

A PLEA FOR THE GODLY

THOMAS WATSON



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ABOUT THIS BOOK



A stirring Puritan treatise on Proverbs 12:26, defending the **dignity and excellency of the godly** against the scorn of a hostile world. Watson demonstrates how the righteous surpass others in **wisdom, spiritual life, usefulness, and even death** — enriched by Christ's imputed righteousness and transformed by the Holy Spirit. With vivid imagery and pastoral warmth, he comforts afflicted believers, exposes the emptiness of mere morality, and calls readers to prize true holiness above worldly greatness. A powerful reminder that **Job on the dunghill was more excellent than Pharaoh on the throne.**



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TITLE PAGE



A Plea for the Godly.

Wherein is shown the excellency of a righteous person.

By **Thomas Watson**, Minister of the Gospel.

Isaiah 43:4. **Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable.** Isaiah 60:15. **I will make thee an eternal excellency.**

London, Printed by **A. Maxwell** for **Thomas Parkhurst**, at the Three Crowns and Bible in **Cheapside**, 1672.

THE EPISTLE TO THE READER



****THE EPISTLE TO THE**** READER.

Christian Reader,

Holiness is a glorious thing, it is the curious refining of the soul: take away holiness from an angel and he is a devil. True piety sheds an excellency upon a person, as the sun imparts a luster to the stars. The righteous man has **God's name written upon him** (Revelation 3:12) and **partakes of the divine nature** (2 Peter 1:4). Which is not by a transubstantiation into the Divine Essence, but by a transformation into the Divine Likeness.

This ensuing discourse is intended as a **Plea for the Righteous**: I would wipe off that obloquy and disrepute which is unjustly cast upon the saints in this God dishonoring age: In false religions, strictness is admired; a devout **Mahometan**, or **Papist**, are had in veneration; but in the true religion he who is most zealous is most hated: As if the name of Protestantism were an honor, but the practice of it a disgrace. The most serious holy men are misrepresented to the world as indiscreet and factious. The prophet **Elijah** was counted **the troubler of Israel** (1 Kings 18:17). And **Luther** the **trumpet of rebellion**. The old serpent spits his virulent poison at the godly through the mouths of the

profane. But there is a time coming when the Lord will reckon with men for **their hard speeches** (Jude 15). What is the **chaff** to the **wheat**? How ignoble and contemptible are the wicked compared to the godly! The difference will more fully appear at the last day (Malachi 3:18). **Then shall you return and discern between the righteous and the wicked.** Such as calumniate the saints, would be glad to die their death (Numbers 23:10). **Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.**

The philosopher asking one, which of these two he had rather be, either rich **Croesus**, or virtuous **Socrates**? He answered that in his life he would be **Croesus**, but at his death **Socrates**. In like manner there are many would live with the wicked, but die with the righteous; but they shall not have their wish: They were offended at the sight and company of God's holy ones, and they shall be as far parted from them, as Heaven and Hell are asunder. Oh you saints of the most High, be not troubled at the groundless aspersions of the wicked; they who are your **censurers** shall not be your **judges**. Lift up your crests, be cheerful to think what Christ has wrought for you by his blood, and wrought **in** you by his Spirit. He has dignified you above the rest of the world, **The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor.** I shall not further expatiate; but humbly imploring the blessing of the Almighty upon these few lines, I rest,

March 27, 1672. Yours in all Christian service, Thomas Watson.

ERRATA



ERRATA.

Page 4, margin, for [illegible] read [illegible]. Page 12, margin, for [illegible] read [illegible]. Page 56, margin, for [illegible]. Page 68, line 24, for Sat. read Saint.

THE RIGHTEOUS MAN'S EXCELLENCY



Proverbs 12:26._ The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor.

— **Solomon** was a man of renown, he was the world's wonder; he discoursed **of trees from the cedar-tree in Lebanon unto the hyssop that springs out of the wall** (1 Kings 4:33). The Proverbs are profound and holy aphorisms, indited by the Spirit of God, and penned by him who was both a king and a preacher. A great part of this book is to set forth the difference between the godly and the wicked; the happiness of the one, and the misery of the other. The text is spoken in the eulogy and commendation of a righteous man. **The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor.**

1. I begin with the first word, **righteous.**] There is a twofold righteousness. 1. A **civil righteousness**; and so he is righteous, who is adorned with the **moral virtues**, prudence, justice, temperance; who keeps free from penal statutes, and does not dash upon the rock of visible scandal. This righteousness is **valid, foro humano**, in man's court, but is insufficient to salvation. Under the fair leaves of civility, the worm of unbelief may be hidden.

