

A TREATISE OF THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD

"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,' Eph. 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, Eph. 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, Eph. 6:11-20. We begin with the first.

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." — Eph. 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,' II Chr. 32:7; 'Say to them that are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong,' Isa. 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,' Gen. 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*, Rom. 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 fouted 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 nickname, 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, II 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, Dan. 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, II Sam. 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*, Isa. 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,' Est. 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 junkets¹ 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, Rev. 21; 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,' Heb. 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

¹. *Junkets*, an old word, which generally, as here, means *sweetmeats*.—ED.

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,' Dan. 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,' I Sam. 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,' II Cor. 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,' Rom. 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,' I Chron. 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,' Rom. 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,' Ps. 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,' Isa. 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. Now², '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

². *Inesse est de esse creaturæ.*

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,' Heb. 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 condescendence: 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, Eph. 1:4, 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,' Rom. 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,' Rom. 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 Sam. 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?³ 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,' Eph. 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,' Ps. 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

³. *Nemo prodiget quod mendicat*—no one will squander what he begs.

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,' Ex. 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, Isa. 26, 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,' ver. 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 Pet. 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?' Num. 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?' ver. 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,' ver. 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,’ Isa. 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.’⁴ 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,’ Rom. 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,’ II Cor. 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

⁴. *Deus amat curristas non quæristas.*

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,' Ex. 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., Num. 14:15, 16. And 'Let the power of my Lord be great,' ver. 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,' Deut. 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.' I 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, Ex. 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,' Isa. 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 Zech. 3, 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,' Gen.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,' I Chron. 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,' Ps. 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,' Ps. 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 con-

fidence 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, Heb. 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,' Heb. 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,' ver. 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, Neh. 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,' ver. 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,' Isa. 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,' Isa. 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,' Ps. 57:7. What makes him so merry in so sad a place as the cave where now he was? he will tell you ver. 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, Isa. 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,' Isa. 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?' Isa. 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 settled 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, Ps. 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 Cor. 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, Hos. 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?' Ps. 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 , *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 darrest 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 ventrest 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 off 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.

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. (Eph. 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,' Rom. 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 sollicitation; 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,' Eph. 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,' Gen. 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. Eph. 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 Eph. 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,' Rom. 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 shall 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 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, Rev. 14:6; there one angel comes forth to preach the everlasting gospel, and another angel follows at his back, ver. 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, Jer. 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, II Cor. 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,' Gen. 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,' II Cor. 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 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 Pet. 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,' Eph. 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 potted 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 ventur'est in battle, therefore thou canst not be too choise 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,' II Cor. 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 Heb. 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. Jud. 16:28. 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,' II Cor. 6:7. The apostle calls sin  an enemy that surrounds us, Heb. 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 repellst 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, ch. 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 art 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

quackled⁵ 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 jostle 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

⁵. *Quackle* is an old word meaning to choke or suffocate.—ED.

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,' Prov. 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, Matt. 23. 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,' Matt. 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 engaged 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, Rom. 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,' Rom. 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,' Eph. 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,' Heb. 5:12.

[*Use and Application.*]

Use. O how few are there endeavour thus to promote 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, hankfully, 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, '*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,

6. 

[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 Thes. 5:16-18. The shield of faith, and helmet of hope, we must hold them to the end, 1 Pet. 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 carriage, here is advantage enough.

Third. Because it is so awky⁷ 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 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

⁷. Awky conveys the meaning of being odd or out of order.

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 it⁸ [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, Jer. 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 thrive; 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,' Ps. 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 displeasing 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

⁸. *Ad unguem.*

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,' Ps. 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 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 cocker⁹ 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

⁹. NOTE: *Cocker* means to coddle or pamper; indulge. — SDB

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 dedolency¹⁰ 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 thracked¹¹ full with money to hold more, Hab. 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,

¹⁰. *Dedolency*, absence of, or want of compunction.

¹¹. *To Thrack* means generally to load or burden.

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 under 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 poorer 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,' II 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, ver. 13. There is a sleepy disease we are subject to in 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 by 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,'¹² saith the apostle, I Cor. 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,' II Pet. 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

¹² . 

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.

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] 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 main designs*, and therein show you

his wiles and policies. HIS FIRST MAIN DESIGN is to draw into sin. The SECOND MAIN DESIGN is to accuse, vex, and trouble the saint for sin.

[SATAN'S FIRST MAIN 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, Ecc. 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,' Ecc. 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, 2, 6, 8, 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 *intra*t 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,ⁱⁱ 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? Matt. 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 serpentⁱⁱⁱ, 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,' II Cor. 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^{iv} 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^v, 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,' ver. 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, I Sam. 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^{vi} 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 wreath 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, II Sam. 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,' Matt. 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., ver. 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, Prov. 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, Josh. 8. 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, Matt. 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,' Deut. 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 embassy, 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, Num. 16:2, 19. Let Jeroboam set up idolatry, and Israel is soon in a snare. It is said [that] the people willingly walked after his commandment, Hos, 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 Chron. 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^{viii}. 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,' Num. 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,' II Cor. 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 gosses. 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^{viii} *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, Jer. 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,' Jer. 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.'^{ix}

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 overreach, 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,' II Cor. 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. 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 Cor. 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, Ps. 19:11.

[SATAN'S SECOND MAIN DESIGN *is to accuse, vex, and trouble the saint for sin.*]

The second main 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 it 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 frightened 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^x, 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, Zech. 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,' Prov. 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,'^{xi} II Cor. 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,' II Chron. 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^{xii} 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 chirurgeon^{xiii}, 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, Eph. 6:6; II Cor. 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, I 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, un lamented 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,' II Sam. 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.^{xiv} 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, Deut. 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? Ps. 77. 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^{xv}; 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? Ps. 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 caught 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, Rom. 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, Rom. 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 keep-est 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,' Rom. 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,' Heb. 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, Heb. 6:6; 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, Jud. 5:25.

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^{xvi}, 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 lovest, 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, ver. 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, II Cor. 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 Gen. 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, Gen. 3:15^{xvii}, 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. 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, Ps. 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, Matt. 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, II Cor. 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^{xviii}], 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, I Cor. 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, Ps. 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^{xix}]. 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, Ps. 51. 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 them 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,' Isa. 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., ver. 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 breach 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 surgeon. 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 Chr. 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 Chr. 21:10, 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, Isa. 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,' ver. 16. Whose spirit is there meant? Not [that] of the presumptuous sinner; he goes on, and never blinks; 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^{xx} 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 Pet. 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 heterogeneous 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^{xxi}; 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, II Sam. 21.) 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

[*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, Deut. 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

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.

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 spiritfull. 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^{xxii}. 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 is 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, Jer. 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.

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' (Eph. 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 described 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,*’ Eph. 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’^{xxiii}, 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^{xxiv}. 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, Isa. 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, II Sam. 12. 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 they wrestle *against his Spirit*. We read of the Spirit striving against the creature, 'My spirit shall not always strive with man,' Gen. 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, I Peter 3:19. The pains that Moses, Aaron, and other servants of God took in

instructing Israel, is called the instruction of the Spirit, Neh. 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, Eze. 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, Isa. 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,' Zech. 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,^{xxv} [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 dispose 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,' ver. 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, ver. 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, II Tim. 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^{xxvi} [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, Est. 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 meantst 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, Ps. 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 veil 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,’ Eph. 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;’* Matt. 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,’* I Cor. 15:50; that is, sinful mortal flesh; as it is expounded in the words following. I consulted not with flesh and blood, Gal.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^{xxvii}, 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,' Rom. 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^{xxviii}. 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', Isa. 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,' II Cor. 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 goodness to the flower of the field, Isa. 40:6. Yea, he is called vanity. 'Men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie,' Ps. 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 primest in? Flesh is grass, but beauty is the vanity of this vanity. This goodness 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 off 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, Ps. 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 off upon themselves, that they cannot perform their enterprise^{xxix}. 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,' Ps. 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^{xxx}. 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 Matt. 10, 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^{xxxii} 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;* Ps. 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?' Isa. 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^{xxxiii} 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, Prov. 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^{xxxiii} [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^{xxxiv}, [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, II Cor. 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, Rev. 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^{xxxv} 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:^{xxxvi} 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.

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. Eph. 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, ver. 11, to be the head or monarch, and these, ver. 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, Matt. 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^{xxxvii} 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, Rev. 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, Rev. 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, II Chr. 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,' Rom. 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,' I Tim. 4:1^{xxxviii}. Princes have their^{xxxix} 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, Rev. 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^{x1} 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 honestest 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 may 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, Rom. 8:2; the other a law of holiness, Rom. 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, Rom. 6:16^{xli}; '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^{xlii}. 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 *nimum 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, II Sam. 7. 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^{xliii}, 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^{xliiv}, 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,' Mal. 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, II Sam. 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,' II Sam. 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, II Tim. 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^{xlv} [the power of the air]. In a word, he is called ‘the god of this world,’ II Cor. 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, Ps. 103:20. Strength is put for angels, Ps. 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. 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; 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,' Isa. 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, 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, Gal. 2:8; I Thes. 2:13. Satan worketh effectually in the children of disobedience, Eph. 2:2, the word in the original being the same as in the former places^{xlvi}, —he is in a manner as efficacious with them, as the Holy Spirit with the other. His delusions [are] 'strong,' II Thes. 2:11; they return not^{xlvii}, [without accomplishing their object]. The Spirit enlightens; he 'blinds the minds of them which believe not,' II Cor. 4:4. The Spirit fills the saints, Eph. 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 sollicitations, 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, Isa. 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^{xlviii} 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^{xlix}, [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,' Isa. 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 faster¹, 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^{li} 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,' Isa. 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*^{lii} 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 Cor. 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,' Dan. 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 Cor. 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,' ver. 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,' Num. 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 Tim. 6:9. O poor sinners! were it not wisdom, before you truck^{liii} 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,' II Tim. 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].

*Hæc habeo quæ edi, quæ exacurata libido
Hausit^{liv}.*

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^{lv} '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 horæ*—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^{lvi} 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 splash 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,' Isa. 50:10; sometimes to express the nature of all sin; so, Eph. 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 poisonous 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, 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^{lviii}.] 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*. Sinners are called the children of the devil, 1 Jon 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,' Matt. 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,                    , 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, Prov. 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 is 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, Matt 24, 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, Matt. 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, Heb. 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,' Prov. 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,' Ps. 119:56; what was the great reward he got? 'I have remembered thy name, O Lord, in the night, and have kept thy law,' ver. 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,' Rom. 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,' Heb. 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 Sam. 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 reformings, 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,' Ex. 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^{lviii} 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^{lix}; 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,' Ex. 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, Ex. 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, II Tim. 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, Jer. 2, 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,' Isa. 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,' Isa. 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, Isa. 6. 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. 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, I Cor. 15, having reproved the sensuality of some, ver. 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, II Tim. 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 puræ tenebræ* [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, Gen. 12; 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,' Ps. 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 Chr. 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, Prov. 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?' ver.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,' Gen. 18:17, 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,' Eze. 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, ver. 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,' Hos. 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,' II Sam. 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, Neh. 4. 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, Jer. 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, Zech. 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,' Heb. 6:1. 'Let us;' it is well, indeed,

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,' Rom. 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^{lx} 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,' II Cor. 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 scorers 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,' Prov. 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 re-

member the curse that is to fall upon his head 'that maketh the blind to wander out of the way?' Deut. 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,' II Thes. 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,' Ecc. 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, II Chr. 1:10. All these outward enjoyments are but *vaginæ bonorum* [the shells of blessings], as afflictions are *vaginæ 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, Rev. 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,' Prov. 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, Eze. 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, Jer. 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^{lxi} 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,' Rom. 1:18, the next news you hear from them is, that they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened, ver. 21.

