must be seasonable. This gives everything its beauty. (1.) Take heed that it doth not justle with public worship. The devil takes great pleasure in setting the ordinances of God at variance one against another. Some he persuades to cry up public prayer, and neglect secret; and others he would fain bring out of love with the public, by applauding the other; whereas there is room enough for both in thy Christian course. Moses, though he killed the Egyptian, yet the two Israelites, when scuffling together, he laboured to reconcile. Beware of giving Satan such an advantage as to neglect the communion of saints in the public, under a pretence of praying in thy closet. This is to set one ordinance to fight with another. They are sister ordinances, set them not at variance. Deny thy presence in the public, and thou art sure to lose God's presence in thy closet: 'He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination,' Proverbs 28:9. (2.) Look that it interferes not with thy duty in thy particular calling. As thou art to shut thy closet door to pray, so open thy shop windows for following thy calling in the world. Go into thy closet before thy shop, or else thou art an atheist; but, when thou hast been with God there, attend thy shop and calling, or else thou art a hypocrite. Thou consistest of soul and body; God divides thy employment between both. He that is not diligent in the duty he owes God concerning both, is conscientious in neither. When every part in the body hath its due nourishment distributed to it health is preserved. So here. He is the sound Christian that divides his care wisely for his spiritual state and temporal also. Sleep not away thy time for prayer in the morning, and then think thou art sufficiently excused for omitting it because thy worldly business calls thee another way. Jade not thy body with over-labouring, nor overcharge thy mind with too heavy a load of worldly cares, in the day, and then think that the weariness of the one, and discomposure of the other, will discharge thee from praying again at night. This is to make a sin thy apology for neglecting a duty.

Second. Social Prayer—that which is performed in joint communion with others. It is double. Either it is private or public—family prayer or church prayer. To this, however, we assigned a separate distinction.

[Social prayer distinguished as family prayer or church prayer.]

Third Distinction. Social and joint prayer is either private in the family or public in the church. I begin with the first—family prayer.

[Family prayer a duty incumbent on the head of the family.]

First. Social or joint prayer may be private in the family. By a family I mean a society of certain persons in mutual relation each to other, natural or civil, who live together under the domestic government of husband, master, or parent. Wherever such a family is found, it is the duty of the governor of it to set up the worship of God there, and this part of worship in particular—prayer in the family. The Jews had their family sacrifice, Exodus 12:21, which the master of the house performed at home with his family. There still remains a spiritual sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving, which every master of a family is with his household to offer up to God. The private house is the Christian's 'chapel of ease,' to worship God in daily with his company. The church began in a family, and it is upheld still by the piety of private families. If the nursery be not preserved, the orchard must needs in time decay.

Question. But the question will be, how can it be proved that family prayer is a duty?

Answer. I hope none will require an set place of Scripture commanding this in terminis—in set terms, or else not believe it a duty incumbent upon them. This were the way not only to lose this part of God's worship, but other duties also. It will trouble us to find an express word commanding us totidem verbis, or, in plain terms, to keep the Christian Sabbath, or to baptize our infant children; yet, God forbid we should, with some, shake off the ordinances upon this account. That which by necessary consequence can be deduced from Scripture, is Scripture, as well as that which is laid down in express terms. And if this will content you—which I am sure should—I will hope to give you some satisfaction.

[How it can be proved that family prayer is a duty.]

1. That general command for prayer will bring this of family prayer within the compass of our duty: 'I will therefore that men pray every where,' 1 Timothy 2:8. If 'everywhere,' then surely, saith Mr. Perkins upon this place, in our families, where God hath set us in so near relation to one another. Paul salutes the church in Aquila and Priscilla's house, Romans 16:5. And were they not a strange church who should live together without praying together?—had they deserved so high and honourable a name if they had thus shut God out of doors? This were to call them a church, as a grove is called lucus, à non lucendo—from not giving light. The Jews, when they built any of them a new house to dwell in, they were to dedicate it, Deuteronomy 20:5; and the manner of dedicating their new-built houses was with prayer, as you may see by the title of Psalms 30:1-12, penned on this occasion: 'A Psalm and Song at the dedication of David 's house.' This they did—

(1.) To express their thankfulness to God, who had given them a habitation. Indeed, it is no small mercy to have a settled place for our abode—a convenient house for ourselves and relations peaceably to dwell in; it is more than those precious saints had 'who wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth,' Hebrews 11:38; yea, than Christ himself had: 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. Matthew 8:20.

(2.) By this they were admonished to acknowledge themselves tenants to God, and that they held their houses of him, their great landlord, upon condition of doing him homage, by making their houses as so many sanctuaries for his worship while they lived in them. So Mollerus upon the place.

2. The trust which governors of families are charged with will evince it is their duty to set up prayer in their families. Every master of a family hath curam animarum—he hath the care of souls upon him as well as the minister. He is prophet, king, and priest in his own house, and from every one of these will appear this his duty.

(1.) He is a prophet, to teach and instruct his family. Wives are bid to learn at home of their husbands, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. Then sure they are to teach them at home. Parents are commanded to instruct their children, 'Ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house,' Deuteronomy 11:19. And, 'To bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,' Ephesians 6:4. Now, there is a teaching and admonition by prayer to God and praising of God, as well as in catechising of them: 'Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns,' Colossians 3:16. The master's praying with his family will teach them how to pray when by themselves. The confessions he makes, petitions he puts up, and mercies he acknowledgeth in his family duty, are an excellent means to furnish them with matter for their devotions. How comes it to pass that many servants and children, when they come to be themselves heads of families, are unable to be their relations' mouth to God in prayer—but because they have, in their minority, lived in prayerless families, and were kept in ignorance of this duty, whereby they have neither head nor heart, knowledge or affections, suitable for such a work?

(2.) He is a king in his house, to rule his family in the fear of God. As the political magistrate's duty is to set up the true worship of God in his kingdom, so he is to do it in his house. He is to say with Joshua, 'I and my house, we will serve the Lord.' Were it a sin in a prince, though he served God himself in his palace, yet if he did not set up the public worship of God in his kingdom? Surely then it is a sin the governor of a family not to set it up in his house, though he prays himself in his closet.

(3.) He is a priest in his own house, and where there is a priest there must be a sacrifice; and what sacrifice among Christians but the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and thanksgiving? Thus David, we find, went from public ordinances to private duty with his family, 'Then David returned to bless his household,' 2 Samuel 6:20; that is, saith one upon the place, he returned to worship God in private with them, and to crave a blessing from God upon them. And this hints a third particular.

3. The practice of saints in all ages hath been to have a religious care of their families. Good Joshua promised for himself and his house that they would serve the Lord. If he meant the inward worship of God, he promised more than he was able to perform in regard of his family, for he could not thrust grace into their hearts. We must therefore understand him that it should not be his fault if they did not, for he would use all means in his power to make them do so. He would set them a holy copy in his own example, and he would take care that they should not live without the worship of God in his family. We find Elisha praying with his servant, 2 Kings 4:33, master and man together—queen Esther and her maids keeping private fast in her family, Esther 4:16. Now it were uncharitable to think that she was a stranger to the ordinary exercise of this duty, who was so forward to perform the extraordinary, and put others also upon it. Surely this gracious woman did not begin her acquaintance with this duty now, and take it up only at a dead lift in her present

strait. That were a gluttonous fast, indeed, that should devour the worship of God in her family for all the year after. Cornelius' family religion is upon record, 'A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway,' Acts 10:2. Mark, he was 'a devout man, and feared God with all his house.' Fear is oft put for the worship of God. God is called 'the Fear of Isaac,' Genesis 31:53; that is, the God whom Isaac worshipped. 'Him shall ye fear, and him shall ye worship;...neither shall ye fear other gods,' 2 Kings 17:36-37; that is, ye shall not worship or pray unto them. Thus we may conceive Cornelius was a devout man, and feared God with his house. Surely he that was merciful to the poor at his door, to refresh his pinched bowels with his alms, could not be so cruel to his relations' souls within his house as to lock up his religion in a closet from them.

[Three objections to family prayer answered.]

Objection (a). But what necessity is there that a family must meet jointly to worship God together? will it not serve if every one prays for himself in his closet?

Answer. A family is a collective body. As such it owes a worship to God. It is he that 'setteth the solitary in families,' Psalms 68:6; and as their founder, will be vouched by them. 'Pour out thy fury upon the families that call not on thy name,' Jeremiah 10:25. It holds in domestic families as well as national; foe he rears up the one as well as the other. There are family sins; and these are to be confessed by the family, as national sins by the nation. There are family wants, and they require the joint supplications of the family. There are family occasions and employments, and those call for the united force of the family, to pull down a blessing upon their joint labours for the good of the whole society. 'Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.' And is it not fit that they who join in work should join in prayer for a blessing on their endeavour? There are family mercies that the whole society share in; and is it not meet that they which eat of the same feast should join in the same song of praise to the founder of it? In a word, there are judgements that may wrap up the whole family, and where all are concerned in the danger all should lend their help to prevent it—and many hand make light work. A rope twisted of many cords is stronger than those very cords would be if single; and so the prayer of many together more prevalent, because likely to be more fervent, than of the same persons severally employed in their closets —though I would not learn one to justle with the other. There is room for both; why should they fall out? Polanus (in his Syntag. de Terræmotu) tells us of a town in the territory of Berne in Switzerland, consisting of ninety houses, that was in the year 1584 destroyed by an earthquake, except the half of one house, where the master of the family was earnestly praying with his wife and children upon their bended knees to God.

Objection (b). O, but I have not abilities and gifts for such a work, and better left undone than spoiled in the doing.

Answer. No more hadst thou skill and ability for thy trade when thou wentest first to be an apprentice. Apply thy mind to the work; bind the duty upon thy conscience; search the scripture, where matter for prayer is laid up, and rules how to perform the duty. Study thy heart, and observe the state of thy family, till the sense of the sins, wants, and daily mercies thereof—which thou hast lodged in thy memory—be left warm upon thy spirit. In a word, exercise thyself frequently in secret prayer, be earnest there for his Spirit to enable thee in thy family service, and take heed of driving the Holy Spirit from thee, whose assistance thou prayest for, by sloth, worldliness, pride, or any

other course of wickedness. Then, up and be doing, and thou mayest comfortably expect God will be with thee, both to assist and accept thee in the work. Moses was sick of his employment that God called him to, and fain would have put it off with this mannerly excuse, 'I am not eloquent,...but I am of a slow speech.' But this objection was soon answered: 'And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say,' Exodus 4:11-12. His call was extraordinary, and his assistance was such. Thy call to this duty, as the head of a family, is ordinary, and so thou mayest look for ordinary assistance. Haply thou shalt never have an ability, to such a degree, with a flow of words to express thyself as some others. But let not that discourage thee. God looks not at the pomp of words and variety of expressions, but sincerity and devotion of the heart. The key opens not the door because gilt, but because fitted to the wards of the lock. Let but the matter of thy prayer be according to God's mind, holy and warrantable, and the temper of thy heart humble and fervent, and no fear but thou shalt speed. Yea, let the prayer be old—pray to■day what thou didst yesterday; be but sure to bring new affections with the old prayer, and thou shalt be friendly received into God's presence, though thou canst not on a sudden put thy requests into a new shape. God will not shut his child out of doors because he comes not every day in a new-fashioned suit.

Objection (c). Others there are who object not their own weakness as the reason of their not praying in their families, but the wickedness of others in their family. They are confident enough of their own gifts, but question others' grace, and whether they may pray with such.

Answer. I will grant there are such in thy family. But is this a ground to lay aside the worship of God? Little thinkest thou whither this principle will lead. By this principle the worship of God should not only be laid aside in most private houses but in all our public congregations also. If thou mayest not pray in thy family because a wicked person is present, then not join in prayer with any public congregation, because thou canst never be assured that they are all godly; nor must the minister pray there, for fear some wicked ones should be in the company; and so this part of divine worship must be thrown out of the church till we can find an assembly made up of all true saints; and where such a one ever was, or will be on this side of heaven, none I think is able to tell. Surely the saints in Scripture were not thus scrupulous. How oft did Christ himself pray with his disciples, though a Judas was among them! I have elsewhere, clearly I think, proved it is the duty of all, even of the wicked, to pray; and that God will never charge the act of prayer upon him as sin, but his obliquity therein; much less will he impute to thee another's sinful frame of heart with whom thou joinest in prayer. Pray thou in faith, and his unbelief shall not prejudice thy faith, nor his pride thy humility. Thou joinest with him in the duty, but hast no communion with his sin. You may as well say, if a cut■purse in the time of prayer should pick another's pocket, that all the company are guilty of his theft. How much better were it, Christian, to fear lest thou pray with a wicked heart in thy own bosom, than with a wicked person in thy family? Thou art like neither to hurt thy own soul by praying in his company, nor better his by omitting for his sake. May be, though he be carnal, yet he is outwardly complying, and how knowest thou but thy prayer—especially in his presence—may pierce his heart, and give a lift towards his conversion? Such I have heard of who have had the first sensible impression made upon their hearts in this duty of prayer. If he be not only carnal, but a mocker at the worship of God, and a disturber of the duty, better thou shouldst, with Abraham, turn such an Ishmael out of doors, than for his sake turn God out of doors by

denying him the worship due unto him.

USE OR APPLICATION.

[Reproof to those who unnecessarily throw themselves to live in families that are prayerless.]

Use First. What we have said of family prayer gives reproof to those Christians who needlessly, and upon choice, throw themselves upon such families where the worship of God is not set up. Dost thou know whither thou goest? Thou art running with Jonah from the presence of the Lord, and mayest expect a storm to be sent after thee. Haply thou art a servant, who once didst live in a godly family, where thou hadst many sweet privileges and spiritual advantages —a table spread every day for thy soul as oft as for thy body, besides some exceedings now and then of extra-ordinary duties—and thereby didst enjoy a kind of heaven upon earth; but, for a little ease in thy work, or gain in thy wages, thou hast made this unhappy change, to put thyself under the roof of those who will sooner learn thee to curse and swear than to pray; and where, by the orders kept in the family, thou canst not know a Lord's■day from a week-day, or whether there be such a thing as religious worship and invocation due to thy Maker or no. Alas, poor creature! What! wert thou even now in so green a pasture, and now wandering upon the barren heath, where nothing is to be got for thy precious soul? —where, as on the mountains of Gilboa, none of those heavenly dews fall with which thy soul was wont to be wet and watered? Truly thou art gone out of God's blessing into the warm sun. Had God, indeed, cast thee by a necessary providence on such a place, thou mightest then have hoped to keep thy spiritual plight, though wanting thy former repast; but, being thy own choice, it is to be feared thou wilt soon pine and languish in thy spiritual state. Leanness is like to shrivel up thy soul, while thou hast thy fat morsels in thy mouth. Thy spirit will grow light and poor, though thy purse may grow heavy. We shall have thee ere long complain, as Naomi, that thou 'wentest out full, but comest home empty.' How darest thou choose to dwell where God himself doth not by his gracious presence? He inhabits the praises of his people, and takes his abode in the house of prayer. And if the Holy Spirit dwells not, walks and breathes not in the house, it must needs be haunted with the evil one. Make thy stay there as short as may be. Leave the dead to dwell with the dead, atheist with atheist; thy safety will be to get among better company. Is the church so barren of godly families, that no such are to be found who will open their door to let thee in? Go inquire where such live, and offer to do the meanest office in that house, where thou mayest enjoy thy former privileges for thy soul, rather than stay where thou art. The very beasts groan to serve the wicked, whereas holy angels themselves disdain not to minister unto the saints. But haply thou wilt say, it is not thy choice, but necessity. Thou art by thy parents put apprentice to a master that is wicked, or thou livest under thy own parents' shadow, and thou canst not help it though they be profane; or with a husband whom thou didst hope, at thy choice of him, would prove a help meet to thy soul, but thou findest it otherwise; what would you have us in this case do?

1. Mourn under it as thy great affliction. Thus David did when he lived in Saul's wicked family, whose court and family, for irreligion and profaneness, he compareth to the barbarous Arabians and profane Ishmaelites, lamenting he was cooped up with such, whom, by his relation, he could not well leave, and for their wickedness he could worse bear. 'Woe is me that I sojourn in Meshech, and dwell in the tents of Kedar.'

2. Be the more in thy secret communion with God. If thou didst live with a niggard[1] who pinched thee for thy belly, wouldst thou not, though thou hadst but a penny in thy purse, lay it out for bread rather than starve? Thou hadst need have a bit the more in a corner because thou art cut short of thy daily bread in the family. Thy soul cannot live without communion with God. Take that thyself which others will not be so kind to allow thee; and, that thou mayest do this, husband all thy ends of time the better. Thou shalt thus, by God's blessing, (1.) Keep thy spiritual life and vigour; (2.) Be antidoted against the infection of that profane air thou breathest in; and, (3.) Have a vent to ease thy incumbered spirit of those griefs, reproaches, and trials thou canst not but meet with from such relations. Gracious Hannah had an adversary in the same family—Peninnah by name —who provoked her sorely, even to make her fret; but this sent her to God in prayer, and there she eased her soul of her burden.

3. Adorn thy piety to God by faithful performance of thy duty to thy relations, though they be not so good as thou desirest. Art thou a servant and thy master profane? Be thou submissive and humble, diligent and faithful. Let him see that thou darest not rob him of thy time by sloth, or wrong him in his estate by falseness—though he be a thief to thy soul by not providing for it—but dost, with thy utmost skill and strength, endeavour to discharge thy trust to him. We see too oft that the unfaithfulness and negligence of some professing servants, do set their carnal masters further off from the worship of God than before they were; yea, make them loathe the duties of religion, which otherwise they might have been won unto, till at last they come to think all profession and forwardness in the duties of piety towards God, to be but a hypocritical cloak to cover some unfaithfulness to men, and to say of their servants when they beg leave to go to a sermon, and wait on God in his ordinances, as Pharaoh of the Israelites, 'Ye are idle, ye are idle: therefore ye say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the Lord,' Exodus 5:17. Thus, as the apostle tells us, the name of God and his doctrine comes to be blasphemed by the ill behaviour of professing servants, 1 Timothy 6:1.

Again, art thou a wife, and thy husband carnal, who lives without any care of his own soul, or those under his roof? Pray the more for him because he prays not with thee. Pray thou for thy family in thy closet, though he neglects it in the house. But, with this, be sure to commend thy piety to thy husband's conscience, and make it as legible as may be to his eye, by thy meekness of wisdom in thy carriage to him, and whole conversation in thy family. A fair print invites to read the book. Religion fairly printed in thy meek and dutiful behaviour to him, and discretion in all thy affairs, how knowest thou but it may in time win him to the consideration of the excellency of religion, which makes thee so officious and faithful to him? He is an unwise angler that scares the fish he desires to take; and she an unwise Christian that, by her peevish and undutiful carriage, offends her husband, whose conversion she desires and prays for.

[Counsel to those that live in praying families.] Use Second. A word of counsel to you whom God hath planted in religious families.

1. Bless God for casting thy lot in so pleasant a seat and fruitful a soil for thy soul, where thou mayest suck in the sweet air of God's Spirit that breathes from thy godly parents or other governors at the throne of grace from day to day; that thou art not wedged into some blind atheistical family, there to live with a godless crew, among whom thou mightest have passed thy days without any knowledge of thy Maker, and with them have been involved in that curse of God

which is in the house of the wicked, and hangs like a black cloud in the threatening, ready to pour down upon the families that call not upon his name. Look round thy neighbourhood and see how many families there are who live like brutes, as in so many dark caves and dens, where none of that heavenly light is seen, from one end of the year to the other, which shines on thy face every day. What nurture and breeding should thy soul have had under the tutoring of such parents and masters, who themselves live 'without God in the world?' The queen of Sheba counted them happy that stood before Solomon, not so much that they might see his pomp, but hear his wisdom. O happy thou—if grace to know thy privilege—that thou ministerest unto a godly master, art under gracious parents, or yoked to a holy husband, from whose devout prayers, pious counsels, and Christian examples, thou mayest gain more than if they had the wealth, delicacies, and preferments of Solomon's court to confer upon thee.

2. Look you make improvement of this spiritual advantage, or else it will go worse with you than others. Rebellious Israel is told, 'They shall know that they had a prophet among them.' The meaning is, they shall know it to their cost; and so shall those that have lived in families, under such governors who went before them, and, as it were, chalked out a way to heaven by their godly example, lamenting over their precious souls so oft with their prayers and tears. If such miscarry, they shall know to their terror what families they once live in but had not a heart to prize or improve the mercy. God forbid that any of you should find the way to hell out of such doors, and force your way to damnation through such means afforded to prevent it. What will Cain answer when his father that begat him shall bear witness against him, and say, 'Lord, this wicked child of mine never learned his atheism of me. I brought him to thy worship and taught him thy fear, but he liked it not, and first proved a murderer and then an apostate. First, he behaved himself wickedly in thy service, and then ran out of thy doors and cast it quite off.' What will then the flouting wife of David—who, though of a wicked stock, was privileged with so gracious a husband—say when she shall be accused for making him her laughing■stock for his zeal in the worship of God? Or how will the wicked children of the same holy man who walked with such uprightness in his house look their godly father on the face at the great day? You, my children, said dying Mr. Bolton, dare not, I believe, meet me at the day of judgment in an unregenerate state. The weight of such holy men's prayers and admonitions will then sink their ungodly relations deeper into hell than others who drop thither out of dark and blind families.

[A word to those heads of families that have not the worship of God in their houses.]

Use Third. Unto you that are heads of families, but yet have not had a heart to set up the worship of God in them. I am afraid God hath little from you in your closets who hath none in your families. It is no breach of charity to suspect your care for your own souls that show none for your relations. If ever thou hadst been acquainted with God thyself and tasted any sweetness in secret communion with him, couldst thou thus rob thy family of so great a blessing? Could you find such a treasure, and hide it from them you love so well? Have they not souls as precious in their bosoms as thy own? Art thou not willing they should find the way to heaven as well as thyself? Yea, art thou not God's feoffee[2] in trust to take care of their souls as well as of their bodies? Dost thou owe no more to thy child and servant than to thy hog or horse? Their bodies are looked to, and wilt thou do no more for the other? How knowest thou but thy holy example in the duties of God's worship among them may leave such impressions on their hearts as shall never be worn off to their dying day? Did you never hear any, to the praise of God, acknowledge that the first turn

towards heaven they ever had was by living in such a godly family, where, with the worship of God, a savour and secret sense of the things of God did secretly steal into their hearts? Certainly were our youth more acquainted with the duties of religion in private, the minister's work would be much facilitated in the public. By this the consciences of many would be preserved tender, and so become pliable to the counsels of the word preached; whereas now the devil hath a sad advantage—from the irreligion and atheism that is in most families—to harden their hearts to such a degree as renders them almost impenetrable. It is no wonder to see that tree thrives not which stands but little in the sun; and as little wonder to see them continue profane and wicked that but once in a week come under the beams of an ordinance, and then {neither} see nor hear any more of God till the Sabbath comes about again.

Alas! how is it like the spark should then be found alive which had all along the week nothing to keep it from dying? One well compareth the public ministry to the mason that builds the house, and family governors to them that make the brick. Now, if you, by neglecting your duty, bring clay instead of brick, you make the minister's work double. The truth is, the neglect of family worship opens a wide flood■gate to let in a deluge of profaneness into the church. Thou livest now without the worship of God in thy family, and haply in a few years from under thy one hive swarms many other families, children or servants, and it is most like they will follow thy copy. Indeed, it were a wonder that they who are taught no better should do otherwise; and so irreligion is like to spread apace. When thy head is laid in the dust thy profaneness is not buried in thy grave with thee. No, thou leavest others behind to keep it alive. O how dismal is it to lay the foundation of a sin to many generations! The children unborn may rise up and curse such. If I had heard my father pray, may the child say in a dying hour, or had been led into the acquaintance of the worship of God by his example, then had not I lived like a heathen as I have done. Well, as you would not have your children and servants meet you in the other world with their mouths full of outcries and accusations—or if this, because it seems further off, dread you not, as you would not have them prove a plague and scourge to you in this world—let not your family government be irreligious. It is just that God should suffer thy servant to be unfaithful to thee in thy estate, who art so to his soul; that thy children when old should forget their duty to thee, that didst bring them up like heathens in their youth without learning them their duty to God.

[A word to those heads of families who do have the worship of God in their houses.]

Use Fourth. To you that have set up this duty in your families, a few words of counsel for the more holy management thereof.

1. Think it not enough to prove thee a saint that thou prayest in thy family; you may set up the worship of God in your house and not enthrone God in your hearts. God forbid that you should bless yourselves in this, and dub yourselves saints because of this. Alas! you are not as yet got so far as some hypocrites have gone. The duty is good, but the outward performance of it doth not demonstrate any to be so. There are many turning to hell nearer heaven than this. From the act therefore, look to the end thou proposest to thyself in it. He is a foolish archer that shoots his arrow before he hath taken his aim aright. The question God asks is, 'Dost thou at all pray to me, even to me?' Thou mayest possibly affect others with thy praying, yea, be instrumental to break their hearts by thy confessions, and refresh their spirits by the sweet expressions that flow from thee, thyself playing the hypocrite all the while. It behooves thee therefore to consider what is the weight

and spring which sets this duty agoing in thy family. Is it not to gain an opinion of being religious in others' thoughts? If so, thou playest at small game. Indeed, religion were a sorry thing if this were all to be got by it. When thou hast obtained this end it will not ease thee of one stitch of conscience, nor quench one spark of hell's tormenting fire for thee. But if this be it thou huntest after, it is a question whether thou believest there be such a place or no. these few principles well girded by faith about the loins of thy mind—that there is a God, and he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him; that heaven is prepared for the sincere, and hell gapes for the hypocrite—would be enough to set thy heart right in the duty. Though the traveller minds not much his way where he apprehends no danger, yet, when he comes to pass over a narrow bridge, where a wry step may hard his life by falling into a deep river that runs on each hand, he will surely watch his eye that is to guide his foot. This is thy case. Prayer is a solemn work as any thou canst go about in thy whole lifetime. A by■end in this may hazard thy soul as much as a wry look thy body in the other. We need do no more to lose our souls than to seek ourselves.

2. Take heed thou blottest not thy holy duties with an unholy life. If thou meanest to foul thy hands with sin's black work in the day, why dost thou wash them in the morning with prayer? It is to no purpose to begin with God and to keep the devil company all the day after. Religious orders in thy house and a disordered conversation ill agree. O! do not render the worship of God base to the thoughts of thy servants and family. Those that like the wine will yet nauseate it when brought in a cup that is nasty and unclean. The duties of God's worship command a reverence even from those that are carnal, but if performed by those that are loose and scandalous they grow fulsome. Eli's sons made the people loathe the Lord's sacrifices. By thy religious duties thou settest a fair copy. O do not write it in sinking paper. It is but a while thou art seen upon thy knees; and a little seeming zeal at thy devotion will not gild over a whole day's sinful miscarriage spent in passion, idleness, riot, or any other unholy course. It is said Christ preached with power and 'authority, not as the scribes,' Matthew 7:29. Not but that they had authority to preach, for they sat in Moses' chair; but because they lost that reverence, by not walking suitably to their doctrine, which their place and work would have given them in the consciences of their hearers. 'They said and did not,' and thereby rendered their doctrine ineffectual. If thou wouldst pray with authority and power, enforce thy duties with purity of life.

3. Preserve peace and unity in thy family. A brawling family cannot be a praying family. The apostle exhorteth husband and wife to love and unity, lest their prayers be 'hindered,' 1 Peter 3:7. Contentions in a family, they both hinder the spirit of prayer, and also the answer to our prayers.

(1.) They hinder the spirit of prayer. The Spirit of God is a Spirit of peace and love, and therefore delights not to breathe in a troubled air. The ready way to send him going is to brawl and chide. 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God,' saith the apostle, Ephesians 4:30. And that we may not, hear what is his counsel: 'Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.' When these are gone, then (and not before) look for his sweet company. You may as well dwell comfortably together with your house on fire, as pray so together when you in the house are on fire.

(2.) Contentions hinder the answer to our prayers. If we pray in anger, God cannot be pleased. 'The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.' A loud wind beats down the smoke. Our prayers are compared to incense, but they will never ascend to heaven till this storm be laid. Go to

pray in this plight, and God will bid you come when you are better agreed. The Spirit will not help in such prayers; and if the Spirit hath no hand in the inditing, Christ will have no hand in presenting the prayer. And if Christ present it not, to be sure the Father will not receive it, for ‘through him we have an access by one Spirit unto the Father,’ Ephesians 2:18.

4. Be very choice whom thou makest a member of thy family. Get, if thou canst, such under thy roof as may give a lift with thee in thy family worship. Though it be not thy sin to pray with a wicked wife and servant; yet is it thy sin to make choice of such for thy relations, if otherwise thou canst help it. Yet, alas! how little is this considered, though the blessing and comfort of the family be deeply concerned therein! A little beauty, honour, or pelf do too oft blind the eyes and bribe the judgments of those we may hope to be themselves gracious, that they can yoke themselves with such as are very unmeet to draw with them in heaven way and work. David knew that Michal came of a bad stock, but haply hoped to bring her over to comply with him in the service of God, and we see what a grievous cross she proved to him. Solomon tells us of some that trouble their own house, Proverbs 15:27. He that for carnal respects takes a wicked wife into his bosom, or servant into his family, is the man that is sure to do this. Haply when he would pray and praise God, his wife, like Job’s, will bid him curse. When he is at duty she will despise him in her heart, and make a mock of his zeal, as Michal did of David’s. And so they who, for some natural abilities they see in a servant, venture on him, though wicked and ungodly, pay dearly for it. Such often bring with them that plague of profaneness which infects the rest; so that, what they earn their masters with their hands, they rob them of with their sins, which brings the curse of God to their family. Who that is wise would build a house with timber that is on fire? If the servant thou entertainest be wicked, fire is in him that will endanger thy house. Make it therefore thy care to plant a godly family. This was David’s resolution—haply he saw the evil of his former choice: ‘Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight,’ Psalms 101:6-7. Then the music will be sweet in thy family duties, when thou canst get a consort into thy house; such whose souls are in tune for those holy services thou art to join with them in.

5. Keep a diary of thy family sins and mercies, that so neither the one may escape thy confession and humiliation, nor the other thy grateful recognition. If this were observed, we should not come with such jejune and barren hearts to the work, as now, alas! most do. Take some time to affect thy heart with both of these. The brokenness of thy heart who prayest, will conduce much towards the same disposition in those that join with thee. Nothing melts metal sooner than to pour on it {that} which is melted. The drowsy speaker prays oft the rest asleep that join with him. Take heed, therefore, of formality; this is the canker which eats out the very heart of religious duties. Remember thou art to thy family what the minister is to the public assembly. As the deadness of his heart in prayer and preaching hath a bad operation upon his people, to make them like himself, so hath thine on thy family. Thou dost not only suffer a personal loss to thyself, but wrongest the rest of thy company. As when thou wastest thy estate, thy wife, children, servants, and all fare the worse, and must pinch for it; so when thou chokest up thy heart with inordinate cares of the world, or any other way indisposest thyself by thy sinful walking for the duty of prayer, thy whole family goes by the loss with thee.

6. Observe the fittest seasons for duty in thy family, when with most freedom and the least disturbance it may be performed. In the morning take the opportunity before a throng of worldly business crowds in upon thee. In some families, I have observed, where they are in great employments, that if duty be delayed till some worldly occasions be despatched, then, either it hath been shut out, or shut up in such straits of time that the slighty slovenly manner of performing it hath proved little better than the total neglect. To prevent this disorder, it is best to forestall the world's market, betimes in the morning to set upon the duty, and offer up to God the first-fruits of the day, before our thoughts meet with a diversion. We read that the Israelites gathered their manna early 'in the morning,' and 'when the sun waxed hot it melted,' Exodus 16:21. I would wish, especially, such who have multiplicity of worldly occasions, to take their time for communion with God early, while their thoughts are more compact, before they are hot in their worldly business, lest they then find their thoughts so diffused and scattered among other businesses, as will not easily be gathered into a close and united attendance upon God in the duty. Again, when night comes, delay not the work till ye are more fit to go to your pillow than to your cushion, to sleep than to pray. If the eye sleep, the soul cannot well wake. Especially consider your servants that labour hard in the day; O do not expose them to the temptation of drowsy prayers! If our hearts took delight in the work, we would plot and contrive which would be the best time for communion with God, even as lovers do how and when they may most privately meet together.

[Public or church prayer required by God, and the reasons why.]

Second. Social or joint prayer may be public in the church. We mean by this, that prayer offered in and by the church assembled together for the worship of God. In handling of it I shall endeavour these five things, to show—1. That God requires a public worship of his people. 2. That prayer is a part of this public worship he commands. 3. Why God requires a public worship, and in particular, public prayer. 4. I shall resolve a question or two concerning public prayer. 5. I shall make some applicatory improvement of this head.

1. That God requires a public worship of his people. This word, cultus, or worship in general, is obsequium alicui præstitum juxta excellentiam ejus —worship is that honour and service which we give to anyone according to his excellency. And that is threefold—civil, moral, or divine. Civil worship is the due honour and service we pay to a person in place and power over us, as prince, father, or master. Moral, is that due reverence and respect which we pay to a person that hath any excellency of virtue or place, without authority over us. Thus we give honour and veneration both to the saints living on earth with us, and to the saints and angels in heaven. Religious or divine worship is the honour and service we give to that Being who, we believe, is the author of our beings and fountain of our happiness. Now this Being is God, and he only. To him therefore, and him alone, is religious worship due. 'Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods,' Deuteronomy 6:13-14. This religious worship of the true God comes under divers distinctions, inward and outward, private and public. The public worship of God is the present subject of our discourse—that, I mean, which the congregation performs to him in their religious assemblies, called 'the congregation of saints,' Psalms 89:5; and, 'the assembly of saints,' Psalms 89:7. The church of God on earth began in a family, and so did the worship of God. But when the number increased, the worship of God became more public: 'Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord,' Genesis 4:26; that is, they began publicly, saith Mercer. Seth and other of the religious seed began to have their holy

assemblies for the service of God (Willet, in locum). It is observable how God at the promulgation of the law on Sinai, when he first formed the Israelites into a polity, took special care for erecting a public worship to his name. That was the ‘day of their espousals,’ Jeremiah 2:2. And then he instituted a solemn form of public worship, with exact rules how it should be performed. The same care took our Lord Jesus for his gospel church, in appointing both church ordinances and officers to dispense the same.

2. Prayer is part of that religious worship which the church is to perform to God in her public assemblies, yea, a principal part, put therefore frequently for the whole, ‘The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord,’ Zechariah 8:21-22. It is a prophecy how believers in gospel times should zealously provoke one another to go to the assemblies of the church—of which Jerusalem was a type—there to pray and worship God together. ‘It is written,’ saith our Saviour, ‘My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer,’ Mark 11:17. This was partially performed when converts in the apostles’ days did flock to Jerusalem, there to worship God. Sed perfectè impletum est illud in Christi ecclesia ex omnibus gentibus collectâ&c.—it is more fully accomplished in the church of Christ, gathered out of all nations, that should keep up the worship of God in their assemblies. St. Luke forgets not to mention this of prayer amongst the other duties and offices of primitive Christians in their assemblies, ‘And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers,’ Acts 2:42. By continuing stedfast ‘in the apostles’ doctrine,’ Mr. Perkins understands their attendance on the apostles’ sermons; by ‘fellowship,’ understands their contributions to the poor, which were gathered at their assemblies, a work very fit for that place, ‘for with such sacrifices God is well pleased,’ Hebrews 13:16; by ‘breaking of bread,’ the celebration of the Lord’s supper; and by ‘prayers,’ those which they put up together in communion at their church meetings. Nor is this of prayer crowded last, because the least duty of the company, but rather because it hath a necessary influence to them all. The word and sacraments, which God useth to sanctify his people by, are themselves sanctified to us by prayer. And St. Paul, when he hath shown, 1 Timothy 1:1-20, what doctrine ministers are to preach in the church, he, 1 Timothy 2:1-15, directs them what to insist chiefly on in their public prayers: ‘I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty,’ 1 Timothy 2:1-2. This the church of Christ ever esteemed a principal part of their public worship. Tertullian, speaking of the assemblies of the church, saith, coimus in cætum et congregationem, ut ad Deum quasi manu facta precationibus ambiamus orantes, hæc vis Deo grata est—we meet in the congregation that we may by our fervent prayers environ God, as an army doth a castle, and this holy fore with which we assault heaven pleaseth him. I proceed to the third head, to give some account.

3. Why God requires a public worship or a joint service of his people in communion together, and why this particular duty of prayer.

(1.) As a free and open acknowledgment of their dependence on and allegiance to God. It is most reasonable we should own the God we serve, even in the face of the world, and not, like Nicodemites, carry our religion in a dark lantern. He is unworthy of his master’s service that is

ashamed to wear his livery, and follow him in the street with it on his back. ‘Thou hast avouched,’ saith Moses to Israel, ‘the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice. And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people,’ Deuteronomy 26:17-18. Even heathens understand this much, that they owe a free profession and public service to the god they vouch: ‘All people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever,’ Micah 4:5. Now by walking in the name of God, they mean they will invocate his name, and vouch him by a public worship, as you may see by Micah 4:1-2. And this is a gospel prophecy concerning the last days; where, by the way, we may take notice of the folly and pride of those that cast off public ordinances, and private also, from a pretence of their high attainments, leaving these duties of religion as strings for those that are yet children to be led by. This is horrible pride and ignorance to have such a high opinion of themselves. But were they so perfect as they falsely imagine themselves, and needed not any further teaching, yet ought they still to vouch God by worshipping of him? The ground from which divine worship becomes due to God, is his own infinite perfections, and our dependence on him as the author of our beings and fountain of our bliss. Hence it is, that angels and saints in heaven worship him, though in a way suitable to their glorified state. Some ordinances, indeed, fitted to the church militant on earth, shall there cease. But a worship remains: yea, it is their constant employment. Saints on earth serve God always, but cannot always worship, therefore they have stated times appointed them. Now to cast off the worship of God is to renounce God himself, and communion with his church both on earth and in heaven. ‘But ye are they that forsake the Lord, that forget my holy mountain,’ Isaiah 65:11. They did not give him his public worship, and he interprets this as a casting him off from being their God. Sometimes, I confess, the church doors are shut by persecutors, and, when this flood is up, the ways to Zion mourn; yet then we are to lament after the Lord and his ark. Holy David was no stranger to private devotions, yet could not but bewail his banishment from the public: ‘My flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary,’ Psalms 63:1-2.

(2.) To preserve love and unity in the church. God is one, and dearly loves oneness and unity among his people. The reason he gives why he would have the curtains of the tabernacle coupled together, that it might be ‘one’ tabernacle, Exodus 36:13-18. The fastening of these curtains so lovingly together for this end, that the tent might be one, signified the knitting and clasping together of the saints in love. Now, though this be effected principally by the inward operation of the Holy Spirit upon their hearts, for he alone can knit souls and knead them into one lump; yet he useth their joint communion in ordinances as a happy means through which he may convey and derive his grace that fastens them in love together. These are the ligaments that tie one member to another in this mystical body. And do we not see that Christians, like members of the natural body, take care for, and sympathize with, one another, so long as they are united in one communion? But when these ligaments are cut, communion in worship is broke; then we see one member drops from another, and little care for or love to each other is to be found among them. The apostle saw good reason to join both these in one exhortation: ‘Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,’ Hebrews 10:24-25. As if he had said, If you cannot agree to worship God one with another, you will have little love one for another. When the Jews’ staff of ‘beauty’ was cut asunder, the staff of ‘bands’ did not last long unbroken, Zechariah 11:10. Religion hath its name â religando —from binding back; it

is a strong binder. Break the beautified order of church communion, and a people will soon fall all to pieces. It is observable how endearing conversation and communion is in things of an inferior nature. Scholars that go to school together, those that board in the same house, collactanei —that suck the same milk, twins that lie together in the same belly, they have a mutual endearment of affection each to another. How influential then must church communion needs be where all these meet? —when they shall consider they go to the same public school of the ministry, sit at the same table of the sacrament, suck the same breasts of the ordinances, and lie together in the bosom, yea womb, of the same church. This was admirably seen in the primitive Christians, who, by fellowship in ordinances, were inspired with such a wonderful love to one another, that they could hardly find their hearts in their own breasts: 'All that believed were together, and had all things common; and continuing with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,' Acts 2:44, Acts 2:46. But when a breach was made in the church's communion, then love caught her cold, and grew upon Christians as divisions increased. Now one would think the cause of our disease, being so easily known, the cure should not be so hard, as, alas! at this day we find it.

(3.) For the saints' safety and defence against their enemies. Paul rejoiced at the order and stead-fastness of the Colossian saints, Colossians 2:5. Order is a military word, and denotes cohortem ordine apto conglobatam—an army compact, and cast into a fit order that every part is helpful to each other for its defence. And such an army are the saints when they stand in communion together according to divine rule. Our blessed Saviour, when departing from earth to heaven, what course took he to leave his disciples in a defensive posture after he was gone? Doth he send them home to look every one to himself? No, but to Jerusalem, there to stand as it were in a body by joint communion, Acts 1:1-26. The drop is safe in the river, lost when severed from it; the soldier safe when marching with the army, but snapped when he straggles from it. Cain, looking upon himself as an excommunicated person from the church of God, expected some great evil, as well he might, would befall him. Therefore the gracious soul, meant by the spouse, is brought in asking where the assembly of the faithful is, that joining herself to it she may be protected in a rime of danger: 'Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?' Song of Solomon 1:7.

(4.) Because of the great delight he takes in the joint prayers and praises of his people. We need not detract from the excellency of private devotions, to magnify the public prayers of the church. Both are necessary, and highly pleasing to God. Yet it is no wrong to the private devotions of a particular saint, to give the precedency to the public prayers of the church. God himself tells us he 'loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob,' Psalms 87:2. No doubt the prayers which the faithful put up to heaven from under their private roofs were very acceptable unto him; but, if a saint's single voice in prayer be so sweet to God's ear, much more the church choir—his saints' prayers in consort together. A father is glad to see any one of his children, and makes him welcome when he visits him, but much more when they come together: the greatest feast is when they all meet at his house. The public praises of the church are the emblem of heaven itself, where all the angels and saints make but one consort. There is a wonderful prevalency in the joint prayers of his people. When Peter was in prison, the church meets and prays him out of his enemies' hands. A prince will grant a petition subscribed by the hands of a whole city, which may

be he would not at the request of a private subject, and yet love him well too. There is an especial promise to public prayer, Matthew 18:20: ‘Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.’ Non dicit ero, non enim tardat vel cunctatur, sed sum jam illic, invenior præsens gratia et favore singulari, eo quod summopere me delectet hujusmodi concordia—he doth not say, I will, for he makes no delay or demur upon the business: but I am there—let them come as soon as they will—present by my special favour and grace, because this concord in prayer highly pleaseth me. It is the gloss of Lucas Brugens upon the place.

4. I come to answer a question or two concerning public prayer.

(1.) The first question is, Whether it be lawful that the public prayers of the church be performed in a language not understood by the people?

Answer. All the offices of the church, and duties performed in its worship, are to be done unto edification. This is an apostolical canon. Now, none can be edified by what he understands not, and therefore it must needs be, as Beza calls the popish Latin service, ludibrium Dei at hominis—a mocking of God and man, for to babble such prayers in the church which the people know not what they mean. ‘If I pray,’ saith the apostle, ‘in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful,’ 1 Corinthians 14:14. He means, the congregation are not the wiser for his understanding the prayer he puts up, except he could make them understand it also. We can no more be edified by another’s intellect than be saved by another’s faith. When God intended to defeat that bold attempt of those sons of pride who would needs build a tower that should vie with the heavens for height, he did no more but confound their languages that they might not understand one another’s speech, and it was done. Presently their work ceased. And as they could not build, so neither can he edify the people that understands not his speech in prayer. A dumb minister may serve the people’s turn as well as he who by his speech is a barbarian to them. For the minister’s voice is necessary in his public administrations, as Augustine saith, significandæ mentis suæ causâ, non ut Deus sed ut homines audiant, &c., —to signify his meaning, not that God may hear, for he hears those prayers which the tongue is not employed to express, but that the people may hear, and so join their votes with his to God. As the minister is to pray for them, so they to pray with him; which they are to testify by their hearty amen at the close. But this they cannot do, if we believe St. Paul, ‘How shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?’ 1 Corinthians 14:16. ‘The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth,’ saith Solomon, Proverbs 16:23; that is, he will not, as we say, suffer his tongue to run before his wit, but know what he shall speak before he sends his tongue on his errand. And surely, above all this, wisdom is to be shown in our prayers, wherein we speak not to man but God. To say amen to that prayer which we understand not—what is it but to offer the sacrifice of fools? Holy matter in prayer is the incense to be offered, the tongue is the censer; but the affections of the devout soul bring the fire to the incense before it can ascend as a sweet perfume into the nostrils of God. Now, if the intellect want light to understand what the matter of the prayer is, the affections must either be cold or wild; and wild fire is unfit to offer up the incense of prayer with. It is not enough that the praying soul be touched with some devout affections, but that these affections be suitable to the matter of the prayer, yea, arise from the sense it hath thereof.

(2.) The second question is, Whether a set form of prayer be lawful to be used in the church?

If it be unlawful, it is because, by the use of a set form in prayer, some command of God is transgressed; for where there is no law there is no transgression.

Now, it will trouble those who decry all set forms —how holy soever the matter of them be—to show any command upon Scripture record that forbids the praying by a set form, or that disallows its use either in express terms or by necessary consequence. It will be granted, yea must, that the Scripture is a perfect rule in this particular duty of God's worship, as well as in other. But among all the precepts and rules in the book of God, we find none that commands we should pray by a conceived form, and not by a set form. We are commanded who to pray to, to God, and none other, Psalms 44:20; in whose name we are to pray, 1 Timothy 2:5; Ephesians 5:20; we are bound up to the matter of our prayer, what we are to ask, 1 John 5:14; and lastly, in what manner we are to pray—we must pray 'with understanding,' John 4:22; 1 Corinthians 14:16; Hebrews 11:6; 'in faith,' James 1:6; Hebrews 11:4, with sincere fervency, Jeremiah 29:12; in a word, which comprehends all in one, we are to pray 'in the Spirit,' Ephesians 6:18; in the Holy Ghost,' Jude 1:20. Now he that can do all this need not fear but he prays lawfully, and consequently acceptably. And we confess this may be done by one that prayeth with a set form, or else we must very boldly charge many eminent saints in scripture for praying unlawfully. Who dares say that Solomon praised God unlawfully when he used the very form which David his father had penned? or, that Moses did not pray in the Spirit, because he prayed in a constant form at the setting forward of the ark, and at its being set down again? Thus you have seen what God hath prescribed to our praying acceptably; and if it had been of such dangerous consequence to have prayed by a set form, as to make our prayers abominable, would God have omitted to warn his people of it, especially when he foresaw that his churches generally in their assemblies would make use of them, as they have done for thirteen or fourteen hundred years? But may we not rather, yea undoubtedly we ought to conclude, that seeing the Lord in his word descends not to prescribe what the outward frame and order of our words in prayer should be, whether conceived ex tempore, or cast into a form beforehand—only gives general rules that all things should be done decently, that we be not rash with our mouth, or our heart hasty to utter anything before God, and such like that are applicable to both—I say we should conclude both are lawful and warrantable, the Scripture having determined neither the one way nor the other. And therefore to put religion in one, so as to condemn the other as unlawful, looks—as a learned holy pen hath it—too like superstition, seeing God himself hath laid no bond upon the conscience either way. As for the excellency of conceived prayer, wherein the devout Christian, out of the abundance of his heart, pours out his requests to God, none but a profane spirit dares open his mouth against it. But is there no way to magnify the excellency of that but by vilifying and imputing sin to the other? Alas! the evil is not in a form, but in formality; and that is a disease that may be found in him that prays with a conceived prayer. A man may pray without a form and yet not pray without formality. Though I confess he that binds himself constantly to a set form—especially in his private addresses—seems to me to be more in danger of the two, to fall under the power of that lazy distemper. But to hasten the despatch of this question—for I intend not a full discourse of this point, but would top a few heads only, which you may find more largely insisted on in many worthy treatises on this subject—I would desire those that scruple the lawfulness of all set forms, to look wishly upon those set forms of blessing, prayers, and thanksgiving that are upon scripture record, and were used by the servants of God with his approbation, and then consider whether God would prescribe or accept what is unlawful. The priests had a form of blessing the people, Numbers 6:24. Moses used, as I hinted, a form of prayer

at the remove of the ark, ‘Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee;’ and when it was set down another form, ‘Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel,’ Numbers 10:36, which very form was continued and used by David, Psalms 68:1. Asaph and his brethren had set forms of thanksgiving given them to use in their public service, ‘Then on that day David delivered first this psalm to thank the Lord into the hand of Asaph and his brethren,’ 1 Chronicles 16:7. This was the first appointed to be sung in the public service; the several parts thereof were afterwards much enlarged, as you may see by comparing Psalms 105:1-45 with the former part of the song in the place fore■quoted, and Psalms 96:1-13, with the latter part of it. At the dedication of the temple, Solomon used the very form of words in praising God which his father had penned, 2 Chronicles 7:6. Good Hezekiah commands the Levites ‘to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David,’ 2 Chronicles 29:30. This holy man no doubt was able to have poured forth extemporary praises, as it is thought he did in that prayer which he on the sudden, put up on the occasion of that railing letter sent him, 2 Kings 19:14; yet did not think it unlawful to use a form in his public administration. Yea, our blessed Saviour—an instance beyond all instances—both gave a form of prayer to his disciples, and himself disdained not to pray three several times one after another the very same form of words, ‘He left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words,’ Matthew 26:44. And that hymn which he sang with his disciples is conceived by the learned to be that portion of psalms which the Jews used at the celebration of the passover. (See Beza and Gerhard, Harmo, in locum.)

5. I come now to the fifth thing propounded in prosecution of this head of public prayer, and that is some applicatory improvement of this head.

(1.) This shows what reason the people of God, wherever they live, have to pray for good magistrates, especially kings and princes. Regna sunt hospitia ecclesiæ—as the inn is to the traveller, so kingdoms are to the church in its pilgrimage here on earth. As they are, such is its usage in the world, and entertainment that it finds. ‘Pray for kings,’ saith the apostle, ‘and all in authority; that we may lead quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty,’ 1 Timothy 2:2. By godliness he means in an especial manner the free profession of the truth and public exercise of God’s pure worship. No magistrate may hinder the saints living godly as to the embracing of the truth in their hearts and secret performance of prayer. Daniel would and could pray, do Nebuchadnezzar his worst. But princes carry the keys of the church doors at their girdles, and an shut or open them. When faithful magistrates sway the sceptre, then the ways of Zion are easy and open. When enemies to the ways and worship of God bear rule, then they mourn; church doors are shut and prison doors opened to the servants of Christ. Then the woman flees into the wilderness, and the church into private chambers, as we find in the apostles’ days, when the church was met with the door shut to pray for Peter. O, pray for kings and princes; for, as they carry the keys of the church doors, so God carries the key that opens the doors of their hearts at his pleasure.

(2.) It reproves those that turn their backs off the public worship. Now they are of two sorts—the profane atheist, the scrupulous separatist.

(a) The irreligious atheist—such who, out of a profane spirit, turn their back off the public worship of God. The Jews have a saying of one of their rabbis much in their mouths, quisquis incolit civitatem in quâ extat synagoga, et inibi non pecatur, is est qui meritò dicitur vicinus malus—he

that dwells in a city where there is a synagogue, and comes not to prayers there, he is a person that deserves the name of a bad neighbour. How many bad neighbours do we, alas! live among, who are seldom seen in the public assembly from one end of the year to the other? Many live as if they had rent the bond that was sealed at their baptism, and renounced all homage to their Maker, and would tell the world they owe him no worship. Worse brutes these are than the hog in their sty, or horse in their stable. They were made for our use, and accordingly serve us. Man was intended for the service of his Maker—a creature made for religion —by which some would define and distinguish the human nature from that of brutes, rather than by his rational faculty. Indeed, in some brutes there is a sagacity that looks something like man's discoursive faculty. But religion is a thing their nature is wholly incapable of, and therefore nothing makes man so truly a brute as irreligion. The Jewish Talmud propounds this question, Why God made man vesperâ Sabbathi?—on the evening before the Sabbath? and gives this as one reason, ut protinus intraret in præceptum—that is, God made man on the evening just before the Sabbath, that he might forthwith enter upon the observation of the command to sanctify the Sabbath, and begin his life as it were with the worship of God, which is the chief end why it was given him. May we not therefore wonder at the patience of God in suffering these ungodly wretches to live, that by casting this horrid contempt upon his worship, walk contrary to the very end of their creation? If the bells which call us to the worship of God were to give them notice of a wrestling, foot■ball, or drunken wake, O how soon should we have them flock together! But prayers and sermons they care not for. What shall we impute this irreligion and atheism of multitudes among us to? Surely it proceeds from a criminous conscience. It is said of Cain, 'He went out from the presence of the Lord,' Genesis 4:16; that is, say some interpreters, from the place where God had his church and worship, there God is especially present.

Guilt indeed makes men afraid of God. This makes them {do} what they can to wear off the thoughts of a Deity that are so troublesome to their flagitious consciences. Now, to do this, they have no other way than to shun those duties which will bring God and their sins to their remembrance. Herod was soon persuaded to cut off that head whose tongue was so bold to tell him his faults; and profane hearts are easily drawn to cast off those duties which will gall and rub hard upon their sore consciences. But that man is in a miserable case that knows no way to get ease but by throwing away the plaster that must heal his wound. Ah, poor wretches! this will not serve your turn. What though the prisoner stops his ears, and will not hear the judge pronounce the sentence against him, will that save him from the gallows? Surely no; but rather procure his being sent thither the sooner for his contempt of the court, who, had he carried himself better, and humbly begged his life at the judge's hand, might possibly have got the sentence reversed. Whether sinners will hear the word or no, come to his worship or no, God will proceed in his work. Flouting against God, and turning thy back on his worship, is not the way to prevent but hasten divine vengeance. How much better were it to make thy humble supplication to thy judge, and wait at the posts of wisdom! While men, though bad, wait on ordinances, there is hope, for they are under the means. But when they cast them off, then their ruin hastens.

(b) The scrupulous separatist—such who do not absent from the public worship out of a profane atheistical spirit, as the former, but from scruples whether they may lawfully be present at the prayers there put up, because there are some maladministrations in the performance of it, or at least {that} which they think to be such. At these they are distasted, and so withdraw. May be it is

because the duty of prayer is performed with a set form, which they conceive unlawful. This I shall waive, having spoken already to it. Or, may be it is not a form, but some passages in the form used, that offends them, and therefore they dare not be present. So that the question will be—

Question. Whether it be lawful to be present at that service, or those prayers in the congregation, that have something faulty in them? To the answering of this question, we must first distinguish of faults, all are not of a size. There are faults in a matter, and faults in the form and method, of a prayer. And faults in the matter may be either fundamental or of a less nature—such as are not fundamental or bordering thereupon; and those less faults may be generally dispersed through the prayer, that it is soured throughout with them, or only in some particular passages.

Again, we must distinguish between approving of the faults, defects, and corruptions that are in a prayer, and being present at the service of God where some things are done faultily. Now I answer, that it is lawful for a Christian to be present at those prayers wherein some things may be supposed to be faulty for outward form, yea, and also in matter, in things not fundamental nor bordering thereupon, and these not dispersed through the whole body of the prayers, but in some passages only. We may be present where God is present by his grace and favour. We may follow the Lamb safely wherever he goes. Now God doth not, for corruptions of doctrine that are remote from the foundation, or of worship in things ritual and of an inferior nature, cast off a church, and withdraw his presence from it; neither ought we. Indeed, if the foundation of doctrine be destroyed, and the worship becomes idolatrous, in that case God goes before us, and calls all the faithful after him to come out from the communion of such a church. But, where corruptions in a church are of the former nature, and such laws be not imposed by the church in their communion with it as being a necessity of approving things unlawful, the sin is not in holding communion with it, but in withdrawing from it, and that no little one either. Many things must be tolerated for maintaining peace and unity, and enjoying the worship of God, when it is not in our power to redress them. Neither doth our presence at the ordinance carry interpretatively a consent with it of all that is there done. It is one thing to tolerate and another to approve. Whoever said that all who are present in an assembly by it show their consent to every impertinent phrase in the minister's prayer, corrupt gloss, or false interpretation he makes of any text quoted in his sermon? If this were true, our Saviour led the people into a snare when he bade them beware of the leaven of the Pharisees' doctrine, yet bade them hear them preach, Matthew 23:3.

(3.) Of exhortation.

(a) Make conscience of joining with the church in her public worship. Do not think thou art left to thy liberty whether thou wilt or not, but bind it upon thy conscience as a duty, for so indeed it is. You think it is the minister's duty to dispense ordinances. Surely then it is your duty to attend on them. He might as well pray for you at home as come to church and not find his people there. Is there a woe to him if he doth not provide food for your souls, and none for you if you come not to partake of it? How can you reasonably think so? And when you come, think not you are time enough there if you get to the sermon, though you miss the prayers, which should prepare you for the word and sanctify the word to you. It is not the way to profit by one ordinance to neglect another. The minister may preach, but God must teach thee to profit. If God opens not thy understanding to conceive of, and thy heart to conceive by, the word thou hearest, no fruit will come of it. Now prayer is the key to open God's heart, as his Spirit the key to open thine.

(b) Take heed how thou comest to, and behavest thyself, as in other parts of public worship, so especially in prayer. [1.] How thou comest to public worship: take heed thou comest not in thy filthiness, I mean, that thou regard not iniquity in thy heart. Wash and then pray. So David resolves, “I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar,’—alluding to the priests, that went to the laver before they approached with their sacrifice to the altar, Exodus 40:1-38. It was counted a great presumption in one that durst come near his prince with a stinking breath. O what a bold act then is it to draw near to the great God with any sin upon thee! This is sure to make thy breath in prayer stink, and render thee for it abominable to him. [2.] How thou behavest thyself in the duty; be sure it be with a holy reverence—with an inward reverence and also an outward reverence.

We are to believe in the duty of worship with an inward reverence. God is called ‘the Fear’ of his people, because he is reverenced by them in their approaches to him. ‘Fear’ is put for the whole worship of God, because no part of it is to be done without a holy trembling. This, as the quaver to the music, gives a grace and acceptableness both to our prayers and praises also: ‘Serve the Lord with fear, rejoice with trembling.’ Now, to fill thee with awful[3] thoughts of God, labour to set up a right notion of God in thy mind as infinitely glorious in holiness, majesty, and power. Irreverence is the product of low thoughts we have of a person, which makes it impossible that an ignorant soul should truly reverence God —how humble soever his outward posture is—because he knows not what God is. A prince in a disguise is not known, and therefore not entertained, when he comes, as when he appears in his royal majesty. The saints use to awe their hearts into a reverence of God in prayer by revolving his titles of majesty in their thoughts, Psalms 89:6-7.

We are to believe in the duty of worship with an outward reverence. God is a Spirit, yet will have the reverence of our body as well as spirit, for both are his, and especially in the public. A prince would not like a rude behaviour from his servant in his bedchamber where none besides himself is witness to it, but much less will he bear it in his presence■chamber, as he sits on his throne before many of his subjects. Now, the fittest gesture of body in public prayer to express our reverence is kneeling: ‘Come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord,’ Psalms 95:6. So Paul, taking his leave of the elders of Ephesus, kneeled and prayed with them all, Acts 20:36. And all the Christians at Tyrus, accompanying Paul to the ship with their wives and children, ‘kneeled down on the shore, and prayed,’ Acts 21:5. Where that cannot be done, they should stand—if debility of nature hinder not. As for sitting we do not find it commended in Scripture as a praying posture; neither have the churches of Christ judged it so: sedentem orare extra disciplinam est, saith Tertullian—to pray sitting is not according to the church’s order. As for that, 2 Samuel 7:18, David ‘sat before the Lord,’ it may be read, he abode or stayed before the Lord. So the word in other places is taken; as Genesis 27:44; Leviticus 14:8; 1 Samuel 1:22.

Again, in the duty of worship we are to exercise attention and intention of mind, that we may go along with the minister by our devout affections, and witness our consent to the prayers put up with our hearty amen at the end of them, 1 Chronicles 16:36; Nehemiah 8:6; 1 Corinthians 14:16. Else indeed, we are as a broken string in a consort, that speaks not with the rest, and thereby discomposeth the harmony.

[The several kinds of prayer distinguished as ordinary or extraordinary.]

Fourth Distinction. Solitary and social, private and public prayer, are either ordinary or extraordinary. For the development of this distinction I shall endeavour to answer these five questions: —First. What extraordinary prayer is. Second. By whom it is to be performed. Third. What are the special seasons wherein we are to take it up. Fourth. Why extraordinary prayer is superadded to ordinary. Fifth. What counsel or direction may be given for the acceptable and successful performance of this duty.

[The nature of extraordinary prayer.] Question First. What is extraordinary prayer?

Answer. Prayer may be called extraordinary in a double respect: 1. In regard of the time set apart for the performance of it. 2. In regard of its adjunct.

1. Prayer may be called extraordinary in regard of the time set apart for the performance of it. Then it is extraordinary when some more than ordinary portion of time is set apart and devoted to this work. Thus we find Jacob wrestling till break of day, Genesis 32:1-32, and Joshua with the elders of Israel till eventide; the one probably spending the night, the other the day, in this duty. And Israel, in their war with Benjamin, 'wept and sat there before the Lord that day till even,' Judges 20:26. We find Daniel many days together in prayer, Daniel 10:12.

2. Prayer may be called extraordinary in regard of its adjunct. Then prayer is extraordinary when fasting is joined to the duty of prayer. Now, fasting is a religious abstinence, whereby we forbear the use of all earthly comforts in the time set apart for this duty —so far as necessity and decency will permit—the more to afflict our souls and enforce our prayers; as,

(1.) A forbearing of food, whether meat or drink, Esther 4:16; Jonah 3:7. From this the whole action is called a fast, which imports not a sober use of food—for this we are at all times bound to observe—but a total abstinence, if necessity of nature, through some debility and infirmity, doth not require otherwise. For, in this case, the less duty must yield to the greater —the end of fasting being to help us in prayer, which it doth not when nature faints under it; for the soul cannot fly if the wings of our bodily spirits flag.

(2.) All costly apparel and ornaments of the body. Gaudy rich clothes on a fast-day do no better than a light trimming on a mourning suit: 'They mourned: and no man did put on him his ornaments,' Exodus 33:4. And this was by God's own command; 'for the Lord had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel,' that they 'put off their ornaments,' Exodus 33:5. In a word, all carnal mirth, music, perfumes, and whatever might recreate and delight the senses, are to be forborne upon this extraordinary occasion. See Daniel 6:18; Daniel 10:2-3. For, though abstinence from food, with the other severities imposed on the outward man, be not in themselves acts of worship, nor intrinsical to the nature of prayer, yet are they required in the extraordinary performance of this duty by way of adjuvancy to it, and they have a reference to spiritual ends.

(a) By this abstinence we acknowledge our unworthiness to enjoy such comforts, and that God may justly take from us what for a time we voluntarily deny ourselves of.

(b) We express by our outward abstinence and fasting, the strength and vehemency of those inward affections which are to be exerted in extraordinary prayer. Men use to signify the violent passions of their soul by forbearing the repast and delights of the body. Is it a passion of grief one is oppressed with? you will see him oft forsake his food. Thus David: 'My heart is smitten, and

withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread,' Psalms 102:4. Is it fear that possesseth the heart with the apprehension of some great danger impending and approaching? you will have such a one refuse his wonted repast. So the mariners did in the sea■storm, Acts 27:1-44. Is it anger that vexeth a man? Ahab was deep in his passion upon the denial of Naboth's vineyard, and he throws himself on his bed and will not eat, 1 Kings 21:1-29. Is it desire of compassing any great design that the head and heart is taken up and transported with? such a one will not allow himself time for his meal. 'Cursed be the man,' saith Saul, 'that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies,' 1 Samuel 14:24. We find the smith, in the prophet, so earnest in his idolatrous work, that he pincheth himself with hunger, and he will not eat though his strength faileth, nor drink though he be ready to faint, Isaiah 44:12. Now, in extraordinary prayer the Christian is to have all these affections in a spiritual and holy manner wound up to the highest key possible. He is to have a deep sorrow for sin, fear and trembling at the judgments of God feared to come for them; a holy anger and indignation against sin, with a vehement desire to be revenged on it for the dishonour it hath cast upon God; and, in a word, a longing desire to make his peace with God and recover his favour, which sin hath unhappily deprived him of. Now, because the excess of natural passions discovers itself this way, even to afflict their very bodies, and makes them deny themselves that which nature most craves, therefore God will have his people in their extraordinary humiliations do the same, that nature may not put grace to shame.

(c) By this abstinence, especially from food, we tame and subdue our wanton flesh, and so come to have a greater advantage for mortifying those sensual lusts that receive the fuel which feeds and inflames them from the flesh. A full body is a mellow soil for such lusts to grow rank in. Cum carne nutriuntur vita carnis—the lusts of the flesh are nourished when the body is pampered. If the body be kept high, carnal lusts will not easily be kept low. What else made Paul to beat down his body by fasting and watching, in which he was often, but that he might have the fuller blow at those lusts that received strength from it? Nostrum est lasciviens jumentum frænis inediæ subjugare, ut sessorem Spiritum sanctum moderato et composito portet incessu (Hieronymus, Epist. 9)—indeed a pampered horse is most like to cast his rider; and the Holy Spirit, using the body as well as soul in the work, this bridle of fasting is of excellent use to curb it.

(d) This abstinence from food is required to sharpen our spirits, and enliven the powers of the soul in this duty, which are pressed down and thickened, as I may so say, with the charge of the stomach. A full body makes a heavy eye and drowsy spirits; and what can then be expected but yawning prayers, especially when we are to continue longer than ordinary at the work?

[By whom extraordinary prayer is to be performed.] Question Second. Who are they that are called to the practice of this duty of extraordinary prayer?

Answer. The command comprehends all that by age are enabled to understand the nature of this duty when any extraordinary occasion occurs for the performance of the same. We find it required of a church and nation. It is the magistrate's duty, when there is a national cause, to call his subjects to the public practice of this duty, Joel 2:15; Nehemiah 9:1; and he that refuseth his call thereunto makes himself an offender both to God and man, Leviticus 23:29. It reacheth to private families. Esther and her maidens keep a religious fast together Esther 4:16. Yea, it is a duty bound upon single persons, and reacheth to the secret closet, 'But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in

secret,' Matthew 6:17-18. The circumstances of the place show it is meant of a secret fast in the closet. We have them all together in one place, 'The land shall mourn;' there is a national fast: every family apart, the family of the house of David, and the house of Nathan apart,' &c.; there is domestical: 'and their wives apart;' Zechariah 12:12; there is a personal secret fast in the closet.

Objection. But is not this extraordinary prayer and fasting too austere and rigid a duty for gospel times? Where doth Christ command his people in gospel times to macerate their bodies with such severities as these? Joy and praise better becomes the freedom and liberty of the gospel.

Objection met. Such wild stuff hath been vented by some in our late loose times. These are a new sort of saints, which the world hath hardly been acquainted with before these unhappy days of ours; they would be in heaven before their time, and leave no tears on their cheeks for Christ at death to wipe away. If any of these could live without sin and suffering they would have some colour for their plea; though even then, being yet 'in the body,' they should owe those tears to their brethren which they need not drop for themselves. The apostle I am sure bids us 'weep with those that weep,' and mourn with those that mourn, Romans 12:15. Thus did Nehemiah fast for his afflicted brethren in Jerusalem when his own affairs were prosperous enough—being surrounded with the beams of the Persian emperor's favour. But there are none in mortal flesh free from sin or exempted from sorrow; and therefore a mourning habit may sometimes become the best of saints on earth. 'They that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses,' Matthew 11:8.

Glorified saints, who dwell in the King of heaven's court, are always clad with joy, but this on earth is the saint's holiday suit. As he hath now and then his rejoicing days, so he wants not his days for mourning. 'The days will come,' saith our Saviour of his disciples, 'when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast,' Matthew 9:15—and surely they lived in gospel times. If these merry professors had been by Paul to see him how he beat down his body and chastised himself with fasting, they surely would have chid him for his pains, and thought him ignorant of his Christian liberty. The worst I wish these poor deluded souls is, that they who are so much for joy here meet with no mourning in another world. It is but an ill sign when men quarrel with a duty for its strictness, and slip the yoke off their necks because the wanton flesh saith it is uneasy. These are like Ephraim, whom the prophet compares to a heifer 'that loveth to tread out the corn,' but not to plough. That is hard hungry work. A thanksgiving day, that brings a feast with it. This they like, and are content it should pass for a gospel duty. But a day of prayer and fasting, wherein they are to pinch their carcass a little, this will not go down. But is there no feast except that it goes down the throat and fills the belly? Certainly this blessed duty deserves not the ill name it hath given unto it by men of sensual spirits. It is indeed to carnal wretches a heavy yoke, a tedious work. As the milk kine carried the ark went bellowing for their calves that were taken from them, so do these in a fast■day after their employments and enjoyments of the world, from which they are for that time restrained. Alas! poor creatures, as the ark was nothing but a burden to the kine, so the duty is no other to them. But the true saint, that knows what ease his poor heart feels in exonerating his conscience by humble confession of sin, what sweet satisfaction his soul meets with in communion with God, and what faith and inward peace he carries away with him from the duty, will give you another character of this ordinance than so. He will tell you he had rather be fasting with God that feasting at a king's table. What saint had not rather be fasting on the mount with Moses, than eating and playing with the carnal Israelites below the hill? Who would not miss a meal for his body, to satiate his soul with those delights that the presence of God in such an ordinance affords?

Who would not take pleasure in mourning and weeping for sin, to have the tears he shed dried up with kisses from his Saviour's mouth? It is indeed to him that stands sucking of the bush—I mean the external part of the duty—a dry sapless service; but to him that is taken into the wine■cellar, and there drinks full draughts of the love of God, it is a most sweet soul-ravishing ordinance. The lower exterior part of the duty, like the bottom of Jacob's ladder, stands on the earth, and leaves the creature on the earth also where it found him—for 'bodily exercise profiteth little;' but the top and spiritual part of it reacheth to heaven, and mounts the gracious soul thither, even unto bosom communion with God. There is as much difference between a saint and a hypocrite or carnal soul in this duty, as there is between a thief locked up with his keeper in a prison, and a scholar locking up himself in his study to read some book that he is greatly delighted with; to the one it is a grievous burden, to the other an incomparable pleasure.

[The seasons for extraordinary prayer.]

Question Third. What are the special seasons wherein the Christian is to take up the practice of this duty of extraordinary prayer?

Answer. I answer, in general, any extraordinary occasion, as it emergeth in the course of providence in the Christian's life. This kind of prayer is not of constant use, as ordinary prayer is; this is food, that physic. And it were absurd to be taking physic all the year long; which shows the folly of the Papists in their fasts, which are holden at set times, whether affairs be prosperous or not prosperous, ordinary or extraordinary. I would not be thought here to speak against set fasts; we have had our monthly fasts, but the extraordinary cause for which they were appointed continued. But to instance in a few special seasons wherein the Christian hath a fit occasion to make use of this extraordinary duty.

Season 1. When the Christian is to set upon any more than ordinary enterprise, wherein he may meet with great difficulty or danger, and the issue whereof will be a great mercy or affliction. Now is a fit season to take up this extraordinary duty, as an excellent means whereby all mountains of intervening difficulties may be levelled, and his undertaking be crowned with happy success. Thus Esther, before she adventured upon that heroic attempt of going uncalled into the king's presence to beg the life of her people, given to the butchery and slaughter by the king's seal at bloody Haman's request—an action that carried death and danger on the face of it—she first goes to God by fasting and prayer, and gets all the auxiliary forces of others' prayers she can, and, attended with this convoy, she, against the Persian law, presents herself before the king, and speeds; for instead of losing her own life, which was forfeited by the law for this attempt, she reverseth the unjust judgment passed upon the life of her people, and recoils it upon the head of him that laid the plot. Prayer had so unlocked and opened the king's heart that she hath but what she asks at the king's hands. No such engine to facilitate and carry on any great design to its desired end as this of extraordinary prayer. Who could have believed that Ezra and his company of pilgrims should all get safe from Babylon to Jerusalem, being so generally hated everywhere? Now what stratagem doth this leader of his people use to secure his passage and escape the fury of his enemies? Doth he desire a band of the Persian king to be their guard? No; he hath gloried so much of that God they served, that he is ashamed the king should think now he was not willing to cast himself upon his protection; but he goes to fasting and prayer, Ezra 8:21. Then they take their march, and find the way all along cleared before them, Ezra 8:31. Our blessed Saviour hath sanctified this duty for

this end in his own holy example, who, when to choose and send forth the twelve to preach the gospel, that they may speed the better in their embassy, he sends them forth under the conduct of prayer, and to that end spends the preceding night himself in prayer, Luke 6:12-13. Now, though every Christian is not called forth, or likely to be in all his life, to such great and public enterprises as some others are, yet if he will observe the several passages of his more private employments and turns of providence in the course of his life, he shall find many such actions occur as give him a fair hint to make use of this duty. Haply thou art to enter upon a calling, or, in the calling thou art, meetest with many difficulties and temptations. Thou hast a long journey or dangerous voyage to take; thou hast to do with a subtle potent adversary, though thy cause be good, yet like to outwitted or overborne. Here is a fair errand put into thy mouth to go before the Lord for counsel, assistance, and protection. May be thou hast children, and these are to be disposed of into callings or new relations; and is not this a great undertaking wherein tou hast a great adventure going in their bottom? Will not the issue that depends on this great change of their condition lay the foundation of much grief or joy to thee? Yet how slighty are many herein, as if it were of little more importance to marry a child than it is to put off a horse or cow at a fair! Few matches are, alas! thus made in heaven—I mean by solemn prayer engaging God in the business. Abraham's servant puts many parents to shame—he hard at prayer for success in his journey when sent to take a wife for his master's son, and not they for their children. But I wonder not that they who propound low and carnal ends to themselves in such enterprises, should forget by prayer both to ask his counsel in the match, or invite him to offer his blessing at the wedding.