Many a person decked with morality is now descended into hell; a bull may be tied with ribbons, and wear a garland on his head, yet go to the slaughter. However for the honor of this age, it were to be wished, that there were more civil righteousness to be found in the world.

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

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

Righteousness is extensive in the subject, it has a spreading virtue (1 Thessalonians 5:23). **The God of peace sanctify you wholly**. A child of God is regenerate in every part, though but in part.

2. He is **more excellent.**] Excellency is the ennobling a person, or a gradual elevation of him above others. **The righteous man is more excellent**, that is, he is a better man; the word in the **Hebrew** and **Italian** for **excellent**, signifies **abundant**; as if the Spirit of God had said, the righteous has more abundant worth in him, more intrinsic goodness.

3. **Than his neighbor.**] Neighbor is not to be taken here strictly, for one that lives in a **vicinity**, and is nearly situated; but by **neighbor** is meant any one that is unrighteous, and has not the fear of God before his eyes.

The text has two general parts.

- 1. The subject, **the Righteous.** - 2. The predicate, **he is more excellent than his neighbor.**

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

Doctrine. **He who is truly righteous is far more excellent than any wicked person in the world whatsoever.** I say [**truly righteous**] to exclude the **hypocrite**, who has a **form**, and slight tincture of piety, but **knows not the grace of God in truth** (Colossians 1:6). He has nothing of religion but the **name** (Revelation 3:1), and religion often suffers by him: But he who is **really** righteous, is the **excellent person**, and has a superiority to all others (1 Samuel 15:28).

For the illustrating of the proposition, I shall do two things; I shall show:

1. Wherein the righteous man is more excellent. 2. Why.

1. Wherein a righteous man is more excellent than another. This appears three ways:

In respect of: 1. What he is. 2. What he has. 3. What he shall have.

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

1. He is more richly endued with **wisdom**; he is of a dexterous sagacity, mixing the serpent's prudence with the dove's innocence (1 Corinthians 2:15). **He that is spiritual judges all things**: As the soul in the eye is the cause why it sees; so the Spirit of God in the mind is the cause why it savingly understands. The **anointing** of the Holy Ghost is irradiating; it clears a Christian's eyesight (1 John 2:27). **The same unction teaches you all things**. The saints are compared to **wise virgins** (Matthew 25:2). Sensualists have often a greater reach in matters of the world, but they have no insight into the **deep things of God** (1 Corinthians 2:14). A swine may see an acorn under the tree, but it cannot see a star. **David** being divinely illuminated, grew **wiser than his teachers** (Psalm 119:99). A righteous man is wise:

1. To know **himself**: Take the most mercurial wit, the subtle politician, who is able to dive into the **arcana Imperii**, the mysteries of **state**, yet he is **acutely obtuse**, ignorant of his own heart: There are those meanders and sophisms, those intrinsic pollutions, that he cannot find out; he dresses himself by the flattering-glass of self-love, he sees not that evil which is in him, nor will he believe it. **Hazael** could not imagine he should be so bad when he came to be king (2 Kings 8:13).

But a soul spiritually enlightened, sees that which the natural man does not; he sees legions of vain thoughts; he sees how his grace is checkered with corruption; his humility is stained with pride; his faith mixed with unbelief: His very duties are but **splendida peccata, shining sins**. He sees so much of his heart that he dares not trust it.

2. A righteous man is wise to know **Jesus Christ**: the natural man hears of Christ by the hearing of the ear, but he does not know him (Song of Solomon 5:9). **What is your beloved more than another beloved?** Those who journeyed with **Paul, heard a voice, but saw no man** (Acts 9:7). So the unregenerate person hears the minister set forth Christ as **altogether lovely**, he hears a voice, but sees no man; he sees not Christ's orient beauties. Christ is a treasure, but a **hid treasure**. But a gracious soul has the veil taken off, he sees the amazing excellencies of Christ (1 Peter 2:7). **To you that believe he is precious**, his merits, graces, benefits are precious: a righteous man has Christ's **eye-salve** to see his **tried gold** (Revelation 3:18). **Zeuxis** having drawn a curious piece, **Nicostratus** fell into the admiration of it, and commended it; an ignorant man stood by and asked him, what such rare excellency he saw in that piece? Said he, If you could see with my eyes, you would admire as well as I. So if a carnal man could see with a spiritual man's eyes, he would wonder at those surpassing beauties in Jesus Christ, which now he makes light of.