Answer Third. Ply the throne of grace. He is the best student in divinity that studies most upon his knees^{lxii}. 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                  —a gift and no gift. Pray then with an humble boldness. God gives it all to ask, and that                —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,' Dan. 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^{lxiii}.] 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,' Ps. 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:^{lxiv} '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, Gen. 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, ver. 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,^{lxv} 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, II Cor. 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, I Thes. 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, Prov. 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] $\epsilon\gamma\omega\sigma\tau\iota\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota\ \epsilon\pi\iota\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omega\sigma\tau\omega\sigma\epsilon\omega\sigma$, 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 $\epsilon\gamma\omega\sigma\tau\iota\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota\ \epsilon\pi\iota\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omega\sigma\tau\omega\sigma\epsilon\omega\sigma$ but $\epsilon\gamma\omega\sigma\tau\iota\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota\ \epsilon\pi\iota\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omega\sigma\tau\omega\sigma\epsilon\omega\sigma$, 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?' Heb. 1:14. The evil 'And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him,' I 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, Col. 1:16; the fall of some from their first estate, Jude 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, Heb. 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,' Matt. 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,' Rom. 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            , *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^{lxvi}? 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                                  , 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^{lxvii}, 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^{xviii} 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,' Prov. 24:9. Mercury is poison in the water distilled, as well as in the gross body. Uncleanliness, 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,' Heb. 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 Sam. 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 off 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, Ps. 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,' Prov. 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, II Cor. 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.' Ps. 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, he 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, II Tim. 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,' I Peter 2:2^{lxix}; 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 Cor. 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,' I 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, Heb. 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, Gal. 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,' II Tim. 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 Heb. 13:2; but he would not have us carried about with strange doctrine, ver. 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 carcasses of other sins. 'That sin is with great difficulty avoided which springs from a victory of our vices.'^{lxx} 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 caught 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, I Cor. 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 Cor. 1, but not in grace; none [were] so charged for weakness in that, 1 Cor. 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;' ver. 3, 'One saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos,' ver. 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^{lxxi}.' 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^{lxvii} 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 heterogeneous 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 33:17,19. 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 upset 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 Sam. 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,' Prov. 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, Num. 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?' ver. 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, Num. 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?' Matt. 20:15, as if Christ had said, What hath any to do with cavil, at my disposal 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, Num. 12, 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 hectic feverish fire in the body is to the kindly heat of nature. 'Charity envieth not,' I Cor. 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.'^{lxxiii} 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," Prov. 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, Rom. 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^{lxxiv} [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, Matt. 5, 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,' Gal. 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,' II Chr. 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?' II Sam. 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 Cor. 4:8. I pray observe how he lays the accent on the particule *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,’ Gal. 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,^{lxxv} ‘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,’ Rom. 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, Heb. 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,' Heb. 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!'^{lxxvi}

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, Col. 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, Hag. 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 refuseth 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,' Rom. 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 acceptance 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,' Rom. 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,' Rom. 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,' Rom. 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^{lxxvii} 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—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 retest 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,’ Ps. 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 Tim 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,' Gal. 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.'^{lxxviii} 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,' Ps. 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., Eze. 36:31. And when shall this be, but when God would save them from all their uncleannesses? as appears, ver. 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^{lxxix} 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.

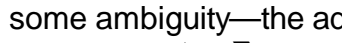
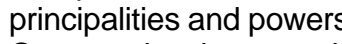
3. Remember thou dependest on God for the continuance of thy comfort. They are not the smiles thou hadst yesterday [that] make thee joyous to-day, any more than the bread thou didst then eat can make thee strong without more. Thou needest new discoveries for new comforts. Let God hide his face, and thou 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,’ Deut. 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,’ Ps. 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,’ Heb. 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,’ Lam. 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,^{lxxx} ‘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, , 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; , saith Occumenius, is as much as if the apostle had said,^{lxxxii} ‘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,^{lxxxii} 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, Heb. 8:5,

may, 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 main 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^{lxxxiii}—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 I Sam. 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 looks 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?'^{lxxxiv} 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*,^{lxxxv} 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!'^{lxxxvi} 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^{lxxxvii} 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,' II 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,' Eze. 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,'^{lxxxviii} 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, Gen. 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, Ps. 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,' II Sam. 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,' Ps. 63. 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,' Isa. 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, Heb. 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  (r<v), a great deal, but as Jacob to him, I have  (k<l), all, all I want, all I desire, Gen. 33:9,11; as David expresseth it, 'This is all my salvation, and all my desire,' II Sam. 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^{lxxxix} 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,' Ps. 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,’ Isa. 33:24. Thou mayest miss of worldly honour, and obtain, with those worthies of Christ, Heb. 11, 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 for 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,’ Gal. 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, chap. 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, II Sam. 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^{xc} 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?

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’ — Eph. 6:13

The Apostle in these words reassumes his former exhortation mentioned, ver. 11, and presseth it with a new force, from that more particular discovery which he gives of the enemy, ver. 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.

[THE EXHORTATION WITH THE INFERENCE.]

'Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God,' — Eph. 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, ver. 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 ver. 11, affords a different note. There it is 'put on;'¹³ here it is, 'take unto you.'¹⁴

¹³ . v .

¹⁴ . _v v .

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 wishly¹⁵ 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, ver. 11, 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 superstructure 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.

¹⁵. *Wishly*, an adverb of local usage, meaning *with longing, wishfully*.

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 his mind: 'I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them,' II 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, Ecc. 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*,¹⁶ 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,

¹⁶. _v v .

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

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

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,' II John 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,' ver. 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.

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

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

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 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

(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

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.

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

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, Rev. 2:5, to Ephesus, 'Repent and do

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 dispose 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.*

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 ver. 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,' Ps. 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,' Rom. 5:1; and, 'We rejoice in the hope of glory,' ver. 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

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

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, Rom. 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?

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

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

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.

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,' Heb. 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,’ Eph. 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,’* Gen. 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, Zech. 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;*¹⁷ 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.

¹⁷. _v _ _ _ _ ov .

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, Heb. 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

(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,' Isa. 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

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 to the 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 fearful 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, Gen 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?' Ps. 49:4,5.

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,' Matt. 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,' Gen. 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

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,' Ecc. 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

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.

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 naturæ*—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

(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

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.

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 long-suffering of our Lord is salvation,' II Peter 3:15, which place he quotes out of Paul, Rom. 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 obliga-

tion 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

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

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 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.

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 be 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

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 won-

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 she 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.

der 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,' Matt. 24:48,50,51. 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?' Dan. 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,' ver. 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

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

flood came and swept them all away,' Matt. 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.

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

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, Gen 24:53. 'All the promises of God are

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.

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 fadge¹⁸ 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,' Ps. 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,

¹⁸. *Fadge*, an obsolete word, to agree; also, suit, fit.

(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:¹⁹ 'I am ready to be offered up,' II Tim. 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,' II 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, bok 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 displeasing 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 bogle²⁰ 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.

¹⁹.

²⁰. *Bogle*, To start with fright or amazement.—SDB.

SECOND ARGUMENT.—THIS HATH RESPECT TO THE HAPPY ISSUE OF THE WAR.

‘*And having done all, to stand,*’ Eph. 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

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,’ Ps. 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

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 *satis Deum habere si corde et animo suspiciatur, licet actu minus fiat*—‘Godhath enough,’ they think, ‘if he be feared and revered 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, Jer. 7.

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 word²¹ 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,' Ps. 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 *prælio*, 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,' Heb. 10:36. There is a remarkable accent on that henceforth, which Paul mentions, II Tim. 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, Rom. 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, II 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.'²² 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,' Heb. 10:38. The apostate is said to tread upon 'the Son of God,' Heb. 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,' Ps. 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*

²². *Comparationem videtur egisse qui utrumque cognoverit, et judicato pronuntiâsse eum meliorem, cujus se rursus esse maluerit.*

hell. Now and then we see a Eutychus raised, that hath fallen from such a height; and you that stand,

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

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

take heed lest you fall.

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,' Prov. 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,' II Tim. 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.

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

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,' I 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.

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.

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,*' Heb. 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,' Rom. 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,' Isa. 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 Isa. 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

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,' Eze. 36:27. He doth not say they shall have his Spirit if

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,' Isa. 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.

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

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 Rom. 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

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 main design of God in the gospel-covenant, reflects sadly on the honour of Christ, and wounds the saint's comfort to the heart.

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,' I Cor. 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,' Eph. 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 not²³ dash the generous wine of God's word with the water of man's conceits, II Cor. 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,' Ps. 89:33; and ver. 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.

²³.

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, Jer. 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,' Rom. 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

(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

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

prayer of faith, and if they be not worth sending this messenger to heaven, truly they are worth little.

filthiness of flesh and spirit, II Cor. 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.

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

Second. To stand, is here to *stand justified and acquitted* at the great day of judgement. The phrase is 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,' Ps. 1:5, that is, they shall not be justified. 'If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?' Ps. 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

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!

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,' Zech. 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,' II Sam. 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

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

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

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' (Eph. 6:14).

The apostle had laid down in general, ver. 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;'* — , *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,

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,' Heb. 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,

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.

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 prole²⁴ 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?' Gen. 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, Heb. 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 word²⁵ 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.

²⁴. *Shark*, to search, and prowl about; live by petty theft.

Prole, sometimes *prolle*, to search or prowl about for anything. — ED.

²⁵. — o .

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,' Eph. 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

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*

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.*]

our place. When a captain sees his soldiers march, or fight out 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,' Prov. 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

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,' Num. 2:2. The Septuagint translates it—according to order. God

'meditate upon these things,' and 'give himself wholly' to the discharge of his duty, as a Christian, in such a place and calling—*v o o _*, be in *them*, let thy heart be on thy work, and thou wholly be taken up about it, I Tim 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, 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.

allows no stragglers from their station in his army of saints. 'As the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk,' I Cor. 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,' I Thes. 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 _ , *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, I 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.

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,' Ps. 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,' I Cor. 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

[*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 II Sam. 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. 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.

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,' Prov. 27:8. God took special care that the bird sitting over her eggs in her nest should not be hurt; Deut. 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 6²⁶, 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,' Col. 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, Eph. 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 bottoms²⁷ 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,' Ps. 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,' Ps. 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,' I 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 Johannes 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—

²⁶. _ o ov o _ v _ ov.

²⁷. *Bottoms*, vessels of burden.

Disce meo exemplo mandato munere fungi,
Et fuge ceu pestem
o o v v.

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, I Tim. 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, *æstuat infelix 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 Num. 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 shoar²⁸ up his glory, truth, or church.

²⁸. *Shoar*, usually spelled *shore*, to prop up, support.

(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, Ex. 22, 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

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 invenit et mortuum reliquit*—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,

and commissioned 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.*]

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, Ps. 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*²⁹ *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,’ Matt. 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? II Sam. 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

²⁹. *Slubbered*, performed in a slipshod fashion.—SDB.

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

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,' Ex. 27:20; 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

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.

to 'winnow' them, Luke 22. 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, Gen 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

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? II Chr. 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, Matt. 23:23.

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. Begin *at the right end of your work*, Christian, by placing your chief care about these main 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 main 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.

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' (Eph. 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, Rom. 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, Deut. 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, Ps. 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,’ Eph. 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 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^{xci} 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,' ver. 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,' Gen. 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 off 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,' Rev. 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, II 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,' II John 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, Gal. 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, II 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, II Peter 2:3, 'with feigned words' to 'make merchandise' of souls—sometimes to hucksters, that blend and dash their wine with water, II Cor. 2:17—sometimes to cheating gamesters, that have a sleight of hand to cog the die, Eph. 4:14—yea, to witches themselves: 'Who hath bewitched you?' saith the apostle, Gal. 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 II Tim. 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,' ver. 7, he then turns to Timothy [with the words], 'But thou hast fully known my doctrine,' ver. 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,' Prov. 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^{xcii}—'By good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple,' Rom. 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,' Eph. 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,' II 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-quickenning 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 farther 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,' I Cor. 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, I Thes. 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,' ver. 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, Gal. 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,' II Tim 2:14; Titus 1:11. The house must needs be in danger when the groundsels^{xciii} 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,' Jer. 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^{xciiv} 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 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,' Ps. 111:10.

Answer Second. We must distinguish *between truths*. Some are fundamental, others are superstrucory. Now, though many eminent for piety as well as parts, are in the dark concerning some of the superstrucory 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^{xcv} 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 Tim. 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, ver. 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 concerns. 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,' Eph. 4:11, 12; and mark, 'that henceforth we be no more children tossed to and fro,' &c., ver. 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,' Neh. 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 glistening 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,' II Tim. 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. *Quæ 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 *feelst 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^{xvii} 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, I 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^{xcvii} 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,' Heb. 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, Rev. 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 Tim. 6:11. While others are proling^{xcviii} 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 ver. 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 ver. 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,’ Rom. 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,’ II Tim. 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 3. ‘Unto them,’ saith the apostle, speaking of the Jews, ‘were committed the oracles of God,’ Rom. 3:2. They were concredited with that heavenly treasure. So Paul Exhorts Timothy to ‘hold fast the form of sound words,’ II Tim. 1:13, and this, he calls the ‘good thing which was committed to him,’ ver. 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, Ps 19:7; Isa.20; Heb. 12:1; Rev. 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 innocence 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, Matt. 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^{xcix} 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, Rev. 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,' Ps. 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!' ver. 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 slightly, rather than seriously spoken, John 18. Our Saviour had told him, ver. 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 abbeyes, 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      —really to love, another         —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^c; 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, Num. 12—when the people had committed idolatry! His heart was so inflamed 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,’ Ps. 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,’ Ps. 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,’ I 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, Rev. 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^{ci}, 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^{cii} 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 Psalm 19:7, and so on.