Season 2. When the Christian is in the dark concerning any truth, and cannot satisfy his judgment by humble and diligent inquiry he hath made after it. Now is a fit season to take up this extraordinary duty as an excellent means to be led into the knowledge of the mind of God therein. Prayer is the proper key to unlock God's heart, and he alone can open our understandings and satisfy our scruples. This course Daniel took, and got more understanding by his fasting and prayer than by all his study, for a messenger is sent from heaven to 'give him skill and understanding,' Daniel 9:20-23, and again, Daniel 10:12. In both he sped. And the angel is careful to let him know that it was his extraordinary praying that procured this extraordinary favour, and also how acceptable his motion was, by the easy access and quick despatch it found with God; and therefore tells him in both, that he had no sooner set upon this course of afflicting his soul but he was heard, and the messenger ordered to give him an answer to his prayer. Surely prayer hath not lost its credit in heaven, but is now as welcome to God as ever; and though an angel be not the messenger to bring the saint an answer, yet he shall have it by as sure and more honourable hand—even the Holy Spirit, whose office is to lead his people into truth. Thus Cornelius, Acts 10:1-48, came to be instructed in the mystery of the gospel, upon his extraordinary seeking of God by fasting and prayer. It is very probable this good man in those divided times, wherein he saw many zealous for the old way of Jewish worship, and others preach up an new way, stood in some doubt what to do; and this might stir him up by fasting and prayer to ask counsel, and beg further light, of God, to direct him in the way of truth, as may seem by the tenor of the message sent him from God in the vision while he was at prayer, which bade him send to Joppa 'for one Simon, whose surname is Peter,...and he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do,' Acts 10:5-6. And certainly, in our divided times, wherein there is so much difference in judgment, had there been less wrangling among ourselves, and more wrestling with God for his teaching Spirit, we had been in a fairer way to find the door of truth, which so many are yet groping for. The way of

controversies, and contentious disputes raise this dust, and blow it most into their eyes that gallop fastest in it, so that they miss the truth, which humble souls find upon their knees at the throne of grace. When the apostles were quarrelling, then they got nothing from Christ but a chiding, Luke 22:24, &c.; but when they were praying together earnestly, then he sent the Spirit to teach them, Acts 2:1-47.

Season 3. When the Christian is under any great affliction. Now is a fit season if he be able for the work. ‘Is any among you afflicted? let him pray,’ James 5:13. That is, let him then be more than ordinary in this duty; for he must, yea will, if a Christian, pray where he is not afflicted as well as when he is. But the meaning is, he must now pray after an extraordinary manner; he must now pray with more vehemency; for, though in all our addresses to God, we are to express the lively workings of our hearts to him, without which our prayers are unsavoury (cold prayers ever find cold welcome); yet God expects, and it always hath been the care of, holy men in their extraordinary applications to this duty of prayer, to wind up their affections to a pitch higher than ordinary, having the advantage of some special occasion to help them thereunto. Look upon them in some great strait and affliction, and you shall find them exceeding themselves, and put upon them a prince-like spirit. So Jacob behaved himself in prayer, Genesis 32:28. As a prince fighting in the field for his crown and kingdom, he wrestled with the angel, who was no other than God himself; that is, he strained as it were, every vein in his heart, and put forth his whole might in prayer, as a wrestler would do that grapples with a potent adversary. Moses is so transported in zeal for Israel, when a dismal cloud of wrath impended them for their idolatry, that he offers rather to die upon the place, than to go down the mount and not carry the joyful news of a pardon with him, Exodus 32:32. And Nehemiah, when he had been afflicting his soul and praying before the Lord, it was with such vehemency that the anguish of his spirit looked out at his eyes, and left a mark of sorrow upon his very countenance, which his prince could observe as he waited on him.

Again, in affliction we are called to pray, as more intensively, so more extensively; I mean longer and oftener. Thus I find that ¦6J,<,FJ,D@< BD@F0b>"J@ of our Saviour, rendered by Lucas Brugensis and others, prolixius orabat—he prayed longer, that is, he spent more time than ordinary in it. Thrice one after another we find him at it, Matthew 26:44. His agony was great and the waves of his affliction violent, and therefore he doubles, yea trebles, his prayer with deep sighs and strong cries to his Father. Nature never strains so to its utmost, as when it is oppressed; then temples work, lungs heave, and heart pants; so in affliction the spirit of prayer should be increased and intended.

Season 4. When the Christian is buffeted with any temptation, or overpowered with a corruption, and cannot, with the use of ordinary means, quench the one or master and mortify the other. If the short dagger of ordinary prayer will not reach the heart of a lust, then it is time to draw out this long sword of extraordinary prayer upon it. There is a ‘kind’ of devils, our Saviour tells us, that ‘goes not out but by prayer and fasting,’ Matthew 17:21. You know the occasion of this speech was that complaint of one concerning his lunatic son, ‘I brought him to thy disciples and they could not cure him.’ Thus some poor souls complain they have come to the word preached so long, in their daily prayers begged power over such a lust, resolved against it many a time, and none of these means could cure it; what can they now do more? Here thou art told. Bring thy condition to Christ in this solemn ordinance of prayer and fasting; this hath at last been the happy means to strengthen many a poor Christian to be avenged on those spiritual enemies which have outbraved all the

former, and like Samson to pull down the devil's house upon his head.

Season 5. When sin doth abound more than ordinary in the times and places we live in. Sinning times have ever been the saints' praying times. This sent Ezra with a heavy heart to confess the sin of his people, and to bewail their abominations before the Lord, Ezra 9:1-15. And Jeremiah tells the wicked rout of his degenerate age that his 'should weep in secret places for their pride,' Jeremiah 13:17. Indeed sometimes sin comes to such a height and insolence, that this is almost all the godly can do, to get into a corner and bewail the general pollutions of the present age; as he told Luther, abi, frater, in cellam et dic miserere Domine—go, brother, into a cell and bewail. 'If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?' Psalms 11:3. Such dismal days of national confusion our eyes have seen, when foundations of government were destroyed, and all hurled into a military confusion. When it is thus with a people, what can the righteous do? Yes, this they may, and should do, 'fast and pray.' There is yet a God in heaven to be sought to, when a people's deliverance is thrown beyond the help of human policy or power. Now is the fit time to make their appeal to God, as the words following hint, 'The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven,' ver. 4; in which words God is presented sitting in heaven as a temple, for their encouragement, I conceive, in such a desperate state of affairs, to direct their prayers thither for deliverance. And certainly this hath been the engine that hath been above any instrumental to screw up this poor nation again, and set it upon the foundation of that lawful government from which it was so dangerously slid.

Season 6. To name no more, times of great expectation are times for extraordinary prayer. When the people of God have been big with expectation of great mercies approaching, then have they been more abounding in prayer. As the cocks crow thickest towards break of day, so the saints, the nearer they have apprehended the accomplishment of promises made to his church, the more instant they use to be in prayer. When a woman with child her reckoning is near out, then she desires her midwife to be at hand. And prayer hath had the name of old for its excellent usefulness to obstetricate mercies. 'The children are come to the birth,' saith good Hezekiah; and then he desires the help of the prophet's prayer for the fair delivery of it: 'Lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left,' Isaiah 37:3-4. When Daniel the prophet had learned by study that the happy period of the seventy years' captivity, bound upon the Jews' neck for their sin, was now at hand, Daniel 9:1, then in an extraordinary manner he sets himself to pray and afflict his soul before the Lord. And we have reason to hope that spiritual Babylon—Rome, I mean—is not long■lived; it is high time therefore that the saints should fall more earnestly than ever to dig her grave for her by their prayers.

[The reasons for extraordinary prayer.]

Question Fourth. But why is extraordinary prayer to be superadded by the Christian to his ordinary exercise of it in his daily course?

Answer 1. Extraordinary prayer is superadded in obedience to the command of God. He commands not only that we should 'pray always,' but 'with all prayer' also, and extraordinary prayer is one kind among the rest. And let none of us say it is not enough to pray once or twice every day, but we must upon some occasions devote a whole day also, to the damage of calling and family? O what niggards would some be towards God, were they left free to devote what time they thought fit for his worship? This cavil sounds too like that of Judas: 'To what purpose is this

waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor,' Matthew 26:8-9. 'But this he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief.' Truly so, when I hear some carnal wretches cry out against this waste of time in praying and fasting—'how much might the improvement of that time, if laid out in their callings, have advantaged their families, wives, and children'—I am ready to think it is not because they have such a care of their relations as they pretend (for they who grudge a day for prayer can throw, some of them, many away at the ale-house or in idleness), but they carry thievish hearts in their bosoms, which love to rob God of his due, and care not how little service they put him off with. Is he a loyal subject that pays the ordinary tribute to his prince, but, if occasion of state requires a subsidy, refuseth this, or doth it grudgingly? God's commands are none of them, no not this which carries some outward severity on it, so grievous, that any should need to groan or grumble under them. Those yokes—duties and commands, I mean—whose outside seem most hard have the softest lining within. What seem harder than suffering? and yet when are the saints fuller of heaven's joy? What duty more austere than this of fasting and afflicting our souls? and yet in the breast of this lion, that scares sensual wretches, the Christian finds the sweetest honey-comb of inward comforts. Temple-work is sure to be well paid if well done; though it be never so little work in his house, God will not have it done gratis. None shall kindle a fire on his altar for naught. And therefore he takes it in great disdain at their hands who durst say, 'What profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?' Malachi 3:14. Whereas the fault was not in the duty, but in themselves, that they got no more by it. As if a naughty servant should bring himself by his riot and excess to poverty, and then give out a hard master hath undone him.

Answer 2. It is superadded to comport with the providence of God, by a suitable return of duty to his actings and dispensations towards us. When God is extraordinary in his providence, he expects his people should be more than ordinary in seeking of him. What else means that of the prophet? 'Thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel,' Amos 4:12. Here God alarms them by his extraordinary proceedings intended against them, to take the hint of this warning, and apply themselves speedily to the solemn practice of repentance and humbling their souls, as a suitable posture to meet God in, and keep off the storm of his wrath now gathering against them. Is it not high time for a nation to betake them to their defensive arms when a mighty host is marching against them? So, Isaiah 26:20-21, 'Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee,' &c. Here he sends his people to their chambers and closets, that they may, by afflicting their souls and fervent prayers, find a hiding in the day of his indignation. And why must they do thus? 'For behold the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity,' Isaiah 26:21. The rising of God out of his place imports some notable enterprise he is about to do; and when the master riseth, it is not manners for the servant to sit still, but to rise also and prepare to follow him where he goes. God takes special notice how we behave ourselves and comport with is dispensations of judgment or mercy, 'In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning;' Isaiah 22:12, that is, he called them by the voice of his providence as well as his prophets, the nature of which was such, that had not their lusts bunged up their ears and made them deaf, they could not but hear and understand that now was the time, if ever, that God expected to see them in sackcloth and tears humbling their souls before him. Now see how heinously he takes their security and profane slighting of his providence, 'And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the

Lord of hosts,' Isaiah 22:14. Few sins more provoke God than this. 'Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up,' Psalms 28:5. So, 'And thou...O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this,' Daniel 5:22. This lost him his life and kingdom, as the contrary saved Ahab's for a time, though it was not so sincere as it ought. A temporal humiliation got him a temporal benefit.

Answer 3. It is superadded for the great influence that this extraordinary duty solemnly performed would have upon our whole life and course of godliness. To keep the body healthful requires not only daily food, but now and the physic also; for in the soundest constitution, and that advantaged with the best care and temperance, there will, in time, such a quantity of superfluous humours gather, that nature without help cannot digest. And truly the temper of the soul is as infirm and needs as much tending as the body. Ordinary prayer is the saint's food. He can as little miss the constant returns of it as his usual meals. But extraordinary is his physic, to clear and discharge his soul of those distempers which it contracts, and cannot conquer by the use of ordinary means; as also to advance and heighten the Christian's graces unto a further degree of strength and activity. As God hath, in his wise providence, ordered one star of great influence to be at a certain season of the year in conjunction with the sun, for the more effectual ripening of the harvest in these colder parts of the world; so hath he, in the same wisdom, appointed for the Christian's spiritual advantage and help in this cold climate of the world, that this solemn duty should now and then be taken into conjunction with our ordinary exercise of devotion; for want of which it is that many ripen slower both in their graces and comforts than some of their fellow-saints who sit often under the influences of this powerful quickening ordinance.

[Directions for extraordinary prayer.]

Question Fifth. What counsel or direction may be given to the acceptable and successful performance of this solemn duty?

Answer. I come now to shut up my discourse on this point, in answering this last question. A serious necessary one it is, for indeed it is an edge■tool of excellent use, but dangerous in his hand that knows not how to use it. Like some physic, if it doth not purge it poisons. In the same fat soil where the corn is best the weeds also are rankest. Neither grace nor sin grow to such a height anywhere as in those that converse much with this solemn ordinance. And therefore, as they who are in a ship upon a swift stream had need the more look to the steerage of it, because they will be carried amain either to their port or wreck; so have they to be reason to be very careful in the managery of this service, the issue whereof cannot be ordinary because the duty is extraordinary. Now the counsel or direction to be given must necessarily be divided into these three general heads. 1. Some preparatory direction before the duty. 2. Something to be observed in the performance of the duty. 3. Something after the despatch of it. The city cannot be safe unless the whole line be kept. It is all one whether the enemy breaks in at the front flank or rear of an army; or whether the ship be taken at sea, or sink in the haven when the voyage is over.

[What is needful before extraordinary prayer.]

1. Requisite. Some preparatory direction before the duty. Now there is a double preparation requisite —the one more remote, the other immediate; or, if you please, habitual preparation and actual.

(1.) There is a remote and habitual preparation, of great use to the performance of this solemn duty of extraordinary prayer. It lies in this, to look, Christian, that thou showest a conscionable care in thy daily walking, and the constant exercise of this duty in thy ordinary daily offices of devotion, or else thou art like to make but bad work when thou comest to engage in the extraordinary.

(a) Thy neglect in the ordinary duty will exceedingly indispose thee for the extraordinary. Who would take a foggy horse out of the pasture to run a race? In extraordinary prayer the soul is to be put on her full speed, all her powers to strained to their utmost ability, and to continue long in the work also. Is he fit for so swift and long a race, whose soul is not kept in breath by the daily exercise of ordinary prayer, but lets his graces, if he hath any, to be choked up with sloth or formality? The more any member is used, the stronger it is. The right hand, which is our working hand, hath more activity than the left, that is used less. A weakness will certainly invade the powers of thy lazy soul, which, though thou perceivest not as thou sittest in thy chair of sloth, will appear when thou risest, and thinkest to go forth in any solemn duty, as thou wert wont to do; then thou wilt find, with Samson, that thou hast lost thy strength in the lap of sloth and negligence. As fasting is too strong for new bottles, so it is too sweet wine for to be put into fusty and mouldy ones. Now the only way to keep a bottle or cask sweet, is to not let it stand long empty without any liquor in it.

(b) As it will indispose thee for this solemn duty, so it is a bad symptom concerning thy spiritual state itself, which is worse than the former. Grace works uniformly, and discovers a comely proportion in its actings. Haply you may see the son of a prince on some high day in richer and more glorious apparel than on another day that is ordinary; but you shall never find him in sordid, ragged, and beggarly clothes. Still he will be clad as becomes a king's son. Possibly, yea, it is likely, that you may see the Christian come forth, in an extraordinary day and duty, with more enlargement of affections in prayer, and all his graces raised to a higher glory in their actings, than ordinary, but you shall never find him with his robe of grace laid aside. Still the true saint will declare his high birth by his everyday course. He will not live in the neglect of ordinary duties, and cast off communion with God, in his daily walking. O, it is the brand of a hypocrite to have his devotion come by fits, and, like a drift of snow, to lie thick in one place and none in another; to seem for zeal like angels at a time and live like atheists many weeks after. Surely grace acts more evenly and is never so unlike itself. It is ill living in that miser's house who hath never any good meat on his table but when he makes a feast, and that is very seldom; or with him that upon an occasion hath a day of prayer, but starves himself and family, or pinches them in their daily fare. Well, never think of meddling with this extraordinary duty till thou inurest thyself to the ordinary exercise of prayer, and takest more care in thy daily walking with God.

(2.) There is more close and immediate preparation required, and this I call actual preparation. It is true, indeed, he that is conscientious and careful in the ordinary exercises of religion, hath a great advantage of him that either neglects them or is loose in them, for his heart must needs stand in a nearer disposition to this extraordinary service than the other—as he that is up and hath his clothes on, is more ready to go on his master's errand than he that is asleep in his bed. Yet, besides this care in our daily walking, there needs some further pains to be taken with his heart to raise it unto such a frame as may comport with this solemn service. The neat housewife, though she endeavours to keep her house clean, yet, against some good time, as they call it, she is more than ordinary curious in washing her rooms, and scouring her vessels, that they might not only be

clean but bright; and so should the Christian. Now is the time for thee to scour off the dust thou contractest in thy daily course, and to brighten thy graces unto a further glory that appears in thy everyday walking, to do which will cost pains and require time. The Christian is like some heavy birds, as the bustard and others, that cannot get upon the wing without a run of a furlong or two; or a great bell that takes some time to the raising of it. Now, meditation is the great instrument thou art to use in this preparatory work. Allow thyself some considerable portion of time, before the day of extraordinary prayer, for thy retirement, wherein thou mayest converse most privately with thy own heart. This cannot be done in a crowd, neither must it be left to the time of engaging in the extraordinary duty. We cannot do both duties together. The husbandman cannot whet his scythe and cut grass at once. Betake thyself therefore to thy closet, and in the first place call thy thoughts off the world, and as much as is possible clear thy soul of all that is foreign to the work thou art about; this is the wiping of the table■book before we can write anything well on it. Now the more effectually to gather in thy heart to a holy seriousness, and compact thy thoughts together, it were expedient for thee at first to lay before thee the grand importance of the approaching service. Thou art going to stand before the great God, and that very near in an extraordinary duty, wherein thou wilt either sanctify or profane his reverend in a high degree, and accordingly art to expect his love or wrath in some choice blessing or dreadful curse, to be the issue and result of thy undertaking! Gird the loins of thy mind with some such awful apprehensions as these. As natural fear makes the spirits retire from the outward parts of the body to the heart, so this holy fear of miscarrying in so solemn a duty would be a means to call thy thoughts from all exterior carnal objects, and fix them upon the duty in hand; 'In thy fear will I worship,' Psalms 5:7. Such will the print on the wax be as the sculpture is on the seal. If the fear of God be deeply engraven on thy heart, there is no doubt but it will make a suitable impression on the duty thou performest. Well, now the court is set and silence commanded, a few particulars I shall propound for thy thoughts to go upon in this preparatory work.

[Three preparatory directions.]

First. Examine thy soul, what end thou propoundest to thyself in the intended service of extraordinary prayer. None but a child or a fool will run before he knows what is his errand. The end is that which a wise man looks to before he sets his hand to any work, and the more weighty the enterprise is the more necessary this is.

1. Consider, if the end thou propoundest be evil, the duty cannot be good, because thy heart is not sincere in it. The sincerity of the heart discovers itself in the mark it sets up and end it aims at in a duty, not in the external performance of it. The thief and the honest traveller may be found riding in the same road, but they have different aims therein, and this distinguisheth them. Thus the saint and hypocrite join in the same duty, shoot as it were the same bow, but their eye takes not the same aim, and therefore the arrows meet not in the same butt. The prayers of one are rejected as abominable, and the other graciously accepted. Who more seemingly devout than the captive Jews that kept up a fast for seventy years together? yet God gives them but little thanks for their pains, because their end was not right: 'When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?' Zechariah 7:5. The faster a man gallops, if he be out of his way, it is the worse. Zeal is the best or worst thing in a duty. If the end be right, O it is excellent! but if wrong, stark naught. And it is no easy thing to propound a right end. The eye must be set right in the head before it can look right. If the piece be

wrong made it will never carry the bullet straight to the mark. A false heart—and every carnal heart is such—cannot have a true end.

2. Consider that your endeavour in the duty will bear proportion, and be commensurate, to the end you propound therein. If your end be low, your endeavour will be no more than to reach that end; as he that intends to build a little cottage contents himself with ordinary stuff, clay and thatch; but he that designs some stately palace provides more precious materials. Thus David was very curious in the materials he laid aside for the temple: 'For the palace,' saith he, 'is not for man, but for the Lord God.' Therefore he 'prepared with all his might gold and silver,' &c., 1 Chronicles 29:1-3. The hypocrite's ends in a fast are low and base—his credit with men, carnal profit, and the like. Accordingly, his endeavour is laid out on the external duty—a demure countenance, devout posture, and such expressions in prayer as may most take with those that hear him, and this is all he looks at. But the gracious soul saith with David, This palace I build, this duty I perform, 'is not for man, but for the Lord God,' and therefore his chief care is to provide more precious materials—a broken heart for sin in his confessions, faith and fervency in his petitions, love and thankfulness in his acknowledgments of mercies received.

Question. But when is an evil end propounded in this duty?

Answer. The end we propound may be evil, either intrinsically, when the thing we aim at is evil in its own nature, or else from some irregularity in placing it too high or low in our aim.

(1.) The ends that are intrinsically evil. To name two,

(a) When a person or a people shall fast and pray to cover and more sleightily carry on any wicked enterprise. This is a horrid evil, a monstrous abomination. What is this but to hang out the sign of an angel at the door, that they may play the devil within the less suspected? Yet, such deep hypocrisy hath the heart of man discovered, that it dare come and lay its cockatrice egg under the very wing of God, and make use of this solemn ordinance as an expedient to hatch their wicked designs. The fox, they say, when hard put to it, will, to save himself, fall in among the dogs, and hunt among them as one of their company. Thus the hypocrite, the better to conceal his wicked projects, will run among the saints, and make as loud a cry in this duty and others as the best of them all. It is the devil's old trick, and he hath learned it his instruments, to wrap up wicked plots in the gilded covers of God's ordinances. What plotting and counterplotting was there between Shechem the son of Hamor and Simeon and Levi? and the expedient both used to accomplish their designs was an ordinance of God. The one hopes by submitting to it to hook into his hands the whole estate of Jacob's family —'shall not their substance be ours?' and the other persuades them to it that when they were sore they might butcher them without resistance. Absalom, that he might better play the traitor against his father, begs leave to pay his vow at Hebron. Jezebel sets her trap for Naboth, and that he may the more surely fall into her clutches, she croucheth and humbleth herself even before God in a fast. And the demure Pharisee, who bragged so much of his fasting, our Saviour was bold to tell him it was to 'devour the widows' houses.' But, as the father hath it, manducant in terris quod apud inferos digerunt—they devour on earth those morsels that will lie heavy on their stomachs in hell to be digesting to eternity. Thus the hypocrite, like antichrist, sits in the temple of God, and there commits his execrable abominations, turning a house of prayer into a den of thieves. O tremble at this great wickedness! It gives a crimson tincture to a sin when it is committed under the disguise of religion.

(b) When a person thinks by fasting and prayer to satisfy God for his sin, or merit any favour at the hands of God. This is wicked and abominable, and as contrary to the nature of prayer as buying is to begging. ‘The poor,’ saith Solomon, ‘useth entreaties,’ Proverbs 18:23. ‘Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer, but I would make supplication to my judge,’ Job 9:15. We cannot have the benefit of the throne of grace till we quit our legal plea. Christ indeed pleads as righteous, and therefore desires what he asks for us as just, because he hath paid for it; but we pray as sinners, and therefore crave all as mercy, yea, though we plead Christ’s merit, because he is the greatest and freest gift of all other. Yet, such is the pride of man’s heart, that he had rather play the merchant, and truck his duties for God’s blessings, than be thought to receive them gratis. This was the temper of the carnal Jews. They thought to pacify God for their sin, as Jacob his angry brother, with the droves and flocks of duties which they presented him with, and thought their services undervalued when they were not accepted for good payment. Hence their bold expostulating the case with the Lord, ‘Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?’ Isaiah 58:3. Such a high opinion they had of themselves. O take heed of this: pride turns an ordinance into an idol. God accepts our fasts and prayers when used for humiliation, but abhors them when we bring them for our justification. The Pharisee lost himself by his proud brags how oft he fasted, while the poor publican got the prize by a humble confession of his sin, Luke 18:1-43. He that thinks to wash his face with puddle water, instead of making it clean will leave it fouler. Truly our best tears are not over clean, and can they make us clean that need themselves to be washed? Holy Job durst not rely on his purity: ‘If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me. For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment,’ Job 9:30-32.

(2.) The end may be, though not intrinsically evil, yet evil from some irregularity in misplacing it; as when we make that our ultimate end which should only be our subordinate end in the duty. That which would be lawful standing in its proper place, becomes sinful when the ultimate end is crowded down to make room for that. The glory of God is to be the ultimate end, not only in every duty of worship, but in all our common actions also, even to eating and drinking. Those low actions are to be elevated to this high end, 1 Corinthians 10:31. And good reason he should be our utmost end from whom we received our beginning. All things are of him, and therefore fit they should be to him. The river-water empties itself into the bosom of the sea from whence it flows. Now, if we are to have so high an end in our lowest actions, then surely in our highest; and such are acts of worship, in which we have immediately to do with God, and are thence called priests, ‘to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ,’ 1 Peter 2:5. There is indeed another end also for which ordinances are appointed, viz. to conduit-pipes for conveying all kind of blessings from God unto us; but this is an inferior end, and to be subordinated to the former, or else we make the glory of God an underling to our particular good, which God will not endure. Possibly we are in some great affliction. This sets us to prayer for deliverance. Thus far we keep our way. But then we turn aside when our deliverance is more regarded by us than his glory. This is to set the subject in his prince’s chair; uti Deo ut fruamur mundo—to make use of God that we may enjoy the creature. Beware of this. Whatever we prefer in our desires above the glory of God is an idol-worship by us. The heart can engrave as well as the hand, and an idol in the heart is as bad as one set up in the house.

Question. But how may I find whether the glory of God, or the particular good thing I pray for, be that which I make my chief end in duty?

Answer. It may be discovered two ways: (a) By thy carriage in prayer. (b) By thy carriage after prayer.

(a) By the carriage of thy heart in prayer. If the glory of God be chiefly aimed at by thee, this will give a tincture to the whole duty, and be influential into every part of it; thou wilt suit thy requests to this end. For, as there is a secret force from the arm that draws the bow impressed on the arrow which carries it to the mark aimed at by the shooter, so there is a secret power which carries the soul out in duty to act suitably to the end he chiefly propounds and desires to obtain; for no man would willingly obstruct and hinder what above all he wisheth for. We will suppose pardon of sin is the mercy thou prayest for. Now if thou desirest sincerely the glory of God as well as this mercy, yea, above it, this will direct thee in thy confession of sin to afflict thy soul more for the dishonour thou hast by it reflected on God than the wrath thou hast incurred thyself. So in thy petition, thou darest not beg thy pardon on terms that were dishonourable for God to give it on, but will desire the mercy in such a way as his glory may be both secured and advanced. Now God cannot pardon the sin of an impenitent wretch that holds still the love and liking of his lust without infinite wrong to his glorious name. And therefore, if his glory be so high in thy eye as thou sayest, thou wilt cry as earnestly for his sanctifying grace as for pardoning mercy, and not merely because thou canst not have pardon without it—as a sick man desires a bitter potion to save his life, not that he loves it—but because by it thou shalt be fitted to glorify him.

(b) It may be discovered by thy carriage after duty, and that in two particulars: when the thing prayed for is obtained, and also when denied. When the mercy prayed for is obtained. If thou didst chiefly aim at the glory of God in begging it, thy chief care will be to lay it out for his glory now thou hast it; whereas he that aimed at himself in praying for it, will as little regard God in the using of it as he did in begging it. It is natural for things to resolve into their principles. The child that Hannah obtained of God she dedicates unto the Lord—and why? but because this was her end in praying for him, 1 Samuel 1:11 compared with 1 Samuel 1:28. When David's prayer is heard, and he delivered, mark what his resolve from this is, 'I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living,' Psalms 116:9. And again, 'O Lord, truly I am thy servant,...thou hast loosed my bonds,' ver. 16. He returns the mercy to God by improving it for him in a holy life. How can we think he aimed at the glory of God in praying for health that runs away from God as soon as he is set upon his legs? or, in praying for wealth, that lays it out upon his lusts?

Again, when the thing prayed for is denied. He that aims sincerely at God's glory in prayer for a mercy—I speak now of such mercies as are but conditionally promised—he will cheerfully submit to the will of God in a denial thereof, because God can in such petitions glorify himself by denying as well as granting them. David prayed and fasted for the life of his sick child. It dies notwithstanding. Now, does this denial make him fall out with God? is he clamorous and discontent? No, it raiseth no storm in his heart or lowering weather in his countenance to hinder him in the service of God. He washeth his tears from his blubbered cheeks, changes his apparel, and goes cheerfully into the house of God and worshippeth, 2 Samuel 12:20, so powerfully did the will of God determine his will. Thus, as the heavenly bodies are by the primum mobile carried contrary to their particular inclination, so grace in a saint overrules his natural affection, and carries

him into a compliance with the will of God when it crosseth his own. Our blessed Saviour had natural affections, which made him pray the bitter cup of his passion might, if possible, pass from him; yet not so but he was willing to take a denial, and therefore desires his Father to glorify himself, though it were by taking away his life, John 12:27-28.

Second. The second thing thou art to do, having fixed thy end right, is to make a private search into thy heart and life, whereby thou mayest be enabled more fully and feelingly to lay open thy condition before the Lord. Now there are three heads of inquiry thou art to go upon: 1. For the sins thou hast committed. 2. For the mercies thou hast received. 3. For the wants thou liest under.

[Three heads of inquiry in searching into our heart and life.]

1. For the sins thou hast committed. The great business of a fast lies in the practice of repentance, and this cannot be done without a narrow scrutiny of the heart: ‘Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord,’ Lamentations 3:40. The thief must be found before he can be tried, and tried before he is condemned and executed. Some sins no doubt may be taken and apprehended with little pains; but if thou beest true to God and thy own soul, thou wouldst not willingly let any of the company escape. How canst thou expect pardon for any that desirest not justice on all? and how canst thou say thou desirest justice on those sins which thou endeavourest not to apprehend? That constable that having a hue and cry brought him for a pack of thieves, and lets any get away rather than he will rise to search for them, shows his zeal to justice is little. I do not say thou wilt be able to find all. It is enough if by thy diligence thou givest proof of thy sincerity that thou wouldst not conceal any. Set thyself, therefore, in good earnest to the work. Beset thy heart and life round, as men would do a wood where murderers are lodged. Hunt back to the several stages of thy life, youth, and riper years all the capacities and relations thou hast stood in, thy calling general and particular—every place where thou hast lived, and thy behaviour in them. Bid memory bring in its old records, and read over what passages are there written. Call conscience in to depose what it knows concerning thee, and encourage it to speak freely without mincing the matter: and take heed thou dost not snib this witness, as some corrupt judges use when they would favour a bad cause, or give it secret instructions—as David did Joab—to deal gently with thee. Be willing to have thy condition opened fully and all thy coverings turned up. For many times foul designs are his with fair pretences, as the barrels of powder in the parliament cellar under coals and billets. Now, when thou hast gone as far as thou canst, begging Heaven’s help in the thing, to search and try thee whether there be any further wickedness that thou hast not found out, then burden thy soul, judge thyself for them with all the brokenness of heart thou canst get, justifying God in the sentence denounced against thee for them. God will have thee lay thy neck on the block, though he means not to give the stroke. In a word, labour in thy meditations to give every sin its due accent, and suffer thy thoughts to dwell on them till thou findest the fire of thy indignation kindle in thy heart against them, yea, flame forth into such a holy zeal against them as makes thee put thyself under an oath to endeavour their utter ruin and destruction. Then thou art fit to beg thy own life when thou hast vowed the death of thy sins.

2. For the mercies thou hast received. Thou hast these—at least the most signal instances of them—upon the file, unless thou beest a very bad husband for thy soul. If God thinks fit to bottle his saints’ tears, they should surely not forget to book his mercies. Now there are some special seasons wherein the saint should take down this chronicle of God’s mercies to read in it; and this

is one, when he is to engage in this extraordinary duty.

(1.) As the most effectual means to melt his heart for sin. Mercy gives the greatest aggravation to sin, and therefore must needs be the most powerful instrument to break the heart for sin. With this God doth reproach sinning Israel, ‘Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?’ Deuteronomy 32:6. They could not have been evil to such a height if God had not been so good to them. When God would break the sore of his people’s sin, he compounds a poultice with his choicest mercies and lays this warm to their hearts. David had sat many months under the lectures of the law, unhumbled for his bloody complicated sin; but Nathan is sent to preach a rehearsal sermon to him of the many mercies that God had graced him with, and while these coals are pouring on his head his heart dissolves presently, 2 Samuel 12:1-31. The frost seldom is quite out of the earth till the sun hath got some power in the spring to dissolve its bands; but then it sets it going. Neither will the hardness of the heart be to any purpose removed until the soul be thoroughly warmed with the sense of God’s mercies. ‘And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight,’ Ezekiel 20:43. Where is that ‘there’ but amidst the thoughts of his mercies, as by the context is manifest? A pardon from the prince hath made some weep whom the sight of the block and axe could not move. Sight of wrath inflames the conscience, but sense of mercy kindly melts the heart and overcomes the will.

(2.) As a necessary ingredient in all our prayers. ‘With thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God,’ Php 4:6. This spice must be in all our offerings. He that prays for mercy he wants, and is not thankful for mercies received, may seem mindful of himself, but he is forgetful of God, and so takes the right course to shut his prayers out of doors. God will not put his mercies into a rent purse, and such is an unthankful heart, for it drops them soon out of his memory.

3. For the wants thou liest under. Before the tradesman goes to the fair he looks over his shop that he may know what commodity he most lacks. Thou goest to this duty to furnish thyself with the graces and mercies thou needest, is it not necessary then to see what thy present store is? what thy personal and what thy relational needs are?—not forgetting the public, in whose peace and happiness thou art so much concerned; for, if this ship sink, thou canst not be safe in thy private cabin. To leave all these to occur and overtake thee, without charging thy thoughts with them by previous meditation, is too high a presumption for a sober Christian to take up. Besides, thy affections need help as well as thy memory. Nay, we may sooner bring our sins and wants to mind than lay them to heart. It is easier to know them, than knowing them to be deeply affected with them: and we do not come in prayer to tell God a bare story of these things, but feelingly and affectionately to make our moan and complaint with deep sighs and groans to him that can pardon the one and relieve us in the other.

Third. When thou hast upon this scrutiny kindled thy affections with the bellows of meditation into a deep sense of these things, then furnish thyself with arguments from the promises to enforce thy prayers and make them prevalent with God. The promises are the ground of faith, and faith when strengthened will make thee fervent, and such and such fervency ever speeds and returns with victory out of the field of prayer. ‘The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,’ James 5:16. Words in prayer are but as powder; the promise is the bullet that doth the execution, faith the grace that chargeth the soul with it, and fervency that gives fire, and dischargeth it into

God's bosom with such a force that the Almighty cannot deny it entrance, because indeed he will not. Now, as he is an impudent soldier that leaves his bullets to be cast or fitted to the bore of his piece till he comes into the field; so he an unwise Christian that doth not provide and sort promises suitable to his condition and request before he engageth in so solemn a service. Daniel first searcheth out the promise—what God had engaged himself to do for his people, as also when the date of this promise expired; and when by meditation and study upon it he had raised his heart to a firm belief thereof, then he sets upon God with a holy violence in prayer, and presseth him close, not only as a merciful God, but righteous also, to remember them now the bond of his promise was coming out: 'O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem,' &c., Daniel 9:16. The mightier any is in the word, the more mighty he will be in prayer. Having despatched the preparatory directions, I now come to those that are to be observed in the duty itself.

[What is needful in extraordinary prayer.]

2. Requisite. That necessary to be observed in the performance of the duty of extraordinary prayer. Because those directions will serve here which are given in another place for the duty of prayer in general, I shall name but a few, and those briefly.

(1.) When the time to engage thyself in this extraordinary duty is come, beware thou settest not upon it in the confidence of thy preparation, whatever thy care success therein hath been. What a worthy doctor directed ministers {to do} as to their preaching, is applicable to Christians as to their praying—he bade them study for their sermons as if they expected no divine assistance in the pulpit, and when they came in the pulpit to cast themselves upon divine assistance as if they had not studied at all. Thus prepare before thou comest to fast and pray, as if thou wert to meet with no further assistance in the duty; but when thou comest to the performance of the duty, cast thyself wholly upon divine assistance as if thou hadst not at all prepared. I know not which of the two doth worst, he that presumes upon God's assistance in this great work without preparation, or he that presumes on his preparation, and relies not after he hath done his best endeavour on the gracious assistance of God. The first shows he hath but mean thoughts of this solemn ordinance, yea, low and unworthy thoughts of the great God with whom he hath to do in it; and the other too high thoughts of himself.

What though now, Christian, thou marchest in goodly array and thy heart in order; how soon, alas! may all that preparation be routed, and thy chariot-wheels, which thou hast taken so much pains to oil, be set fast or knocked off! Now thy thoughts are united, thou thinkest; dost thou know where they will be a few minutes hence, if thy God help thee not to keep them together? Thou canst as easily hold the four winds in a bag, as keep the thoughts of thy fluid mind from gadding. Now thy affections are wound up to some height, but canst thou hold the pegs from slipping? Cannot God wither thy hand while thou stretchest it out in prayer; make thy tongue falter when thou wouldst make use of it; yea, suffer a sudden damp to fall on thy spirit that shall chill all thy affections and leave thy heart as cold as a stone in thy bosom? 'Surely man at his best estate is vanity.' And this in regard of the temper of his spirit as well as in the constitution of his body and other {of} his worldly advantages. How oft do we see the gifts of his mind and the vivacity of his graces fade and wither in one duty, which at another, when the Spirit of God vouchsafed his gentle breath to quicken them, did flourish and send forth their fragrant spices in abundance! O do not then

applaud thyself in thy gourd, which may so soon be smitten, neither commit so great an adventure as the success of this duty is in the leaking bottom of thy own preparation.

(2.) Pray often rather than very long at a time. It is hard to be very long in prayer and not slacken in our affections. Those watches which are made to go longer than ordinary at one winding do commonly lose towards the end. The flesh is weak; and if the spirits of the body tire, the soul that rideth on this beast must needs be cast behind. Our Saviour, when he prayed for his life, we find him praying rather often than long at once. He who, in a long journey, lights often to let his beast take breath, and then mounts upon him again, will get to his journey's end may be sooner than he that puts him beyond his strength. Especially observe this in social prayers. For, when we pray in company we must consider them that travail with us in the duty; as Jacob said, 'I will lead on softly,...as the children are able to endure.' Yet I speak not this that you should give any check to the Spirit of God in his assistances, which sometime come so strong that the Christian is, as it were, carried with a full fore■wind, and hath the labour of tugging at the oar saved him. The ship of the soul goes with most facility when with most speed. Such assistances lift both the person praying and those that join with him—if gracious, and under the same quickenings—in a manner above all weariness. The Spirit brings spirits—affections, I mean—with him. Such a soul is like a vessel that runs full and fresh—what pours from him is quick and spiritful; whereas at another time, when the Spirit of God denies these assistances, his prayer tastes flat to his own palate, if not to others'.

(3.) Be very careful to approve thyself faithful in the soul-humbling work of the day. Let thy confessions be free and full, the sense thou hast of thy sins be deep, and thy sorrow for them be sincere and evangelical, for as thou quittest thyself in this, so thou wilt be in all the other parts of the duty. If thou confessest thy sin feelingly, thou wilt pray against it fervently. If thy sorrow be deep and reach to thy very heart and spirit, then thy petitions for pardoning mercy and purging grace will also come from the heart, be cordial, warm, and vehement. Whereas he that melts not in confession of sin will freeze in his prayers that he puts up against it; if his tears be false and whorish—lachrymæ mentiri doctæ, his desires cannot be true. Why do men ask in their petitions that grace which they do not in their hearts desire, but because they do not feel the smart, and are not loathed with the evil, of their sins that they confess? thus many confess their sins as beggars sometimes show their sores, which they are not willing to have cured. Again, as thou art in thy confession of sin, so thou wilt be in thy acknowledgments of mercy. The lower thou fallest in the abasement of thyself for thy sins, the higher thou wilt mount in thy praises for his mercies. The rebound of the ball is suitable to the force with which it is thrown down. The deeper the base is in confession, the shriller will the treble of thy praises be, for these mutually aggravate one another. the greater our mercies are, the greater are our sins; and the greater our sins, the greater are the mercies which, notwithstanding them, our good God vouchsafeth to us. So that the sense we have of one must needs be in proportion to the other; as we are afflicted for sin so will we be affected with mercy.

(4.) Improve the intervals of prayer with seasonable and suitable meditations, that thou mayest be fitted to return to the work with more life and vigour. Meditation is prayer's handmaid to wait on it both before and after the performance. It is as the plough before the sower, to prepare the heart for the duty of prayer, and the harrow to cover the seed when it is sown. As the hopper feeds the mill with grist, so doth meditation the heart with matter for prayer. Now, if it be necessary that thou

shouldst consider before duty what thou art to pray, then surely after duty to make reflection on thyself how thou didst pray. The mill may go and yet no corn be ground. Thus thou mayest confess many sins, and yet thy heart be broken and ground with sorrow for none of them all. Thou mayest pray for many graces, and exercise little or no grace in thy praying for them—thy heart being lazy, and putting no weight to the work—without which these spices are not broken, and so send not forth their sweet savour. Look therefore back upon the past duty, and observe narrowly what the behaviour of thy heart was in it. If thou findest it to have been lazy, and drew loose in its gears, or played the truant by gadding from the work with impertinent thoughts—in a word, if under the power of any sinful distemper, be sure at thy return to the duty of prayer that thou chargest this home upon thyself with shame and sorrow. This is the only way to stay God's hand and stop him from commencing a suit against thee: 'If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged,' 1 Corinthians 11:31. Ubi desinit justitia incipit judicium—where justice takes end judgment begins. If we do not justice on ourselves, then God will right himself as well as he can. Indeed thou canst not in faith pray for pardon of these sins till thou hast shown thyself on God's side by entering thy protest against them. Moses took the right method—he expressed his zeal first for God against Israel's sin of the golden calf, and then fell hard to the work of prayer to God for the pardon of it. He durst not open his lips for them to God till he had vented his zeal for God, Exodus 32:26 compared with ver. 30, 31. And if he took this course when to intercede for others, much more then shouldst thou when to pray for the pardon of thy own sin.

Again, if upon this review of thy prayer thou findest thy heart was warm in the work, that thy affections flowed out to God, and his reciprocated loves again by unbosoming himself to thee, take heed that no secret pride robs thee of thy new got treasure; be humble and thankful, remembering they were not thy own wings on which thou wert carried. And also, be careful to improve these divine favours given to encourage thee in the work, as the handfuls of ears of corn let fall for Ruth in the field of Boaz. God would not that they should stop thy mouth, but open it wider when thou comest again to pray. Did thy heart begin to melt in thy bosom? O now cry for more brokenness of heart. Did thy God cast a kind look on thee? let it set thee a longing for fuller discoveries of his love. When the beggar sees the rich man putting his hand to his purse he cries more earnestly. God is now on the giving hand, and this should embolden thee to ask; as Abraham, who, as God yielded, made his approaches closer, improving the ground which he got by inches for a further advantage to gain more, Genesis 18:27.

[What is needful after extraordinary prayer.]

3. Requisite. That which is necessary after extraordinary prayer. The third word of direction is to the Christian, how he should carry himself when the day for extraordinary prayer is over, and this lies in a holy watch that he is to set upon himself. He that prays and watcheth not, is like him that sows a field with precious seed, but leaves the gate open for hogs to come and root it up; or him that takes great pains to get money, but no care to lay it up safely when he hath it. If Satan cannot beat thee in the field, yet he hopes to have thee at an advantage when thou hast disbanded thy forces, the duty be past, and thou liest in a careless posture. Esau promised himself an opportunity of avenging himself on Jacob: 'The days of mourning,' saith he, 'for my father are at hand; then will I slay him,' Genesis 27:41. Thus saith Satan: The days of mourning and fasting will soon be over; he will not be always upon his knees praying, not always beating down his body with fasting, and then I will fall upon him. Now one of these two ways thy danger is like to come upon

thee—either by his wounding thy faith or slackening thy care in thy obediential walking; and if he can do either, he will give a sad blow to thy prayers.

(1.) Look therefore after such a day to thy faith. To pray and not to act faith, is to shoot and not look where the arrow lights; to send a ship with merchandise to sea and look for no return by the voyage. Thou hast in prayer laboured to overcome God to hear and help thee; now take as much pains to overcome thy heart into a quiet waiting on God and entire confidence in him. When Jehoshaphat had ended his public fast, he stands up the next day and speaks these words to his people that had joined with him in that solemn duty, 'Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper,' 2 Chronicles 20:20. So when our blessed Saviour had taught his disciples to pray, then he presseth them entirely to commit themselves and their affairs to that God to whom they prayed, Matthew 6:19-34. Truly else extraordinary prayer is but extraordinary prattle; we mock God, and our prayers will mock us, for no fruit will come of them. The hunter may want his supper, though his dog runs fast and mouths it well, if, when he comes at the prey, he dares not fasten upon it. Now it is faith's office to fasten on the promise and take hold of God, without which thy loud cry in prayer is bootless and fruitless. O canst thou trust thy cause with the lawyer, after thy opening it to him; and put thy life into the physician's hand by following his prescriptions, when thou hast acquainted him with thy disease; and darest not thou venture thy stake in God's hand, after thou hast poured thy soul forth to him in prayer! This is a great folly. Why shouldst thou think omnipotency cannot help, or truth and faithfulness will not? Yea, a grievous sin to bring the name of the great God into question by thy unbelief. Yet this our Saviour complains sadly to be the usage God meets with at their hands from whom he might expect better. 'Shall not God avenge his own elect which cry day and night to him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.' What greater security can the heart of a saint desire more than the word of a faithful God? yet few to be found after all their praying for deliverance that can entirely wait for the same. 'Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?' Luke 18:8.

(2.) Look after a day of extraordinary prayer to thy obediential walking. Solomon's advice is, to 'keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God,' Ecclesiastes 5:1. Mine at present is, to look to thy foot as thou comest from it. Thou mayest do thyself more mischief than all the devils in hell can do thee. They cannot intercept thy prayers and hinder the happy return of them into thy bosom, but thou mayest soon do it: 'Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear,' Isaiah 59:1-2. This is the whisperer that separateth chief friends; that makes God, our best friend, stand aloof from his people and their prayers. Be as careful, Christian, after a fast, as a man would be after strong physic. A cold caught now—a little disorder in thy walking—may be of sad consequence. Remember that as thou hast left thy prayers, so thy vows, with the Lord. As thou lookest God should answer the one, so he expects thou shouldst pay the other. Break thy promise to him and thou dischargest God with thy own hand of any mercy he owes thee. It is folly to think thou canst bind God and leave thyself free.—We have despatched then the first branch of the distinction of the kinds of prayer, which held forth the diversos modos orandi—diverse manners of praying; from which hath been shown, that we are to pray with all manner of prayer, ejaculatory and composed, solitary and social, private and public, ordinary and extraordinary; and we now go on to the second.

BRANCH SECOND.

['All prayer' viewed as to diversity in matter.]

Passing from what we have said of diverse manner in prayer, we are now to consider the diversam materiam orationis—the diverse matter of prayer. And thus, to pray with all prayer and supplication, is to encircle the whole matter of prayer within the compass of our duties, and not to leave anything out of our prayers which God would have taken in. Now this diversity of prayer's matter, some think they find in the two words of the text, BDTF,LP¬ and *,ZF4H; but I shall not ground my discourse on so nice a criticism. We will content ourselves with the division which the same apostle makes: 'In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God,' Php 4:6; and, 'Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks,' 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18. In both which places the whole matter of prayer is comprehended in these two: First. Request or petitionary prayer. Second. Thanksgiving. These two are like the double motion of the lungs, by which they suck in and breathe out the air again. In the petitionary part of prayer we desire something at God's hands; in thanksgiving we return praise to him for mercies received from him. I begin with the petitionary part of prayer.

[The petitionary part of prayer.]

First. The first of the twofold division of the whole matter of prayer, viz. petitionary prayer. This is threefold. First. Precatory. Second. Deprecatory. Third. Imprecatory. As for that of intercession, we shall leave it to another place, under those words 'supplication for all saints.'

[First kind of petitionary prayer—the precatory.]

First. Precatory prayer; that part of prayer, I mean, wherein the Christian desires of God, in the name of Christ, some good thing of the promise to be given unto him. Now the good things promised are either spiritual or temporal—those that respect our souls and our eternal salvation, or those which relate to our bodies and temporary estate of them in this life. Such a large field hath the Christian given him for his requests to walk in, for 'godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come,' 1 Timothy 4:8. This earth below, to a saint, is a land of promise, though not the land which is chiefly promised. God hath not promised him heaven but left him to the wide world to shift for his outward subsistence, he hath not bid them live by faith for their souls, but live by their wits for their bodies. No, he that hath promised to 'give' him 'grace and glory,' hath also said, 'no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly,' Psalms 84:11. Their bill of fare is provided as well as their inheritance hereafter. Now all that I shall do here is to put a compass into your hand, by the help of which you may steer your course safely, when you are bound in your requests to either point of the promise, whether it be for temporal or spiritual mercies. And that I may not run you beside the true channel upon rocks or sands, I shall touch the needle of that compass I would commend to your use with the lodestone of Scripture, from which we may gather a fourfold similitude to be used in our request for spiritual and temporal good things promised, and a threefold dissimilitude also.

1. There is a fourfold similitude to be used in precatory prayer.

(1.) Whether thou prayest for temporal or spiritual blessings, thou must pray in the sense of thy own unworthiness, for thou deservest neither. When Christ prays for us, he pleads as an advocate

for justice, because he paid before he prays, and asks but what he gives the price for. But we poor creatures are beggars, and must crave all as pure alms, for the money comes not out of our purse that made the purchase; neither was God the Father bound to engage his Son, or the Son to engage himself, in our recovery, who were fallen by forfeiture into the hands of divine justice. So that mercy is the only plea thou who art a sinner canst make with God. Thou mayest with man stand upon thy desert. Thus Jacob claimed his wages at Laban's hand; but when he hath to do with God he changeth his plea, and sues sub formâ pauperis—in the form of the poor: 'I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant,' Genesis 32:10. So Daniel: 'We do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.' No blessing so great but may be obtained where mercy is the plea, and none so little that we merit. If thou wouldst therefore beg anything at God's hand, confess thou deservest nothing. Then are we fit to receive great things from God when we are least in our own eye; then nearest the crown when we judge ourselves unworthy of a crust. The proud Pharisee brought his righteousness in his prayer to God, and carried away his sin bound upon him; the publican brought his sin in his humble confession, and carries away his absolution and justification with him. Thus God crosseth his hands like Jacob in giving his blessings.

(2.) In both thou must pray in faith, for both spiritual and temporal blessings are promised, and therefore thou art to believe that God will be as faithful and punctual in the performance of the less promises that concern this life, as in the more weighty matters which respect thy eternal happiness in the other. Indeed, he promiseth spiritual blessings in specie—grace and glory he will give; but temporal enjoyments in valore—either in kind or value—'no good thing will he withhold.' And it is fit he should judge when a temporal enjoyment will be good for us, and when it will be better to give some other thing in the lieu of it. Hence that method in our Lord's prayer, first to pray, 'Thy will be done,' before we pray, 'Give us this day our daily bread.' But the seal is the same which ratifies temporal promises with that which he sets to spiritual; his truth and faithfulness are as deeply obliged to perform temporal promises, according to the tenure in which they are made, as to make good the other. And therefore we are as strongly to acquiesce in his care and providence for our protection and provision here, as for our salvation hereafter; else he had done his people wrong to take them off from an anxious care for those things which he meant not to charge his providence with. Certainly if he bids us be careful for none of these things, but only let our requests be made known to him, he intends not our loss by our ease, but thereby would have us understand and believe that he will take the care upon himself, and give us at last a full account of his love and faithfulness in the issue of his providence, how all was disposed for our best advantage.

(3.) We must join our endeavour in the use of all means with our prayers, whether they be put up for spiritual or temporal blessings. Lazy beggars are not to be relieved at our door. 'This we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat,' 2 Thessalonians 3:10. And certainly God will not bid them welcome to his door whom he would have us deny at ours. We must pray with our hand at the pump or the ship will sink in sight of our prayers. Is it temporal subsistence thou prayest for? Pray and work, or pray and starve. Dost thou think to set God at work whilst thou sittest with thy hand in thy bosom? Those two proverbs in Solomon are observable, 'The hand of the diligent maketh rich,' Proverbs 10:4; and, Proverbs 10:22, 'The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.' He that prays but is not

diligent is not like to be rich. He that is diligent but prays not may be rich, but he cannot be blessed with his riches. But he that obtains his riches by sincere prayer in conjunction with his diligence is rich by the blessing of God, and shall escape the sorrow which the worldling lays up with his money; yea, though he gets not an estate, yet he hath the blessing of God, and that makes him rich when there is no money in his purse.

Again, is it any spiritual blessing thou prayest for? Wouldst thou have more knowledge in the things of God? Think not it will drop into thy mind without endeavour. Daniel studied as his eyes were one while on the book, and another while lift up to heaven in prayer, Daniel 9:2. 'Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased,' Daniel 12:4. It is got by running from one means to another. As the merchant's ship takes in some of her freight at one port, some at another, so the Christian gets some light in a sermon, some in a conference; some in one duty, some in another. And he that takes up one duty, but through sloth neglects the rest, saves but his pains to lose his gains. Sometimes God is found in this duty and sometimes in that, on purpose to keep up the credit of all, that we waive none.

(4.) Our requests for both must be spiced with thanksgiving. 'With thanksgiving let your requests be made known,' Php 4:6; and, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, 'in everything give thanks.' Art thou praying for the love and favour of God? Bless God thou art where it may be obtained, and not in hell past hope or help. Is it health thou desirest? Bless God for life; it is the Lord's mercy we are not consumed. No condition on earth can be of so sad a colour in which there may not some eye of white, some mixture of mercy, be found interwoven. Puræ tenebræ—utter darkness, without any stricture of mercy, is found in hell alone. Come not therefore to pray till you know also what to praise God for. As God hath an open hand to give, so he hath an open eye to see who comes to his door, and to discern between the thankful beggar and the unthankful. Will God give more to him on whom all is lost that he hath formerly bestowed? Indeed he doth do good to the evil and unthankful, but it is not a gracious return of their prayers, but an act of common providence, of which they will have little comfort when he brings the bounty of his providence in judgement against them, to aggravate their sins and increase their torment.—Now follows a threefold dissimilitude which we are to observe in framing our requests for spiritual and temporal mercies.

2. There is a threefold dissimilitude to be used in precatory prayer. Temporal mercies are chiefly to be desired for the sake of spiritual, but spiritual mercies for themselves, and not for temporal advantages.

(1.) Temporal mercies are chiefly to be desired for the sake of spiritual blessings, and not their own. The traveller desires a horse not for itself so much as for the convenience of his journey he is to go. Thus the Christian, when praying for temporal things, should desire them as helps in his way and passage to heaven. I do not say it is unlawful to desire life, health, and other comforts of this life, for the suitableness these have to our natural affections, and to supply our outward necessities; but to desire them only for this is low and base, it is the mere cry of the creature. The ravens thus cry, and all the beasts of the field seek their meat of God; that is, they desire the preservation of their lives, and make their moan when they want that which should support them. And these creatures being made for no higher end than the enjoyment of these particular narrow good things, they observe the law of their creation. But thou art an intellectual being, and by thy immortal soul, which is a spiritual substance, thou art as near akin to the angels in heaven as thou

art by thy meaner bodily part to the beasts, yea, allied to God thy Maker, not only made by him, as they were, but for him, which they are not. He is thy chief good, and therefore thou infinitely dishonourest him and thyself too if thou canst sit down short of him in thy desires. Nihil bonum sine summo bono—nothing should be good to thee without God, who is thy chief good. Non placent tibi mea sine mecum, nec tua mihi sine tecum—thus shouldst thou say and pray, O Lord, as all my gifts and services do not please thee except with them I give thee myself, so none of these gifts of thy bounty can content me except with them thou wilt bestow thyself on me. Now this regular motion of the heart in praying for temporals is to be found only in those whose inward wheels—I mean powers and faculties —are set right by the hand of divine grace. Man in his corrupt state is like Nebuchadnezzar at grass—he hath a beast's heart, that craves no more than the satisfaction of his sensual appetite. But when renewed by grace, then his understanding returns to him, by which he is enabled in praying for temporals to elevate his desires to a higher pitch and nobler end.

Doth sick David pray that some further time may be added to the lease of his temporal life? It is not out of a fond love to this world or the carnal entertainments of it, but to prepare himself the better for another life. 'O spare me,' a little 'that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more,' Psalms 39:13. Is he comforted with hopes of a longer stay here? It is not any of this world's carnal pleasures that kindles this joy in his holy breast, but the advantage he shall thereby have for praising God in the land of the living. 'Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God,' Psalms 42:11. The saint hath as quick a sense to taste the sweetness of a temporal mercy as another; but his heart being spiritual, and so acquainted with higher enjoyments, he desires with Luther that God would not put him off with these shells of blessings. O how few thus pray for temporals! Most are but progging[4] for their lusts while praying for them. 'Ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts,' James 4:3. One is sick, and prays for health that he may be again at his pots or harlots. Another is childless, and he would have an heir to uphold the pride and grandeur of his house, but not the increase of Christ's family in the world. A third would be a greater man in the world—and for what? May be, that having more power he may take the fuller revenge on his enemies that are now out of his reach. And other that bring not their sacrifice with so evil a mind, yet look no higher their carnal contentment in the enjoyment they would have, as appears by their carriage in the use of it. Thus the mariners in a sea■storm, 'Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble,' Psalms 107:28. And when they have their life given them as they desire, 'then are they glad because they be quiet,' and God hears no more of them now their turn is served—a plain evidence that they were selfish and carnal in their prayer for this mercy, because they improve it not for their spiritual end. Which makes the psalmist break out into that holy option and vote, 'Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness,' Psalms 107:31. But much more abominable is it to pray for spiritual mercies for the sake of some temporal advantage we hope to have by them. Thus Simon Magus desired the gifts of the Holy Ghost that he might be JÂH µX("H—a man of fame and name. And do not some labour to bring the gospel to town as an expedient to mend the takings in their shop? —others pray for the assistances of the Spirit, and project their own praise by the means, basely perverting those holy things to secular advantages? O horrid baseness! As if one should desire a prince's robe to stop an oven with it! This is, as Austin saith, uti Deo ut fruamur mundo—to make God the stirrup and the creature our saddle.

(2.) Those spiritual blessings which are intrinsical to our happiness and indispensably necessary to our salvation, these we are to pray for with an undeniable importunity. Such are pardon of sin, the love and favour of God, and the sanctifying graces of the Spirit. To be cold or indifferent in our prayers for these is a great wickedness. The promise will bear us out in our greatest importunity: 'Seek the Lord, and his strength: seek his face evermore,' Psalms 105:4. 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely,' Revelation 22:17. Tantum possumus in negotio religionis, quantum volumus—we are powerful in the matter of religion. Nothing loseth us these mercies more than weak velleities and faint desires of them. But our prayers for temporal blessings must be with a latitude of submission to the will of God, because they are promised conditionally. The promise is the foundation of our faith, the superstructure therefore of our prayers must not jet beyond it. This was Israel's sin —'Who shall give us flesh to eat?' Numbers 11:18. God had indeed promised to feed them in the wilderness, but not to give them every dish their wanton palate craved; and therefore, when God's bill of fare contents them not, but they cry for flesh, they have their desire but sour sauce with it; for, 'while their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them,' Psalms 78:31. Thus they were fed for the slaughter by the meat they inordinately lusted after. O take heed of peremptory prayers for any temporal enjoyment, for thereby thou beggest but a rod for thy own back. Rachel must have children or else she dies, and she at last hath two, but dies in travail of the latter. It was a smart saying of one to his wife, who passionately desired a son, and had one at last, but none of the wisest, 'Wife,' saith he, 'thou hast long passionately desired a boy, and now thou hast one that will always be a boy.' God may justly set some print of his anger on that mercy which he answers our peremptory prayers with. Why, alas! must we needs have that which we must needs lose, or shall not enjoy while we have it?

(3.) Those spiritual blessings which are intrinsical to the saints' happiness are to be prayed for with boundless desires. Not, Give me thus much grace and I will trouble thee for no more. No, God gives a little grace, not to stop our mouth, but to open it wider for more. Yet, alas! how unreasonably reasonable are most in this particular! So much holiness contents them as will, like salt, keep them from putrefying in gross sins, that they be not unsavoury to the nostrils of their neighbours, or as will save them from the lash of their tormenting conscience; like school-boys, that care for no more of their lesson than will save a whipping. Alas! this is not to desire it at all; it is thy credit abroad and thy quiet within thou desirest, and the other but to help thee to these. He that knows the true worth of grace thinks he hath never enough till satisfied with it in glory. Paul had more than many of his brethren, yet prays and presseth as hard after more as if he had none at all, Php 3:13-14. But in temporal enjoyments we are to stint our desires, and not let out all the sails of our affections when praying for them. A gracious heart is as unwilling to have too much of these as afraid of having too little. 'Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me,' Proverbs 30:8. I think not a saint but could cheerfully say amen to this prayer of Agur—I am sure he ought. That house is best seated which stands neither on the bleak top of the hill nor on the wet bottom. The nature of these temporal good things is enough to convince any wise man that the mean is best. They are not the Christian's freight but his ballast, and therefore are to be desired to poise, not load, the vessel. They are not his portion—heaven is that; but his spending money in his journey thither; and what traveller that is wise desires to carry any greater charge about him than will pay for his quarters?

[Second kind of petitionary prayer —the deprecatory.]

Second. Deprecatory prayer. The second branch in the petitionary part of prayer is deprecation, wherein we desire of God, in the name of Christ, the removal of some evil felt or feared, inflicted or threatened. So that evil is the object of deprecation. Here I shall briefly point at the evils to be deprecated, and how we are to frame our requests to God in deprecating of them. All evil is comprehended in these two:—1. Sin. 2. Suffering.

[First object of deprecatory prayer.]

1. Object. Sin. This indeed is the evil of evils, against which chiefly we are to let fly the arrows of our prayers. This is the only thing that is intrinsically evil in its own nature. Suffering is rather evil to us than in itself, and our sufferings have both their being and malignity from the evil of our sins. Had there been no sin, there had been no suffering. Where that ceaseth, this is not to be found. No sorrow in heaven, because no sin. These, like twins, live and die together. ‘If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door;’ that is, if thou doest the evil of sin, prepare to meet with the evil of suffering. Now in sin two things [are] to be deprecated: (1.) Guilt, and (2.) Filth—the defiling power of sin.

(1.) Guilt. This is the proper effect and consequent of every sin. Whenever any sin is committed there is guilt contracted, whereby the creature becomes obnoxious to the wrath of God; and this guilt wears not off by length of time, but continues bound upon the sinner till God by an act of pardoning mercy absolves him. So that, though the act of sin be transient, and passeth away as soon as the fact is committed, yet the creature is in the bond of his iniquity, held with this chain of guilt as a prisoner to divine justice, till he by faith and repentance sues out his pardon; even as a felon who, may be, is not presently after the fact taken and brought into judgment, yet abides a debtor to the law, wherever he is, till he can obtain his pardon. Now need I speak anything to set out the dismal and deplored condition of a soul under guilt, thereby to provoke you to pray for the removal of it? There is no mountain so heavy as the guilt of the least sin is to an awakened conscience. Better thy house were haunted with devils than thy soul with guilt. If thy conscience tells thee thou art ‘in the bond of iniquity,’ thou canst not be ‘in the gall of bitterness,’ they are joined together, Acts 8:23. Guilt is a burden which the sinner can neither stand under nor throw off. One compares him to a beast stung with a gadfly—fain would he run from his pain, but still he finds it in him. This lies throbbing in his soul like a thorn in the flesh, and will not let him rest by day or sleep by night; he turns himself on his bed as Regulius in his barrel stuck with nails—not an easy plat that he can find in it. This makes him afraid of every disease that comes to town, pox or plague, lest it should arrest him and bring him by death to judgment. His guilt makes him think that every bush a man, and every man a messenger of divine vengeance to slay him. The ‘mark’ that God set upon guilty Cain, Genesis 4:15, is by many interpreters conceived to be a trembling heart, made visible by a ghastly countenance and discomposed carriage of his outward man; and that passage, Genesis 4:12, ‘A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth,’ the Septuagint read thus, FJX<T< 6"Â JDXµT< §F® ¦BÂ JH (H —thou shalt be sighing and trembling in the earth. No convulsion fit so distorts the body as sin doth the soul.—Now in this prayer against guilt, and for pardon, observe these particulars.

[Five particulars to be observed in praying against guilt.]

(a) Pray with a deep sense and sorrow for thy sins. The worse nonsense in prayer is of the heart, when that hath no sense of the sin [the person praying] deprecates, or of the mercy he desires. Nothing more hardens the heart of God against our prayer, than the hardness of our heart in prayer; and, on the contrary, no such way to melt God into pity as for our own hearts to dissolve into sorrow. He that would have us 'give wine unto those that be of heavy hearts,' Proverbs 31:6, saves this vessel—the promise, I mean, of pardoning mercy, which holds the sweetest wine in God's cellar—'to revive the heart of the contrite ones,' Isaiah 57:15. A tear in the eye for sin adorns the creature more than a jewel in his ear, and his prayer more than all the embroidery of expressions in it can do. While the publican smote his own breast, he got into God's bosom, and carried a pardon home with him. Will Christ drop his blood to procure thy pardon who canst shed no tears for thy sin? The truth is, here lies the difficulty of the work—not how to move God, but how to get the sinner's own heart melted. It is harder to get sin felt by the creature, than the burden, when felt, removed by the hand of a forgiving God. Never was tender-hearted chirurgeon more willing to take up the vein and bind up the wound of his fainting patient, when he hath bled enough, than God is, by his pardoning mercy, to ease the troubled spirit of a mourning penitent. It is one rule he gives his servants in their practice upon their spiritual patients, to beware of making too great an evacuation in the souls of poor sinners by excessive humiliation, lest thereby the spirits of their faith be too much weakened: 'Sufficient to such a man is this punishment,' &c. 'So that...ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow,' 2 Corinthians 2:6-7.

(b) Justify and clear God in all the expressions of his displeasure for thy sins. Thou dost perhaps carry the marks of his anger on thy flesh in some outward judgement; or, which is worse, the terrors of the Lord have taken hold of thy soul, and like poisoned arrows lie burning in thy conscience, where they stick. Acknowledge him just, and all this that has come upon thee 'less than thy iniquities deserve,' Ezra 9:13. The way to escape the fatal stroke of his axe is to kiss the block. Clear his justice, and fear not but his mercy will save thy life. Thou hast a promise on thy side: 'If then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: then will I remember my covenant,' Leviticus 26:41-42. David took this course and sped, 'For I acknowledge my transgressions,' Psalms 51:3. And why is he so willing to spread his sins in his confession before the Lord? See Psalms 51:4: 'That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.' He would have all the world know that God did him no wrong in the judgments that came upon him; he takes all the blame upon himself.

(c) Take heed thou prayest not with a reservation. Be sure thou renouncest what thou wouldst have God remit. God will never remove the guilt so long as thou entertainest the sin. What prince will pardon his treason that means to continue a traitor? It is desperate folly to desire God to forgive what thou intendest to commit. Thou hadst as good speak out and ask leave to sin with impunity, for God knows the language of thy heart, and needs not thy tongue to be an interpreter. Some princes have misplaced their high favours to their heavy cost, as the emperor Leo Armenius, who pardoned that monster of ingratitude Michael Balbus, and was in the same night in which he was delivered out of prison murdered by him. But the great God is subject to no mistake in his government. Never got a hypocrite pardon in the disguise of a saint. He will call thee by thy own name, though thou comest to him in the semblance of a penitent. 'Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam,' said the prophet. Hypocrisy is too thin a veil to blind the eyes of the Almighty. Thou

mayest put thy own eyes out, so as not to see him; but thou canst never blind his eyes that he should not see thee. And as long as God loves himself, he must needs hate the hypocrite; and if he hates him, surely he will not pardon him. The pardoned soul and the sincere are all one. ‘Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile,’ Psalms 32:2.

(d) Make Christ thy plea. Pardon of sin is a favour not known in the first covenant. Do, and live; sin, and die, were all its contents. No room left for an after-game by that law. The gospel covenant is our tabula post naufragium—the only plank by which we may recover the shore after our miserable wreck. This covenant is founded in Christ, who, upon agreement with his Father, undertook to answer the demands of the law, and happily performed what he undertook; upon which the gospel is preached, and pardon promised to all that repent and believe on him. ‘Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour,’ Acts 5:31. Him hath God ‘set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood,’ Romans 3:25. As therefore, when Christ intercedes for poor sinners, he carries his blood with him and presents it to God, for the price of that forgiveness he desires for them; so thou mayest bring the same blood in the hand of thy faith when thou prayest for the pardon of thy sins, for ‘without shedding of blood is no remission,’ Hebrews 9:22. This is the more to be heeded, because many, out of ignorance, and some from a corrupt principle, apply themselves to their prayers to the absolute goodness and mercy of God for pardon. Ask them why they hope to be forgiven, and they will tell you, ‘God is good, and they hope he will be merciful to them, seeing his nature is so gracious.’ But, alas! they forget he is just as well as merciful, and mercy will not act but with the consent of his justice. Now the only salve for the justice of God is the satisfaction of Christ. ‘Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness;...that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus,’ Romans 3:25-26. So that, to desire God to forgive thee thy sin without the intervening of Christ’s satisfaction, is to desire God to be unjust, and pardon thee with the loss of his own honour; and how welcome thou art like to be that comest to him on such an errand, is easy to think.

(e) Lastly, take no denial in this thy request, but, pray for it with unwearied importunity. It is a mercy thou canst not want; it is more necessary than thy very being. Better never to be than ever be unpardoned. Think but a little on thy dismal condition while guilt is not taken off and thy pardon not obtained, and it is impossible that thou shouldst e a cold faint suitor for this mercy of mercies. Know, then, while unpardoned thou art God’s prisoner. All the plagues written in the law cleave as close to thee as thy girdle to thy loins. Every moment thou mayest fear they should take hold upon thee as thou walkest in thy house, sittest at thy table, or liest on thy bed. Where canst thou be safe who hast God {for} thine enemy? Can the bread resist him that eats it? or the tree withstand the axe of the feller? truly no more canst thou the wrath of an avenging God. Is it not he that holds the stoutest devils in chains?—he who can kindle a fire in thy own bones and bosom, and make thee consume like lime with the inward burning of thy self■tormenting thoughts? Is he not a righteous God, whose justice binds him, in the distributions of justice, to be exact according to the sinner’s demerit? Is he not the everlasting God?—not a sorry creature, who may threaten thee to■day, and be dead himself to■morrow; but eternity itself, who ever lives to take vengeance on sinners, out of whose hands thou canst not escape by dying? In earthly courts, when the man dies his cause dies with him, because out of their jurisdiction, and past their summons. But, at death, thou fallest into

the hands of the living God, who will pursue his quarrel with thee in the other world also. No sooner is thy soul abandoned of thy body and turned out of its earthly house, but it shall return to God to receive its doom. Neither shall thy body long rest in the grave where it is earthed, but be called forth to share with the soul in torment, whose partner it hath been in sin. The parting of these at death to a guilty soul is sad enough; but their meeting again at the great day of judgement will be much more dismal. For husband and wife, that have joined in some bloody murder, to be attached and sent to several prisons in order to their trial, must needs fill them with fear and terror of their approaching judgment, but much more dreadful is it to them when brought forth to receive their sentence, and suffer at the same gibbet together. At death, the sinner's body is disposed of to one prison, his soul to another, and both meet again at the great day of assize for the world—then to be sent by the final sentence of the Judge to everlasting flames in hell's fiery furnace, where, after the poor wretch hath experimented a thousand millions of years the weight of God's just vengeance, he shall find himself no nearer the end of his misery than he was the first day wherein his torment commenced. Then death will be desired as a favour, but it shall flee from him—his misery being both intolerable and interminable. By this time, I suppose, a pardon will be thought worth thy having, and too good to be lost by sluggish sleepy praying for it. When, therefore, thou hast chafed thy soul thus into a sense of the indispensable necessity of this mercy, then take up a holy resolution to lay thy siege to the throne of grace, and never to rise till God open the gates of his mercy to thee. As it is so necessary thou canst not want it; so thou hast the promise of a faithful God that thou shalt not miss it, upon the timely and sincere seeking of it. 'If we confess, he is faithful and just to forgive.' Prayers and tears are the weapons with which the Almighty may be overcome. Manasseh, who could not on his throne —when he sinned and stouted it out against God —defend himself from the justice of God, yet in his dungeon and fetters, greatly humbling himself before the Lord, obtained his mercy. So Ephraim, 'when he spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died,' Hosea 13:1.

(2.) The second thing in sin to be deprecated is the defiling power of it. He that desires not to be purged from the filth of sin, prays in vain to be eased of the guilt. If we love the work of sin, we must like the wages also. A false heart, could be willing to have his sin covered, but the sincere desires his nature to be cured and cleansed. David begged a clean heart as well as a quiet conscience: 'Blot out all mine iniquities; create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me,' Psalms 51:9-10. He desires water to purify his heart, as well as blood to sprinkle and pacify his conscience. Now, in framing thy requests as to this, observe these particulars.

[Five particulars to be observed in praying against the defilement of sin.]

(a) Be sure thou comest with a deep abhorrence of thyself for that sin-filth which cleaves to thee. This is called 'knowing the plague of a man's own heart,' 1 Kings 8:38, when a creature is affected and afflicted with the sense of his corruptions, as if he had so many plague sores running upon him, and bathes himself for them, as much as Job did for the boils and sores with which his body was covered. The leper was commanded, in order to his cure, to put himself into a mourner's habit: 'His clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean,' Leviticus 13:45. Why all this, but to express the deep sense of his sin and misery? Look upon the saints in scripture, and you shall find this was their way to abase themselves in their prayers with the greatest self-abhorrency that was possible. Penitent David takes the fool, yea the beast, unto himself; he knows not how to speak bad enough of himself. 'So

foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee,' Psalms 73:22. Holy Job cries out, 'I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes,' Job 42:6. Others blush, and are as much ashamed to be seen in the presence of God, as one that had fallen into some puddle or jakes[5] would be in that pickle to come before his prince.