3. A righteous man is wise to discern the **times** (1 Chronicles 12:32). **The children of Issachar were men that had understanding of the times**. The world cries out, **Glorious times!** but a righteous man has an **eye of discerning**, he can see when the wicked [reconstructed: make void] **God's law**, and when reli-

gion is crucified by such as cry **Hosanna** to it. He is wise to keep from the contagion of the times (Revelation 14:2). **These are they which were not defiled with women, for they are virgins:** a person divinely qualified is wiser than to run himself into snares, or go to hell for company; he is **wise to salvation** (Psalm 111:10). **A good understanding have all they that do his commandments.**

2. A righteous man is of a more excellent **birth**. **Alexander** feigned himself to be son to **Jupiter**: every good Christian is high-born; he is **born of God**; and that is more than to come of princes, and be of the blood-royal. **David** thought it no small honor to be the king's son in law (1 Samuel 18:18). Oh what an infinite honor is it to be regenerated by the Spirit, and enrolled among the first born of heaven! The righteous man derives his pedigree from the **Ancient of Days** (Daniel 7:9). He gives the fairest scutcheon, the **eagle**, and [reconstructed: the] **lion**; he is near a kin to the **Lion of the tribe of Judah**.

3. A righteous person is of a more excellent **beauty**. How is worldly beauty courted by all, and what is it? (Proverbs 31:30) **Beauty is vain**; the bravest features of body, and the most lovely sanguine are no other than well-colored earth. But a righteous person has a celestial beauty shining in him; he is embellished with knowledge, love, meekness, which are of such oriental splendor as allure the very angels. A good Christian has some idea and resemblance of that sparkling holiness which is in the **Deity**. Christ is infinitely taken with the spiritual beauty of his Church (Song of Solomon 6:4). **You are beautiful, O my love as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem. Tirzah** was a map of pleasure, **Jerusalem** was the metropolis of **Judea**, the star and light of all

the eastern world. This was hieroglyphical, to set forth the radiancy of the church's glory; and verse 5, **Turn away your eyes from me, for they have overcome me;** as if Christ had said, Oh my spouse, such a resplendent luster is in your visage, that I have much ado to bear it: I am wounded with the delightful darts of your beauty. One eye of a believer draws Christ's heart to it (Song of Solomon 4:9). **You have ravished my heart with one of your eyes;** a saint's beauty never withers, it outlives death. True grace like colors laid in oil, cannot be washed off.

4. A righteous man's **thoughts** are more excellent: thoughts are the **first-born** of the soul; sinful thoughts arise out of a bad heart, like sparks out of a furnace; an unsanctified fancy is Satan's work-house (Micah 2:1). But, **the thoughts of the righteous are right** (Proverbs 12:5). A righteous man's thoughts have got wings and fled to heaven (Psalm 139:18). **When I awake I am still with Thee.** God is a saint's treasure; and where should his mind be but upon his treasure? A righteous man is got upon the top of Mount **Tabor**, solacing himself in **Jehovah**; he contemplates the beauty of holiness, the love of Christ, the felicity of saints glorified; his thoughts are among the cherubims. The soul while it is musing on Christ, is filled with holy and sweet raptures, it is caught up into Paradise, it is in heaven before its time (Psalm 104:34). **My meditation of Him shall be sweet.**

5. A righteous man's **desires** are more excellent. He spreads the sails of his desire to receive the fresh breathings of God's Spirit (Song of Solomon 4:16). I deny not but a bad man may have some faint velleities after the best things. Those deserters of Christ, cried, **Lord, evermore give us this bread** (John 6:24). But a righteous man's desires excel.

1. He desires Christ for himself; not only for his **jewels**, but his **beauty**, not only as he is a **Savior**, but as he is the **Holy One** (Acts 3:14).

2. He is **unsatisfied** without Christ, not the most rich viands, not golden chalices filled with sapphires or diamonds will content him without Christ. The two **Marys** were not satisfied with the **linen clothes** lying in the sepulcher, unless they had seen the body of Jesus. So it is not the linen on the communion-table, or the elements of bread and wine, will satisfy a believer, unless he may meet with Christ whom his soul loves.

3. He desires still **more** of Christ, and would be swallowed up in the sweet ocean of his love; behold here a desire which God himself has raised in the soul, and he will open the breast of mercy, and satisfy it.