Truth is '*pure*;' this made David love it, Ps. 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,' Eze. 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, Ps. 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,' ver. 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, Eph. 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, Rev. 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, Rev. 21:8, and all that run away from truth's colours, Heb. 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,' Ps. 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, Heb. 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 Cor. 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,' Isa. 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,' Gen. 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 Sam. 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, Gen. 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 Cor. 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, Eph. 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 grafted, that makes him fruitful; and therefore he reserves all the fruit he bears for him. Thus we see how this mortal^{ciii} 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,' Gen. 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, Ecc. 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, II Cor. 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, II Cor. 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,' Eze. 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,' II Cor. 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.' Gen. 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 II Cor. 1:12, for sincerity is emphatical,       —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, Rev. 13, 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, Ecc. 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,’ Isa. 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^{civ} 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,'

Ps. 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, II Tim. 1:5. ‘Here is water,’ saith the eunuch, ‘what doth hinder me to be baptized?’ Acts 8:36. Now mark Philip’s answer, ver. 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, Prov. 10:9.

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, II Chr. 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,' I 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 jostle 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, I 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, ver. 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,' Matt. 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,' II 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, Heb. 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, Eph 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, Gen. 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; —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, be-

cause 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,' Prov. 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, Num. 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 ver. 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, ver. 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,' Matt. 22:16, then did they play the hypocrites, and had a plot to decoy him by his glozing^{CV} speech into danger; as you may perceive, ver. 15—they came that 'they might entangle him.' But good Nathaniel had no plot in his head in his coming, but to find the Messiah 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 Messiah, 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,' I Chr. 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, II Chr. 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, ver. 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, ver. 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, I 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,' Isa. 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,' Jer. 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,' ver. 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,' ver. 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,' I 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 failings 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,' II Chr. 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,' II 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,' Isa. 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,' Ps. 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,' ver. 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,' Isa. 10:5,6; see Jer. 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,' Eze. 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,' ver. 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^{cvi} 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] Matt. 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^{cvi} 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,’ Ps. 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 scorers. 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,’ Ps. 32:5. This sin seems very probably to have been his adultery with Bathsheba, and murder of Uriah, by his long ‘keeping silence,’ ver. 3; by the pardon he had immediately given in upon confessing, ver. 5, which we know Nathan delivered to him; and by his further purpose to continue confessing of it, which appeared by the mournful Psalm 51, 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,' Rev. 3:2. I have not found them *full*^{cvi} '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, II Sam. 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?' Gen. 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,' Matt. 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, Rev. 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 accidentally. His glistening 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,' Ps. 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?' I Cor. 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^{cix} 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, Gen. 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*^{cx} [*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^{cx} 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,' ver. 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, ver. 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 Sam. 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 shaken 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 helpst 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^{cxiii} 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,' Prov. 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. 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, II Cor. 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 knocked 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^{cxiii}, 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 from 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^{cxiv} 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,' Ps. 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,' Mal. 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 Cor. 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. Eze. 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, slumbering 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 roiling 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,' Isa. 29:15; 'their heart is deep,' Ps. 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, II Cor. 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 or 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,’ Ps. 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,’ ver. 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 forgot 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 haymows^{cxv}, 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 displeasing 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? Ps. 139:21. His own conscience answers to it: ‘I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies,’ ver. 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,’ ver. 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,' II Sam. 12:13; in another place, 'I have sinned greatly, and done very foolishly,' II Sam. 24; 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,' Ps. 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,' I Sam. 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,’ Lam. 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,’ Prov. 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 obedientiæ*—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,’ Ps. 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,’ *Ecc.* 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, *Ex.* 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 subtly to hide the secret enmity it hath against it.

(3.) The sincere soul is *uniform quoad circumstantias obedientiæ—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,’ *Psa.* 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,’ *Psa.* 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, Ps. 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,' Ps. 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,' ver. 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,’ Matt. 23. 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^{cxvi}, 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,’ Lev. 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^{cxvii}. 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^{cxviii}; 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 5:40,43, 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, Matt 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 rai-

ment, that thou mayest be clothed,' &c., Rev. 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^{cxix}, 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,' Matt. 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 Ps. 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,' Gen. 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,' Heb. 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,' Ps. 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. Heb. 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, Ex. 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,' II Chr. 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, Deut. 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,' Ps. 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,' Deut. 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, II Tim. 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,' Ps. 78:34,36. 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?' Jer. 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 ver. 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, I Cor. 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 juggle 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?' II Sam. 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 carriage to him, 'Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me,' Jer. 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,' Deut. 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 heart 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,' Jer. 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^{cxx} 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,' Ps. 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^{cxxi}, 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 Cor. 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, dissemble 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,' Isa. 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, Deut. 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 ver. 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, Zech. 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,' Ps. 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,' Dan. 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^{cxvii}, 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, Gal. 2:12, compared with ver. 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,    —'above all keeping keep thy heart,' Prov. 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,' II 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, Rev. 2:17. And I hope thou dost not think this to be such an *ens rationis*—an imaginary thing, as the philosopher's stone^{cxxiii} 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,' II Cor. 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,' I 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^{cxxiv} 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 nightlight 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 to 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,' Gen. 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.

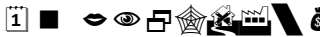
Again, may be the thing God would have thee deny thyself in is thy wrath and revenge, which, to give thee a fair occasion to do with greater demonstration of thy sincerity, he puts thy enemy into thy power, and lays him bound, as it were, under thy hand; yea, so orders it in his providence, that thou 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 Sam. 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, put in the tabernacle 'behind the ephod,' as a memorial of what God had done by it in David's hand, 1 Sam. 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,' 11 Sam. 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 Sam. 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 Cor. 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, Ecc. 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,' Ps. 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.

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,' Ps. 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,' , with incorruption, Eph. 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,' Prov. 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,' Ps. 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 Psalm, ver. 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,' Prov. 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, Num. 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, Ps. 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, ver. 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, ver. 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?' Gen. 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,' II 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,' II Chr. 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, Gen. 45:5. And what preserved him in his hour of great temptation? He told them, Gen. 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 Neh. 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,' Prov. 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 Sam. 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*, Ps. 19:7. 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul,' Heb.  (mashab)—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: Prov. 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 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,’ Ps. 37:16. But why? See the reason: ‘For the arms of the wicked shall be broken; but the Lord upholdeth the righteous,’ ver. 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,’ II Tim. 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, Isa. 6:9,10. It melts and breaks the sincere soul, as in Josiah, II Kings 22:19; but meeting with a naughty false heart, it hardens exceedingly, as appeared in the same Jews, Jer. 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,’ Ps. 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 harp did. ‘My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise,’ Ps. 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^{cxxv} 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,' Lam. 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, Heb. 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^{cxxxvi}, 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,' Ps. 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, ver. 4. His enemies from this take advantage to speak him all to naught, ver. 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, ver. 6; yea, they are not ashamed to say, ver. 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, ver. 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,' ver. 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' ver. 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,' Ps. 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*, Ps. 38. 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,' Ps. 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,' Ps. 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,' II Cor. 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,' ver. 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,' Jer. 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,' Ps. 101:2—careful in the nurture of his children, as appears in his pious counsel to Solomon, I Chr. 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,' II Sam. 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,' Jer. 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, Jer. 20; who was a man that bare great sway at court in Jeremiah's time, a bitter enemy to the 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, ver. 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,' Ps. 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,' Gen. 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 to the 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 Matt. 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,' Isa. 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,' Ps. 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,^{cxxvii} '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,' Ps. 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,' II Sam. 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,' ver. 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,' ver. 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?'

DIRECTION SIXTH.

THE SEVERAL PIECES OF THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD.

Second Piece—The Christian's Breastplate.

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

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

THE EXPLANATION OF THE WORDS.

FIRST INQUIRY.

[*The righteousness meant.*]

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

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

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

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

Third. This perfect personal obedience *must be perpetual*. This law allows no after-gain. If the law be once broken, though but in one very thought, there is no place for repentance in that covenant, though it were attended with a life afterward never so exact and spotless. *After-obedience* being but due, cannot make amends for former disobedience. He doth not satisfy the law for killing a man once, that doeth so no more. How desperate were our condition, if we could not be listed in Christ’s muster-roll, till we were provided with such a breastplate as this is? Adam indeed had such a righteousness made to his hand. His heart and the law were in unison; *it answered it*, as face answers face in a glass. It was as natural to him to be righteous, as now it is to his posterity to be unrighteous. God was the engraver of his own image upon man, which consisted in righteousness and holiness. And he who made all so perfect, that upon a review of the whole creation, he neither added nor altered anything, but saw ‘all very good,’ was not less curious in the master-piece of all his work, he ‘made man perfect.’ But Adam sinned, and

defiled our nature, and now our nature defiles us; so that, never since could Adam’s *plate*—righteousness, I mean—fit the breast of any mere man. If God would save all the world for *one* such righteous man—as once he offered to do Sodom for ten—that *one* could not be found. The apostle divides all the world into ‘Jew and Gentile,’ Rom. 3:9. He is not afraid to lay them all in the dirt;—we have before proved that they are ‘all under sin. As it is written, There is none, no, not one.’ Not the most boastful philosopher among the Gentiles, nor the precisest Pharisee among the Jews—we may go yet further—not the holiest saint that ever lived, can stand righteous before that bar. ‘Enter not into judgment with thy servant,’ saith David, ‘for in thy sight shall no man living be justified,’ Ps. 143:2. God hath nailed that door up, that none can for ever enter by a law-righteousness into life and happiness. This way to heaven is like the northern passage to the Indies—whoever attempts it, is sure to be frozen up before he gets halfway thither.

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

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

Second. Because this is *the righteousness, and not the other, which God hath ordained to be the meritorious cause of the justification of our persons, and also of the acceptance of our inherent righteousness imparted by him to us*. Now, this righteousness belongs to ‘the fourth piece of armour’—the ‘shield of faith’—indeed we find it bearing its name from that grace, Rom. 4:11, where it is called ‘the righteousness of faith,’

because apprehended and applied by faith unto the soul. The 'righteousness' therefore which is here compared to 'the breastplate,' is the latter of the two, and that is, the righteousness of our sanctification, which I called a righteousness imparted, or a righteousness wrought by Christ in the believer. Now, this take, thus described. It is a supernatural principle of a new life planted in the heart of every child of God by the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit, whereby they endeavour to approve themselves to God and man, in performing what the word of God requires to be performed to both. Briefly let us unfold what is rolled up in this description.

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

2. Here is *the work produced—a supernatural principle of a new life*. (1.) By a *principle of life*, I mean, an inward disposition and quality, sweetly, powerfully, and constantly inclining it to that which is holy; so that the Christian, though passive in the production, is afterward active, and co-working with the Spirit in all actions of holiness; not as a lifeless instrument is in the hand of a musician, but as a living child in the hand of a father. Therefore they are said to be 'led by the Holy Spirit,' Rom. 8:14. (2.) It is a *principle of new life*; the Spirit's work was not chafe and recover what was swooning, but to work a life *de novo*—anew, in a soul quite dead: 'You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses,' Eph. 2:1. The devil comes as orator, to persuade by argument, when he tempts; the Spirit as a creator, when he converts. The devil draws forth and enkindles what he finds raked up in the heart before; but the Holy Spirit puts into the soul what he finds not there—called in

Scripture the 'seed' of God, I John 3:9. 'Christ formed in you,' Gal. 4:19, the 'new creature,' Gal. 6:15, the 'law' put by God into the inner man, Jer. 31:33, which Paul calls 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,' Rom. 8:2. (3.) It is a *supernatural principle*. By this we distinguish it from Adam's righteousness and holiness, which was co-natural to him, as now sin is to us; and, had he stood, would have been propagated to us as naturally as now his sin is. Holiness was as natural to Adam's soul as health was to his body, they both resulting *ex principiis recte constitutis*—from principles pure and rightly disposed.