(b) In praying against thy lusts, look thy heart goes with thy tongue. In nothing so our hearts put more cheats upon us than in our prayers, and in no requests more than in those which are levelled against our lusts. That is least oftentimes intended which is most pretended. And truly we had need be well acquainted with ourselves before we can find the bottom of our designs. Austin confesseth, when he was a young man, and forced by conviction in his conscience to pray that God would deliver him out of the bondage of his lust, that yet the secret whispers of his heart were non adhuc, Domine—not yet, Lord. He was afraid that God would take him at his word. Thus the hypocritical Jews first 'set up their idols in their heart,' Ezekiel 14:3. This is a great wickedness. And it were a just, though a heavy plague, for God to answer such according to the secret vote of their hearts, by them up to those lusts which they inwardly crave. When Paul begs prayers for himself, to embolden them in their requests for him, he assures them of his sincerity: 'Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly,' Hebrews 13:18. As if he had said, I durst not make you my spokesmen to God, if my heart did not check me that I did secretly comply with any sin, and did not mean in all things to live honestly. How then canst thou have the face to go thyself to God on an errand to desire that of him which thou wouldst be loath to have.

Question. But how may we come to know that our hearts are sincere or hypocritical in praying against the defiling power of sin?

Answer [1]. Observe whether thy prayer be uniform—laid against all sin, one lust as well as another. Sincerity makes not here a balk and there a furrow; is not hot against one lust and cold against another; but goes through stitch in the work: it 'hates every false way,' Psalms 119:104. It shoots its arrows at the whole flock, and singles not this sin out in his prayers which he would have taken, and that left: 'Let not any iniquity have dominion over me,' Psalms 119:133. He knows if all his chains were knocked off, and only one left upon him, he should be as true a slave to Satan as if all the other were still on. He prays not against one sin because a great one, and pleads for another because it is a little one. The dust and rubbish help to fill up the wall as well as the great stones; little sins contribute as well as great to make up the partition wall between God and the creature. Every little speck blemisheth the garment, and every penny increaseth the sums. So little sins defile the soul and swell the sinner's account. Therefore he prays against them as well as the other. David, who desired to be kept back from 'presumptuous sins,' did also beg to be 'cleansed from his secret faults,' Psalms 19:12.

Answer [2]. Observe whether thy heart stand firmly resolved to renounce that sin thou prayest God to subdue. The sincere Christian binds himself, as well as labours to engage God against his sin. Indeed that prayer is a blank which hath not a vow in it. 'Thou...hast heard my vows,' Psalms 61:5; that is, his prayers, which are always to be put up with vows. Is it a mercy thou prayest him to give? If sincere, thou wilt vow to praise him for it and serve him with it. Is it a sin thou prayest against? Except thou jugglest with God thou wilt vow as well as pray against it. 'Remove from me the way of lying,' Psalms 119:29. There is David's deprecation. Now, mark his promise and vow: 'I

have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me,' Psalms 119:30. While he prays against the way of lying he chooseth the way of truth.

Answer [3]. Observe whether thou beest vigorous in the use of all appointed means to mortify the lust thou prayest against. Resolutions in the time of prayer are good when backed with strenuous endeavours, else but a blind for a false heart to cover itself with. Samson did not only pray he might be avenged on his enemies, but set his hands to the pillars of the house. He that hath bid thee pray against thy lust hath bid thee shun the occasions of it. 'Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house, lest thou give thy honour unto others,' Proverbs 5:8; that is, lest thou be hooked in to her by the occasion. Thus Joseph, that he might not be drawn to lie with his mistress, would not stay alone in the room with her, Genesis 39:7-12. So, Proverbs 23:20, 'be not among wine-bibbers;' and, 'look not on the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup,' Proverbs 23:31, because looking may breed liking. Now, art thou conscientiously careful to keep out of the way that leads to the sin, and to shun the occasion that might betray thee into the hands of that lust thou prayest against? Certainly, he that would not have his house blown up will not have set his gunpowder in the chimney-corner.

(c) Again, God, who bids thee pray against thy lusts, commands thee also to take the sword of his word, by meditating on it, and applying it close to thy heart and conscience, to cut them down and get victory over them. Thus did David. He hid the word in his heart that he might not sin. Thou prayest against covetousness. O that God would rid thy heart of it! Well, what dost thou towards thy own delivery from this base lust? Here is a sword put into thy hand, whose edge is sharp enough to cut and kill if thou wilt lay it on in good earnest. This sets forth the vanity of the creature—how vile and base a sin covetousness is; takes away all occasion of inordinate desires and cares for the world by many sweet promises—what he hath laid up in another world for us, and what care in his providence he will take for us in this life. 'Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,' Hebrews 13:5. Now, what use doth thou make of this weapon? Dost thou strengthen thy assent to the truth of these promises?—labour to affect thy heart with the sweetness of them, and then draw forth this sword to defend thyself against this lust when the enemy comes with a temptation to it? If so, thou wert sincere in thy prayer. A false heart contents itself with a few idle lay prayers against his lust, but is afraid to use this sword against it. Or, if he doth, he strikes with the back and not the edge; or lays his stroke so favourably on that it shall not much endanger the life of his sin—like a mountebank, that will be sure to make no worse wound in his side than his balsam will in a day or two cure.

Now, to raise thy heart to the greater vehemency in praying against thy lusts, labour deeply to affect thy heart what a fearful plague it is—indeed, of all other incomparably the greatest—for a soul to be given up of God to the power of his lusts. This consideration, if any, will make thee lay close siege to God and set upon him with the utmost importunity, knowing thou art an undone creature if thou speedest not in thy errand. When God intends to smite home he takes his aim at the heart, he gives the creature over to his lusts. Thus he hardened Pharaoh to a final obstinacy, 'I will...send all my plagues upon thine heart,' Exodus 9:14. They did not only light upon the beasts and fruits of the field, or upon their own bodies, but chiefly upon their hearts and spirits, hardening them into obstinacy to their destruction. And this, indeed, is to send all plagues in one. Other plagues, that reach only to estate or body, are consistent with the love and favour of God. He can

smite the body and smile on the soul; blast the man's estate and bless him with spiritual riches; make him poor in the world and rich in faith. But he that is given up to his lusts is abhorred of God. A saint may be given up to Satan ut lictori—to correct him, for the destruction of the flesh and saving of his spirit; but it is the brand of a reprobate to be delivered up to Satan ut domino —that his lusts may have full power over him; which judiciary act of God portends the sinner's destruction, Deuteronomy 2:30; 2 Thessalonians 2:11. Outward plagues are sometimes in the sinner's mouth as a bridle to restrain him from sin. But this is a spur that makes them more mad after their lusts; it takes away the sense of sin, and then the wretch plays the devil. Nothing will stop him in his way, but to hell he will go over hedge and ditch.

(d) Pray against the power of thy lusts as a branch of the gospel covenant. God is not bound by the first covenant to stir a foot for man's help. Man went of his own accord over to the devil's quarters. He deserted God and chose a new lord; and in his hands God might have left him, without offering any help for his rescue. It was not any tie that man had upon God by the covenant of nature which obliged him, but his own free grace that moved him, to undertake his recovery. And this he doth by making a new covenant on the ruins of the old. So that, whoever will pray against his lusts with success must first become a covenanter with God, by accepting the terms upon which God in it offers to save us from our sins, and they are faith and repentance. When the soul doth thus face about from his sins to close with Christ, then he becomes a covenanter with God, and may, with faith, call God into the field for his help against this huge host of lusts and devils that come against him. God's chariots are his; the whole militia of heaven is engaged in his quarrel. 'Sin shall not have dominion over you'—and why?—'for ye are not under law but under grace,' Romans 6:14; that is, you are not under the law covenant made with Adam, but under the gospel covenant made with Christ, and through him with all believers. O how many prayers against sin are lost for want of well understanding this grand notion of the gospel! A great cry is made and complaint by many of their sins to God, and victory over them pretend to be desired; yet they live and grow stronger every day than other. And what is the reason? Alas! they stand not in a federal relation to God; neither take they any care how to get into it. Will a prince raise an army to fight for he knows not whom? Indeed, if his subjects or allies be in distress he is ready to step in for their succour; but strangers cannot expect he should do this for them. Leagues are made before assistance desired. God first promised to bring Israel 'into the bond of his covenant,' Ezekiel 20:37; and then, that he will 'accept them with your sweet savour,' Ezekiel 20:41. David knew this very well, that the carnal world are abandoned by God, to be trod under the foot of every lust; and therefore, when he prays God would order his steps in his word, and let no iniquity have dominion over him, he desires it as a favour peculiar to those that were near and dear to him: Deal with me 'as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name,' Psalms 119:132.

(e) Pray not only against the power of sin, but for the power of holiness also. A naughty heart may pray against his sins, not out of any inward enmity to them, or love to holiness, but because they are troublesome guests to his conscience. Believe it for a certain truth, his zeal is false that seems hot against sin but is key■cold to holiness. A city is rebellious that keeps their rightful prince out though it receives not his enemy in. Nay, the devil needs not fear but at last he shall make that soul his garrison again, out of which for a while he seems shut, so long as it stands empty and is not filled with solid grace, Matthew 12:44-45. What indeed should hinder Satan's re-entry into that house which hath not in it to keep him out?

[Second object of deprecatory prayer.]

2. Object. The second object of deprecatory prayer is suffering. Sin brought suffering into the world. Sin is indeed the elder twin, but suffering stayed not long after it; for it took it by the heel, presently arresting Adam upon the very place where he committed his trespass, and ever since follows it as close as the shadow doth the body. It leaves not the saint till death parts him and his sin, but pursues the wicked with their sins into the other world also. So that this distribution of suffering into temporal and eternal shall content us at present—they being comprehensive of all the miseries which sin hath brought upon the sons of men. Now my work in this place shall be only to direct the Christian how to frame his prayer in deprecating the one and the other also. (1.) Temporal sufferings—how the Christian is to deprecate and pray against them. (2.) Eternal suffering.

[How the Christian is to pray against temporal sufferings.] (1.) Temporal sufferings—how the Christian is to deprecate and pray against them.

[1.] Negatively—The Christian is not to pray for an immunity from all temporal sufferings. There is no foundation for such a prayer in the promise; and what God thinks not fit to promise we must not be bold to ask. Temporal promises are to be understood, saith Melancthon, cum exceptione crucis—with exception of the cross. God had one Son without sin, but he will have none in this life without suffering. John writes himself, 'Your brother, and companion in tribulation,' Revelation 1:9. He hath too high an opinion of himself that would have God lead him dryshod on a fair causeway to heaven, while he sees the rest of his brethren march through thick and thin to the same place; or who thinks he needs not this thorn■hedge of suffering, to keep him as well as others from wandering out of his way to glory. The rod and ferule are not more needful among children at school than suffering is to the saints while in their minority here on earth. If thou wert come to that ripeness of ingenuity as to have worn off all thy childishness, thou shouldst stay here no longer under the lash; but while thou art subject to sin thou must submit to his disciplinary rod. Valetudinarious[6] bodies can as well spare food as physic, and saints in this their crazy state may as well live without ordinances as without sufferings. In a word, to pray absolutely against all suffering is to desire one of the greatest punishments on this side hell. When God said, 'I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom,' Hosea 4:14, he meant them no good by sparing his rod. If we count him an unwise father that, when he puts his child to school, indents with his master not to whip him; surely much more folly were it in thee to desire God to privilege thee from all suffering.

[2.] Affirmatively—how he may and should pray against sufferings; and in these particulars following.

(a) Deprecate the vindictive justice and wrath of God in all temporal sufferings. Thus Jeremiah shapes his prayer, 'O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing,' Jeremiah 10:24, and, Jeremiah 17:17, 'Be not a terror unto me: thou art my hope in the day of evil.' He declines not suffering but deprecates wrath. As if he had said, 'Let trouble come, but not with this message—to tell me thou art mine enemy; shoot thy darts, my breast is open to receive them; but let them not be envenomed arrows headed with thy punitive justice.' Without this sting all suffering is innocent and harmless. But if the creature does fear—though without just cause—that they are shot out of justice's bow, then they drink up his spirits and exanimate him

presently. ‘When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth,’ Psalms 39:11. That holy woman, 1 Kings 17:18, was not so much distressed for her son’s death as for the reflection this sad providence made upon her conscience: ‘Art thou come...to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?’ Thou canst not therefore be too passionately importunate in deprecating this.

(b) Deprecate the snare and temptation that suffering may expose thee to. Satan commonly finds it easy to make some sinful impression upon the saint when he is heated, and his ‘heart made soft,’ as Job phraseth it, ‘in the furnace of affliction.’ He is a rare Christian in whom the stream of his grace runs clear upon such royling. Job was a man of a thousand —God’s nonesuch: ‘None like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man,’ Job 1:8; yet bewrayed many weaknesses in his troubles, and would have done more, had not God in pity to his poor servant taken the devil off before he had quite run him down. Christ teacheth us to pray against suffering under the notion of temptation: ‘Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.’ That is, let us not be led into sin when we fall into suffering, let us not fall into thy hands and Satan’s together. This discovers a holy frame of heart—to be more tender of our conscience than skin; not so much to fear affliction from God, as, left in it, we should be have ourselves unseemly and unholily towards him. Agur is not so much ashamed to beg as afraid to steal, and so take the name of his God in vain, upon which account he chiefly prays against poverty, Proverbs 30:8-9. There is nothing lost by serving God first and preferring his honour before our own private interest in our prayers. Self■denial is the best for self■seeking; for, by neglecting ourselves for God’s sake, we oblige him to take the care of us upon himself, and he is the only happy man who hath his stake laid up in God’s hands.

(c) Deprecate the excess of suffering—that thou beest not overladen, thy burden too heavy for thy back. This is promised. Thou mayest therefore present it in faith: ‘I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure;’ Jeremiah 46:28. The patient doth not intrench upon the physician’s art by desiring him to proportion his dose according to the weakness of his body, if, when he hath done this, he acquiesceth in his skill and faithfulness for the same. Indeed, to desire God to consider our weakness, and then not to rely on his wisdom and care, but continue jealous and suspicious, or to murmur at his prescriptions, as if the physic he gives were too churlish and strong, this makes a dishonourable reflection upon God. Sometimes the physician exceeds the proportion that his fearful patient thinks strong enough, but withal tells him, ‘You are not so weak as you take yourself to be. Your body may bear so many grains more in the composition. Leave me to my art and all shall be well.’ Thus God, who knows our frame exactly, deals with his people, and is highly pleased to see them satisfied with what he orders them out: ‘In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly,’ Job 1:22; @Û6 §*T6,< •ND@Fb<0< Jè 2,è—so the Septuagint reads it—he did not impute folly to God; indeed the word {Hebrew Characters Omitted} (tiphlah), is a noun. The meaning of the place is, Job did not make any unworthy reflection upon God for the evils he suffered by his providence, as if anything were wanting in his care or wisdom, like some rash physician, who fails either in timing or tempering his physic.

(d) Thou mayest not only deprecate these evils in thy affections, but also pray believingly for a happy issue out of them all. The darkest lane of suffering shall, to the saint, have a lightsome end. And all, we say, is well that ends well. ‘Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful,’ James 5:11. This is that which God so fully intends in

all his saints' troubles, that he takes pleasure in thinking of it beforehand: 'I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace,' Jeremiah 29:11. And that petition comes in a happy time to court, which finds the king thinking of the very business it prays for.

(2.) Eternal suffering. The second kind of suffering is eternal in hell. This is the center in which all the lines of sin and of misery meet—the common shoal into which they all disgorge themselves, as rivers do their streams into the vast ocean. And as rivers, when they are fallen into the sea, lose their several names in one that comprehends them all—the ocean; so all the evils of this life, when resolved into this, forget their private names—sickness, pains, poverty, &c,—and are called hell. Not that these are all formally and literally there, but virtually, in that the torment of the damned doth not only amount to, but, beyond expression, exceed them all. As in heaven there is no belly-cheer, yet a feast; no silks and satins worn, yet all in glorious robes; as silver is in gold, and gold in a jewel, so all these are in heaven—because that which is of infinite more value and worth than such things as are of highest reckoning on earth. Thus the great miseries of this life are incomparably less than the least torment of hell. Never can the creature say he is completely miserable, till the devouring jaws of that infernal pit inclose him. Were the worst of his punishment what he feels here, he might in a manner bless himself; as Paul, on the contrary saith, he should judge the saint miserable above others, if all his hope were here. But there is the sinner's easeless endless state. There is not so much as one well day to release him a while from his pain, but he shall continue forever in the height of his paroxysm; no change of weather or hope of clearing, but a perpetual storm set in to rain fire and brimstone upon him to all eternity, for so long it will be before the arm of the Almighty is weary of pouring out his wrath, or his heart be brought in love with sin, and reconciled to the sinner. Now, in deprecating this, we should endeavour to keep this threefold notion of hell in our thoughts, for which above all we are to desire to be delivered from it.

(a) Conceive of hell as a state of sin as well as of suffering, yea, in its utmost height. Earth is a middle place betwixt heaven and hell. Neither sin in the wicked, nor grace in the saint, come here to their full ripeness. Grace being an outlandish[7] slip brought from heaven's paradise, riseth not to its just height and procerity[8]Tallness; highth of stature. — From Webster's, till it be transplanted and set in its native climate from whence it came. And sin, being a brat of hell, comes not to its full complexion and monstrosity, till it be sent back to the place it came from. Here poor wretches are tolled on to sin by the pleasure it promiseth. But there they sin out of malice, for nothing else can invite them where this morsel is eaten with such sour sauce. On earth the sinner is maidenly, and conceals the venom that is bagged in his heart; but in hell he spits it out in blasphemies against heaven. In a word, here he sins with wavering thoughts, and some weak purposes of repenting, but there he is as desperate as the devil himself—hardened beyond all relenting. Now, under this notion, thou shouldst pray to be delivered from hell, that thou mayest never be one of that damned crew, who think it not enough to fight against God their Maker on earth, but carry the war with them into the other world also, and there continue their feud with implacable enmity to eternity. Certainly the saints—to whom the notions of sin in this life are so grievous, above all the crosses and losses that befall them, and who count a few years' neighbourhood among the wicked so great an affliction, that they cry, 'Woe is me, that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar'—must needs deprecate that dismal state with their utmost vehemency of spirit, wherein they should be everlastingly yoked with sin, and cooped up with unclean sinners, both which they loathe so perfectly.

It was the speech of a gracious woman when on the very marches of death: ‘O Lord, send me not to hell among such filthy company, which thou knowest I have not liked on earth.’ But as for those that can fadge very well with their lusts, and the company of the wicked here, I know not how they can thus deprecate that place where they shall meet with that which pleaseth them so much on earth. David, Psalms 26:1-12, first protests his abhorrency against the ways and society of the wicked: ‘I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers; I have hated the congregation of evil-doers; and will not sit with the wicked,’ Psalms 26:4-5: then his zeal for God, and delight he had in his house to praise and serve him, Psalms 26:6-8. After which, he breaks out into this prayer, ‘Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men,’ Psalms 26:9. As if he had said, I am not of their knot in my life, O let me not be of their bundle at my death. I have praised thee on earth, send me not to blaspheme thee in hell. I have loved the habitations of thy house here, let me not dwell with unclean spirits hereafter.

(b) Hell is a state of separation from the blissful presence of God. Pray to be delivered from it under this notion—as it is the last, yea, everlasting excommunication of the creature from God. ‘Go, ye cursed,’ that is, never to see my sweet face more—called therefore ‘outer darkness,’ because not the least beam or stricture of his favour to enlighten the souls of the damned, nor the least crevice is left open for hope to expect it. The heat of hell-fire is not so dismal, as the want of this light. This makes them cursed; ‘Go, ye cursed.’ The curse lies in their departure from God, the fountain of all blessing. All besides this were tolerable. Would God cast but one kind look upon those miserable souls, as they swim in this lake of fire and brimstone, it were able to change the property of the place, and the joy thereof were enough to take away the sense of their torment. The three worthies in Daniel could walk in the fire, having God to bear them company, as if they had been only in the sunshine. That which a saint prizeth most in heaven is the presence of God: ‘So shall we ever be with the Lord,’ 1 Thessalonians 4:17. And hell is most dreaded by them, because a gulf is fixed between the souls in it and God, that no communion can be had with him to all eternity. O how few pray against hell under this notion! how few cry out with David, ‘Cast me not away from thy presence!’ Psalms 51:11. If this were the thing above all they feared should befall them in the other world, would they so willingly live without acquaintance with God in this world? Surely no.

(c) Hell is a state wherein the damned can never actually satisfy God’s justice; for their debt being infinite, and they, because creatures, but finite, will ever be paying. But the last farthing can never be paid, which is the only reason they lie forever in prison, because it can never be said, ‘Now God hath his due.’ But Christ, the saints’ pay-master, discharged their whole debt at once, and took in the bond, which he nailed to his cross, leaving no back-reckoning unpaid, to bring the believer afterward into any danger from the hands of divine justice. Now, as an ingenuous debtor desires his freedom at his creditor’s hands, that thereby he may be capable of paying his debt, as well as to escape the misery that himself should endure by his imprisonment; so an ingenuous soul—and such is every saint—deprecates hell, as well with an eye to God’s glory, as to his own ease and happiness. Lord, saith the sincere soul, if thou packest me away to hell, there I shall pay thee, it is true, by my just torments something in a dribbling way by retail, but never be able to discharge the whole sum; but at Christ’s hands thou mayest receive to the full what thy justice can demand at mine, and also make me thy poor creature a trumpeter of thy praise to eternity. O send me not to blaspheme thee among that wretched crew of damned souls and unclean spirits, who so much

desire to join with the choir of holy angels and saints in singing hallelujahs to thy holy and glorious name.

[Third kind of petitionary prayer —the imprecatory.]

Third. Imprecatory prayer; wherein the Christian imprecates the vengeance of God upon the enemies of God and his people. On such a sad and solemn errand are the saints' prayers sometimes sent to heaven, and speed as effectually as when they go to obtain blessings for themselves and the church of God. And no wonder, for they are perfumed with Christ's merits, and thereby are as acceptable to God as any other they put up in his name. 'And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God,' Revelation 8:4. Now what kind of prayers these were is clear by the next words, 'And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake,' Revelation 8:5. By which is signified the dreadful judgments which God in answer to his saints' prayers would bring upon the wicked world, whose bloody persecutions of the church, and fury against the truth of God, made the saints to cry to heaven for vengeance upon them; and that it should come inevitably come as thunder, lightning, and earthquakes, that can be resisted by no power or policy of the greatest monarch on earth. Thus, as at the firing of some cannon planted against a city, you may see its turrets or wall come tumbling down; so, upon the prayers of the saints, great judgments were certainly to befall the enemies of God and his church. Now, the path wherein the Christian is here to tread being very narrow, he is to be the more cautious that he steps not awry. He is, in this part of prayer which is imprecatory, like one that drives a chariot on the brow of a steep hill, who, if he hath not the quicker eye and steadier hand, may soon spoil all. The highest strains of a saint's duty run nearest the most dangerous precipices, as the most mysterious truths are soonest perverted into the most damnable errors. I shall therefore first lay down a few particulars which may serve as a rail to compass in this duty, for the better securing the Christian from falling into any miscarriage about it.

1. Take heed thou dost not make thy private particular enemies the object of thy imprecation. We have no warrant, when any wrong us, presently to go and call for fire from heaven upon them. We are bid, indeed, to heap coals upon our enemy's head, but they are of love, not of wrath and revenge. Job sets a black brand upon this, and clears himself from the imputation of so great a sin: 'If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me,...neither have I suffered my mouth to sin by wishing a curse to his soul,' Job 31:29-30. He durst not wish his enemy ill, much less deliberately form a wish into a prayer, and desire God to curse him. Our Saviour hath taught us a more excellent way: 'Bless them that curse you,...and pray for them which despitefully use you,' Matthew 5:44. I know this is counted a poor sheepish spirit by many of our gallants. Go pray for them? No, send them the glove rather, and be revenged on them in a duel by shedding their blood. This is the drink-offering which these sons of pride delight to pour out to their revenge. Or, curse them to the pit of hell with their God damn them oaths! O tremble at such a spirit as this! The ready way to fetch a curse from heaven on thyself, is to imprecate one sinfully upon another. 'As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones,' Psalms 109:17-18. Moses, I suppose, has as noble a spirit as any of these that style them such men of honour; yet, did he draw upon Aaron, or fall a cursing of Miriam, when they had used him so unworthily? I trow not, but bears all patiently. Nay, when God declares his displeasure against Miriam for this affront

put upon him, see how this holy man intercedes for her with God, Numbers 12:1-16. This is valour of the right make, to overcome evil with good, and instead of seeking revenge on him that wrongs us, to get the mastery of our own corruption so far as to desire his good the more. Thus our Lord, when he was numbered amongst transgressors, even then ‘made intercession for the transgressors,’ Isaiah 53:12; that is, those very men which used him so bloodily, while they were digging his heart out of his body with their instruments of cruelty, then was he begging the life of their souls with his fervent prayers.

2. When thou prayest against the enemies of God and his church, direct thy prayers rather against their plots than person. Thus the apostles, ‘And now, Lord, behold their threatenings,’ Acts 4:29. Not, ‘confound their persons,’ but, ‘behold their threatenings;’ and so they leave their case with the Lord to right it for them. So David, ‘O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness,’ 2 Samuel 15:31. Indeed, did do more, he destroyed plot and plotter also; and in this sense the saints may oft say with the prophet, ‘Thou hast done terrible things we looked not for’—by pouring out his vengeance on the persons, when they have only prayed against their wicked designs.

3. When praying against the persons of those that are open enemies to God and his church, it is safest to pray indefinitely and in general: ‘Let them all be confounded...that hate Zion,’ Psalms 129:5; because we know not who of them are implacable, and who not, and therefore cannot pray absolutely and peremptorily against particular persons. There may be an elect vessel for a time in open hostility against God and his church, whom afterward God may consecrate to himself by converting grace, and so make him a holy vessel for the use of his sanctuary. We do, it is confessed, find some in Scripture prayed against by name. So Moses prayed against Korah and his complices, Numbers 16:15; and Paul against Alexander the coppersmith, ‘The Lord reward him according to his works;’ but these and other in the Scripture had an extraordinary spirit, and not to be patterns for us in this case. Elias called for fire from heaven upon the captains, but the disciples were soundly chid for a preposterous imitation of this act, who had not his spirit, ‘Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of,’ Luke 9:55. Pray thou for vengeance against all the implacable enemies of God, and leave him to direct thy arrow to its mark. Ahab was hit, though the arrow was shot at a venture by one that may be thought not of him. Prayers are sorted in heaven before their answer returns. Some of those emperors for whom the church in the primitive times prayed, yet proving implacable enemies to God and his people, felt the weight of those imprecations, which in general they put up against the adversaries of the truth.

4. In praying against the implacable enemies of God and his church, the glory of God should be principally aimed at, and vengeance on them in order to that. ‘Arise, O Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered.’ As the sun, when it hath dispelled the vapours that muffled it up from our sight, breaks out in the glory of its beams; so God, by taking vengeance on his enemies, and scattering them in their wicked imaginations with which they endeavoured to obscure his glory in the world, doth display and make visible the splendour of his attributes before his people’s eyes. The saddest consequence which attends the prosperity and success of God’s enemies in the world, is their pride and blasphemy against God, his truth, and church. Then they belch out their horrid blasphemies against heaven; then they mock the poor saints, and pierce them with the sharp sword of their mocking language, while they say unto them, ‘Where is now their God?’ But when God takes to himself power and strength, and confounds these giants and sons of the earth, by

tumbling destruction upon their heads in the midst of their wicked enterprises; when he recoils their own plots they have charged against his church upon themselves—making them go off like a pistol in their pocket—to procure their own death and ruin; now the reproach is taken off, and they have an answer given to their question, 'Where is now your God?' He is at their throat, he is with his sword of vengeance vindicating his glorious name upon them. When Julian the Apostate was slain—and confessed at whose hand he received his fatal blow, in crying, vicisti Galilæ—thou hast conquered, O Galilean—then Libænius, his scoffing sophister, had his question, 'What is the carpenter's son now a doing?' —which a little before he had put to a Christian in scorn of his Saviour—thrown in his teeth to the confusion of his face, and found the Christian's answer—that he was making a coffin for his master —prove truer than he was aware of. It cannot but be a joyful day to a saint, that prizeth the honour of his God above his own life, when he sees even the wicked —that before denied a providence, and thought all events were thrown out of blind fortune's lap, as if the world were but a lottery, wherein everyone had his portion by chance—now forced by the remarkable appearance of his power and wisdom in saving his people, and destroying his implacable enemies, to confess, 'Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth,' Psalms 58:11. The exaltation of the glorious name of God, every saint doth, and should, aim at, in the prayers wherein he imprecates vengeance. 'Let them be confounded...let them be put to shame, and perish, that men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the most high over all the earth,' Psalms 83:17-18. Now from this head of imprecatory prayer, there is—

(1.) Matter of comfort to the saints against those direful imprecations which the wicked world belcheth out against them. The saints in this sense are a cursed people. The wicked make the greatest part of the world; the church is a little flock, but her enemies a huge herd; and these cannot wish well to the saints. Cain, as Luther saith, will hate and kill Abel to the end of the world; the same spirit that was in him remaineth in his seed. Sometimes when the church of God flourisheth, and hath the sun of outward prosperity on her side, they may cry hosanna in the crowd—as Shimei, when David was going up the hill of honour, then he could worship the rising sun, and crouch to him whom he had bitterly cursed in his distress—but when 'they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly' in their heart, Psalms 62:4. A wicked man cannot wish well to a saint as a saint, as, on the contrary, a saint cannot bless the wicked as such. 'Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the Lord be upon you: we bless you in the name of the Lord,' Psalms 129:8. They do, indeed, desire their conversion, and therein wish them well, but in the wicked way they are in at present they cannot bless them. So the wicked can desire the saints should come over to their party, do as they do, and then they would applaud and hug them. But, let the saints keep close to God, and refuse to run into riot and excess with them, and they are sure to meet with their curse and imprecation; it is not their unblamable and peaceable will free them from their wrath and fury. 'I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me,' Jeremiah 15:10. But fear not, thou who art a saint, their imprecations. This is but anathema secundum dici; like false fire in the pan of an uncharged gun, it gives a crack but hurts not. God's blessing will cover thee from their curse; 'Let them curse, but bless thou,' Psalms 109:28. When the viper flew out of the fire upon Paul's hand, the barbarians looked that he should presently drop down dead, but it proved no such matter. Thus the enemies of God and his people have looked one generation after another, when the church, that hath been always laden with their curses, should perish under them; but it lives yet to walk over the graves of all those that have

wished it ill. Alas, poor wretches! what is your imprecation worth? Truly as your blessing can do no good, so neither your curse any hurt, till you can get God to set his seal and say amen to it; which is impossible for you to obtain. Did our Saviour so sharply rebuke the rash request of his disciples, calling for fire to fall on them whom they thought deserved it? and will he gratify the lust of your devilish wrath and fury against his own dear people, by pouring on them what you audaciously, yea blasphemously, desire of him? Will nothing serve you but to have God your executioner to hang whom you condemn? and those no other than his dear children, and for nought else but because they dare not be as wicked as yourselves? Go bid the tender mother imbrue her hands in the blood of her sweet babe, that even now came out of her womb, and now lies at her breast; or the husband betray and deliver the wife of his bosom into the hands of murderers that wait for her life. Would these be an errand to make the messenger that brings them welcome to loving mother or husband? But if any such anomalies in nature's grammar and monsters among men were to be found, yet remember he is a God thou solicitest whose nature is unchangeable and covenant with his people inviolable. How was God courted by Balak and Balaam with altar after altar, from place to place! But all to no purpose: 'Nevertheless the Lord thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the Lord thy God loved thee,' Deuteronomy 23:5. Never was any design carried on with more zeal and passionate desire to effect it than this; one would think that God had said enough to Balaam at first to make him sick of his enterprise, as a thing infeasible, Numbers 22:12: 'Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed.' But the liked the work and loved the wages, and therefore baffles his conscience, not telling the messengers all that God said to him, and they also report not all to Balak what Balaam said to them, so loath were both the work should fall: yet we see by the event, that they took but pains to lose their labour, nay worse, to lose themselves, for God made them, and him that set them on this work, to drink the curse which they would so fain have brewed for Israel.

(2.) A word to the wicked. Take heed that by your implacable hatred to the truth and church of God, yo do not engage her prayers against you. These imprecatory prayers of the saints, when shot at the right mark, and duly put up, they are murdering pieces, and strike dead where they light. 'Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily,' Luke 18:7-8. They are not empty words—as the imprecations of the wicked poured into the air, and there vanish with their breath—but are received into heaven, and shall be sent back with thunder and lightning upon the pates of the wicked. David's prayer unravelled Ahithophel's fine-spun policy, and twisted his halter for him. The prayers of the saints are more to be feared—as once a great person said and felt—than an army of twenty thousand men in the field. Esther's fast hastened Haman's ruin, and Hezekiah's against Sennacherib brought his huge host to the slaughter, and fetched an angel from heaven to do the execution in one night upon them.

[Thanksgiving, or the gratulatory part of prayer.]

Second. The second of the twofold division of the whole matter of prayer, viz. thanksgiving. In handling of this I shall still keep my former method.

First. I shall show what we are to return praises and thanks to God for. Second. How we are to frame our thanksgiving we return.

[What we are to praise and thank God for.]

First. I shall show what we are to return praises and thanks to God for. Now the object of thanksgiving, as of requests, is something that is good, but under another notion. We ask what we want; we bless and praise God for the mercies we have received, or for the hope we have from the promise that we shall in due time receive them. So that we see the Christian hath as large a field for the exercise of his thankfulness in praising God, as he hath in the petitionary part of prayer for his desires. This duty circumscribes heaven and earth; it takes both worlds within its circumference. As God does nothing but he aims at his own glory thereby, Proverbs 16:4; so no act of God towards his people, wherein he intends not their good, and as such becomes the subject of their thanksgiving. Hence we are bid 'in everything give thanks.' O what a copious theme hath God given his people to enlarge their meditations upon—'in everything!' The whole course and series of divine providence towards the saints is like a music■book, in every leaf whereof there is a song ready pricked for them to learn and sing to the praise of their God. No passage in their life of which they can say, 'In this I received no mercy for which I should bless God.' Now, as a partial obedience is not good, so partial thanks is stark naught. Not that any saint is able to keep all the commands, or reckon up all the mercies of God, much less return particular and express acknowledgement for every single mercy. But, as he hath respect to all the commandments, Psalms 119:6, so he desires to value highly every mercy, and to his utmost power give God the praise of all his mercies. 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?' Psalms 116:12. This is an honest soul indeed; he would not sink any debt he owes to God, but calls his soul to an account for all his benefits, not this or that. The skipping over one note in a lesson may spoil the grace of the music; unthankfulness for one mercy disparageth our thanks for the rest. But to sort the mercies of God into several ranks, that you may see more distinctly your work in this duty lie before you.

1. Mercies are either ordinary or extraordinary —our everyday commons or exceedings, with which God now and then feasts us. Thou must not only praise God for some extraordinary mercy which once in a year betides thee—a mercy that comes with such pomp and observation, that all thy neighbours take notice of it with thee, as the mercy which Zacharias and Elizabeth had in their son, that was 'noised abroad throughout all the hill country,' Luke 1:65—but also for ordinary, everyday mercies. For,

(1.) We are unworthy of the least mercy, Genesis 32:10; and therefore God is worthy of praise for the least, because it is more than he owes us.

(2.) These common ordinary mercies are many. Thus David enhanceth the mercies of this kind: 'O God! how great is the sum of them? if I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee,' Psalms 139:17-18. As if he had said, There is not a point of time wherein thou art not doing me good; as soon as I open my eyes in the morning, I have a new theme, in some fresh mercies given in since I closed them overnight, to employ my praiseful meditations. Many little items make together a great sum. What less than a grain of sand? yet what heavier than the sand on the sea-shore? As little sins—such as are vain thoughts and idle words —because of their multitude, arise to a great guilt and will bring in a long bill, a heavy reckoning, at last; so ordinary mercies,what they want in their size, particularly and individually considered, of some other great mercies, they have it compensated in their number. Who will not

say that a man shows as great, yea greater, kindness to maintain one at his table with ordinary fare all the year, as in entertaining him at a great feast twice or thrice in the same time?

(3.) The sincerity of the heart is seen more in thankfulness for ordinary mercies than extraordinary. As it shows a naughty heart upon every ordinary occasion to fall into sin, so the soul very gracious that takes the hint of every common mercy to bless his God. Some, they are bound up in their spirits, that none but strong physic will work upon them; they can digest little afflictions, and swallow ordinary mercies, without humbling themselves under the one or praising God for the other. That is the upright heart which gentle physic prevails with, little chastisements humble, and ordinary mercies raise to thankfulness.

2. Mercies are complete or imperfect—begun mercies, or finished. We must not make God stay for our praises till he hath finished a mercy, but praise him at the beginning of a mercy. We should be as ready to return our praises for a mercy, as God is to hear our prayers when begging a mercy. Now God comes forth early to meet a praying soul: 'At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth,' Daniel 9:23. 'I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest,' Psalms 32:5. Thus should we echo in our thankfulness to the first intimation that God gives in his providence of an approaching mercy. If you do but hear the king is on the road toward your town, you raise your bells to ring him in, and stay not till he be entered {through} the gates. The birds, they rise betimes in the morning, and are saluting the rising sun with their sweet notes in the air. Thus should we strike up our harps in praising God at the first appearance of a mercy. Notable instances we have for this: Moses did not promise God, when he had saved them from Pharaoh's wrath and the sea's waves, that, at his landing them safe in Canaan, and lodging his victorious colours at the end of their journey in their full rest, he would then praise him for all his mercies together. No, but he presently pens a song, and on the bank, within sight of the howling wilderness, which they were now to enter into, he sings it with Israel in thankfulness for this first handsel after their march out of Egypt. So, 2 Samuel 6:13, 'And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings.' And, 1 Chronicles 15:26, which is a place parallel to this, and speaks of the same passage, 'When God helped the Levites that bare the ark,...they offered seven bullocks and seven rams.' That is, so soon as, by going a few paces or steps, they perceived God graciously to favour their enterprise—making no breach as formerly he had done upon them—they presently express their thankfulness upon the place for this hopeful beginning, well knowing no way was better to engage God in the continuance and enlargement of this mercy, than by a praiseful entertainment thereof at its first approach. In a word, thus the Jews in Babylon at the very first peep of day, when their deliverance began to break out, are at their praises: 'Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them,' Psalms 126:2. It was now but coming tide, as I may say, with them; the water was newly turned, and their affairs began to look with a more smiling face, yet now they salute their infant mercy with joy and thankfulness. May be, Christian, thou art upon a sick■bed, and some little reviving thou hast, though far from thy former health—O bless God for this little lift of thy head from thy pillow. May be thou hast been, as to thy spiritual state, in great distress—as it were in the belly of hell—swallowed up with terrors from the Lord, but now thy agony abates; though the Comforter be not come, yet thou hast some strictures of divine light let into thy dungeon, that raise a little hope to wait for more: O, let not this handsel of mercy pass without some thankful acknowledgment. Some, alas!

are like great ships that cannot be set afloat but with the spring-tide and highwater of a mercy completed; if they have not all they would, they cannot see what they have, nor tune their hearts into a praiseful frame.

3. Mercies are such as are received in this life or reserved for the next—mercies in the hand or mercies in hope. There are promises which God will have us stay till we come to heaven for the performance of, and these we are to praise God for, as well as what we receive here; bless God for what he hath laid up for thee in heaven, as well as that he lays out upon thee on earth. The more our hearts are enlarged in thankfulness for these mercies, which we now have only in hope, the more honour we put upon his faithful promise. He that bestows much cost upon a house he hath in reversion, shows his confidence is great one day to be possessed of it. When a bill of exchange is paid at sight, it shows the merchant whose it is to be a man of credit and ability. By the joy thou takest up, and the thankfulness thou layest out for what the bare promise tells thee thou shalt at death receive, thou glorifiest the truth of God that is the promiser.

4. There are bitter mercies and sweet mercies —some mercies God gives in wine, some in wormwood. Now we must praise God for the bitter mercies as well as the sweet. Thus Job, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' Too many are prone to think nothing is a mercy that is not sweet in the going down, and leaves not a pleasant farewell on their palate; but this is the childishness of our spirits, which, as grace grows more manly, and the Christian more judicious, will wear off. Who that understands himself will value a book by the gilt on the cover? Truly none of our temporals—whether crosses or enjoyments—considered in themselves abstractly, are either a curse or a mercy. They are only as the covering to the book. It is what is written in them that they must resolve us whether they be a mercy or not. Is it an affliction that lies on thee? If thou canst find it comes from love, and ends in grace and holiness, it is a mercy though it be bitter to thy taste. Is it an enjoyment? If love doth not send it, and grace end it—which appears when thou growest worse by it—it is a curse, though sweet to thy sense. There are sweet poisons as well as bitter cordials. The saints commonly have greater advantage from their afflictions in the world, than enjoyments of the world. Their eyes are oftener enlightened with wormwood than honey—those dispensations that are bitter and unpleasing to sense, than those that are sweet and luscious.

5. Mercies are either personal, or such as we receive in partnership with others—and these must be recognized as well as the other. 'Pardon, O God,' said he, 'my other men's sins.' Thus, 'Blessed be God,' say thou, 'for my other men's mercies.' Haply, Christian, thou hast prayed for a sick friend, and he is restored to health: for another in distress of spirit, and the Comforter at last is come to him. Now thou who hadst an adventure in his bottom, hast a mercy also in the return that is made to him, and therefore art to bless God with him. He that prays for his friend, and joins not with him in thankfulness when the mercy is given, is like one that is a means to bring his friend into debt, but takes no care to help him out. Thy friend, Christian, needs thy aid much more to pay the thanks, than to borrow the mercy, because this is the harder work of the two. But above all mercies to others, be sure church mercies and nation mercies be not forgot.

[Ten directions how to frame our thanksgivings.]

Second. You have heard what is the subject of our praises and thanksgivings; we shall now lay down some directions how we are to frame our thanksgivings.

1. Direction. Be sure the thing thou prayest God for be found among the good things of the promise. That is the compass by which we are to steer our course, as in the petitionary, so also in the gratulatory, part of prayer. If it be not in the promise it is not a mercy, and so not the subject of thanksgiving. When some prosper in their wickedness, they are so bold as to thank God they sped so well. Now, if it be grievous sin for a man to bless himself in any wicked way, Deuteronomy 29:19, much more horrid is it to bless God for prospering therein. By the former, he only voucheth his own sin—which indeed is bad enough—but by the other he makes God a party with him, and tempts the Lord to own it also. It is a good speech of Bernard to this purpose, who, comparing those that on the one hand thank God for their success in wickedness, with hypocrites, who praise him for the good things they receive, saith, isti impiè mala suo Deo, isti dei bona fraudulenter intorquent sibi (Serm. 45 super Cant.)—the one impute their sin to God, the other ascribe the glory of his mercies to themselves. God cannot accept thy praise, unless he first approve thy fact. He that receives a bribe is guilty of the fault. And dare you thus tempt the holy One? If the God you serve were like the heathens' idols, the matter were not much. When the Philistines had practiced their cruelty on Samson, they present his head to their god. The devil desires no better sacrifices than the fruit of men's sins. But the holy One of Israel abhors all wicked praises. 'The hire of a whore, was not to be offered,' Deuteronomy 23:18.

2. Direction. Let all your praises be offered up in Christ. 'By him...let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God,' Hebrews 13:15. 'Ye...are...an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ,' 1 Peter 2:5. Couldst thou pen never so rare a panegyric[9], couldst thou flourish it with never so much art or rhetoric, and deliver it with the greatest passion and zeal possible, all this would be harsh and grate the Almighty's ear except sounded through Christ. It is not the breath poured into the open air but passing through the trumpet or some other instrument—where it is formed into a tunable sound—that makes it pleasing music. Possibly when thou prayest for a mercy thou shelterest thyself under Christ's wing, and usest his name to procure thy admission —because conscious of thine own unworthiness to receive what thou askest—but, when thou praisest God, thy errand being not to beg and receive but to give, thou expectest welcome. He that brings a present shall surely find the door open. Yes, if thy gift were suitable to the great God. But who art thou that the great God should take a present at thy hand? If thou beest not worthy of the least mercy thou beggest, then surely thou art unworthy of this honour to have thy thank-offering accepted. Thou needest Christ's mediation for the one as much as for the other.

3. Direction. Stay not in generals, but descend to the particular instances of God's mercy towards thee in thy thanksgivings. Est dolus in generalibus —there is guile in generals. It bewrays a slighty spirit, if not a false, when in confession of sin we content ourselves with a general indictment, 'I am a sinner—a great sinner,' and there to stop, without a particular sense of the several breaches made in the law of God. Neither is here a better symptom when a man puts God off with a compliment at distance for his goodness and mercy in general, but takes no notice of the particular items which swell and make up the total sum. Now, to be able to do this, it will be necessary that thou takest special notice of God's daily providence to thee and thine, yea, and to the church of Christ also. Lay up these in thy heart, as Mary did our Saviour's words, for the matter of thanksgiving against the time of prayer; this true good husbandry for thy soul. You do not expect to find that money in your chest which you never laid up there; neither will you readily find in your heart to praise God for those mercies which you never committed to your memory. It is to be

feared the man means not to pay that debt honestly which he doth not set down in his book. Psalms 107:1-43, when the psalmist there had stirred them up to thankfulness for the mercies of God in creation and providence, his conclusion is worthy of remark, ‘Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord,’ Psalms 107:43. As if he had said, The reason why so little praise is given for such great works of mercy, is because men see not the lovingkindness of God in them; and they see not this because they observe not those; and they observe not those because they have not wisdom. It is not a library that makes a scholar, but wisdom to observe and gather the choice notions out of his books. None want mercies to bless God for. Divine providence is a large volume, written thick and close with mercies from one end of our life to the other; but few, alas! have a heart to read in it, and fewer have wisdom to collect the choice passages of it for such a holy purpose as this is.

4. Direction. Excite thy praising graces. David stirs up all that is within him to praise God, Psalms 103:1-22; that is, all the powers and graces of his soul. To instance but in two or three.

(1.) Humility. A proud man cannot well tell how to beg, yet selfishness may make him stoop to it; but in thankfulness he must needs be a bungler, for this is a high piece of self-denial. ‘Not unto us, Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise.’ The proud man’s gift will cleave to his hand; he is unfit to set the crown on God’s head that hath a mind to wear it himself. We find indeed the tool in the Pharisee’s hand, but he cuts his work into chips. He seems to honour God with his mouth, but eats his words as he speaks them, and discovers plainly that he intends more to exalt himself than God: ‘I thank God I am not as this publican.’ This, ‘I thank God,’ comes in pro formâ; it is the publican he disdains, and himself that he applauds. You may easily think what a look ambitious Haman gave Mordecai when he held his stirrup, who desired himself to have been in the saddle. How, alas! can a proud heart give God that which he covets himself? No man, saith Luther, can pray sanctificetur nomen tuum till he first be able to pray profanetur nomen meum—sanctified be thy name, till he be willing his own name should be debased.

Labour therefore to vilify, nullify thyself; then, and not till then, thou wilt magnify, omnify thy God. None so zealous in begging as he that is most pinched with his want; none so hearty in his thanks as he that hath most sense of his unworthiness. And who can think better of himself that is thoroughly acquainted with himself? If God had not set thee up, what stock couldst thou have found of thy own? Thou wert as bare as a shorn sheep, naked camest thou into the world, and ever since thou hast been cast upon thy God, even as a poor child upon the charge of the parish. What hast thou earned by all the service thou hast done him? Not the bread of thy poorest meal. And art thou yet proud? Bernard compares Joseph’s carriage with his master and the grateful soul’s with God thus together: Joseph, saith the father, knew that his master, who put all he had into his hands, yet excepted his wife, and therefore accounted it too base an ingratitude to take her from his master’s bed who had been so kind to him in his house. Thus, saith he, God freely gives his mercies into the saint’s hands but excepts his glory. Therefore the gracious soul takes what God gives thankfully; but leaves the praise of them, which God reserves for himself humbly.

(2.) Love and joy. Amour et gaudium faciunt musicum—love and joy, it is said, make a musician. Indeed then this music of praise is best—in heaven, I mean—where the graces are perfect.

(a) Excite thy love. This is an affection that cannot keep within door, but must be sallying forth in the praises of God. Austin, speaking of heaven, breaks out thus, ibi vacabimus et videbimus, vide-

bimus et amabimus, amabimus et laudabimus, laudabimus et cantabimus—in heaven we shall have nothing to do but to behold the face of God, and seeing him we shall love him, loving him we shall praise him, and praising we shall sing and rejoice. Love and thankfulness are like the symbolical qualities of the elements—easily resolved into each other. David begins with ‘I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice,’ Psalms 116:1. And, to enkindle this grace into a greater flame, he aggravates the mercies of God in some following verses; which done, then he is in the right cue for praises, and strikes up his instrument, ‘What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?’ Psalms 116:12. The spouse, when once she was thoroughly awake, pondering with herself what a friend had been at her door, and how his sweet company was lost through her unkindness, shakes off her sloth, riseth, and away she goes after him. Now, when with running after her beloved she had put her soul into a heat of love, then she breaks out into an encomium of her beloved, praising him from top to toe, Song of Solomon 5:10. That is the acceptable praising which comes from a warm heart; and he that would warm his heart must use some holy exercise to stir up his habit of love, which, like natural heat in the body, is preserved and increased by motion.

(b) Excite thy joy. I will sing ‘with joyful lips,’ Psalms 63:5. A sad heart and a thankful hardly can dwell together—I mean, sad with worldly sorrow. The disciples for sorrow could not hold open their eyes to pray, much more sure were they unfit to praise. This indeed makes the duty of praise and thanksgiving more difficult than to pray, because our joy here is so often quenched and interrupted with intervening sins and sorrows that this heavenly fore seldom burns long clear on the Christian’s altar from which his praises should ascend. Temptations and afflictions, they both drive the soul to prayer and more dispose it for prayer; but they untune his instrument for praise. Hannah, she wept and prayed, but durst not eat of the peace-offering, the sacrifice of praise, because she wept. It behoves us therefore the more to watch our hearts lest they be indisposed by any affliction for this duty. Do with thy soul as the musician in wet weather doth with his instrument, which he hangs not in a moist nasty room, but where it may have the air of the fire. Art thou under affliction? let not thy soul pore too long on those thy troubles, but bring it within the scent of God’s mercies that are intermingled with them. Sit near this fire of God’s love in Christ —warm thy heart with meditation on spiritual promises—while thou art under bodily pressures, and thou shalt find, through God’s blessing thy heart in some comfortable tune to praise God in the saddest and most rainy day that can befall thee in all thy life. Thus David could make music in the cave: ‘My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise,’ Psalms 57:7.

5. Direction. Content not thyself with a bare narrative, but give every mercy its proper accent according to the enhancing circumstances thereof. There is great difference in two that sing the same song. From one you have only the plain song; the other descants and runs division upon it, in which consists the grace of music. The mercies of God affect our hearts as they are dressed forth. If we put on them their rich habiliments—the circumstances, I mean, that advance them, they appear glorious to our eyes and enlarge our hearts in praises for them; but considered without these, we pass them slightly. God himself, when he would express the height of his love to his people, presents them to his own eye, not as now they are, but as clothed with the glory he intends them. ‘As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee,’ Isaiah 62:5. At the wedding day the best clothes are put on. Thus do thou, to draw out thy thankfulness for mercies, consider them in the circumstances that may render them most glorious in thine eye.

Some emperors have not suffered every one to draw their picture, lest they should be disfigured by their bungling pencil. Truly, slighty praises disfigure the lovely face of God's mercy. They are but few that draw them to life. To do this much study and meditation are requisite. 'The works of the Lord are sought out of them that have pleasure in them.' The curious limner studies the face of the man before he makes his draught. Praise is a work not done in a trice, the lesson must be pricked before it can be sung. Read therefore the word, and learn from the saints there recorded what aggravating circumstances they have observed in recognizing their mercies.

Sometimes we have them setting the accent upon the speedy return of their prayers, 'In the day when I cried thou answeredst me,' Psalms 138:3. This is a print that superadds a further excellency to the mercy. It was but knock, and have; come, and be served. While the church were at God's door praying for Peter's deliverance, Peter is knocking at theirs to tell them their prayer is heard.

Sometimes from the sinful infirmities which mingled with their prayers. Now that mercy would come with a 'notwithstanding these,' and steal upon them when they had hardly faith to wait for them, this hath exceedingly endeared the goodness of God to them. 'I said in my haste, All men are liars. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?' Psalms 116:11-12.

Sometimes from the greatness of their strait: 'This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.' 'O taste and see that the Lord is good,' Psalms 34:6, Psalms 34:8. So, 'Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy endureth for ever,' Psalms 136:23. Indeed this must needs raise high appreciating thoughts of the mercy. The water that God gave Israel out of the rock is called honey, because it came in their extreme want, and so was as sweet to them as honey. Silver is gold when given to a poor man that must else have died for lack of bread.

Sometimes from the frequent returns of God's goodness and expressions of his care; thy mercies 'are new every morning,' Lamentations 3:23. 'Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed,' Psalms 129:2. 'Hitherto hath the Lord helped us,' 1 Samuel 7:12. This gives such an accent as, without it, the mercy cannot be pronounced with its due emphasis. A course of sin is worse than an act of sin. 'Their course is evil,' Jeremiah 23:10. So a course of mercy from time to time speaks more love. Some that could beteem[10] a single alms on a beggar, would beat him from their door should he lie there and make it a trade.

Sometimes from the peculiarity of the mercy, they take notice of the distinction God makes in issuing out his favours: 'He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord,' Psalms 147:20. 'Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?' John 14:22—Let these few hints suffice to set thee on work to find out the other. Without this, we rob God of the best part of our sacrifice; as if a Jew had stripped off the fat and laid the lean on God's altar; or, as he did by his idol, who took off the cloak of silver it had and put on his own threadbare one in the room of it. The mercies thou receivest are great and rich; give not him thy beggarly praises. He expects they should bear some proportion to his mercy: 'Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness,' Psalms 150:2.

6. Direction. Distinguish between mercy and mercy; let the choicest mercies have thy highest praises. It shows a naughty heart to howl and make a great noise in prayer for corn and wine, and in the meantime to be indifferent or faint in his desires for Christ and his grace. Nor better is it, when one acknowledges the goodness of God in temporals, but takes little notice of those greater blessings which concern another life. You shall have sometimes a covetous earthworm speak what a blessed time and season it is for the corn and the fruits of the earth —that fit his carnal palate, as the pottage did Esau's —but you never hear him express any feeling sense of the blessed seasons of grace, the miracle of God's patience that such a wretch as he s out of hell so long, the infinite love of God in offering in offering Christ by the gospel to him. He turns over these as a child doth a book, till he hits on some gaud and picture, and there he stays to gaze. Christ and his grace, with other spiritual blessings, he skills not of, he cares not for, except they would fill his bags and barns. Now, shall such a one pass for a thankful man? will God accept his praises for earth that rejects heaven? that takes corn and wine with thanks, and bids him keep Christ to himself with scorn? saying, as Esau when his brother offered him his present, 'I have enough?' A gracious heart is of another strain: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,' Ephesians 1:3. Indeed God gives temporals to make us in love with spirituals, yea, with himself that gave them; as the suitor sends the token to get the love of the person.

Again, as we are to distinguish between mercy and mercy, so even in these lower mercies that concern this life, because thou layest the accent of thy thankfulness on the spiritual part of them. In every outward mercy there is food for the flesh and food for the spirit; that which pleaseth the sense and that which may exercise our grace. Is it health? The carnal heart is most taken with it, as it brings the joy of his natural life to him, which sickness deprived him of; but that which, above all, pleaseth a saint, is the opportunity that comes with it for his glorifying God in his place and generation: 'I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God,' Psalms 42:11. Is it an estate that God casts in? The carnal wretch values it for his private accommodation, as if it were given for no higher end than to spend it upon himself, or enrich his family; but the gracious soul blesseth God that gives him to give to the necessity of others, and counts a large heart to be a greater mercy than a full purse. David did not bless himself in his abundance, but blessed God that gave him a heart to return it again into the bosom of God, from whom he received it: 'But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort?' 1 Chronicles 29:14.

7. Direction. Let not thy praises be transient—a fit of music, and then the instrument hung by the wall, till another gaudy day of some remarkable providence makes thee take it down. God will not sit at such a niggard's table, who invites him to a thanksgiving feast once for all the year. God comes not guestwise to his saints' house, but to dwell with them; he 'inhabits the praises of Israel,' Psalms 22:3. That day thou blessest not God thou turnest him out of doors. David took this up for a life-work, 'As long as I live I will praise thee.' 'A lying tongue is but for a moment,' saith Solomon, Proverbs 12:19. Something drops from a liar within a while that discovers his falsehood; the tongue that lies in praising of God is thus for a moment. He can curse God with that tongue to■morrow with which he praiseth him to■day.

8. Direction. Thou must not only continue, but grow in thy praises. As the tide increaseth the ship is lift higher on the waters; as your crop increaseth your barns are enlarged; as you grow richer

you advance in your garb and port; in a word, as your bodies grow so you make your clothes bigger. Every day swells the tide of your mercies, adds to your heap, increases your treasure, and heightens your stature. They are ‘new,’ saith the prophet, ‘every morning,’ Lamentations 3:23; they grow whether thou sleepest or wakest. Now, as the coat thou didst wear when thou wert a child would not become thee now thou art a man; so neither will the garment of praise, which thou didst clothe thy soul with when a young convert, become thee now thou art an old disciple. Thou standest deeper in God’s books than before, and God expects according to what every man hath received. Yourselves are not so bad husbands, but you would improve your estates to the height. Would you let a farm now by the rate it bare forty or fifty years ago? why then may not God raise the rent of his mercies also? Look back, Christian, and see how well the world is mended with thee since thou didst first set up. May be thou canst say with Jacob, ‘I passed over with my staff, and behold now I am become two bands.’

Well, see what thou hast more, in health, estate, in gifts, graces, or comforts, than thou hadst formerly, and then compare thy present thankfulness with what it was before these additions were made to thy stock and treasure. Would it not be a shame to thee if it should be found not to have grown as the goodness of God to thee hath done, much more if it hath shrunk and grown less? And yet how common are such instances of ingratitude? The freer God is with his mercy, the more close and gripple they are in their thankful returns. When poor, they could be thankful for a short meal of coarse fare, more than they are now for their varieties and dainties. When sick, a few broken sleeps that amounted to an hour or two rest in a night, O how affected were their hearts for this mercy! Whereas now they can rise and take little notice of the goodness of God, that gives them their full rest night after night without interruption. Thus as the days lengthen, so the cold strengthens. But is it not strange to see a man grow colder in his love to God, as the sun of God’s mercy riseth higher and shines hotter upon him? O it is sad to see the heap increase, and the heart waste; to find a man grow richer in mercy, and poorer in thankfulness.

9. Direction. Let thy praises be real. Words, we say, pay no debts. There goes more to thankfulness than a mouthful of windy praises, which pass away with the sound they make. A gracious heart is too wise to think God will be put off with a song. He will give God that, but it is the least he intends. ‘The Lord is my strength and song,...and I will prepare him an habitation,’ Exodus 15:2. Aye, here it sticks, building is chargeable; thankfulness is a costly work. Shall I offer to God that which cost me nothing? saith David to Araunah. Cheap praises are easily obtained, but when it comes to charges, then many grow sick of the work. The Jews could sing a ‘song’ when delivered from Babylon, Psalms 137:1-9; but it was long before they could find in their hearts to build God ‘a habitation.’ The time was not come for that. They might have said, their heart was not come. They had money and time enough to build their own nests, but none for God, though herein they played the fools egregiously, for as fast as they built at one end, God pulled down at the other. Some have been of their mind in our times; instead of finding God a habitation and loving our nation to build synagogues, they have pulled them down and carried the beams to their own houses. Excellent artists, in taking down ministers, ministry, and their maintenance, whereby the gospel should be upheld! If this be the way to thrive, God gave his people ill counsel when he said, Consider now from this day I will bless you, Haggai 2:18. But you will ask what I mean by real praises?

[What is meant by real praises.]

(1.) Our praises are real when they are cordial —'All that is within me, bless his holy name,' Psalms 103:1—when his mercies beget amiable thoughts of God in our hearts. We read of 'cursing God in the heart,' Psalms 106:1 {better: Job 1:5}; which then is done when we have base, low, unbecoming thoughts of his greatness and goodness. And, on the contrary, when the mercies of God imprint such an image in the heart of him as livelily represents these his attributes, then thou blessest God in thy heart, by adoring his majesty, reverencing his holiness, delighting in his love, and fearing his goodness. Here is real thankfulness. What is laus—praise or honour, but a reflection of the person's excellency we commend? Now, as the glass represents the image of the person that looks on it, so the thankful soul reflects those glorious attributes again upon God which he puts forth in his mercies. Thus God sees his face in a true glass, which the thankful soul holds up while he praiseth him. Whereas an unthankful heart, like a broken glass, distorts and disfigures the beautiful face of God, by conceiving such low thoughts of God as are unworthy of his glorious attributes.

(2.) Our praises are real when they are obediential. God accounts those mercies forgotten which are not written with legible characters in our lives, 'They forgat God their Saviour,' Psalms 106:21. That of Joshua is observable, Joshua 8:32. Upon their victory over the city Ai, an altar is built as a monument of that signal mercy. Now mark, what doth God command to be written or engraved on the stones thereof? One would have thought the history of that day's work should have been the sculpture, but it is 'the copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel,' Joshua 8:32, whereby he plainly showed the best way of remembering the mercy was not to forget to keep the law. Saul could not blind Samuel's eyes with his many good■morrows, that the people saved the best of the cattle for sacrifice: 'Hath the Lord,' saith he, 'as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams,' 1 Samuel 15:22. As if he had said, 'What, Saul! thinkest thou to bribe God with a sacrifice, while thou art disobedient to his command? Dost thou take the swan, and stick the feather in the room? deny him thine own heart to obey his word, and give him a beast's heart in sacrifice for it? Is this the oblation which he hath required, or will accept?' Truly God riseth hungry from our thanksgiving-dinners, if obedience be not a dish at the table. Without this we and our sacrifices may burn together. God will pluck such from the horns of the altar, and take them off their knees with their hypocritical praises, to pay this debt in another kind. 'If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land,' Isaiah 1:19. Then, and not till then, will God eat of your sacrifices, and yourselves taste the sweetness of your enjoyments. 'He meeteth him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness,' Isaiah 64:5. Not either apart, but both together are required; not rejoice without working righteousness, nor that without rejoicing in the work. The threatening is levelled against Israel not barely because they served not God, but because they served him not 'with gladness in the abundance of his mercies,' Deuteronomy 28:1-68. God delights to have his mercy seen in the cheerful countenance of his servants while they are at his work, which may tell the spectators they serve a good master.

(3.) Then they are real praises when they end in acts of mercy. Very observable is that place, 'By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name,' Hebrews 13:15. Now mark the very net words, 'but to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.' As if he had said, Think not you may thank God to save charges, be willing to both or neither. God's goodness to us should

make us merciful to others. It were strange indeed a soul should come out of his tender bosom with a hard uncharitable heart. Some children do not indeed take after their earthly parents; as Cicero's son, that had nothing of his father but his name. But God's children partake all of their heavenly Father's nature. Philosophy tells us that there is no reaction from the earth to the heavens. They, indeed, shed their influences upon the lower world, which quicken and fructify it, but the earth returns none back to make the sun and stars shine the better. David knew very well that 'his goodness extended not unto God,' but this made him reach forth to his brethren, 'to the saints that are in the earth,' Psalms 16:2-3. Indeed, God hath left his poor saints to receive his rents we owe unto him for his mercies. An ingenuous guest, though his friend will take nothing for his entertainment, yet to show his thankfulness will give something to his servants. At Christ's return, how doth he salute his saints? Not, 'Come ye blessed,' ye have kept such a thanksgiving day, and filled the air with your songs of praise; but, When 'I was an hungered and ye gave me meat, naked and ye clothed me,' Matthew 25:1-46. Alms-deeds in Saint Paul's language are called fruit: 'When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit,' Romans 15:28; implying that all our profession without these good works are but leaves. This is the solid fruit of our faith —love to God and thankfulness for his mercies. Neither must these acts of charity be restrained to the money in thy purse or bread in thy cupboard, though these are included: there are poor souls as well as poor bodies, that need relief.

Hath God plucked thee out of Sodom—out of Satan's bondage? Where are then thy bowels of compassion to those who are yet chained to the devil's post? What means dost thou use to redeem these captives out of their worse than Turkish slavery? The argument God urgeth to Israel to use strangers kindly, is to remember they were once so, Deuteronomy 23:7. Hast thou, after long lying in the dungeon of spiritual darkness and troubles of conscience, had thy head lift up with the comforts of the Spirit—received into the presence of God, as Pharaoh's butler was to his prince's court? how canst thou think thyself thankful, while thou forgettest others that lie in the same prison-house, under as sad fears and terrors as once thyself did? 'Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous,' Psalms 112:4. Surely this will hold, if in any, then in this case. In a word—that I may not be thought to make you hard to the outward man, while I stir up your charity to the inward—hath God raised thee to an estate? May be thy pilgrim's staff, with Jacob's, is turned to two troops? Dost thou now show the kindness of God to his poor members? as David, who inquired if there were none of the house of Saul. O how unlike are we to the saints of primitive times! They would run to meet an object for their charity, and we run from them. They considered the poor, what they wanted, how they might relieve them, yea, they 'devised liberal things;' but we consider and contrive how we may save our purse best. They were willing to part with all in case of extremity, while we grudge a little from our superfluity; laying that, by pride, on our backs which should cover the poor's; throw that to our hawks and hounds which should refresh the bowels of the poor; yea, spend more in our drunken meeting, a miser's feast, or a wrangling suit at law, than we can be willing to give in a year to the necessitous members of Christ.

(4.) Our praises are real when they produce a stronger confidence on God for the future. Who will say that man is thankful to his friend for a past kindness that nourishes an ill opinion of him for the future, and dares not trust him when he needs him again? This was all that ungrateful Israel returned to God for his miraculous broaching the rock to quench their thirst, 'Behold, he smote the

rock, can he give bread also?' Psalms 78:20. This indeed was their trade all along their wilderness march. Wherefore God gives them their character, not by what they seemed to be while his mercies were piping hot, and the feast stood before them—then they could say, 'God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer'—but by their temper and carriage in straits. When the cloth was drawn, and the feast taken out of their sight, what opinion had they then of God? Could they sanctify his name so far as to trust him for their dinner to■morrow who had feasted them yesterday? Truly no. As soon as they feel their hunger return, like froward children they are crying, as if God meant to starve them. Wherefore God spits on the face of their praises, and owns not their hypocritical acknowledgments, but sets their ingratitude upon record, 'They forgat his works, and waited not for his counsel.' O how sad is this, that after God had entertained a soul many a time at his table with choice mercies and deliverances, these should be so ill husbanded, that not a bit of them all should be left to give faith a meal, thereby to keep the heart from fainting, when God comes not so fast to deliver as we desire! He is the most thankful man that ponders up the mercies of God in his memory, and can feed his faith with the thoughts of what hath done for him, so as to walk in the strength thereof in present straits. When Job was on the dunghill, he forgot not God's old kindnesses, but durst trust him with a knife at his throat, 'Though he slay me yet will I trust in him.' He that distrusts God, after former experience, is like the foolish builder, Matthew 7:1-29—he rears his monument for past mercies on the sand, which the next tide of affliction washeth away.

10. Direction. Thou must not only praise God thyself while on the stage of this earth, but endeavour to transmit the memorial of his goodness to posterity. The psalmist, speaking of the mercies of God, saith, 'We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord,' Psalms 78:4. Children are their parents' heirs, they enter upon their estates. It were unnatural for a father, before he dies, to bury up his treasure in the earth, where his children should not find or enjoy it. Now the mercies of God are not the least part of his treasure, nor the least of his child's inheritance, being both helps to their faith, matter for their praise, and spurs to their obedience: 'Our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old; how thou didst drive out the heathen,' &c., Psalms 44:1-3. From this they ground their confidence, 'Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob,' Psalms 44:4; and excite their thankfulness, 'In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever,' Psalms 44:8. Indeed, as children are their parents' heirs, so they become in justice liable to pay their parents' debts. Now, the great debt which the saint at death stands charged with, is that which he owes to God for his mercies, and therefore it is but reason he should tie his posterity to the payment thereof. Thus mayest thou be praising God in heaven and earth at the same time.

USE OR APPLICATION.

[Reproof to the ungrateful world, and exhortation to saints.] We shall wind up this head with a double application of reproof and exhortation.

Use First. Of reproof to the ungrateful world. How few, alas! can we find so ingenuous as to pay this little quit-rent to the great Lord of this world's manor for all the mercies they hold of him! Some are such brutes that, like swine, their nose is nailed to the trough in which they feed. They have not the use of their understanding so far as to lift up their eye to heaven and say, there dwells that God that provides this for me, that God by whom I live, and from whom I have my livelihood. It were

well if we knew not in all our towns where such brutes as these dwell. You would count it a sad spectacle to behold a man in a lethargy, with his senses and reason so blasted by his disease, that he knows not his nearest friends, and takes no notice of those that tend him or bring his daily food to him. How many such senseless wretches are at this day lying on his hands? Divine providence ministers daily supplies to their necessities, but they take no notice of his care and goodness. Others there are, that feloniously, yea sacrilegiously, set the crown of praise on their own head which is due alone to God. Thus Nebuchadnezzar writes his own name upon his palace, and leaves God out of the story: 'Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?' Daniel 4:30. Proud wretch! was not every stone he used in that pile cut out of God's quarry? and for every skep of sand did he not come upon God's ground? Thus the atheistical husbandman cons his plough and dung■cart more thanks than the God of heaven, who 'crowns the year with his goodness.' The proud soldier stands upon his sword, daring to take the honour of his victory to himself, and not ascribe it to the Lord of hosts, who at his pleasure gives and takes away the heart from the mighty.

Yea, some, rather than God shall have it, will give it to any other. Thus Pope Adrian, in his blasphemous inscription on the gates of a college he built, abuseth God with Scripture language, 'Utrecht planted me, Lovian watered me, and Cæsar gave the increase;' which made one underwrite, nihil hic Deus fecit—it seems God did nothing for this man. Not that I think it unlawful to acknowledge our benefactors, as instruments in God's hand for our good, but to blot out the name of God, our chief founder, to write the name of an underling creature, is a high piece of wickedness and ingratitude. I like that form which a good man used to his friend for a kindness: 'I bless God for you, I thank God and you.' He that will exact more, requires what we owe him not. In a word, some, the worst of the three, instead of returning thanks to God for his mercies, abuse them to his dishonour. It is not more sad than true, that the goodness of God with many serves but to feed and nourish their lusts. They eat and drink at God's cost, and then rise up to play the rebels against God; no weapons will serve them to use but the mercies he hath given them. It is too bad if the tenant pays not his easy rent; but to make strip and waste of the trees on his landlord's ground, this is more intolerable. Yet such outrages are daily practised in the wicked world with the mercies of God.

Michael Balbus is infamous for his horrid ingratitude, who, the same night that the emperor had pardoned and released him, barbarously slew his saviour. And do not many, whom God lets out of the prison of affliction, lift up their traitorous knife at God, wounding his name with their oaths, drunkenness, and profaneness, as soon almost as the sentence of death is taken off and their prison door set open? To conclude, others that will needs pass for thankful, yet all the return is but windy praise—honour him with their lips, and pour contempt upon him in their lives. What music more harsh and unpleasing than to hear a harper sing to one tune with his voice and play another with his hand? O it grates in God's ears when Jacob's voice is attended with Esau's rough hands. Truly, when I consider how the goodness of God is abused and perverted by the greatest part of mankind, I cannot but be of his mind that said maximum miraculum est Dei patientia et munificentia—the greatest miracle in the world is God's patience and bounty to an ungrateful world. If a prince hath an enemy got into one of his towns, he doth not send them in provision, but lays close siege to the place, and doth what he can to starve them. But the great God, that could wink all his enemies into destruction, bears with them, and is at daily cost to maintain them. Well may he

command us to bless them that curse us, who himself ‘does good to the evil and thankful.’ O what would not God do for his creature if thankful, that thus heaps the coals of his mercies upon the heads of his enemies! But think not, sinners, that you shall escape thus. God’s mill goes slow, but it grinds small; the more admirable his patience and bounty now is, the more dreadful and unsupportable will that fury be which ariseth out of his abused goodness. Nothing blunter than iron, yet when sharpened it hath an edge that will cut mortally. Nothing smoother than the sea, yet when stirred into a tempest nothing rageth more. Nothing so sweet as the patience and goodness of God, and nothing so terrible as his wrath when it takes fire. Be therefore, in the fear of God, stirred up to bethink yourselves what you mean to do. It is the trick, they say, of distracted people to spite their dearest friends and nearest relations most. These above all they seek to mischief. But what folly and madness is it in thee to fly at the face of God with thy sins, that hath done more for thee than all thy friends, and can do more against thee than all thy enemies thou hast in the world! But the more to move thee,

1. Consider that God keeps an exact account of all his mercies thou receivest. You cannot steal God’s custom. He that could tell the prophet where his servant Gehazi had been, and what he had received of Naaman, will one day tell thee to a farthing every talent thou hast received of him. God hath, as a bag for thy sins, so a book for his mercies, and what he books he means to reckon for.

2. Consider how severely he hath dealt with those that never had so much mercy from him as thyself. If heathens are speechless in judgment, when God reckons with them for their mercies, O how confounded wilt thou be that goest from gospel dispensations to hold up thy hand at the bar before the Judge of all the world! ‘They are without excuse, because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful,’ Romans 1:21. If the heathen that was not thankful for his penny, cannot lift up his hand in the day of the Lord, where wilt thou appear that hast so many hundred talents in thy hand to answer for?

Question. But may be, poor wretch, thou mayest now ask, what thou shouldst do to give God the praise of his mercies?

Answer. In a word, thou hast but one way to pay God this his tribute, and it is a strange one—even by running deeper into his debt than by all the mercies that yet thou hast received of him. Hear therefore, poor sinner, what I mean: That God—who hath given thee life and being—that hath exercised unspeakable patience towards thee—been at a vast expense in his daily providence upon thee, to preserve, feed, clothe, and maintain thee—all which have been most wretchedly abused by thee, and for it thy life become forfeited to his justice—doth yet offer a greater mercy than all these, even the Lord Jesus, whom, if thou wilt, with shame and sorrow for thy past sins, but come unto, and accept to be thy Lord and Saviour, then wilt thou be in a posture, and not till then, to give God the praise of his other mercies. He that rejects this, that is the greatest of all mercies, can never be thankful for any. It is Christ who alone can give thee a spirit of thankfulness. Not a Christian person in the world but is an unthankful person. ‘Evil’ and ‘unthankful’ are inseparable. O what a blessed gospel is this, that teacheth us here to pay debts by running deeper into the score!—to be thankful for less mercies, by accepting that which is infinitely greater!