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

Sinners in their ordinary discourse bring forth scripture, as the **Philistines** did **Samson** to make sport, as if the Bible were the best minstrel to play with, and a jest were worth nothing, unless it were seasoned with the salt of the sanctuary. It is a saying of **Luther**, whom God has a mind to destroy, he lets them play with scripture: But in this sense the righteous is more excellent. **The**

tongue of the just is as choice silver (Proverbs 10:20). Gracious words drop as silver from him to the enriching the souls of others (Ecclesiastes 10:12). **The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious.** In the **Hebrew**, they are **grace**. His words are not as **vinegar** to fret, but as **salt** to season others (Colossians 4:6). The roof of the mouth is called **Coelum**, heaven; a godly man's mouth is full of heaven; he speaks as if he had been already in heaven: The holy conference of the two disciples going to **Emmaus** brought Christ into their company (Luke 24:15). **While they communed together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them;** Such savory speeches drop from holy lips, that God has a table-book to write them down (Malachi 3:16). **Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another, and God hearkened, and a book of remembrance was written.** It is reported of **Tamerlane** that he kept a register of the names and good deeds of his soldiers. God registers the speeches of his people that they may not be lost.

7. A righteous man is of a more excellent **spirit** (Daniel 5:12). **An excellent spirit was found in Daniel.** (Numbers 14:24) **My servant Caleb because he had another spirit with him.** A wicked man has **the spirit of the world** (2 Corinthians 2:12). He is of an atheistical spirit; **Lucian** is his Old Testament, **Machiavel** his New; but a person invested with grace has choiceness of spirit in him: He is of a

1. Sublime spirit. 2. Noble spirit. 3. Invincible spirit.

1. He is of a **sublime** spirit. He savors the things of God; a person sublimated by **grace**, sets **his feet** where others set their **hearts**; he being clothed with Christ the **Sun of righteousness**, and crowned with the graces as glittering **stars**, has the **moon**

under him; the world may have his **look**, but Christ has his **love**; he dwells below, but trades in the **Jerusalem** above. A true saint is taken up about higher matters; getting the love and favor of God; he aspires after glory and immortality; he looks no lower than a crown; he feeds as the birds of paradise on the dew of heaven; he is employed about angels' work, lifting up God's name in the world; he is a living organ of God's praise.

2. He is of a **noble spirit**; he has the spirit of an heir, he scorns anything that is disingenuous and sordid; he can deny himself, but not disparage himself; he can be **humble**, but not **base**; he knows not how to palliate the sins of any, which were to wash the Devil's face: He cannot prostitute himself to the lusts of men, or flatter to get preferment (Job 32:21). A righteous man abhors to be biased from the truth for secular advantage: It was said of **Luther**, he cared not for gold; his spirit was more noble than to be bribed with money: A good man will not purchase the liberty of his person by the ensnaring of his conscience (Hebrews 11:35). **Not accepting deliverance.**

3. He is of an **invincible** spirit; he bears afflictions without fainting, or fretting, Though the **archers** shoot at him, his **bow** abides in strength. Such as want a principle of grace, **faint in the day of adversity** they cannot bear a frown from a great man, or digest a reproach: If the bough of a tree be rotten, the least weight hung upon it breaks it. But the righteous has the heart of a lion; he is not startled at the discourtesies of the world; he looks upon reproaches for Christ, as ensigns of honor (1 Peter 4:11). When the **Roman** Catholics taunted at **Luther** for his apostasy from their church, I confess (said **Luther**) I am an apostate from you, but a blessed one; I am such an apostate as a magician is when he re-

nounces his compact made with the Devil, and betakes himself to Christ. Grace steels the heart with courage, and fires it with zeal. **Nazianzen** said of **Athanasius**, he was both a **loadstone** and an **adamant**; a loadstone for the sweetness of his disposition, and an adamant for the invincibleness of his resolution. When the Emperor **Valens** promised **Basil** great preferment, if he would subscribe to the **Arian** heresy: Sir, said he, these speeches are fit to catch little children, but we who are taught by the Spirit, are ready to endure a thousand deaths rather than suffer one syllable of scripture to be altered. A righteous man is willing to take the **cross** for his jointure, and with **Ignatius** wear Christ's sufferings as a collar of pearl. (Romans 5:3) **We glory in tribulation**. Saint **Paul** rattles his chain, and did glory in it as a woman (says **Chrysostom**) that is proud of her jewels. It is to my loss, said **Gordius** the Martyr, if you abate me anything of my sufferings. Of what heroic undaunted spirits were the primitive Christians! Who could scorn preferments, laugh at imprisonments, snatch up torments as crowns; and whose love to Christ burned hotter than the fire; insomuch that the heathens cried out, **Vere magnus est Deus Christianorum**; Great is the GOD of the Christians.