3. Here is *the soil or subject* in which the Spirit plants this principle of holiness—*the child of God*. 'Because ye are sons, he hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts,' Gal. 4:6. Not a child in all his family that is unlike his Father—'as is the heavenly, so are they that are heavenly'—and none but children have this stamp of true holiness on them. As the apostle, Rom. 8:9, concludes, we 'have not his Spirit' if we be 'in the flesh'—that is in an unholy sinful state—so he concludes, we are 'not his' children if we 'have not his Spirit,' thus transforming and sanctifying us. There is indeed a holiness and sanctification, taken in a large sense, which may be found in such as are not children. So all the children of believers are 'holy,' I Cor. 7, who are not all children of God. Yea false professors also gain the name of being sanctified, Heb. 10:29, because they pretend to be so. But that which the Scripture calls righteousness and true holiness, is a sculpture the Spirit engraves on none but the children of God. The Spirit sanctifies none but whom Christ prays his Father to 'sanctify,' and they are his peculiar number given to God of him, John 17:17.

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

God with all his might and main. The seed which the sanctifying Spirit cast into the soul, is not lost in the soil, but quickly shows it is alive by the fruit it bears.

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

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

7. Here is the *order of its actings*—as 'to God and man;' so, first *to God*, and then *to man*; yea,

to God, in his righteousness and charity to man. Paul saith of the Macedonians that they first gave 'their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God,' II Cor. 8:5. God is first served, and man, in obedience to the will of God.

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

SECOND INQUIRY.

[*Why righteousness is compared to a breastplate.*]

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

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

the conscience from all wounds and harms from sin, which is the weapon Satan useth to give the conscience its deadly stab with.

SECOND. The breastplate, by defending this principal part, *emboldens the soldier, and makes him fearless of danger*; and that is as necessary in fight as the other. It is almost all one for an army to be killed or cowed. A dead soldier slain upon the place, will do, in a manner, as much good, as a dead-hearted soldier that is dismayed with fear—his heart is killed while he is alive—and a naked breast exposeth the unarmed soldier to a trembling heart; whereas one otherwise cowardly, having his breast well defended with a plate of proof, will the more boldly venture upon the pikes. Thus,

righteousness, by defending the conscience, fills the creature with courage in the face of death and danger; whereas guilt—which is the nakedness of the soul—puts the stoutest sinner into a shaking fit of fear. 'The wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous are bold as a lion,' Prov. 28:1. They say sheep are scared by the clatter of their own feet as they run. So is the sinner with the din of his guilt. No sooner did Adam see his plate off, and himself to be naked, but he is afraid at God's voice, as if he had never been acquainted with him. Never can we truly recover our courage, till we recover our holiness—'If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God,' I John 3:21.

CONNECTION OF THE BREASTPLATE AND GIRDLE.

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

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

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

THE CHRISTIAN'S ESPECIAL CARE—TO KEEP ON HIS BREASTPLATE.

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

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

BRANCH FIRST.

[*God's great design—his people's holiness.*]

[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.

REASON FIRST. *In regard of God, whose great design is, to have his people 'a holy people.'* This is enough to oblige, yea to provoke, every Christian to promote what God hath so strongly set upon his heart to effect. He deserves to be cashiered that endeavours not to pursue what his general declares to be his design; and he to have his name blotted out of Christ's muster-roll whose heart stands not on tiptoes ready to march, yea to run, on his design. It is an honourable epitaph which Paul sets on the memory of David, long before deceased, that he, 'in his own generation served the will of

God,' Acts 13:36. He made it the business of his life to carry on God's designs: and all gracious hearts touched with the same loadstone of God's love stand to the same point. All the private ends of a sincere soul are swallowed up in this, that he may 'do the will of God in his generation.' This he heartily prays for, 'Thy will be done.' This is his study—to find what is the 'good and acceptable will of God,' which is the very cause why he loves the Bible above all the books of the world beside, because in none but that can he find what is the mind and will of God concerning him. Now I shall endeavour to show that this is the great design of God *to have his people holy*. It runs like a silver thread through all God's other designs.

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

Second. It was his design in *sending his Son into the world*. It could be no small occasion that brought him hither. God wants not servants to go on his ordinary errands. The glorious angels, who behold his face continually, are ready to fly wherever he sends them. But here God had a work to do of such importance, that he would put trust, not in his servants, but [in] his Son alone to

accomplish. Now, what God's design was in this great work will appear by knowing what Christ's was, for they—both Father and Son—were agreed what should be done before he came upon the stage of action. See therefore the very bottom of Christ's heart in this his great undertaking opened. He 'gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,' Titus 2:14. Had man kept his primitive righteousness, Christ's pain and pains had been spared. It was man's lost holiness he came to recover. It had not been an enterprise becoming the greatness and holiness of such a one as the Son of God to engage for less than this. Both God and man, between whom Christ comes to negotiate, call for holiness—God's glory and man's happiness; neither of which can be attained except holiness be restored to man. Not God's glory, who, as he is glorious in the holiness of his own nature and works, so is he glorified by the holiness of his people's hearts and lives. Were it possible—which is the height of all blasphemy to think—that the holiness of God could be separated from any of his attributes or works, God himself would cease to be glorious; his sovereignty would degenerate into tyranny, his wisdom into craft, his justice into cruelty, &c. Now the glory of all God's attributes and works resulting from his holiness in them all; it follows, that then we glorify God, when we give him the glory of his holiness, and who but a holy creature will or can do that? While man stands under the power of sin, how can he give God the glory of that which his own sinful nature makes him defy and hate God for? Had Christ's therefore been to procure man a pardon, and not to restore his lost holiness, he had been but a minister of sin's, and instead of bringing glory to God, had set sin in the throne, and only obtained a liberty for the creature to dishonour God without control. Again, man's happiness could not have been obtained without a recovery of his lost holiness. Man's happiness stands in his likeness to God, and his fruition of God. He must have the first before he can enjoy the latter; he must be like God before God can take any liking in him. And God must take full content in man, before he admits him to the enjoyment of himself, which that he may do, Christ undertakes to make his people 'holy as God is holy.' You see now what was the great

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

Third. It is God's great design, *in the regenerating work of the Spirit* on the hearts of his people, to make them righteous, and to fit them to walk holily before him, Eze. 36:26,27, where God promiseth 'a new heart,' and to 'put his Spirit into them.' And why will he do this? that he may cause them to 'walk in his statutes, keep his judgments, and do them.' An old heart would have served well enough to have done the devil's drudgery withal. But God intending them for more high and noble employment, to lift up their head out of sin's prison, and prefer them to his own service, therefore he throws away their jail-clothes, and beautifies them with the graces of his Spirit, that their hearts suit their work. When God ordered the temple to be built with such curious care and costly materials, he declared that he intended it for holy use. That however was not so glorious as the spiritual temple of a regenerate heart is, which is the 'workmanship' of God himself, Eph. 2:10. And for what intent reared by him? If we read on we may see, 'created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.' This accents the unrighteousness and unholiness of a saint with a circumflex; it lays a deeper aggravation I mean upon his sin, than others', because committed against such a work of the Spirit as none have in the world besides. A sin acted in the temple was greater than if the same had been committed by a Jew in his private dwelling, because the temple was a consecrated place. The saint is a consecrated person, and, by acts of unrighteousness, he profanes God's temple.

The sin of another is theft, because he robs God of the glory due to him; but the sin of a saint is sacrilege, because he robs God of that which is devoted to him in an especial manner. Better not to repent at all than to repent of our repentance. 'Better not to vow' and dedicate ourselves to him, and after this to inquire how we may evade and repeal this act. Such a one tells the world he finds some 'iniquity in God,' that alters the opinion and practice formerly taken up by him. In a word, the saint is not only by the Spirit consecrated to God, but is by him indued with a new life from God: 'you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins,' Eph. 2:1. A noble principle of high extraction hath been given you on a high design, that you should live up to that principle in righteousness and holiness. When God breathed a rational soul into man, he intended not that he should live with the beasts, and as the beasts; nor that thou shouldst have thy conversation as a mere carnal man doth; but that 'as thou hast received Christ, so thou shouldst walk in him,' Col. 2:6.

The apostle blames the Corinthians for living below themselves, and like the poor-spirited men of the world, in their corrupt passions. 'Are ye not carnal,...and walk as men?' 1 Cor. 3:3. When thou, Christian, actest unholy, thou sinnest at a high rate indeed. Others sin against the light of God in their consciences. That is the furthest they can go. But thou sinnest against the life of God in thy very heart. The more unnatural any act is, the more horrid. It is unnatural for a man to be cruel to his own flesh; for a woman to go about to kill the child in her womb. O how your ears tingle at such a flagitious^{cxxix} 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^{cxxx} 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^{cxxxii} part of the word—this runs like a devouring gulf on either side of the narrow path of holiness and righteousness, ready to swallow up every soul that walks not therein. 'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,' Rom. 1:18. To the promissory and minatory is annexed *the exemplary part of the word*, as Bible instances to confirm our faith concerning truth and certainty of both. The promises—they are backed with the example of holy men and women, who have beaten the path of holiness for us, and 'through faith and patience' in their holy course, have at last 'obtained' the comfort of 'the promises' in heaven's bliss, to the unspeakable encouragement of all that are ascending the hill after them. To the threatenings are annexed many sad *examples* of unholy souls who have undone themselves, and damned their own souls in unholy ways—whose carcasses are, as it were, thrown upon the shore of the word, and exposed to our view in reading and hearing of it, that we may be kept from being engulfed in those sins that were their perdition. 'These things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also

lusted,' 1 Cor. 10:6.

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

Fifth. It is his design *in all his providences*. 'All things'—that is all providences especially—'work together for good to them that love God,' Rom. 8:28. And how do they work for their good, but by making them more good and more holy? Providences are good and evil to us, as they find, or make us, better or worse. Nothing is good to him that is evil. As makes use of all the seasons of the year for the harvest—the frost and cold of the winter, as well as the heat of the summer—so doth he, of fair and foul, pleasing and displeasing providences, for promoting holiness. winter providences kill the weeds of lust, and summer providences ripen and mellow the fruits of righteousness. When he afflicts it is for our profit, to make us partakers of his holiness, Heb. 12:10. Afflictions Bernard compares to the tease^{cxxxii}, which, though it be sharp and scratching, is to make the cloth more pure and fine. God would not rub so hard if it were not to fetch out the dirt that is ingrained in our natures. God loves purity so well that he had rather see a hole than a spot in his child's garments. When he deals more gently in his providences, and lets his people under the

sunny bank of comforts and enjoyments, fencing them from the cold blasts of affliction, it is to draw forth the sap of grace, and hasten their growth in holiness. Paul understood this, when he besought the saints at Rome, 'by the mercies of God, to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God,' Rom. 12:1, implying that mercies came from God to us on this very errand, and that God might reasonably expect a such a return. The husbandman, when he lays his compost on the ground, looks to receive it at harvest again in a fuller crop; and so doth God, by his mercies. Therefore doth he so vehemently complain of Israel's ingratitude, 'She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal,' Hosea 2:8. God took it ill, and well might he, that they should entertain Baal at his cost. If God sends in any cheer to us, he would have us know that it is for his own entertainment, he means to come and sup upon his own charge. And what dish is it that pleaseth God's palate? Surely he would not have his people eat of any unclean thing, will not himself. They are the pleasant fruits of holiness and righteousness which Christ comes into his garden to feed on: 'I am come into my garden, my sister, [my] spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk,' Song 5:1.

[The power of holiness to be maintained because of SATAN'S DESIGN AGAINST IT.]

SECOND REASON. There is a reason in regard of Satan, whose design is as much against the saints' holiness, as God is for it. He hath ever a *ney* to God's *yea*. If God be for holiness, he must needs be against it. And what should be our chief care to defend, but that which Satan's thoughts and plots are most laid to assault and storm? There is no creature the devil delights to lodge and dwell in as man. When he enters into other creatures it is but on a design against man. When he entered the 'serpent,' it was to deceive Eve. The 'swine,' Matt. 8:32, he possessed on a design to dispossess the Gergesenes of the gospel. But, might he choose his own lodging, none pleaseth him but man. And why? Because man only is capable, by his rational soul, of sin and

unrighteousness. And as he prefers man to quarter in above all inferior creatures, so he had rather possess the souls of men than their bodies. None but the best room in the house will serve this unclean spirit in which to vomit his blasphemies, and spit out his malice against God—and why? but because the soul is the proper seat of holiness and sin. This, one gives as the reason why, amongst all the ways that Satan plagued Job, he did not choose to make a forcible entry into his body, and possess him corporally; for certainly he might—that being short of taking away his life—the only thing reserved by God out of his commission, and being in his power, sure it was not to spare Job that trouble. No pity dwells in a devil's heart. But the very reason seems to be what an ancient hath noted. The devil waited for a higher preferment; he hoped for to possess his soul, which he longed for a thousand times more. He had rather hear Job himself blaspheme God, while he was *compos mentis*—his own man, than himself in Job to belch out blasphemies against God, which would have been the devil's own sin, and not Job's.