Use Second. For exhortation to the saints; not to call you to this duty, which if you answer your name is undoubtedly your practice, but to quicken you in it, and make you more in love with it.

1. Consider it is a duty that becomes you well, ‘Praise is comely for the upright,’ Psalms 33:1. This garment of praise sits so well on none as on your back; you should not think yourselves dressed in a morning till you have it on. An unthankful saint carries a contradiction with it. ‘Evil’ and ‘unthankful’ are the twins that live and die together. As any ceaseth to be evil, he begins to be thankful.

2. Consider it is that which God both expects and promiseth himself at your hands; he made you for this end. When the vote passed in heaven for your being, yea happy being, in Christ, it was upon this account, that you should be ‘a name and a praise’ to him on earth in time and in heaven to eternity. Should God miss of this, he would fail of one main part of his design. What prompts him to bestow every mercy, but to afford you matter to compose a song for his praise? They are ‘a people, children that will not lie: so he became their Saviour,’ Isaiah 63:8. He looks for fair dealing, you see, at your hands. Whom may a father trust with his reputation, if not a child? Where can a prince expect honour, if not among his courtiers and favourites? Your state is such as the least mercy you have is more than all the world can show besides. Thou, Christian, and thy few brethren, divide heaven and earth among you. What hath God that he withholds from you? Sun, moon, and stars are set up to give you light, sea and land have their treasure and store for your use. Others do but ravish them, you are the rightful heirs to them. They groan that any other should be served by them. The angels, bad and good, minister unto you; the evil, against their will, are forced, like scullions, when they tempt you to scour and brighten your graces, and make way for your greater comforts. Like Haman, they hold your stirrup, while you mount up higher in favour with God. The good angels are servants to your heavenly Father, and disdain not to carry you, as the nurse her master’s child in her arms. Your God withholds not himself from you. He is your portion, father, husband, friend, and what not. The same heaven you shall have to dwell in with him; the same table and fare. God is his own happiness, and admits you to enjoy himself. O what honour is this, for the subject to drink in his prince’s cup! ‘Thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures,’ Psalms 36:8. And all this, not as the purchase of your sweat, much less blood; the feast is paid for by another hand, and you are welcome; only he expects your thanks to the founder of it, at whose cost you are entertained. No sin-offering is imposed upon you under the gospel; thank-offerings are all he looks for.

3. God hath a book of remembrance for your services; he takes kind notice of the little good that is in you, and done by you. Not the least office of love to his name and house is overlooked, though mingled with much evil; he commands the one, pardons and pities you for the other. ‘There is found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel,’ it was said of Jeroboam’s son, 1 Kings 14:13. What an honourable testimony doth God give of Asa, that ‘his was perfect all his days,’ 2 Chronicles 15:17, though we find many wry steps he took. The little strength Philadelphia had must not be forgot. What a favourable apology doth Christ make for Joshua, accused by Satan for his filthy garments—‘Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?’ and for his drowsy disciples—‘The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak?’ Now shall God take notice of the little good in his saints, apologize for their infirmities, commend and reward their weak services, yea eternize their memory with honour, ‘The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance,’ Psalms 112:6; and doth not he deserve to be exalted for his infinite perfections? praised and loved, who is all good, ever good, and doing good to them? Shall not he be tender of thy name, and thou be regardless of his honour, so as to entomb his precious mercies in the sepulchre of unthankfulness?

4. Consider what an ornament a thankful frame of heart is to religion. This commends God to the unbelieving world, who knows little more of him than your lives preach to them. They read religion in that character you print it, and make their report of God and his ways as they see you behave yourselves in the world. If you walk disconsolately, or grumble at divine providence, how they can believe the ways are so pleasant as they are told? We listen what the servant saith of his master. If he commends him, and goes cheerfully through his work, this gains him credit among his neighbours. It was a convincing testimony Daniel gave to the goodness of God, when he would praise him thrice a day with the hazard of his life. To see a poor Christian thankful for his little pittance, yea, in the midst of his afflictions, as if he had crowns and kingdoms at his dispose, an ordinary understanding would reason thus, Surely this man finds some sweetness in his God that we see not, and is better paid for his service than we know of. The joyful praise of dying saints in the midst of fiery flames, have made their spectators go home in love, not only with religion, but with martyrdom.

5. Consider the honour that is put upon you in this duty. To attend on a prince, though bareheaded and on the knee, is counted more honour for a nobleman, than to live in the country, and have the service of his fellow-subjects. Though we serve God all the day long, yet in acts of worship we have the honour immediately to attend on him, and minister to him. O blessed are they who may thus stand about him! Praise is the highest act of worship, and therefore to be continued in heaven's blissful state. Whereas other graces shall be melted into love and joy, so other duties of worship, as hearing, praying, &c., into praise and thanksgiving. The priesthood was a great honour under the law. He chose Aaron and his tribe from among their brethren to serve at his altar; he would take that gift from their hand which he would not at a king's. But in this gospel state every believer hath a more honourable priesthood, because he brings better sacrifices, the spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. And while thou art honouring thy God, thou honourest thyself. The whole body shines with the beams of that crown which is put on the head.

6. Consider that thy praises will render thy prayers more grateful and successful. It was thought a good omen for Alexander's future victories, that he was liberal to the gods in his sacrifices, throwing frankincense by handfuls into the fire. He is a niggard to himself that is so to his God. Remittatur in suum principium cæleste profluvium, quo uberius terræ refundatur (Bern. Serm. 42 in Cantic.)—let the river of God's mercies be returned to pay its tribute to God, their source and fountain, that they may refund more abundantly to us again. You shall observe the saints in their greatest straits, when they have most to beg, deliver their prayers praise-wise. Jehoshaphat sends his priest praising God into the field, and God fights for him. David, in the cave, My heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise.' Daniel, when a trap was laid for his life, 'praiseth God thrice a day.' Christ himself, when he would raise Lazarus, lifts up his eyes and blesseth God, 'I thank thee, O Father,'&c.; when he was to suffer, sings a hymn. A thankful heart cannot easily meet with a denial. 'Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand,' Psalms 149:6.

[1]Niggard: a stingy or miserly person. From Webster's.

[2]Feoffee, one put in possession of anything.—Ed.

[3]Used in this context, awful means to inspire awe, or filled with awe and respect; and not the more common and purely colloquial: terrible, bad, or objectionable.

—SDB

[4]Progging;—(poss. derived from M.E. prokken, to beg) to prowl about, as in search of food or plunder; forage. >From Webster's.

[5]Jakes:—an outdoor toilet, privy, outhouse.

— From Webster's.

[6]Valetudinarious; sickly, ill, in poor health.

—From Webster's.

[7]By outlandish, Rev. Gurnall means foreign or alien here. —SDB [8]procer'ity, n. [L. proceritas, from procerus, tall.] [9]panegyric: — A formal speech or writing praising a person or event; a high or hyperbolic praise; laudation.

— From Webster's [10]Beteem, sometimes beteeme, to give, bestow.—Ed.

Chapter 19

02.07 - The Inward Principle of Prayer

Division Third.—The Inward Principle of Prayer.

‘In the Spirit.’

We are come to the third division in the apostle’s directory for prayer—the principle or spring from whence they are to flow—the Spirit, ‘praying...in the Spirit.’ In proceeding to the consideration of this topic, the first point is that which will be determined by the solution of the following question, viz:—

Question. What is it to pray ‘in the Spirit?’

Answer. Interpreters generally comprehend in this phrase both the spirit of the person praying, and the Spirit of God, by which our spirits are fitted for and acted in prayer. Est oratio in spiritu, nempe et nostro quo oramus, et Spiritu Sancto per quem oramus (so Zanch. in loc)—that is a prayer in the spirit, which, by the help of the Holy Spirit, is performed with our soul and spirit. These two indeed go ever together. We cannot act our spirit without the Holy Spirit. Alas! this is like a lump of clay in our bosoms till he quickens it; and we cannot but with our heart and spirit, when the Holy Spirit moves upon it. The Spirit’s breath is vital. The Holy Ghost doth not breathe in us as one through a trunk or trumpet, which is a mere passive instrument; but stirs up our hearts, and actuates our affections in the duty. Prayer is called ‘a pouring out of the soul to God.’ The soul is the well from which the water of prayer is poured; but the Spirit is the spring that feeds this well, and the hand that helps to pour it forth. The well would have no water without the spring, neither could it deliver itself of it without one to draw it. Thus the Spirit of God must fill the heart with praying affections, and enable them also to pour themselves forth. From the words thus sensed, we shall a while dwell upon these two propositions. First. He who will pray acceptably, must pray in his heart and spirit. Second. He that would pray in his own spirit, must pray in the Spirit of God.

BRANCH FIRST.

[He who will pray acceptably, must pray in his heart and spirit.]

Praying in the spirit is opposed to lip■labour, ‘they draw near to me with their lips, but their heart is removed far from me;’ Matthew 15:8 like an adulteress, whose heart and spirit is as far from her husband as where her paramour is. It is no prayer in which the heart of the person bears no part. Parisiensis, glossing upon the place of Hosea 14:2, ‘so will we render the calves of our lips,’ compares the duty of prayer to the calves in the legal sacrifices. The composure of the words, saith he, in prayer, is as the skin or hide of the beast, the voice as the hair, the understanding as the flesh, the desires and affections of the heart as the fat of the inwards; this, and this alone, makes it a prayer in God’s account. ‘My spirit prayeth,’ saith the apostle, 1 Corinthians 14:14; and, ‘I will pray with the spirit,’ ver. 1 Corinthians 14:15. So, ‘God, whom I serve with my spirit,’ Romans 1:9. The melodious sound which comes from a musical instrument, such as viol or lute, is formed within the belly of the instrument, and the deeper the belly of the instrument the sweeter is its

music; the same strings on a flat board, touched by the same hand, would make no music. The melodiousness of prayer comes from within the man, ‘We are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit,’ and the deeper the groans are that come from thence, still the sweeter the melody. There may be outward worship and inward atheism; as Melancthon said, vos Itali adoratis Deum in pane, quem non creditis in cælo esse—You Italians worship that God in bread, whom you do not believe to be in heaven. There may be much pomp in the outward ceremony of the performance, when the person neither loves nor believes that God whom he courts with an external devotion. The blemishes which made the sacrifices in the law rejected, were not only in the outward limbs of the beast, the sick as well as the lame beast was refused, Malachi 1:8. We read of loud praises when never a word was heard spoken. But God owns none for a prayer that hath the vehemency of the voice but not inspirited with the affection of the heart. Separate the spirit from the body, and the man is dead; the heart from the lip, and there is a dissolution of prayer. Now, in handling of this I must first show what it is to pray in our spirit when these three are found in the duty:—First. When we pray with knowledge. Second. When we pray in fervency. Third. When we pray in sincerity. These three exercise the three powers of the soul and spirit. By knowledge the understanding is set on work; by fervency the affections; and by sincerity the will. All these are required in conjunction to ‘praying in the spirit.’ There may be knowledge without fervency, and this, like the light of the moon, is cold, and quickens not; there may be heat without knowledge, and this is like mettle in a blind horse; there may be knowledge and fervency, and this like a chariot with swift horses, and a skilful driver in the box, but, being dishonest, carries it the wrong way. Neither of these, nor both these together, avail, because sincerity is wanting to touch these affections, and make them stand to the right point, which is the glory of God. He will have little thanks for his zeal that is fervent in spirit, but serving himself with it, not the Lord.

[To pray in the spirit, we must have knowledge and understanding.]

First. To pray acceptably, or in the spirit, it is required that we pray with knowledge and understanding. A blind sacrifice was rejected in the law, Malachi 1:8; much more are blind devotions under the gospel. As knowledge aggravates a sin, so ignorance takes from the excellency of an action that is good: ‘I bear them witness,’ saith Paul, ‘they have a zeal, but not according to knowledge.’ The want of an eye disfigures the fairest face, the want of knowledge the devoutest prayer: ‘Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews,’ John 4:22, where we see what a fundamental defect the want of knowledge is in acts of worship, such as brings damnation with it.

Question First. But why is knowledge so requisite to acceptable praying?

Answer First. Because without this it is not a ‘reasonable service;’ for we know not what we do. God calls for 8@(486¬< 8"JD,\"<—‘reasonable service,’ Romans 12:1, which some oppose to the legal sacrifices. They offered up beasts to God; in the gospel we are to offer up ourselves. Now the soul and spirit of a man is the man. Why did not God lay a law on beasts to worship him, but because they have not a rational soul to understand and reflect upon their own actions? And will God accept that service and worship from man, wherein he doth not exercise that faculty that distinguisheth him from a beast? ‘Show yourselves men,’ saith the prophet to those idolaters, Isaiah 46:8. And truly he that worships the true God ignorantly is brutish in his knowledge as well as he that prays to a false god.

Answer Second. Because the understanding is JÎ º(‚µT<46Î<—the leading faculty of the soul, and so the key of the work. The inward worship of the heart is the chief. Now, the other powers of the soul are disabled if they want this their guide which holds the candle to them. As for those violent passions of seeming zeal, sorrow, and joy, which sometimes appear in ignorant worshippers and their blind devotions, they are spurious. Christ's sheep, like Jacob's, conceive by the eye.

1. The saint's eye is enlightened to see the majesty and glorious holiness of God, and then it reveres him, and mourns before him in the sense of his own vileness: 'Now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes,' Job 42:6.

2. Again, by an eye of faith he beholds the goodness and love of God to poor sinners in Christ, and in particular to him, and this eye affects his heart to love and rely on him, which it is impossible the ignorant soul should do.

Question First. But you will say, what is necessary for the praying soul to know?

Answer First. There is required a knowledge that he to whom he directs his prayer is the true God. Religious worship is an incommunicable flower in the crown of the deity, and that both inward and outward. We are religiously to worship him only, who, by reason of his infinite perfections, deserves our supreme love, honour, and trust. He must have the crown that owes the kingdom. 'The kingdom and power' are God's. Therefore 'the glory' of religious worship belongs to him alone, Matthew 6:13. Angels are the highest order of creatures, but we are forbid to 'worship any of the host of heaven,' Deuteronomy 17:3. 'Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee it doth appertain'—where fear is put for religious worship, as appears by the circumstance of the place. The want of this knowledge filled the heathen world with idolatry. For, where they found any virtue or excellency in the creature, presently they adored and worshipped it, like some ignorant rustic, who coming to court, thinks every one he sees in brave clothes to be the king.

Answer Second. There is required a knowledge of this true God, what his nature is. 'He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,' Hebrews 11:6. It is confessed, a perfect knowledge of the divine perfections is incomprehensible by a finite being. He answered right who said—when asked quid est Deus? what is God?—si scirem essem ipse Deus—if I knew, I myself would be God. None indeed knows God thus but God himself; yet a Scripture knowledge of him is necessary to the right performance of this duty. The want of understanding his omniscience and infinite mercy, is the cause of vain babbling, and a conceit to prevail by long prayers, which our Saviour charges upon the heathen, and prevents in his disciples by acquainting them with these attributes, Matthew 6:7-8. They came rather narrare than rogare—to inform God than to beg. The ignorance of his high and glorious majesty is the cause why so many are rude and slovenly in their gesture, so saucy and irreverently familiar with God in their expressions. We are bid to 'be sober, watching unto prayer.' Truly there is an insobriety in our very language, when we do not clothe the desires of our hearts with such humble expressions as may signify the awe and dread of his sacred majesty in our hearts. In a word, the reason why men dare come reeking out of the adulterous embraces of their lusts, and stretch forth their unwashen hands to heaven in prayer—whence is it? —but because they know not God to be of such infinite purity as will have no fellowship with the workers of iniquity? 'Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself,' Psalms 50:21.

Answer Third. We must understand the matter of our prayers, what we beg, what we deprecate. Without this we cannot in faith say amen to our own prayers, but may soon ask that which neither becomes us to desire, nor is honourable for God to give. This Christ rebuked, when she in the gospel put up her ambitious request for her children to be set one at the right the other at the left hand of Christ in his kingdom. God never gave us leave thus to indite our own prayers by the dictate of our private spirit, but hath bound us up to ask only what he hath promised to give.

Answer Fourth. There is required a knowledge of the manner how we are to pray; as, in whose name, and what qualifications are required in the prayer and person praying. We find Paul begging prayers, 'that ye strive together with me in your prayers.' In another place he tells us of a lawful striving, 2 Timothy 2:5. There is a law of prayer which must be observed, or we come at our own adventure. Even in false worship they go by some rule in their addresses to their gods. Therefore those smattering Samaritans, when a plague was on them, concluded the reason to be because they 'knew not the manner of the god of the land,' 2 Kings 17:26. The true God will be served in due order, or else expect a breach. A word or two for application of this branch.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. How few then pray in the spirit! Were this the only character to try many by, would they not be cast over the bar for mere babblers? As, first, those in the Popish church, where most know not a word what they say in prayer. If it be such a weakness to subscribe a petition to a king, or to a parliament, which we never read or understood, what shall we then think of such brutish prayers as these sent to heaven and indorsed with an ignoramus on the back of them? Yea, amongst ourselves, many, who though they pray in their mother language, yet are as ignorant as to the matter of their prayers; how else could they patter over the creed and commandments with their blind devotion instead of prayers? Are there more deplored ruins of mankind to be found among the Indians than such? Yea, when they join with their minister in prayer, neither know that God to whom the prayer is directed, nor the Mediator under the favour of whose name it is presented. Before Nebuchadnezzar could bless God, he had the understanding of a man given him, which these yet want. Do you not think such ignorant wretches as these might be easily persuaded to kneel before an image gaudily dressed up, or to put their letter into some angel or saint's hand for despatch, being made to believe that it will find a kinder welcome by the mediation of such favourites? O what a darkness is there even at this day upon the face of our waters! on which, had but the pope's instruments opportunity to sit brooding awhile, they might soon bring their desired work to a perfection among the multitude of ignorant souls that are amidst us! We see there is need not only to stir up our people to pray, or else we send them before they have learned their errand, as if we should call a child to read before he hath learned his letters.

Use Second. It speaks to all that are at any time the mouth to God for others in prayer, so to pray, that those who join with them may clearly understand what they put up to God for them. Who is more to be blamed—he that prayeth in an unknown tongue, or he that with such uncouth phrases and high-flown expressions as are not understood by half the company? Suppose thine own spirit prays, as the apostle saith, yet thy understanding is unfruitful unto them. They, alas! are at a loss, and stand gazing, as the disciples did when the cloud parted Christ from them. Either come down from thy high towering expressions, or help them up to thee. They may say of thee as those of Moses, 'We know not what is become of the man.' No wonder if, while they cannot keep sight of

the matter in hand, that their thoughts rove and dance about some object of their own framing. Dost thou pray to be admired for thy rouling tongue, height of gifts, or the like? Perhaps thou mayest have this thy reward of some ignorant ones, and others that would as fain commend themselves upon the same account; but consider what a low and base end thou propoundest in so high a service, unworthy of a Christian's thought. What! no net to fish with for thy credit and applause but a sacred ordinance! The whip which Christ made in the gospel belongs to thy back. Our blessed Saviour, that was all on fire with zeal to see his house of prayer made a house of merchandise, O how doth his soul loathe the baseness of thy mercenary spirit, who dost the same, though in another dress!

[To pray in the spirit, we must have fervency.]

Second. We pray in the spirit when we pray in fervency. The soul keeps the body warm while it is in it. So much as there is our soul and spirit in a duty, so much heat and fervency. If the prayer be cold, we may certainly conclude the heart is idle, and bears no part in the duty. Our spirit is an active creature: what it doth is with a force, whether bad or good. Hence in Scripture, to set the heart and soul upon a thing, imports vehemency and fervour. Thus the poor labouring man is said to 'set his heart on his wages,' Deuteronomy 24:15. The hopes of what he shall have at night makes him sweat at his work in the day. Darius 'set his heart on Daniel to deliver him;' and it follows, 'He laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him,' Daniel 6:14. When the spirit of a man is set about a work, he will do it to purpose. 'If thou shalt seek the Lord with all thy heart and with all thy soul,' Deuteronomy 4:29, that is, fervently. This consists not in a violent agitation of the bodily spirits. A man may put his body into a sweat in duty, and the prayer be cold. That is the fervent prayer that flows from a warm heart and enkindled affections; like an exhalation which first is set on fire in the cloud, and then breaks forth into thunder. 'My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue, Lord, make me to know mine end,' Psalms 39:3, 4. Now as zeal is not one single affection, but the edge and vehemency of them all; so fervency in prayer is, when all the affections act strongly and suitably to the several parts of prayer. In confession, then have we fervency, when the soul melts into a holy shame and sorrow for the sins he spreads before the Lord, so that he feels a holy smart and pain within, and doth not act a tragical part with a comical heart. For, as Chrysostom saith, 'To paint tears is worse than to paint the face.' Here is true fervency: 'I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise,' Psalms 55:2. There may be fire in the pan, when none in the piece; a loud wind, but no rain with it. David made a noise with his voice, and mourned in his spirit.

So, in petition we have fervency, when the heart is drawn out with vehement desires of the grace it prays for, not some lazy woundings or wishings, or weak velleities, but passionate breathings and breakings of heart. Sometimes it is set out by the violence of thirst, which is thought more tormenting than that of hunger. As the hunted hart panteth after the cool waters, so did David's soul after God, Psalms 42:1-11. Sometimes it is set out by the strainings of a wrestler—so Jacob is said to wrestle with the angel; and of those that run in a race, 'instantly serving God day and night,' Acts 26:7, ¦< ¦6J,<,\'—they stretched out themselves. 'My soul breaketh for longing,' Psalms 119:20, as one that with straining breaks a vein.

[Why we must pray in the spirit fervently.]

Question. But why must we pray in the spirit fervently? Answer First. We must pray in the spirit fervently, from the command. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might; and these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart,' Deuteronomy 6:5-6; which imports the affectionate performance of every command and duty. Sever the outward from the inward part of God's worship, and he owns it not. 'Who hath required this at your hands?' Isaiah 1:12. As if he had said, Did I ever command you to give a beast's heart in sacrifice, and keep back your own? Why dost thou pray at all? Wilt thou say, Because he commands it? Then, why not fervently, which the command intends chiefly? When you send for a book, would you be pleased with him that brings you only the cover? And will God accept the skin for the sacrifice? The external part of the duty is but as the cup. Thy love, faith, and joy are the wine he desires to taste of. Without these, thou givest him but an empty cup to drink in. Now, what is this but to mock him?

Answer Second. We must pray in the spirit, to comport with the name of God. The common description of prayer is calling on the name of God. Now, as in prayer we call upon the name of God, so it must be with a worship suitable to his name, or else we pollute it and incur his wrath. This is the chief meaning of the third commandment. In the first, God provides that none besides himself, the only true God, be worshipped; in the second, that he, the true God, be not served with will■worship, but his own institutions; and in the third, that he be not served vainly and slightily in his own worship. There is no attribute in God but calls for this fervency in his worship.

1. He is a great and glorious God; and as such it becomes us to approach his presence with our affections in the best array. Are yawning prayers fit for a great God's hearing? Darest thou speak to such a majesty before thou art well awake, and hast such a sacrifice prepared as he will accept? 'Cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen,' Malachi 1:14. See here, first, anything less than the best we have is a corrupt thing. He will accept a little, if the best, but he abhors that thou shouldst save thy best for another. Again he that offers not the best—the strength of his affections—is a deceiver; because he robs him of his due, and he is a great God. It is fit the prince's table should be served with the best that the market affords, and not the refuse. When Jacob intended a present to the governor of the land, he bids his children 'take of the best of the fruit of the land in your vessels.' Lastly, the awful thoughts which God extorts from the very heathen by his mighty works, do reproach us who live in the bosom of the church, and despise his name by our heedless and heartless serving of him.

2. He is the living God. Is a dead■hearted prayer a sacrifice suitable to a living God? How can that be accepted of him which never came from him? Lay not your dead prayers by his side. The lively prayer is his, the dead thine own. What the psalmist saith of persons, we may say of prayers, The living, the living they shall praise him.' The glorious angels, who for their zeal are called seraphims, and a flame of fire, these he chooseth to minister to him in heaven; and the saints below—who, though they sojourn on earth, yet have their extraction from heaven, and so have spirits raised and refined from the dulness of their earthly constitution—these he sets apart for himself as priests to offer up spiritual sacrifices unto him. The quicker any one is himself, the more offensive is a dull leaden heeled messenger or slow■handed workman to him. How then can God, who is all life, brook thy lazy listless devotions? When he commanded the neck of an ass to be broke, and not offered up unto him, was it because he was angry with the beast? No sure, it was his own

workmanship; no other than himself made it; but to teach us how unpleasant a dull heart is to him in his service.

3. He is a loving God, and love will be paid in no coin but its own. Give God love for love, or he accounts you give him nothing. ‘If ye love me, keep my commandments,’ John 14:15. And, ‘If a man would give the substance of his house for love, it would be contemned,’ Song of Solomon 8:7. So, if a man thinks to commute with God, and give him anything in prayer instead of his love and fervent affection, it will be contemned. Let the prayer be never so pithy, the posture of the body never so devout, the voice never so loud, if the affections of the heart be not drawn out after God in the duty, he disdains and rejects it, because it doth not correspond with the dear affections which God expresseth to us. He draws out the heart with his purse, and gives his very soul and self with all his gifts to his people. Therefore he expects our hearts should come with all our services to him. It is no wonder to see the servant, whose master is hard and cruel, have no heart to or mettle in his work; but love in the master useth to put life into the servant. And therefore God, who is incomparably the best master, disdains to be served as none but the worst among men use to be.

Answer Third. We must pray in the spirit, because the promise is only to fervent prayer. A still-born child is no heir, neither is a prayer that wants life heir to any promise. Fervency is to prayer what fire was to the spices in the censer—without this it cannot ascend as incense before God. Some have attempted a shorter cut to the Indies by the north, but were ever frozen up in their way; and so will all sluggish prayers be served. It were an easy voyage indeed to heaven if such prayers might find the way thither. But never could they show any of that good land’s gold who prayed thus, though he were a saint. The righteous man indeed is declared heir, as to all other promises, so to this of having his prayer heard; but if he hath not aptitudinem intrandi—he is not in a fit posture to enter into the possession of this promise, or claim present benefit from it, while his heart remains cold and formal in the duty. There is a qualification to the act of prayer as necessary as of the person praying: ‘The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.’ When God intends a mercy for his people, he stirs up a spirit of prayer in them: ‘I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain,’ Isaiah 45:19; that is, I never stirred them up to it, and helped them in it, and then let them lose their labour. ‘Then ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you: and ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart,’ Jeremiah 29:12-13. Feeble desires, like weak pangs, go over, and bring not a mercy to the birth. As the full time grows nearer, so the spirit of prayer grows stronger. ‘Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, I tell you that he will avenge them speedily,’ Luke 18:7-8. None in the house perhaps will stir for a little knock at the door; they think he is some idle beggar, or one in no great haste; but if he raps thick and loud, then they go, yea, out of their beds. ‘Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity,’ Luke 11:8.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. This sadly shows there is little true praying to be found among us, because few that pray fervently. Let us sort men into their several ranks.

1. The ignorant, do these pray fervently? Their hearts, alas! must needs be frozen up in the duty; they dwell too far from the sun to have any of this divine heat in their devotions.

2. The profane person, that is debauched with his filthy lusts, his heat runs out another way. Can the heart which is inflamed with lusts be any other than cold in prayer? Hell-fire must be quenched before this from heaven can be kindled.

3. The soul under the power of roving thoughts —whose mind, like Satan, is walking to and fro the earth, while his eyes seem nailed to heaven—can he be fervent? Can the affections be intended and the mind inattentive? Fervency unites the soul and gathers in the thoughts to the work in hand. It will not suffer diversions, but answers all foreign thoughts, as Nehemiah, in another case, did them that would have called him off from building, 'I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease?' Nehemiah 6:3. It is said of Elias {Elijah}, 'He prayed earnestly,' he prayed in praying, so the Greek. As in Ezekiel's vision, there was 'a wheel in a wheel,' so a prayer in his prayer. Whereas the roving soul is prayerless, his lips pray and his mind plays; his eye is up to heaven, as if that were his mark, but he shoots his thoughts down to the earth.

4. He to whom the duty is tedious and wearisome, who doth not sigh and groan in the duty, but under it; who prays as a sick man works in his calling, finding no delight or joy in it. True fervency suffers no weariness, feels no pain. The tradesman, when hot at his work, and the soldier in fight, the one feels not his weariness nor the other his wounds. Affections are strong things, able to pull up a weak body. Therefore, he that shrugs at a duty, and turns this way and that way, as a sick man from one side of his bed to the other for ease, shows he hath little content in the duty, and therefore less zeal. These aches of the spirit in prayer—though he be a saint—come of some cold he hath gotten, and declare him to be under a great distemper. A man in health finds not more savour in his food and refreshing from it, than the Christian doth in the offices of religion, when his heart is in the right temper.

Use Second. For exhortation. Dost thou pray? Pray fervently, or thou dost nothing. Cold prayer is no more prayer than painted fire is fire. That prayer which warms not thine own heart, will it, thinkest thou, move God's? Thou drawest the tap, but the vessel is frozen. A man hath not the use of his hand clung up with cold, neither canst thou have the use of thy spirit in duty till thy heart chafed into some sense and feeling of what thou prayest for. Now to bring thy cold heart into some spiritual heat, [Arguments to enkindle our zeal and fervency in prayer.]

Argument 1. Consider the excellency of zeal and fervency. If a saint, thou hast a principle that inclines thee to approve of things that are excellent; and such is this. Life is the excellency of beings, yea, even in inanimate creatures there is an analogical life, and therein consists its excellency. The spirits of wine commend it; what is it worth when dead and flat? In the diamond, the sparkle gives the worth; in fountain water, that which makes it more excellent than other is its motion, called therefore 'living water.' Much more in beings that have true life; for this the flea or fly are counted nobler creatures than the sun. The higher kind of life that beings have, their nature is thereby the more advanced—beasts above plants, men above beasts, and angels above men. Now as life gives the excellency to being, so vivacity and vigour in operating gives excellency to life. Indeed the nobler the life of the creature is, the greater energy is in its actings. The apprehension of an angel is quicker, and zeal stronger, than in a man. So that, the more lively thou art in thy duty, and the more zeal thou expressest therein, the nearer thou comest to the nature of those glorious spirits who, for their zeal in service of God, are called 'a flame of fire.' I confess, to

be calm and cool in inferior things, and in our own matters betwixt man and man, is better than zeal. So Solomon saith, ‘A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit,’ Proverbs 17:27. In the Hebrew it is a cool spirit. Injuries do not put him into a flame, neither do any occurrences in the world heat him to any height of joy, grief, or anger. Who more temperate in these than Moses? but set this holy man to pray, he is fire and tow, all life and zeal. Indeed it is one excellency of this fervency of spirit in prayer, that it allays all sinful passions. David’s fervency in praying for his child when alive, made him bear the tidings of his death so calmly and patiently. We hear not an angry word that Hannah replies to her scolding companion Peninnah. And why, but because she had found the art of easing her troubled spirit in prayer? What need she contend with her adversary, who could, by wrestling with God, persuade him to espouse her quarrel? And truly were there nothing else to commend fervency of spirit in prayer, this is enough—that, like David’s harp, it can charm the evil spirit of our passions, which in their excess the saint counts great sins, and I am sure finds them grievous troubles. When are you more placate and serene, than when the most life and fervour your souls can mount up in the flame of your sacrifices into the bosom of God? Possibly you may come, like Moses, down the mount with greater heat, but it will be against sin, not for self; whereas a formal prayer, like a plaster, which hath good ingredients in it, yet being laid cold upon the wound, hurts it rather than heals it.

Argument 2. God deserves the prime and strength of thy soul should be bestowed on him in thy prayers.

(1.) He gave thee the powers of thy soul and all thy affections. According to the mould so is the statue that is cast in it; such thou art as thou wert in the idea of the divine mind. Now, may not thy Maker call for that which was his gift? He that made the stone an inanimate being, and confined the narrow souls of brutes to act upon low sensitive good, ennobleth thee with a rational appetite and spiritual affections. Now, wilt thou not employ those divine powers in the worship of thy God, from whom, thou hadst them? This were hard indeed—that God should be denied what himself gave, and not suffered to taste of his own cost. ‘I came unto my own,’ saith Christ, ‘and they would not receive me.’ Thus here, I came to my own creature; he had his life from me, and brings a dead heart unto me! Suppose a friend should give you notice that he will ere long be at your house, and sends you in beforehand a vessel of rich wine; which you, when he comes, grudge to broach it for his entertainment, and put him off with that which is dead and flat? Expectest thou a better friend to be thy guest than thy God? The psalmist calls upon us to ‘serve the Lord with gladness,’ and what is his enforcement? ‘Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us,’ Psalms 100:2-3. Who plants a vineyard and looks not to drink of the wine? If God calls our corn and wine his, he therefore expects to be served with them; much more with our love and joy, for surely he allows us not to alienate the best of his gifts from him. When thou art therefore going to pray, call up thy affections, which haply are asleep on some creature’s lap, as Jonah in the sides of the ship: ‘What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God.’

(2.) He deserves thy affections because he gives thee his. He is jealous of thee because he is zealous for thee. Well may he complain of thy cold dreaming prayers whose heart is on a flame of love to thee. High and admirable are the expressions with which he sets forth his dear love to his people; whatever he doth for them is with a zeal. In protecting of them, ‘as birds flying, so will the Lord defend Jerusalem,’ that is, swiftly, as a bird flies full speed to her nest when she perceives her young is in danger; in avenging them of their enemies, ‘the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall

perform this;' in hearing their prayers he doth it 'with delight;' in forgiving their sins he is ready to forgive,' 'multiplies to pardon;' when they ask one talent he gives them two. Jacob desires a safe egress and regress. He doth this and more than he desired, for he brings him home with two bands. Not the least mercy he gives but he draws forth his souls and heart with it; even in his afflicting providences, where he seems to show least love, there his heart overflows with it. 'O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? mine heart is turned within me.'

(3.) He is a good pay-master for his people's zeal. 'He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,' Hebrews 11:6. Never did fervent prayer find cold welcome with him. Elias' {Elijah's} prayer fetched fire from heaven because it carried fire to heaven. The tribe of Levi for their zeal were preferred to the priesthood. And why? Surely they who were so zealous in doing justice on their brethren would be no less zealous in making atonement for them by their sacrifices. Most men lose their fervency and strength of their desires by misplacing them; they are zealous for such things as cannot, and persons that oft will not, pay them for their pains. O how hot is the covetous man in his chase after the world's pelf! He 'pants after the dust of the earth,' and that 'on the head of the poor.' But what reward hath he for his labour? After all his getting, like the dogs in pursuit of the hare, he misseth his game, and at last goes often poor and supperless to bed in his grave; to be sure he dies 'a fool,' Jeremiah 17:11. How many court-spaniels—that have fawned and flattered, yea, licked up their master's spittle, and all for some scraps of preferment —have befooled themselves, when at last they have seen their creeping sordid practices rewarded with the fatal stroke of the headsman, or a lingering consumptive death in their prince's favour? Which made that ambitious cardinal say too late, If he had been as observant of his heavenly Master as he had been of his earthly, he could not have been left so miserable at last. In a word, do we not see the superstitious person knocking his breast and cutting his own flesh, out of a zeal to his wooden god, that hath neither ear to hear nor hand to help him? Now, doth not the living God, thy loving Father, deserve thy zeal more than their dead and dumb idols do theirs? For shame! Let not us be cold in his worship when the idolater sweats before his god of clouts[1]; let not the worldling's zeal in pursuit of his earthly mammon leave thee lagging behind with a heedless heartless serving of thy God. Neither fear the world's hooting at thee for thy zeal; they think thee a fool, but thou knowest them to be so.

[How to raise our affections to fervency in prayer.] Question. But how may we get this fervency of spirit in prayer?

Answer (a). Thou who propoundest the question art a saint or not; if not, there is another question must precede this. How thou, that art at present in a state of spiritual death, mayest have spiritual life? There must be life in the soul before there can be life in the duty. All the rugs in the upholsterer's shop will not fetch a dead man to warmth, nor any arguments, though taken from the most moving topics in the Scripture, will make thee pray fervently while thy soul lies in a dead state. Go first to Christ that thou mayest have life, and having life, then there is hope to chafe thee into some heat. But,

Answer (b). If thou beest a saint, it yet calls for thy utmost care to get, and when thou hast got, to keep, thy soul in a kindly heat. As the stone cannot of itself mount up into the air, so the bird—though it can do this, yet—cannot stay there long without some labour and motion with its wings. The saints have a spark of heavenly fire in their bosom, but this needs the bellows of their

care and diligence to keep it alive. There is a rust that breeds from the gold, a worm from the wood, a moth from the garment, that in time waste them; and ashes from the coal that choke the fire; yea, and in the saint too, which will damp his zeal if not cleared by daily watchfulness. Observe therefore what is thy chief impediment to fervency in prayer, and set thyself vigorously against it. If thou beest remiss in this precedaneous[2] duty thou wilt be much more remiss in prayer itself. He that knows of a slough in the way, and mends it not before he takes his journey, hath no cause to wonder when his chariot is laid fast in it.

Answer (c). Now this is not the same in all, and therefore it is necessary that thou beest so much acquainted with thine own estate as to know what is thy great clog in this duty. Certainly, were not the firmament of the saint's soul cooled with some malignant vapours that arise from his own breast, and weaken the force of divine grace in him, it would be summer all the year long with him, his heart would be ever warm, and his affections lively in duty. Look therefore narrowly whence thy cooling comes. Perhaps thy heart is too much let out upon the world in the day, and at night thy spirits are spent, when thou shouldst come before the Lord in prayer. If thou wilt be hotter in duty thou must be colder towards the world. A horse that carrieth a pack all day is unfit to go post at night. Wood that hath the sap in it will not burn easily; neither will thy heart readily take fire in holy duties who comest so sopped in the world to them. Drain, therefore, thy heart of these eager affections to that, if thou meanest to have them warm and lively in this. Now, no better way for this than to set thy soul under the frequent meditation of Christ's love to thee, thy relation to him, with the great and glorious things thou expectest from him in another world. This, or nothing, will dry up thy love to this world, as your wood which is laid a sunning is made fit for the fire. Whereas, let your hearts continue soaking in the thoughts of an inordinate love to the world, and you will find, when you come to pray, that thy heart will be in a duty even as a foggy wet log at the back of a fire, long in kindling, and soon out again. Haply the deadness of thy heart in prayer ariseth from want of a deep sense of thy wants and mercies thou desirest to have supplied. Couldst thou but pray feelingly no doubt but thou wouldst pray fervently. The hungry man needs no help from art to learn him how to beg; his pinched bowels make him earnest and eloquent. Is it pardon of sin thou wouldst pray for? First see what anguish of spirit they put thee to. Do with thy soul as the chirurgeon with his patient's wounds, who syringeth them with some sharp searching water to try what sense he hath of them. Apply such considerations to thy soul as may make thee feel their smart, and be sensible of thy deplored estate by reason of them; then go and sleep at prayer if thou canst. We have David first affecting his heart, and expressing the dolor of his soul for his sin: 'Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me,' Psalms 38:4. Now when his heart is sick with these thoughts, as one with strong physic working in his stomach, he pours out his soul in prayer to God, 'All my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee,' Psalms 38:9.

Art thou to pray for others? First pierce thy heart through with their sorrows, and, by a spirit of sympathy, bring thyself to feel their miseries as if thou wert in their case. Then will thy heart be warm in prayer for them when it flows from a heart melted in compassion to them. Thus we read Christ troubled himself for Lazarus before he lifted up his eyes to heaven for him, John 11:33, John 11:38, compared.

Again, it may be thy want of zeal proceeds from a defect in thy faith. Faith is the back of steel to the bow of prayer; this sends the arrow with a force to heaven. Where faith is weak the cry will not

be strong. He that goes about a business with little hope to speed will do it but faintly; he works, as we say, for a dead horse. It is a true axiom, voluntas non fertur in impossibilia—the less we hope the less we endeavour. We read of strong cries that Christ put up in the days of his flesh. Now mark what enforced his prayer—'unto him that was able to save him;' and not only so, but if you look into that prayer to which this refers, you shall find that he clasped about God as his God—'My God, my God.' His hold on God held up his spirit in prayer. So in the several precedents of praying saints upon Scripture record, you may see how the spirit of prayer ebbed and flowed, fell and rose, as their faith was up and down. This made David press so hard upon God in the day of his distress: 'I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted,' Psalms 116:10. This made the woman of Canaan so invincibly importunate. Let Christ frown and chide, deny and rebuke her, she yet makes her approaches nearer and nearer, gathering arguments from his very denials, as if a soldier should shoot his enemy's bullets back upon him again; and Christ tells us what kept her spirit undaunted, 'O woman, great is thy faith!'

Again, may be it proceeds from some distaste thou hast given to the Holy Spirit, who alone can blow up thy affections; and then, no wonder thou art cold in prayer when he is gone that should keep thy heart warm at it. What is the body without the soul but cold clay, dead earth? and what the soul without the Spirit? truly no better. O invite him back to thy soul, or else thy praying work is at an end. And, if thou wouldst persuade him to return, observe what was the thing that distasted him, and remove it. That which makes this dove forsake its lockyers will hinder his return if not taken away.

[To pray in the spirit, we must have sincerity.]

Third. We pray in the spirit when we pray in sincerity. There may be much fervour where there is little or no sincerity. And this is strange fire; the heat of a distemper, not the kindly natural heat of the new creature, which both comes from God and acts for God; whereas the other is from self, and ends in self. Indeed the fire which self kindles serves only to warm the man's own hands by it that makes it: 'Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks,' Isaiah 50:11; the prophet represents them as sitting down about the fire they had made. Self-acting and self■aiming ever go together; therefore our Saviour with spirit requires truth. He 'seeketh such to worship him' as will 'worship him in spirit and in truth,' John 4:23-24.

Question. But wherein consists this sincere fervency?

Answer. Zeal intends the affections, sincerity directs their end, and consists in their purity and incorruption. The blood is oft hot when none of the purest, and affections strong when the heart insincere; therefore the apostle exhorts us that we 'love one another out of a pure heart fervently,' 1 Peter 1:22, and speaks in another place of 'sorrowing after a godly sort,' that is, sincerely. Now the sincerity of the heart in prayer then appears when a person is real in his prayers, and that from pure principles to pure ends.

First. When he is real in what he presents to God in prayer. The index of his tongue without and the clockwork of his heart within go together; he doth not declaim against a sin with his lips which he favours with his heart; he doth not make a loud cry for that grace which he would be sorry to have granted him. This is the true badge of a hypocrite, who oft would be loath {that} God should take him at his word. A dismal day it would be to such when God shall bring in their own

conscience to witness against them that their hearts never signed and sealed the requests which they made. There is a state-policy used sometimes by princes to send ambassadors, and set treaties on foot, when nothing less than peace is intended. Such a deceit is to be found in the false heart of man, to blind and cover secret purposes of war and rebellion against God with fair overtures in prayer to him for peace.

Second. When the person is not only real in what he desires, but this from a pure principle to a pure end. I doubt not but a hypocrite in confession may have a real trouble upon his spirit for his sins, and cordially, yea passionately, desire his pardoning mercy; but not from a pure principle—a hatred of sin —but an abhorrency of wrath he sees hastening to him for it; not for a pure end, that the glory of God's mercy may be magnified in and by him, but that himself may not be tormented by God's just wrath. He may desire the graces of his Spirit, but not out of any love to them, but only as an expedient, without which he knows to hell he must go; as a sick man in exquisite torture—suppose of the stone or some other acute disease—calls for some potion he loathes, because he knows he cannot have ease except he drinks it. Whereas the sincere soul desires grace, not only as physic, but food. He craves it not only as necessary but as sweet to his palate. The intrinsical bounty and excellency of holiness inflames him with such a love to it, that, as one taken with the beauty of a virgin, saith he will marry her though he hath nothing with her but the clothes to her back; so the sincere heart would have holiness though it brought no other advantages with it than what is found in its own lovely nature. So much to show what sincerity in prayer is.

Now he that would pray acceptably must pray thus in his spirit, that is, with the sincerity of his spirit. 'The prayer of the upright is his delight.' Nadab and Abihu brought fire, and had fire, 'a strange fire,' to destroy them for the 'strange fire' they offered; and such is all fervency and zeal that is not taken from the altar of a sincere heart, Leviticus 10:1. 'The fervent prayer'—B@8×ÆFPb,4—'availeth much.' It can do much, but it must be of a righteous man, and such the sincere man only is. And no wonder that God stands so much upon sincerity in prayer, seeing the lip of truth is so prized even among men. Nature hath taught men to commend their words to others by laying their hands on their breasts, as an assurance that what they say or promise is true and cordial; which the penitent publican it is like aimed at, he 'smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner,' Luke 18:13, thereby declaring whence his sorrowful confession came. That light which told the heathens that God must be worshipped, informed them also this worship must come from the inward recesses of the heart. In sancto quid facit aurum —quin damnus id superis, &c.—what care the gods for gold! let us offer that which is more worth than all treasures, sanctos recessus animi—the heart and inward affections of it. It is a strange custom Benzo, in his Historia Novi Orbis, relates of the natives there: Indi occidentales dum sacra faciunt, dimisso in guttur bacillo, vomitum cient, ut idolo ostendant nihil se in pectore mali occultum gerere—the West Indians, when worshipping their gods, used, by putting a little stick down their throat, to provoke themselves to vomit, thereby showing their idol that they carried no secret evil within them. I should not have named this barbarous custom but to show how deeply this notion is engraven in the natural conscience—that we must be sincere in the worship of God.

Use. Let it put us upon the trial whether we thus pray in the spirit—whether you can find sincerity stamped on your fervency. If the prayer be not fervent it cannot be sincere, but it may have a fervour without this. This is a very fine sieve; approve thyself here, and thou mayest without

presumption write thyself a saint. But how fervent soever thou art without sincerity, it matters not. Nay, zeal without uprightness is worse than key■cold; none will go to hell with more shame than the false-hearted zealot, who mounts up towards heaven in the fiery chariot, a seeming zeal, but at last is found a devil in Samuel's mantle, and so is thrown down like lightning from heaven, whither he would have been thought by his neighbours to be going. Be not loath to be searched. Then there will then need no further search to prove thee unsound. If God's officer be denied entrance, all is not right within. Now to help thee in the work, inquire—

[Rules for trying the sincerity of our hearts in prayer.]

Rule 1. What is thy care in performing this duty of prayer in secret? If thy heart be sincere, it will delight in privacy. A false heart calls others to see his zeal for God. May be he is forward to put himself upon duty where he hath spectators to applaud him, and can be very hot and earnest at the work; but wither he is wholly a stranger to secret prayer, or else he is cold in the performance; he finds himself becalmed now he wants the breath of others to fill his sails. The plummets are off which quickened his motion, and he moves heavily to what he did before company. Whereas a sincere Christian never finds more freedom of spirit, and liquefactions of soul, than in his solitary addresses to God. Joseph, when he would give full vent to his passion, sought some secret place where to weep, and therefore retired himself into his chamber, Genesis 43:30. So the sincere Christian goes to his closet, and there easeth his heart into the bosom of God, and lets his passions of sorrow for sin, and love to Christ, burst forth and have their full scope, which in public prayer he restrains —as to the outward expression of them—out of a holy modesty, and fear of being observed by others, which he hunts not for. Now speak, Christian, what is thy temper? Can thy closet witness for thee in this particular? It is the trick of a hypocrite to strain himself to the utmost in duty when he hath spectators, and to draw loose in his gears when alone; like some that carry their best meat to market, and save the worst for their own food at home; and others that draw their best wine to their customers, but drink the dead and flat themselves at their own private table.

Rule 2. Observe thyself in thy more public addresses to the throne of grace: and that in two particulars. (1.) When thou prayest before others. (2.) When thou joinest with others that pray.

(1.) When thou prayest before others, observe on what thou bestowest thy chief care and zeal, whether in the externals or internals of prayer—that which is exposed to the eye and ear of men, or that which should be prepared for the eye and ear of God; the devout posture of thy body, or the inward devotion of thy soul; the pomp of thy words, or the power of thy faith; the agitation of thy bodily spirits in the vehemency of thy voice, or the fervency of thy spirit in heart■breaking affections. These inward workings of the soul in prayer are the very soul of prayer; and all the care about the other without this, is like the trimming bestowed upon a dead body—that will not make the carcass sweet, nor these thy prayer to God's nostrils. It is the faith, love, brokenness of heart for sin, and the inward affections exerted in prayer, that, like Elijah in his fiery chariot, mount up to God in the heavens, while the other, with the prophet's mantle, fall to the ground. The sincere soul dares not be rude in his outward posture. He is careful of his very words and phrase, that they may be grave and pertinent. Neither would he pray them asleep that joins with him, by a cold, dreaming, and lazy manner of delivering of it; but still, it is the inward disposition of his heart he principally looks to, knowing well, that by the other he is but cook to others, and may fast himself if

his own heart be idle in the duty; and therefore he doth not count he prays well—though to the affecting of their hearts—except he finds his own affections drawn out in the duty. Whereas the hypocrite, if he may but come off the duty with the applause of others in the external performance, is very well pleased, though he be conscious of the deadness and naughtiness of his own heart therein.

(2.) When thou joinest with others that pray. Do the gifts and graces that breathe from others in prayer warm thy affections, and draw out thy soul to bear them company to heaven in the petitions they put up? Or do they stir up a secret envying and repining at the gifts of God bestowed on them? This would discover much pride and unsoundness in thy spirit. The hypocrite is proud, and thinks all the water is spilt and lost that runs beside his own mill; whereas the sincere soul prizeth the gifts of others, can heartily bless God for them, and make a humble and holy use of them. His heart is as much affected with the holy savoury requests that another puts up, as when they come out of his own mouth. But the hypocrite's eye is evil, because God's is good.

Rule 3. Observe whether thy fervency in prayer be uniform. A false heart may seem very hot in praying against one sin; but he can skip over another, and either leave it out of his confession, or handles it very gently. As a partial witness, that would fain save the prisoner's life he comes against, will not speak all he knows, but minceth his evidence; thus doth the hypocrite deal with his darling lust. He is like one that mows grass with a gapped scythe; some he cuts down, and other he leaves standing; vehement against this, and favourable to that lust; whereas sincerity makes clear work as it goes. 'Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me,' Psalms 119:133.

Again the false heart is as uneven in his petitions as in his deprecations. Very earnest he is for some mercies, and they are commonly of an inferior nature, but more indifferent in his desires for those that are greater; he tithes mint and cummin in his prayers —temporal mercies, I mean—but neglects the weightier things of the promise—the sanctifying graces of the Spirit, humility, heavenly-mindedness, contentment, self-denial; a little of these upon a knife's point will content him.

Rule 4. Observe whether thy endeavours correspond with thy prayers. The false heart seems hot in prayer, but you will find him cold enough at work. He prays very fiercely against his sins, as if he desired them to be all slain upon the place; but what doth he towards the speeding of them with his own hands? Doth he set himself upon the work of mortification? doth he withdraw the fuel that feeds them? is he careful to shun occasions that may ensnare him? When temptations come, do they find him in arms upon his guard, resolved to resist their motion? Alas! no such matter. If a few good words in prayer will do the work, well and good; but as for any more, he is too lazy to go about it. Whereas the sincere heart is not idle after prayer; when it hath given heaven the alarm, and called God in to his help, then he takes the field himself, and opposeth his lusts with all his might, watching their motions, and taking every advantage he meets with to fall upon them. Every mercy he receives, he beats it out into a weapon, to knock down all thoughts of sinning again. Thus, 'Seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this; should we again break thy commandments?' Ezra 9:13-14. O God forbid, saith the holy soul, that he should bid such a thought welcome! Every promise he reads, he lifts it up as a sword for his defence against this enemy. 'Having these promises, let us cleanse

ourselves,' 2 Corinthians 7:1. I shall shut up this head with a few directions how we may get this sincere heart in prayer.

[How we may get this sincerity in prayer.]

(1.) Get thy heart united by faith to Christ. It is faith that purifies the heart from its false principles and ends in duty. 'God made man upright;' and, while he stood so, his eye and foot went right; neither did his eye look or his foot tread awry. But after Eve had talked with the serpent, she and all mankind after her learned the serpent's crooked motion, to look one way and go another. 'God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions,' Ecclesiastes 7:29. O beg therefore, with David, that God would 'renew a right spirit within thee,' Psalms 51:10. What the evil spirit hath perverted the Holy Spirit alone can set right. If the cause why a piece carries wrong be in its make and mould, it must be new cast, or it will never carry right. Hypocrisy in duty comes from the falseness of man's depraved nature; the heart therefore must be made new before it can be sincere. The new heart is the single heart, 'I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you,' Ezekiel 11:19. He that loves 'truth in the inward parts' can put it there.

(2.) Make hypocrisy in prayer appear as odious to thee as possibly thou canst; and thou needest not dress it up in any other than its own clothes to do this. Consider but how grievous a sin and how great a folly it is, and methinks it were enough to set thee against it.

(a) Consider what a grievous sin it is. A lie spoken by one man to another is a sin capable of high aggravations; what then is that lie which is uttered in prayer to God? Surely this must be much more horrid, for here is blasphemy in the untruth. God spares not to give the hypocrite the lie, 'Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit,' Hosea 11:12; so many lies they told to God, as prayers they put up. O the patience of a God that doth not strike the hypocrite dead upon the place, while the lie is in his throat, as he did Ananias and Sapphira.

(b) Consider what a great folly it is. [1.] As it is infeasible. Who but a fool can think to blind the eyes of the Almighty? Canst thou cover the eye of the sun with thy hand or hat, that it shall not shine? as unable art thou to hide thy secret designs so close that the great God should not see them. [2.] As it is impossible to deceive God, so thou puttest a woful cheat upon thyself. Thou thinkest thou mendest the matter by praying, and thou makest it worse. When thou comest on thy trial for thy life, thy hypocrisy in prayer will cost thee dearer than thy other sins. Thou takest pains to increase thy condemnation; thou dost, as Solomon saith of another kind of hypocrite, Proverbs 1:18, 'lay wait for thy own blood; they lurk privily for thy own life.' Of all sinners, the hypocrite hath the precedency in God's purposes and preparations of wrath. Hell is prepared for them as the firstborn of damnation. Other sinners are said to have their 'portion with hypocrites,' as the younger brethren with their elder, who is the heir, Matthew 24:51.

(3.) Crucify thy affections to the world. Hypocrisy in religion springs from the bitter root of some carnal affections unmortified. So long as thy prey lies below, thy eye will be to the earth, even when thou seemest like an eagle to mount in thy prayers to heaven. The false heart does uti Deo ut fruatur mundo—he useth religion for secular ends, and makes his seeming piety to God but as a horsing■block to get into the creature's saddle. God is in his mouth, but the world is in his heart; which he projects to attain more easily by the reputation that this will gain him. I have read of one that offered his prince a great sum of money for no more but to have his leave once or twice a day

to come into his presence, and only say, ‘God save your majesty.’ The prince, wondering at this large offer for so small a favour, asked him what this would advantage him? O sir, saith he, this, though I have nothing else at your hands, will get me a name in the country for one that is a great favourite at court, and such an opinion will help me to more by the year’s end than I am out for the purchase. Thus some, it is to be feared, by the very name which they get for great saints among their neighbours, from their acquaintance with religious duties, do facilitate their carnal projects, and advance their worldly interest, that lie at the bottom of all their goodly profession. Well, Christian, this is but to play at small game—to fish for any of the world’s petty enjoyments with religion’s golden hook. As thou lovest thy soul, and wouldst not lose this for ever, to get that which thou must lose after thou hast got it, mortify those carnal affections which thou findest most likely to withdraw thy heart from God. Thou knowest not God, if thou seest not enough in him to make thee happy without the world’s contributions. This, thoroughly believed, will make thee sincere in his service. ‘I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect,’ Genesis 17:1.

BRANCH SECOND.

[He that would pray in his own spirit, must pray in the Spirit of God.]

Having despatched the first importance of this phrase, ‘praying in the spirit,’ viz. the spirit of the person that prayeth, and shown that then a person prays in the spirit when his own soul and spirit acts in the duty—when he prays with understanding, fervency, and sincerity; now we proceed to the second importance of the phrase. To pray ‘in the Spirit’ is to pray in, or with, the Spirit of God; ‘praying in the Holy Ghost,’ Jude 1:20. So that the note or doctrine to be insisted on will be this,

Doctrine. That to right praying, it is necessary that we pray in, or by, the Spirit of God. Prayer is the creature’s act, but the Spirit’s gift. There is a concurrence both of the Spirit of God and the soul or spirit of the Christian to the performance of it. Hence we find both the Holy Spirit is said to pray in us, Romans 8:26, and we said to pray in him, Jude 1:20. By the first is meant is his inspiration, whereby he excites and assists the creature to and in the work; by the latter the concurrence of the saint’s faculties. The Spirit doth not so pray in him as that the Christian doth not exercise his own faculties in the duty, as the Familists[3] Niclaes gained many followers, among them the great publisher Christophe Plantin, who surreptitiously printed a number of Niclaes’ works. Niclaes apparently made two visits to England, where his sect had the largest following. Elizabeth I issued a proclamation against the Family of Love in 1580, and James I believed it to have been the source of Puritanism. The sect did not survive after the Restoration of the English monarchy in 1660, but according to George Fox, a British preacher and the founder of the Society of Friends (or Quakers), some remaining Familists later became associated with the Quakers. —From Encyclopædia Britannica. fondly conceive. In handling this point I shall endeavour to do these three things: First. I shall assert the point, and prove the truth of it. Second. Explicate what it is to pray by the Spirit of God. Third. Make some application of the point.

First. I shall assert the truth of the point, that to right praying it is necessary we pray by the Spirit of God. This is clear from Ephesians 2:18, ‘Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.’ Mark those words, ‘by one Spirit.’ As there is but one Mediator to appear and pray for us in heaven, so but one Spirit that can pray in us, and we by it, on earth. We may as well venture to come to the Father through another Mediator than his Son, as pray by another Spirit than by the Holy Ghost. Therefore our Saviour, when he would show his dislike of the disciples rash motion,

he doth it by telling them, ‘Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of,’ Luke 9:55. As if he had said, It behoves you to be well acquainted with the spirit that acts you in prayer; if your prayers be not breathed in and out by my Holy Spirit, they are abominable to me and my Father also. The name of Christ is not more necessary that the Spirit of Christ is in prayer. Christ’s name fits only the Spirit’s mouth; it is too great a word for any to speak as he ought, that hath not the Spirit to help him. ‘No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost,’ 1 Corinthians 12:3. One may say the words without any special work of the Spirit in him, and so may a parrot; but, to say Christ is Lord believingly, with thoughts and affections comporting with the greatness and sweetness thereof, requires the Spirit of God to be in his heart and tongue. Now it is not the bare naming of Christ in prayer, and saying, ‘For the Lord’s sake,’ that procure’s our welcome with God; but saying it in faith, and none an do this without the Spirit. Christ is the door that opens into God’s presence, and lets the soul into his very bosom; faith is the key that unlocks the door; but the Spirit is he that both makes this key, and helps the Christian to turn it in prayer, so as to get any access to God. You know in the law it was a sin, not only to offer ‘strange incense,’ but also to bring ‘strange fire,’ Leviticus 10:1. By the incense, which was a composition of sweet spices appointed by God to be burned as a sweet perfume in his nostrils, was signified the merit and satisfaction of Christ, who being bruised by his Father’s wrath, did offer up himself a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. By the fire that was put to the incense—which also was appointed to be taken from the altar, and not any common hearth—was signified the Spirit of God, by which we are to offer up all our prayers and praises, even as Christ offered himself up by the eternal Spirit. To plead Christ’s merits in prayer and not by the Spirit, is to bring right incense but strange fire, and so our prayers are but smoke, offensive to his pure eyes, not incense, a sweet savour to his nostrils.

Second. I proceed to explicate what it is to pray by the Spirit of God. To the better opening of this, we must know that there are two ways that the Spirit of God helps persons in prayer; one way is by his gifts, the other by his grace.

First. The Spirit of God helps in prayer by his gifts. Now those gifts which he furnisheth a person with for prayer are either extraordinary or ordinary. The extraordinary gifts of the Spirit in prayer were, in the primitive times, shed forth, whereby the apostles and others were able in a miraculous manner to pray as well as preach on a sudden in a language that they never had learned. Of this gift interpreters understand that passage of Paul, ‘I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also,’ 1 Corinthians 14:15. That is, he would make use of this extraordinary gift Christ had furnished him with, but so as he might edify the church by it, and no otherwise. This extraordinary gift was fitted for the infancy of the gospel church, and ceased—as others of the like nature did—with it. The ordinary gift of the Spirit in prayer is that special faculty whereby persons are enabled on a sudden to form the conceptions of their minds and desires of their hearts into apt words before the Lord in prayer. This is a common gift, and is bestowed on those that are none of the best men. The hypocrite may have more of this gift than some sincere Christian. It is a gift that commonly bears proportion to natural endowments, a ready apprehension, fruitful fancy, voluble tongue, and audacity of spirit, which are all gifts of the Spirit, and do dispose a person for this. Now we see that the head may be ripe and the heart rotten; and, on the contrary, the heart sound and sincere where the head is low■parted.

Second. The Spirit helps in prayer by his grace. His gifts help to the outward expression, but his grace to the inward affection. By the gifts of the Spirit a person is enabled to take the ear and affect the heart of men that hear him; but by the grace of the Spirit acting a soul in prayer, he is enabled to move his own heart and the heart of God also; and this is the man that indeed prays 'in the Spirit.' The other hath the gift, but this hath the spirit, of prayer. Now, there is a twofold grace necessary to pray thus in the Spirit. 1. Grace from the Spirit to sanctify the person that prays. 2. Grace to act and assist this person sanctified in prayer. By the first, the Spirit dwells in the soul; by the second, he acts the soul.

1. There is necessary to this praying in the Spirit, grace to sanctify the person that prays. Before the creature is renewed and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, it can neither apprehend nor desire things aright. 'The carnal mind receiveth not the things of God,' nay, 'it is enmity to God.' And is how such a one fit to pray in an acceptable manner? First, then, the Spirit renews the creature by infusing those supernatural qualities, or habits of saving sanctifying graces, which makes him a new creature; by these he comes to dwell and live in him, and then he acts his own graces thus infused. The soul is in the body before it acts and moves it. We read of living in the Spirit and walking in the Spirit, Galatians 5:25: 'If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.' Walking supposeth life. To pray, hear, or perform any other holy action in a holy manner, is to walk in the Spirit; but we must live in the Spirit, or the Spirit live in us —which is all one—before we can thus walk in the Spirit. There are some acts indeed the Spirit of God puts forth upon souls that are not thus sanctified —acts of common illumination, restraining grace, and assisting also. Thus many hypocrites are enabled to pray in excellent expressions. But he never did assist hypocrite, or any unsanctified person, to perform the inward part of prayer, to mourn sincerely for sin, to pant after Christ and his grace, or to cry, 'Abba Father,' believingly; these are the vital acts of the new creature, and flow from a Spirit of grace infused into the soul, which follows this 'spirit of supplication,' Zechariah 12:10.

2. As habitual grace is required to sanctify the person, so actual grace to assist him as oft as he prays. The Spirit of God may dwell in a soul by his habitual grace, yet deny actual assistance to this or that particular duty, and then the poor Christian is becalmed, as a ship at sea when no wind is stirring. For as grace cannot evidence itself, so neither can it act itself. Hence it is that sometimes the saint's prayers speed no better, because he is not acted by the Spirit in it. Samson, when his lock was cut, was 'weak like another man.' A saint, when the Spirit of God denies his help, prays no better than a carnal man. The Spirit of God is a free agent: 'Uphold me,' saith David, 'with thy free spirit,' Psalms 51:12. He is not as a prisoner tied to the oar, that must needs work when we will have him; but, as a prince, when he pleaseth he comes forth and shows himself to the soul, and when he pleaseth he retires and will not be seen. What freer than the wind? not the greatest king on earth can command it to rise for his pleasure; to this the Spirit of God is compared, John 3:8. He is not only free to breathe where he lists, in this soul and not that, but when he pleaseth also.

[What assistance the Holy Ghost gives to a saint more than to any other in prayer.]

Question. But the question will here be, What assistance doth the Spirit of God give a saint in prayer more than another person?

Answer. The assistance which the Spirit of God gives a saint in prayer above another lies deep; it is laid out upon the inward man, and inward part of the duty. So that a person may come to know whether himself prays in the Spirit, but he cannot judge so easily of another. Now this special assistance consists in these three particulars.

1. The Spirit puts forth an act of exsuscitation[4] upon the soul, to stir up his affections. Never was any formal prayer of the Holy Spirit's making. When the Spirit comes, it is a time of life. The Christian's affections spring in his bosom at his voice, as the babe in Elizabeth at the salutation of the Virgin Mary. Or, as the strings under the musician's hand stir and speak harmoniously, so doth all the saint's affections at the secret touch of the Spirit. He excite's the saint's fear, filling it with such a sense of God's greatness, his own nothingness and baseness, as makes him with awful thoughts reverence the divine majesty he speaks unto, and deliver every petition with a holy trembling upon his spirit. Such a fear was upon Abraham's spirit, when, in his prayer for Sodom, he expressed how great an adventure he made, being but 'dust and ashes, to take upon him to speak unto the Lord.' He excites the Christian's mourning affections. By his divine breath he raiseth the clouds of the saint's past sins, and when he hath overspread his soul in meditation with the sad remembrance of them, then in prayer he melts the cloud, and dissolves his heart into soft showers of evangelical mourning, that the Christian sighs and groans, weeps and mourns, like a child that is beaten, though he sees the rod laid out of his heavenly Father's hand, and fears no wrath from him for them. The apostle tells us the groans and sighs which the Spirit helps the saint to are such as 'cannot be uttered,' Romans 8:26; no, not by the saint himself, who, being unable to translate the inward grief he conceives into words, is fain sometimes to send it with this inarticulate voice to heaven, yet it is a voice that is well understood there, and more musical in God's ear than the most ravishing music can be to ours. In a word, he stirs up affections suitable to every part of prayer, enabling the gracious soul to confess sin with an aching heart, as if he felt so many swords raking in it; to supplicate mercy and grace, as with inward feeling of his wants, so with vehement desires to have them satisfied; and to praise God with a heart enlarged and carried on high upon the wings of love and joy. Parts may art it in the phrase and composure of the words—as a statuary may carve a goodly image, with all the outward lineaments and beautiful proportions in every part—but still it is but the counterfeit and image of a true prayer, for want of that aliquid intus—something within, which should give life and energy to it. This the Spirit of God alone can effect.

2. As the Spirit of God doth excite the Christian's affections in prayer, so he regulates and directs them. Who indeed but the Spirit of God can guide and rein these fiery steeds? He is said in this respect to 'help our infirmities: for we know not what to pray for as we ought,' Romans 8:26. We, alas! are prone to over-bend the bow in some petitions, and want strength to bend it enough in some other. One while we overshoot the butt, praying absolutely for that which we should ask conditionally; another time we shoot beside the mark, either by praying for what God hath not promised, or too selfishly that which is promised. Now the Spirit helps the Christian's infirmity in this respect, for he 'maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God' Romans 8:27, that is, he so holds the reins of their affections and directs them, that they keep their right way and due order, not flying out to unwarrantable heats and inordinate desires. He, by his secret whispers, instructs them when to let out their affections full speed, and when to take them up again. He teacheth them the law of prayer, that striving lawfully they may not lose the prize. Just as the Spirit

was in the ‘living creatures’ to direct their motion, of whom it is said, ‘They went every one straight forward: whither the Spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went,’ Ezekiel 1:12: so the Spirit, acting his saints in prayer, keeps them that they lash out neither on this hand nor on that, but go straightforward, and draw their requests by his rule.

3. He fills the Christian with a holy confidence and humble boldness in prayer. Sin makes the face of God dreadful to the sinner. Guilty Adam shuns his presence, and tells the reason, ‘I heard thy voice and was afraid.’ If the patriarchs—being conscious how barbarously they had used their brother Joseph—were terrified at his presence, and so abashed that they could not answer him; how much more confounded must the sinner be to draw near to the great God, when he remembers the horrid sins he hath perpetrated against him? Now the Spirit easeth the Christian’s heart of this fear, assuring him that God’s heart meditates no revenge upon him, but freely forgives what wrong he hath done him; yea, which is more, that he takes him for his dear child; and, that the Christian may not stand in doubt thereof, he seals it with a kiss of love upon his heart, leaving there the impression of God’s fatherly love fairly stamped, whereby the Christian comes to have amiable thoughts of God, is able to call God Father, and expect the kind welcome of a child at his hands. This is the Spirit of adoption which the apostle speaks of, that chaseth away all servile fear and dread of God from the soul: ‘Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father,’ Romans 8:15. And, ‘Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father,’ Galatians 4:6.

USE OR APPLICATION.

Third. I shall make some application of the point that it is necessary that we pray in or by the ‘Spirit of God.’

[Reproof of those that mock at the need of the Spirit in prayer, with a trial whether we have him or no.]

Use First. Take heed of blaspheming the Holy Spirit as to this work of his in his saints. Some are so desperately profane, that they dare flout and jeer at those who show any strictness in their lives, or zeal in the worship of God, especially in this duty of prayer, with this—‘These are they that have the Spirit, that pray, forsooth, by the Spirit.’ Nay more—I tremble to speak it—some have called their praying by the Spirit praying by the devil. That every gracious soul hath the Spirit of God dwelling in him the Scripture tells us, ‘If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his,’ Romans 8:9. That God hath promised his Spirit to help his saints in prayer is undeniable, and that he accepts no prayer but what is put up by his Spirit is as sure. Now mayest thou not know, bold wretch, what spirit thou art acted by, who makest a mock of having the Spirit and praying by the Spirit? Who but the devil would set thee on work to blaspheme the Spirit of God? But why should we wonder that the actings of the Holy Spirit in the saints should be thus scorned and blasphemed, seeing we find that the Spirit of God, working so mightily in Christ himself, was maliciously interpreted by the wicked Pharisees to be from the devil? Matthew 12:24. But let such know to their terror, that to make a jeer of the Spirit, or to attribute his works to the devil, if it be maliciously done, will be found to come near to the blasphemy of the Spirit which is unpardonable, see Matthew 12:32, ‘Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world,

neither in the world to come.' And this our Saviour spake upon their attributing what he did by the Spirit of God to the spirit of the devil.

Use Second. Try whether you have the Spirit of God or no. A prayerless state is a sad state to live in. Now thou canst not pray acceptably except thou prayest in the Spirit, and thou canst not pray in the Spirit except thou hast the Spirit in thee.

Question. But how may I know whether I have the Spirit of God or no?

I shall answer. 1. Negatively, by what thou must not conclude that thou hast the Spirit. 2. Affirmatively, by what thou mayest.

Answer 1. Negatively; thou canst not know, because thou hast now and then some good motions from the Holy Spirit stirred in thee. The evil spirit is found oft stirring evil motions in souls where he doth not dwell. A foul stir he makes oft in the bosom of a saint; yet dwells not there, because he is not there per modum quietis—he finds no rest in these dry places. Therefore he is brought in saying, 'I will return to my house,' viz. to those that are yet in a carnal state, where he can rule the roost, and command as a master doth all in his house. Truly thus the Holy Spirit is often moving in the consciences and affections of carnal creatures, counselling, rebuking, and exciting them; so that, upon his suggestions, some flashy short pangs of affections are raised in them to that which is good, but presently all is quashed and comes to nothing, and the Spirit driven away by the churlish entertainment he finds.

Again, thou canst not know by the common gifts of the Spirit, illumination, conviction, restraining grace, and assistance to perform the external part of religious duties, even to the admiration sometimes of others that hear them. These are gifts of the Spirit, but such as do not prove he hath the Spirit that hath them. They are like the brightness or radiancy which we see the clouds gilt with in the morning before the body of the sun is above the horizon—they show the sun is near, but it is not yet risen for all this radiancy that is seen; so these gifts are beamed from the Spirit of God, and show the kingdom of God is come nigh such a one; but they do not demonstrate that the Spirit of God is come into that soul and taken possession of it for his house and temple. Or they are like the tokens which a suitor sends to a person whom he is wooing to be his wife—the more to insinuate upon her; but the match breaking off, all are required again. Many have these gifts sent them by the Spirit of God, with whom the match betwixt Christ and them was never made up; and if they be not called for back in this life, they shall however be accountable for them at the great day.

Answer 2. Affirmatively; by what thou mayest conclude that thou hast the Spirit of God; and that in two particulars; though here I might multiply.

(1.) If thou beest regenerated by the Spirit. The Spirit of God dwells only in a new creature. So long as a man continues in his carnal natural state he is destitute of the Spirit. 'Sensual, having not the Spirit,' Jude 1:19. The word is RLP46@Â, such as have no more but a reasonable soul, without a higher principle of life than nature gives to all men. St. Paul useth the word to set out a man in his mere naturals, as opposed to another that hath a principle of supernatural life from the Spirit of God; RLP46ÎH •<¬D, 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit,' 1 Corinthians 2:14. But here the question will be, How shall I know I am regenerate? To this I answer, Every regenerate soul hath divinam indolem—a divine nature and disposition like unto the Spirit of God that regenerates him. 'That which is born of the Spirit is spirit,' John 3:6, viz. is spiritual, the abstract

being put for the concrete, to increase the force of the words. He hath a soul raised as far above natural men as they are above the nature of beasts. When Nebuchadnezzar had the understanding of a man given him he grazed no longer among the beasts of the field, but returned to his princely throne and life. Thus the regenerate soul returns to that high and heavenly disposition which man in his primitive holy state once had. Now God and the things of God take up his thoughts; he hath a new eye to see vanity where before he placed felicity; a new gust and taste, which makes him spit out those sinful pleasures as poison that once were pleasant morsels, and count all earthly enjoyments, that before were his only feast, but dung and dross in comparison of Christ and his grace. He can no more make a meal on them than a man can with dogs' meat. 'They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit,' Romans 8:5, ND@<@ØF4<, they do sapere, savour the things of the Spirit. Find therefore what thy gust is, and thou sayest know what thy life is, whether spiritual, or natural.