8. The **prayers** of a righteous man are more excellent: Another may have more elegance in prayer, he has more sincerity (Proverbs 15:8). **The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is his delight**. A sinner's praying is howling (Hosea 7:14), but the prayer of a righteous man is music in God's ears (Song of Solomon 2:14). **Let me hear your voice for sweet is your voice**.

Maximinus a persecutor, being on his sick-bed craved the prayers of the godly. The excellency of a righteous man's prayer is seen.

by its 1. Noble exploits. 2. Gracious returns.

1. By its **noble exploits**. **Luther's** prayer recovered **Theodorus Vitus** of a consumption, after the physicians had given him over for dead. The prayer of the righteous has stopped the sun in its full career (Joshua 10:13). It has divided the waters (Exodus 14:15). Overcome armies (Exodus 17:11). Cast out devils (Matthew 17:21). Opened prisons (Acts 12:9). Shut heaven (James 5:17). Prayer has had power with God (Hosea 12:4). The **Tyrrians** tied fast their God **Hercules** with a golden chain; the great **Jehovah** is held by the prayers of his people (Genesis 32:26). **I will not let you go till you bless me.**

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

1. Because his affections are drawn forth strongly in prayer; his eyes melt, his heart burns: he is **fervent in spirit** (Romans 12:11). It is a metaphor alluding to water, **quae ebullit prae ardore**, which boils over; a good heart boils over with hot affections in prayer; there may be powder in a gun when there is no fire; some may have good matter in prayer, but no fire of affection to discharge it; prayer without fervency, is like wine that has lost the spirits; fervency (as **Ambrose** says) baptizes a duty, and gives it a name; without this, prayer is no prayer: a righteous man is carried up to heaven in a **fiery chariot** of devotion: this holy fervency is caused by the Spirit of God, which both indites and inflames the saints' prayers. **The spirit helps us with sighs and groans** (Romans 8:26): not only **gifts**, but **groans**; and surely the incense of a righteous man's prayer with the Holy Ghost's fire put to it, must needs ascend as a sweet perfume to heaven.

[reconstructed: 2]. A righteous man's prayers are so excellent, because he sprinkles faith in every prayer (Psalm 25:1-2). **To You, O Lord, do I lift up my soul, O my God I trust in You.** Faith is the breath of prayer; as the body cannot live without breath, so prayer cannot live unless faith breathes in it; faith is the bullet which is shot in prayer; a believing prayer can obtain anything from God. It is reported of a nobleman of this nation, that the queen gave him a ring, and told him that when he was in any strait, let him send that ring to her, and she would relieve him. To this ring I compare prayer, when a child of God stands in need of anything, he sends this ring to God, and presents it by the hand of faith, and has his desires granted (Matthew 21:22).

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

9. The **tears** of a righteous man are more excellent: holy tears are the costly gum which distills from the trees of righteousness: **Mary Magdalene** stood at Christ's feet weeping (Luke 7:38). Her tears dropped as pearls from her eyes; the tears of the wicked are good for nothing, they are either **carnal**; they weep for worldly losses; or **spurious**, they are more troubled for hell than sin; conscience is in an agony, there is water in their eyes, because there is fire in their bones: but the tears of a true penitent are more precious, they drop from the eye of **hope**, they are purifying tears; the holy mourner weeps out sin; these tears are the **wine of angels** (Luke 15:10). So precious they are that God bottles them (Psalm 56:8). **Put my tears in Your bottle:** in the **Hebrew** it is, **my tear**; to show that God takes notice of every tear. Holy tears though they are silent, yet they have a voice.

Interdum lachrymae pondera vocis habent.

Though they fall to the earth, yet they reach heaven: tears dropping from the saints' eyes are as sweet water dropping from the roses.

10. The **life** of a righteous man is more excellent,

- 1. For spiritualness. - 2. For usefulness.