Thus, you see, it is holiness and righteousness his spite is at. No gain comes to the devil's purse, no victory he counts got, except he can make the Christian lose his holiness. He can allow a man to have anything, or be anything, rather than be truly, powerfully, holy. It is not your riches and worldly enjoyments he grudges, so much as your holiness. Job, for aught we know, might have enjoyed his flocks and herds, his children, and servants, without any disturbance from hell, if the devil had not seen him to be a godly man—'one fearing God and eschewing evil.' This angered the wicked spirit. Now he tries a fall with Job, that, if possible, he may unsaint him, and despoil him of his breastplate of righteousness. His plundering of his estate, butchering his children, carbonading^{cxxxiii}, 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^{cxxxiv}. The profession made by Judas, Satan knew, did not put him a step out of his way to hell. The devil can show a man a way to damnation, through duties and ordinances of God's worship. That covetous traitorous heart which Judas carried with him to hear Christ's sermon, and [to] preach his own, held him fast enough to the devil, and therefore he gives him line enough, liberty enough, to keep his credit awhile with his fellow-apostles. He cares not though others think him a disciple of Christ, so he knows him to be his own slave.

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

cease so long as he continues an unclean spirit, and they to be the holy ones of God. 'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,' II Tim. 3:12.

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

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

[*The power of holiness to be maintained because of ITS OWN EXCELLENCY.*]

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

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

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

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

Third. It is holiness, and that maintained in its power, that *capacitates us for communion with God in this life*. Communion with God is so desirable, that many pretend to it, who know not what it means; like some that brag of their acquaintance with such a great man, who, may be, never saw his face, nor have been admitted into his company. The Spirit of God gives the lie to that man who saith he hath any acquaintance with God, while he keeps his acquaintance with any unrighteousness: 'If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie,' 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,' Prov. 25:26; much more is he so when he falls down before the wicked one, and yields to his temptation—now his spirit is roil [*i.e.* turbid] and muddied. And if *we* will not use the water of a spring, though in itself pure and wholesome, when it is troubled, or drink of that vessel that runs thick, but stay while [*i.e.* until] it be settled and comes clear; can we wonder if God refuseth to taste of those duties which a godly person performs, before the stream be cleared by the renewing of his repentance for his sin?

Fourth. Holiness in the power of it is *necessary to the true peace and repose of the soul.* I do not say that our peace is bottomed on the righteousness of our nature or holiness of our lives, yet it is ever attended with these. 'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.' We may as soon make the sea always still, as an unholy heart truly quiet. From whence come the intestine wars in men's bosoms, that set them at variance with themselves, but from their own lusts? these break the peace, and keep the man in a continual tempest. As the spirit of holiness comes into his heart, and the sceptre of Christ—which is 'a sceptre of righteousness'—bears sway in the life; so the storm abates more and more, till it be quite down, which will not be while we are short of heaven. *There* only is perfect rest, because perfect holiness. Whence those frights and fears, which make them a *magor missabib*—a terror round about?—they wake and sleep with the scent of hell-fire about them continually. O, it is their unholy course and unrighteous ways that walk in their thoughts, as John's ghost in Herod's. This makes men discontented in every condition. They neither can relish the sweetness of their enjoyments, nor bear the bitter taste of their afflictions. I know there are ways to stupefy the conscience, and bind up for a time the senses of an unholy heart, that it shall not feel its own misery; but the virtue of this opium is soon spent, and then the wretch is upon the rack again, and his horror

returns upon him with a greater paroxysm. An example whereof I have heard. A notorious drunkard, who used, when told of his ungodly life, to shake off, as easily as Paul did the viper from his hand, all the threatenings of the word that his friends would have fastened on his conscience—bearing himself upon a presumptuous hope of the mercy of God in Christ: it pleased God to lay him, some while after, on his back by sickness; which, for a time, scared his old companions—brethren with him in iniquity—from visiting him; but hearing he was cheery and pleasant in his sickness, they ventured again to see him; doing so, they found him very confident of the mercy of God (whereby their hands were much strengthened in their old ways); but before he died, this tune was changed to purpose; his vain hopes vanished, his guilty conscience awakened, and the poor wretch, roasted in the scorching flames of his former ungodly practices, and now ready to die, cries out despairingly, 'O sirs! I had prepared a plaster, and thought all was well, but now it will stick no longer.' His guilty conscience rubbed it off as fast as he clapped it on. And truly, friends, you will find that the blood of Christ himself will not cleave to a soul that is in league with any way of sin and unrighteousness. God will pluck such from the horns of his altar, that flee *to* it, but not *from* their unrighteousness, and will slay them in the sight of the sanctuary they so boldly trust to. You know the message Solomon sent to Adonijah, 'If thou showest thyself a worthy man, not a hair of thy head shall fall; but if wickedness shall be found in thee, thou shalt surely die.' In vain do men think to shroud themselves under Christ's wing from the hue and cry of their accusing conscience, while wickedness finds a sanctuary in them. Christ never was intended by God to secure men *in* their unrighteousness, but to save them *from* it.

Fifth. Holiness has a *mighty influence upon others.* When this appears with power in the lives of Christians, it works mightily upon the spirits of men; it stops the mouths of the ungodly, who are ready to reproach religion, and to throw the dirt of professors' sins on the face of profession itself. They say that frogs will cease croaking when a light is brought near unto them. The light of a holy conversation hangs as it were a padlock on profane lips; yea, it forceth them to acknowledge God in them. 'Let your light so

shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,' Matt. 5:16. Yea more, this would not only stop their mouths, but be a means to open their very hearts to the embracing of Christ and his grace.

One reason why such shoals of souls came into the net of the gospel in primitive times was, because then the divinity of the gospel doctrine appeared in the divinity and holiness of Christians' lives. Justin Martyr, when converted, professed, 'That the holiness that shined in Christians' lives and patience, that triumphed over their enemies' cruelty at their deaths, made him conclude the doctrine of the gospel was truth.' Yea, Julian himself, vile wretch as he was, could say, that the Christian religion came to be propagated so much, '*propter Christianorum erga omnes beneficia*—because Christians were a people that did good to all, and hurt to none.' I am sure we find, by woeful experience, that in these debauched times, wherein religion is so bespattered with frequent scandals, yea, a common looseness of professors, it is hard to get any that are out to come under the net of the gospel. Some beasts there are, that if they have once blown upon a pasture, others will hardly eat of the grass for some while after. Truly I have had some such sad thoughts as these concerning our unhappy times; that, till the ill favour, which the pride, contentions, errors, and looseness of professors now-a-days, have left upon the truths and ordinances of Christ be worn off, there is little hope of any great comings in of new converts. The minister cannot be always preaching. Two or three hours, may be, in a week, he spends among his people in the pulpit, holding the glass of the gospel before their faces; but the lives of professors, these preach all week long. If they were but holy and exemplary, they would be as a repetition of the preacher's sermon to the families and neighbours among whom they converse, and would keep the sound of his doctrine continually ringing in their ears. This would give Christians an admirable advantage in doing good to their carnal neighbours, by counsel and reproof, which is now seldom done, and when done, it proves to little purpose, because not backed with their own exemplary walking. 'It behoves him,' saith Tertullian, 'that would counsel or reprove another, to guard his

speech—*autoritate propriae conversationis, ne dicta factis deficientibus erubescant*—with the authority of his own conversation, lest, wanting that, what he says may put himself to the blush.' We do not love that one that hath the stinking breath should come very near us; and truly we count one comes very near us that reproves us. Such therefore had need have a sweet-scented life. Reproofs are good physic, but they have an unpleasing farewell. It is hard for men not to vomit them up on the face of him that gives them. Now nothing is more powerful to keep a reproof from thus coming up, than the holiness of the person that reproves. 'Let the righteous smite me,' saith David, 'it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head,' Ps. 141:5. See how well it is taken from such a hand, because of the authority that holiness carries with it. None but a vile wretch will smite a righteous man with reproach, for smiting *him* with a reproof, especially if it be softly laid on, and like oil fomented, and wrought into him, as it should, with compassion and love to his soul. Thus we see how influential the power of holiness would be unto the wicked. Neither would it be less upon our brethren and fellow-Christians.

When one Christian sees holiness sparkle in the life of another he converses with, he shall find his own grace spring within him, as the babe in *Elizabeth* at the salutation of Mary. Truly one eminently holy is enough to put life into a whole society; on the contrary, the error or looseness of one professor, endangers the whole company that are acquainted with him. Therefore we have so strict a charge—'Follow peace with all men, and holiness;...looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you and hereby many be defiled,' Heb. 12:14. It is spoken to professors. The heathen's drunkenness, uncleanness, unrighteous walking did not so much endanger them. But, when 'a root of bitterness springs up' among professors themselves, this hazards the defiling of many. A scab on the wolf's back is not so dangerous to the sheep —because they will not be easily drawn among such company; but, when it gets into the flock, among professors that feed together, pray, hear, and walk in fellowship together, then is there fear it will spread. A

loose erroneous professor doth the devil more service in his kind, than a whole troop of such as pretend to no religion. The devil gets no credit by them. There are many errors and sinful practices which have long lain upon his hands, and he could 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,' Gen. 19:22. Rehoboam and his kingdom were strengthened for three years, and might have been for three and twenty, if he had 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, II Chr. 11:16-12:2. 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^{cxxxv} 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^{cxxxvi} 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 than 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 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?’ Neh. 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^{cxxxvii} 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 Thes. 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?’ Zech. 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, Matt. 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., Ex. 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 concerns 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.' Gen. 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,' II Sam. 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, Rev. 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,' Matt. 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, Ps. 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,' Ps. 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., ver. 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*^{cxviii} *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 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 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, Dan. 9:3 compared with ver. 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,' Ps. 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 Sam. 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,' Matt. 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, Gen. 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,' Heb. 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,' Mal. 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 Chr. 29:1; therefore he saith, he 'prepared with all my might for the house of his God,' ver. 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,' Ps. 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,' Ps. 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,' Isa. 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,' II Thes. 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^{cxxxix}, 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,' Hab. 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, Gen. 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, Gen 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,' I Tim. 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,' Ecc. 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, I Chr. 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,' Ps. 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 chooseth, and towards the governors thou putteth 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,' Rom. 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,' Prov. 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,' Gen. 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 scarce more wickedness to be found. 'Woe is me,

that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!' Ps. 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,' Ps. 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 Ps. 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,' Gen. 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?' II Cor. 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 Cor. 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^{cxl} 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^{cxli} 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:^{cxlii} ‘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, Gen 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,’ Gen. 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 deepest 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, II 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, Gen. 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 Cor. 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^{cxliii} 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 takes 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, II Cor. 5:17. It is solid grace in the vessel of the heart that feeds profession in the lamp—holiness in the life, Matt. 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^{cxliiv}. 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,' II Cor. 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?' I 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, Matt 5:27, and by walking in his life by the rule of it, I 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,' II 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,' Isa. 8:20. Pretend not to more strictness than the word will vouch. This is to be 'righteous overmuch' indeed, Ecc. 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,' Rev. 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,' I 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, Mal. 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,' Prov. 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 rendering themselves unclean, John 18, 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,' Rom. 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 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,' ver. 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, II Cor. 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  (*foot it right*), according to the gospel, Gal. 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,' I Cor. 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,' Rom. 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, Ex. 12. 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 dependently 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.'^{cxlv} 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,' Prov. 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—whom they are thou consores 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.^{cxlvi} 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,' Heb. 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,' Lev. 19:17; by the second he proves himself 'a scorner,' Prov. 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, Ps. 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 reprov'd 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 his dying day, 1 Kings 1:27, 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, Heb. 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,' Eze. 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,' II 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,' II Cor. 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,' Col. 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,' Ps. 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,' ver. 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,' ver. 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,' Ecc. 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,' Isa. 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 his 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,' I Cor. 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.