(2.) If thou beest led by the Spirit. The Spirit is the saints' guide, 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,' Romans 8:14. As the soul is in the body, to direct and move it, so is the Spirit in their soul: 'Thou hast holden me by my right hand, thou shalt guide me with thy counsel,' Psalms 73:23-24. Even as the child is led by his father's hand, so the saint by the manuduction of the Spirit. Now, to be led by the Spirit of God imports these three things:

(a) A sense of our own weakness and ignorance. He that thinks he knows his way, or that he is able to direct his own steps, will not accept of a guide. It is the weak child or the blind man that calls to be led. First Saul was struck blind, and then he gives his hand to be led to Damascus, Acts 9:1-43. Inquire therefore whether God hath made thee sensible of thy own ignorance and impotency. Man by nature is proud and self-conceited; he leans much to his own understanding, and stands upon his own strength, very loath to be thought out of the way or unable to go of himself in it. 'A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident,' Proverbs 14:16. Tell a soul spiritually wise he is out of his way, he fears himself, hearkens to the counsel, and turns back; but a fool—and such is every carnal man—he falls out with him that counsels or reproves him, and is confident he is right, as if he knew the way to heaven as well as he doth the way from his house to the market. The first thing that the Spirit doth is to dismount the soul from his high opinion he hath of himself, thereby to make him teachable and tractable. 'Men and brethren,' say those converts, after God with one prick in their hearts had let out this wind of pride, 'what shall we do?' Acts 2:37. Their spirit now comes down, willing they are to be directed, so meek and humble that a child may lead them.

(b) He that is led by another is ruled and determined by him that is his guide which way he should go. Inquire, therefore, whether the Spirit of God doth thus determine thy soul in its actings and motions. If thou beest led by the Spirit, thou walkest after the Spirit, and goest the way he goes. Now you know which is the Spirit's walk. He is a Spirit of truth and leads into truth. The word of God is the road he keeps; if thou walkest not by this rule he is not thy guide. Speak therefore, what authority and sway bears the word with thee? Dost thou consult with it and hearken to it? or is it to thee as Micaiah was to Ahab, art thou afraid to advise with it? Or, when thou dost, canst thou cast its counsel at thy heels, and venture to break its hedge, to pursue thy ambitious or covetous projects? If a word lying in thy way will not stop thee, thou art not led by the Spirit of God thou mayest be sure.

(c) To be led imports spontaneity and willingness. This is the difference betwixt leading and driving. The carnal heart may be driven by the rebukes and convictions of the Spirit, as a beast by switch and spur; but the gracious soul follows the Spirit as a child his father that holds him by the hand, yea, that cries after his father to take him along with him. 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.' The Spirit indeed 'draws,' but then the soul 'runs after him.' Mary chose the 'better part;' it was not imposed on her against her liking. The obedience of the saints is compared to a sacrifice, 'Present your bodies a living sacrifice,' &c., Romans 12:1; and it is no acceptable sacrifice that is not offered willingly. The Spirit of God makes the soul 'willing in the day of his power.' 'I will go with this man,' said Rebekah; she was as willing to have Isaac as he to have her. The gracious soul answers the Spirit's call as the echo the voice: 'Seek ye my face. Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' Now, this use of trial calls for a double word of exhortation.

[Exhortation to those who want the Spirit of prayer.]

1. O labour to get this heavenly guest to come and dwell in your hearts. Better it were thou hadst not the spirit of a man than to want the Spirit of God. If the Holy Spirit be not in thee, assure thyself the evil spirit is; and no way is there for thee to turn this troublesome guest out of doors but by getting the Spirit of God in. Thou mayest know where thy eternal mansion will be, in heaven or hell, hereafter, by the spirit that fills and acts thy soul here. If God takes not up thy soul as a mansion for his Spirit on earth, it shows that he prepares no mansion for thy soul in heaven, but leaves thee to be entertained by him in the other world that is thy guest in this. Thus thou seest how thy soul hangs over the infernal pit. What course canst thou take to prevent this thy endless misery that is coming upon thee? Wilt thou stand up as Haman to make request for the life of thy soul? Alas! thou canst not pray though thy life lies on it; thou wantest the Spirit of God that should help thee to groans and sighs; thou must live before thou canst breathe. Prayer, you see, is not a work of nature, but a gift of grace; not a matter of will and parts, got by human skill and art, but taught and inspired by the Holy Ghost. At the bar of man the orator's tongue may so smooth over a cause as to carry it. Rhetoric hath a kind of spell in it that charms the ears of men, he is called the 'the eloquent orator,' {Hebrew Characters Omitted}—nekÇn l~chash—he that is skilful in a charm, Isaiah 3:3. Thus Abigail charmed David's passion with a well-set speech, and returned his sword into his scabbard that was drawn to cut off her husband and his family. But words, alas! how handsomely soever they chime, make no music in God's ear; they avail no more with him when his Holy Spirit is not with them, than Esau's prayers and tears did with old Isaac for the blessing. The same rod which wrought miracles in Moses' hand would have done no such thing in the hand of another, because not acted with the Spirit that Moses had. The same words put up in prayer by a man's own private spirit are weak and ineffectual, yea, distasteful and abominable; which, delivered by the Spirit of God in another, are mighty with God and exceedingly acceptable to him. Kings have their cooks, and eat not but what is dressed by their hands. The great God, I am sure, will not like that sacrifice which his Spirit doth not prepare and offer. Those prayers which are highly esteemed and applauded by men are sometimes a great abomination to the Lord, who sees the heart to be naught and wholly void of his Spirit and grace. And on the contrary, those prayers which are despised and harshly censured by man may be highly pleasing to God. Eli was offended with Hannah and took her for a drunken woman; but God knew her better, that she was not drunk with wine, but filled with the Spirit in prayer, and therefore answered graciously her request. It was wisely done of that Grecian, who, being sent ambassador to a foreign prince, studied the language

of the country that he might the more effectually persuade the king by delivering his embassy in his own tongue. O, get thou the Spirit of God, that thou mayest pray to God in the language of heaven, and no fear but thou shalt speed. Now, if thou wouldst obtain the Spirit,

(1.) Labour to be deeply sensible of thy deplorable state while without the Spirit. An unsavoury sapless creature thou art, God knows, unable for any duty, incapable of any comfort. The Spirit is oft in Scripture compared to water, rain, and dew. Now, as the earth is barren and can bring forth no fruit without these, so is the heart of man without the Spirit of God. O get thy soul affected with this! When the fields are burned up for want of rain, man and beast make a moan; yea, the very earth itself, cleft with drought, by opening its thirsty mouth expresseth its extreme need of some kind showers from the heavens to refresh it. And hast thou no sense of thy woeful condition? Which is worse, thinkest thou—to have the earth iron or thy heart stone? that the fruits and beasts of the field should perish for want of water, or thy soul for want of the Spirit? O couldst thou but be brought to lament thy want, there were hope for having it supplied. 'For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed,' Isaiah 44:3.

(2.) When thou art inwardly scorched with the sense of thy spiritless graceless condition, go and earnestly beg this gift of God. Now thou goest in a good time and mayest hope to speed. Possibly thou hast heretofore prayed for the Spirit, but so slightily and indifferently that thou hast grieved his Spirit while thou hast been praying for him. But now thou seest thy need of him, and thyself undone except thou mayest get him; and therefore, I hope, thou wilt not now shut the door upon thy own prayers by being a cold suitor; which if thou dost not, thou art sure to bring him away with thee. Christ himself assures thee as much. Take it from his own mouth, 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?' Luke 11:13. A father may deny his wanton child bread to play with and throw under his feet, but not his starving child that cries for bread to preserve his life. God can, and will, deny him that asks the Spirit to pride himself with his gifts, but not the hungry soul, that pinched with his want of grace, humbly yet vehemently cries, 'Lord, give me thy Spirit, or else I starve, I die.' Nay, let me tell thee, thy strong cries and earnest prayers for the Spirit would be a sweet evidence to thee that thou hast him already within thee.

(3.) Plant thyself under the word preached. This is vehiculum Spiritus—the Spirit's chariot in which he rides, called therefore 'the ministration of the Spirit.' The serpent, that evil spirit, wriggled into Eve's heart by her ear; and the Holy Spirit ordinarily enters in at the same door, for he is received 'by the hearing of faith,' Galatians 3:2. They that cast off hearing the word to meet with the Spirit do as if a man should turn his back off the sun that it may shine on his face. The poor do not stay at home for the rich to bring their alms to their house, but go to their door and there wait for relief. It becomes thee, poor creature, to wait at the posts of wisdom, and not expect the Spirit should lacquey after thee. If the master come to the truant scholar's house it is to whip him to school.

(4.) Take heed of resisting the Spirit when he makes his approaches to thee in the word. Sometimes he knocks, and, meeting a repulse, goes from the sinner's door. This is dangerous. He that hath promised to come in if we open, hath not promised to come again though we unkindly send him away. He doth indeed oft return after repulses; but sometimes, to show his liberty, he doth not, nay, leaves a padlock, as I may so say, on the door, a judiciary hardness and unbelief, which no minister's key can open. Thus Christ dealt with them that so mannerly excused themselves to his

messengers that invited them. ‘None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper,’ Luke 14:24. Doth the Spirit move on thy heart in an ordinance? Haply it is by some secret rebukes directing the minister’s finger unawares to touch thy sore plat. O beware how thou now behavest thyself towards the Spirit. Quarrel not with the preacher, as if he had a spite against thee and came for a spy to find out the nakedness of thy soul. Struggle not with thy convictions, smother not the motions of the Holy Spirit in thy next pillow at night, but rather cherish and improve them. It is no little mercy that, as the Spirit went by in his chariot, he would call at thy door and give thee so merciful a warning, which, if kindly received, may bring on a treaty of peace betwixt God and thee that may end in thy conversion here and salvation hereafter. It heightened the favour which God bestowed on the widow of Sarepta that there were many other widows in Israel at the same time, but the prophet was sent to her and not to them. So it enhanceth this mercy vouchsafed to thee, that there should be many other sinners in the congregation, and yet the Spirit not sent to them, but to thee; that his arrows should fly over their heads, and be shot at thy window with a secret message from heaven, to rouse thy sleepy conscience and woo thy affections from sin to Christ. Verily the kingdom of heaven is come nigh unto thee. Be but friendly to these his motions and thou shalt have more of his company.

(5.) Converse with the saints that have the Spirit of God in them. They that would learn a foreign language associate with men of that country whose natural tongue it is. Wouldst thou have the Spirit, and so learn to speak to God in heaven’s language? Consort with those who by reason of their heavenly nature will be speaking of God and the things of God unto thee. It is true, they cannot derive and propagate this their spiritual nature; but it is as true, that the Spirit of God may make the gracious discourses which they breathe forth vital and quickening to thee. While thou art with such, thou walkest in the Spirit’s company. Joseph and Mary sought Christ among his kindred, supposing it most likely to find him among them. And it is more probable to find the Spirit of Christ among the saints, his spiritual kindred, than among strangers. The Spirit of God came upon Saul when among the prophets; at the hearing of them prophesy and praise God, his spirit was moved also to do the same. Who knows but thy heart may be warmed at their fire, and from the savour of their graces be drawn thyself to the love of holiness? But, above all, take heed of profane company; this is a great quencher to the Spirit’s work. When David resolves for God and a holy life, he packs the wicked from him: ‘Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God,’ Psalms 119:115. The husbandman busheth his young plants about to keep the cattle off. If there be any buddings and puttings forth of the Spirit of grace in thee, as thou wouldst not have all cropped and bit off, choose not men of a profane spirit for thy associates. They are like the north wind that blows away the rain. When the Spirit of God hath been moving on a soul, the clouds begin to gather in his bosom, and some hopes of a shower of repentance to follow; then comes wicked company and drives all these clouds away, till there be no show left upon his heart of what before there was great hopes.

[Exhortation to those who by the rules of trial find the Spirit of God is in them.]

2. To the saints; the word I have for you is to beseech you not to grieve or quench the Holy Spirit in your bosoms. Thou canst not fadge to live long without prayer if a saint, nor art thou able to pray to purpose without him. When he withdraws, thy hand presently will forget its cunning. Such a chillness will invade thy soul, that thou wilt have little list to pray, for it is he that stirs thee up to the duty; and if thou creepest to it, thou wilt not be warm in the work, for it is his divine breath that must

make thy green-wood burn, thy affections enkindle. Clothes do not warm the body, till the body warm them; and the body cannot warm them, except the soul, which is the principle of life, warm it. If there be no warmth in the heart, there can be no fervency in the prayer; and without the Spirit of God—who is the Christian's soul and what his soul is to his body—no kindly heat can be in the soul. O take heed therefore thou dost not grieve him, lest being distasted he refuse to assist thee. Now three ways the Spirit of God may be distasted by a saint, so as to cause him to deny his wonted assistance in prayer.

(1.) By some sin secretly harboured in the heart. 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me,' Psalms 66:18. Now when God refuseth to hear, we may be sure the Spirit refuseth to assist, for God never rejects a prayer that his Spirit indites and his Son presents. Sin is so offensive to the Holy Spirit, that wherever it is bid welcome he will show his distaste. If you would have this pure dove stay with you, be sure you keep his lodging clean. Hast thou defiled thyself with any known sin? think not to have him help thee in prayer till he hath helped thee to repent of it. He will carry thee to the laver before he go with thee to the altar. The musician wipes his instrument that hath fallen into the dirt before he will set it to his mouth. If thou wouldst have the Spirit of God breathe in thy soul at prayer, present it not to him besmeared with any sin unrepented of.

(2.) By frequent resisting or putting off his motions. As the Spirit helps in prayer, so he stirs up to prayer; he is the saint's remembrancer and monitor: 'He shall bring all things,' saith Christ of the Spirit, 'to your remembrance,' John 14:26. God called Jacob up to Bethel, so the Spirit prompts the saint to duty. Such a mercy thou hast received—up, Christian, praise thy God for it while it is fresh in thy memory and warm in thy heart. Such a temptation lies before thee—go pray thou mayest not be led into it. Thy God waits for thy company, and expects thy attendance; now is a fit time for thy withdrawing thyself to hold communion with him, and pay thy homage to him. Now, when the Christian shall shift off these motions and not take the hint he gives, but from time to time neglect his counsel, and discontinue his acquaintance with God, notwithstanding these his mementos, he is exceedingly distasted, and, taking himself to be slighted, he gives over calling upon him, and leaves the soul for a time, till his absence, and the sad consequences of it, bring him to see his folly, and prepare him to entertain his motions more kindly for the future. Thus Christ leaves the spouse in her bed, when she would not rise at his knock, and makes her trot after him with many a weary step before he will be seen of her. It is just that God should raise the price of his mercy, when we may have it at an easy rate and will not. Christ thrice calls up his drowsy disciples to 'watch and pray,' that they might not 'enter into temptation,' but finds them still asleep when he comes; what saith he then? Truly he bids them 'sleep on,' as if he had said, 'Take your course and see what will become of it.' Indeed they soon saw it to their sorrow, for they all presently fell into that very temptation which their master had so seasonably alarmed them by prayer to prevent, and this waked them to purpose.

(3.) By priding ourselves in and with the assistances he gives. Pride is a sin that God resists wherever he meets with it; for indeed it is a sin that justles with God himself for the wall. It is time for the Spirit to be gone when his house is left over his head. He takes it as a giving him warning to be gone, when the soul lifts up itself into his seat; if he may not have the honour of the work he will have no hand in it. Now the proud man makes the Spirit an underling to himself, he useth his gifts to set up himself with them. Three ways pride discovers itself in prayer, and all to be resisted if we

mean to have the Spirit's company.

(a) When the creature ascribes the Spirit's work to himself, and sets his own name upon the duty, where he should write the Spirit's; like Caligula, who set the figure of his own head on the statue of Jupiter. Instead of blessing God for assisting, he applauds himself, and hath a high opinion of his own abilities, pleasing himself with what expressions and enlargements of affection he had in the duty. This is plain felony, a sin which every gracious soul must needs tremble at. Church robbery is a great wickedness: O what then is spirit robbery! 'I live,' saith Paul, 'yet not I,' Galatians 2:20. 'I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me,' 1 Corinthians 15:10. Thus shouldst thou, Christian, say, 'I prayed, yet not I; I laboured and wrestled, yet not I, but the Spirit of God that was with me.' Applaud not thyself, but humbly admire the grace and dignation of God, to help such a poor creature as thou art. Thus David did: 'Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee,' 1 Chronicles 29:14. That steward deserves to be put out of his office, that brags of his master's money as his own.

(b) When we go to duty in confidence of the gifts and grace we have already received, and do not acknowledge our dependence on the Spirit, by casting ourselves after all our preparations upon him for present assistance. As we must pray by the Spirit, so we must ask for him that we may pray by him: 'How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him,' Luke 11:13. And it is not once asking for all will serve the turn. Thou mayest have his help in the morning and want it at night, if thou dost not humbly ask again for his aid. You know how Samson was served when he thought to go out as he used to do. Alas! poor man, the case was altered, he was weak as water; the Spirit was gone and he had carried away his strength with him. God will have thee, O Christian, know the key to thy heart hangs at his girdle, and not thy own, that thou shouldst be able to open and enlarge it at thy pleasure. Acknowledge God, and his Spirit shall help thee; but 'lean to thy own understanding,' and thou art sure to catch a fall. When pride is in the saddle, shame is in the crupper; if pride be at the beginning of a duty, shame will be at the end of it.

(c) When we rely on our prayers, and not entirely on Christ's mediation, for acceptance and audience; this is pride with a witness, and highly derogatory to the honour of Christ. God indeed accepts the saints in prayer, but not for their prayer, but for Christ's sake. Now the Spirit, who is Christ's messenger, will not, you may be sure, give his assistance to rob Christ of his glory. When he helps thee to pray, if thou wouldst harken to his voice, thou mayest hear him calling thee out of thyself, and confidence of thy prayers, to rely wholly on the mediation of Christ. Wrong Christ, and you are sure to grieve his Spirit.

Division Fourth.—The Guard of Prayer.

'And watching thereunto.'

These words present us with the fourth branch in the apostle's directory for prayer, which I called prayer's guard. Prayer to the saints is as the great artillery to an army—of great use to defend them, and of as great force to do execution upon their enemies; it therefore needs the stronger guard to be set about it, lest it be taken from them, or turned against them by the enemy. Now the guard which the Spirit of God here appoints this great ordinance of prayer, is watching—'watching

thereunto.' Watching is either or improper, literal or metaphorical. First. Watching, literally taken, is an affection of the body. But, Second. Watching is taken metaphorically for the vigilancy or watchfulness of the soul.

[The duty of watching unto prayer.]

First. Watching, literally taken, is an affection of the body. That only can properly be said to watch which is subject to sleep; and so the body is, but not the soul. Thus, to watch in a religious sense is a voluntary denying of our bodies sleep, that we may spend either the whole or part of the night in pious exercises. Thus the Jews kept the night of the passover holy, Exodus 12:42. Our Saviour oft spent the night in prayer, Matthew 14:23; Matthew 26:38. We find Paul treading in his Lord and Master's steps, 'In watchings, in fastings,' 2 Corinthians 6:5. Many a sweet spiritual junket holy David's devout soul got in the night, when others lay in their bed: 'My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness,...when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches,' Psalms 63:5-6. No doubt, for a devout soul, upon some extraordinary occasions—so superstition be avoided and health regarded—thus to watch unto prayer is not only laudable but delectable. Vigiliæ in quantum valetudinem non perturbant, si orando, psallendo, legendo sumantur, in delicias spirituales convertuntur —happy soul, that can thus steal in the dark into the arms of his beloved, and watch for devotion while others watch to do mischief or fill themselves with impure delights (Augustinus). This is the Christian, whose soul, like Gideon's fleece, shall be filled with the dews and influences of heaven above others. But,

Second. Watching is taken metaphorically for the vigilancy or watchfulness of the soul. This is principally meant here, and in other scriptures, where we are commanded to watch, Mark 13:35; Revelation 16:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:6; 1 Peter 5:8; cum multis aliis—with many others. Now we shall the better understand what duty is imposed upon the Christian under this word [watching], if we consider what bodily watching is. Two things it imports—waking and working. When a man wakes in the night to attend some business then to be done, such a one only truly watcheth; a man that sleeps not in the night, but to no purpose, for no business he hath to despatch, he may be said to wake but not to watch, for this relates to some employment he hath in charge to look to. Thus the shepherds are said to 'keep watch over their flock by night,' Luke 2:8, and the disciples 'watched' with Christ while they sat up to wait on him the night before his passion, Matthew 26:40. So that, for a Christian to watch in a spiritual sense is to preserve his soul awake form sin in the height of this world, that he may keep the Lord's charge and do the duty imposed upon him as a Christian. Now prayer being one principal duty he is to attend and intend with all his might, therefore watching is very often joined with it, Matthew 26:41; Mark 13:33; Luke 21:36; Colossians 4:2; 1 Peter 4:7. In handling this duty of watching unto prayer, I shall show, First. Why the Christian is to watch unto prayer. Second. Wherein the duty of watchfulness, in reference to prayer, consists. Third. I shall set the Christian's watch for him, by giving some little counsel and help towards his performing this duty of watchfulness; for it is not a temporary duty, but for his whole lifetime.

[Why the Christian is to watch unto prayer.] First. I shall show why the Christian is to watch unto prayer.

1. Reason. Because of the importance of the duty of prayer. No one action doth a Christian meet with in his whole life of greater weight and moment than this of prayer is; and that in regard of God

or himself.

(1.) In regard of God. Prayer is an act of religious worship; we have immediately to do with the great God, to whom we approach in prayer. Now religion is as tender as the eye; it is not a thing to be played with or handled without great care and heedfulness. Prayer is too sacred a duty to be performed between sleeping and waking, with a heavy eye or a drowsy heart. This God complained of, ‘There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of me,’ Isaiah 64:7. He counts it no prayer where the heart is not stirred up and awake. No way can we more honour or dishonour God than in prayer. O how then ought we to watch to this duty!

(2.) Again, in regard of ourselves; for our behaviour in prayer hath a universal influence into all the passages of our whole life. As a man is in this duty so he likely to be in all the rest. If careless in praying, then slighty in hearing, loose in his walking; he shall find that he miscarries in all his enterprises, is ensnared in all his enjoyments, baffled with every temptation, and discomposed at every affliction that meets him. And the reason of all this is—because our strength both to do and suffer comes from God. Now God communicates his assistance to his children in a way of communion with them. They ask, and they have; they seek, and find; knock, and the treasury of mercy is opened to them. Prayer is the channel in which the stream of divine grace, blessing, and comfort runs from God the fountain into the cistern of their hearts. Dam up the channel and the stream is stopped. If the stomach doth not its office all the members want their nourishment. If the trade fails in the shop there is but a poor house kept within.

2. Reason. Watchfulness is of as great importance to prayer as prayer is to all our other duties. No duty can be despatched well without prayer, nor prayer without watching; for it is not prayer, but prayer performed in a holy spiritual manner, that is effectual. Now, this cannot be done when the is off his watch. Take the Christian a napping, with his grace in a slumber, and he is no fitter to pray than a man is to work that is asleep. Whatever a man is doing, sleep, when it comes, puts an end to it. Sleep is the great leveller of the world, it makes all men alike. The strong man is as unable to defend himself from an enemy in his sleep as the child. The rich man asleep and the poor man are alike; he enjoys his estate no more than if he had none. Thus the Christian, while his graces are asleep, is even like another that hath no grace—as to the present use of them, I mean—he will pray as the carnal man doth, enjoy God no more in the duty than such a one would do. O how sad is this! and yet how prone are we to give way unto this drowsiness of spirit in prayer! It creeps insensibly upon the soul, as sleep doth upon the body; the heart is gone before the Christian is well aware. The more need therefore there is to watch against it.

3. Reason. Because Satan is so watchful against prayer, therefore it behoves the Christian to watch unto prayer. Where should the strongest guard be set but where the enemy maketh his fiercest assault? This is the fort he batters and labours with all his might to beat the Christian from, well knowing the shot which gall him most come out of it. What he doth otherwise against the Christian is on a design to hinder his prayers, 1 Peter 3:7, as an enemy falls upon one part of the city to draw their forces from another place which he chiefly desires to gain. Indeed the soul never falls fully into his hands till it throws up this duty. ‘Pray that ye enter not into temptation.’ Sometimes the city is taken, and the enemy is forced back again, by those in the castle which commands the city. Prayer is like such a castle. Sometimes the Christian hath nothing left him but a spirit of prayer, and with this he beats back the devil out of all his advantages, and wrings out of

his hands his new-gotten victories.

[Wherein watchfulness unto prayer consists.]

Second. The second thing I promised was to show wherein the Christian is to express his watchfulness in reference to this duty of prayer. Take it in these three particulars. 1. He is to watch before prayer. 2. He is to watch in prayer. 3. He is to watch after prayer.

1. The Christian is to show his watchfulness before prayer; and that,

(1.) By watching for the fit season to pray in. We cannot be always on our knees. We may serve God all the day, but worship him we cannot; this is a duty that requires some set times for its exercises. Now it is our duty to watch for the season of prayer as the merchant watcheth for the exchange hour; he orders his other occasions so that by no means he may miss that. Thus the Christian should endeavour to dispose his occasions so that his devotions be not shut out or crowded up into straits of time by his improvidence; no, nor interfere with other necessary duties. Many a fair child is lost by an untimely birth, and good duty spoiled by being unseasonably performed.

(2.) By keeping a strict watch over himself in his whole course.

(a) By shunning all that may defile his conscience, and so render him unmeet for communion with God. Thus the priest was to watch himself that he touched no unclean thing, God thereby signifying that he will have them to be holy in their lives that approach near to him in the duties of his worship.

(b) By a holy care to observe and lay up the most remarkable passages of God's providence to him, as also the frame and behaviour of his own heart to God all along the interval between prayer and prayer. The want of this part of watchfulness is the cause why we are so jejune and barren in the performance of this duty. It is no wonder that he should want matter for his prayer at night, and trifle in it with impertinences, who did not treasure up what passed in the day betwixt God and him. Though the minister be not making his sermon all the week, yet by observing in his other studies what may be useful for him in that work, he is furnished with many hints that help him when he goes about it. Such an advantage the Christian will find for prayer by laying up the remarkable instances of God's providences to him and of his carriage to God again under them; these will furnish him with necessary materials for the performance. The bag is filling while the kine are feeding or chewing the cud, and accordingly yields more plentily when milked at night. Truly thus it is here. That Christian must needs be most fruitful and plentiful in his devotions, when he comes to pour out his heart to God in prayer, that hath been thus filling it all the day with meditations suitable and helpful to the duty. Would he praise God? He hath the preservations, deliverances, and assistances which God hath given into him at hand, in the commonplace■book of his memory, which another hath lost for want of writing them down in this book of remembrance. Would he humbly confess the sins of the day? He presently recalls, 'In this company I forgat myself and spake unadvisedly with my lips; in that enjoyment I observed my heart to be inordinate; this duty I omitted; that I was remiss and negligent in doing.' Now what a wonderful help hath such a soul above another that walks at random to get his soul into a melting mournful frame? The eye affects the heart. The presence of the object actuates the affection. The sight of an enemy stirs up anger; the sight of a dear friend excites love, and puts a man into a sudden ravishment —whom, may be,

he should not have thought on, if he had not seen him. How can they mourn for the sins of the day at night who remember them no more than Nebuchadnezzar his dream?

(c) By the frequent exercise of ejaculatory prayer. He doth not watch to pray that never thinks on God but when he is on his knees; for, by this long discontinuing his acquaintance with God, he indisposeth himself for the more solemn addresses of his soul to him. Long fasting takes away the stomach. The Christian will find that the oftener he is refreshing his spirit with those little sips and short gusts of heaven, the larger draught he will be able to take when he returns to his set meal of morning and evening prayer. For, by the means of these he will be secured from worldly affections, which exceedingly deaden the heart, and also be seasoned and prepared for further communion with God. These short walks often taken keep the soul in breath for a longer journey.

2. The Christian must watch in prayer. It is not enough to watch the child that he goes to school, but the master's eye must watch him in school; to be idle at school is as bad as to truant from it. Thou dost well, Christian, to take care of thyself before prayer, and to see that the duty be not omitted; but wilt thou now leave it at the school-door? Truly then all thy former care is to little purpose.

(1.) Thou must watch thy outward man, and rouse that up from sleep and sloth. If the body be heavy-eyed in prayer the soul must needs be heavy-heeled; the pen drops out of the writer's hand when he falls asleep. 'Watch and pray,' saith Christ to his disciples; he knew that they could not do that work nodding. And yet, how many do we see at the very time of prayer in our congregations so far from watching, in this sense, that they invite sleep to come upon them by laying themselves in a lazy posture? Certainly, friends, communion with God is worth keeping our eyes open. Little do these drones think what contempt they cast upon God and his ordinance. I wonder any can sleep at the worship of God and not dream of hell■fire in their sleep. But it is not enough to keep thy awaked, if thou sufferest it to wander. 'Turn away mine eyes,' saith David, 'from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way,' Psalms 119:37.

(2.) Thou must watch thy soul in prayer. The soul is the man, and the soul in prayer is the very soul of prayer. Watch what its ends and aims are, that it shoots not beside the mark. Watch what strength and force thy soul puts to the work. Our prayers miscarry by shooting short as well as wide. In a word, thou must keep thy heart with all diligence from one end of the duty to the other, or else it will give thee the slip before thou art aware. How oft, alas! do our souls begin to speak with God in prayer, and on a sudden fall a chatting with the world! One while, our hearts are warm at the work, and we pursue hard after God with full cry of our affections; but instantly we are at a loss and hunt cold again. Holy David was sensible of this, and therefore we have him in the midst of this duty begging help from God to call in his gadding heart: 'Unite my heart to fear thy name,' Psalms 86:11.

3. The Christian is to watch after prayer.

(1.) By calling his soul to a review concerning the duty, how it was performed by him. God himself, when he had finished the works of creation, looks back upon them, 'And God saw every thing that he had made,' Genesis 1:31; that is, he viewed his work, as an artist would do a piece he had drawn. He hath given us all a faculty to reflect upon our actions, and looks we should use it, yea, complains of those that do not 'consider their ways and doings.' Many duties depend upon this. He

that looks not back how he prayed, can he be humbled for the sins that cleaved to it? And will God pardon what he takes no care to know, that he may show his repentance for them? Or will he mend those faults in the next prayer which he found not out in the former? No, but rather increase them. We need not water weeds; let them but stand unplucked up and they will grow alone. This is the sluggard whose soul will soon run into a wilderness, and be overgrown with those sins in prayer, which at last may choke the very spirit of supplication in him.

(2.) By observing what is the issue and success of his prayer. As he is to look back and see how he prayed, so forward to observe what return he finds of his prayer. To pray, and not watch what becomes of our prayer, is a great folly and no little sin; like children that throw stones into a river, which they never look to see more. What is this but to take the name of God in vain, and play with an ordinance that is holy and sacred? Yet thus, alas! do many knock at God's door—as idle children at ours—and then run away to the world, as they to their play, and think no more of their prayers. Or, like Pilate, who asked Christ, 'What is truth?' and, when he had said this, went out to the Jews, forgetting what he asked. Holy David did not think prayer such an idle errand. 'My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up,' Psalms 5:3. First, he is careful to take his aim right in delivering this arrow of prayer, which he sends with a message to heaven, 'I will direct my prayer unto thee.' Then he is as careful to observe where his arrow lights, and what answer is made to it, 'and I will look up,' which amounts to as much as that expression, 'I will hear what God the Lord will speak,' Psalms 85:8, that is, to me, concerning the prayer which in those words immediately foregoing he had made, 'Show us thy mercy, O lord, and grant us thy salvation.' When the merchant hath sent his ship to sea, he is inquiring at the exchange after her, to hear how she got to her port, whether on her return, and with what lading. When the husbandman hath cast his seed into the ground, then he comes every day almost to see how it comes up. This, Christian, is to watch unto prayer, to wait for answers to prayer. Mordecai, no doubt had put up many prayers for Esther, and therefore he waits at the kings gate, looking what answer God would in his providence give thereunto.

[The Christian's guard or watch about prayer set for him.]

Third. The third thing I promised was to set the Christian's watch for him, by giving some little counsel and help towards his constant performing this duty of watchfulness. In doing this, we take the following particulars.

1. Particular. Harbour not any known sin in thy bosom. Sin hath two contrary effects on the conscience, and both sad enough. Either it fills the conscience with horror, or benumbs and stupifies it; it breaks the soul's rest, or takes away its sense. The latter is the more common. Suffer the devil to anoint thy temples with this opium, and thou art in danger to fall into the sleeping disease of a stupid conscience; little list then thou wilt have to pray. Or if it hath the other effect upon thee, thou wilt be as much afraid, as now thou dost little desire, to pray.

2. Particular. Beware of any excess in thy affections to the creature. A drunken man, of all other, is most unfitting to watch. Such a one will be asleep as soon as he is set in his chair. Now all inordinacy of affection is a spiritual drunkenness. Christ joins both together, 'Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares,' Luke 21:34. It is a preservative against drowsiness of spirit, that the day of the Lord might not take them napping. And of the two,

the drunkenness of the affection is the worse. He that is bodily drunk over-night, is sober by the morning; but he that is overcharged with the cares or love of the world, rises as drunk as when he lay down; and how can he then watch unto prayer? We have therefore these two often joined together, ‘Let us watch and be sober,’ 1 Thessalonians 5:6; ‘Be ye therefore sober, and watch,’ 1 Peter 4:7. Whatever the affection is, the intemperance of it lays the soul under a distemper, and indisposeth it to prayer. Is it sorrow? Our Saviour finds his disciples ‘sleeping for sorrow,’ when they should have watched and prayed, Luke 22:45. Is it love? This laid Samson asleep in Delilah’s lap. The heart of man hath not room enough for God and the world too. Worldly affections do not befriend spiritual. The heart which spends itself in mourning for worldly crosses, will find the stream runs low when he should weep for his sins. If the cares of this life fill his head and heart he will have little list to wait on God for spiritual purposes. It is no wonder that the master finds his servant asleep in the day, when he should be at work for him, if he sat up revelling all the night.

3. Particular. Resist this spiritual drowsiness when it first creeps upon thee. Sleep is easier kept off when approaching, than shaken off when it hath got possession and bound the senses. This sleepy disease of the soul steals insensibly upon us, even as the night steps in by little and little. When, therefore, thou findest it coming, rouse up thyself; as a man who hath business to do would start up from his chair to shake off his drowsiness. Now thou mayst observe these few symptoms of this distemper invading thee.

(1.) An unwillingness and backwardness to duty. If thou findest this, it appears thou beginnest to be heavy■eyed. When grace is wakeful, the Christian needs not many words to persuade him into God’s presence. ‘Thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said, Thy face, Lord will I seek.’ therefore, conclude thou mayest that some vapours have fumed up from thy corruptions, to dull and deaden thy heart to the work. He that would run to the door, when awake, at the first knock of his dear friend to let him in, may, when between sleeping and waking, let him stand too long. This was the spouse’s case, and it lost her the company of her beloved. It showed plainly she was in a sleepy distemper, in that she was so backward to duty; for that was the door that Christ would have met her at.

(2.) Formality in prayer is a certain symptom that a sleepy distemper hangs about thee. Grace awake is full of life and activity; at least it discovers itself by making the soul deeply sensible of its deadness and dulness. Vigilantis est somnium narrare. saith Seneca—it shows the man awake that tells his dream, what he did in his sleep; and it proves the soul awake that can feelingly and mournfully confess his deadness.

(3.) Prevalency of wandering thoughts. In sleep, fancy and imagination rules and ranges without any control. If thy thoughts range and scatter into impertinences in time of prayer, and meet with no check from thee, it shows thy grace, if thou hast any, is not well awake.

4. Particular. Express a conscientious diligence at thy particular calling in the intervals of prayer. They that sit up to watch had some need of work to keep them awake. Idleness is but one remove from sleep. I cannot believe that he who lazeth a day awake in idleness, should find his heart awake to pray at night; for he hath that day lived in the neglect of a duty as necessary as this, and it is bad going to one duty through the neglect of another. There is a generation of men indeed, that under a pretence of watching and praying always, betake themselves to their cloisters, and renounce all secular employments, as if it were easy to put off the world as to change their clothes,

and get on a cowl or a religious habit; but the world hath found those places commonly to have proved, not so much houses to pray in, as dens to draw their prey into. It is more like that those who are pampered with sloth and fulness of bread should be eaten up with luxury and sensuality than with zeal and devotion. The air, when still, thickens and corrupts; the spirits in our body are choked with rest; and the soul needs motion and exercise as much as either. In spiritual offices it cannot hold out without intermmittings; therefore, God hath provided our particular callings as a relief to our spiritual devotions. Only, our care must be not to overdo. The same thing may quicken and weaken, wake us and lay us asleep. No greater help to our religious offices than a faithful discharge of our particular calling; no greater duller of the Spirit of prayer than the same when inordinately pursued. The same oil feeds the lamp and drowns it if excessively poured on. Hold the candle one way, and the wax nourishes the flame; turn the other end up, it puts it out.

5. Particular. Preserve a sense of thy spiritual wants. As fulness inclines the body to sleep, so doth a conceit of spiritual fulness the soul. When the belly is full then the bones would be at rest—the man hath more mind to sleep than work; whereas he that is pinched with hunger, his empty craving stomach keeps him awake. If once thou beginnest to have a high opinion of thyself, and thy spiritual hunger be a little stayed—from a conceit of thy present store, and sufficiency of thy grace—truly then thou wilt compose thyself to sleep, and sing the rich man's lullaby to thy soul, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for may years; take thine ease.' The Corinthians are a sad instance for this purpose. 'Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us,' 1 Corinthians 4:8. Paul is now nobody with you. The time hath been you could not be without his pains. The hungry child did no more cry for the breast than you for the word preached by him. But now your stomach is stayed, you are full and can live without him. Whereas, God knows, it was a fulness of wind of pride, not of solid grace. It is the nature of grace to dilate the heart and make room for more, but of pride to cloy and glut the soul. God hath long kept open house in England; the wine-cellar door of his ordinances hath not been shut upon us; we have had free access to drink, and that abundantly, of their sweet wine. But, alas! may it not be for a lamentation to see how many are drunk with spiritual pride, rather than filled with grace, after so long an enjoyment of them!—insomuch that some have attempted to stave the very vessels from which they have drawn this wine! Such are they that decry all ordinances, and would down with ministers and ministry; yea, who can live without public preaching and private praying also. Others, not so mad drunk as the former, are yet fallen asleep under the tap; they have lost their first life in and love to ordinances; they sit with sleepy eyes and dead hearts under them. Well, Christian, if thou wouldst keep thy soul awake for this or any other ordinance, take heed thou losest not the sense of thy wants. Begging is the poor man's trade. When thou beginnest to conceit thyself rich, then thou wilt be in danger to give it over, or be remiss in it.

6. Particular. Retire often to muse on some soul-awakening meditations. We seldom sleep when we are thoughtful, especially if the thoughts we muse on be of weight and importance enough to intend and occupy the mind. Indeed, idle trivial thoughts such as have nothing to invite attention, are given as a ready means to bring a man asleep—I mean bodily sleep. That Christian who neglects frequently to meditate on spiritual things, and lets his thoughts walk all day in the company of carnal worldly occasions, I should wonder if he finds his heart awake at night to pray in a spiritual manner. Give me therefore leave to present a few subjects for thy meditations to insist upon, and they will be as the brazen ball which some philosophers used to hold in their hand

that they might not sleep too long, or as the alarm which men set overnight to call them up to their business early in the morning.

(1.) Meditate of Christ's coming to judgment. Surely thou wilt not easily sleep while this trumpet, that shall call all mankind to judgment, shall sound in thy ear. The reason why men sleep so soundly in security is, because they either do not believe this, or at least do not think of it seriously so as to expect it. The servant that looks for his master will be loath to be found in bed, when he comes; no, sits up sits up to open the door for him when he knocks. Christ hath told us he 'will come;' but not when, that we might never put off our clothes or put out the candle. 'Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come,' Matthew 24:42. There are indeed negative signs concerning his coming to the general judgement of the world, by which we may know he will not yet come; as the fall of Babylon, the calling of the Jews, and other prophecies, that must be fulfilled; before which he will not come. But there are none such, from which we may conclude that his coming to any of us in particular, to take us away by death, and summon us to our particular judgment before his bar, shall not yet be. Thou art young; thou canst not therefore say thou shalt not die as yet. Alas! measure the coffins in the churchyard, and thou wilt find some of thy length. Young and old are within the reach of death's scythe. Old men indeed go to death; their age calls for it. But, young men cannot hinder death's coming unto them. Thou art rich, will this excuse thee? Rich men indeed can get others to serve in their arms here, when their prince calls them forth to war; but 'there is no discharge in this war.' Solomon tells us 'Thou must personally do this. Thou art strong and lusty, thou canst not therefore say that death will be longer at work to fell thee down. Some indeed he cuts down by chips in consumptive diseases —they die by piecemeals; others he tears up in one night, as a tree by a tempest. O think of this, and thy sleep will depart from thee!

(2.) Consider the devil is always awake. Is it time for them in the city to sleep, when the enemy without watch, and may be are climbing the walls? Our Saviour takes it for granted, 'If the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up,' Matthew 24:43. Of all the nights in the year he would not then have slept. Would Saul have slept in his trench, if he had thought David had been so near? Or Sisera have lain down to rest, if he had seen the hammer and nail in Jael's hand to drive through his temples? 'Hannibal is at the gates!' was enough to wake the whole city of Rome, and call them to their arms. And is not diabolus ad ostium—the devil is at thy door, enough to keep thee out of thy bed of sloth and negligence? What day in all the year is no term to Satan? What place or company art thou in, that he cannot make a snare to thy soul? What member of thy body, or faculty of thy soul, which is not in danger to be abused by him? Hast thou not an inmate in thy own bosom that watcheth to open the gate to him? and is there not a constant correspondence between them? O how oft doth he beat us—as Bernard saith—with our own staff; and as the thief sometimes serves the traveller, binds us with our own garters! Shall we not always watch to pray, when he watcheth to tempt? Shall not we keep our correspondence with God, and Christ, our allies in heaven, as he doth with our flesh that is his confederate?

Ut jugulent homines surgunt de nocte latrones;

Ut t'ipsum serves non expergisceris;—

—shall thy enemy be awake to seek to cut thy throat, and wilt not thou rise to save it?

(3.) Consider wicked men are awake, and hard at work for Satan and their lusts. The philosopher blushed that the smith should be up and have his hammer in his hand before he had his book. O may it not put the Christian to shame! Consider how watchful the men of the world are to follow their worldly business. Do they not rise early, and go to bed late, grudging the very time that is spent to refresh nature in the night with sleep, so bent they are upon their carnal projects! The philosopher observed this, and shamed himself for suffering the smith to be at his anvil in the morning sooner than he was at his book. O Christian! should it not make thee blush much more to see the whole town up and as busy as bees about a garden, one flying this way, another that way—and all to bring a little more of this world's perishing pelf into their hive, out of which death, ere long, will smoke them, and force them to leave what with so much pains they have gathered for others they know not who, possibly their greatest enemies—while thou, Christian, sleepest away thy precious time, though thou art sure to carry thy gettings into the other world with thee,, and there enjoy the fruit of thy short labour here with everlasting glory! Nay, consider how watchful the wicked are to take all opportunities to pursue their works of darkness. The adulterer watcheth for the twilight to meet his minion; and wilt not thou watch unto prayer, that thou mayest fill thy soul with spiritual loves in communion with thy God? The thief is up at midnight to get his prey; and wilt not thou break thy rest a little for to obtain a richer treasure than is to be found in the coffers of the richest princes that the world boasts of? Shall these be at so much pains to satisfy their lusts, and thou take none to honour and enjoy thy God? O what a shame was it to the heavy-eyed disciples that they could not watch to pray with their Master, when Judas that bold traitor was so wakeful to be up in the dead of the night to betray him into his murderers' hands!

(4.) Consider how short the time is that thou art desired to watch. 'Could you not watch with me one hour?' saith Christ,' Matthew 26:40. Ere long, Christian, thou shalt be called off thy guard, and then thou shalt have all rest, though no sleep. It is but for this short life thou art put to stand upon this hard duty; and is that so long? Others do not count it so. O how soon is a day, a year, yea a life, passed at play or sin? The great complaint that such make is, 'Time is short.' They wish they could clip its wings, and take off the weights from this clock that make it post away so fast. Is time so short and sweet to spend in sin, and can it be tedious to thee to bestow it in devotion? Why should an hour in the closet be thought by a saint long, when day and night spent in an ale-house is too short for the sinner? But, above all, consider whether it be not better to watch and pray here on earth for a few days than to wake and roar in hell under endless and easeless torments!

(5.) Consider seriously how great a loser thou hast been already in thy heavenly trade for want of watching. It is with the Christian as with some negligent merchant, who takes notice of some one loss of a round sum that befalls him—may be some hundreds at a clap. At this he cries he shall be undone; but regards not the pence and shillings that he idly spends, nor considers his loss which follows upon his daily negligence. Here his estate melts insensibly, and he is not aware of it; whereas, would he count what in this dribbling way is lost by retail, he might find it amounts to more than the other. Thus the Christian sometimes is troubled for one great sin into which he hath fallen—and that not without reason —but withal, he observes not how he neglects this duty to-day, and negligently performs that at another time; how he now prays coldly for want of due preparation, and what little fruit comes of another for want of watchfulness after it; whereby in time he falls low, though with an easy descent, step by step; whereas, if he could bring the several items of these his particular losses together, he would find them swell into a sad reckoning, except with

these his losses he hath also lost—which is the greatest—the tenderness of his conscience. Now, Christian, hast thou not a mind to thrive at last? And shall a careless Christian add to his stock? Did you ever go by the sluggard's field and not find it overgrown with thorns? Wouldst thou but be persuaded to make it thy business daily to watch thy heart—how thou prayest, and how thou walkest after thou hast been at prayer—thou shouldst find a blessed change in thy spiritual affairs. This strictness will at first be uneasy, like a new suit; but every day that will wear off, and a sweet facility follow when thou shalt see thy gains come trowling in by it. He that finds how well he is paid for his diligence by the increase of his estate, will not grudge the sluggard his ease when he shall see him walk by his door in rags. It was the saying once of a rich man, who, by God's blessing on his diligence, had raised a vast estate, that at his first setting up in the world he got a little with much trouble, but afterwards he got his great gains with little trouble. And thou, Christian, wilt find the same in thy spiritual trade. Thy trouble will be most at first, but thy gains most at last; and the trouble less, because the way of godliness, by use and experience, will be naturalized to thee, and consequently become easy and delightful.

(6.) Consider what others lose by thy not watching. He that lives in a town wrongs his neighbour as well as himself by not looking to his fence: thus one Christian may injure many by not keeping his own watch.

(a) Thy very example is a wrong to others, for this sleepy disease is catching; thy loose conversation may make others so, as one learns to yawn of another. It s no small blessing to to live among active Christians, whose zeal and forwardness in the ways of God is exemplary; this puts mettle in those that follow them; the heavenly holy conversation of a master is a help to the whole family.

(b) Thou indisposest thyself for doing thy duty to them. We are commanded to watch over one another in love, as those that are concerned in our brethren's welfare. Now, how unfit is he to watch over others that doth not watch himself? to 'provoke to love and to good works,' who needs himself the spur? Can one asleep wake another that is so?

(7.) Lastly, Consider Christ's care over thee. Look upon him in his providence. That eye which neither sleeps by night nor slumbers by day is thy constant keeper. Consider him in his intercession. There he prays for thee, 'watching thereunto with all perseverance.' It is his trade and business in heaven, for he lives to make intercession for his saints. Consider him in his Spirit. What is he but Christ's messenger sent as our guardian to take care of the saints in his absence? In a word, consider him in the gospel ministry, which is set up for this very purpose, to 'watch for your souls.' Yea, every private saint hath a charge to be his brother's keeper. This well considered would make thee,

(a) Watchful to promote his glory that so carefully provides for thy safety. What put David into such a rage against Nabal but the disrespect that his servants found at his hands to whom he had been so serviceable? 'In vain have I kept all that this fellow hath.'

(b) It would make thee the more watchful over thy own soul, if thou hast so much ingenuity as to fear grieving thy God, who expresseth this tender care over thee. What greater grief can the indulgent parent have than to see his child not mind his own good after all his care and cost laid out upon him? He joys to see the money he gives him improved and increased by his diligence;

but it breaks his very heart with sorrow when it is all wasted and squandered away by ill husbandry.

Division Fifth.—the Constancy proper to Prayer.

‘With all perseverance.’

These words, ‘with all perseverance,’ contain the fifth branch in the apostle’s directory for prayer—the constancy proper to prayer—which I shall despatch briefly in these four heads. First. By giving the importance of this phrase, ‘all perseverance.’ Second. By giving the reason why we are to pray ‘with all perseverance.’ Third. I shall cast in some considerations to move us to the duty. Fourth. Wind up the discourse with a word of counsel and direction for the help of the weak Christian therein.

[Import of the phrase ‘with all perseverance.’]

First. Let us explain the importance of the phrase ‘with all perseverance.’ Here is perseverance, yea ‘all perseverance,’ required in prayer. First. Let us inquire what is meant by ‘perseverance.’ Second. What is meant by ‘all perseverance.’

First. What is meant by ‘perseverance.’ The word BD@F6"DJXD0F4H here used comes from 6"D-JÎH, the same with 6D"JÎH—a letter only transposed to melt the sound. It signifies strength and victory; hence its compound BD@F6"DJ,D,Ã<, is to prosecute any business with an unwearied constancy till all difficulties be conquered and the thing at last be accomplished. It is used for the diligence and labour of hunting dogs that follow the chase till at last they get the game pursued; it is applied also to lackeys that with great labour run after their masters and are at their hand in a journey. In Scripture it is frequently applied to the duty of prayer, as Acts 6:4; Colossians 4:2; Romans 12:12, and signifies that invincible patience, courage, and constancy which a Christian is to show in upholding this duty of prayer.

Question. But are ‘praying always’ in the beginning of this verse, and this ‘praying with perseverance,’ the same? If not, wherein lies the difference?

Answer. It cannot be thought the apostle, being giving directions for prayer, would let them interfere one with another, and in so short a space repeat the same direction over again in other words; the rest are all distinct, so therefore will we take these. Calvin makes this to be the difference:—By ‘praying always,’ saith he, he exhorts us to pray in prosperity as well as adversity; and not then to intermit the practice of this duty because not driven to it by such outward pressing necessities. But, by ‘praying with perseverance,’ admomet ne defatigemur, instandum esse alacri animo; infracto studio continuandas esse preces, si non statim consequamur quod volumus—he admonisheth that we be not weary of the work; but continue instant and constant in its performance, though we have not presently what we pray for. By ‘praying always,’ we are exhorted to the daily constant exercise of the duty of prayer, not to neglect the seasons the seasons for prayers as they return upon us. By ‘praying with perseverance,’ we are pressed to bear up against discouragements as to any particular suit or request we make at the throne of grace, and not to give over though we have not a speedy answer to it. So that the former is opposed to a neglect of duty in its stated seasons, and the latter to a fainting in our spirits as to any particular suit we put up. We may keep our constant course of prayer, and yet not persevere in prayer for this or that

mercy, which God withholds sometime for the exercise of our grace.

Second. I shall show what is meant by ‘all perseverance.’

1. By ‘all perseverance’ is meant such a perseverance as holds out to the end—till God doth give the thing we pray for, or takes away the subject of our prayer, as he did in David’s case for his sick child by his death. It is possible a soul may continue long, yet at last faint when it sees the time for answering still protracted. God still stays, and no news of his coming, after many a despatch sent to heaven upon that occasion. O it is hard to hold up our hands, with Moses, ‘to the going down of the sun!’ Christ complains how rare and scarce such a faith is to be found, when he bears long before he throws in the mercy prayed for. ‘Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?’ Luke 18:8. Shall he find so much faith as to keep his people at prayer in expectation of his coming to their relief?

2. By ‘all perseverance’ is meant a perseverance of the whole man in prayer. We must not only persevere to hold up the outward performance of the duty of prayer; but persevere to exert the inward powers of our souls and their graces in the duty. The duty may be kept up, and the heart be down in performing it. The faith, zeal, and other graces of the soul may be gone or act but feebly. Like an army that hath not yet quitted the field, but their powder and are even all spent; there they stand, and set a good face on it, but can do little or nothing to offend the enemy or defend themselves. Thus many in afflictions pray still. They have not yet given over the duty and run out of the field. But alas! their faith fails and their heart quails; there is little life and vigour to be seen in the performance. Here is some kind of perseverance, but not this ‘all perseverance,’ which above all requires the perseverance of grace in its actings at the duty. So we translate the word, Romans 12:12. What is here ’with perseverance,’ is there ‘continuing instant in prayer;’ the word is BD@F6"DJ,B@Ø<J,H. Some are ‘instant,’ but it lasts not. If they find the mercy comes, they draw hard; but if their chariot of prayer be set, and after a pull or two the mercy comes not, their faith jades, and they give over the work. Others are constant, but not instant; they continue to pray, but pray themselves cold; they grow lifeless and listless in the work, as if they looked for nothing to come of it. We must join both together, or expect benefit from neither.

[Why we are to pray ‘with all perseverance.’]

Second. I proceed to the second thing promised, viz. to show why we must pray ‘with all perseverance;’ which take in these particulars:—

First. It is strictly commanded. ‘Pray without ceasing,’ 1 Thessalonians 5:17; that is, without fainting. So our Saviour, Luke 18:1, ‘And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.’ Mark, not only that they might, but ‘ought.’ It is indeed a high privilege to us, and a low stoop in the high God, to give us leave thus to lie at his door, and to suffer the cry of our prayers to be ever sounding his ears. We, I ma sure, could not like to have beggars knocking day and night at our doors; but so infinitely good is God, that he doth not only allow us this boldness, but also commands it,that the fear of a sin might move us, if the loss of a privilege will not.

Second. This perseverance in prayer is highly recommended. Indeed perseverance crowns every grace and commends every duty. It is not our faith and hope, but to ‘hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end,’ that God looks at, Hebrews 3:6. Not the seeming zeal

and swiftness of our motion in the ways of God at our first start and setting forth, but the constancy of a well-breathed soul in holding on his course till the race be finished, that Christ commends: ‘If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed,’ John 8:31. So in prayer. Not the short spurts of an inconstant zeal, that begins to pray as they say the French do to fight —like thunder and lightning, but if the first charge carries it not, then they quail, and are quite cowed in their spirits. No; it is not this soft metal, whose edge is thus easily turned, that God likes in prayer, but a zeal tempered and hardened so with resolution that makes it cut through all delays and difficulties. This God highly commends. It got Jacob the name of a prince, so nobly he behaved himself in this duty, holding it out till break of day with God, and then would not let him go till he had blessed him.

Third. It is that which God intends by his delays and seeming denials. Why deals he thus with his people? Surely it is to put their graces to the trial, whether they will quit the siege for a few repulses or fall on with more courage. He holds his peace, to make them cry the louder; steps aside, to make them hunt more eagerly after him. He lays blocks before the wheel of their prayers, to try their mettle how well they will draw, when it seems a dead pull, and the mercy comes not at their prayer. Now two things God aims at by his people’s perseverance in prayer. 1. His own glory. 2. Their advantage. These two are never severed.

1. His own glory. What fairer occasion can the Christian have in his whole life to honour God, than by holding fast his integrity, and keeping his allegiance to God firm, when he seems to be neglected, yea, forsaken of him? Certainly God would never have put Job to so much trouble, nor have made him pray and stay so long for the gracious issues of his providence, but to glorify himself in the faith and patience of his faithful servant. ‘Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord,’ saith the apostle James, James 5:11. Truly, we could not have heard so much of his patience, if we had not heard so much of his troubles. Had God put an end sooner to them, he might have found more ease, but not God more honour. This was it that God was pleased with and counted himself highly honoured by —that Satan with all his wits and wiles could not make Job give over praying, much less fall of cursing God; no, not when God broke him with his tempest, and seemed not to regard him or his prayers. It pleaseth us most when our prayers make the shortest voyage—when they are at heaven and back again with and answer quickly; but it glorifies God most when he lays an embargo—as I may so say—upon our prayers, that no answer comes from heaven to us, and yet we will send more after them, as Jacob did Benjamin after his other son, who was then prisoner in Egypt. When the poor soul will not be taken off the duty by any intervening discouragements, but presseth harder upon God from his seeming denials, this is indeed to give glory to God. ‘Blessed is he that hath not seen, and yet’ thus ‘believeth.’

2. God, by his people’s persevering long in prayer before he gives in his gracious answer, intends their advantage.

(1.) He usually pays them use for their forbearance. The longer they pray, the more redundant the mercy is when it comes. Such a mercy, that comes as an answer of persevering prayers, is compared to the husbandman’s gains at harvest, which abundantly recompenseth his whole year’s patience. ‘In due season we shall reap, if we faint not,’ Galatians 6:9. The breast is filling for the child while the mother is sleeping. God sometimes seems to sleep and forget his poor children that cry to him, but he is preparing the fuller mercy for them.

(2.) Such mercies are got with longest and greatest difficulties, they come with sweetest manifestations of divine love: ‘O woman, great is thy faith,’ Matthew 15:28. This poor woman had not her request so soon granted as some others, but she lost nothing by it; for, with the recovery of her child—which was all her errand—she carries away with her a high testimony from Christ’s own mouth to the truth and eminency of her grace. She who was at first called a dog is at last owned for a dear child.

(3.) Such mercies as are the issue of persevering prayers, they are received usually with more joy and thankfulness than others. Partly they are so, because the Christian’s desires are more intense and sharp by long staying and earnest praying for them—and so he tastes more sweetness in the mercy, as he that comes hungry from a long journey at plough relisheth his food better than another that hath not whetted his appetite with any labour or exercise; and also because such mercies give disappointment to the Christian’s many fears, which their long stay occasioned. When God is long a coming, we are prone to question whether he will come at last or no: ‘Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore?’ Psalms 77:7-8. See how many sad thoughts gathered about this good man’s heart; which, though they did not overthrow his chariot of prayer, yet clogged his wheels, and made him drive with a heavy heart. Now, for a mercy to break out of so dark a cloud, it must needs bring such a glory with it as to ravish the soul with joy and enlarge it into thankfulness. Those judgments amaze and dispirit sinners most which come after long peace and prosperity, when they think the danger is over and bitterness of death is even past; as in Haman’s case, who was sent to the gallows after he had vaunted how he was invited to the queen’s banquet. This strange turn of his affairs made it a double death to him. So, mercies that surprise the saint after he hath prayed long, and can hear no tidings that they are on their way, O how it affects his heart with joy and gratitude! The church had prayed ‘without ceasing’ for Peter in prison, but still he is there, even to the very time when Herod would have brought him forth—probably to his execution. Now, when he came himself to bring the joyful news their prayers were heard—while they were instant at the work—it is said ‘they were astonished,’ Acts 12:16.

(4.) They were usually more holily used and improved. For God holds his people long at prayer for a mercy many times for this very end—to prepare and season their hearts, that, when they have it, they may know the better how to employ it for his glory and their own good. None are more careful to husband a great estate than those who are at most pains to get it. Hannah prayed long for a son, but none is given. This makes her add a vow to her prayer: ‘If thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and wilt give unto thine handmaid a man-child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life,’ 1 Samuel 1:11. Happy was it for this good woman she had not her desire sooner. If she had received him at first, haply she had never given him back to God again. The Lord sometimes forbears to give a mercy to us, only to get us deeper into bonds to lay it out for him when we have it.

(5.) The last advantage that comes to the Christian by perseverance in prayer is, when the mercy is at last denied. And it is this—it will enable and dispose him to bear the denial more meekly and holily than another. He that is short■spirited, and cannot wait on God for a mercy, will not easily submit to him in a denial; whereas, he that keeps up a spirit of prayer for it, when God comes to take away the subject of his prayer, will acquiesce, now he sees God hath fully declared his will in the thing. David and Job are pregnant instances for this. Job lets not a day pass without prayer for

his children; and how does the man behave himself when they are slain? Doth he fret and fume? Doth he curse God for making them a sacrifice for whom he had offered so many sacrifices? No; he meekly submits to his holy will; he opens not his mouth against him, but in praises to him. So David, when his child was dead—for whom, while living, he ceased not passionately to pray—to show how well satisfied he was with divine providence, he washeth his blubbered cheeks, puts off his mourning apparel, and goes to the house of God to worship, 2 Samuel 12:20. Prayer is a great heart■easer; it breathes out those distempered passions which, being bound up in others, break out when God at any time crosseth them in their wills.

[Some considerations pressing the duty of persevering prayer.]

Third. Having shown why we are to persevere in prayer, I come no to the third place, to cast in some considerations to move us to the duty. Christ bestowed a parable on his disciples for this very end, to show that ‘men ought always to pray and not to faint.’ Surely, then, it deserves an exhortation. Now to enforce the exhortation, take these five particulars into your consideration.

First Consideration. The prevalency of perseverance in prayer. This is emphatically expressed by that question of our Saviour in his parable upon this subject: ‘Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?’ Luke 18:7. As if he had said, Can you think that God will send away those who are so near and dear to him, his own elect, with a denial and that when he hath made full proof of their faith and patience in waiting long upon him for an answer? ‘I tell you,’ saith Christ, ‘that he will avenge them speedily.’ Men seek to please their old customers that are constant to their shop, whoever else they send away; so will God those that are in constant trading with him at the throne of grace. ‘They that wait upon the Lord are not ashamed.’ David is careful for our encouragement to let us know how well he sped after his long waiting at God’s door: ‘I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry,’ Psalms 40:1; Hebrew ‘in waiting I waited;’ that is, I stayed waiting long, and at last he came. But David was a favourite; may others look to speed as he did? See Psalms 40:3, ‘Many shall see it,...and shall trust in him.’ Answer of prayers is a covenant privilege. It is not a monopoly given to one or two, but a charter granted to the whole corporation of saints to the end of the world: ‘He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer,’ Psalms 102:17. Now mark what follows, ‘This shall be written for the generation to come,’ Psalms 102:18.

Second Consideration. Thy perseverance in prayer will help to evidence thy state to be gracious. The hypocrite is oft uncased here; will he pray always? Job 27:10. Many will come into a workman’s shop, and take up his tools to work with them for awhile, and lay them down again by and by, who would never yield to be bound to his trade and serve out an apprenticeship at it. Thus an unsound heart will be meddling with this duty now and then, but grows weary of the work at last, especially if he be made to wait long for an answer. Saul prays to God, and because he hears not from him, goes at last to seek to the devil. Observe what effect God’s silence, frowns, and seeming denials produce in thy heart, and thou mayest know the temper of thy spirit thereby. Do they wear off thy edge to prayer, or sharpen it? Do they make thee fall off, and send thee away from God’s door—as some sturdy beggars go from ours when denied an alms—with clamours in thy mouth, and discontent in thy heart, resolved to beg no more there? Or do they make thee fall on with more courage, and enkindle thy affections to God and this duty more ardently? as the suitor, whose love is heightened by repulses, and importunity doubled by being obstructed and

opposed. Truly, if thou findest the latter, thou mayest conclude, if this instant constancy in prayer be for spiritual blessings—Christ and his sanctifying graces—that divine virtue, and that good store hath gone from Christ into thy soul. ‘O woman, great is thy faith!’

Third Consideration. Consider the great folly of fainting in prayer. Thou dost a foolish and irrational act. Haply thou art in a deserted condition, prayest for comfort, but none comes; for victory over such a temptation without or corruption within, but art foiled in both, for all thy praying; therefore thou first faintest in the duty, and then givest it over. What egregious folly is this! Because mercy comes not in all haste to thee, therefore thou wilt run from it —which thou dost in ceasing to pray! When the fisher misseth his draught, he doth not presently give over his trade, but falls a mending his net. O cease not to pray, but mend thy praying! See at what hole the fish went out—the mercy was lost; double thy diligence, and all shall be well at last. If thy pain continues while the plaster is on, dost think it will cease when it is taken off? Whatever the mercy is thou wouldst have, must it not come from God’s hands? Now will God give the mercy to thee who rejectest his counsel for the obtaining of it? Is not prayer, and that ‘with all perseverance,’ the way he directs all his people to take? Suppose a physician, who is sent for to a sick patient, should give the messenger an electuary to carry back with him, and saith, It will be some time before I come myself to the sick man, but charge him to take a good quantity of this as oft as he finds himself ill, every day, till I come, and he shall do well. Now the patient begins to follow his physician’s directions, but, staying longer than he likes before he comes, and finding his trouble continue, sets it away, and takes no more of it. The physician at last sets forth, and, as he is on his way to him, hears of it, turns back, and comes not at him; so the poor man dies by his own hasty folly. Truly this is our case. God, for reasons best known to himself, stays some while before he comes to his tempted distressed servants, for their deliverance, but leaves order when any of them ail anything—so the word 6"6`B"2,Ã, James 5:13, signifies—that they should pray, apply themselves to the use of this duty; yea, continue the spiritual constant use of it till he comes; and withal assures us he will come soon enough to save us. Now, what folly is it to cast off this means so strictly prescribed? Surely, thought there were nothing else, this is enough to turn God back when on his way of mercy to do us good.

Fourth Consideration. Consider it is as sinful as foolish to give over this duty. ‘Thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God,’ Job 15:4. It is a high crime for one trusted with a castle for his prince to deliver it cowardly into his enemy’s hand, especially if he hath provision wherewithal to defend it. Now hath not God provided sufficiently to enable the Christian to maintain this duty against all the armies of men and devils, afflictions and temptations, that can oppose it? Princes are most careful to enforce and supply frontier castles above others with all necessaries for defence, because most assaulted. Prayer is a duty that is as hard laid at by Satan as any, and hath many other difficulties that render it no easy matter for the Christian to be instant and constant at it. God hath considered this, and accordingly provided succour. He gives his Spirit to help the Christian—because of his many infirmities—what and how to pray; who, if he be used kindly, will not be wanting to lift with him in the work. And, while the Spirit is ready to pray in him, Christ is as ready in heaven to pray for him; who also sends the precious promise of the gospel—as messengers into a besieged town—to assure the soul relief is coming from heaven to him, be the affliction or temptation never so great and formidable that besets it. Now, to faint in the work, and, by giving over the duty, to open the city gates of his soul, for Satan to enter and triumph

over God with his insulting blasphemies—O what gracious soul, that hath any spark of loyalty in his breast unquenched to his God, doth not tremble at the thought of such a treasonable action! We cannot cast off prayer, but we cast some dishonourable reflection upon God; for, as one saith well, every real defect in the creature proceeds from an imaginary defect which he falsely supposeth to be in God. Men first conceive unworthily of God, and then carry themselves unworthily and undutifully to him. Now the causes from which this fainting in prayer proceeds are all evil and bitter, as by and by will appear.

Fifth Consideration. As it is foolish and evil, so it is of dangerous consequence to ourselves, to faint, and cease to pray.

1. It is the ready way to bring some stinging affliction upon us. This is the best that can come of it. Art thou a servant of God, and fleest from his face? Art thou a child, and playest the truant? Look that thy heavenly Father will send thee to school with a rod at thy back.

2. Cease to pray, and thou wilt begin to sin. Prayer is not only a means to prevail for mercy, but also to prevent sin. ‘Pray that ye enter not into temptation.’ The thief comes when the candles are out and all the house in their beds. Christ could not keep his disciples awake at their devotions; and how soon were they put to the rout when the tempter came! When the courtier in a discontent withdraws, and gives over his attendance at court, he is more easily wound in to disloyal practices against his prince. Discontent softens the heart to receive sinful impressions from the tempter. ‘Thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God,’ Job 15:4. Eliphaz’s doctrine was true, though his application was false. When Saul gave over in a pet to pray to God, then he sought to a witch. Sins of commission are the usual punishments that God inflicts on persons for sins of omission. He that leaves a duty may fear to be left to commit a crime; he that turns his ear from the truth takes the ready course to be given over to believe fables, 2 Timothy 4:4. He that casteth off prayer, it is a wonder if you find him not ere long cast into some foul sin.

[Counsel and direction for the weak Christian in persevering prayer.]

Fourth. I shall wind up the discourse with a word of counsel and direction for the help of the weak Christian therein. Now this will, I suppose, be best performed by laying before you the several causes of a person’s falling off from this duty, or fainting in it, and so to fit the directions accordingly. All diseases are not cured with the same medicine, neither are catholic remedies so effectual as those which respect the particular humour from which the distemper ariseth. Now the causes of non■persevering in prayer are diverse.

First. Sometimes the cause is want of a lasting and enduring motive or principle to keep and hold us constantly to the duty. When the spring is down the watch must needs cease going, for that fails that gave the wheels their motions. That sometimes which sets the creature to prayer, is not pure obedience to the command, but a desire to some particular mercy, which, if obtained, the fish being caught, the net is laid aside; or, if he prays long, and hath it not, he grows weary of the work, and lets it fall. Be sure, Christian, therefore to pray in obedience. Bind the duty upon thy conscience, and thou wilt not easily shake it off. ‘God forbid that,’ saith Samuel, ‘I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you,’ 1 Samuel 12:23. He had little encouragement, from them he prayed for, to continue at the work, but his obedience to God, to whom he prayed, held him to it. This is a strong fence to hedge in the heart indeed. We cannot break through this hedge

but we shall feel the thorns in our side. A gracious soul dreads nothing more than guilt. Tell him it is a sin to cease praying, and you say enough. What though God answers not my prayer, his silence to my prayer must not make me silent not to pray. Prayer is still a duty. God is not bound to answer presently when we pray, but we are bound to pray though he doth not answer. ‘All this is come upon us,’ saith the church, ‘yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant,’ Psalms 44:17. Remember, Christian, thou art a covenant servant, and one thing thou art as such bound to do is, to pray to thy God without ceasing, 1 Thessalonians 5:17. This will defend thee against any motion that the tempter suggests to the contrary. the beggar knocks awhile at the rich man’s door, and, if he be not served, away he goes. But the servant in the house, though he be hungry, doth not run away presently from his master, because he hath not his dinner so soon as he desires.

Second. Sometimes this not persevering in prayer comes from pride. ‘This evil is of the Lord; what should I wait for the Lord any longer?’ 2 Kings 6:33. What a haughty spirit was here! Pride likes not to wait, but to be waited on. He in the gospel was ashamed to beg, much more to stand long at the door upon a begging errand. Now, though this be a disease which a saint is more free from than other men, yet there are dregs enough still within him to royle and distemper his spirit, if he be not daily evacuating and purging them out. It will not therefore be amiss to leave a few soul■humbling considerations in your hands, which you may be often taking, especially when you feel any grudgings of this sin about you, and your hearts begin to grow discontented that God makes you stay so long for any mercy prayed for.

1. Consider what it is to pray. It is to go a begging for an alms, not to demand a debt. Now, doth it become thee in so poor a condition, and about such a work, to be so quick and short with thy God? If you can live without being beholden to God, why then do you at all come to his door? If you cannot, why then do you not wait more patiently for his pleasure? Should he wrong thee if he beat thee from his door? Why then art thou no more thankful for his leave to wait there, though thou beest not presently served?

2. Consider who he is thou prayest to. Is he not the great and glorious majesty of heaven and earth? And is not this one piece of the state he looks to be served in by his poor creatures? How long did Mordecai sit at the king’s gate before he had that which he waited for? Is it not time enough for the servant to be set at dinner after he hath waited at his master’s table? Were it not unsufferable sauciness in the servant to complain his master sat too long and required too much waiting at his hands? This is the language of our hearts, when we think much to stay God’s time for a mercy. Is he not a righteous holy God? Surely he doth thee no wrong to make thee pray, and that long, for a mercy which thou deservest not when it comes at last. Is he not wiser than thou, to know how to time his mercies? ‘Shall the earth be forsaken for thee? and shall the rock be removed out of his place?’ Job 18:4. Wilt thou have God overthrow the course of his providence, which he thinks fit, to gratify thy impatient spirit? Surely this is to charge God foolishly with some error in his government. In a word, is not he a faithful God, though he comes not so soon to thy relief as thou wouldst have him? where did he give thee leave to date his promises and set the day of payment? No; he hath promised to answer his children’s prayers, but concealed the time of performance of his promise, on purpose to keep them in a waiting posture; and therefore he breaks not his promise when he detains a mercy, but thou forgettest thy duty not to wait. God is not unfaithful, but thou art faithless and unbelieving.

3. Have not as good as thyself prayed, and that as long as thou, before they have received an answer, and yet have not thus behaved themselves? Look into the generation of seekers, and thou wilt find that God hath exercised their patience as well as thine. Hast thou stood at God's door longer than many of thy brethren have done? Remember Job, David, and Heman, how many troubles came over their heads! what sad tidings did they hear! Dismal afflictions did they endure they endure before the day broke and divine providence cleared up! Shall God raise a causey[5] for thee to walk by thyself dryshod, while these, and thousands besides, have taken many a weary step through the deep sloughs of affliction, before they could come to fair way? When God led Israel far about, and made it a journey of forty years from Egypt to Canaan, it had been great pride for any among them to have desired God to lead them a shorter way thither than all his brethren. David desired no more at God's hands than to fare as his fellow-saints did: 'Be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name,' Psalms 119:132. Nay, doth not Christ himself and example beyond all example, wait, and that long, even in heaven itself for an answer to his prayers? He hath been already above a thousand years there at prayer for his church, and against his enemies, and hath not as yet received the full of his desires; but still is expecting till the one be saved, and the other be made his footstool. Who art thou that thou shouldst have so high an opinion of thyself, as to look God should make all stay, and trade for time, while thou alone for ready money?

4. Consider whether thou didst never make God wait on thee before his suit could be heard, though he begged not for his benefit but thy own. Did God wait in thy carnal state upon thee, that he might at last be gracious to thee, and thinkest thou much to wait at prayer now on him?

Third. This not persevering in prayer proceeds oft from unbelief. The creature prays, God is silent, and no answer comes. Now, thinks Satan, is my time come to do this person a mischief; and therefore he labours to persuade the creature that there is no mercy to be expected from God. If, saith the tempter, God had meant to come, he would have been here before now. So many days and months are now gone, and no news of his approach. Thou hast stayed too long to meet with disappointment at last; give over, and take some other course. Thus he dealt with our Saviour. No enemy appeared in the field for forty days, and then he appears. This is his way with the saints also. He lets them alone while he thinks they are softened into a compliance by long standing upon duty, and hopes their ammunition grows low; then he comes to parley with them, and take them off from waiting upon God, by starting many fears and doubts in their thoughts concerning the power, mercy, and truth of God; so that the poor Christian is at last put to a stand, and knows not whether he should pray or not pray. Or if he holds up the duty, yet not his heart in it; he prays faintly, and with a kind of despair, as the poor widow made ready her last handful of meal with no other thoughts than of dying when she had ate it. Thus he prays, but lots upon nothing but death and misery to follow it. O this is sad praying, to expect no good from God in the performance! Unbelief is a soul■enfeebling sin; it is to prayer as the moth to the cloth, which bites the very threads asunder, and crumbles it to nothing; it wastes the soul's strength, that it cannot look up to God with any hope. 'For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened,' Nehemiah 6:9. Resist therefore Satan, steadfast in the faith. Never let thy heart suffer the power, mercy, or truth of God to be called into question; thou hadst as good question whether he can cease to be God. These attributes of the divine nature are to thy faith like the stone to Moses, which Aaron and Hur put under him to sit upon; they will sustain thy spirit, that thou shalt not faint or grow weary at the

work, though God makes thee wait till ‘the going down of the sun.’ O this waiting posture highly pleaseth God, and never puts the soul to shame. Mary, that stayed by the sepulchre, though she missed her Lord there, got at last a happy sight of him. Quæramus et nos Christum, saith one upon the place, ex fide, et astabit nobis licet non illicò eum agnoverimus—let us but seek Christ in faith, and he will at last be with us, though we do not presently see him.