1. For **spiritualness**; and that three ways:

1. He lives by a more spiritual **rule** than others. A sinner either lives by no rule, or by a false; he walks **according to the course of the world** (Ephesians 2:2). But a righteous man goes by the canon of Scripture, as a well made dial goes exactly by the sun: God's Word is the oracle he consults with, it is his pillar of fire or pole-star to direct him (Psalm 119:105). **Your Word is a lantern to my feet**: the Word is a divine pandect, it is a model and platform of God's mind, to which a pious man conforms his actions, both moral and sacred; he will not resolve his faith into councils or fathers, nor will he follow the examples of the best men further than they follow the Word.

2. A righteous man lives more spiritually as he lives a life above others; whereas they live no higher than reason. **The just lives by faith** (Hebrews 10:38). A righteous man moves in a higher sphere, he penetrates the clouds, **Moses saw him who is invisible** (Hebrews 11:27). Sense and reason are too low of stature to see Christ; faith climbs up, **not into the tree as Zacchaeus, but within the veil**, and there sees Jesus: a holy person sends out faith as a spy to view the land of promise; faith unties difficulties (Romans 4:18). **Who against hope believed in hope**: against the hope of sense, **Abraham** believed in hope of the promise; faith anticipates future things, and makes them present: when God told **Abraham** what a glorious country he would give him, **Abraham** looked upon it as if it had been actually done, and he had taken **livery and seisin**: faith can live upon God in the defi-

ciency of visible comforts (Habakkuk 3:17). **Although the fig tree does not blossom, yet I will rejoice in the Lord:** a righteous man believes that if God will save him from **hell**, he will save him from **want**; if he will give him a kingdom, he will not deny him **daily bread**.

3. A righteous man lives more spiritually, as he shows forth more of the power of holiness in his life than others; he is a **pattern of piety** (Psalm 106:16). **Aaron the saint of the Lord:** his sanctity adorned him more than his [**reconstructed: mitre**] or **linen garments:** a [**reconstructed: moralist**] may live as a man, but he who is regenerate lives the life of Christ (1 John 2:6). The **Macedonians** on the birthday of **Alexander** did wear **Alexander's** picture about their necks, set with gold and pearl: so the righteous carry the lively picture of Christ in their holy example; they live so devoutly as if they had seen the Lord with bodily eyes.

2. The life of a righteous man is more excellent for **usefulness:** he is **a blessing in the midst of the land** (Isaiah 19:24). He **spends and is spent** for Christ; he had rather **wear out**, than **rust:**

Nec propter vitam vivendi perdere causam.

The lives of the wicked are **unprofitable**, therefore compared to **chaff** (Matthew 3:11) and **hurtful**, therefore compared to **thorns** (Micah 7:4). But a righteous man is like the **bee** or **silk-worm**, working for the good of others: **It comforts me** (said worthy **Jewel**) **that I have exhausted myself in the labors**

of my holy calling. A good man hangs between these two as a needle between two loadstones, **longing to be with Christ,** and **love of doing service.**

1. A righteous man is helpful to the **bodies** of others: he is a **temporal savior**; he has one eye shut to wink at the failings of others, and another eye open to spy their wants: he is like the heaven diffusing his influence, and sending down his silver drops of charity; he is a staff to the lame, bread to the hungry; he puts under a golden crutch to support others when they are falling. It is reported of the young Lord **Harrington**, that he gave the tenth part of his yearly revenue to charitable uses: as **Mary** brought her sweet ointments to anoint Christ's dead body; so a gracious soul brings his ointments of charity to anoint the saints which are Christ's living body: a good man judiciously considers how he himself lives upon contribution; the earth enriches him with veins of silver, crops of corn: one creature brings him wool, another oil, another silk; and as every creature conspires for his good, so he studies to lay out himself for the good of others. **Faith if it has not works is dead** (James 2:17): faith sanctifies works, and works testify faith: a believer with one hand receives Christ's merits, with the other relieves his members; and he not only gives to the necessities of the poor, but gives **freely** (Deuteronomy 15:10). Charity drops from him as myrrh from the tree. He does not put his alms among his desperate debts; he is thankful that God has made him in the number of **givers**, and not **receivers**.

2. A righteous man is helpful to the **souls** of others: he who pities his neighbor's ox when it is fallen into a pit, does much more pity his neighbor's soul that is falling into hell; he does counsel the

ignorant, confirm the weak, reduce the wandering, **convert the sinner from the error of his way** (James 5:20).