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, Ps. 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,' Ps. 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 is 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,' Eph. 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, Ps. 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,' Ps. 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 your 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,' ver. 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 Tim. 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 Tim. 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,’ Heb. 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,’ Matt. 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,’ Prov. 3:33; but ‘in the house of the righteous is much treasure,’ Prov. 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,’ Hab. 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,’ Zeph. 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,’ Ex. 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,’ Prov. 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, Gen. 31:24; and, ver. 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 yesternight,' &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,' Matt. 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 thee 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 Sam. 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, Ex. 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, Ps. 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 so 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, fruitfulest 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, Rom. 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,' Ps. 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 Deut. 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?' II Sam. 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,' Eph. 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,' Ps. 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,' Prov. 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, Gen. 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,' Gal. 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, Matt. 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 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,' ver. 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,' II 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, I 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,' Prov. 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?' Ex. 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,' Ps. 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?' ver. 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,' Col. 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, Ps. 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,' Ps. 39:13. David was not yet recovered out of that sin, which had brought him exceeding low, as you may perceive, vv. 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,' Ps. 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,' Rom. 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,' Hab. 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^{cxlvii} disease hanging about thee—thy heart leaning on thy righteousness, and lifting up thyself into confidence of it, so as to expect thy acceptance 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,' Isa. 6:3, 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 off 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?' I 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, I Cor. 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, I Cor. 15:7. He calls himself one 'born out of time,' ver. 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?

DIRECTION SIXTH.

THE SEVERAL PIECES OF THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD.

Second Piece—The Christian's Breastplate.

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

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

THE EXPLANATION OF THE WORDS.

FIRST INQUIRY.

[The righteousness meant.]

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

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

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

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

Third. This perfect personal obedience *must be perpetual*. This law allows no after-gain. If the law be once broken, though but in one very thought, there is no place for repentance in that

covenant, though it were attended with a life afterward never so exact and spotless. *After-obedience* being but due, cannot make amends for former disobedience. He doth not satisfy the law for killing a man once, that doeth so no more. How desperate were our condition, if we could not be listed in Christ's muster-roll, till we were provided with such a breastplate as this is? Adam indeed had such a righteousness made to his hand. His heart and the law were in unison; *it answered it*, as face answers face in a glass. It was as natural to him to be righteous, as now it is to his posterity to be unrighteous. God was the engraver of his own image upon man, which consisted in righteousness and holiness. And he who made all so perfect, that upon a review of the whole creation, he neither added nor altered anything, but saw 'all very good,' was not less curious in the master-piece of all his work, he 'made man perfect.' But Adam sinned, and defiled our nature, and now our nature defiles us; so that, never since could Adam's *plate*—righteousness, I mean—fit the breast of any mere man. If God would save all the world for *one* such righteous man—as once he offered to do Sodom for ten—that *one* could not be found. The apostle divides all the world into 'Jew and Gentile,' Rom. 3:9. He is not afraid to lay them all in the dirt; —we have before proved that they are 'all under sin. As it is written, There is none, no, not one.' Not the most boastful philosopher

among the Gentiles, nor the precisest Pharisee among the Jews—we may go yet further—not the holiest saint that ever lived, can stand righteous before that bar. ‘Enter not into judgment with thy servant,’ saith David, ‘for in thy sight shall no man living be justified,’ Ps. 143:2. God hath nailed that door up, that none can for ever enter by a law-righteousness into life and happiness. This way to heaven is like the northern passage to the Indies —whoever attempts it, is sure to be frozen up before he gets halfway thither.

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

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

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

man, in performing what the word of God requires to be performed to both. Briefly let us unfold what is rolled up in this description.

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

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

body, they both resulting *ex principiis recte constitutis*—from principles pure and rightly disposed.

3. Here is *the soil or subject* in which the Spirit plants this principle of holiness—*the child of God*. ‘Because ye are sons, he hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts,’ Gal. 4:6. Not a child in all his family that is unlike his Father—‘as is the heavenly, so are they that are heavenly’—and none but children have this stamp of true holiness on them. As the apostle, Rom. 8:9, concludes, we ‘have not his Spirit’ if we be ‘in the flesh’—that is in an unholy sinful state—so he concludes, we are ‘not his’ children if we ‘have not his Spirit,’ thus transforming and sanctifying us. There is indeed a holiness and sanctification, taken in a large sense, which may be found in such as are not children. So all the children of believers are ‘holy,’ I Cor. 7, who are not all children of God. Yea false professors also gain the name of being sanctified, Heb. 10:29, because they pretend to be so. But that which the Scripture calls righteousness and true holiness, is a sculpture the Spirit engraves on none but the children of God. The Spirit sanctifies none but whom Christ prays his Father to ‘sanctify,’ and they are his peculiar number given to God of him, John 17:17.

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

5. Here is the *imperfect nature of this principle*—as it shows its reality by endeavouring, so its imperfection, that it *enables but to an endeavour*, not to a full performance. Evangelical holiness makes the creature rather willing than able to give full obedience. The saint’s heart leaps when his legs do but creep in the way of God’s

commandments. Mary asked ‘where they had laid Christ?’ meaning, it seems, to carry him away on her shoulders; which she was not able for to do. Her affections were stronger than her back. That principle of holiness which is in the saint, makes him lift at that duty which he can little more than stir. Paul, a saint of the first magnitude, he gives us his own character, with other eminent servants of Christ, rather from the sincerity of their will and endeavour, than perfection of their work. ‘Pray for us; for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly,’ Heb. 13:18. He doth not say ‘In all things we do live honestly,’ as if no step were taken 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,^{cxlviii} but a will exerted in a vigorous endeavour, it weighs as much in an impartial ear, as that of the same Paul, Acts 24:16, ‘herein do I exercise myself.’ He was so willing, as to use his best care and labour in the ways of holiness, and having this testimony in his own breast, he is not afraid to lay claim to ‘a good conscience,’ though he doth not fully attain to that he desires: ‘We trust we have a good conscience, willing,’ &c.—he means in the favourable interpretation of the gospel, for the law allows no such good conscience.

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

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

8. Here is the *rule it goes by*—‘what the word of God requires.’ Apocryphal holiness is no true holiness. We cannot write in religion a right line without a rule, or by a false one. And all are false rules besides the word—‘to the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this

word, it is because there is no light in them,' Isa. 8:20.

SECOND INQUIRY.

[Why righteousness is compared to a breastplate.]

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

FIRST. The breastplate *preserves the principal part of the body*, and that is the breast, *where the very vitals of man are closely couched together*, and where a shot or stab is more deadly than in other parts that are remote from the fountain of life. A man may outlive many wounds received in the arms or legs, but a stab in the heart or other vital parts is the certain messenger of death approaching. Thus righteousness and holiness preserve the principal part of a Christian—his soul and conscience. We live or die spiritually, yea eternally, as we look to our souls and consciences. It is not a wound in estate, credit, or any other worldly enjoyment, that kills us in this sense. These touch not, hazard not, the Christian's life, any more than the shaving of the beard, or the paring of the nails, do the man's. Spiritual vitals are seated in the soul and conscience. It must be a spiritual dagger that stabs these, and that only is sin which is said to 'hunt for the precious life,' Prov. 6:26. This is the

'dart' that strikes the young man 'through the liver,' who hasteth to his lust, 'as the bird to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life,' Prov. 7:23. Now righteousness and holiness defend the conscience from all wounds and harms from sin, which is the weapon Satan useth to give the conscience its deadly stab with.

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

CONNECTION OF THE BREASTPLATE AND GIRDLE.

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

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

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

THE CHRISTIAN'S ESPECIAL CARE—TO KEEP ON HIS BREASTPLATE.

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

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

BRANCH FIRST.

[*God's great design—his people's holiness.*]

[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.

REASON FIRST. *In regard of God, whose great design is, to have his people 'a holy people.'* This is enough to oblige, yea to provoke, every Christian to promote what God hath so strongly set upon his heart to effect. He deserves to be cashiered that endeavours not to pursue what his general declares to be his design; and he to have his name blotted out of Christ's muster-roll whose heart stands not on tiptoes ready to march, yea to run, on his design. It is an honourable epitaph which Paul sets on the memory of David, long before deceased, that he, 'in his own generation served the will of

God,' Acts 13:36. He made it the business of his life to carry on God's designs: and all gracious hearts touched with the same loadstone of God's love stand to the same point. All the private ends of a sincere soul are swallowed up in this, that he may 'do the will of God in his generation.' This he heartily prays for, 'Thy will be done.' This is his study—to find what is the 'good and acceptable will of God,' which is the very cause why he loves the Bible above all the books of the world beside, because in none but that can he find what is the mind and will of God concerning him. Now I shall endeavour to show that this is the great design of God *to have his people holy*. It runs like a silver thread through all God's other designs.

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

Second. It was his design in *sending his Son into the world*. It could be no small occasion that brought him hither. God wants not servants to go on his ordinary errands. The glorious angels, who behold his face continually, are ready to fly wherever he sends them. But here God had a work to do of such importance, that he would put trust, not in his servants, but [in] his Son alone to

accomplish. Now, what God's design was in this great work will appear by knowing what Christ's was, for they—both Father and Son—were agreed what should be done before he came upon the stage of action. See therefore the very bottom of Christ's heart in this his great undertaking opened. He 'gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,' Titus 2:14. Had man kept his primitive righteousness, Christ's pain and pains had been spared. It was man's lost holiness he came to recover. It had not been an enterprise becoming the greatness and holiness of such a one as the Son of God to engage for less than this. Both God and man, between whom Christ comes to negotiate, call for holiness—God's glory and man's happiness; neither of which can be attained except holiness be restored to man. Not God's glory, who, as he is glorious in the holiness of his own nature and works, so is he glorified by the holiness of his people's hearts and lives. Were it possible—which is the height of all blasphemy to think—that the holiness of God could be separated from any of his attributes or works, God himself would cease to be glorious; his sovereignty would degenerate into tyranny, his wisdom into craft, his justice into cruelty, &c. Now the glory of all God's attributes and works resulting from his holiness in them all; it follows, that then we glorify God, when we give him the glory of his holiness, and who but a holy creature will or can do that? While man stands under the power of sin, how can he give God the glory of that which his own sinful nature makes him defy and hate God for? Had Christ's therefore been to procure man a pardon, and not to restore his lost holiness, he had been but a minister of sin's, and instead of bringing glory to God, had set sin in the throne, and only obtained a liberty for the creature to dishonour God without control. Again, man's happiness could not have been obtained without a recovery of his lost holiness. Man's happiness stands in his likeness to God, and his fruition of God. He must have the first before he can enjoy the latter; he must be like God before God can take any liking in him. And God must take full content in man, before he admits him to the enjoyment of himself, which that he may do, Christ undertakes to make his people 'holy as God is holy.' You see now what was the great

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

Third. It is God's great design, *in the regenerating work of the Spirit* on the hearts of his people, to make them righteous, and to fit them to walk holily before him, Eze. 36:26,27, where God promiseth 'a new heart,' and to 'put his Spirit into them.' And why will he do this? that he may cause them to 'walk in his statutes, keep his judgments, and do them.' An old heart would have served well enough to have done the devil's drudgery withal. But God intending them for more high and noble employment, to lift up their head out of sin's prison, and prefer them to his own service, therefore he throws away their jail-clothes, and beautifies them with the graces of his Spirit, that their hearts suit their work. When God ordered the temple to be built with such curious care and costly materials, he declared that he intended it for holy use. That however was not so glorious as the spiritual temple of a regenerate heart is, which is the 'workmanship' of God himself, Eph. 2:10. And for what intent reared by him? If we read on we may see, 'created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.' This accents the unrighteousness and unholiness of a saint with a circumflex; it lays a deeper aggravation I mean upon his sin, than others', because committed against such a work of the Spirit as none have in the world besides. A sin acted in the temple was greater than if the same had been committed by a Jew in his private dwelling, because the temple was a consecrated place. The saint is a consecrated person, and, by acts of unrighteousness, he profanes God's temple.

The sin of another is theft, because he robs God of the glory due to him; but the sin of a saint is sacrilege, because he robs God of that which is devoted to him in an especial manner. Better not to repent at all than to repent of our repentance. 'Better not to vow' and dedicate ourselves to him, and after this to inquire how we may evade and repeal this act. Such a one tells the world he finds some 'iniquity in God,' that alters the opinion and practice formerly taken up by him. In a word, the saint is not only by the Spirit consecrated to God, but is by him indued with a new life from God: 'you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins,' Eph. 2:1. A noble principle of high extraction hath been given you on a high design, that you should live up to that principle in righteousness and holiness. When God breathed a rational soul into man, he intended not that he should live with the beasts, and as the beasts; nor that thou shouldst have thy conversation as a mere carnal man doth; but that 'as thou hast received Christ, so thou shouldst walk in him,' Col. 2:6.