Fourth. Some persevere not in prayer, because they have their eye upon some other than God from whom they expect help. It is no wonder he gives over praying who thinks he hath another string to his bow. While the carnal heart prays for deliverance, he hath other projects in his head how to wriggle himself out of the briers in which he is caught, and on these he lays more stress and weight than on God to whom he prays; therefore, at last, he leaves praying, to betake himself to them. Whereas another, that looks for all from God, and sees no way to help himself but by calling in God to his aid, will say as Peter to Christ —asking his disciples whether they would leave him as others had done—‘Lord, to whom shall we go but unto thee? thou hast the words of eternal life.’ I know not another door to knock at—saith the poor soul—but thine; the creature hath it not to give, but thou hast; I will therefore never leave thee. We know not what to do, said good Jehoshaphat, but our eyes are up unto thee.

Fifth. It proceeds from a want of inward complacency which the creature should have in God, and communion with him. ‘Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?’ Job 27:10. He will not always call upon him, because he never did ordinarily delight in him. We easily let go what we take no great content to enjoy. The sincere soul is tied to God by the heart■strings, his communion is founded in love; and ‘love is stronger than death,’ ‘many waters cannot quench it.’ A stranger may have an errand that brings him to a man’s house; but that done his acquaintance ceaseth. But a friend, he comes to sit with him, and the delight he takes in his company will not suffer him to discontinue his acquaintance long. Get therefore thy affections but once placed upon God as thy chief good, and the spark or stone will as soon forget the way to their centre, as thou the way to thy God in prayer. The hypocrite useth prayer as we use physic—not because he loves the taste of it; the sincere soul as food—it is sweet to his gust[6]. David, from the inward satisfaction he found in the presence of God, cries out, ‘It is good for me to draw near to God;’ Psalms 73:28, as one that, tasting some rich wine or sweet morsel, lays his hand on his stomach—where he finds the cheering of it—and saith to the standers■by, ‘O it is good!’ Never will such a soul part with it. No, he will say, as the fig■tree in Jotham’s parable, Shall I forsake my sweetness, and the good fruit I have found in communion with my God! I will never do it.

Division Sixth.—The Comprehensiveness of Prayer.

‘And supplication for all saints.’

These words contain the sixth and last branch in the apostle’s directory for prayer, and that is, the comprehensiveness of the duty, or the persons that are to be the subject of our prayers—‘supplication for all saints.’ But what! would he have us pray for none but saints? Thus cannot be the apostle’s meaning, it being so contrary to the mind of Christ, from whom he hath his message. Christ both bids us pray for our enemies, and is himself our pattern for it; yea, Paul himself teacheth contrary doctrine to this: ‘I exhort therefore, that, first of all, prayers and supplications be made for all men,’ 1 Timothy 2:1, that is, all sorts of men, faithful and infidels,

friends and enemies. So then saints are not here named as the adequate and only subject of our prayers, but as a principal species, a sort of persons whom we are in an especial manner to carry in our prayers to God, whom if we do but remember, we shall not easily forget to pray for others also; because, as Augustine saith, numerus sanctorum de numero impiorum semper est auctus —the saints' number is increased and taken out of the number of the wicked. In praying for Babylon, we pray for Jerusalem. The more that are prayed out of sin, the more are prayed into Christ. We shall wind up our discourse upon this subject upon these three propositions or bottoms. First. We must show a public spirit in prayer, by praying for others as well as ourselves. Second. Of all whom we remember in our prayers, saints must not be forgot. Third. In praying for saints, we must be careful to comprehend and encircle all saints.

FIRST PROPOSITION.

[A public spirit must be shown in prayer.]

We must show a public spirit in prayer, by praying for others as well as ourselves. This is a duty of common interest, in which others are to share with ourselves. Like the buckets that hang in our houses, which are for the use of the whole town when any house is on fire, the spirit of prayer is a public treasure, though laid up in some few hands. All cannot pray, therefore all should be prayed for. I say it is the saints' duty, not a favour upon courtesy, which may ad libitum—at pleasure, be done or left undone. We sin and transgress the law of prayer if we do it not. 'God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you,' 1 Samuel 12:23. Paul writes himself a debtor to his brethren in this respect, 'We are bound to thank God always for you,' 2 Thessalonians 1:3. He acknowledges it due debt. In another place he 'thanks God that he hath them in remembrance always.' So sensible he was of the weight of this duty, that he thanks God for giving of him a heart to perform it.

[Why a public spirit must be shown in prayer.]

First. It is one end why the Spirit of prayer is given us. The gifts of the Spirit are to be employed according to the mind and intent of the Donor. If a man bequeaths house and land to another, but charges the estate with such a payment for the use of the poor, he forfeits his legacy that fulfills not the will of the dead. God intends the good of others in all his gifts to particular saints; the way to lose our gift is to hoard it up, and not lay it out for the end it was given. 'The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal,' 1 Corinthians 12:7. How should we profit others by this gift of the Spirit, if not by praying for them? That Spirit which stirs us up to pray for ourselves, will, if we quench it not, send us on the same errand for others; yea, in some cases, for others before ourselves—for their spiritual good, before our own temporal; for the public good of a community, before the private good of our single person; as in Moses' case, who would not be taken off praying for Israel to be made great upon their ruins. Indeed that offer from God, 'Let me alone, and I will make of thee a great nation,' was only probatory, to try whether Moses would prefer his own stake before the people's, and God was highly pleased with his self-denial.

Second. The law of love binds it as a duty upon us. We are commanded to 'love our neighbour as ourself.' That 'as' imports a parity for kind, though not for proportion; for manner, though not for measure. I must love my neighbour as truly, though not as strongly, as myself. Now, how do we show real love to ourselves, if we pray not for ourselves? Our Saviour expounds our love to our

enemy by praying for him: ‘Love your enemies,’ and ‘pray for them which despitefully use you,’ Matthew 5:44. We may give an alms to an enemy, and not love him. It is easier to draw out our purse than to draw out our soul to the hungry; as the prophet phraseth it, in prayer we draw out our souls. If a man ever speaks or does anything sincerely, surely it is when he directs his speech to God in prayer, saith Lucas Brugens, upon the place. Therefore, God chooseth this of praying for our enemies as the surest testimony for our loving of them. And truly he that wisheth well only to himself may well be reckoned among the most degenerate of mankind. One well compares such a self-lover to the hedgehog, that laps himself with his own soft down, and turns out bristles to all the world besides.

Use. This shows the largeness of God’s bountiful heart. He gives his children not only leave to ask for themselves, but for others. This is not the manner of men; we count it too much boldness to beg for themselves and others also. If a poor man, when he hath got his alms, should then beg for all his neighbours, where should he find the man that would bid him welcome? But behold here the immensity of divine goodness, who gives us leave to bring our neighbour’s pitcher with our own to his door, yea commands it, and then takes it ill when we steal to prayer upon our own private errand, and leave the thought of others’ necessities behind us. Why shouldst thou, Christian, stand in doubt whether God will supply thy own wants, when he commands thee to intercede for others?

[Lamentation for the want of a public spirit in prayer.] A lamentation may be taken up for the narrowness of our spirits in prayer. Some, indeed, are so far from praying for others, that they have not learned to show so much mercy to themselves; yea, live in such an estate of alienation from God, wherein they cannot pray for themselves or their dearest relations. O how many prayerless fathers have we that are cruel to their own flesh! husbands to the wives of their own bosom! Ask whether they love them; they will tell you, Yes, that they do as their own souls. And you may believe them, for they serve them no worse than they do their own souls. A time is coming wherein they will know, one hearty prayer found upon the file for their relations would speak more for their love they pretend towards them, than all the bags of money which they fill for them. Others, if they show a little natural affection to their own flesh and domestic relations, yet their love hath much ado to get over their own thresholds, to inquire how it fares with others. O how little do they feel their neighbours’ pains! how seldom do they spread them with any real sense upon their hearts before the Lord! Or, if their eye affects their heart with what is presented so near unto them in the afflictions of their next-door neighbour, yet how few discover such a public spirit as to carry upon their hearts the miseries of those that are at further distance, so as to be faithful remembrancers to the Lord for them? Blessed Paul was afflicted with, yea, had ‘a great conflict for, those that had never seen his face in the flesh.’ Even among those that are Christian, O what a decay is there of this public spirit! There is great complaint in the world among men of their great losses in our late times of confusion; but I think the saints are the greatest losers, who have lost so much of their love and charity. One saith the world was once destroyed with water, propter ardorem cupidinis—for the heat of lust which had set it on a flame; and shall be once again destroyed with fire, propter teporem charitatis—for the coldness of love and charity. Love is to the soul what natural heat is to the body—it gives vigour, and enables for the performance of all offices of life. But alas! how is this kindly heat decayed among Christians in this old age of the world! This was long ago foretold by our Saviour, ‘The love of many shall wax cold,’ Matthew 24:12, and no wonder, when self■love, that predatory fire, waxes so hot; foretold also by the

apostle, ‘In the last days men shall be lovers of themselves,’ 2 Timothy 3:2. And what a black regiment follows this captain sin, is there to be seen! If once a man make self the top of his aim, farewell loving of or praying for others. Charity cannot dwell in so narrow a house as the self■lover’s heart is; yea, it is diametrically opposed to it: ‘Love seeks not her own,’ 1 Corinthians 13:5. But to turn lamentation into exhortation: labour for a public spirit in prayer. Is there none, O man, that needs the mercy of God besides thyself? Wouldst thou have none saved in another world, nor provided for in this with thee? Now, in remembering others, God will give thee leave thy love should begin at home, though he would not have it end there. Look into thy family; canst thou forget them a day, if thou rememberest thyself? Shall a believer turn worse than an infidel? He provides for his house; and thou hast light that tells thee all thy providing for them is nothing, except God say amen. When thou hast paid thy duty to them, still widen thy charity and take up thy neighbours into thy thoughts. O consider what is doing in the streets and neighbourhood! How many mayest thou there soon find pouring out their precious souls as a drink-offering to Satan, the god of this world, in their horrid abominations? O pray that God would stay their bloody hand before they have irrecoverably made away themselves! Then take a further walk in thy meditations to view the public state and posture of the nation. See what mercies are writ with the golden pen of Providence upon its forehead, and pay thy humble thanks; what prognostics of judgments coming thou canst observe in the face of the times, and get into the gap before the wrath begins. Did Abraham so plead for a Sodom, though himself was far enough from the danger of the storm, and not thou for thy own nation, who art like to be taken in it if it fall in thy days, or thy posterity to rue it, if the cloud impending be not scattered by the prayers of the faithful? Nay, let not the sea that divides thee and the other parts of the earth make thee think thou art not concerned in their happiness or misery. Let thy prayers walk over the vast ocean, and bring matter for thy devotions, like the merchant’s ship her freight from afar. Visit the churches of Christ abroad; yea, the poor Indians and other ruins of mankind that lie where Adam’s sin threw them with us, without any attempt made as yet upon them by the gospel for their recovery, and carry their deplored condition before the Lord. Our Drake is famous for compassing the earth with his ship in a few years; thou mayest by thy prayers every day, and make a more gainful voyage of it too than he did.

[Considerations to induce to a public spirit in prayer.] Take two or three quickening considerations to set thee the more feelingly to this work.

1. Consideration. Thou canst not pray in faith for thyself, if only for thyself. The Lord Jesus taught his disciples this piece of charity in the form of prayer he gave them: ‘When ye pray, say, Our Father.’ Pater est verbum fidei; noster est verbum charitatis— ‘father’ is a word of faith and confidence; ‘our father’ imports love and charity, two necessary graces in prayer. We live by faith, and faith works by love. No prayer can be without faith, nor faith without charity. Christ sends him in the gospel from the altar, to reconcile himself to his brother before he offered his gift. And why, but that he might be as ready and willing to pray for his brother as himself? If we have not charity to pray for our brother, we cannot expect welcome when we pray for ourselves.

2. Consideration. You do not else make good the character and report which God gives of his children. He speaks of them to be a blessing to the persons and places about them: Israel ‘a blessing in the midst of the land of Assyria,’ Isaiah 19:24. They are compared to a fountain, which is a common benefit to serve a whole town; to stop or trouble which is a wrong to all that draw their water thence, Proverbs 25:26. Now, one way wherein the godly are eminently serviceable to

others, is by the interest they have in God and the prevalency of their prayers with him. ‘By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted,’ Proverbs 11:11; that is, by their fervent prayers, which draw down a blessing from heaven upon it. God blesseth imperatoriè—by command: ‘he commanded the blessing, even life for evermore,’ Psalms 133:3. The saints bless when they pray: ‘On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee,’ Numbers 6:23-24.

3. Consideration. God gives a signal testimony of his favour to his saints’ prayers for others.

(1.) He doth great things at their request for others. How oft did Moses reverse divine plagues that were executed on Egypt? even as oft as Pharaoh had a heart to beg his prayers. How low did Abraham beat the market for Sodom’s preservation? he brought it down to ‘ten righteous men.’ Could that wicked place have but afforded that number, it had not been turned to ashes.

(2.) When their prayers obtain not a mercy for the people, then nothing else can help them. Therefore God, to express his peremptory resolution and irreversible decree to punish Israel, tells them, ‘Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people,’ Jeremiah 15:1, thereby intimating their case desperate. If the prayers of such holy men could not prevent the fall of that cloud of his wrath impending, much less could they with their own power or policy shift it off. Indeed when God is fully set upon a vindictive way, he takes them off from praying: ‘Pray not thou for this people,...for I will not hear thee,’ Jeremiah 7:16. And even in this he shows at what a rate he values his people’s prayers, which makes him loath they should bestow their pains in vain. ‘Pray not thou for this people’—as if he had said, Let them pray if they will, I can without any regret reject their motion; but I am unwilling thou shouldst pray in an unaccepted time for that which I have no mind to give.

(3.) When the saints’ prayers bring not back with them the mercy for others that is their express errand, yet God is careful that his people should not have the least suspicion that the denial proceeds from any disrespect he hath to their persons or prayers, and therefore he sometimes gives the thing they desire, only he changes the subject. Thus, when God denied Abraham for Ishmael he gave him abundantly in Isaac. Sometimes, again, what he denies them for others he grants to themselves. Thus David’s prayers for his enemies ‘returned into his own bosom.’ Now in praying for others:

(a) Get thy heart deeply affected with their state and condition for whom thou prayest. God loves mercy better than sacrifice. To draw out our souls in giving and alms is greater charity than to draw out our purse. So in prayer, be sure thy soul be poured out, or else thou art a deceiver; thou wrongest both God and him also thou prayest for. Before Christ prayed for Lazarus he troubled himself. ‘Behold how he loved him!’ said those about him who were witness to the groans he fetched and tears he shed. Then thou wilt pray fervently for others when thy heart is warmed into sympathy for them. A lawyer may show more rhetoric in pleading a man’s cause, but a brother or dear friend that carries the sense of his condition upon their hearts must needs discover more affection.

(b) Prefer spiritual blessings in thy prayers for others before temporal. Is it a sick friend on whose errand thou goest? If health be all thou beggest for him, thou art not faithful to thy friend. He may have that and be the worse for it. Ask of Christ grace and glory for him, and then thou dost

something to purpose. Surely this our Saviour meant in his method of causing the palsied man to be cured of his disease: ‘Be of good cheer,’ saith Christ, ‘thy sins are forgiven,’ Matthew 9:2. He first brings him the news of a pardon, as a mercy {of} infinitely more worth than life or limbs, thereby tacitly reproving his friends, who took more care to have his body healed than his soul saved. Is it the nation thou art praying for? Aim at more than deliverance from outward judgments and plagues. The carnal Jews could say, ‘Give us water that we may drink,’ Exodus 17:2; but thought not of their sin, to beg repentance for and pardon of it. That was the cry of the creature—a beast can low and bellow in a drought; but this is the voice of a saint.

(c) Be not discouraged in your prayers for others though an answer doth not presently overtake them. Thou prayest for a rebellious child, or carnal friend, who yet continue to be so; take heed thou dost not presently think them past grace, and give over the work. Samuel saw the people he prayed for mend but slowly, yet hear what he saith: ‘God forbid that I should cease praying for you,’ 1 Samuel 12:23. I have heard of some that have been laid forth, yea buried, before they were dead, by their overhasty friends. Be not thou thus cruel to the souls of thy relations or neighbours. Lay them not out of thy prayers, bury them not in thy thoughts for reprobates, because thou canst not perceive any sign of spiritual life in them, though thou hast many a time stretched thy hands in prayer over them; their souls thou seest are yet in their bodies, and so long it is not too late for God to breathe the life of grace into their souls. Again, is it for the public thou prayest? Draw not in thy stock of prayer, though thou hast not so quick a return in thy trade with heaven for it as thou desirest. The father’s labour is not lost if his son receives the benefit of it. He may be dies before the ship comes home he sent forth, but his child lives to have the gains of that adventure paid into his purse. Thus one generation sows prayers for the church, and another reaps the mercy prayed for.

SECOND PROPOSITION.

[Saints must be specially remembered in prayer.] In praying for others, of all we remember, saints must not be forgot. The apostle hints this, by making them the instance for all, as the species famosa—or chief rank of men, for whom we are to pray; and it suits well with Paul’s doctrine elsewhere. We are here bid ‘As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all, especially unto them who are of the household of faith,’ Galatians 6:10. Now this of prayer I take to be one of the most eminent ways of doing them good. What greater kindness can a man do for his sick friend than to go to the physician for him. By other acts of charity we give a little out of our own purse; but, by praying for the poor saints, we open God’s treasury for them. If one should meet a beggar, and out of his purse throw him a few pence; but another tells him, I have no money of my own to give, yet I will go to court, and open your necessitous condition to the king my master; it were easy to tell which of these does the poor man the greatest kindness. A poor saint may thus do more for another, though, as Peter told the cripple, he hath neither silver nor gold to give, than he who hath the largest purse of his own. That of Araunah is observable, where we have his bountiful offer to king David: ‘Let my lord the king take and offer up what seemeth good unto him: behold, here be oxen for burnt■sacrifice,’ 2 Samuel 24:22. This was much, and showed his heart to be noble and large, as it follows, ‘All these things did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king,’ 2 Samuel 24:23. Yet one thing he did amounted to more than all this, which was his hearty prayer to God for David’s acceptance: ‘And Araunah said to the king, The Lord thy God accept thee.’ He might have done all the other for fear; a subject sometimes gives his prince, because he knows he may take

though he gives it not. But by his praying for him he discovered his hearty affection to him. There are several weighty reasons for this duty. First. >From God. Second. From Satan. Third. From the saints prayed for. And, Fourth. From the saints praying.

[Why believers are to be specially remembered in prayer.] First. There is a reason taken from God.

1. They are the special object of his love; his heart is set upon them, his thoughts and providence are at work continually for them. Others indeed do partake of divine bounty, but they may thank the saints' company and neighbourhood for it. When the gardener waters his beds of flowers, some runs down into the alleys, but had he no flowers he would save that pains. When once God hath got his whole family of saints home to himself in heaven, it will quickly be seen what God will do with the rest of the world. God dispenseth the same providence to them both, but not with the same affection, not to the same end. 'He is the Saviour of all men, but especially of those that believe,' 1 Timothy 4:10. He saves the saints with saving purposes; the wicked he saves temporally, to destroy them eternally. He saves them from a present sickness or danger that they may ripen for hell; as we save our young wood for greater growth, and then cut it down for the fire. Now what shall be done for those whom God declares so much love? We cannot do less than pray for them. By this we comply with God, and show our content in his choice.

2. God hath made them the proper heirs of all his promises. Now promises are the ground of prayer. We are to pray for others, though wicked, not knowing but God may have a secret purpose of doing them good. But when there is grace, hic se asperit decretum—here God breaks open his decree. The fountain of his electing grace, which ran hitherto underground, now bursts forth; so that now you may with fuller confidence pray for such a one. When Paul begs prayers, to encourage his friends at the work for him, he assures them of his sincerity: 'Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly' Hebrews 13:18. As if he had said, You pray for one that God will not chide you for mentioning. It is an encouragement for a merchant to adventure when he puts his stock into a good bottom.

3. They are a generation that alone honour God in the world. Indeed God honours himself upon others in their present lusts and future damnation. He makes their wrath praise him here, and his wrath poured on them shall praise him hereafter; but no thanks to them for all this, for they do their utmost to lay the honour of God in the dirt. But the saints are a people who are not merely passive but active in the praising of God; it is their mother■language to bless the name of God. Whatever is their work, this is their end and aim—'whether they eat or drink,' to 'do all to the glory of God.' Now, upon this account, we are to pray for saints above others. The first thing our Saviour teacheth us to pray for is, that the name of God may be hallowed, in order to which he directs us in the very next words to pray for his church and saints, as those who alone can hallow it—'thy kingdom come.'

Second. There is a reason from Satan. His great spite is against the saints. God owns them; therefore he hates them, and spits fire and brimstone at them. Where God is of one side you may be sure to find the devil on the other; indeed they are the only company that stand in his way. As for the wicked, he takes himself to be advanced when they are exalted in the world; the father is honoured when the child is preferred. But the saints' rising portends his fall; this makes him bend all his force, by temptation or persecution, to procure their ruin. these are the stars he would stamp under his feet. The first murder in the world was of a saint; and Cain will kill Abel to the end of the

world. In all broils and confusions of nations these are the threatened party, therefore they need our prayers most.

Third. There is a reason taken from the saints prayed for.

1. They exceedingly desire prayers. The wicked, I confess, may do this also, but it is by fits—in a pang of fear or fright. Thus Pharaoh sends in all haste for Moses when the plagues of God are in his house and fields. The carnal Jews pray Samuel to pray for them that they die not; but it was when terrified with dreadful thunder and rain that fell, 1 Samuel 7:1-17[7]. Yea, Simon Magus himself, smitten with horror at Peter's words, begs his payers, 'that none of those things which he had spoken might come upon him.' But at another time these wretches cared neither for the saints nor for their prayers. Pharaoh, who desired Moses at one time to pray for him, at another time chases him out of his presence with a charge never to come at him more. But now, the saints are very covetous, yea ambitious, of the auxiliary prayers of their brethren, and those not the meanest among them neither. Indeed, as any is more eminent in grace, so more greedy of his brethren's help. The richer the tradesman is, the more he sets at work for him. Paul himself is not ashamed to beg this boon of the meanest saint. 'Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,' Romans 15:30. Did you ever hear a beggar at your door, or prisoner at the gate, beg more passionately?—for the Lord Jesus' sake, for the Spirit's sake. If ever you felt any warmth in your hearts from the blood of Christ, or love of the Spirit comforting you, strive FL<"(T<\.,2,, wrestle with me till we together have the victory, prevailed with God for this mercy.

2. As the saints are covetous of prayers, so they lot upon it that you do pray for them; yea, take up comfort beforehand from the expectation of what they shall receive by them. 'I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayers,' Php 1:19. 'I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you,' Philemon 1:22. Where, (1.) Observe Paul's modesty. He sinks and drowns his own prayers, and expresseth his faith on theirs.

(2.) His confidence. He doubts not but they will pray, neither does he question the happy return of them into his bosom. As if he had said, If ye be faithful ye will pray for me. So that we break our trust, and disappoint our brethren, if we forget them.

3. Saints are the honest debtors we can deal with; they will pay you in their own coin. He that shows any kindness to a saint is sure to have God for his paymaster; for it is their way to turn over their debts to God, and engage him to discharge their score to man. Onesiphorus had been a kind friend to Paul, and what does Paul for him? To prayer he goes, and desires God to pay his debts. 'The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain,' 2 Timothy 1:16.

Fourth. There is a reason taken from the saints praying. There is no duty God commands but he pays the Christian well for the performance, and leaves him a loser that neglects it. There is enough in this duty we are speaking to that may make it lovely and desirable in our eye. The best of saints have accounted it a great privilege to be admitted into this noble order. Paul thanks God that 'without ceasing he had Timothy in remembrance in his prayers night and day.' But wherein lies this mercy to have a heart to pray for our brethren?

1. It is a singular mercy to be instrumental to the grace or comfort of any saint, much more to be instrumental for the glorifying of God. This a gracious heart prizeth highly, though it costs him dear to promote it. Now in praying, though but for one single saint, thou dost both. ‘Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf,’ 2 Corinthians 1:11. Paul, begging prayers, enforceth his request with a double argument.

(1.) From the prevalency of joint prayers. When twenty pull at a rope, the strength and force of every one is influential to the drawing of it; so in prayer, where many concur, all help. God looks at every one’s faith and fervency exerted in the duty, and directs the answer to all.

(2.) From the harmony of joint praises. The fuller the concert in praises, the sweeter the music in God’s ear. Joint prayers produce social praises. He that concurs to a prayer, and not in returning praise, is like one that helps his friend into debt, but takes no care to bring him out.

2. By praying for others we increase our own joy. When Paul saw the prayers which he had sown for the Thessalonian saints, 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10, come up in their faith and zeal, he is transported with joy, as an incomparable mercy bestowed upon himself: ‘What thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God?’ 1 Thessalonians 3:9. He had watered them with his prayers; God gives increment to their grace. From this his joy flourisheth, and his heart is so ravished, that he knows not what thanks to God are enough for the mercy he receives through his hands. Truly, the reason why we gain no more from the graces of our brethren, is because we venture no more prayers upon them.

3. This would be an undoubted evidence to prove ourselves saints—could we but heartily pray for them that are such. Love to the brethren is oft given as a character of a true saint. Now, no act whereby we express our love to saints stands more clear from scruples of insincerity than this of praying for them. Will you say you love the saints because you frequent their company, show kindness to their persons, stand up ion their defence against those that reproach them, or because you suffer with them? All this is excellent, if sincere; yet how easy is it for vainglory, or some other carnal end, to mingle with these! But if thou canst find thy heart in secret—where none of these temptations have such an advantage to corrupt thee—let out to God for them with a deep sense and feeling of their sins, wants, and sorrows, this will speak more for the sincerity of thy love, than all the former without this.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. Must we pray above all for saints? Woe then to those who, instead of praying for them, had rather with those, Isaiah 59:15, make ‘a prey’ of them; that, instead of praying for them, can curse them, and drink to their confusion. Haply it is not under the plain name of saints, but as wrapped up in the bearskin of fanatic, puritan, or some other name of scorn, invented to cover their malice, so they can devour and tear them in pieces. The saints are a sort of people that none love but those that are themselves such. It is a good gloss of Jerome, estote sancti, ut oratis pro sanctis—be saints, and then you will pray for saints. The righteous is an abomination to the wicked: it is a sect everywhere spoken against. The feud began at first between Abel and Cain, and so spread over the whole world; one generation takes up the cudgel against them, as another lays it down. Hamilcar bequeathed his hatred against the Romans to his son Hannibal when he

died. So is the feud transmitted by the wicked from one generation to another against the saints. Nothing can quench their wrath or take up the quarrel;—no moral perfections, which, were they in others, would be thought lovely. Let the saint be never so wise, meek, affable, and bountiful, yet this, that he is a Christian, is a 'but' that will blot all in the wicked world's thoughts. Bonus vir Cajus Sejus, sed malus tantum quod Christianus, was the language in Tertullian's age —Cajus Sejus had been a good man if he had not had that without which he could not be good. No near relation can wear off their spite. Michal cannot bite in her scornful spirit, but jeers her husband to his face for his zeal before the Lord. In a word, no benefit which accrues to the wicked by the saints' neighbourhood—and that is not a little—can make them lay down their hatred. They are the only bail which God takes to keep a nation, when under his arrest, out of prison. They are the cause of blessings to the families, towns, and kingdoms they live in; yet the butt at which their envenomed arrows are levelled against. The whole city is against Lot; not a man among them to take his part, so true and constant are the wicked to their own side. Tertullian tells us of some heathen husbands that liked their wives, though loose and wanton, and lived with them, when such, before they were converted to Christianity, but when once they had embraced the faith, and thereby were made chaste, they put them away; fathers that could bear undutiful rebellious carriages in their children, when once converted and these amended, they turned them out of doors. Ut quisque hoc nomine emendatur, offendit—as any were reformed in their lives by turning Christian, so he became an offender. It were will if this were only the heathens' sin; but by woeful experience we find that the true Christian hath not more cruel enemies in the whole world than some be that are of his own name. The sharpest persecutions of the church have been by those that were in the church. O what a dreadful will such have to make in the great day, who profess the name of Christ, yet hate his nature in the saints!—who call Christ Lord, yet persecute his best servants and destroy his loyalest subjects! These are the men that above all other shall feel the utmost of the Lord's fiery wrath in the day when he shall plead his people's cause and avenge himself on their adversaries.

Use Second. Be exhorted tot his duty of praying for saints; you cannot do that which God will take more kindly at your hands. He himself puts this petition into our mouths: 'Ask me of things to come concerning my sons,' Isaiah 45:11. Courtiers frame their petitions according to their prince's liking. They are careful not to ask that which he is unwilling to give; but when they perceive he favours a person or business, then they are ambitious to present the petition. Joab knew what he did in sending the woman of Tekoah to David, with a petition wrapped up in a handsome parable for Absalom the king's son. He knew the king's heart went strongly after him, and so the motion could not but be acceptable. And is not the Lord's heart gone after his saints? Thy prayer for them, therefore, must needs come in a good time, when it shall find the heart of God set upon the very thing thou askest. This was it that God was so pleased with in Daniel, Daniel 9:22-23. Now, in your prayers for the saints, among other things that you pray for them, forget not these:

1. Pray for their lives. They are such a blessing when they live, that they seldom fall but the earth shakes under them. It is commonly a prognostic of an approaching evil when God takes them away by death. Jeroboam had but one son in whom some good was found; he must die, and then the ruin of his father's family follows, 1 Kings 14:7. When Augustine died, then Hippo falls into the enemy's hands. If the wise man be gone that preserved the city, no wonder if its end hastens. God makes way to let his judgments in upon the world by taking the saints out of the world. When God

chambers his children in the grave, a storm is at hand, Isaiah 26:1-21. It is, you see, of concernment to do our utmost to keep them among us, especially when their number is so few and thin already, that we may say, as once the prophet concerning Israel, 'I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape-gleanings of the vintage,' Micah 7:1. Did we indeed see them come up as thick in our young ones as they fall in the old, we might say a blessing is in them. These would be as hope■seeds at least for the next generation. But when a wide breach is made and few to step into it, this is ominous. At Moses' death, Joshua stood up in his place, and it went well with Israel's affairs. But when Joshua died, and a generation rose up that had not seen the wonders God had done for his people, and so rebelled, then they to wrack apace, Judges 2:9-10.

2. Pray for their liberty and tranquility. 'Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee,' Psalms 122:6. Jerusalem was the place for their public worship, 'whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord,' ver. 4; so that, by praying for Jerusalem's peace, is meant such serene times wherein the people of God might enjoy his pure worship without disturbance. The church hath always had her vicissitudes; sometimes fair and sometimes foul weather, but her winter commonly longer than her summer; yea, at the same time that the sun of peace brings day to one part of it, another is wrapped up in a night of persecution. Universal peace over all the churches is a great rarity; and where it is in any part of it enjoyed, some unkind cloud or other soon interposeth. The church's peace therefore is set out by a half-hour's silence, Revelation 8:1. When God gave the poor Jews 'a reviving,' after a tedious captivity, by moving Cyrus to grant them liberty to go and rebuild the house of God, how soon did a storm rise and beat them from their work! One prince furthers them, another obstructs the work. The gospel church Acts 9:1-43, had a sweet breathing time of peace; but how long did it last? this short calm went before a sudden hurricane of persecution that falls upon them, Acts 12:1-25. Thus have the politic rulers of the world used the saints, as their carnal interest seemed to require; one while to countenance, another while to suppress, them. No sort of people in the world can expect less favour from the world than the church; their only safety therefore lies to engage God to espouse their cause.

3. Pray for their love and unity among themselves. The persecutor's sword—blessed be God!—is not at the church's throat among us. But are not Christians at daggers' drawing amongst themselves? The question in our days hath oft been asked, Why the word preached—being as frequent, clear, and powerful as any former age ever enjoyed in this nation —hath been no more effectual to convert the wicked or to edify the saints? I will not say this is the sole reason, but I dare deliver it as none of the least causes—and that is the woeful divisions and rents amongst those that have made greatest profession of the truth.

(1.) For the saints. It is no wonder they should thrive no more under the word, for the body of Christ is edified in love, Ephesians 4:1-32. So long as there is a fever upon the body it cannot nourish. The apostles themselves, when wrangling, got little good by Christ's sermon, or the sacrament itself administered by Christ unto them. One would have thought that such was a meal in the strength whereof, as so many Elijahs, they might have gone a long journey. But, alas! we see how weak they rise from it. One denies his master, and the rest in a fright forsake him; so unfit were they in such a temper to make a spiritual advantage of the best of means.

(2.) Again, for the wicked. It is no wonder that the word prevails no more on them. The divisions and scandals that have arisen among those that call themselves saints have filled their hearts with prejudice against the holy truths and ways of God. Christ prays for his people's unity: 'That the world may believe,' saith he, 'that thou hast sent me,' John 17:21. What is oftener in the mouths of many profane wretches than this—We will believe them when they are all of one mind, and come over to them when they can agree among themselves? Who loves to put his head into a house on fire? This should, methinks, stir up all that wish well to the gospel to pray, and that instantly, for the reunion of their divided hearts. Hot disputes will not do it; prayer, or nothing can. Pliny saith of the pearls called uniones, that their nature, though they be engendered in the sea, partakes of the heavens more than the earth. 'The God of peace' can only see us at peace. If ever we be wise to agree, we must borrow our wisdom from above; this alone is 'pure and peaceable.'

THIRD PROPOSITION.

[In praying for saints, we must comprehend 'all.'] In praying for saints, we must be careful to comprehend and encircle all saints. I do not mean, as the Papists, for quick and dead. Prayer is a means to wait upon them in their way; at death, then they are at their journey's end. Prayers are bootless for the dead sinner, and needless for the deceased saint. The wicked in that state are beneath, the saint above, our prayers. We cannot help the wicked. The tree is fallen, and so it must lie. We read of a change the body shall have after death. Vile bodies may, but filthy souls cannot, after death be made glorious. If they go off the body filthy, so they shall meet it at the resurrection. The time to pray for them is now while they live among you, or never; for death and hell come together to the sinner. No sooner Dives' wretched soul is forced out of his body, but you hear it shriek in hell, 'The rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment,' Luke 16:22-23. But Abraham tells him 'there is a gulf fixed,' that forbids all intercourse betwixt heaven and him. No what is that but an irrevocable decree with which the wicked are sealed under everlasting wrath? If God receive no prayers from them, then not from others for them. And as the wicked are beyond our help, so the saints above all need of our help; for they are in their port and haven. Prayer implies want, but saints departed are perfect, called therefore 'the spirits of just men made perfect.' We need not beg a pardon for them, for the Lord acquits them—they are 'just;' not for a supply of any good they want, they are 'made perfect;' not to remove any pain they feel, for 'the Spirit saith, Blessed are they that die in the Lord, they rest from their labours.' But they who invented this device intended, it is like, gain to their own purse, rather than benefit to others' souls. It is a pick■purse doctrine, contrived to bring grist to the pope's mill. But, to leave this, they are the living saints, your companions here in tribulation, that are the subject of your prayers, and of these we are to encircle the whole community within our remembrance. The Papists speak much of a treasury the church hath. This indeed is the true treasury of the church—the common stock of prayers with which they all trade to heaven for one another. Paul tells us what a large heart he had, even for those whose 'face he never saw in the flesh,' Colossians 1:2. Take a few reasons for the point.

[Why in praying on behalf of saints we are to comprehend 'all.']

Reason First. We are to love all saints, therefore to pray for all. Love in a saint is the picture of God's love to us; and God';s love looks not asquint to one saint more than another. That image is not of God's drawing which is not like himself. Nature may err in its productions, but not God in the

grace he begets in his saint's bosom. The new creature never wants its true nature. If God loves all his children, then wilt thou all thy brethren, or not one of them. When Paul commends Christians for this grace of love, he doth it from this note of universality, Ephesians 1:15; 'After I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints;' so Colossians 1:4; Philemon 1:5. Now, if we love all, we cannot but pray for all. To say we love one, and not pray for him, is a solecism. Can a courtier love his friend and not speak to his prince for him, when he may do him a favour by it? Love prompts a man to do that wherein he may express the greatest kindness to his friend. Mary pours the most precious ointment she hath upon Christ. Prayer, if of the right composition, is the most precious ointment thou canst bestow on the saints. Save it not for some few of them that are of thy private society or particular acquaintance; but let the sweet odour of it fill the whole house of the church; pray for all.

Reason Second. We are to pray for all saints, because Christ prays for all. He carries all their names in his breastplate. 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.' He leaves not one of the number out of his remembrance. The elder brother was priest to the whole family; so is Christ, our elder brother, to the whole household of believers. Now Christ's intercession is a pattern for our prayers. We cannot indeed pray for all as he doth. He prays for them not only in the lump, but for every individual saint by name: 'I have prayed,' Peter, 'for thee,' Luke 22:32; yea, not only for every person by name, but for their particular wants and occasions. 'I have prayed that thy faith fail not.' Christ takes notice of that very grace which was in most imminent danger, and secures it by his intercession. O what unspeakable comfort is this to a saint, that he in particular should be spoken of in heaven, and every want or temptation he laboureth with be taken notice of, and provided for, by Christ's mediation! Thus indeed we cannot pray for all, because we know but few of their persons, and little of the state and condition of those we know. Neither is there need we should. Our general suffrage and vote is as kindly taken as if we could descend to particular instances. God knows the mind of the Spirit, in our prayers on earth, to be for the same things which Christ insisteth on in his intercession in heaven.

Reason Third. We must pray for all saints, or else we can pray for none.

1. We cannot pray really for any, if not for all. He that prays for one saint and desires not good to another, prays not for that one as a saint, but under some other consideration, as wife, friend, child, or the like—a saint clothed with such and such circumstances; for à quatenus ad omne valet consequentia —he that loves a man, because a man, loves all, because the same human nature is found in all; and all saints have the same nature.

2. We cannot pray acceptably for one, except for all; and so we wrong those for whom we do pray, by leaving them out for whom we also should. Joseph would not hear the patriarchs for Simeon's release till they brought Benjamin over to him also. If thou wouldst be welcome to God in praying for any, carry all thy brethren to him in thy devotions; leave none behind. 'Are here all thy children?' said Samuel to Jesse. He would not sit down till the stripling David was fetched to complete the company. May be thou art earnest in prayer for thy hear neighbour Christians, but dost thou not forget others that are further off? Thou rememberest the church of God at home, but dost thou lay the miseries of the churches abroad to heart? What if God should ask thee now, Are here all thy brethren? Are there none but these that live under thy eye to be remembered? Have

not I children, and you brethren, elsewhere in the world to be thought upon? The Jews in Babylon were not to forget Jerusalem because of the great distance. ‘Remember the Lord afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind,’ Jeremiah 51:50.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. O what a rich merchant is the saint, who hath a stock going in so many hands! In heaven Christ is hard at prayer for him, on earth his brethren. What can this man want? Christ hath such an interest in his Father’s heart, that he can deny him nothing; the saints such interest in Christ, that he will not deny them. So the Christian’s trade goes smoothly on in both worlds. Think of this, Christian, for thy comfort—wherever a child of God is living upon earth, there hast thou a factor to traffic with heaven for thy good. Let this help thy faith in putting up thy own private prayers, knowing that thou prayest in a communion and fellowship with others. Even when thou art alone in thy closet, expect an answer to more than thy own prayer. It is an uncharitableness not to pray for others, and pride not to expect a benefit from the prayers of others.

Use Second. It teacheth us how inquisitive we should be of the affairs of our brethren and state of the church, that so we may pray with a more bowelly sense of their wants for them. Nehemiah, when he heard of some that were come out of Judea, inquires how it fared with his brethren there? and from the sad report he heard of their afflictions and reproaches is put into a bitter passion, which he emptied, with prayers and tears for them, into the bosom of God, Nehemiah 1:4. How could he have done this so feelingly, had he not first been acquainted with their distressed condition? We are many of us asking oft, ‘What news?’ and reading books of intelligence, foreign and national; but is it as Athenians, or as Christians? to fill our heads, or to affect our hearts? to furnish us with matter of chat and talk by the fireside with our neighbours, or of prayer to our God?

Use Third. Labour to get a wide heart in prayer for all the saints. God, it is said, gave Solomon a large heart of knowledge and wisdom, as the sand of the sea, 1 Kings 4:1-34;29. Behold a mercy greater than that to Solomon is here. A large heart is better than a large head—to do good, than to know it. Nothing is more unworthy than a selfish spirit; no selfishness worse than that which is vented in prayer. A heathen could blame that Athenian who in a drought prayed for his own city, saying, ‘O Jupiter, rain upon the fields of the Athenians,’ but forgot that his neighbours wanted as well as himself. Many heathens were great admirers of this virtue of charity. Take one instance for all. It was a law among the Romans that none should come near the emperor’s tent in the night upon pain of death. Now, there was one night a certain soldier apprehended, standing near the emperor’s tent with a petition to deliver unto him, who was therefore presently to be executed; but the emperor, hearing the noise from within his pavilion, called out, saying, ‘If it be for himself, let him die; if for another, spare his life.’ Being examined, it was found his petition was for two of his fellow-soldiers that were taken asleep on the watch. So both he escaped death and they punishment. Was this office of charity so pleasing to an earthly prince as to dispense with a law for its sake? O how acceptable then to our merciful God is it to intercede for our fellow-saints! But the more to provoke you to the exercise of this duty in its full breadth and latitude—viz. for all saints—consider,

1. This praying for all saints will prove thy love to saints sincere. A man, in praying for himself or his relations, stands not at that advantage to see the actings of pure grace, as when he prays for such as have not these carnal dependencies on him. When thou prayest for thyself in want or

sickness, how knowest thou that it is any more than the natural cry of the creature? Is it for thy family thou prayest? Still thy flesh hath an interest in the work, and may help to quicken thee—if it be not the chief spring to set thee agoing. But when thy heart beats strongly with a sense of any other's misery, that hath nothing to move thee, but his Christianity to be his remembrancer, and thou canst in secret plead with God for him as feelingly as if thou didst go on thy own errand, truly thou breathest a gracious spirit.

2. As it will speak for the truth of thy grace, so for the height and vigour of it. It is corruption that contracts our hearts. They were none of the best Christians of whom Paul gives this character, 'They sought their own,' Php 2:21. As the heart advanceth in grace, so it widens and grows more public■spirited. The higher a man ascends a hill the larger his prospect. One that stands upon the ground cannot look over the next hedge; his eye is confined within the compass of his own wall. Thus the carnal spirit thinks of none but his own estate or stake, feels not the water till it comes into his own cabin; whereas grace cleaves the soul, and the more grace a man hath, the more it will enable to look from himself over into the condition of his brethren. Such a one partakes of the nature of the heavenly bodies, which shed their influences down upon the whole world. Especially this would speak grace high in its actings, if these circumstances concur with it:

(1.) When a person is himself swimming in abundance of all enjoyments, and can then lay aside his own joy to weep and mourn for and with any afflicted saints, though at never so great a distance from them. Thus did Nehemiah for his brethren at Jerusalem, when himself was in a warm nest and had all the enjoyments that so great a prince's court could afford. It is not usual for any but those of great grace to feel the cords of the church's afflictions through a bed of down on which themselves lie. It must be a David that can prefer Jerusalem above his chief joy.

(2.) On the other hand, when in the depth of our own personal troubles and miseries, we can yet reserve a large room in our prayers for any other saints, this speaks a great measure of grace. It showed the Romans' strength and courage to be great, that they could spare several legions to send into Spain for the help of their friends there, while Hannibal was near their own walls with a puissant army. To be able to lend auxiliary prayers to other afflicted saints, or abroad to the church of God, when thou thyself art engaged deeply with private sorrows, does signify a very gracious spirit.

(3.) When, in our own distresses, we can entertain the tidings of any other saint's mercies with joy and thankfulness. This requires great grace indeed, to act two so contrary parts well at the same time. The prosperity of others too oft breeds envy and discontent in them that want it. If therefore thou canst praise God for others' mercies, while the tears stand in thy eyes for thy own miseries, it is a rare temper; flesh and blood never learned thee it thou mayest be sure. To shut up this with a caution—though we are to pray for all saints, yet some call for a more special remembrance at our hands.

(a) Those that are near to us by other relations. First, by bond of nature as well as of grace: 'A brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?' Philemon 1:16. It is true the bond of the Spirit is more sacred than that of the flesh—sanctior est copula cordis quàm corporis; yet, when that of the flesh is twisted with the other, it adds, as force to the affection, so argument to the duty; therefore saith Paul, 'much more unto thee.' Charity may begin, though it must not end, at home. Again, by domestic relation, society and communion,

whether civil or religious—these give an enforcement to the duty; master for servant, and servants for masters; minister for people, and people for minister. He that starves his family is not like to feast his neighbours. He that is a churl to his neighbours, is not like to be overkind to strangers. So he that prays not for those who by these relations stand so near to him, is very unlike to abound in this duty for others.

(b) Those that are in distress. Whoever you forget, remember these. If one be sick in our family, we will send him his portion before we carve for any that are at the table. This is a fit season for love. A friend for adversity is as proper as fire is for a winter's day. Job's friends chose the right time to visit him in, but took not the right course of improving their visit. Had they spent the time in prayer for him which they did in hot disputes with him, they had profited and pleased God more. Again, this is the season that the tempter is busy. This lion walks abroad in the night of affliction, hoping then to make the Christian his prey. And if he wakes to make a prey of him, shall not we watch to pray for him? Again, this is the season of God's most speedy answering prayers. 'In the day when I cried thou answeredst me,' Psalms 138:3; that is, in the day of affliction. Indeed now is the time when the Spirit of Christ will be stirring us up to pray. And when should we send our letters but when the post calls? He that stirs thee up to pray for them, will be as careful to deliver up thy prayers and see an answer returned.

(c) Such of the saints as are of a public place and use. You pray for many here while you pray for one.

(d) Such as have expressly desired and engaged you to remember them at the throne of grace. Among debts, specialties are paid in the first place. Thou art a debtor to all thy brethren, and owest them a remembrance in thy prayers; but more especially them to whom thou hast particularly promised it. This is, as it were, a bond under thy hand, given for further security of paying this debt to thy friend. Whoever thou forgettest, remember him. Did the butler's conscience accuse him for not remembering his promise to Joseph, who had engaged him—when he was restored to court—to intercede with Pharaoh for him? 'I do,' saith he, 'remember my faults this day,' Genesis 41:9. Much more hast thou cause to confess thy faults, who forgettest to make mention of them to the Lord that have solemnly desired it at thy hands. To have promised the payment of a sum of money, and to have failed, were not greater dishonesty. Thou mayest prejudice his soul more by disappointing him of thy prayer, than his estate could suffer for want of thy money. How knowest thou but the mercy he wants is stopped while [until] thy prayers come to heaven for it? That other saints obtain by their prayers for us what sometimes we do not by our own is clear from Job 42:8.

[1]CLOUT, n. 1. A patch; a piece of cloth or leather, &c., to close a breach.

2. A piece of cloth for mean purposes.

—From Webster's

[2]Precedaneous: (Pre`ce*da"ne*ous) a. Preceding; antecedent; previous. [Obs.] Hammond. — From Websters's

[3]Familist: — member of Family Of Love, religious sect of Dutch origin, followers of Hendrik Niclaes, a 16th-century Dutch merchant. Niclaes' main activity was in Emden, East Friesland (1540-60). In his Evangelium regni, issued in England as A Joyfyl Message of the Kingdom, he

invited all “lovers of truth, of what nation and religion soever they be, Christian, Jews, Mahomites, or Turks, and heathen,” to join in a great fellowship of peace, the Family of Love, giving up all contention over dogma and seeking to be incorporated into the body of Christ.

[4]Exsuscitation:—Ex*sus`ci*ta"tion) n. [L. exsuscitatio.] A stirring up; a rousing.

— From Webster’s [5]causey: — a raised path or road as across wet ground.

—SDB [6]Gust: — taste; relish; flavour; savour.

1 Samuel 7:9-11. But also see 1 Samuel 12:14-19; which seems to fit Gurnall’s context better. — SDB

Chapter 20

02.08 - The Duty of Every Christian In Complete Armour to Aid by Prayer

Direction Twelfth. The Duty of every Christian in complete Armour to aid by Prayer the Public Ministers of Christ.

‘And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly,to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds’

(Ephesians 6:19-20). The apostle having laid out this duty of prayer in its full compass, taking all saints within its circumference, he comes now to apply the general rule, and claims a share in it himself—‘and for me.’ When he bids them pray ‘for all saints,’ he surely cannot be shut out of their prayers who is not the least in the number. In the words there are four branches. FIRST. Here is an exhortation, or Paul’s request for himself, and in him for all ministers of the gospel—‘and for me.’ SECOND. The matter of his request—‘that utterance may be given unto me.’ Not that he would confine and determine them in their prayers to this request alone; but he propounds it as a principal head to be insisted on by them on his behalf. THIRD. The end why he desires this—‘that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.’ FOURTH. A double argument to back and enforce this request—‘for which I am an ambassador in bonds’—First. Taken from his office. Second. From his present afflicted state.

BRANCH FIRST.

[The request of Paul as a minister of Christ, for the prayers of believers.] ‘And for me.’

Here is an exhortation, or Paul’s request for himself, and in him for all ministers of the gospel—‘and for me.’ First. We may note here that people are to be taught the duty they owe to their minister as well as to others. Second. It is not only our duty to pray for others, but also to desire the prayers of others for ourselves. Third. We may note that the ministers of the gospel are, in an especial manner, to be remembered in the saints’ prayers.

First. We may note here that people are to be taught the duty they owe to their minister as well as to others; though indeed no duty is harder for the minister to press or for the people to hear—for him to preach with humility and wisdom, or for them to receive without prejudice.

[It is our duty as well to desire the prayers of others, as to pray for them.]

Second. It is not only our duty to pray for others, but also to desire the prayers of others for ourselves. If a Paul turns beggar, and desires the remembrance of others for him, who then needs it not? This hath been the constant practice of the saints. Sometimes they call in the help of their brethren upon special occasions to pray with them. Thus Daniel, Daniel 2:18, when required to interpret the king’s dream, makes use of ‘Hananiah, Mishael,’ and ‘Azariah, his companions.’ ‘Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to these that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret.’ Daniel would not give an answer to the king till he

had got an answer from God. To prayer therefore he goes. No doubt he forgot not his errand in his closet when at his solitary devotions; but withal he calls in help to join in social prayer with him. He sends for them to his house; where, it is probable, they prayed together, for the mutual quickening of their affections and strengthening of their petition by this their united force. Wherefore, he acknowledgeth the mercy as an answer to their concurrent prayers: 'I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee,' Daniel 2:23. This justifies the saints' practice when, in any great strait of temptation or affliction, they get some other of the faithful to give a lift with them at this duty. Sometimes we have them desiring their brethren's prayers for them when they cannot conveniently have it with them. Thus Esther sets the Jews in Shushan to prayer for her, Esther 4:16; so our apostle in many of his epistles desires the saints to carry his name with them to the throne of grace, Romans 15:30; 2 Corinthians 1:1-24; 2 Corinthians 10:1-18, 2 Corinthians 11:1-30; Colossians 4:3; Php 1:19. And not without great reason, for,

First. God hath made it a debt which one saint owes to another to carry their names to a throne of grace. Now, not to desire this debt to be paid, which God hath charged our brethren with, is to undervalue the mercy and goodness of our God. Should a legacy be left us by a friend, were it not a despising of his kindness not to call upon the heir who is to pay it? Surely God accounts he doth us a kindness herein, and therefore may take it ill not to ask for it. It is not our usage to lose a debt for want of a demand, and this is none of the least we have owing to us.

Second. Many are the gracious promises that are made to such prayers of the faithful one for another. 'If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them,' 1 John 5:16. But you will say, How can the prayer of one obtain the forgiveness for another? I answer, None is forgiven for the faith of another; this must be personal; but the believing fervent prayer of one is an excellent means to obtain the grace of repentance and faith for another, whereby he may come to be forgiven. So, 'Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed,' James 5:16. Now, in not desiring our brethren's help in this kind, we make no use of these promises—the proper end of which is to encourage us to call in the auxiliary aid of others—as if such passages of Scripture might have been well spared for any need we have of them. Should you see a piece of ground never sown nor fed, you might well say the ground is barren or the owner a bad husband; either the promise is empty and useless, or we that do not improve it are worse husbands for our souls. But we cannot say so of the promise, if we consider the great fruit and advantage which the saints in all ages have reaped from it. Did not Daniel get the knowledge of a great secret as a return of his companions' prayers with him? Did not Job's friends escape a great judgment that hung over their heads at his intercession? What a miraculous deliverance had Peter at the prayers of a few saints gathered together on his behalf! Bring not therefore an evil report upon this promise, seeing such sweet clusters as these are to be shown that have been gathered from it.

Third. If we desire not others to carry our name to a throne of grace, we are guilty of quenching the Spirit of prayer; which may be done in ourselves and others also.

1. By this we may quench it in ourselves. Partly, because we neglect a duty. We are bid to 'confess our sins one to another,' and for what end but to have the benefit of mutual prayers? The same Spirit which stirs thee up to pray for thyself will excite thee in many cases to set others at

prayer for thee; which, if thou dost not, thou overlayest his motions, and so committest a sin. Again, thou quenchest the Spirit of prayer in thyself by depriving thyself of that assistance which thou mightest receive in thy own prayers through theirs; for the Spirit conveys his quickening grace to us in the use of instruments and means. He that doth not hear the word preached quenches his Spirit, because God useth this as bellows to blow up and enkindle the saint's grace. So, he that desires not the prayers of others quencheth the Spirit of prayer in himself, because the exercise of their grace in prayer for thee may fetch down more grace to be poured in unto thee.

2. Thou mayest be accessory to the quenching of the Spirit in others, because thou hinderest the acting of those graces in them which would have been drawn forth in prayer for thee hadst thou acquainted them with thy condition. Fire is quenched by subtracting fuel as well as by throwing on water. By opening thy wants or desires to thy brethren thou feedest Spirit of prayer in them, as they have new matter administered to work upon; by acquainting them with the merciful providences of God to thee, thou prickest a song of praise for them. How many groans and sighs should God in prayer have had from thy neighbour-saints hadst thou not bit in thy temptations and afflictions from their knowledge! What peals of joy and thankfulness would they have rung hadst thou not concealed thy mercies from them!

Fourth. We are to desire others to pray for us, to express the humble sense we have of our own weakness, and the need we have of others' help. Humble souls are fearful of their own strength. They that have little, desire partners with them in their trade; but when they conceit their own private stock to be sufficient, then they can trade by themselves. 'Now are ye full, now are ye rich; ye have reigned as kings without us,' saith Paul of the self-conceited Corinthians. The time was you thought you had need of Paul's preaching to you and praying for you, but now ye reign without us! O how many are there, when time was, could beg prayers of every Christian they met! Nothing but wants and complaints could be heard from them, which made them beg help from all they knew to pray their corruptions down and their graces up. But now they have left the beggar's trade, and reign in an imaginary kingdom of their self-conceited sufficiency. Certainly, as it shows want of charity not to pray for others, so no want of pride not to desire prayers from others.

Fifth. We are to desire others to pray for us, that we may prevent Satan's designs against us. He knows very well what an advantage he hath upon the Christian when severed from his company; wherefore he labours what he can to hinder the conjunction of his solitary prayers with the auxiliary aid his brethren might lend him. Samson's strength lay not in a single hair but his whole lock; the saint's safety lies in communion, not in solitude and single devotion. How many, alas! concealing their temptations from others, have found their sorrows grow upon them after all their own private endeavours and wrestlings in secret against them? like one who, when his house is on fire, tries to quench it himself, but is not able, and so hazards the loss of all he hath for want of timely calling his neighbours to his help.

Sixth. The love we owe to our brethren requires that we should desire others to pray for us. The saints here live where none else love them but themselves, therefore they need not make much of one another. Now this of desiring their prayers carries a threefold expression of love to them.

1. By this we acknowledge the grace of God in our brethren, or else it is supposed we would not employ them in such a work. He that desires a friend to present a petition to the king on his behalf, shows he believes him to be in favour, and one that hath some interest in the prince. Now, what

more honourable testimony can we give to another than to own him as a child of God, one whose prayers are welcome to heaven? We are bid to ‘prefer every one his brother in honour.’ Now no one way can we do this more than by making use of their help at the throne of grace to be our remembrancers to the Lord.

2. By this we do our utmost to interest our brethren in the mercy we desire them to pray for. Were a merchant to send some commodity to Turkey or Spain which he knows will make a gainful return, it would be a great favour to take others into partnership with him in the adventure. And what voyage is gainful like this of prayer? and whoever shares in the duty is partner in the mercy.

3. By this we confirm them in a confidence of our readiness to pray for them. What consists good neighbourhood in but a readiness to reciprocate kindnesses one to another?—when that is at the service of one neighbour which is in the house of another? Now, who will be bold or free with his neighbour to take a kindness from him that is not willing to receive the like? Be ye strange to your friend, and you teach him to be so to yourself. Nothing endears Christians more in love than an open heart one to another. A friend should have no cabinet in his bosom to which he allows not his friend a key.

Objection (1.) But do we not, by desiring our fellow-saints’ prayers, intrench upon Christ’s mediatory office?

Answer. No; surely Christ would not command that which would be a wrong to himself. There is great difference betwixt our desiring Christ to pray for us and our fellow-brethren. We desire Christ to present our persons and prayers, expecting acceptation of both through his blood and intercession. But no such matter from the prayers of our brethren; we only desire them as friends to bear us company to the throne of grace, there to present our prayers in a communion together, expecting the welcome of both their and our prayers, not from them, but from Christ —relying on Christ to procure the welcome both to our prayers and theirs at our heavenly Father’s hand.

Objection (2.) But why, then, may we not desire the prayers of the deceased saints for the same purpose we desire the prayers of those that yet live with us?

Answer (1.) We have no precept or example for this in the word; and unbidden there in duties of worship, is forbidden. We must not be ‘wise above what is written.’ Not to use the means which God hath appointed is a great sin, which was Ahaz’s case; but to invent ways or means more than God hath appointed is far worse. It is bad enough for a subject not to keep the king’s laws, but far worse for him to presume to mint a law of his own head. The first is undutiful, but the latter is a traitor.

Answer (2.) We have no way of expressing our thoughts and desires to the saints departed. Why should we pray to them that cannot hear what we say? or where is the messenger to send our minds by? or which the word in Scripture that saith they hear in heaven what we pray on earth?

Answer (3.) It is the prerogative of Christ to be the only agent in heaven for his saints on earth. ‘To which of the angels or saints did God say, ‘Sit thou at my right hand?’ In the outward temple we find the whole congregation praying, but into the holy of holiest entered none but the high priest with his perfume. Every saint is a priest to offer up prayers for himself and others on earth; but Christ only as our High-priest intercedes in heaven for us. The glorious angels and saints there no

doubt wish well to the church below; but it is Christ's office to receive the incense of his militant saints' prayers, which they send up from this outward temple here below to heaven, and to offer it with all their desires to God; so that, to employ any in heaven besides Christ to pray for us, is to put Christ out of office.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. It reproves those into whose hearts it never yet came to beg prayers for their own souls. Surely they are great strangers to themselves, and ignorant what a privilege they lose! As Christ said to the woman of Samaria, If thou hadst known the gift of God, and who it is that asks, thou wouldst have asked, and he would have given. Did poor souls know who the saints are—what favourites with God, and how prevalent their prayers are with him—they would not willingly be left out of their remembrance. I never knew any but, as soon as God began to work upon them—though it were no more than to awaken their consciences—thought this worth the desiring. It is natural for man in straits to crave help. A servant or a child, when master or father are displeased and blows are threatened, if they know any that have interest in their favour, and are more likely to prevail with them than others, then they entreat such to become suitors for them. When hunger and want pinch the poor, then, if they have any neighbour to be their friend, to speak to the parish for them, he shall soon hear of them. Now, were the sense of their wants or troubles of a higher nature, would they not be as earnest to desire prayers for their souls as now they are to beg bread for their bodies? Well, you that fear God, and live among such, do your duty, though they have not hearts to desire it at your hands, pray over their stupid souls before the Lord. When a friend is sick, and his senses are gone, you do not stay to send for the physician till he comes to himself and is able to desire you to do it for him. You had need make the more haste to God for such as these, lest they go away in this apoplexy of conscience, and so be past praying for.

Use Second. It reproves those who desire prayers of God's people, but hypocritically; and they are such as set others on work, but pray not for themselves—a certain sign of a naughty heart. Thus pharaoh often called for Moses to pray for him and his land; but we read not that ever he made any address himself to God, but thought it enough to send another on his errand; whereas a gracious soul will be sure to meet him he employs at the work. 'I beseech you,' saith Paul, 'to strive together with me' in your prayers to God for me. He did not slip the collar off his own neck to put it on another's, but drew together with them in it; else they that pray for thee may pray the mercy away from thee.

Use Third. It reproves such as desire prayers of others, but it is only in some great pinch. If their chariot is set fast in some deep slough of affliction, then they send in all haste for some to draw them out with their prayer, who, at another time, change their thoughts of the saints' prayers, yea, and of God himself. The frogs once gone, and Moses hears no more of Pharaoh till another plague rubs up his memory. Moses hears not Pharaoh cry till Pharaoh hears the frogs croak. Thus, as they say of coral, it is soft in the water where it grows, and hard when taken out; many, their consciences are soft and tender whilst sleeping in affliction, but hard and stout when that is removed. Pharaoh that so oft called Moses up to prayer, at last could not endure the sight of him, but forewarned him for ever coming in his sight. O take heed of this! When once the wretch came to that pass, and so strangely changed his note as to drive Moses from him, that had so often bailed and rescued him out of the hands of divine vengeance, then he had not long to live, for he

removed the very dam, and lift up the sluice to let in ruin upon himself.

Use Fourth. It reproves such as desire others to pray for them, but vaingloriously—to gain a reputation for religion. Beware of this; yet charge not all for the hypocrisy of some, neither deprive thyself of the benefit of others' prayers out of an imaginary fear lest thou shouldst play the hypocrite therein. Watch thy heart, but waive not the duty. Because some have strangled themselves with their own garters, wilt thou therefore be afraid to wear thine? Or because some canting beggars go about the country to show their sores, which they desire not to have cured, wilt not thou therefore, when wounded, go to the chirurgeon?

[Ministers of the gospel have a special claim on the prayers of believers.]

Third. From this request of the apostle we may note that the ministers of the gospel are, in an especial manner, to be remembered in the saints' prayers; and that,

First. In regard of God, whose message they bring. They come about his work and deliver his errand. Not to pray for them will be interpreted you wish not well to the business they have in hand for him. They do not only come from God, but with Christ. 'We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain,' 2 Corinthians 6:1. Christ and the minister go into the pulpit together. A greater than man is there; master and servant are both at work.

Again, the blessing of the minister's labour is from God; not the hand that sets the plant or sows the seed, but God's blessing, gives the increase, 1 Corinthians 3:6. When Melancthon was first converted, the light of the gospel shone so clear and strong a beam on his own eyes, that he thought he should convert all he preached unto. He deemed it was impossible his hearers should withstand that truth which he saw with so much evidence; but he afterwards found the contrary, which made him say, 'I see now that the old Adam is too hard for the young Melancthon.' God carries the key by his girdle that alone can open hearts, and prayer is the key to open his. When Christ intended to send forth his disciples to preach the gospel, he sets them solemnly to prayer, Matthew 9:38. Many are the promises which he hath given to the ministers of the gospel for their protection—that he will keep these stars in his right hand, or else they had been on the ground and stamped under foot long ere this—for their assistance and success in the work: 'I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say,' Exodus 4:12. 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations...I am with you alway, unto the end of the world,' Matthew 28:19-20. Wherefore are these promises, but to be shot back again in prayers to God that gave them?

Second. In regard of the ministers themselves. There is not a greater object of pity and prayer in the whole world than the faithful ministers of Christ; if you consider,

1. The importance of their work. It is temple work, and that is weighty; which made Paul, that had the broadest shoulders of all his brethren, cry out, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' 'I am doing a great work,' said Nehemiah, Nehemiah 6:3. But what was that to his? No work more hazardous to carry in than this. It is sad enough to drop to hell from under the pulpit—to hear the gospel, and yet to perish; but O how dismal to fall out of it thither for unfaithfulness to the work! The consideration of this made Paul so bestir him; 'knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men.'

2. It is a laborious work. 'Know them which labour among you...and admonish you,' 1 Thessalonians 5:12; those who labour in the word and doctrine, @Ë 6@B4ä<J,H—which labour to weariness. He that preaches as he should, shall find it a work, and not play. Not a work of an hour while speaking in the pulpit, but a load that lies heavy on his shoulders all the week long; a labour that spends the vitals, and consumes the oil which should feed the lamp of nature; such a labour, in a word, as makes old age and youth oft meet together. The Jews took Christ to be about fifty years old when he was little above thirty, John 8:57. I find some give this reason of it, because Christ had so macerated his body with labour in preaching, fasting, and watching, that it aged his very countenance and made him look older than he was. Other callings are, many of them, but as exercise to nature; they blow off the ashes from its coal, and help to discharge nature of those superfluities which oppress it. Who eats his bread more heartily, and sleeps more sweetly, than the ploughman? But the minister's work debilitates nature. It is hard for him to eat and work too. Like the candle, he wastes while he shines. Whatever work is thought harder than other, we have it borrowed to set forth the minister's labour. They are called soldiers, watchmen, husbandmen, yea, their work is set out by the pangs of a woman in travail. Some of them indeed have easier labours than other—those who find more success of their ministry than their brethren; but who can tell the throes that their souls feel who all the time of their ministry go in travail and bring forth dead children at last?

3. It is opposed work by hell and earth.

(1.) It is opposed by hell. The devil never liked temple work; he that was at Joshua's right hand to resist him, is at the minister's elbow to disturb him, and that both in study and pulpit also. 'I would have come,' saith Paul, 'but Satan hindered.' Who can tell all the devices that Satan hath to take the minister off or hinder him in his work? One while he discourageth him, that he is ready with Jonah to run away with his charge; another while he is blowing of him up with pride. Even Paul himself hath a thorn given him in his flesh to keep pride out of his heart. Sometimes he roils him with passion, and leavens his zeal into sourness and unmercifulness. This the disciples were tainted with, when they called for fire to come down from heaven upon those that stood in their way. Sometimes he chills their zeal, and intimidates their spirits into cowardice and self■pity. Thus Peter favoured himself when he denied his Master; and when at another time he dissembled with the Jews, to curry their favour.

(2.) It is opposed by the wicked world. 'To be a minister,' said Luther, 'is nothing else but to derive the world's wrath and fury upon himself.' How are they loaden with reproaches! This dirt lies so thick nowhere as on the minister's coat. What odious names did the best of men, the apostles themselves, go under? And it were well they would only smite them with the tongue; but you shall find in all ages persecutors have thirsted most after their blood. The persecution in the Acts begins with the cutting off of James' head. Seven thousand could lie better his in Jezebel's time than one prophet. These are the burdensome stones which every one is lifting at, though none can do it without bruising his own fingers. In every national storm almost, they are taken up to be thrown overboard for those that raised it. How many are there of an opinion that nothing keeps them from seeing happy days but the standing of them and their office? O miserable happiness, which cannot be bought and purchased but with the ruin of those that bring the tidings of peace and salvation to them all! Such a happiness this would be as the sheep had in the fable, when persuaded to have the dogs that kept the wolves off killed; or as the passengers at sea would have when their pilot is

thrown overboard. In a word, such a happiness as the Jews had when Christ was taken out of the way by their murderous hands. They slew him to preserve themselves from the Romans destroying their city, but brought them with irreparable ruin by this very means upon their own head.

4. That which adds weight to all the former is, that the men who are to bear this heavy burden, and to conflict with all these difficulties and dangers, are those who have no stronger shoulders than others; for they are men subject to the like infirmities with their brethren. Now, will not all this melt you into compassion towards them, and your compassion send you to prayer for them? Shall they stand in the face of death and danger, where Satan's bullets, and man's also, fly so thick, and you not be at the pains to raise a breast■work before them for their defence by your prayers?

Third. In regard of yourselves. Love to yourselves will plead to pray for them.

1. Consider their ministry is an office set up on purpose for your sakes. It was never intended for the exalting of a few men above their brethren, but for the service of your faith. The gifts that Christ hath given to men, Ephesians 4:1-32—that is, their office and abilities to discharge it—are both for the edifying of the body of Christ, and will you not pray for those that from one end of the year to the other are at work for you? If you had but a child or servant sent abroad about your worldly business, would you not send a prayer after him? Thus did good Jacob, when his children went on his errand to Egypt: 'God Almighty give you mercy before this man.' Will you not do thus much for your poor minister, and pray God Almighty go with him, when in his study to prepare, and when in the pulpit to deliver what he hath prepared for our souls?

2. The ministers' miscarriage is dangerous to the people; therefore pray for them, lest you be led into temptation by their falls. The sins of teachers are the teachers of sin. If the nurse be sick, the child is in danger to suck the disease from her that lies at her breast. If the minister be tainted with an error, it is strange if many of his people should not catch the infection; when, if he be loose and scandalous in his life, he is like a common well or fountain, corrupted and muddied, at which all the town draw their water. The devil aimed at more than Peter when he desired leave to try a fall with him. 'Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat,' Luke 22:31. He knew his fall was like to strike up the heels of many others. The minister's practice makes a greater sound than his doctrine. They who forget his sermon, will remember his example to quote it for their apology and defence when time serves. Peter withdraws, and 'other Jews dissembled with him,' Galatians 2:12-13. Truly, friends, your ministers are but men, and of no stronger than yourselves—men subject to the like passions. He among them that presumes he shall not slide into an error, or fall into a sin, is bolder than any promise in the word gives him leave. They need your prayers as much as any, and those most that fear their danger least.

3. By praying for the minister you take the most hopeful way to profit by his ministry. Such a soul as this may come in expectation to have a portion laid on his trencher; his meal is spoke for; and such guests as send to heaven before they come to an ordinance are most likely to have the best entertainment. He that hears a sermon, and hath not prayed for the minister, and the success of his labours, sits down to his meat before he hath craved a blessing; he plays the thief to his own soul, while he robs the minister of the assistance his prayers might have brought him in from heaven. Pinch the nurse, and you starve the child. The less the minister is prayed for, the less, it is to be feared, will the people profit by him.

4. By praying for the minister you do not only render the word he preacheth more effectual to yourselves, but you also interest yourselves in the good his ministry does to others. As there is a way of partaking in others' sins, so in others' holy services. He that strengthens the hands of a sinner any way in his wicked practices, makes his sin his own, and shall partake with him in the wages due to the work when the day of reckoning comes. So he that strengthens the minister's hand in his holy work, whether by prayer, countenance, or relief of his necessities, becomes a partaker with him in his service, and shall not be left out in the reward, Matthew 10:40. We read there of 'a prophet's reward' given to private Christians; they who communicate with the minister in his labour, by any subserviency to it, shall share in the reward. When God comes to reward his prophets for their faithful service, then Obadiah that hid them from the fury of their persecutors—then Onesiphorus that refreshed their bowels—yea, then all those faithful ones that put up their fervent prayers for the free course of the gospel in their ministry—shall be called in to share with them in the reward. He that hath but a fifteenth part in a ship is an owner as well as he that hath more; and, when the voyage is over, he hath his share of the return that is made proportionable to his part. O what an encouragement is this to have a stock going in this bottom!—yea, to venture than ever at the throne of grace for the now despised ministers of Christ, seeing heaven's promise is our insuring office to secure all we send to sea upon this account.

BRANCH SECOND.

[The matter of Paul's request, as a minister of Christ, for the prayers of believers.] The second branch in the general division of the words follows, and contains the matter of the apostle's request to the church of Ephesus, or what he desires them to mention to God in his behalf—'that utterance may be given unto me.' Where observe, First. The spirituality of his desire. He sets them not a praying for carnal things, the world's honour or riches; no, we hear him not so much as mention his necessities and outward wants, which he, being now a prisoner, it is like, was no great stranger to; but they are spiritual wants he most groans under. He desires the charity of their prayers more than of their purse.

Second. Observe the public concernment of that he begs prayers for—'that utterance may be given me.' This is not a personal privilege, that would redound only on his own private advantage, but which renders him useful to others—that which may fit him for his public employment in the church; from which we may gather this note.

[What the minister of Christ chiefly desires believers' prayers for.]