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

11. The **death** of a righteous man is more excellent: death comes with a **habeas corpus** (Psalm 89:48). **What man is he that lives and shall not see death?** Grace itself gives no charter of exemption from it; an earthen pot though full of gold may break: the righteous who are **earthen vessels**, though they are filled with the golden graces are not freed from breaking by death: but their death is precious (Psalm 116:15).

Wicked men like hawks are set high upon a perch, verveled with jingling bells, but then comes their passing-bell and calls them away, and when they die, there is no miss of them; their life

was scarce worth a prayer, nor their death worth a tear; the wicked **die in their sins** (John 8:21). Death to them is but *inferni porta*, a trap-door to let them into hell.

But when a righteous man dies, his sins die with him; the pale face of death looks ruddy, being sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb. When a believer has death in his body, he has Christ in his soul; the day of his death is his ascension day to heaven: the death of a saint is precious.

1. To **God**; The righteous are said to be **gathered** (Isaiah 57:1). A [reconstructed: sinner] **is carried away in a [reconstructed: storm]** (Job 27:20). The righteous is **gathered** as we gather precious fruit and candy it; so greatly does God value the death of a saint, that he **makes inquisition** for every drop of his blood (**Psalm 9:12**).

2. His death is precious to the **saints surviving**; they follow his hearse weeping, as **David** did **Abner's** (2 **Samuel 3:31**). Though they know that when a godly man dies he is fixed in a higher and more transparent orb, yet they cannot but mourn at the fall of such a star. It is a lamentation when God cuts down the pillars of a land; the great cables and anchors of a ship being gone, there is danger of a shipwreck, it presages a storm coming when God hides his jewels: After **Augustine's** death followed the sacking of **Hippo** by the **Goths** and **Vandals**. After the decease of **Paraeus**, fell out the destruction of **Heidelberg**: Hence it is that the saints who are left behind, when they see such as are the glory of a kingdom taken away by a stroke of death, cannot but cry as **Elisha** did, when **Elijah** was parted from him (2 **Kings 2:12**). **My**

Father, my Father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof. The saints living are affected with the loss of the godly, and carry them to their grave with a shower of tears.

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

2. A righteous man is more excellent than a wicked, in respect of what he **has**.

1. He has a more excellent **name**: God himself embalmed **Moses'** name, and set a garland of honor upon his hearse (**Joshua 1:2**). **Moses my servant is dead**: The names of the righteous are registered in the sacred records of Scripture (**Proverbs 10:7**). **The memory of the just is blessed**. The wicked **leave their name for a curse** (Isaiah 65:15). How cursed is the name of **Judas!** what Christian would baptize his child of that name? How odious are the names of **Nero, Domitian, Bonner?** When their bodies rot under ground, their names rot above ground: But **by faith the elders obtained a good report** (Hebrews 11:2). How renowned was **Moses** for his meekness; **Cornelius** for his alms! their names send forth a fragrant perfume in the church of God to this day. **Psalm 112:6. The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.** It may

be said of a gracious person as once of King **David** (1 **Samuel** 18:30). **His name was much set by.** A wicked man may leave a great estate behind; a righteous man leaves a good name.

2. A righteous man has more excellent **company**:

1. He has the **communion of saints** (Psalm 119:63). **I am companion to all them that fear Thee;** A good man delights in a companion of his own **species**; the lamb cares not to be with the wolf. If unawares a godly man lights into the company of the wicked, he fears either pollution or scandal, therefore makes haste as out of an infected house: A righteous man twists and incorporates among the saints, he is joined to Christ's body mystical (**Acts** 4:23). **And being let go, they went to their own company.**

2. A righteous man has communion with God (1 **John** 1:3). **Our fellowship is with the Father and his Son Jesus.** A gracious soul has sweet intercourse with heaven; he goes to God by prayer, and God comes to him by his Spirit; How happy is that person who has the angels to guard him, and God to keep him company!

3. A righteous man has more excellent **promises** belong to him; what a sinner has, is rather by **providence** than by virtue of a **promise**; the saints are called **heirs of the promise** (Hebrews 6:17). The promises are **precious** (2 Peter 1:4). They are the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, the pleasant streams that run in the paradise of Scripture: Behold a blessed promise (Romans 8:28). **All things shall work for good;** but to whom? **to them that love God:** All **mercies** shall work for their good; they shall be footstools to lift up their hearts higher to heaven, and all **afflictions** shall work for their good; the rod shall be a divine pencil to

draw Christ's image more lively upon their souls: and there is another promise (Hebrews 13:5). **I will never leave Thee nor forsake Thee.** This promise belongs to the heirs of salvation; God will not leave his people, either to their strong corruptions, or their weak graces; he will counsel them in their doubts, supply them in their wants, defend them in their dangers, when they are most **assaulted** they shall be most **assisted**. How can God leave them? they are his spouse, will a man leave his spouse? Thus the saints have the royal charter of the promises settled upon them: and these promises as they are **sweet**, so they are **sure**: Men reckon their wealth not always by what ready money they have in their houses but by their bonds and leases; a Christian's estate lies most in bonds and bills of God's hand sealed with his oath: What better security can there be?