The apostle blames the Corinthians for living below themselves, and like the poor-spirited men of the world, in their corrupt passions. 'Are ye not carnal,...and walk as men?' 1 Cor. 3:3. When thou, Christian, actest unholy, thou sinnest at a high rate indeed. Others sin against the light of God in their consciences. That is the furthest they can go. But thou sinnest against the life of God in thy very heart. The more unnatural any act is, the more horrid. It is unnatural for a man to be cruel to his own flesh; for a woman to go about to kill the child in her womb. O how your ears tingle at such a flagitious^{cxlix} 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^{cl} 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^{cli} part of the word—this runs like a devouring gulf on either side of the narrow path of holiness and righteousness, ready to swallow up every soul that walks not therein. 'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,' Rom. 1:18. To the promissory and minatory is annexed *the exemplary part of the word*, as Bible instances to confirm our faith concerning truth and certainty of both. The promises—they are backed with the example of holy men and women, who have beaten the path of holiness for us, and 'through faith and patience' in their holy course, have at last 'obtained' the comfort of 'the promises' in heaven's bliss, to the unspeakable encouragement of all that are ascending the hill after them. To the threatenings are annexed many sad *examples* of unholy souls who have undone themselves, and damned their own souls in unholy ways—whose carcasses are, as it were, thrown upon the shore of the word, and exposed to our view in reading and hearing of it, that we may be kept from being engulfed in those sins that were their perdition. 'These things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also

lusted,' 1 Cor. 10:6.

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

Fifth. It is his design *in all his providences*. 'All things'—that is all providences especially—'work together for good to them that love God,' Rom. 8:28. And how do they work for their good, but by making them more good and more holy? Providences are good and evil to us, as they find, or make us, better or worse. Nothing is good to him that is evil. As makes use of all the seasons of the year for the harvest—the frost and cold of the winter, as well as the heat of the summer—so doth he, of fair and foul, pleasing and unpleasing providences, for promoting holiness. winter providences kill the weeds of lust, and summer providences ripen and mellow the fruits of righteousness. When he afflicts it is for our profit, to make us partakers of his holiness, Heb. 12:10. Afflictions Bernard compares to the tease^{clii}, which, though it be sharp and scratching, is to make the cloth more pure and fine. God would not rub so hard if it were not to fetch out the dirt that is ingrained in our natures. God loves purity so well that he had rather see a hole than a spot in his child's garments. When he deals more gently in his providences, and lets his people under the

sunny bank of comforts and enjoyments, fencing them from the cold blasts of affliction, it is to draw forth the sap of grace, and hasten their growth in holiness. Paul understood this, when he besought the saints at Rome, 'by the mercies of God, to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God,' Rom. 12:1, implying that mercies came from God to us on this very errand, and that God might reasonably expect a such a return. The husbandman, when he lays his compost on the ground, looks to receive it at harvest again in a fuller crop; and so doth God, by his mercies. Therefore doth he so vehemently complain of Israel's ingratitude, 'She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal,' Hosea 2:8. God took it ill, and well might he, that they should entertain Baal at his cost. If God sends in any cheer to us, he would have us know that it is for his own entertainment, he means to come and sup upon his own charge. And what dish is it that pleaseth God's palate? Surely he would not have his people eat of any unclean thing, will not himself. They are the pleasant fruits of holiness and righteousness which Christ comes into his garden to feed on: 'I am come into my garden, my sister, [my] spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk,' Song 5:1.

[The power of holiness to be maintained because of SATAN'S DESIGN AGAINST IT.]

SECOND REASON. There is a reason in regard of Satan, whose design is as much against the saints' holiness, as God is for it. He hath ever a *ney* to God's *yea*. If God be for holiness, he must needs be against it. And what should be our chief care to defend, but that which Satan's thoughts and plots are most laid to assault and storm? There is no creature the devil delights to lodge and dwell in as man. When he enters into other creatures it is but on a design against man. When he entered the 'serpent,' it was to deceive Eve. The 'swine,' Matt. 8:32, he possessed on a design to dispossess the Gergesenes of the gospel. But, might he choose his own lodging, none pleaseth him but man. And why? Because man only is capable, by his rational soul, of sin and

unrighteousness. And as he prefers man to quarter in above all inferior creatures, so he had rather possess the souls of men than their bodies. None but the best room in the house will serve this unclean spirit in which to vomit his blasphemies, and spit out his malice against God—and why? but because the soul is the proper seat of holiness and sin. This, one gives as the reason why, amongst all the ways that Satan plagued Job, he did not choose to make a forcible entry into his body, and possess him corporally; for certainly he might—that being short of taking away his life—the only thing reserved by God out of his commission, and being in his power, sure it was not to spare Job that trouble. No pity dwells in a devil's heart. But the very reason seems to be what an ancient hath noted. The devil waited for a higher preferment; he hoped for to possess his soul, which he longed for a thousand times more. He had rather hear Job himself blaspheme God, while he was *compos mentis*—his own man, than himself in Job to belch out blasphemies against God, which would have been the devil's own sin, and not Job's.

Thus, you see, it is holiness and righteousness his spite is at. No gain comes to the devil's purse, no victory he counts got, except he can make the Christian lose his holiness. He can allow a man to have anything, or be anything, rather than be truly, powerfully, holy. It is not your riches and worldly enjoyments he grudges, so much as your holiness. Job, for aught we know, might have enjoyed his flocks and herds, his children, and servants, without any disturbance from hell, if the devil had not seen him to be a godly man—'one fearing God and eschewing evil.' This angered the wicked spirit. Now he tries a fall with Job, that, if possible, he may unsaint him, and despoil him of his breastplate of righteousness. His plundering of his estate, butchering his children, carbonading^{cliii}, 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^{cliv}. The profession made by Judas, Satan knew, did not put him a step out of his way to hell. The devil can show a man a way to damnation, through duties and ordinances of God's worship. That covetous traitorous heart which Judas carried with him to hear Christ's sermon, and [to] preach his own, held him fast enough to the devil, and therefore he gives him line enough, liberty enough, to keep his credit awhile with his fellow-apostles. He cares not though others think him a disciple of Christ, so he knows him to be his own slave.

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

cease so long as he continues an unclean spirit, and they to be the holy ones of God. 'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,' II Tim. 3:12.

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

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

[*The power of holiness to be maintained because of ITS OWN EXCELLENCY.*]

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

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

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

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

Third. It is holiness, and that maintained in its power, that *capacitates us for communion with God in this life.* Communion with God is so desirable, that many pretend to it, who know not what it means; like some that brag of their acquaintance with such a great man, who, may be, never saw his face, nor have been admitted into his company. The Spirit of God gives the lie to that man who saith he hath any acquaintance with God, while he keeps his acquaintance with any unrighteousness: 'If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie,' 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,' Prov. 25:26; much more is he so when he falls down before the wicked one, and yields to his temptation—now his spirit is roil [*i.e.* turbid] and muddied. And if *we* will not use the water of a spring, though in itself pure and wholesome, when it is troubled, or drink of that vessel that runs thick, but stay while [*i.e.* until] it be settled and comes clear; can we wonder if God refuseth to taste of those duties which a godly person performs, before the stream be cleared by the renewing of his repentance for his sin?

Fourth. Holiness in the power of it is *necessary to the true peace and repose of the soul.* I do not say that our peace is bottomed on the righteousness of our nature or holiness of our lives, yet it is ever attended with these. 'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.' We may as soon make the sea always still, as an unholy heart truly quiet. From whence come the intestine wars in men's bosoms, that set them at variance with themselves, but from their own lusts? these break the peace, and keep the man in a continual tempest. As the spirit of holiness comes into his heart, and the sceptre of Christ—which is 'a sceptre of righteousness'—bears sway in the life; so the storm abates more and more, till it be quite down, which will not be while we are short of heaven. *There* only is perfect rest, because perfect holiness. Whence those frights and fears, which make them a *magor missabib*—a terror round about?—they wake and sleep with the scent of hell-fire about them continually. O, it is their unholy course and unrighteous ways that walk in their thoughts, as John's ghost in Herod's. This makes men discontented in every condition. They neither can relish the sweetness of their enjoyments, nor bear the bitter taste of their afflictions. I know there are ways to stupefy the conscience, and bind up for a time the senses of an unholy heart, that it shall not feel its own misery; but the virtue of this opium is soon spent, and then the wretch is upon the rack again, and his horror

returns upon him with a greater paroxysm. An example whereof I have heard. A notorious drunkard, who used, when told of his ungodly life, to shake off, as easily as Paul did the viper from his hand, all the threatenings of the word that his friends would have fastened on his conscience—bearing himself upon a presumptuous hope of the mercy of God in Christ: it pleased God to lay him, some while after, on his back by sickness; which, for a time, scared his old companions—brethren with him in iniquity—from visiting him; but hearing he was cheery and pleasant in his sickness, they ventured again to see him; doing so, they found him very confident of the mercy of God (whereby their hands were much strengthened in their old ways); but before he died, this tune was changed to purpose; his vain hopes vanished, his guilty conscience awakened, and the poor wretch, roasted in the scorching flames of his former ungodly practices, and now ready to die, cries out despairingly, 'O sirs! I had prepared a plaster, and thought all was well, but now it will stick no longer.' His guilty conscience rubbed it off as fast as he clapped it on. And truly, friends, you will find that the blood of Christ himself will not cleave to a soul that is in league with any way of sin and unrighteousness. God will pluck such from the horns of his altar, that flee *to* it, but not *from* their unrighteousness, and will slay them in the sight of the sanctuary they so boldly trust to. You know the message Solomon sent to Adonijah, 'If thou showest thyself a worthy man, not a hair of thy head shall fall; but if wickedness shall be found in thee, thou shalt surely die.' In vain do men think to shroud themselves under Christ's wing from the hue and cry of their accusing conscience, while wickedness finds a sanctuary in them. Christ never was intended by God to secure men *in* their unrighteousness, but to save them *from* it.

Fifth. Holiness has a *mighty influence upon others.* When this appears with power in the lives of Christians, it works mightily upon the spirits of men; it stops the mouths of the ungodly, who are ready to reproach religion, and to throw the dirt of professors' sins on the face of profession itself. They say that frogs will cease croaking when a light is brought near unto them. The light of a holy conversation hangs as it were a padlock on profane lips; yea, it forceth them to acknowledge God in them. 'Let your light so

shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,' Matt. 5:16. Yea more, this would not only stop their mouths, but be a means to open their very hearts to the embracing of Christ and his grace.

One reason why such shoals of souls came into the net of the gospel in primitive times was, because then the divinity of the gospel doctrine appeared in the divinity and holiness of Christians' lives. Justin Martyr, when converted, professed, 'That the holiness that shined in Christians' lives and patience, that triumphed over their enemies' cruelty at their deaths, made him conclude the doctrine of the gospel was truth.' Yea, Julian himself, vile wretch as he was, could say, that the Christian religion came to be propagated so much, '*propter Christianorum erga omnes beneficia*—because Christians were a people that did good to all, and hurt to none.' I am sure we find, by woeful experience, that in these debauched times, wherein religion is so bespattered with frequent scandals, yea, a common looseness of professors, it is hard to get any that are out to come under the net of the gospel. Some beasts there are, that if they have once blown upon a pasture, others will hardly eat of the grass for some while after. Truly I have had some such sad thoughts as these concerning our unhappy times; that, till the ill favour, which the pride, contentions, errors, and looseness of professors now-a-days, have left upon the truths and ordinances of Christ be worn off, there is little hope of any great comings in of new converts. The minister cannot be always preaching. Two or three hours, may be, in a week, he spends among his people in the pulpit, holding the glass of the gospel before their faces; but the lives of professors, these preach all week long. If they were but holy and exemplary, they would be as a repetition of the preacher's sermon to the families and neighbours among whom they converse, and would keep the sound of his doctrine continually ringing in their ears. This would give Christians an admirable advantage in doing good to their carnal neighbours, by counsel and reproof, which is now seldom done, and when done, it proves to little purpose, because not backed with their own exemplary walking. 'It behoves him,' saith Tertullian, 'that would counsel or reprove another, to guard his

speech—*autoritate propriae conversationis, ne dicta factis deficientibus erubescant*—with the authority of his own conversation, lest, wanting that, what he says may put himself to the blush.' We do not love that one that hath the stinking breath should come very near us; and truly we count one comes very near us that reproves us. Such therefore had need have a sweet-scented life. Reproofs are good physic, but they have an unpleasing farewell. It is hard for men not to vomit them up on the face of him that gives them. Now nothing is more powerful to keep a reproof from thus coming up, than the holiness of the person that reproves. 'Let the righteous smite me,' saith David, 'it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head,' Ps. 141:5. See how well it is taken from such a hand, because of the authority that holiness carries with it. None but a vile wretch will smite a righteous man with reproach, for smiting *him* with a reproof, especially if it be softly laid on, and like oil fomented, and wrought into him, as it should, with compassion and love to his soul. Thus we see how influential the power of holiness would be unto the wicked. Neither would it be less upon our brethren and fellow-Christians.