Note. A faithful minister's heart runs more on his work than on himself. That which he chiefly desires is how he may best discharge his ministerial trust. No doubt Paul spake out of the abundance of his heart. That comes out first of which his heart was most full, and for which his thoughts were most solicitous; as if he had said, If you will take me into your prayers, let this be your request, 'That utterance may be given me.' Wherever, almost, you find him begging prayers, he forgets not this: 'Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course,' 2 Thessalonians 3:1; 'Praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ,' Colossians 4:3. Admirable are the expressions whereby this holy man declares how deeply his heart was engaged in the work of the Lord. He tells them that his very soul and spirit was set upon it: 'Whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son,' Romans 1:9. Never did any more long for preferment in the church, than he to preach the gospel to the church. 'I long to see you, that I may

impart unto you some spiritual gift,' Romans 1:11. He professeth himself a debtor to all sorts of men; he hath a heart and tongue to preach to all that have an ear to hear: 'I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise,' Romans 1:14. Yea, he was 'ready to preach the gospel' Romans 1:15, where he should stand in the mouth of death and danger. This so took up his thoughts, that for it he threw all his worldly concernments at his heels. As for the world's riches, he professeth he progged[1] not for it: 'I seek not yours, but you,' 2 Corinthians 12:14. He had a nobler merchandise in his eye. He had rather preach them into Christ, than their money into his purse. And for their respect and love, though it was due debt to him, yet he lays it aside, and on he will go with his work, though they give him no thanks for his pains: 'I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.' His duty he will do to them, and leaves them to look to theirs to him. The nurse draws forth her breast to the child, though froward, because she looks for her reward, not from the child, but its parent. God will reward the faithful minister, though his people will not thank him for his labour. In a word, his very life was not valued by him when it stood in competition with his work: 'But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus,' Acts 20:24. And not without great reason is it that ministers should prefer their duty above all temporal respects. They are servants to God; and a servant must look to his work, whatever becomes of himself. Abraham's servant would not eat till he had done his message; and when it sped, neither would he stay then to lose time, but posts back again with all expedition to his master, Genesis 24:33. He said well who was employed to relieve the city of Rome with corn, who, when the master of the ship would have had him stay for fair weather, answered, 'It is necessary that we sail, not that we live.' It is necessary the minister should fulfil his ministry, not that he should be rich, not that he should be in reputation. The incomparable value of souls is such as should make hazard our whole temporal stake to promote their eternal salvation. He that wins souls is wise, though he lose his own life in the work. But we come to a more particular inquiry into these words, what the apostle means by 'utterance,' which he desires may be given him. A parallel place to this we have, Colossians 4:3-4. Three things we may conceive the apostle drives at in this his request.

[Threefold import of Paul's request, when he desires that utterance be prayed for.]

First. By 'utterance' may be meant liberty to preach the gospel;—that his mouth might not be stopped by the persecutor, who had him already his prisoner. Now he desires they would pray for him, that he might not be quite taken off his work: where,

1. Observe what a grievous affliction it is to a faithful minister to be denied liberty to preach the gospel. So long as Paul might preach, though in a chain, he is not much troubled; the word is free, though he be bound. But, to have his mouth stopped, to see poor souls ready to perish for want of that bread which he hath to give out, and yet may not be allowed this liberty, goes to his heart. 'O pray,' saith he, 'that utterance may be given.' If he may not preach, neither should he live; for upon this account alone he desired life—the furtherance of their faith, Php 1:25. O how far are they from Paul's mind, to whom it is more tedious to preach than grievous to be kept from the work! How seldom should we see some in the pulpit, were it not a necessary expedient to bring in their revenue at the year's end!

2. The liberty of the gospel, and of the ministers to deliver it, are in an especial manner to be prayed for.

(1.) Because this is strongly opposed and maligned by Satan and his instruments. Wherever God opens a door for his gospel there Satan raiseth his batteries. ‘For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries,’ 1 Corinthians 16:9. No sooner doth God open his shop-windows, but the devil is at work to shut them again, or hinder the free-trade of his gospel. Other men’s servants can work peaceably in their master’s shop, but as for God’s servants, every one hath a stone to throw in at them as they pass by. When Paul began to preach at Thessalonica, the city was presently in an uproar and cry, ‘These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also,’ Acts 17:6. Indeed they said true; let the gospel have but liberty and it will ‘turn the world upside down.’ It will make a change, but a happy one. This the devil knows, and therefore dreads its approach.

(2.) Because it is the choicest mercy that God can bless a nation with. Happy are the people that are in such a case. It is the gospel of the kingdom; it lifts a people up to heaven. We could better spare the sun out of its orb than the preaching of the gospel out of the church. Souls might find the way to heaven, though the sun sis not lend them its light; nut without the light of truth they cannot take one right step towards it. Work, saith Christ, ‘while ye have the light,’ John 12:36. Salvation-work cannot be done by the candle■light of a natural understanding, but by the daylight of gospel revelation; this sun must rise before man can go forth to this labour.

(3.) It is God’s power to preserve the liberty of his gospel and messengers, in spite of the devil and his instruments. Therefore, indeed, Paul sends them not to court to beg his liberty, but to heaven. God had Nero closer prisoner than he had Paul. ‘Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it,’ Revelation 3:8. At Ephesus were many adversaries we heard, yet the door was kept open. Christ carries the keys of the church-door at his girdle: ‘He that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth,’ Revelation 3:7, ‘the key of the house of David,’ so Isaiah 22:22. The church is Christ’s house, and the master sure will keep the key of his own door.

(4.) Prayer hath a mighty power with God to preserve or restore liberty to his gospel and messengers. It hath fetched home his servants from banishment, it hath brought them out of their dungeon. The prison could not hold Peter when the church was at prayer for him. It hath had a mighty influence into the church’s affairs when at the lowest ebb. It was a sad world to the church in Nero’s time, when Paul set the saints a praying for kings and those that were in authority; which prayers, though they were not answered in Nero, yet I doubt not but afterwards they were in Constantine and other Christian princes, under whose royal wing the church of Christ was cherished and protected.

(5.) Pray for their liberty, because, when the gospel goes away, it goes not alone, but carries away your other mercies along with it. The hangings that are taken down when the prince removes his court. Where the minister hath not liberty to preach the truth, the people will not long have liberty to profess it. When it went ill with James the apostle, it went not well with the church at Jerusalem, Acts 12:1-2, nor can that place look long to enjoy its outward peace. When God removes his gospel, it is to make way for worse company to come, even all his sore plagues and judgements, Jeremiah 6:8.

Second. When the apostle desires ‘utterance’ to be given him, he may mean that he may have a word given him to preach—Ë<" µ@Â *@2,\0 8`(@H, according to that which Christ promiseth, ‘It shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak,’ Matthew 10:19. From which we may note:

1. That ministers have no ability of their own for their work. O how long may they sit tumbling their books over, and beating their brains, till God comes to their help; and then, as Jacob’s venison, it is brought to their hand! If God drop not down his assistance, we write with a pen that hath no ink. If any in the world need walk pendantly upon God more than others, the minister is he.

2. Observe that those who are most eminent for gifts and grace have meanest thoughts of themselves, and are acquainted most with their own insufficiency. Paul himself is not ashamed to let Christians know that if God brings it not into him he cannot deal out to them; he cannot speak a word to them till he receives it from God: ‘Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament,’ 2 Corinthians 3:5-6. He is the able minister whom God enables.

3. Observe, the meanest Christian may, by his faithful prayers, help to make the minister’s sermon for him. ‘Pray,’ saith the apostle, ‘that utterance may be given unto me;’ that I may have from God what I should deliver to others. O what a useful instrument is a praying Christian! he may not only help his own minister, but others even all the world over. Paul was now at Rome, and sends for prayers as far as to the saints at Ephesus.

Third. By ‘utterance’ he may mean a faculty of speech—a readiness and facility to deliver to others what he hath been enabled to conceive in his own mind of the will of God. Many eminent servants of God have been very sensible of, and much discouraged for, their impedite speech and hesitant delivery. Now this may proceed from a natural cause, or supernatural.

1. From a natural cause. As,

(1.) From a defect in the instruments of speech; which some think was the cause of Moses’ complaint, ‘I am not eloquent,...but I am slow of speech,’ Exodus 4:10. And this discouraged him from being sent on God’s errand. But God can compensate the hesitancy of the tongue with the divine power of the matter delivered. This Moses, who was so ‘slow of speech,’ yet was ‘mighty in words,’ Acts 7:22, able to make Pharaoh’s stout heart to tremble, though he might stammer in the delivery of it. God promised indeed to be ‘with his mouth;’ yet, it is probable, he did not cure his natural infirmity, for we find him complaining afterwards of it. Such natural imperfections, therefore, should neither discourage the minister nor prejudice the people; but rather make him more careful that the matter be weighty he delivers, and them that their attention be more close and united.

(2.) From a weak memory. He that reads in a bad print, where many letters are defaced, cannot read fast and smooth, but will oft be stopped to study what is next. Memory is an inward table or book, out of which the minister reads his sermon unseen. If the notions or meditations we have to deliver be not fairly imprinted on our memory, no wonder that the tongue is oft at a stand, except we should speak to no purpose. If the hopper be stopped, the mill cannot grind; or if the pipe that feeds the cistern be obstructed, it will be seen at the cock. When God hath assisted in the study, we need him to strengthen our memory in the pulpit.

(3.) From fear. If the heart faint, it is no wonder the tongue falters. This, it is like, was at the bottom of Jeremiah's excuse: 'Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child,' Jeremiah 1:6. That is, I want the courage and spirit of a man to wrestle with these oppositions that will certainly meet me in the work. That this was his infirmity appears by the method God takes for the cure: 'Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee,...be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee,' Jeremiah 1:7-8.

2. From a supernatural cause; where none of these defects are, but the minister stands best furnished and in greatest readiness for his work. Yet, let but God turn the cock, and there is a stop put to the whole work. Not only 'the preparations of the heart,' but 'the answer of the tongue,' both are 'of the Lord,' Proverbs 16:1. God keeps the key of the mouth as well as of the heart; not a word can get out, but sticks in the teeth while [i.e. until] God opens the doors of the lips to give it a free egress. He opened the mouth of the ass, and stopped the mouth of that wicked prophet its master. Hear him confessing as much to Balak: 'Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say anything? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak,' Numbers 22:38. Never man desired more to be speaking than he; that which should have got him his hire, the wages of unrighteousness, for he loved it dearly. But God had tongue-tied him. Nay, even holy men, when they would speak the truth, and that for God, cannot deliver themselves of what they have conceived in their inward meditations. Hence David's prayer: 'Open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.' Ezekiel he would 'make his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth;' he should not reprove them though he would, Ezekiel 3:26.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. To ministers. Do ministers depend thus on God for utterance? This speaks to you , my brethren in the Lord's work. Do nothing for which God may stop your mouths when you come into the pulpit.

1. Take heed of any sin smothering in your bosoms. Canst thou believe God will assist thee in his work who canst lend thy hand to the devil's? Mayest thou not rather fear he should hang a padlock on thy lips, and strike thee dumb, when thou goest about thy work? You remember the story of Origen, how after his great fall he was silenced in the very pulpit; for, at the reading of that, 'What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?' Psalms 50:16, the conscience of his sin would not suffer him to speak. O it is sad when the preacher meets his own sin in his subject, and pronounceth sentence against himself while he reads his text! If thou wouldst have God assist thee, be zealous and repent. When the trumpet is washed, then the Holy Spirit, thou mayest hope, will again breathe through it.

2. Beware thou comest not in the confidence of thy own preparation. God hath declared himself against this kind of pride: 'By strength shall no man prevail,' 1 Samuel 2:9. A little bread with God's blessing may make a meal for multitude, and great provision may soon shrink to nothing if God help not in the breaking of it. It is not thy sermon in thy head, or notes in thy book, will enable thee to preach except God open thy mouth. Acknowledge therefore God in all thy ways, and 'lean not to thy own understanding.' The swelling of the heart as well as of the wall goes before a fall. Did the Ephraimites take it so ill that Gideon would steal a victory without calling them to his help? How much more may it provoke God, when thou goest to the pulpit, and passest by his door in the way without calling for his assistance?

Use Second. To the people. Take heed you do not stop your ministers' mouths. This you may do,

1. By admiring their gifts and applauding their persons; especially when this is accompanied with unthankfulness to God that gives them; when you applaud the man, but do not bless God for him. Princes have an evil eye upon those subjects that are over-popular. God will not let his creatures stand in his light, nor have his honour suffer by the reputation of his instrument. The mother likes not to see the child taken with the nurse more than with herself. O how foolish are we, who cannot love, but we must dote; not honour, what we adore also! He that would keep his posey fresh and sweet, must smell and lay it down again—not hold it too long in his hand, or breathe too much upon it; this is the way soon to welter it. To overdo is the ready way to undo. Many fair mercies are thus overlaid and pressed to death by the excess of a fond affection; or when it is accompanied with detracting of others—the abilities of one are cried up to cry down the another. 'I am of Paul, and I am of Apollos.' Thus the disciples of either advanced their preacher to hold up a faction.

2. You may provoke God to withdraw his assistance by expecting the benefit from man and not from God; as if it were nothing but to take up your cloak and Bible, and you are sure to get good by such a one's ministry. This is like them in James, that say, 'We will go into such a city, and get gain;' as if it were no more to hear with profit than to go to the tap and draw wine or beer in your own cellar! It is just thou shouldst find the vessel frozen—the minister, I mean, straitened, and his abilities bound up—because thou comest to him as unto a God who is but a poor instrument. O say not to him, Give me grace, give me comfort, as Rachel asked children of her husband; but go to thy God for these in thy attendance on man.

3. You may provoke God to withdraw his assistance by rebelling against the light of truth that shines forth upon you in his ministry. God sometimes stops the minister's mouth because the people shut their hearts. Why should the cock run to have the water spilt upon the ground? Christ himself did 'not many mighty works'—'he could not,' saith Mark—in his own country, 'because of their unbelief.' Dei justitia non permittebat, ut sanctum canibus daretur, saith Brugensis upon the place—it is just God should take away the ministry, or stop the minister's mouth, when they despise his counsel, and the word becomes a reproach to them. I am sure it is a sad dump to the minister's spirit, that preacheth long to a gainsaying people, and no good omen to them. The mother's milk goes away sometimes before the child's death. God binds up the spirit of his messengers in judgment: 'I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover: for they are a rebellious house,' Ezekiel 3:26.

BRANCH THIRD.

[The end in Paul's request as a minister of Christ for the prayers of believers.] 'That I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.' The third branch in the division of the words presents us with the end why he desires their prayers for utterance to be granted him, expressed in these words—'that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel;' where there are these three observables. First. The sublime nature of the gospel—it is 'a mystery.' Second. Wherein lies the work of a gospel minister—'to make known the mystery of the gospel.' Third. The manner how he is to perform this work —'that I may open my mouth boldly.'

[What is meant by a 'mystery,' and in what respects the gospel is one.]

First Observable. The sublime nature of the gospel—it is ‘a mystery.’ The Greek word µLFJZD4T< some derive from µLXT, to teach any secret belonging to religion; others of µbT or µb.T, to shut the mouth, because those that were initiated or admitted to be present at the religious rites and mysteries of the heathens—who were called µbFJ"4 —might not reveal them to those that were •µb<J@4, or not initiated. Therefore they had an image before the temple, holding his finger upon his mouth, to put them in mind as they went in and out of keeping secret what was done within. Indeed the mysteries in their idolatrous worship were so impure and filthy that nothing but secrecy could keep them from being abhorred and detested by the more sober part of mankind; and it is not unworthy of our noting what I find observed to my hand by a learned pen—that the Spirit of God should make choice of that word in the New Testament so often to express the holy doctrine of truth and salvation contained in it, which was so vilely abused by those heathenish idolaters; surely it shows them to be over■scrupulous that judge it unlawful any way to make use of those names or things which have been abused by heathens or idolaters. (R. Sanderson on 1 Timothy 3:16.) But, to return to the word ‘mystery;’ it hath obtained in our usual speech to be applied to any secret, natural, civil, or religious, which lies out of the road of vulgar understandings. In Scripture it is generally used for religious secrets; and it is taken both in an evil sense and in a good.

[What is meant by a ‘mystery.’]

First. The word mystery is used in an evil sense. ‘The mystery of iniquity doth already work,’ 2 Thessalonians 2:7; whereby is meant the secret rising antichristian dominion, whereof some foundations were laid even in the apostle’s days. Error is but a day younger than truth. When the gospel began first to be preached by Christ and his apostles, error presently put forth her hand to take it by the heel and supplant it. The whole system of antichristianism is a mystery of policy and impiety. Mystery is written upon the whore of Babylon’s forehead, Revelation 17:2. And Causabon tells us the same word was written upon the pope’s mitre; if so, it is well he would own his name. ‘My soul, enter not thou into their secrets.’

Second. In a good sense. Sometimes for some particular branch of evangelical truth. Thus the rejection of the Jews and calling of the Gentiles is called a ‘mystery,’ Romans 11:25; the wonderful change of those that shall be upon the earth at the end of the world, 1 Corinthians 15:51; the incarnation, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, 1 Timothy 3:16; with others. Sometimes it is used for the whole body of the gospel; as to the doctrine of it, called a ‘mystery of faith,’ 1 Timothy 3:9; as to the purity of its precepts and rules for a holy life, a ‘mystery of godliness;’ as to the author, subject, and end of it, called ‘the mystery of Christ,’ Ephesians 3:4—it was revealed by him, treats of him, and leads souls to him; and lastly, in regard of the blessed reward it promiseth to all that sincerely embrace it, called ‘the mystery of the kingdom of God,’ Mark 4:11. This gospel is the glorious mystery we are now to speak of; and we will show in what respect it is a mystery, or why so called by the Spirit of God.

[Why or in what respects the gospel is a mystery.]

First. Because it is known only by divine revelation. Such a secret it is that the wit of man could never have found out. There are many secrets in nature, which, with much plodding and study, have at last been discovered, as the medicinal virtue of plants and the like; but the gospel is a secret, and contains in it such mysteries as were omni ingenio altiora—beyond the reach of all genius, as Calvin saith. What man or angel could have thought of such a way for reconciling God

and man as in the gospel is laid out? How impossible was it for them to have conjectured what purposes of love were locked up in the heart of God towards fallen man, till himself did open the cabinet of his own counsel? Or had God given them some hint of a purpose he had for man's recovery, could they ever have so much as thought of such a way as the gospel brings to light? Surely as none but God could lay the plot, so none but himself could make it known. The gospel therefore is called 'a revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,' Romans 16:25.

Second. Because the gospel when revealed, its truths exceed the grasp of human understanding. They are the eye of our reason as the sun is to the eye of our body, such a nimium excellens—exceeding excellency, as dazzles and overpowers the most piercing apprehension. They disdain to be discussed and tried by human reason. That there are three subsistences in the Godhead, and but one divine essence, we believe, because there revealed. But he that shall fly too near this light, as thinking to comprehend this mysterious truth in his narrow reason, will soon find himself lost in his bold enterprise. God and man, united in Christ's person, is undeniably demonstrable from the gospel. But, alas! the cordage of our understanding is too short to fathom this great deep. 'Without controversy,' saith the apostle, 'great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh,' 1 Timothy 3:16. It is a truth without controversy, Òµ@8@(@LµX<TH—it is confessed of all, yet such a mystery as is not fordable by our short-legged understanding. That there is no name but the name of Jesus by which we can be saved is the grand notion of the gospel; but how many mysteries are wrapped up in this one truth? Who that should have seen the babe Jesus when he lay in the manger, and afterward meanly bred under a carpenter, and at last executed for a malefactor, could have imagined, as one saith, that upon such weak hinges should move such a glorious design for man's salvation? But who dares think it unreasonable to believe that upon God's report to be true, which we cannot make out by our own understanding? Some things we apprehend by reason that cannot be known by sense—as that the sun is bigger than the earth; some things by sense, which cannot be found out by reason. That the lodestone attracts iron, and not gold, our eye beholds; but why it should, there our reason is dunced and posed. Now if in nature we question not the truth of these, though sense be at a loss in one and reason in the other, shall we in religion doubt of that to be true which drops from God's own mouth and pen, because it exceeds our weak understanding? Wouldst thou see a reason, saith Augustine, for all that God saith? look into thy own understanding, and thou wilt find a reason why thou seest not a reason.

Third. It is a mystery in regard of the paucity of those to whom it is revealed. Secrets are whispered into the ears of a few, and not exposed to all. 'Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God,' Mark 4:11. Who were those 'you,' but a few disciples who believed on his name? The greater part of the world were ever strangers to this mystery. Before Christ's time it was impaled within a little spot of ground of the Jewish nation. Since it came abroad into the Gentile world, and hath been travelling above these sixteen hundred years hither and thither, how few at this day are acquainted with it! Indeed, where its glorious light shines long, many get a literal notional knowledge of it—it were strange that men should walk long in the sun and not have their faces a little tanned with it; but the spiritual and saving knowledge of this mystery is revealed but to few, for the number of saints is not great compared with the reprobate world.

Fourth. It is a mystery in regard of the sort of men to whom it is chiefly imparted—such as are, in reason, most unlikely to dive into any great mysteries; those who are despised by the wise world, and the great states of it, as poor and base. ‘Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty,’ 1 Corinthians 1:26-27. If we have a secret to reveal, we do not choose weak and shallow heads to impart it unto; but here is a mystery which babes understand and wise men are ignorant of: ‘I thank thee, O Father,...because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.’ The people who were so scorned by the proud Pharisees, as those who knew not the law, John 7:49, to them was the gospel revealed, while these doctors of the chair were left in ignorance. It is revealed to the poor many times, and hid from kings and princes. Christ passeth often by palaces to visit the poor cottage. Herod could get nothing from Christ—who out of curiosity so long desired to see him, Luke 23:8; whereas the poor woman of Samaria with a pitcher in her hand, Christ vouchsafeth her a sermon, and opens to her the saving truths of the gospel. Pilate missed of Christ on the bench, while the poor thief finds him, and heaven with him, on the cross. Devout women are passed by and left to perish with their blind zeal, while harlots and publicans are converted by him.

Fifth. It is a mystery in regard of the kind of knowledge the saints themselves have of it.

1. Their knowledge is but in part and imperfect. The most of what they know is the least of what they do not know. The gospel is as a rich piece of arras rolled up; this God hath been unfolding ever since the first promise was made to Adam, opening it still every age wider than other; but the world shall sooner be at an end than this mystery will be fully known. Indeed, as a river—which may be breaks forth at first from the small orifice of a little spring—does widens its channel and grows broader as it approacheth nearer the sea; so the knowledge of this mystery doth spread every age more than other, and still will, as the world draws nearer and nearer to the sea of eternity, into which it must at last fall. The gospel appeared but a little spring in Adam’s time, whose whole Bible was bound up in a single promise; this increased to a rivulet enlarged itself into a river in the days of the prophets; but when Christ came in the flesh then knowledge flowed in amain. The least in the gospel state is said to be greater than the greatest before Christ. So that, in comparison of the darker times of the law, the knowledge Christians now have is great, but compared with the knowledge they shall have in heaven, it is little, and but peep of day.

2. It is mysterious and dark. Gospel truths are not known in their native glory and beauty, but in shadows. We are said indeed ‘with open face’ to ‘behold the glory of God,’ but still it is ‘as in a glass.’ Now, you know the glass presents us with the image, not with the face itself. We do not see them as indeed they are, but as our weak eyes can bear the knowledge of them. Indeed this glass of the gospel is clearer than that of the law was; we see truths through a thinner veil; baptism is clearer than circumcision, the Lord’s supper than the passover; in a word, the New Testament than the Old; yet there is nothing of heaven revealed in the gospel but it is translated into our earthly language, because we are unable while here below to understand its original. Who knows, or can conceive, what the joys of heaven are, so as to speak of them in their own idiom and propriety? But, a feast we know, what a kingdom is we understand; with riches and treasures we are well acquainted. Now, heaven is set out by these things, which in this world bear the greatest price in men’s thoughts. In heaven is a feast, yet without meat; riches, without money; a kingdom, without

robes, sceptre, and crown, because infinitely above these. Hence it is said, ‘It doth not yet appear what we shall be,’ 1 John 3:2. Our apprehensions of these things are manly compared with those under the law, but childish compared with the knowledge which glorified saints have. Therefore, as Paul saith ‘he putteth childish things away,’ when he grew up into further knowledge of the gospel; so he tells us of an imperfect knowledge, which yet he had, ‘that must be done away, when that which is perfect is come,’ 1 Corinthians 13:10-11.

Sixth. The gospel is a mystery in regard of the contrary operation it hath upon the hearts of men. The eyes of some it opens, others it blinds; and who so blind as those whose eyes are put out with light? Some when they hear the gospel are ‘pricked in their hearts;’ they can hardly stay till the preacher hath done his sermon, but cry out, ‘What shall I do to be saved?’ Others are hardened by it, and their consciences seared into a greater stupidity. At Paul’s sermon, Acts 17:32, ‘some mocked;’ others were affected so with his discourse that they desired to ‘hear it again.’ What a mysterious doctrine is this, that sets one a laughing, another a weeping!—that is the savour of life to some, and of death to others!

Seventh. The gospel is a mystery in regard of those rare and strange effects it hath upon the godly; and that both in respect of their judgments and practice. As the gospel is ‘a mystery of faith,’ so it enables them to believe strange mysteries—to believe that which they understand not, and hope for that which they do not see. It enables them to believe three to be one, and one to be three; a trinity of Persons in the Deity, and a unity of essence; a Father not older than his Son, a Son not inferior to his Father; a Holy Spirit proceeding from both, yet equal to both. It teaches them to believe that Christ was born in time, and that he was from everlasting; that he was comprehended within the virgin’s womb, and yet the heaven of heavens not able to contain him; to be the son of Mary, and yet her maker that was his mother; to be born without sin, and yet justly to have died for sin. They believe that God was just in punishing Christ though innocent, and in justifying penitent believers who are sinners; they believe themselves to be great sinners, and yet that God sees them in Christ ‘without spot or wrinkle.’

Again, as the gospel is a ‘mystery of godliness,’ it enables Christians to do as strange things as they believe—to live by another’s Spirit, to act from another’s strength, to live to another’s will, and aim at another’s glory. They live by the Spirit of Christ, act with his strength, are determined by his will, and aim at his glory. It makes them so meek and gentle that a child may lead them to anything that is good, yet so stout that fire and faggot shall not fright them into a sin. They can love their enemies, and yet, for Christ’s sake, can hate father and mother. It makes them diligent in their worldly calling, yet enables them to contemn the riches they have got by God’s blessing on their labour; they are taught by it that all things are theirs, yet they dare not take a penny, a pin, from the wicked of the world by force and rapine. It makes them so humble as to ‘prefer every one in honour’ above themselves, yet so to value their own condition that the poorest among them would not change his estate with the greatest monarch of the world. It makes them thank God for health, and for sickness also; to rejoice when exalted, and as much when made low; they can pray for life, and at the same time desire to die. Is not that doctrine a mystery which fills the Christian’s life with so many riddles!

USE OR APPLICATION.

[Why the gospel and its professors are so slighted, misunderstood, and persecuted.]

Use First. This gives us a reason why the gospel, with the great offers it makes, is so slighted and rejected by the wicked world. The cause is, the blessings of the gospel are a mystery, and offered in such a way that carnal hearts skill[2] not of them, and therefore care not for them. The things it propounds are such as they like well enough, might they have them in a way suited to their carnal apprehensions. The gospel offers riches and honours; who are not taken with these? The gospel opens a mine of unsearchable riches, but in a mystery; it shows them a way how to be 'rich in faith,' 'rich to God,' rich for another world, while poor in this. Our Saviour went about to learn the young man in the gospel the way to be rich—not by purchasing more land, but by selling what he had; but he would not follow his counsel. The gospel offers pleasures and delights—and these the sensual world like well enough—but, alas! they please not their carnal coarse palate, because they are pleasures in a mystery, pleasures in mourning for sin, and mortifying of sin, not pleasures in satisfying them; pleasures in communion with Christ at an ordinance, not with a knot of good fellows over a pot at an ale-house; pleasures to the eye and palate of faith, not of sense; to feed their souls, not pamper and fat their bellies. In a word, the gospel makes discovery of high and choice notions. Surely now those who are the more sober part of the world, bookish men, and in love with good literature, whose souls crave intellectual food, and prize a lecture more than a feast, these will be highly pleased with the truths the gospel brings to light, being such rare mysteries that they can find in no other book. Yet, alas! we see that the gospel doth as little please this sort and rank of men as any other. Had it been filled with flowers of rhetoric, chemical experiments, philosophical notions, or maxims of policy, O how greedily would they have embraced it! But it is wisdom in a mystery. 'We speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought,' 1 Corinthians 2:6. Bradwardine, a great scholar, before he was meekened by the grace of the gospel, slighted Paul's epistles, as afterward he confessed, because he did not express ingenium metaphysicum—a metaphysical head in his discourses.

Again, we here have the reason why the gospel and its professors are not only slighted, but hated and persecuted. For the gospel, it is a mystery, which the world knows not; and therefore opposed by it. Ignorance is the mother of persecution: 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!' The greatest enemies the gospel ever had were not the sensual and open profane—though these bad enough—but the superstitious and ignorantly devout, these have been they who have shown most fierceness and fury against the gospel. Paul tells of the 'devout' persons that cruelly persecuted him, Acts 13:50. None more hot against the truth than Paul himself, who was a strict Pharisee, but bloody enemy against the truth. What reason then have we to pray for the increase of gospel light! The more the gospel is known, the more kindly will it be entertained.

Again, the professors of the gospel, why are they so hated and maligned, but because they partake of the mysterious nature of the gospel, and therefore their worth is not known? They are high-born, but in a mystery; you cannot see their birth by their outward breeding—the arms they bear, revenues they have to live on, by which the world judges the greatness of persons and families. No, their outside is mean, while their inside is glorious; and the world values them by what they know and see of their external port, and not by their inward graces. They pass, as a prince in disguise of some poor man's clothes, through the world, and their entertainment is accordingly. Had Christ put on his robes of glory and majesty when he came into the world, surely he had not gone out of it with so shameful and cruel a death; the world would have trembled at his

footstool, which we see some of them did when but a beam of his deity looked forth upon them. Did saints walk on earth in those robes which they shall wear in heaven, then they would be feared and admired by those who now scorn and despise them. But, as God should not have had his design in Christ's first coming had he so appeared, so neither would he in his saints, did the world know them, as one day they shall; therefore he is pleased to let them lie hid under the mean coverings of poverty and other infirmities, that so he may exercise their suffering graces, and also accomplish his wrath upon the wicked for theirs against them. The gospel as a mystery shows us the reason why carnal men do so bungle when they meddle with matters of religion. Let them speak of gospel truths —what ignorance do they show! Even as a countryman chops logic, and speaks of the liberal arts, so they of heavenly matters. Do we not see that those who in worldly affairs will give you a wise and solid answer, in the truths of the gospel they speak like children and babes? Yea, even those that have some brain-knowledge of the Scriptures, how dry and unsavoury is their discourse of spiritual things! They are like a parable in a fool's mouth. So, when they engage in any duty of religion. Put them to pray, hear the word, or meditate upon what they have heard; you had as good give a workman's tools to him that was never of the trade. They know not how to handle them; they go ungainsomely about the work, and cut all into chips. Every trade hath its mystery, and religion above all callings, when none but those that are instructed in know how to manage.

[Several duties which the mysterious nature of the gospel imposes on believers.]

Use Second. Several duties pressed upon the saints, who are instructed in the mystery of the gospel, by way of exhortation.

1. Duty. Be thankful that ever God revealed it to thee. O what a mercy this is, that thou hast 'life and immortality brought to light,' that thy ears hear this joyful sound! Never came such joyful news to town as the gospel brings. What a poor nation was this of ours before the gospel day broke among us! Bless God thy lot is cast where this sun is up. The gospel indeed was early preached in the world. Adam had it soon after his fall; but a short gospel, a mystery, indeed, to him, wrapped all up in one promise, and that a dark one. But now that one wedge of gold is beaten out into the whole Bible—a gospel written at length, and not in figures. You hear the gospel not preached in law terms, as the Jews did under Moses' pedagogy; but gospel in gospel language. The veil is taken off which hid the beauty of gospel truths from their face. You hear it after it hath been rescued out of Antichrist's hands, by whom for many ages it was kept prisoner. You live not in those dark times when gospel truths were embased with the mean alloy of schoolmen's subtleties and superstitious vanities —when more stones were given to break the teeth, than bread to feed the souls, of people. The conduit of the gospel now runs with wine, not twice or thrice a year, on some gaudy festival day, but constantly. Every Sabbath■day you have your fill of its sweetest truths. Were it not sad, if they should be found to have been more thankful for the little drawing of gospel light which then but peeped forth, than you for its meridian light, who live to see the Sun of righteousness with his healing wings spread forth upon you? But especially bless God for any inward light and life thou hast received from this gospel. God hath done more for thee in this, than for thousands thou livest among, and those no means ones either. To this day God hath not given thy carnal neighbours eyes to see, nor hearts to perceive, that mystery which is unfolded unto thee. Are you thankful to him that hath taught your worldly trade, by which you pick a small livelihood for your body? O what praise then dost thou owe to thy God, who, by instructing thee in this

mystery, hath learned thee as art for saving thy soul! Trumpeters delight to sound where they have the best echo; God delights to give his mercy to those that will most resound his praise.

2. Duty. The gospel is a mystery, therefore rest not in thy present attainments; either in thy knowledge, as it is a mystery of faith, or thy practice, as it is a mystery of godliness.

(1.) Rest not in thy present knowledge. It is like thou knowest much to what once thou didst; but thou knowest little to what thou mayest. Some books are learned at once reading, but the gospel is a mystery that will take up more than thy lifetime to understand it. Mysteries are here sown thick; thou diggest where the springs rise faster upon thee the further thou goest. God tells not all his secrets at once—'here a little, and there a little;' 'many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased,' Daniel 12:4. The merchant's ship takes not all in her lading at one port, but sails from one to another for it; neither doth the Christian enrich himself with this heavenly treasure all at one time or in one ordinance. The true lover of learning gives not over his chase and pursuit for a little smattering knowledge he gets, but rather, having got the scent how sweet learning is, puts on with fuller cry for what he wants. The true doctor studies harder than the freshman, because, as he knows more of learning, so by that knowledge he understands his own deficiency better; for the higher he ascends the hill of learning, the more his prospect enlargeth, while the other, standing at the bottom, thinks he knows all in his little.

(2.) Rest not in thy present practice, as it is a mystery of godliness. Let not a little grace serve thy turn, when thou mayest have more; which that you may do,

(a) Compare not thyself with those that have less than thyself, but look on those that have far exceeded thee. To look on our inferiors occasions pride, 'I am not this publican,' saith the Pharisee; but look on other more eminent than ourselves will both preserve humility, and be a spur to diligence. Miltiades' victories would not suffer Themistocles, then a young man, to sleep. The progress that some have made in grace—didst thou but keep them in thine eye—would not suffer thee to be quiet, who art now lagging so far behind, till thou hast overtaken them. May be thou hast got some victory over thy passion, and art not such a bedlam in thy fury as others; but didst thou never hear how meek a man Moses was, that could bear the murmurings of the multitude, yea envy of his brother and sister, and yet his heart not take fire? Thou hast some good affections towards God, but how far short of holy David's zeal, whose heart did run out to God as soon as his eyes were open in the morning? 'When I awake I am still with thee.' Thrice a day, yea seven times a day, he would praise his God. Thou hast some patience, but hast thou learned to write after Job's copy? Thou art not without faith, but art thou like Abraham—strong in faith to follow God when thou knowest not whither he will lead thee?

(b) The grace thou hast will soon be less, if thou addest not more to it. Thou art upon a swift stream; let thy oar miss its stroke, and thou fallest backward. There is not such a thing in religion as a saving trade of godliness. Some men in their worldly trade can say at the year's end they have neither got nor lost; but thou canst not say thus at the day's end. Thou art at night better or worse than thou wert in the morning.

(c) It is the design of the gospel to give grace in great measures. Christ gives life, 'and that more abundantly,' John 10:10. Now shall the fountain be so large, and the pitcher we carry to it so little? Wherefore doth God open his hand to such a breadth in the promise, but to widen our desires and

encourage our endeavours?

(d) The more grace thou hast got, the easier it will be to add to it. A little learning with more difficulty by a young scholar, than a great deal more afterwards.

3. Duty. Bear with one another's imperfections. You see the gospel is a mystery, do not wonder therefore that any are not presently masters of their art. Christ bears with the saints' imperfections; well may the saints one with another. How raw were the disciples in their knowledge—how long did they stand at one lesson before they could learn it! 'Do you now believe?' says Christ, John 16:31. He had borne with them long, and inculcated the same thing often, before it entered their minds; yet, alas! we can hardly have a good opinion of, or hold communion with, those that are not every way of our judgment, and cannot see things so clear as ourselves. Surely we mistake the nature of the gospel, as if there were none but plain points in it. Blessed be God, as to the principles necessary to salvation, though their nature be high and mysterious, yet they are clearly and plainly asserted in the word. 'Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness,' 1 Timothy 3:16. Godliness is a mystery, but it is 'without controversy.' As to the main fundamental points and practices of it there is no dispute among the faithful; but there are some points more remote from the vital parts of religion that have knots not easily untied, which makes some difference of judgment. But it is not every excess or defect makes a monster—as six or four fingers on the hand—but an excess or defect in some principal part; neither doth every mistake make a monster in religion. Remember that the gospel is a mystery, and you will bear with one another's ignorance the better. And, when love hath once laid the dust which passion and prejudice hath blown into our eyes, we shall then stand at greater advantage for finding out truth.

Again, bear with weaknesses in the practical part of religion. Godliness, as well as the doctrine of our faith, is a mystery. All the servants in a shop cannot work alike. Some bungle at more than other—as their parts and experience are less. All saints are not of a height. Christ hath some children in his family that are led with strings, as well as others that go strongly without such help. Some act more upon pure gospel principle—love, and a spirit of adoption; others have not yet worn off their legal fears and terrors. Some are got higher up the hill of faith, and have clearer apprehensions of their spiritual state; others are nearer the bottom, who, as the sun newly risen above the horizon, are wrapped up with many clouds of perplexing fears and doubts. In a word, some are got further out of their passions, have greater mastery over their corruptions, than other of their brethren. Pity thy weak brother, and take him by the hand for his help; but despise him not, God can make even him stand, and suffer thee to fall. Christ doth not quench the smoking flax, why should we? The weak Christian is welcome to his heavenly Father, as well as the strong; why should he not be so to his brethren? But, alas! the proverb here is too true, 'Better speak to the master than the man; the father, than the child.' Those that can be so bold with God, dare not be free with their fellow-servants and brethren.

4. Duty. Is the gospel a mystery? Then Christian, long for heaven; there, and only there, shall this mystery be fully known. The great things which were spoken concerning the gospel church made many saints and prophets before Christ's time desire to see those happy times wherein such revelations should be made; how much more should we long for heaven, where this great mystery shall be fully opened, and every box of this cabinet unlocked, in which lie so many precious jewels to this day unseen by any saint on earth! Then it will be said, 'The mystery of God is finished,'

Revelation 10:7. Here we learn our knowledge of it by little and little, like one that reads a book as it comes from the press, sheet by sheet; there we shall see it altogether. Here we get a little light from this sermon, a little more from the next, and thus our stock increases by the addition of a few pence thrown in, some to■day, and more to-morrow; but there we shall have all at once. Here we learn with much pain and difficulty; there without travail and trouble. Glorified saints, though they cease not from work, yet rest from labour. Here passion blinds our minds, that we mistake error for truth and truth for error; but then these clouds shall be scattered and gone. Here the weakness of natural parts keeps many in the dark, and renders them incapable of apprehending some truths, which other of their brethren are led into; but there the strong shall not prevent the weak, the scholar shall know as much as his master, the people as their minister. Here the squabbles and contentions among the godly do leave the weaker sort at great uncertainty what to think concerning many truths; but there they shall all agree—which comforted that holy man on his death-bed, that he was going thither where Luther and Calvin were reconciled. Here we are disturbed in our inquiries after truth—one while the necessary occasions of this world divert us, another while the weakness and infirmities of our bodies hinder us; but in heaven our bodies will call for none of this tending, we shall need provide neither raiment for the back nor food for the belly.

O happy death, that will ease us of all the aches of our bodies and conflicts in our souls! Thou art the only physician to cure all the saints' distempers in both. When that blessed hour comes, then lift up your heads with joy, for it will lead you into that blissful place where you shall see Christ, not a great way off, with the eye of faith in the optic glass of an ordinance or promise, but, with a glorified eye, behold his very person, never more to lose the sight of him. Thou shalt not taste his love in a little morsel of sacramental bread and sip of wine, but lay thy mouth to the fountain, and from his bosom drink thy full draught. Thou shalt no more hear what a glorious place heaven is, as thou wert wont to have it set forth by the sorry rhetoric of a mortal man preaching to thee of that with which himself was but little acquainted; but shalt walk thyself in the streets of that glorious city, and bless thyself when thou art there, to think what poor low thoughts thou and thy minister also had thereof, when on earth thou didst meditate, and he did preach, on this subject. One moment's sight of that glory will inform thee more than all the comments and books written of it were ever able to do. And dost thou not yet cry out, How long will it be, O Lord, most holy and true, before thou bringest me thither? Is not every hour a day, day a month, month a year, yea age, till that time comes? As Bernard, upon those words, 'A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me,' John 16:16, passionately breaks forth—pie Domine, modicum illud vocas, in quo te non videam? O modicum, modicum longum—holy Lord, dost thou call that a little while in which I shall not see thee? O this little is a long little while!

[Exhortation to study the mystery of the gospel.]

Use Third. Be you provoked, who are yet strangers to this mystery, to get the knowledge of it—yea, endeavour to gain an intimate acquaintance with it. To move you thereunto, I shall make use of the two arguments: 1. Consider the Author of this mystery. 2. The subject-matter of it.

1. Argument. Consider the Author of the mystery of the gospel. That book must needs be worth the reading which hath God for the author; that mystery deserves our knowledge which is the product of his infinite wisdom and love. There is a divine glory sitting upon the face of all God's

works. It is impossible so excellent an artist should put his hand to an ignoble work. ‘O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all,’ Psalms 104:24. But there is not the same glory to be seen in all his works. Our apostle tells us ‘there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon; one star differs from another in glory.’ Now, among all the works of God that of man’s redemption may well pass for the master-piece. The world itself was set up to be a stage for the acting of this piece of providence, wherein B@8LB@\648@H F@N\" J@Ø 1,@Ø—‘the manifold wisdom of God,’ is so curiously wrought, that angels themselves pry into it, and are wrapped up into an admiration of it, Ephesians 3:10; 1 Peter 1:12. God’s works deserve our study, and those most wherein he hath drawn the clearest portraiture of himself. The gospel mystery therefore, above all other, should be searched into by us, being the only glass in which the glory of God is with open face to be seen.

2. Argument. Consider the subject-matter of the gospel—Christ, and the way of salvation through him. What poor and low ends have all worldly mysteries! one to make us rich, another to make us great and honourable in the world, but none to make us holy here or happy hereafter;—this is learned only from the knowledge of Christ, who is revealed in the gospel, and nowhere else. No doubt Solomon’s natural history, in which he treated ‘of all trees from the cedar to the hyssop, of all beasts, fowls, and creeping things,’ was a rare piece in its kind; yet one leaf of the gospel is infinitely more worth to us than all that large volume would have been;—so much more precious, by how much the knowledge of God in Christ is better than the knowledge of beasts and birds. And we have reason to think it a mercy that the book is lost and laid out of our sight, which we should have been prone to have studied more than the Bible; not that it was better, but more suitable to the mould of our carnal minds. But, to a gracious soul, enlightened with saving knowledge, no book to this of the Bible. Paul was a bred scholar; he wanted not that learning which commends men to the world, yet counts all dung and dog’s meat in comparison of ‘the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ his Lord,’ Php 3:8. Well might he call it dog’s meat; for a man may feed all his lifetime on human learning, and die, in Scripture sense, a dog at last. It was the saying of Bonaventure, that he had rather lose all his philosophy than one article of his faith. We read that those, Acts 19:1-41, were no sooner converted but they burned their books of curious arts. Neither were they losers by it; for they had got acquaintance with one book that was worth them all. Of all creatures in this visible world, light is the most glorious; of all light, the light of the sun without compare excels the rest. Were this eye of the world put out, the earth would be a grot, a grave, in which we should be buried alive. What were the Egyptians while under the plague of darkness but like so many dead men? they had friends, but could not see them; estates abroad in the fields, but could not enjoy them. Now what is the sun to the sensible world, that is Christ in the gospel to the intellectual world of souls. Without this ‘light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ,’ what can the soul do or enjoy aright? Man’s soul is of high, yea royal extraction, for God is ‘the Father of spirits;’ but this child meets his heavenly Father in the dark, and knows him not: ‘He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not,’ John 1:10. And as it is of high birth, so intended for a high end, to glorify and enjoy God its Maker. Now, for want of the knowledge of Christ it can do neither, but debaseth itself to the drudgery of sin and sensual embraces of the creature instead of God, for whom it was at first made; like the son of some great prince, who, not knowing his royal descent, casts himself away in marriage on some beggar’s daughter. O how should we prize and study this mystery therefore that brings us to the true knowledge of God, and the way how we may recover our interest in him and happiness with

him! Man's primitive happiness consisted in God's love to him and his likeness to God. The gospel discovers a way how man may be restored to both. The first it doth, as it is a mystery of faith, by revealing Christ and his atonement for our reconciliation with God; the latter, as it is a mystery of godliness, and the instrument with Christ useth in the hand of his Spirit to create man anew, and as it were the tool to re-engrave the image of God upon him with.

Question. But how may we be led into the saving knowledge of this mystery?

(1.) Think not how to obtain it by the strength of thy reason or natural parts. It is not learned as other secrets in nature or human arts, of which those that have the most piercing wit and strongest brain soonest get the mastery. None have been more mistaken, or erred more foully in their apprehensions about gospel truths, than the greatest scholars, sons of reason, and men admired for their parts and learning; the cause whereof may be partly their pride and self-confidence, which God ever was and will be an enemy to; and also because the mysteries of the gospel do not suit and jump with the principles of carnal reason and wisdom. Whence it comes to pass that the wiser part of the world, as they are counted, have commonly rejected the grand principles of evangelical faith as absurd and irrational. Tell a wise Arian that Christ is God and man in one person, and he laughs at it, as they did at Paul when he mentioned the resurrection of the body, Acts 17:32, because the key of his understanding fits not the wards of this lock. When a merit■monger hears of being justified by faith, and not by works, it will not go down with him. It seems as ridiculous to him that a man should be justified by the righteousness which another fulfills, as for a man to live by the meat another eats, and be warm with the clothes another wears. Tell him, when he hath lived never so holily, he must renounce his own work, and be beholden to another's merit; you shall as soon persuade him to sell his estate, to get his living by begging at another's door. These are 'hard sayings,' at which they take offence, and go away, or labour to pervert the simplicity of gospel revelation to their own sense. Resolve therefore to come, when thou readest the gospel, not to dispute with thy Maker, but to believe what he reveals to be his mind. Call not divine mysteries to give an account to thy shallow understanding. What is this but to try a prince at a subject's bar? When thou hast laid aside the pride of thy reason, then thou art fit to be admitted a scholar in Christ's school, and not till then.

Objection. But must we cease to be men when we become Christians?

Answer. No; we cease not to be men, but to be proud men, when we lay aside the confidence of our own understanding to acquiesce in the wisdom and truth of God. An implicit faith is absurd and irrational when a man requires it of us, who may deceive or be deceived in what he saith. But when God speaks, it is all the reason in the world we should believe what he saith to be true, though we cannot comprehend what he saith; for we know he who is infinite wisdom cannot himself be deceived, and he who is truth and faithfulness will not deceive us.

(2.) Thou must become a disciple to Christ. Men do not teach strangers that pass by their door, or that come into their shops the mystery of their trade and profession; but their servants, and such as are willing to be bound apprentices to them. Neither doth Christ promise to reveal the mysteries of the gospel to any but those that will give up their names to be his servants and disciples: 'Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables,' Mark 4:11. When once thou hast subscribed to the covenant of the gospel, thy indenture is sealed, Christ is now thy master he takes thee for one of his family and

charge, and so will look to thy breeding and education; but for those on whose hearts and affections he hath no hold, they come may be to the ordinance, but, when the sermon is done, return to their old master again. Sin is still their trade, and Satan their lord; is it like that Christ should teach them his trade? The mystery of iniquity and of godliness are contrary; the one cannot be learned till the other be unlearned.

(3.) If thou wouldst learn this mystery to any purpose, content not thyself with a brain-notional knowledge of it. The gospel hath respect both to the head and heart—understanding and will. To the understanding it is a mystery of faith; to the heart and life it is a mystery of godliness. Now these two must not be severed: 'Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience,' 1 Timothy 3:9. Here is both the manna, and a golden pot to keep it in—truth laid up in a pure conscience. Knowledge may make thee a scholar, but not a saint; orthodox, but not gracious. What if thou wert able to write a commentary on all the Bible, and from the Scripture couldst confute all the errors and heresies which were at any time broached and vented against the truth; what would this avail thee, when thy own lusts confute, yea confound, thyself? 'If I understand all mysteries,...and have not charity, I am nothing,' 1 Corinthians 13:2. He that increaseth knowledge, and doth not get grace with his knowledge, increaseth sorrow to himself, yea, eternal sorrow. It would be an ease to gospel sinners in hell if they could rase the remembrance of the gospel out of their memories, and forget that they ever knew such truths. In thy knowledge therefore of gospel mysteries, labour for these two things especially:

(a) To see thy propriety in them. Herein lies the pith and marrow of gospel knowledge. When thou findest what Christ hath done and suffered for poor sinners, rest not till thou canst say with Paul 'who loved me, and gave himself for me,' Galatians 2:20. When thou readest any precious promise, thou shouldst ask thy own soul, as the eunuch did Philip concerning that place of Isaiah, 'Is it spoken to me, or of some other?' Am I the pardoned person? Am I one in Christ Jesus, to whom there is no condemnation? How impatient were those two prisoners till Joseph had opened their dream, that they might know what should befall them! The Scripture will resolve you whether your head shall be lift up to the gibbet in hell, or to the king's court in heaven. Now in reading or hearing it preached, this is it thou shouldst listen after and inquire to know—where it lays thee out thy portion, whether in the promise or in the threatening. There is a sweet feast the gospel speaks of, but am I one of Christ's guests that shall sit at it? There are mansions prepared in heaven, but can I find one taken up for me there?

(b) Labour to find the power and efficacy of gospel truths upon thee. When our first parents had eaten that unhappy fruit which gave them and all mankind in them their bane, it is said then 'they knew that they were naked;' doubtless they knew it before their fall, but now they knew it with shame; they knew it, and sought for clothes to cover them, of which they found no want before. I only allude to the place. Many know what sin is, but it is not a soul-feeling knowledge: they know they are naked, but are not ashamed for their nakedness; they see no need of Christ's righteousness to cover it, and of his grace to cure it. Many know Christ died, and for what he died; but Christ's death is a dead truth to them, it doth not procure the death of their lusts that were the death of him. They know he is risen, but they lie still themselves rotting in the grave of their corruptions. They know Christ is ascended to heaven, but this draws not their souls after him. A philosopher, being asked what he had got by philosophy, answered, 'It hath learned me to contemn what others adore, and to bear what others cannot endure.' If one should ask, What have

you got by knowing the mystery of the gospel? Truly you can give no account worthy of your acquaintance with it, except you can say, I have learned to believe what flesh and blood could never believe have taught me, and to do what I never could, till I had acquaintance with its heavenly truths. This is to know ‘the truth as it is in Jesus,’ Ephesians 4:21. Had a sick man drunk some potion—which if it works will save his life, if not, will certainly be his death—O how troubled would he be while [until] he sees some operation it hath upon him! what means would he not use to set it awork! If gospel truths work not effectually on thee for thy renovation and sanctification, thou art a lost man; they will undoubtedly be ‘a savour of death’ to thee. O how can you then rest till you find them transforming your hearts and assimilating your lives to their heavenly nature! Thus Paul endeavoured to know the power of Christ’s resurrection quickening him to a holy life here, without which he could not attain to a joyful resurrection hereafter, Php 3:10-11. The gospel is a glass, but not like that in which we see our bodily face. This only shows what our feature is, and leaves it as it was; but that changeth the very complexion of the soul ‘from glory to glory,’ 2 Corinthians 3:18.

[The minister’s duty to make known the gospel.]

Second Observable. Wherein lies the work of a gospel minister—‘to make known the mystery of the gospel.’ You have had the sublime nature of the gospel set forth: it is a mystery. Here the minister’s work is laid out; he is with all possible clearness and perspicuity to open this mystery and expose it to the view of the people. Mark, ‘the gospel’ is his subject, and ‘to make it known’ is his duty. So runs the minister’s commission for his office, ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,’ Mark 16:15. We hear people sometimes saying, The preacher is beside his text; but he is never beside his errand so long as it is the gospel he makes known. Whatever is his text, this is to be his design. His commission is to make known the gospel; to deliver that therefore which is not reductive to this is beside his instructions. Nothing but the preaching of the gospel can reach the end for which the gospel ministry was appointed, and that is the salvation of souls, ‘After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe,’ 1 Corinthians 1:21. The great book of the creation had lain long enough open before the world’s eyes, yet could they never come to the saving knowledge of God, by all that divine wisdom which is written with the finger of God in every page thereof. Therefore it pleased God to send his servants, that by preaching the gospel, poor souls might believe on Christ, and believing might be saved. No doctrine but the gospel can save a soul; nor the gospel itself, except it be made known.

[The gospel alone can save a soul, and this only when known.]

First. No doctrine but the gospel can save a soul. Galen may learn you to save your health if you will follow his rules. Littleton and other law-books will teach you how to save your estates. Plato and other philosophers will learn you how to save your credits among men, by an outward just inoffensive life. Their doctrine will be a means to save you from many nasty and gross sins, by which you may be applauded by your neighbours on earth, and perhaps less tormented in hell, where Fabricius finds a cooler place than Cataline. But it is the gospel alone whereby you can be taught how to save your souls from hell and bring them to heaven. But what do I speak of these? It is not God’s own law—the moral, I mean—that is now able to save you. God would never have been at such a vast expense—in the bloodshed of his Son—to erect another law, viz. the law of

faith, if that would have served for this purpose; Galatians 2:21, ‘for if righteousness come’—yea, or could come—‘by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.’

Question. Why then do ministers preach the law?

Answer. They preach it as they should, they preach it in subserviency to the gospel, not in opposition. Qui scit benè distinguere inter legem et evangelium, Deo gratias agat, et sciat se esse theologum—he that knows how to distinguish well between the law and the gospel, let him bless God, and know that he then deserves the name of a divine. We must preach it as a rule, not as a covenant, of life. Holiness, as to the matter and substance of it, is the same that ever it was. The gospel destroys not the law in this sense, but adds a strong enforcement to all its commands.

Again, we may and must preach the law as the necessary means to drive souls out of themselves to Christ in the gospel. The gospel is the net with which we should catch souls and draw them out of their sinning sinking state. But how shall we ever get them to come into it? Truly never. Except we first beat the river with the law’s clubs—threatenings, I mean—sinners lie in their lusts, as fish in the mud, out of which there is no getting them but by laying hard upon their consciences with the threatenings of the law. ‘Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound,’ Romans 5:20; that is, in the conscience by conviction, not in life by commission and practice. The law shows both what is sin, and also what sin is. I mean it tells when we commit a sin, and what a hateful and dangerous thing we do in committing of it—how we alarm God, and bring him with all his strength into the field against us. Now this is necessary to prepare a way for the sinner’s entertaining the gospel. The needle must enter before the thread with which the cloth is sewed. The sharp point of the law must prick the conscience before the creature can by the promises of the gospel be drawn to Christ. The field is not fit for the seed to be cast into it till the plough hath broken it up. Nor is the soul prepared to receive the mercy of the gospel till broken with the terrors of the law.

Second. The gospel itself saves not, except it be made known. ‘If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost,’ 2 Corinthians 4:3. Where God sends no light, he intends no love. In bodily sickness a physician may make a cure, though his patient knows not what the medicine is that he useth. But the soul must know its remedy before he can have any healing benefit from it. John is sent ‘to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,’ Luke 1:77. No knowledge, no remission. Christ must be lift up on the pole of the gospel, as well as on the tree of the cross, that by an eye of faith we may look on him, and so be healed, John 3:14[3]. ‘Look unto me, and be ye saved,’ Isaiah 45:22. A man that sees may lead another that is bodily blind to the place he would go. But he that would go to heaven must have an eye in his own head to see his way, or else he will never come there. ‘The just shall live by his faith,’ Habakkuk 2:4, not by another’s. A proxy faith is bootless. Now saving faith is a grace that sees her object; it is ‘the evidence of things not seen,’ Hebrews 11:1; that is, which are not seen by sense. ‘I know,’ saith Paul, ‘whom I have believed,’ 2 Timothy 1:12. Therefore faith is oft set out by knowledge: ‘And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent,’ John 17:3. Now, how can they know Christ and life eternal, till the gospel be made known, which bringeth him and life by him to light? 2 Timothy 1:10. And by whom shall the gospel be made known if not by the ministers of it? Thus far the apostle drives it: ‘How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?’ Romans 10:14. So that this great work lies at

the minister's door. He is to 'make known the mystery of the gospel.'

Objection. But what need now of preaching? this was the work of those that were to plant a church. Now the church is planted and the gospel made known, this labour may be spared.

Answer. The ministry of the gospel was not intended only to plant a church, but to carry on its growth also. What Paul plants, Apollos comes after and waters with his ministry, 1 Corinthians 3:6. When the foundation is laid, must not the house be built? And this Christ gave ministers to his church for, 'For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,' Ephesians 4:12. The scaffold is not taken down till the building be finished, but rather to raised higher and higher as the fabric goes up. Thus Paul went on in his ministry from lower points to higher, from foundation to superstructory truths, Hebrews 6:1. A famous church was planted at Thessalonica, but there was something 'lacking in their faith,' which Paul longed to come and carry on to further perfection 1 Thessalonians 3:10. Surely they that think there is so little need of preaching, forget that the gospel is a mystery—such a mystery as can never be fully taught by the minister or learned by the people; neither do they consider how many engineers Satan hath at work continually to undermine the gospel, both as it is a mystery of faith and godliness also. Hath not he his seedsmen that are always scattering corrupt doctrine? Surely then the faithful minister had need obviate their designs by making known the truth, that his people may not want an antidote to fortify them against their poison. Are their not corruptions in the bosoms of the best, and daily temptations from Satan and the world to draw these forth, whereby they are always in danger, and oft sadly foiled? In a word, is not grace planted in a cold soil, that needs cherishing from a gospel ministry? Do we not see, that what is got in one Sabbath by the preaching of the word, is, if not lost, yet much impaired, by the next? Truly our hearts are like lean ground, that needs ever and anon a shower or else the corn on it withers and changeth its hue. O what barren heaths would the most flourishing churches soon prove if these clouds did not drop upon them! The Christians to whom Peter wrote were of a high form, no novices, but well grounded and rooted in the faith; yet this did not spare the apostle his further pains: 'I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth,' 2 Peter 1:12.

USE OR APPLICATION.

[Reproof and encouragement to ministers.] Use First. To the ministers. To reprove some; for encouragement to others. It reproves,

1. The vainglorious preachers; that, instead of 'making known the mystery of the gospel,' makes it his errand into the pulpit to make himself known; who blows up his sermon, as butchers do their flesh they sell, with a windy pomp of words, and frames their discourse rather to tickle their ears, than to profit their souls; to send them home applauding the preacher for his wit and parts, rather than admiring the excellencies of Christ and riches of his grace. Thus many, alas! who should be factors for Christ, play the merchants for their own credit. They are sent to woo souls for Christ, and they speak one word for him and two for themselves. This is a great wickedness, which blessed Paul solemnly clears himself of, 'Nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness: nor of men sought we glory, 1 Thessalonians 2:5-6. O how seldom are any converted by such sermons! These gloriæ animalia—vainglorious preachers, they may be, like Rachel, fair, but their ministry is like to be barren.

2. Abstruse preachers; who do not make the mysteries of the gospel known, but make truths plain in themselves mysterious by their dark perplexed discourses upon them. This was the unhappiness of the schoolmen, that ruffled and ensnarled the plainest truths of the gospel with their harsh terms and nice questions, which else might have been wound off by an ordinary understanding. What is said of some commentators, 'The places on which they treat were plain till they expounded them,' may be said of some preachers, their text was clear till their obscure discourse upon it darkened it. What greater wrong can a preacher do his hearers than this? The preacher is to open scriptures; but these turn the key the wrong way, and lock the up from their knowledge. They are to hold up the gospel glass before their people, whereby they may see to dress their souls, like a bride, against their husband's coming; but by that time that they have breathed on their text, it is so obscured that they cannot see their face in it. That water is not the deepest that is thickest and muddy; nor the matter always the most profound when the preacher's expression is dark and obscure. We count it a blemish in speech, when a man's pronunciation is not distinct. I know not then how it should come to be thought a perfection to be obscure in the delivery of our conceptions. The deeper and fuller the sculpture in the seal is, the clearer the impression will be on the wax. The more fully any man understands a thing, the more able he will be to deliver it plainly to others. As a clipped stammering speech comes from an impediment in the instruments of speech, so a dark and obscure delivery of our thoughts bewrays a defect in our apprehensions; except it should come from an affectation of soaring high in our expressions above the reach of vulgar understandings—and this is worst of all.

3. The mere moral preacher; the stream of whose preaching runs not in an evangelical channel. Moral duties he presseth, and sins against the moral law he exclaims against. Neither dare I blame him for that. The Christian's creed doth not vacate the ten commandments. One of the first sermons our Saviour preached was most of it spent in pressing moral duties Matthew 5:1-48. And never more need to drive this nail to the head than in our days, in which Christianity hath been so wounded in its reputation by the moral dishonesty of many of its professors. But I level my reproof against them for this, that they do not preach the law evangelically, and make that the Mal. design of their ministry for which they received their commission, and that is, 'to make known the mystery of the gospel'—'to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ,' Ephesians 3:8-9. Did it make the father undervalue Cicero's works—which otherwise he admired for their eloquence—only because his leaves were not perfumed with the sweet name of Jesus Christ? Surely then it is a foul blot upon their sermons and labours, who reveal little of Christ and the mystery of the gospel through the whole course of their ministry. The woe is pronounced not only against the non-preaching minister, but the not-gospel-preaching minister also: 'Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel,' 1 Corinthians 9:16. An ethic lecture will not make thy people 'wise unto salvation.' It were well if thou couldst preach thy drunken neighbour sober and the riotous temperate. But this is no more than Plato did for his Polemo. This may make them men that were before beasts; but thou must get them to be saints, regenerate ones; preach them out of themselves, as well as out of their flagitious practices; from the confidence of their righteousness, as well as from the love of their sins; or else thou leavest them short of heaven. Well then, smoke, yea fire, them out of their moral wickednesses, by the threatenings of the law; but rest not till thou hast acquainted them with Christ, and the way of salvation by him. In a word, preach moral duties as much as thou wilt, but in an evangelical strain.

Convince them they cannot do these without grace from Christ, for want of which the heathens' virtues were but splendida peccata—gilded vices. Per fidem venitur ad opera, non per opera venitur ad fidem—we must come to good works by faith, and not to faith by good works. The tree must be good before the fruit it bears can be so. 'Without me ye can do nothing.' And then convince them, when they are most exact in moral duties, that this must not be their righteousness before God; the robe which they must cover their souls with—if they would not be found naked in his sight—must not be the homespun garment of their own inherent righteousness wrought in them, but of Christ's righteousness which he wrought for them.

It affords a word of sweet encouragement to the faithful ministers of Christ. Haply you have been long at work for Christ, and see little fruit of your labours; your strength is even spent, and candle almost at the socket of old age; but your people are still carnal and obstinate, no sun will tan them, no arguments move them, filthy they are, and so will continue; to hell they will go, no gate can stop them; thou hast done thy utmost to reclaim them, but all in vain. This is sad indeed—to them, I mean—thus to go to hell by broad daylight, while the gospel shows the whither every step of their sinful course leads them. But thou hast cause of much inward peace and comfort, that thou hast done what God expects at thy hands. Remember thy work is, 'To make known the mystery of the gospel,' and upon their peril be it if they embrace it not. God never laid it upon thee to convert those he sends thee to. No; to publish the gospel is thy duty, to receive it is theirs. Abraham promiseth to discharge his servant of his oath, if the woman which he was to woo for his son would not follow him; and so will God clear thee of their blood, and lay it at their own door. 'If thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness,...he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul,' Ezekiel 3:19. God judgeth not of his servants' work by the success of their labour, but by their faithfulness to deliver his message. 'Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord,' Isaiah 49:5.

[The duty of the people to make known the gospel.]

Use Second. To the people. As it is the minister's task to make known the mystery of the gospel in his pulpit, so your duty to do the same in your lives. The Christian's life should put his minister's sermon in print; he should preach that mystery every day to the eyes of his neighbours, which the minister preacheth once or twice a week to their ears. As a true-made dial agrees with the sun in its motion, and as a well■drawn picture resembles the face from which it was taken, so should thy conversation resemble that gospel which thou professest. Let none have cause to say, what once did of some loose Christians, aut hoc non est evangelium, aut hi non sunt evangelici —either this is not the gospel, or these are not its subjects. What hast thou to do with any sordid and impure practices, who pretendest to be instructed in this high and holy mystery? Thy Christian name ill agrees with a heathen life. If thou sufferest any that is not of thy profession to outstrip thee, yea but to keep pace with thee, in any action that is virtuous and truly honourable, thou shamest thyself and the gospel also. What a shame were it to find one in some trivial country school that should be able to pose a graduate in the university! Thou art trained up in such high and heavenly learning as no other religion in the world can show, and therefore your lives are to bear proportion to your teaching. It was a sharp reproof to the Corinthian saints, when the apostle said, 6"Jz –<2DTB@< B,D4B"J,ÃJ,—'ye walk as men,' 1 Corinthians 3:3; that is, men in a natural state. And he that walks thus like men, will not walk much unlike the very beasts; for man is become brutish in his understanding, and it is worse to live like a beast than to be a beast.

Surely, Christians, if you have not your name for nought, you partake of a nature higher than human. Your feet should stand where other men's heads are; you should live as far above the carnal world as grace is above nature, as heaven is above earth. Christ would never have stooped beneath angels, but to raise your hearts and lives above men. He would never have humbled himself to take the human nature, but on a design to make us partakers of the divine; nor would he have walked on earth, but to make a way to elevate our hearts to heaven. Say not, therefore, flesh and blood cannot bear such an injury or for bear such a sensual pleasure. Either thou art more than a man, or less than a Christian. Flesh and blood never revealed the gospel to thee, flesh and blood never received Christ; in a word, flesh and blood shall never enter into the kingdom of God. If thou beest a Christian, thou art baptized into the spirit of the gospel; thou hast a heaven-born nature, and that will enable thee to do more than flesh and blood can do. Hast thou no desire to see others converted by the gospel? Wouldst thou steal to heaven alone, and carry none of thy neighbours with thee? Now, how shalt thou win them into a good opinion of the gospel, but by such an amiable life as may commend it unto their consciences? It was a charge long ago laid upon Christianity, that it was better known 'in leaves of books than in the lives of Christians.' From hence it is, that many are hardened in their wickedness and prejudice against the gospel. He is an unwise fisherman that scareth away the fish which he desires to get within his net. O offend not those, by scandals in thy life, whom thou wouldst have converted by the preaching of the gospel. There is now■a■days, saith one, much talk, as if the time for the Jews' conversion were at hand; but, saith he, the loose lives of Christians do so disparage this heavenly mystery, that the time seems further off. Indeed, the purity of Christians' lives is the best attractive to win others to the love of religion. Had Christ's doves more sweet spices of humility, charity, patience, and other heavenly graces, in their wings, as they fly about the world, they would soon bring more company home with them to the church's lockers. This is the gold that should overlay the temple of Christ's church, and would make others in love with its beauty. This was one happy means for the incredible increase of converts in the primitive times. Then the mystery of the gospel was made known, not only by the apostles' powerful preaching, but by Christians' holy living. See how they walked, Acts 2:46; and what was the blessed fruit of it 'They had favour with all the people, and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved,' Acts 2:47. It would tempt any almost but a devil—who loves to live in the fire of contention, and is desperately hardened against all goodness—to have entered their names into such a heavenly society; but when this gold grew dim, then the gospel began to lose its credit in the world, and consequently its takings. Converts came in slower when those that professed the gospel began to cool in their zeal and slacken in the strictness of their lives.

[The minister is to declare the gospel with boldness.]

Third Observable. The manner how the gospel minister is to perform his work—'that I may open my mouth boldly.' We must inquire:—First. What this boldness is the apostle desires prayers for. Second. Wherein the minister is to express the boldness in preaching the gospel. Third. What kind of boldness it is that he must show. Fourth. Some helps to procure boldness.

First. What this boldness is the apostle desires prayers for. The words are ¦< B"ÖÕ0F\', and import these two things:

1. To speak all that he hath in command from God to deliver. This lies full in the etymon of the word. Thus Paul kept nothing back of God's counsel, Acts 20:27. He 'concealed not the words of the holy One,' as Job's phrase is.

2. To speak with liberty and freedom of spirit—without fear or bondage to any, be they many or mighty. Now this is seen, (1.)By speaking openly, and not in corners; the trick of heretics and false teachers, who 'privily bring in their damnable heresies.' It is said Christ 'spake them openly' —¦< B"ÖÕ0F\', Mark 8:32. (2.) By speaking plainly. It shows some fear in the heart, when our words are dark and shady—that the preachers' judgment or opinion cannot easily be spelled from his words, he lays the so close and ambiguous. The minister is to speak truth freely and plainly. This was the apostle's boldness, 'Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech,' B@88± B"ÖÕ0F\' PDfµ,2"—'we use great boldness;' so your margin 2 Corinthians 3:12.

Second. Wherein the minister is to show this boldness in preaching the gospel.

1. In asserting the truths of the gospel. He is not to smother truth for the face or fear of any. Ministers are called witnesses. A witness is to speak what he knows, though it be in open court before the greatest of men. Paul had a free tongue to speak the truth, even in prison, though he was in bonds, yet he tells us 'the word of God is not bound,' 2 Timothy 2:9. Some truths will go down easily; to preach these requires no boldness. The worst in the congregation will give the preacher thanks for his pains upon some subject; but there are displeasing truths, truths that cross the opinion, may be, of some in the assembly; to preach these requires a free and bold spirit. When Christ was to preach before the Pharisees, he was not afraid to preach against their errors. Had some wary preacher been to have stood in his place, he would have pitched upon such a subject as should not have offended their tender ears. There are truths that expose the preacher to scorn and derision, yet not to be concealed. Paul preached the resurrection, though some in the assembly mocked him for his pains. There are truths that sometimes may expose the minister to danger—truths that carry the cross at their back. Such was that truth that Isaiah delivered concerning the rejection of the Jews. 'But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not,' Romans 10:20. This was like to enrage his countrymen, and bring their fists about his ears. We read of a 'word of patience' which we are to keep, Revelation 3:10. Such a word as the preacher had need have good store of patience that delivers it, and Christians that profess it, because it may bring them into trouble, and draw the persecutor's sword against them. This is not always the same. The word of patience in the apostle's time was truths levelled against Judaism and heathenism; under the Arian emperors, it was the deity of Christ; in Luther's time the doctrine of justification, and others asserted by him against the Romish church.

2. Boldness in reproving sin, and denouncing judgment against impenitent sinners. They are commanded 'to lift up their voice like a trumpet, and tell Jerusalem her sins.' 'Preach the word,' saith Paul; 'be instant in season, and out of season; reprove, rebuke with all long-suffering.' He must reprove, and continue therein while they continue to sin. The dog ceaseth not to bark so long as the thief is in the yard. A minister without this boldness is like a smooth file, a knife without an edge, a sentinel that is afraid to let off his gun when he should alarm the city upon a danger approaching. Nothing more unworthy to see a people bold to sin and the minister afraid to reprove. It is said of Tacitus that he took the same liberty to write the emperor's lives that they took in leading them. So should the minister in reproving sin, be they who they will. Not the beggar's sin,

and spare the gentleman's; not the profane, and skip over the professor's sin. It was all one to Christ; whoever sinned should hear of it. The scribes and Pharisees, them he paid to purpose; neither connives he at his own disciples, but rebukes them sharply. 'Get thee behind me, Satan,' saith he to Peter; 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?' to his own mother for her unseasonable importunity.

Third. What kind of boldness must the minister's be.

1. A convincing boldness. 'How forcible are right words?' saith Job; and how feeble are empty words, though shot with a thundering voice? Great words in reproving an error or sin, but weak arguments, produce laughter oftener than tears. Festus thought it 'unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him,' Acts 25:27. Much more unreasonable is it in the pulpit to condemn an error and not prove it so; a practice and not convince of the evil of it. The apostle saith of some, 'Their mouths must be stopped,' Titus 1:11. They are convincing arguments that must stop the mouth. Empty reproofs will soon open the mouths of those that are reproved, wider, than shut them. The Spirit of God reproves by convincing, 'And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin,' ¦8X(>,4, John 16:8, he will convince; and so should the minister. This is to preach in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit.

2. A wise boldness. The minister is to reprove the sins of all, but to personate none. Paul, being to preach before a lascivious and unrighteous prince, touched him to the quick, but did not name him in his sermon. Felix's conscience would save Paul that labour; he 'trembled,' though Paul did not say he meant him.

3. A meek boldness. 'The words of wise men are heard in quiet,' Ecclesiastes 9:17. Let the reproof be as sharp as thou wilt, but thy spirit must be meek. Passion raiseth the blood of him that is reproved, but compassion turns his bowels. The oil in which the nail is dipped makes it drive the easier, which otherwise have riven the board. We must not denounce wrath in wrath, lest sinners think we wish their misery; but rather with such tenderness, that they may see it is no pleasing work to us to rake in their wounds, but do it, that we might not by a cruel silence and foolish pity be accessory to their ruin, which we cordially desire to prevent. Jeremiah sounds the alarm of judgment, and tells them of a dismal calamity approaching; yet at the same time appeals to God, and clears himself of all cruelty towards them: 'I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee: neither have I desired the woeful day; thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was right before thee,' Jeremiah 17:16. As if he had said, I have delivered my message in denouncing judgment (for I durst do no other), but it was with a merciful heart; I threatened ruin, but wished for peace. Thus Daniel, he dealt plainly and roundly with the king, but ushers in his hard message with an affectionate expression of his love and loyalty to him: 'My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies,' Daniel 4:19.

4. A humble boldness; such a boldness as is raised from a confidence in God, not from ourselves, or our own parts and ability, courage or stoutness. Paul is bold, and yet can tremble and be in fear; bold, in confidence of his God: 'We were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention,' 1 Thessalonians 2:2; but full of fear in the sense of his own weakness: 'I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling,' 1 Corinthians 2:3.

5. A zealous boldness. Our reproofs of sin must come from a warm heart. Paul's spirit was stirred within him when he saw the city given to idolatry. Jeremiah tells us 'the word of God was as fire in his bones;' it broke out of his mouth as the flame out of a furnace. The word is a hammer, but it breaks not the flinty heart when lightly laid on. King James said of a minister in his time, he preached as if death was at his back. Ministers should set forth judgment as if it were at the sinner's back, ready to take hold of him. Cold reproofs or threatenings, they are like the rumblings of thunder afar off, which affright not as a clap over our head doth. I told you the minister's boldness must be meek and merciful, but not to prejudice zeal. The physician may sweeten his pill to make his patient to swallow it better; but not to such a degree as will weaken the force of its operation.

Fourth. We promised to propound some helps to procure this boldness.

1. A holy fear of God. We fear man so much because we fear God so little. One fear cures another as one fire draws out another. When your finger is burned you hold it to the fire; when man's terror scares you, turn your thoughts to meditate on the wrath of God. This is the plaster God lays to Jeremiah's wrists to cure his anguish distemper of man's fear. 'Be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them,' Jeremiah 1:17. If we must be broken in pieces—so is the original—better man do it than God. What man breaks in pieces God can make whole again. 'He that loseth his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it,' Mark 8:35. But if God break us in pieces, it is beyond the skill of man to gather the sherds, and remake what God hath marred.

2. Castle thyself within the power and promise of God for thy assistance and protection. He that is a coward in the open field grows valiant and fearless when got within strong walls and bulwarks. Jeremiah was even laying down is arms, and fleeing from the face of those dangers which his ministry to a rebellious and enraged people exposed him. Hear what course he had in his thoughts to take, because the word of the Lord was made a reproach to him, and a derision daily: 'Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name,' Jeremiah 20:9. Now what kept him from this cowardly flight? 'But the Lord is with me as a mighty terrible one,' Jeremiah 20:11. Now he takes heart, and goes on with his work undauntedly. Our eye, alas! is on our danger, but not on the invisible walls and bulwarks which God hath promised to set about us. The prophet's servant, that saw the enemy's army approaching, was in a panic fright; but the prophet, that saw the heavenly host for his lifeguard about him, cared not a rush for them all. If God be not able to protect thee, why dost thou go on his errand at all? If thou believest he is, why art thou afraid to deliver it when he is able to deliver thee?

3. Keep a clear conscience. He cannot be a bold reprover that is not a conscientious liver. Such a one must speak softly for fear of waking his own guilty conscience. He is like one that shoots in a rusty foul piece, his reproofs recoil upon himself. Unholiness in the preacher's life either will stop his mouth from reproving, or the people's ears from receiving what he saith. O how harsh a sound does such a cracked bell make in the ears of its auditors! Every one desires, if he must be smitten, that it may be by the hand of 'the righteous,' Psalms 141:5. Good counsel from a wicked man is spoiled by his stinking breath that delivers it. Our Saviour was fain to bid them hear the Pharisees, because their persons were a scandal to their doctrine, Matthew 23:2-3. Even those that are good are too prone to turn their back off the ordinance for the scandal of him that officiates. This is their

weakness and sin; but woe be to them at whose wickedness they stumble upon this temptation. It shows the man hath a very good stomach, that can eat his dinner out of a slovenly cook's hands; and a very sound judgment and quick appetite to the word, that can fall to and make a hearty meal of it without any squeamish scrupulosity or prejudice from the miscarriages of the preacher.

4. Consider that which thou most fearest is best prevented by thy freedom and holy boldness in thy ministry. Is it danger to thy life thou fearest? No such way to secure it as by being faithful to him that hath the sole dispose of it. In whose hands thinkest thou are thy times? Surely in God's. Then it is thy best policy to keep him thy friend; for, 'when thy ways please him, he can make thy enemies to be at peace with thee.' Man-pleasing is both endless and needless. If thou wouldst, thou couldst not please all; and if thou couldst, there is no need, so thou pleasest one that can turn all their hearts or bind their hands. They speed best that dare be faithful. Jonah was afraid of his work. O he durst not go to such a great city with so sad a message! To tell them they should be destroyed was to set them awork to destroy him that brought the news. But how near was he losing his life by running away to save it? Jeremiah seemed the only man like to lose his life by his bold preaching, yet had fairer quarter at last than the smooth preachers of the times. However, it is better to die honourably than live shamefully. Is it thy name thou art tender of? If thou beest free and bold, the word thou deliverest will be a reproach and daily derision to thee, as once to Jeremiah. Thou mayest, indeed, be mocked by some, but thou wilt be reverenced by more; yea, even they that wag their heads at thee carry that in their conscience which will make them fear thee. They are the flattering preachers—who are 'partial in the law'—that become 'base' among the people, Malachi 2:9.

5. Consider, if thou beest not now bold for Christ in thy ministry, thou canst not be bold before Christ at his judgment-bar. He that is afraid to speak for Christ will certainly be ashamed to look on his face then. 'We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,' &c., 2 Corinthians 5:10. Now what use doth Paul make of this solemn meditation? 'Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men,' 2 Corinthians 5:11. It is no wisdom to provoke the judge by flattering the prisoner. A serious thought of that day, as we are going to preach, would make us shut all base fear out of the pulpit. It is a very small thing to be judged by man now for our boldness, but dismal to be condemned by Christ for our cowardice. This is man's judgment-day, as Paul calls it, 1 Corinthians 4:3. Every one dares tax the preacher, and pass his sentence upon him, if he please not his itching ear; but Christ will have his judgment-day also, to judge them that now take upon them to judge others, and his sentence will easily reverse theirs. Yea, even those that now condemn thy freedom thy freedom to reprove would be the first to accuse thee for thy sinful silence. The wicked servant, who likes the remissness of his master's government—whereby he may play his ungodly pranks without control—cries out of him at the gallows, and is oft heard there to lay both his sin, and sad catastrophe of his life to which it brings him, at his master's door; saying, 'If he had reproved me, the magistrate had not condemned me; if he had done his duty, the hangman had not now been to do his office.' Thus may some at the last day accuse their cowardly ministers, and say, 'If they had told them their danger, they had not run into it; if they had been bold to reprove their sin, they had not been so impudent to live in the practice of it, which now hath brought them to everlasting shame and misery.'

6. Consider how bold Christ was in his ministry. His very enemies were forced to give him this testimony, 'We know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of

any, but teachest the way of God truly,' Luke 20:21. He spared not the proudest of them, but to their head reproved them, and denounced the judgment of God against them. When in the midst of his enemies, he was not daunted with their high looks or furious threats, but owned that very truth which they made his capital crime, Matthew 27:11; John 18:37. Hence Paul saith of him that 'before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession,' 1 Timothy 6:13; and useth this as the most powerful argument to conjure Timothy to be faithful in his ministry. What greater incentive to valour can the soldier have, than to see his general before him stand with undaunted courage where the bullets fly thickest? Such valiant captains do not use to breed white-livered soldiers. It is impossible we should be dastardly if instructed by him and acted with his spirit. When the high-priest and elders 'saw the boldness of Peter and John'—who were convented before them—they soon knew where they had got this heroic resolved spirit; for it is said, 'they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus,' Acts 4:13.

7. Pray and beg prayers, for this holy boldness. Thus did the apostles come by it. Their natural boldness was not the product of any natural greatness of spirit they had above others. You see what stout soldiers they were in themselves by their poor-spirited behaviour at Christ's attachment, when they all ran away in a fright, and left him to shift for himself. No; this boldness was the child of prayer; it was not bred in them, but granted from heaven unto them at their humble suit. See them praying hard for it: 'Now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,' Acts 4:29. Mark, they do not pray against suffering, but for 'boldness' to preach, whatever it may cost them. They desire not to be excused the battle, but to be armed with courage to stand in it. They had rather be lift above the fear of suffering, than have an immunity from suffering. Let God but give them boldness to do their duty, and stand to their tackling, and they have enough. Now see how soon God sets his fiat to their prayers: 'And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness,' ver. 31. There is the grace they desired, dropped into their bosom, in a farther measure than ever they had it. If the soldier hath a desire to fight for his prince, no doubt he may have arms for asking. If this be thy sincere request, God will not deny it. See them also sending others to God upon this errand for them, Colossians 4:3, and here in the text. Certainly people cannot desire that of God for their minister which both he and they need more. It is a difficult duty to them, but necessary for you. He cannot be a faithful minister that dares not deliver all his message. When Mauritius the emperor had inquired of Phocas' disposition, he said, si timidus est, homicida est—if he be timorous, he is a murderer. He that fears his people's faces is the man that is most like to murder their souls; so that you pray for yourselves, while you endeavour to pray down this gift upon your minister.

BRANCH FOURTH.

[The double argument of Paul enforcing his request for the prayers of believers].

'For which I am an ambassador in bonds.'

We are at length got to the last general head in the words—the double argument with which the apostle backs his request, the more effectually to provoke them to the remembrance of him in their prayers. First. Taken from his office—'for which I am an ambassador.' Second. From his present afflicted state—'an ambassador in bonds.'

[An argument for Paul's request, taken from his office.]

First argument. Paul enforces his request for his people's prayers by an argument taken from his office. Ambassadors being messengers of state, sent by princes abroad about great affairs of their kingdom, it behoves all good subjects to wish them good speed and success in their embassy. Upon this account, Paul, being sent from the great God in embassage as the apostle of the Gentiles, desires the church's prayers for a happy success to the message he brings.

Note. Ministers of the gospel are God's ambassadors. The apostle doth not monopolize this title, as if none were so beside himself; for elsewhere he reads others in the commission, 'We are ambassadors for Christ,' 2 Corinthians 5:20—that is, we apostles who are now upon the place, and in the employment of the gospel, and such also as shall be despatched after us to the end of the world upon the same errand. The authority of the apostles' extraordinary commission, and that which ordinary ministers after them have, is the same for substance, only they had their mission immediately from Christ's mouth, and were ecumenical; whereas ordinary ministers receive it from the church by an authority derived from Christ, and are fixed to their particular orbs, and are to lie as ambassadors legier in some one place whither they are sent. In handling this point we shall inquire into these three particulars. First. Why ministers are called ambassadors. Second. Why God would send ambassadors to his poor creature. Third. Why he useth weak men and not glorious angels, to be his ambassadors in this negotiation.

[Why ministers are called ambassadors.]

First. Let us inquire why ministers are called ambassadors: and that is, 1. To set out the dignity of their function. 2. To set out the duty of their function.

[The dignity of the ministry is expressed by the title 'ambassadors.']

1. Ministers of the gospel are by God designated ambassadors, to set out the dignity of their office. God by this title would procure and honourable esteem of the ministers' calling in the hearts of all those to whom they are sent. This is more necessary to the good success of their message than is generally thought. I know very well that what ministers speak on this subject, they are thought in it to be rather kind to themselves, than friends to the gospel. Men are prone to interpret it as a fruit of their pride, and an affectation they have of some outward grandeur and worldly pomp which they design to gain by such a magnificent title. The apostle himself was sensible of this, and therefore, when he had called for that respect which was due to the minister's function —'Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God'—he gives a caveat, that they would 'judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come,' 1 Corinthians 4:1, 1 Corinthians 4:5. Then it shall be known from what spirit it is that we ministers magnify our office, and have been acted by in our function; and also by what spirit they are moved who vilify and despise both it and our persons for our calling's sake. Now the dignity of gospel ambassadors will appear in three things.

(1.) In the greatness of the Prince from whom they come. Ambassadors have their respect according to the rank of their master that sends them; the greater the prince, the more honourable is his messenger. Now, the ministers of the gospel come from the great God, who is 'King of kings and Lord of lords'—by whom they reign and of whom they hold all their principalities. This is their Master in whose name they come. Therefore Moses, when he was to deliver his message to

Israel, bids them ‘ascribe greatness to that God’ whose name and will he was to publish, Deuteronomy 32:3. The potentates of the world have found to their cost how deeply God takes himself concerned in the affronts that are done to his servants. What brought Israel’s flourishing kingdom to ruin but their mocking his messengers and misusing his prophets? Then ‘the wrath of God arose against his people, till there was no remedy,’ 2 Chronicles 36:16. We cannot despise the messenger and honour his master that sends him, Luke 10:16. Few are so bold as to say with that proud king, ‘Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?’ Exodus 5:2. But too many dare say, Who is the minister, that I should obey his message? —repent at his summons, tremble at the words he delivers? forgetting, alas! they have God’s authority for what they say; and so, by a slanting blow, they hit God himself in contemning his ambassador.

(2.) In the greatness of the Person whose place the minister supplies. Ministers are but deputy ambassadors; Christ himself had the first patent; called therefore ‘the Messenger of the covenant,’ Malachi 3:1; and ‘the Apostle...of our profession,’ Hebrews 3:1. From him the ministers receive their authority: ‘All power is given unto me,...Go ye therefore, and teach all nations,’ Matthew 28:18. So, 2 Corinthians 5:20, ‘We pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.’ As if the apostle had said, We do but deliver that message which Christ should and would have done had he not been called to heaven about the affairs of his church; and therefore hath left us as his deputies to carry out that ministry which himself began when he was here below. Now, what an honour is it for a poor creature to stand up in Christ’s room and bring that message to poor sinners which was first committed unto him?

(3.) In the excellency of the message they bring. There are three kinds of embassies in the world which make way for their honourable entertainment that are the messengers to bring them to any state—embassies for peace, embassies for marriage, and embassies for trade.

(a) Embassies for peace. Beautiful are their feet, and honoured are their persons, that bring glad tidings of peace along with them; especially four things concur in their embassage, which will all be found in the minister’s negotiation.

[1.] When an ambassador comes from some puissant prince whose power is formidable and armies irresistible. An ambassador from such a prince, to a people naked and unarmed, for peace and amity, O how welcome is his approach! Such a king we come from. He offers not peace because he cannot maintain a war or stands in need of our friendship. Sinners need his favour, but he fears not their hostility. Never could they yet shoot any of their arrows so high as heaven, but all have come down upon their own heads. What can he that spits against the wind, but look to have it blown back upon his own face? and he that fights with God, but expect to have his weapons beat back to his own head? Worldly princes treat when they cannot fight. Think not so of the great God. His instruments of death are ready. No place where he hath not his armed troops able to fetch in his proudest enemies. No creature so little but contains an army in it big enough to tame the proudest king in the world. The worm under Herod’s foot, at God’s command, shall seize on him and eat out his heart. O with what fear and trembling should the ambassadors of this God be received! When Samuel the prophet came to Bethlehem, ‘the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably?’ 1 Samuel 16:4.

[2.] When such a puissant prince sends his ambassadors for peace to a people that have already felt the impressions of his power, and are pining under the bleeding miseries which their war with

him has brought upon them, O how would they run to open their city gates to his ambassador!—as willingly surely as Noah opened the window to receive the dove that brought the olive■branch after that dismal flood. This is the deplored state which the ministry of the gospel finds mankind involved in. What a forlorn condition hath our war with heaven brought us into! Do we not feel the arrows of divine vengeance sticking in our very hearts and consciences? The curse of God cleaving to every faculty of our souls and member of our bodies? Are not all the creatures in arms against us? and doth not hell from beneath open its devouring mouth upon us, ready to swallow us in everlasting destruction? And yet we are so stout that we can find no lodging in our town for his ambassadors, but a prison? no entertainment to the offers of peace they make, but contempt and scorn?

[3.] When the terms of peace he brings are honourable. Gold, we say, may be bought too dear, and so may the peace of one state with another; as when Nahash the Ammonite offered peace to the men of Jabesh■Gilead, but upon condition that they should have 'every one his right eye thrust out, to lay it as a reproach on Israel,' and therefore was rejected with just indignation; they resolving rather to die with honour than live with shame. It is the custom among many of this world's princes to make their demands according to the length of their sword. When their power is great it is hard to have peace on easy terms. Now this, one would think, should make the ministers of the gospel and their message infinitely welcome to poor sinners, that, though they come from the great God that may make his own demands—for who may say to God, 'What doest thou?'—and might not only require the eye out of your head, but force the very heart out of your body; yet offers peace on such gracious terms, that we could not possibly have framed them so to our own advantage, had we been left to draw them, as he of his own free grace is pleased to propound them; there being nothing in the whole instrument of peace provided for himself, besides the securing of his own glory in our salvation. See, a little, what he offers to poor sinners, and what he requires of them again. He offers to seal an act of oblivion, wherein all wrongs done to his crown and dignity in the time of our hostility against him shall be forgiven and forgotten. So runs the promise, 'He will forgive them their iniquities, and remember them no more.' He will not only forgive what is past, but receive our persons into favour for the future. A prince may save a malefactor's life, but forever banish his person from court. But God promiseth access into his presence. 'By whom also we have access by faith into this grace (or favour) wherein we stand,' Romans 5:2. Yea, he promiseth to restore the sinner to all that by his rebellion was forfeited. Treason taints the blood, degrades from honour, and confiscates the estate; God offers to take off the whole curse which befell the sinner for his rebellion, and restores him to his primitive dignity. He 'gives them power to become his children,' John 1:12, and, as his children, makes them his heirs, and that not to a Cabul here below only, but to heaven itself, an inheritance in light beyond all expression glorious; for godliness hath both the promise of this life and that which is to come.

Now, let us see what he expects at the sinner's hand. Not to purchase this his favour with a ransom out of his own purse! No, he empties his Son's veins to pay that. But he requires us, (a) To lay down the weapons of our rebellion—for he cannot in honour treat with us while we have that sword in our hand with which we have fought against him. (b) To accept our pardon and peace at the hands of free grace; attributing the glory of it to the mere mercy of God as the moving, and Christ's satisfactory obedience as the meritorious cause. (c) That we shall swear fealty and allegiance to him for the future. How reasonable these are, those that now reject them shall

confess with infinite shame and horror for their folly, when Christ shall pack them to hell by his irrevocable sentence.

[4.] When in all this a prince is real in the offers of peace he makes, and gives full security for the performance of what he promiseth, this must needs make the ambassador that brings them still the more welcome. Treaties of peace among men are too often used but as a handsome blind for war—they intend least what they pretend most. But when an ambassador comes plenipotentiary, and enabled to give full security and satisfaction against all fears and jealousies that may arise in the breasts of those he treats with, this gives a value to all the rest. Now, the great God hath wonderfully condescended to satisfy the querulous hearts of poor sinners. Guilt hath made man suspicious of God; his own unfaithfulness to God makes him jealous of God's faithfulness unto him. Could Satan make Eve so question the truth of God's promise? He saith but, 'Ye shall not surely die?' and she is presently shaken out of her faith on her Maker to believe her destroyer. O how easy then is it for him to nourish those suspicions which do naturally breed now in our unbelieving hearts! How oft are we putting it to the question, Will God forgive so great, so many sins? May I venture to believe? Now God gives his ambassadors full instructions from his word to satisfy all the doubts and scruples which he injects, or which may arise from our own misgiving hearts. Tota Scriptura hoc agit, saith Luther, ne dubitamus sed certò speremus—the whole Scripture drives at this, to satisfy our doubts, and assure our hopes in the mercy of God. St. Paul hath a passage something like this, 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope,' Romans 15:4.

There are many expedients men use to satisfy the minds of those they deal with concerning the truth of their promises and certainty of their performing them. Sometimes they ratify them with their seal set to the writing. Thus God gives the broad seal of the sacraments, and privy seal of his Spirit, to assure the believer he will perform all he hath promised in his word. Sometimes witnesses are called in for further security of the conveyance. Thus in the purchase Jeremiah made of his kinsman's field, he took witnesses to the bargain, Jeremiah 32:10. See witnesses both in heaven and earth, ready to vouch the truth of what God promiseth, and all agree in their verdict, 1 John 5:7-8. If all these will not do, then an oath is taken, and this useth to be 'an end of controversies.' To this also doth God graciously condescend. Not that God's promise needs the suretiship of his oath to make it surer—for it is as impossible God should lie when he promiseth as when he swears—but to make our faith stronger, which needs such supporters as these to stay and strengthen it; as is hinted in that sweet place, from which one flower the sincere believer may suck honey enough to live comfortably upon in the hardest longest winter of affliction that can befall him: 'Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation,' &c., Hebrews 6:17-18. Now, the greater the security God enables his ambassadors to offer poor sinners for the salvation they preach in his name, the more prodigiously provoking is their unbelief and impenitency who reject it. When Titus Vespasian came into Jerusalem, and saw the unspeakable miseries which the besieged had endured from those three sore plagues, sword, pestilence, and famine, that had so long raged among them, it is said that he broke out into these words, 'I am not guilty of all this blood which hath been shed, nor of the miseries this people have endured; that by their obstinacy have brought it upon their own heads.' O how much more may the ambassadors of Christ wash

their hands over the heads of impenitent sinners, to whom they have so oft offered pardon and peace in God's name, but they would not hearken, and say, 'We are free from your blood; it is your own obstinacy and desperate impenitency hath undone your precious souls. Would you have accepted life at the hands of mercy, you should not have been cut off by the sword of his justice.'

(b) Embassies for marriage. To offer an alliance by marriage between one state and another, this is one great part of the minister's embassage. They are sent to let the world know what good-will the God of heaven bears to poor sinners; that he can be content to bestow his only Son and heir in marriage upon them, if they also upon treaty can like the match. Nay more, both Father and Son desire it. It is a match which God himself first thought on for his Son. It sprang from the counsel of his own will; and when this great intendment was transacted betwixt Father and Son—as it was before the foundation of the world—the Son declared his liking of it to his Father, yea, expressed the dear affection he bore to mankind; for then it was that he 'rejoiced in the inhabitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men.' In pursuance of this, 'when the fulness of time was come,' he took his progress from heaven to earth, that by marrying our nature he might also enter a near alliance with the persons of believers. This is the match God's ambassadors come to negotiate with you. The Scriptures are their credential letters, that confirm, under God's own handwriting and seal, the truth of all they offer in his name. There you have the picture of his heavenly Prince they woo your affections for drawn to the life in his glory, love, and loveliness, that, by knowing him, you may the better take liking to his person; there are the rich bracelets of the promises, which his messengers are in his name to deliver to those willing souls that shall entertain the motion, and declare their consent to take him for their Lord and husband; yea, they have authority to pronounce the contract, and to promise in Christ's name marriage, which at the great day he will perform unto them: 'I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ,' 2 Corinthians 11:2. Stand here and adore, ye children of men, this low stoop of divine majesty! O that ever it should enter into the heart of the great God to match his Son unto his creature, and that not of the noblest house among them! for 'he took not upon him the nature of angels,' but of mankind, not in its primitive state, but when it was lapsed and degraded of its primitive glory. For a high-born prince to take a poor damsel out of the beggar's row, is a thing that yet the world hath not been acquainted with. But to take one from the meanest cottage were not so strange as to take her from the jail or bar, where she is condemned for treason against his royal person. Yet this is the very case—the Lord offers to lift up the head of his rebel creature out of prison, where it lies under a sentence of death for horrid treason against his crown and dignity, to take it into his bed and bosom. Truly I know not at which most to wonder; whether at the mercy of God in making love to us, or our pride and folly that are so coy hardly persuaded to entertain the motion. Though Abigail confessed herself unworthy to be David's wife, yet she was too wise to stand in her own light, by letting slip such an opportunity for her preferment as was not like again to occur; therefore it is said, 'She made haste to go with David's servants.' But alas! how do we either broadly deny, or foolishly make excuse, and hold God's messengers in suspense from day to day.

(c) Embassies for commerce and trade. Suppose a prince had in his kingdom rich commodities, without which his neighbour nation could not subsist, nor could find elsewhere; if this prince should send an ambassador to this people, and offer them a free trade, that they might come as oft as they pleased and take of the good things of his land, O how joyfully would such an embassy be

embraced! Man's happiness on earth lies in a free trade and commerce with heaven. This world is a barren beggarly place. Nothing is here to be had that an immortal soul can live upon or find satisfaction from. In heaven alone what it needs is to be found. The food it must live on, the clothes it must wear, are both of the growth of this heavenly country. Man's first sin spoiled all his trade with heaven. No sooner did Adam rebel, but a war was commenced, and all trade with him forbidden. Therefore, in our natural state, we are said to be 'afar off,' and 'without God in the world.' The sad effects of this loss are to be seen in the forlorn condition of man's soul, which was once was so gloriously arrayed with righteousness and holiness, but now shamefully naked—not having a rag to cover its shame withal.

Now, God sends his ambassadors to offer peace, and with it liberty to return to its first communion with him: 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.' He invites all to turn merchants with heaven, 'Come ye to the waters;' by which phrase the gospel is compared to a port-town, or its quay-side, to which the crier calls people to repair, and buy commodities that are there landed. Here it is that God sets forth the riches of his grace to view and sale 'without money and without price.' That must needs be a gainful trade which brings in rich treasure without much cost exported. Here is all the riches of heaven to be had, and no money required for the purchase. Can you hear of this pearl of price, and not turn merchants for it? Or can your souls be maintained by your peddling worldly trade? O, why do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? It is not necessary you should be rich in the world, but it is necessary you should have Christ and his grace. In all your pains and travail for the things of this world, you are but merchant adventurers—it is a hazard you get them or lose your labour. There is no certain rule and method can be learned for growing rich in the world. There are some poor as well as rich of every trade; but, in this trade for Christ and his grace, there is an office erected to insure all your adventure. His soul shall live that seeks the Lord; he that hungers after righteousness shall be satisfied.

[The duty of the ministry is set out by the title 'ambassadors.']

2. Ministers of the gospel are by God designated ambassadors, to set out the duty of their office. Where there is honos there is onus—places of honour are places of trust and service. Many like well enough to hear of the minister's dignity—with Diotrephes, they love pre-eminence—that would willingly be excused the labour that attends it. None have a greater trust deposited in their hands than the minister. It is tremendum onus—a weight that made the apostle tremble under it: 'I was among you,' saith Paul, 'with much fear and trembling.' To them is 'committed the word of reconciliation,' 2 Corinthians 5:19. If the treaty of peace between God and sinners doth not speed, the ambassador is sure to be called to an account how he discharged his place. But more of the minister's duty as an ambassador afterwards.

[Why God delivers his gospel by ambassadors from mankind.]

Second. The second thing we propounded to give an account of was, why God would send ambassadors to his poor creature. I answer,

1. Negatively.

(1.) Not because he needs man's good-will. Earthly princes' affairs require they should hold a correspondence with their neighbours, therefore they send ambassadors to preserve peace or

preserve amity. But God can defend his crown without the help of allies.

(2.) Not because he was bound to do it. There is a law of nations, yea of nature, that obliges princes before they commence a war to offer peace. But the great God cannot be bound, except he binds himself. When Adam sinned, God was free, and might have chosen whether he would make a new league with man, or take vengeance on him for breaking his faith in the first. But,

2. Affirmatively. No other account can be given of this but the good-will and free-grace of God. When Christ, who is the prime Ambassador, landed first on earth, see what brought him hither, 'Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,' Luke 1:78. Tender mercy indeed, for the life of man lay under God's foot at his pure mercy. He was no more bound to treat with his creature than a prince with a traitor legally condemned. Wherever God's ambassadors come, they come on mercy's errand: 'The Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people,' 2 Chronicles 36:15.

Question. But if God will treat with his poor creatures, why doth he it by ambassadors, and not by himself immediately?

Answer. This is the fruit of divine indulgence. Sin hath made the presence of God dreadful; man cannot now well bear it. What a fright was Adam put into when he heard but the voice of God walking towards him in the garden, and not furiously rushing upon him? The Jews had the trial of this; they soon had enough of God's presence, and therefore came to Moses, saying, 'Speak thou with us,...but let not God speak with us, lest we die,' Exodus 20:19.

[Why God useth men, and not angels, as his ambassadors.]

Third. But if God will use ambassadors, why does he not employ some glorious angels from heaven to bring his message, rather than weak and frail men?

Answer (1). The apostle gives us the reason: 'We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us,' 2 Corinthians 4:7; ¦< ÏFJD"6\<T4H F6,b,F4<—in vessels of shell. As the precious pearl is found in a shell, so this precious treasure of the gospel shall be found in frail men, that the excellency of the work may be of God. The more contemptible the instrument, the more glorious appears his divine power in using it for so high and noble an end. To see a man wound another with a sword that is sharp and weighty would carry no wonder; but to wound him with a feather in his hand, this would speak it a miracle. To see men fall down and tremble when an angel—a creature of such might and glory—is the speaker, is no great wonder; but to behold a Felix quivering on the bench, while a man, and he a poor prisoner at the bar, preacheth to his judge, this carries a double wonder. First, that so poor a creature as Paul was, and in the condition of a prisoner, durst be so bold; and also, that so great a person as Felix was should be smitten with his words, as if some thunderbolt had struck him. Who will not adore the power of a God in the weakness of the instrument? Had God employed angels in this business, we should have been in danger of ascribing the efficacy of the work to the gifts and parts of the instrument, and of giving credit to the message for the messenger's sake that is so honourable. But now, God sending those that are weak creatures like ourselves, when anything is done by them, we are forced to say, 'It is the Lord's doing,' and not the instruments'. What reason God had this way to provide for the safe-guarding his own glory, we see by our proneness to

idolize the gifts of men, where they are more eminent and radiant than in others. What would we have done if angels had been the messengers? Truly, it would have been hard to have kept us from worshipping them, as we see John himself had done, if he had not been kept back by the angel's seasonable caveat, Revelation 19:10.

Answer (2). Ministers, being men, have an advantage many ways above angels for the work.

(a) As they are more nearly concerned in the message they bring than angels could have been; so that they cannot deceive others, without a wrong to their own salvation. What greater argument for one's care than his own interest? Surely that pilot will look how he steers the ship that hath an adventure in the freight.

(b) Their affections have a naturalness arising from the sense of those very temptations in themselves which their brethren labour under. This an angel could not have; and by this they are able to speak more feelingly to the condition of other men than an angel could do. So that what man wants of the angels' rhetoric is recompensed with his natural affection and sympathy flowing from experience. He knows what a troubled conscience is in another, by having felt it throb in his own bosom; as God told his people, having been themselves sojourners in Egypt, 'You know the heart of a stranger.' And who will treat poor souls with more mercy than they who know they need it themselves?

(c) The sufferings which ministers meet with for the gospel's sake are of great advantage to their brethren. Had angels been the ambassadors they could not have sealed to the truth of the doctrine they preached with their blood. Paul's bonds were famous at court and country also: 'Many of the brethren,...waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear,' Php 1:14. Angels might have sounded the trumpet of the gospel with a shriller voice; but men alone have pitchers to break—I mean frail bodies—by suffering for the gospel, whereby the glory of its truths, like the lamp in Gideon's soldier's hand, shines forth upon the eyes of their greater enemies, to the confusion of their faces and amazement of their hearts.

USE OR APPLICATION.

[Exhortation to the people to hearken to God's ambassadors.] Are ministers ambassadors? This shows the gospel ministry to be an office peculiar to some, not a work common to all. An ambassador we know is someone who hath his commission and credential letters from his prince to show for his employment. It is not a man's skill in state affairs that makes him an ambassador, nor ability in the law that makes a man a magistrate, but their call to these places. Neither do gifts make a man a minister, but his mission: 'How can they preach except they be sent?' The rules which the Spirit of God gives about the minister's admission into his function were all to no purpose if it lay open to every man's own choice to make him a preacher. 'Lay hands suddenly on no man,' 1 Timothy 5:22; that is, admit none to the ministry without good proof and trial. But why should any be set apart for that which every one may do? This leads to an exhortation, 1. To the people. 2. To the minister.

Exhortation 1. To the people. Be persuaded in the fear of God to hearken to the message these ambassadors bring. What mean you to do in the business they come to treat about? Will you be friends with God or not?—take Christ by faith into your embraces, or resolve to have none of him? We are but ambassadors; back again we must go to our Master that sends us, and give an

account what comes of our negotiation. Shall we go and say, Lord, we have been with the men thou sentest us unto; thy message was delivered by us according to our instructions; we told them fire and sword, ruin and damnation, would come upon them, if they did not at thy call repent and turn; we laid both life and death before them, and spared not to reveal 'the whole counsel of God' for their salvation; but they believed never a word we spake; we were to them as those that mocked, or told what we had dreamed in the night, and not the words of truth an faithfulness? O God forbid that this should be the report which at their return they make to God of their negotiation! But the more to affect you with the importance of their message, and your answer to it, consider these things following:

(1.) Consider the wonderful love of God in sending you these ambassadors. Is it not a prince that sends to one of his own rank, but a God to his rebel creature; against whom he might have sent, not an ambassador to treat, but an army of judgments to fight and destroy. It is not against rebels that are entrenched in some place of strength, or in the field with a force wherewith you are able to resist his power; but to his prisoners fettered and manacled —to you that have your traitorous head on the block. It is not any need he hath of your life that makes him desire your salvation. A prince sometimes saves his rebellious subjects because he needs their hands to fight for him, and weakens himself by shedding their blood; but God can ruin you, and not wrong himself. If you perish, it is without his damage. The Pharisees are said to reject 'the counsel of God against themselves,' Luke 7:30. It is you that suffer, not God.

(2.) Consider what an intolerable affront is given to the majesty of heaven by rejecting his offers of grace. Princes' requests are commands. Who dare deny a king what he asks? and darest thou, a poor thimbleful of dust, stout it out against thy Maker? It is charged upon no less than a king as an act of insufferable pride, that 'he did...evil in the sight of the Lord his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the Lord,' 2 Chronicles 36:12. But what! must a king come down from his throne, and humble himself before a poor prophet that was his own subject. God will not have him tremble and bow, not to Jeremiah, but to 'Jeremiah...speaking from the mouth of the Lord.' O, consider this, ye that think it childish and poor-spirited to weep at a sermon, to humble yourselves at the reproof of a minister! Your carriage under the word preached declares what your thoughts of God himself are. When Naash slighted David's ambassadors, and abused them, the king took the scorn upon himself. 'I will publish the name of the Lord,' saith Moses, 'ascribe ye greatness unto our God,' Deuteronomy 32:3. How should they ascribe greatness to God while Moses is preaching to them. Surely he means by their humble attendance on, and ready obedience to, the word he delivered in God's name.

(3.) Consider how much the heart of God is engaged in the message his ambassadors bring. When a prince sends an ambassador about a negotiation, the success of which he passionately desires, and from which he promiseth himself much honour, to be opposed in this must needs greatly provoke and enrage him. There is nothing that God sets his heart more upon than the exalting of Christ, and his grace through him, in the salvation of poor sinners. This therefore is called 'his counsel,' Hebrews 6:17; 'the pleasure of the Lord,' Isaiah 53:10. Abraham's servant knew how much his master desired a wife for his son and heir among his kindred, and therefore presseth Laban with this as the weightiest argument of all other, 'If you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me; and it not, tell me;' as if he had said, By this the truth of your love to my master will be seen. So here. If ye will indeed deal kindly with God, tell his ambassadors so, by

your complying with them in that which he so affectionately desires. This the Lord Jesus, when on earth, called ‘his Father’s business,’ which must be done, whatever comes on it: ‘Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?’ Luke 2:49. He knew he had never come hither except for the despatch of this, and could not look his Father on the face, when he went back, except this was finished. Therefore, as this sped, and the work of the gospel made progress, or met with any stop, in the hearts of men, he mourned or rejoiced. When it was rejected, we find him ‘grieved for the hardness of their hearts,’ Mark 3:5. When his disciples make report how victoriously the chariot of the gospel ran, ‘in that hour,’ it is said, ‘he rejoiced in spirit,’ Luke 10:21. When he was taking his leave of the world, his thoughts are at work how the gospel should be carried on, and the salvation of souls suffer no prejudice by his departure; he therefore empowers his apostles for the work: ‘All power is given me. Go, preach the gospel to all nations.’ Yea, now in heaven he is waiting for the success of it, and listening how his servants speed in their errand. Now, what a prodigious sin is it, by thy impenitency to withstand God in his Mal. design! Do you indeed deal kindly with our Master, whose embassy we bring?

(4.) Consider the weight and importance of the message these ambassadors bring unto you. It is not a slight, sleeveless errand we come about. ‘I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil,’ Deuteronomy 30:15. ‘He that believeth not,...the wrath of God abideth on him,’ John 3:36. We come not to entice you with the favour of an earthly prince, who may promise honours to■day, and lose his own crown to-morrow. We bait not our hook with the world’s treasures or pleasures; but bring you news of a heaven that shall as surely be yours as you are now on earth, if you accept of the offer. We scare you not with the displeasure of a mortal man, ‘whose breath is in his nostrils;’ not with the momentary torment of a rack or gibbet, which continue hardly long enough to be felt; but with the never-dying wrath of the ever-living God. And what we either promise or threaten in God’s name, he stands ready and resolved to perform. He ‘confirmeth the word of his servants, and performeth the counsel of his messengers;’ Isaiah 44:26.

(5.) Consider on what terms the gospel and its messengers stay among you. There is a time when God calls his ambassadors home, and will treat no longer with a people; and that must needs be a sad day! For, when they go, then judgments and plagues come. If the treaty ends, it will not be long before the war begins. ‘Elisha died,...and the bands of the Moabites invaded the land,’ 2 Kings 13:20. The prophet once gone, then the enemy comes. The angel plucks Lot out of Sodom, and how long had they fair weather after? The Jews put away the gospel from them by their impenitency, which made the apostles ‘turn to the Gentiles,’ Acts 13:46. But did they not thereby call for their own ruin and destruction, which presently came flying on the Roman eagle’s wings to them? They judged themselves unworthy of eternal life, and God thought them unworthy also to have a temporal. If once God calls home his ambassadors, it is no easy matter to bring them back, and get the treaty, now broke up, set on foot again. God can least endure, upon trial made of him, to be slighted in that which he makes account is one of the highest ways he can express his favour to a people. Better no ambassadors had come, than to come and go re infectâ —without effecting what they came for. They ‘shall know,’ saith God, ‘there hath been a prophet among them,’ Ezekiel 2:5; that is, they shall know it to their cost. God will be paid for his ministers’ pains. Now, ministers die, or are removed from their people, and glad they are to be so rid of them; but they have not done with them till they have reckoned with God for them.

[Exhortation to ministers in discharge of their duty as ambassadors of the King of kings.]

Exhortation 2. To the ministers of the gospel. You see, brethren, your calling; let it be your care to comport with this your honourable employment. Let us set forth a few directions.

(1.) Stain not the dignity of your office by any base unworthy practices. Dignitas in indigno, saith Salvian, is ornamentum in luto—O lay not the dignity of your function in the dirt by any sordid unholy actions! Paul magnified his office; do not you do that which should make others vilify and debase it. That which makes others bad will make you worse. 'Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?' John 6:70. You are called angels, but if wicked, you become devils. We have read of 'a prophet's reward,' Matthew 10:41, which amounts to more than a private disciple's; and do you not think there will be a prophet's punishment in hell, as well as reward in heaven? One saith, 'If any were born without original sin, it should be the minister; if any could live without actual sin it should be the minister; if there were such a thing a venial sin, it should not be in ministers. They are more the servants of God than others; should not they then be more holy than others?' Art thou fit to be an ambassador, who art not a good subject? to be a minister, that art not a good Christian?

(2.) Keep close to thy instructions. Ambassadors are bound up by their commission what they are to say; be sure therefore to take thy errand right, before thou ascendest the pulpit to deliver it. 'I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you,' 1 Corinthians 11:23. God bids the prophet, Ezekiel 3:17, 'Hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.' It must be from him, or it is not right. O take heed thou dost not set the royal stamp upon thy own base metal! Come not to the people with, 'Thus saith the Lord,' when it is the divination of thy own brain. No such loud lie as that which is told in the pulpit. And, as thou must not speak what he never gave thee in commission, so not conceal what thou hast in command to deliver. It is as dangerous to blot out, as put in, anything to our message. Job comforted himself with this, that he had 'not concealed the words of the Holy One,' Job 6:10. And Paul, from this, washeth his hands of the blood of souls, 'I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God,' Acts 20:26-27. Pray, observe, he doth not say he hath declared all the counsel of God. No; who can, but God himself? The same apostle saith, 'We prophesy but in part.' There is a terra incognita—unknown land, in the Scriptures, mysteries that yet were never fully discovered. We cannot declare all that know not all. But he saith, 'He shunned not to declare all.' When he met a truth, he did not step back to shun it; as when we see a man in the street with whom we have no mind to speak, we step into some house or shop till he be past. The holy apostle was not afraid to speak what he knew to be the mind of God; as he had it from God, so should they from him. He did not balk in his preaching what was profitable for them to know. Caleb, one of the spies sent to Canaan, could not give them a full account of every particular place in the land, but he made the best observation he could, and then brings Moses word again—'As it was,' saith he, 'in mine heart,' Joshua 14:7; while others basely concealed what they knew, because they had no mind to the journey; and this gained him the testimony from God's own mouth to be a man that 'followed him fully,' Numbers 14:23. So he that doth his utmost to search the Scriptures, and then brings word to the people as it is in his heart, preaching what he hath learned from it, without garbling his conscience and detaining what he knows for fear or favour, this is the man that fulfills his ministry, and shall have the euge—well done! of a faithful servant.

(3.) Think it not enough that thou deliverest thy message from God, but show a zeal for thy Master, whose cause thou negotiatest. Should an ambassador, after audience had, and his errand coldly

done, then give himself up to the pleasures of the court where he is resident, and not much mind or care what answer he hath, nor how his master's business speeds, surely he could not say he had done the duty of a faithful ambassador. No; his head and heart must be both at work how he may put life into the business and bring it soonest to the desired issue. Abraham's servant would neither eat nor drink till he saw which way his motion would work, and how they would deal with his master. Thus should ministers let those they are sent to see they are in earnest—that their hearts are deeply engaged in their embassy. When their people show their respect to their persons, though they are thankfully to resent this civility, yet they are not to let them know this is not it they come for, or can be content with; but that they would deal kindly with their Master, whose message they bring, and send them back to him with the joyful news of their repentance and acceptation of Christ. They should passionately endeavour their salvation; one while trying to dissolve them with the soft entreaties of love; another while beleaguering them with threatenings, that if they will to hell, they may carry this witness with them, that their destruction is of themselves, and comes not on them for want of your care and compassion to their souls. It is not enough you are orthodox preachers, and deliver truth; it is zeal God calls for at your hands. He so strongly himself desires the salvation of poor sinners, that he disdains you, whom he sends to impart it to them, should coldly deliver it, without showing your good-will to the thing. Christ, when he sends his servants to invite guests to his gospel-supper, bids them 'compel them to come in,' Luke 14:23. But how? Surely not as the Spaniards did the Indians, who drove them to be baptized as we drive cattle with staves and stones. We are not to pelt them in with outward violence and cruelty practised upon their bodies, but [by] a spiritual force of argument subduing their hearts in our powerful preaching. Percutit ut faciat voluntarios, non salvet invitos—when God smites the consciences of men with the terrors of his threatenings, it is to make them willing, not to save them against their wills (Bern.).

(4.) Let not any person or thing in the world bribe or scare thee from a faithful discharge of thy trust. Ambassadors must not be pensioners to a foreign prince. He is unworthy to serve a prince in so honourable an employment that dares not trust his master to defend and reward him. Such a one will not long be faithful to his trust; nor will he in the ministry, that rests not contented with God's promise for his protection or reward. O how soon will he for fear or favour seek to save his stake or mend it, though it be by falsifying his trust to God himself? Blessed Paul was far from this baseness, and hath set a noble pattern to all that shall be God's ambassadors to the end of the world: 'As we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness,' 1 Thessalonians 2:4-5.

(5.) Be kind to and tenderly careful of thy fellow-subjects. Were it not strange if an ambassador, sent from hence to Turkey or Spain, instead of protecting and encouraging the English merchants there in their trade, should hinder their traffic, and employ all the power of his place to their prejudice and damage? Surely this prince sent him not to be an enemy, but a friend and patron, to his good subjects there. The minister, as God's ambassador, is to encourage the saints in their heavenly trade, to assist them by his counsel, and protect them from the scorn that their wicked neighbours cast upon them for their goodness. O how sad is it if he shall bend his ministry against them! if he shall weaken their hands and strengthen the hands of the ungodly, in or out of the pulpit, by his preaching or practice! Better he were, with a millstone tied about his neck, thrown

into the sea, than thus to offend these little ones! Moses, he smote the Egyptian, but rescued the Israelite. What account will they make to God of their embassy, who, in the very pulpit, smite the Israelite with their tongues, twitting them for their purity, and stroke the Egyptian—the profane and wicked, I mean, in their congregations—whereby they bless themselves as going to heaven, when, God knows, their feet stand in the ways that will undoubtedly lead them to hell!

[An argument for Paul's request, taken from his present afflicted state.]

Second Argument. The second argument with which he stirs them up to his remembrance in their prayers, is taken from his present afflicted state—'for which I am an ambassador in bonds.' In the Greek ¦< ■8LF,4—in a chain. When we hear of an ambassador and a chain, we might at first expect it to be a chain of gold about his neck, and not a chain of iron about his leg or arm; yet it is the latter here is meant. Paul was now a prisoner at Rome, but in libera custodia. as is thought by interpreters from this passage—in a chain, not in chains; it being usual there for a prisoner to be committed to the custody of some soldier, with whom he might walk abroad, having a chain on his right arm, which was tied to his keeper's left arm. Such a prisoner, it is conceived, this holy man was now. Paul the lamb was prisoner to Nero the lion, and therefore both needed and desired the church's prayers for him. Many are the observables which this short passage might afford. I shall lightly touch them, but not enlarge upon them.

[Five observables touched upon, from Paul's being in bonds.]

First Observable. Observe the usage which this blessed apostle finds from an ungrateful world. A chain is clapped upon him, as if he were some rogue or thief. He preacheth liberty to poor sinners, and is deprived of his own for his pains; he proclaims deliverance to the captives, and is used like a slave for his labour. One would wonder what they could find against so holy and innocent a person to accuse him for, who made it his daily exercise to live without offence to God and man; yet see what an indictment Tertullus prefers against him, Acts 24:1-27, as if there had not been such a pestilent fellow in the whole country as he! And Paul himself tells us he 'suffered trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds,' 2 Timothy 2:9. Many grievous things were laid to his charge. Whence,

Note. That the best of men may and oft do suffer under the notion of vile and wicked persons. Let the saints' enemies alone to black their persons and cause. Christ himself must be 'numbered among the transgressors,' and no less than blasphemy be laid to his charge. Persecutors think it not enough to be cruel, but they would be thought just while they are cruel—'Ye have condemned and killed the just,' James 5:6. Here is a bloody murder committed with all the formalities of justice. They condemn first, and then kill; and truly, murder on the bench is worse in God's account than that which is perpetrated by a villain on the highway. Well, there is a time when Paul's cause and the rest of suffering saints' shall have a fairer hearing than here they could meet with, and then it will appear with another complexion than when drawn with their enemies' black-coal. The names of the godly shall have a resurrection as well as their bodies. Now they are buried with their faces downward—their innocency and sincerity charged with many false imputations; but then all shall be set right. And well may the saints stay to be cleared as long as God himself stays to vindicate his own government of the world from the hard speeches of ungodly ones.

Second Observable. Observe the true cause of Paul's sufferings. It was his zeal for God and his truth—'for which I am in bonds:' that is, for the gospel which I profess and preach. As that martyr who, being asked how he came into prison, showed his Bible, and said, 'This brought me hither.' Persecutors may pretend what they will, but it their religion and piety that their spite is at. Paul was an honest man, in the opinion of his countrymen, so long as he was of their opinion, went their way, and did as they did; but when he declared himself to be a Christian, and preached his gospel up, then they cried him down as fast—then his old friends turned new enemies, and all their fists were about his ears. The wicked are but the devil's slaves, and must do as he will have them. Now, it is truth and godliness that pull down his kingdom. When, therefore, these appear in the saints' lives, then he calls forth the wicked world, as a prince would do his subjects into the field, to fight for him; so that it is impossible to get to heaven without blows. 'He that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution:' {2 Timothy 3:12} that is, one way or other; and none more than the preacher. He puts his hand into the wasp's nest, and therefore must expect to be stung; he treads on the serpent's head, and it were strange if he should not turn again to bite him. But let not this trouble you. Fear not what you can suffer, only be careful for what you {do} suffer. Christ's cross is made of sweet wood. There are comforts peculiar to those that suffer for righteousness. When Sabina, a Christian martyr, fell in travail in the prison, and was heard to cry and make a dolor in those her child-bearing throes, some asked her how she could endure the torments which her persecutors prepared for her, if she shrank at those? 'O,' saith she, 'now I suffer for sin, then I shall suffer for Christ.'

Third Observable. Observe how close Paul sticks to the truth. He will not part with it, though it brings him to trouble. He had rather the persecutor should imprison him for preaching the gospel, than he imprison it by a cowardly silence. He hath cast up his accounts, and is resolved to stand to his profession whatever it may cost him. The truth is, that religion is not worth embracing that cannot bear one's charges in suffering for it; and none but the Christian's is able to do this. Neither is he worth the name of a Christian that dares not take Christ's bill of exchange, to receive in heaven what he is sent out in suffering for his sake on earth. And yet, alas! how hard is it to get faith enough to do this! It is easier to bow at the name, than to stoop to the cross of Jesus. Many like religion for a summer-house, when all is fair and warm abroad in the world; but, when winter comes, doors are shut up, and nobody to be seen in or about it.

Fourth Observable. Observe the publication Paul makes of his sufferings to the church. He, being now a prisoner, sends his despatches to this and other churches, to let them know his condition. From whence,

Note. That sufferings for the gospel are no matter of shame. Paul doth not blush to tell it is for the gospel he is 'in bonds.' The shame belonged to them that clapped on the chain, not to him that wore it. The thief, the murderer, may justly blush to tell wherefore they suffer, not the Christian for well-doing. 'If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf,' 1 Peter 4:16. Christ himself counted it no dishonour to have the print of his wounds seen after his resurrection. Babylas, a Christian martyr, would have his chains buried with him. The apostles 'rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name,' Acts 5:41. And if it be no shame to suffer for the gospel, then surely it is none to profess it, and live up to its holy rules. Shall the wicked 'glory in their shame,' and thou be ashamed of thy glory? Shall they do the devil's work at noonday light, and thou afraid to be seen with the good? Yet Salvian tells us, in his

days—so wicked they were, and such a scorn was cast upon holiness—that many carried Christ's colours in their pocket, and concealed their piety, ne viles haberentur—lest they should be counted vile and base.

Fifth Observable. Observe the end why he makes known his sufferings.

1. That they may know the true cause wherefore he suffered. Paul's enemies laid heavy things to his charge, and these might haply fly as far as Ephesus. When the saints' are in a suffering condition, Satan is very industrious to defame them, and misrepresent the cause of their troubles to the world, as if it were for no good. Now, though Paul regarded little what the wicked world said of him, yet he desired to stand right in the thoughts of the churches, and therefore acquaints them with the cause of his imprisonment.

2. To strengthen their faith and comfort their hearts. No doubt but Paul's chain entered their souls, and his suffering was their sorrow. This he knew, and therefore sends them word by Tychicus—the bearer of this epistle—how it fared with him in his bonds, that they might not spend too many tears for him who had a heart so merry and cheerful in his sufferings: 'That ye might know our affairs, and that he comfort your hearts,' Ephesians 6:22. Thus have we seen sometimes a tender-hearted, father on his sick-bed, not so much troubled with his own pains, or thoughts of his approaching death, as to see his children take them so much to heart; and therefore, forgetting his own miseries, address himself with a smiling countenance to comfort them. O it is an excellent sight to behold the saints that are at liberty mourning over their afflicted brethren, and those that are the sufferers become comforters to them that are at liberty! Never doth religion appear more glorious than when they commend it who are suffering for it. And no way can they commend it higher than by a holy humble cheerfulness of spirit in their sufferings. The comfortable which the martyrs in queen Mary's days sent out of prison, did wonderfully strengthen their brethren throughout the kingdom, and fit them for the prison. Sufferers preach with great advantage above others. They do not speak by hearsay, but what they experiment {verified} in themselves.

3. To engage their prayers for him. Suffering saints have ever been very covetous of prayers. Paul acts all the churches at work for him. 'Pray, pray, pray,' was the usual close to Mr. Bradford's letters out of prison. And great reason for it; for a suffering condition is full of temptations. When man plays the persecutor, the devil forgets not to be a tempter. He that followed Christ into the wilderness will ever find a way to get to his saints in the prison. Sometimes he will try whether he can soften them for impressions of fear, or make them pity themselves; and he shall not want them that will lend their tears to melt their courage and weaken their resolution—may be wife and children, or friends and neighbours, who wish them well, but are abused by Satan to lay a snare before them, while they express their affection to them. No doubt those good people meant well to Paul, who, with tears and passionate entreaties, endeavoured to keep him from Jerusalem—where it was foretold he should come into trouble—but Satan had a design against Paul therein, who hoped they might not only break his heart, but weaken his courage, with their tears. When he cannot make a coward of the saint, to run from the cross; then he will try to sour and swell his spirit with some secret anger against those that laid it on. O it is no easy matter to receive evil, and wish none to him from whose hands we have it. To reserve love for him that shows wrath and hatred to us is a glorious but a difficult work. If he cannot leaven him with wrath against his persecutor, then he will try to blow him up with a high conceit of himself, who dares

suffer for Christ, while others shrink in their heads, and seek to keep themselves safe within their own shell. O this pride is a salamander, that can live in the fire of suffering! If any one saint needs the humility of many saints, it is he that is called to suffer. To glory in his sufferings for Christ becomes him well, 2 Corinthians 12:9; Galatians 6:14; but to glory in himself for them is hateful and odious. Needs not he a quick eye, and a steady hand, that is to drive his chariot on the brow of so dangerous a precipice? In a word, a suffering condition is full of temptations, so the saint's strength to carry him safely through them is not in his own keeping. God must help, or the stoutest champion's spirit will soon quail. 'In all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need,' Php 4:12. This was a hard lesson indeed to learn . Who was his master? See, 'I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me,' Php 4:13. Now, as the saints' strength to suffer is not in themselves, but Christ, so prayer is the best means to fetch it in for their help; for by it they confess their own weakness, and so God is secured from having a co-rival in the praise. Which Paul is here free to do, and more than so; for, as he confesseth he can do nothing without Christ's strength to enable and embolden him, so he dares not rely on his own solitary single prayers for the obtaining it, but calls in the auxiliary forces of his fellow-saints to besiege heaven for him; that, while he is in the valley suffering for the gospel, they might be lifting up their hands and hearts in the mount of prayer for him. The End Of "The Christian in Complete Armour"

[1]Prog: — to prowl about, as in search of food or plunder; forage. From Webster's.

[2]The meaning of the word skill in this case is probably more in line with either the obsolete meanings of knowledge, understanding, or judgment; or, the archaic meanings of to matter, avail, or make a difference; with the former being the most likely. — SDB

[3]14And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

— John 3:1-36 See also the following passage from Numbers:

4And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. 5And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. 6And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. 7Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. 8And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. 9And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

— Numbers 21:1-35

S. A Basket of Fragments

A BASKET OF FRAGMENTS

"The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails — given by one Shepherd." Ecclesiastes 12:11

The believer is to persevere in his Christian course to the end of his life; his work and his life must go off the stage together. The fearful are in the forlorn of those who march to Hell (Revelation 21:8).

O how unfitting a sight is it — a bold sinner, and a fearful saint!

Christ never lost a battle — even when He lost His life.

He who has God’s heart — cannot lack His arm! This goodly fabric of Heaven and earth has not been built — but as a stage whereon God would in time act what He decreed in Heaven of old.

One Almighty, is more than many mighties. All these mighty sins and devils make not any almighty sin, or an almighty devil. A proud heart, and a lofty mountain, are never fruitful.

"Pray." But how? "Without ceasing."

"Rejoice." But when? "Evermore."

"Give thanks." For what? "In everything."

God will not have His kingdom, either in the heart or in the world, maintained by carnal policy. When afflicted, love can allow you togroan— but not togrumble.

Mercy should make us ashamed to sin.

Wrath should make us afraid to sin.

Whoever you are, you are base-born until born again.

Sin alone, sets Satan in the throne of your heart.

Sinners dying in their sins, cannot hope to have a better resurrection than they have a death.

Since man was turned out of paradise, he can do nothing without labor, except sin.

We must either lay self aside — or God will lay us aside.

Bernard used to say, when he heard any scandalous sin of a professor, "He fell today — I may stumble tomorrow!" A soul in meditation, is on his way to prayer.

It is impossible for an evil heart, to think well of an afflicting God. The great talkers of religion — are oft the least doers. Does your heavenly Father keep so starved a house — that the devil’s scraps will go down with you? No truth, but has some error next door. No action so little — but we

may in it do God or the devil some service. Therefore none too little for our care to be bestowed on.

It is not enough to have truth on our side, if we have not truth in our hearts.

Hypocrisy is a lie — with a fair cover over it!

None sooner topple over into error, than such who have a dishonest heart with a nimble head. The richest soil, without culture, is most tainted with weeds.

You must live by your faith, not another's. Labor to see truth with your own eyes.

He who maintains any error from the Bible, bears false witness against God.

He who abandons the truth of God, renounces the God of truth.

Error is short lived; "a lying tongue is but for a moment"; but truth's age runs parallel with God's eternity.

It is no matter what the external profession is — if the devil and sin dwell within.

Heaven is worth the having, though you go poor and ragged, yes, naked, there! The gospel — what is it, but God's heart in print! The Christian's love to Christ — takes fire at Christ's love to him. No suchpicklockto open the heart, as love.

You never knew a man full of self-confidence and self-abasement together. The conscience cannot abound with a sense of sin — and the heart with self-conceit at the same time. A temptation comes very forcibly, when it runs with the tide of our own hearts.

"So you see a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him" (Proverbs 26:12). That is, of all fools, the conceited fool is the worst. Pride makes a man incapable of receiving counsel.

Exerciseyour faith, if you mean topreserveyour faith. We live by faith, and faith lives by exercise. The devil iswily— so you had need bewary.

None long for Heaven, more than those that enjoy most of Heaven.

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend — but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (Proverbs 27:6). God's wounds cure — sin's kisses kill.

Never think to find honey in the pot — when God writes poison on the cover.

Sin disturbs the inward peace of the soul — and the outward peace of the world.

You know, sinner, already, the best of your sinful pleasure — but not the worst of your punishment!

If you will play the charlatan — choose not the pulpit for your stage. The less conscience barks at present — the more it will bite when it shall be unmuzzled.

Either use the world as if you used it not — or you will pray as if you prayed not. The faster a man rides if he is in a wrong road — the farther he goes out of his way!

He who is impatient, and cannot wait on God for a mercy — will not easily submit to Him in a denial.

Man's words will not break your bones.

Cease to pray — and you will begin to sin. Prayer is not only a means to prevail for mercy — but also to prevent sin. Where God is on one side — you may be sure to find the devil on the other.

He who shows any kindness to a saint — is sure to have God for his paymaster. The work of salvation cannot be done by the candle-light of a natural understanding — but by the sunlight of a gospel revelation.

Christ passes oft by palaces — to visit the poor cottages. Pilate missed Christ on the bench — while the poor thief finds Him, and Heaven with Him, on the cross.

Ignorance is the mother of persecution. That book must be worth reading — that has God for the author!

We must come to good works by faith — and not to faith by good works.

It was a charge long ago laid upon Christianity, that it was better known in leaves of books, than in the lives of Christians.

It is better to die honorably — than live shamefully.

It is easier to bow at the name of Jesus — than to stoop to the cross of Jesus. The head may be ripe — and the heart rotten!

Prayer is a great heart-easer. The sins of teachers — are the teachers of sins!

S. Choice Gems

Choice gems from William Gurnall

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ The gospel is God’s heart in print!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ That book must be worth reading — that has God for the author!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ Do not say that you love Christ, so long as you can lay those sins in your bosom — which plucked His heart out of His bosom! It were strange if a child should keep, and delight to use, no other knife but that with which his mother was stabbed to death!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ The pleasures of sin must needs be short, because life cannot be long — and they both end together.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ Cease to pray — and you will begin to sin.

Prayer is not only a means to prevail for mercy — but also to prevent sin.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ To forsake sin, is to leave it without any thought reserved of returning to it again.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ The sheep may fall into a ditch — but it is the swine that wallows in it!

Take heed of deliberate sins!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ "He who is his own teacher, is sure to have a fool for a master!"

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ Of all men out of Hell, none more to be pitied than he who hangs over the mouth of it, and yet is fearless of his danger.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ A Christian should deny himself of the world’s carnal joys and delights, lest the ungodly say, "These Christians draw their joy out of our cistern!"

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ He who has God’s heart — cannot lack His arm!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ It is impossible for an evil heart, to think well of an afflicting God.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend — but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." Proverbs 27:6 God’s wounds cure — sin’s kisses kill.

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We have published a selection of choice extracts from William Gurnall’s, "The Christian in Completer Armor".

S. Prayer and Thanksgiving

PRAYER AND THANKSGIVING

William Gurnall

"Be anxious for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Php 4:6

Prayer the sign of life. What is prayer — but the breathing forth of that grace which is breathed into the soul by the Holy Spirit? When God breathed into man the breath of life, he became a living soul. Just so, when God breathes into the creature the breath of spiritual life — he becomes a praying soul: "Behold, he prays," says God of Paul to Ananias (Acts 9:11). Praying is the same to the new creature, as crying to the natural babe. The child is not learned by art to cry — but by nature — it comes into the world crying. Praying is not a lesson got by forms and rules — but flowing from principles of new life.

Prayer and reality. Prayer is an act in which we have immediately to do with the great God, to whom we approach in prayer. It is too sacred a duty to be performed between sleeping and waking, with a heavy eye or a drowsy heart — this God complained of: "There is none that calls upon Your name, that stirs up himself to take hold of You" (Isaiah 64:7). He counts it no prayer, where the heart is not stirred up and awake. Our behavior in prayer has an universal influence upon all the passages of our whole life. As a man is in prayer — so he is likely to be in all the rest; if he is careless in praying — then he is negligent in hearing, and loose in his walking. Prayer is the channel, in which the stream of divine grace, blessing, and comfort — runs from God into the heart; dam up the channel — and the stream is stopped.

Prayer and integrity. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalms 66:18). Now, when God refuses to hear, we may be sure the Spirit refuses to assist; for God never rejects a prayer which His Spirit indites. Have you defiled yourself with any known sin? Think not to have Him help you in prayer, until He has helped you to repent. He will carry you to the laver — before He goes with you to the altar.

Take heed that you pray not with a reservation. Be sure you renounce, what you would have God remit. He who desires not to be purged from the filth of sin — prays in vain to be eased of the guilt. If we love the work of sin — we must take the wages. A false heart could be willing to have his sin covered — but the sincere desires his heart may be cleansed. David begged a clean heart, as well as a quiet conscience: "Blot out all my iniquities; create in me a clean heart, O God" (Psalms 51:9-10). In nothing do our hearts more cheat us than in our prayers, and in no requests more than those which are leveled against our lusts. That is oftentimes least intended — which is most pretended. The saint's prayer may miscarry from some secret grudge which is lodged in his heart against his brother.

Prayer and diligence. God has appointed prayer as a help to our diligence — not as a cloak for our sloth. Idle beggars are welcome neither to God's door nor man's. What! Will you lift up your hands to God in prayer — and then put them in your pocket? Is it a lust you are praying against? And do you sit down idle to see whether it will now die alone? Will that prayer slay one lust — which lets another (your sloth I mean) live under its nose? Do you think to walk loosely all day, yielding yourself, and betraying the glory of God into the hands of your lust — and then mend all with a prayer at night?

O Christian, should it not make you blush much more, to see the whole town up, and as busy as bees in a garden, one flying this way, and another that way, and all to bring a little more of this world's perishing pelf into their hive — out of which death before long will drive them, and force them to leave what with so much pains they have gathered for others — while you sleep away your precious time, though you are sure to carry your gettings into the eternal world with you, and there enjoy the fruit of your short labor here, with everlasting glory!

Prayer and watching. He who prays and watches not, is like him that sows a field with precious seed — but leaves the gate open for hogs to come and rout it up!

"Watch and pray," says Christ to His disciples; He knew they could not do that work sleeping. But it is not enough to keep the eye awake, if you wander it to wander: "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in your way" (Psalms 119:37). To pray, and not watch what becomes of our prayer, is a great folly, and no little sin. What is this but to take the name of God in vain? Yet thus do many knock at God's door, and then run away to the world and think no more of their prayers.

Prayer and perseverance. By "praying always" we are exhorted to the daily, constant exercise of prayer; by "praying with perseverance," we are pressed to bear up against discouragements, as to any particular request we may make at the throne of grace, and not to give over, though we have not a speedy answer to it. So that the former is opposed to a neglect of the duty in its stated seasons, and the latter to a fainting in our spirits, as to any particular suit we put up.

Prayer and supplication. "Praying with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." In praying for saints, you must pray for all: I do not mean for both living and dead; prayer is a means to wait upon them in their way; at death, when they are at their journey's end, prayers are useless, and the wicked in that estate are beneath, the saints above, our prayers. We cannot help the wicked, the tree is fallen — and so it must lie. We read of a change the body shall have after death. Vile bodies may change — but filthy souls cannot after death be made glorious. If they leave the body filthy, so shall they meet it at the resurrection. As the wicked are beyond our help — so the saints are above all need of our help.

We are to love all saints, therefore to pray for all. The new creature never lacks its new nature; if God loves all His children, then will you love all your brethren. When Paul commends Christians for this grace of love, he does it thus: (Ephesians 1:15) "After I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints." Now, if we love all, we cannot but pray for all.

Though we are to pray for all saints — yet some call for a more special remembrance at our hands: for instance, those that are near to us by bond of nature as well as of grace. "A brother beloved, specially to me — but how much more unto you, both in the flesh, and in the Lord"

(Philemon 1:16). You are to pray particularly for those that are in distress: whoever you forget, remember these — this is a fit season for love. A friend for adversity is as proper as fire for a winter's day.

Job's friends chose the right time to visit him — but took not the right course of improving their visit: had they spent the time in praying for him which they did in hot disputes with him — they would have profited him, and pleased God more.

Prayer and thanksgiving. Prayer is a means to dispose the heart to praise. When David begins a psalm with prayer — he commonly ends it with praise. That Spirit which leads a soul out of itself to God for supply — will direct it to the same God with His praise. We do not borrow money of one man — and return it to another. If God has been your strength, surely you will make Him your song. The thief comes not to thank a man for what he steals out of his yard. Mercies ill gotten, are commonly as ill spent, because they are not sanctified, and so become fuel to feed lusts. As a necessary ingredient in all our prayers: Let your requests be made known with thanksgiving (Php 4:6). This spice must be in all our offerings. He who prays for a mercy he wants, and is not thankful for mercies received, may seem mindful of himself — but is forgetful of God. God will not put His mercies into a rent purse; and such is an unthankful heart.

Daniel, when in the very shadow of death, the plot being laid to take away his life, prayed three times a day, and gave thanks before his God (Daniel 6:10). To have heard him pray in that great strait would not have afforded so much matter for wonder; but to have his heart in tune for giving thanks in such a sad hour, was admirable.

Prayer and trial. When prayer cannot prevail to keep a temporal mercy alive — yet it will have a powerful influence to keep your heart alive when that dies. O, it is sad, when a man's estate and comfort are buried in the same grave together. None will bear the loss of an enjoyment so patiently — as he who was exercised in prayer while he had it. The more David prayed for his child while alive — the fewer tears he shed for it when dead.

Prayer and prosperity. Prayer is not a winter garment: it is then to be worn indeed — but not to be left off in the summer of prosperity. If you would find some at prayer, you must stay until it thunders and lightenings; and not go to them except it be in a storm. Pray in prosperity, that you may speed when you pray in adversity. Own God now — that He may acknowledge you then. Shall that friend be welcome to us — who never gives us a visit but when he comes to borrow?

Pray in prosperity — that you may not be ensnared by it. Prosperity is no friend to the memory, therefore we are cautioned so much to beware when we are full, lest we forget God. You shall find, in Scripture, that the saints have had their saddest falls — on the most even ground. Noah, who had seen the whole world drowned in water, no sooner was safe on shore — but himself is drowned in wine! David's heart was fixed when in the wilderness; but his wanton eye rolled and wandered — when he walked upon the terrace of his palace.

Morning and evening prayer. Prayer must be the key of the morning — and lock of the night. We do not show ourselves Christians, if we do not open our eyes with prayer when we rise, and shut them again with the same key we lie down at night. Pray as often as you please besides.

If you will have fire for your evening sacrifice, labor to keep what is already on your altar from going out. What you fill the vessel with — you must expect to draw thence. If water is put in — we cannot, without a miracle, think to draw out wine. What! are you all day filling your heart with earth (God being not in all your thoughts) — and do you look to draw Heaven from thence at night? He who is heavenly in his earthly employments — will be the less worldly in his heavenly employments. It was a sweet speech of a dying saint, that he was going to change his place — but not his company.

Broken prayer. Sometimes you hear one pray with a moving expression, while you can hardly get out a few broken words in duty, and you are ready to accuse yourself and to admire him; as if the brightness of the key made it open the door better. "Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed" (James 5:17). A weak hand with a sincere heart — is able to turn the key in prayer!

Ejaculatory prayer. Ejaculatory prayer (a short utterance that expresses a strong feeling) to God, is the short dagger you are to use for your defense against temptation — when you have no time to draw the long sword of solemn prayer. Thus you may pray in any place, company, or employment.

Public prayer. When you pray before others, observe on what you bestow your chief care and zeal, whether on the externals or internals of prayer: that which is exposed to the eye and ear of men — or that for the eye and ear of God; the devout posture of your body — or the inward devotion of your soul; the pomp of your words — or the power of your faith; the agitation of your bodily spirits in the vehemency of your voice — or the fervency of your spirit in heart-breaking affections.

These inward workings, are the very soul of prayer. The sincere soul dares not be crude in his outward posture; he is careful of his words, that they may be grave and pertinent, neither would he pray them asleep who join with him, by a cold manner of delivering his prayer. But still, it is the inward disposition of his heart which he principally looks to, knowing well, that it is possible to be warm in prayer, thereby benefitting others — and at the same time have his own heart cold and idle. Therefore he does not count that he prays well, except he finds his own affections drawn out. The hypocrite, if he comes off the duty with the applause of others in the external performance, is well pleased.

Formal prayer. Take heed of formal praying, this is as baneful to grace as not praying. A plaster, though proper, and of sovereign virtue — yet if it be laid on cold, may do more hurt than good. Do you think that God will welcome that prayer to Heaven — which has not your heart to bear it company? And how can your heart go with it, when you have sent it another way? Will God hear you — when you mock Him? And if this be not to mock Him — then what is? Like children that give a knock at a door, and then run away to their play again; thus you raise your voice to God, and then are gone in your roving thought to hold converse with the world, or worse. Is not this trifling with God?

Satan disturbs you in praying, that he may make you weary of praying. Indeed he is not likely to miss his mark, if you let these vermin go on to breed in your heart. For these will rob you of the sweetness of prayer; and when the marrow is once out, you will easily be persuaded to throw the bone away. He is in danger to forsake his meat, who has lost his relish for it. Prayer is a tedious

work for him who has no pleasure in it: and weariness in it stands next door to weariness of it. The best way to keep vessels from leaking, is to let them stand full. A vain heart out of prayer, will be little better in prayer. Walk in the company of sinful thoughts all the day — and you will hardly shut the door upon them, when you go into your prayer closet. You have taught them to be bold; they will now plead acquaintance with you, and crowd in after you, like little children, who if you play with them, will cry after you when you would be rid of their company.

Beware that your prayers do not degenerate into a lifeless formality. What we do commonly — we are prone to do slightly. He is a rare Christian that keeps his course in prayer, and yet grows not to pray of mere course. He who watches his heart all day, is most likely to find it in tune for prayer at night; whereas loose walking breeds lazy praying.

Never was any formal prayer of the Holy Spirit's making; when He comes, it is a time of life.

Lengthy prayer. Pray often, rather than very long. It is difficult to remain long in prayer, and not slacken in our affections. Especially observe this in social prayers; for when we pray in company, we must consider those who travel with us: as Jacob said: "I will lead on softly, as the children are able to endure."

Hindrances to prayer. There is an antipathy between sinning and praying. The child that has misspent the day in play abroad, steals to bed at night, for fear of a chiding from his father. Sin and prayer are such contraries, that it is impossible at one stride to step from one to another.

Another method Satan has to make the Christian put off prayer, is some worldly business that is to be dispatched. Take heed of overcharging yourself with worldly business, which is done when you grasp more thereof than will consist with your Christian calling. God allows you to give to the world that which is the world's — but He will not allow you to pay the world, that which is due to Him.

We could not easily lack time to pray, if our hearts would but persuade our heads to devise and study how our other affairs might be disposed of, without harm to our devotions. That cloth which a bungler thinks too little for a garment, a good workman can make one of it, and leave some for another use also. O, there is a great deal of art in cutting out time, with little loss. Some look upon every minute of time spent in the closet — as lost in the shop. Does the gardener mow the less, for sharpening his scythe? Does giving thanks to God before a meal, spoil the dinner? No: nor does prayer hinder the Christian either in his employments or enjoyments — but expedites the one, and sanctifies the other. "Acknowledge God in all your ways, and lean not to your own understanding."

Godliness has the "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4:8). This earth below, to a saint, is a land of promise, though not the land that is chiefly promised. God has not promised him Heaven, and left him to the wide world to shift for his outward subsistence; He has not bid them live by faith, for their souls, and live by their wits, for their bodies. No; He who has promised to give him both "grace and glory," has also said, "No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly" (Psalms 84:11). Their bill of fare here, is provided as well as their inheritance hereafter.

Neglect of prayer. When Saul had given over inquiring after God — we hear him knocking at the devil's door, and asking counsel of a witch. Take heed of living near the tempter! If Satan might have his wish, surely it would be this — that the creature might live prayerless.

Satan cannot but deny but great wonders have been wrought by prayer. As the spirit of prayer goes up — so his kingdom goes down. Satan's stratagems against prayer are three: First, If he can, he will keep you from prayer. If that is not feasible, secondly, he will strive to interrupt you in prayer. And, thirdly, if that plot takes not, he will labor to hinder the success of your prayer.

"You cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God" (Job 15:4). Eliphaz' doctrine was true, though his application was false. Sins of commission — are the usual punishments that God inflicts on people for sins of omission. He who leaves a duty, may fear to be left to commit a crime. He who turns his ear from the truth — takes the ready course to be given over to believe fables (2 Timothy 4:4). He who casts off prayer, it is a wonder if you find him not, before long, cast into some foul sin!

Answers to prayer. God has engaged to answer the prayers of His people, and fulfill the desires of those who fear Him (Psalms 145:19). But it proves a long voyage sometimes, before the praying saint has the return of his prayers. There comes often a long and sharp winter — between the sowing time of prayer, and the reaping. He hears us, indeed, as soon as we pray — but we often do not hear of Him as soon. Prayers are not long on their journey to Heaven — but long coming thence in a full answer. Never was faithful prayer lost at sea. No merchant trades with such certainty, as the praying saint. Some prayers, indeed, have a longer voyage than others — but then they come with the richer lading at last!

Sometimes we have speedy return of prayers — "In the day that I cried — you answered me." While the church were at God's door praying for Peter's deliverance — Peter is knocking at theirs, to tell them their prayer is heard.

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