When one Christian sees holiness sparkle in the life of another he converses with, he shall find his own grace spring within him, as the babe in *Elizabeth* at the salutation of Mary. Truly one eminently holy is enough to put life into a whole society; on the contrary, the error or looseness of one professor, endangers the whole company that are acquainted with him. Therefore we have so strict a charge—'Follow peace with all men, and holiness;...looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you and thereby many be defiled,' Heb. 12:14. It is spoken to professors. The heathen's drunkenness, uncleanness, unrighteous walking did not so much endanger them. But, when 'a root of bitterness springs up' among professors themselves, this hazards the defiling of many. A scab on the wolf's back is not so dangerous to the sheep —because they will not be easily drawn among such company; but, when it gets into the flock, among professors that feed together, pray, hear, and walk in fellowship together, then is there fear it will spread. A

loose erroneous professor doth the devil more service in his kind, than a whole troop of such as pretend to no religion. The devil gets no credit by them. There are many errors and sinful practices which have long lain upon his hands, and he could 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,' Gen. 19:22. Rehoboam and his kingdom were strengthened for three years, and might have been for three and twenty, if he had 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, II Chr. 11:16-12:2. 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^{clv} 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^{clvi} 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 than 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 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?’ Neh. 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^{clvii} 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 hot 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 Thes. 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?’ Zech. 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, Matt. 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., Ex. 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 concerns 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.' Gen. 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,' II Sam. 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, Rev. 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,' Matt. 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, Ps. 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,' Ps. 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., ver. 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*^{clviii} *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 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 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, Dan. 9:3 compared with ver. 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,' Ps. 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 Sam. 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,' Matt. 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, Gen. 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,' Heb. 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,' Mal. 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 Chr. 29:1; therefore he saith, he 'prepared with all my might for the house of his God,' ver. 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,' Ps. 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,' Ps. 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,' Isa. 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,' II Thes. 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^{clix}, 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,' Hab. 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, Gen. 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, Gen 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,' I Tim. 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,' Ecc. 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, I Chr. 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,' Ps. 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 chooseth, and towards the governors thou putteth 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,' Rom. 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,' Prov. 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,' Gen. 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 scarce more wickedness to be found. 'Woe is me,

that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!' Ps. 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,' Ps. 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 Ps. 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,' Gen. 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?' II Cor. 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 Cor. 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^{clx} 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^{clxi} 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:^{clxii} ‘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, Gen 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,’ Gen. 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 deepest 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, II 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, Gen. 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 ighteously, 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 Cor. 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^{clxiii} 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 takes 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, II Cor. 5:17. It is solid grace in the vessel of the heart that feeds profession in the lamp—holiness in the life, Matt. 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^{clxiv}. 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,' II Cor. 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?' I 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, Matt 5:27, and by walking in his life by the rule of it, I 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,' II 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,' Isa. 8:20. Pretend not to more strictness than the word will vouch. This is to be 'righteous overmuch' indeed, Ecc. 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,' Rev. 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,' I 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, Mal. 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,' Prov. 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 rendering themselves unclean, John 18, 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,' Rom. 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 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,' ver. 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, II Cor. 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  (*foot it right*), according to the gospel, Gal. 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,' I Cor. 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,' Rom. 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, Ex. 12. 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 dependently 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.'^{clxv} 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,' Prov. 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—whom 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.^{clxvi} 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,' Heb. 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,' Lev. 19:17; by the second he proves himself 'a scorner,' Prov. 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, Ps. 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 reprov'd 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 his dying day, 1 Kings 1:27, 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, Heb. 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,' Eze. 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,' II 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,' II Cor. 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,' Col. 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,' Ps. 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,' ver. 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,' ver. 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,' Ecc. 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,' Isa. 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 his 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,' I Cor. 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.

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, Ps. 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,' Ps. 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 is 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,' Eph. 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, Ps. 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,' Ps. 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 your 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,' ver. 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 Tim. 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 Tim. 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,’ Heb. 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,’ Matt. 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,’ Prov. 3:33; but ‘in the house of the righteous is much treasure,’ Prov. 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,’ Hab. 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,’ Zeph. 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,’ Ex. 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,’ Prov. 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, Gen. 31:24; and, ver. 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 yesternight,' &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,' Matt. 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 Sam. 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, Ex. 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, Ps. 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 so 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, fruitfulest 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, Rom. 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,' Ps. 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 Deut. 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?' II Sam. 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,' Eph. 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,' Ps. 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,' Prov. 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, Gen. 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,' Gal. 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, Matt. 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 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,' ver. 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,' II 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, I 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,' Prov. 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?' Ex. 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,' Ps. 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?' ver. 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,' Col. 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, Ps. 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,' Ps. 39:13. David was not yet recovered out of that sin, which had brought him exceeding low, as you may perceive, vv. 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,' Ps. 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,' Rom. 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,' Hab. 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^{clxvii} disease hanging about thee—thy heart leaning on thy righteousness, and lifting up thyself into confidence of it, so as to expect thy acceptance 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,' Isa. 6:3, 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 off 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?' I 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, I Cor. 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, I Cor. 15:7. He calls himself one 'born out of time,' ver. 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?

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' (Eph. 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, , signifies any good news, or joyful message. So, Jer. 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, . 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, ver. 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 joyfulest 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,' Ps. 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,' Isa. 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, Isa. 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; I Cor. 2:12, so that it is made the sad sign of a soul marked out for hell, to have the gospel 'hid' from it, II Cor. 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,' I Cor. 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,' II Tim. 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,' I Tim. 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 acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,’ 1 Tim. 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,’ Rev. 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 rations. 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 gaities 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,' Rev. 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 relieve 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, Gen. 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,' Jer. 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, believably, 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,' ver. 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 dost 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? Ps. 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, Ecc. 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, Deut. 26. 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, Gen. 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.'^{clxviii} 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,' Jer. 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 bestow 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,’ Rom. 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,’ Ps. 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 its 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^{clxix} 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,’ II Thes. 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, Gal. 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 causeway, called, 'a living way,' Heb. 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,' Rom. 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,' II Tim. 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 Isa. 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,' Rom. 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,' II Cor. 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, Col. 1:20, 'And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself;' and, ver. 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 unproveable 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 forget 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, Ps. 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,' Isa. 53:5. 'the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all,' ver. 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,' Isa. 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;,' Isa. 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,' Eph. 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,' Isa. 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, Eph. 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,' Deut. 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? Ps. 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*

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 Cor. 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, Heb. 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,' Eph. 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, II Cor. 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,' Isa. 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,' Rev. 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,' Rom. 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, II Cor. 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,' Isa. 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!' Eph. 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,' Gen 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*, II Cor. 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 embassy 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,' II Tim. 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,' Isa. 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^{clxx} 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^{clxxi}, 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,' Isa. 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 doud 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, Ps. 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, II Sam. 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,' Ps. 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,' I Sam. 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,' II Sam. 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,' Isa. 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^{clxxii} 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,' Isa. 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^{clxxiii} 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^{clxxiv}—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,' Isa. 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 through 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?' Rom. 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,' I Cor. 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!' I Sam. 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?' Rom. 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 gaities, 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,' Rom. 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,' Rom. 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?' Rev. 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,' Ps. 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,' Eze. 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,' Ex. 6:9. Hannah, she went up to the festival at Jerusalem with her husband, but it is said, 'She wept, and did not eat,' I Sam. 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, Heb. 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^{clxxv} 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,' Matt. 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, Heb. 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, ver. 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,' Heb. 9. 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,' Heb. 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,' Ps. 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,' Lev. 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,' Heb. 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 Pet. 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,' Rom. 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? ver. 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,' Rom. 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 ver. 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, Rom. 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. 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 Cor. 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 ver. 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 irresistible, 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, Ps. 51. 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,' Rom. 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,’ Deut. 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 reprov’d, *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,’ Matt. 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,’ Col. 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,’ Gal. 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 sweetmeats 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,' Prov. 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,' Prov. 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, Ps. 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,’ ver. 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,’ Ps. 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,’ Heb. 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,’ Gen. 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,’ Ps. 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,’ Ps. 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 displeasing 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, Gen. 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,' ver. 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? Matt. 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* (fiduciarly) *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,' *Isa. 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,' Isa. 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,' Isa. 35:3. And upon their peril be it, if they pour this ointment upon the head of an unhumiliated 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, Gal. 6:16. Now this rule you may see, to be the rule of the 'new creature,' ver. 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^{clxxvi} 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,' II Thes. 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.' II Thes. 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^{clxxvii} 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,' Ps. 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,' Prov 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,' Ps. 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 Sam. 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,' Ps. 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^{clxxviii} 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,' Ps. 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,' Prov. 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,' Ps. 40:12; but, before the psalm is at an end, after a few deep groans in prayer, ver. 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,' ver. 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; Heb. 12:14; I Thes. 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,' ver. 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,' Isa. 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 bos-

oms 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,' ver. 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 *minus 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,' Rev. 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, Eph. 4:3. The apostle exhorts them 'to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.' And how doth he persuade them ver. 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, Gen. 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 Zech. 11:10, compared with ver. 14. When once 'the staff of beauty,' ver. 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 ver. 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,' Rom. 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,' Gal. 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,' Isa. 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,' Prov. 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 est 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,’ Eze. 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 gossellers, 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 Cor. 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,' Rom. 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 Cor. 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 quærululum*—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 Tim. 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 sævitiae 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, Lev. 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 sealing 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 remain 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, ver. 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, ver. 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, ver. 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,' ver. 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,' ver. 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, ver. 21, and again, ver. 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^{clxxix} 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 Cor. 10. 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 found—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,’ Gal. 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,’ Eph. 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 3, and ‘the inheritance of the saints in light,’ Col. 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,' Gen. 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,' Eph. 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 ver. 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,' Matt. 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, Gen. 31:44, and then, 'Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread,' ver. 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,' Eph. 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, Rom. 1, he longs to see them, as to impart some spiritual gift to them, ver. 11, so, saith he, 'that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me,' Rom. 1:12; yea, he hopes to be 'filled with their company,' Rom. 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,' ver. 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,' Mal. 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,' II Cor. 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 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,' Rom. 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,' Rom. 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' (Eph. 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 —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 shod, 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, Ps. 57. And how came he so? 'My heart is prepared, O God, my heart is prepared,' saith he, 'I will sing and give praise,' ver. 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,' Ps. 110—'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, Rom. 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,'  , II Tim. 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 —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,' II Tim. 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^{clxxx} 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, Ex. 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,' Ps. 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, Matt. 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 Cor. 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,' Ps. 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,' Ps. 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,' II Cor. 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, Num. 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 awkwardness^{clxxxix} 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, Ex. 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 disposal of God's afflicting hand to evidence a son's spirit, 'If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons,' Heb. 12:7. Observe, he doth not say, 'If you be chastened,' but, 'If ye endure chastening.' Naked suffering doth not prove sonship, but 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,' Est. 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,' I Cor. 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,' I Thes. 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,' Rom. 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*^{c^{lxxxiii}}, 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, Ps. 23:4, 5, brings in (as it were), a death's head with his feast. In the same breath almost he speaks of his dying, ver. 4, and of the rich feast he at present sat at, through the bounty of God, ver. 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,' Ps. 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, 7. 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,' Matt. 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 disposal 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,' ver. 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, ver. 17. Then said he, 'Lord, are there few that be saved?' 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,' ver. 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 ^{clxxxiii} *bout* or try yourselves by this coarse sieve; but 'strive to enter,' —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 Sam. 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,' II Tim. 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,' Ex. 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,' Matt. 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 jealousy 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 Sam. 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,' Gen. 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,' ver. 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. 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, ver. 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 oftentimes 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,' Rom. 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,' Rom. 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, Deut. 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 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,' Ps. 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, Heb. 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 vv. 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^{clxxxiv} 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,’ Isa. 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 awkwardness 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, Ps 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, Ps. 42. 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,' Heb. 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^{clxxxv} 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,' Heb. 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,' II Tim. 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,' Prov. 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,' Ps. 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,' Ps. 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, Gen 12:1, and what so fit as a promise of Christ to bring his heart to God's foot? ver. 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 disposal. 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,' Rom. 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,' Rom. 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, Ps. 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, ver. 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 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 displeasing 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,' Heb. 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,' Gal. 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, —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,' Matt. 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,' Rom. 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 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 chooseth 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,' Prov. 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, Matt. 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,' Prov. 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 sweat 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.

The Christian
In Complete Armour

Volume Two