4. A righteous man has more excellent **freedom** (Psalm 119:45): **And I will walk at liberty.** Another is capable of **civil freedom**; he may be a **Roman born**; but he is still enslaved to his **lusts**; but a righteous person is **God's freeman** (1 Corinthians 7:21). His neck is out of the Devil's yoke; he is **freed from the law of sin** (Romans 8:2). He has God's **free spirit** (Psalm 51:12), which makes him free and cheerful in his obedience; the will is not **compelled** but **changed**; a regenerate person is drawn indeed by the Spirit, but **sweetly**, as one is drawn into a garden of spices by the fragrancy of their smell; he is drawn to Christ as one is drawn with another's beauty; so that while he is drawn he is free: a righteous soul **chooses** the ways of God (Psalm 119:30), and what greater act of freedom than an act of choice? And a saint cannot have his spiritual freedom taken from him; while he suffers in

prison, his conscience is most free; in short, he is made free of a **company**, the **innumerable company of angels** (Hebrews 12:22).

5. A righteous man has more excellent **food**. Carnalists feed only on earthly provision, he feeds on heavenly; he **tastes how sweet the Lord is** (Psalm 34:8). He feeds on God's love, this is the **hidden manna**; he eats Christ's flesh, which not only **begets** life (John 6:33), but **prevents** death (John 6:50). **This is the bread which comes down from heaven that a man may eat of it and not die**: that is, not die **the second death**; other bread may nauseate or cause surfeit, but there is no excess here, we cannot eat too much of the bread of life, we cannot have too much of Christ, as one cannot have too much health. Oh what excellent food is this, God himself is in this cheer.

6. A righteous man has more excellent **armor**; namely, **the armor of light** (Romans 13:12). This is armor of God's making (Ephesians 6:16), and the Lord with his armor gives strength. **Alexander** might give a coward his armor, but he could not give him his courage; but God infuses a spirit of magnanimity into his people, with his armor he conveys strength (2 Corinthians 12:9): **My strength is made perfect in weakness**. A Christian having on God's armor, and going forth **in the power of his might**, nothing can hurt him (1 John 5:18): **That wicked one touches him not**; that is, **Tastu lethali**, with a **deadly touch**, says **Cajetan**. Grace is armor of proof, it may be shot at, but it cannot be shot through; this spiritual armor is not burdensome, a Christian may run his race in it as well as fight. The armor of God, the more it is struck at the stronger it is; the more faith is assaulted, the more vigorous it is; the more zeal is opposed the hot-

ter it is; this excellent armor makes a Christian steadfast in religion. Hypocrites wear Christ's colors, but want his armor, therefore fall away. The righteous man never gives over the spiritual combat, till the trophies are hung up, and the palm-branches are put in his hand in token of victory.

7. A righteous man has more excellent **hopes**.

—Credula vitam Spes fovet, & melius cras fore, semper ait.—

A sinner's hope is in this life; he hopes to increase his estate, he makes **the wedge of gold** his hope; it is a **perishing** hope (Proverbs 11:7).

But the righteous man's hope excels, his hope is in Christ, his hope is both a **helmet** (1 Thessalonians 5:8) and an **anchor** (Hebrews 6:19). While he is fighting with temptation, hope is a helmet; while he is upon the waters of affliction, hope is an anchor; the anchor of a ship is cast downwards, the anchor of the soul is cast upwards in heaven. A saint's hope is a **purifying** hope (1 John 3:3), a **deathbed** hope (Proverbs 14:33), a **soul-comforting** hope (Titus 2:13): **Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Savior**. When Christ was in the flesh, he appeared as a **surety**, now in heaven he appears as an **advocate**, and when he comes in the clouds he will appear as a **judge**. A righteous man hopes for this blessed appearing, when Christ shall vindicate his saints from all unjust calumnies, and openly acquit them in the court.

9. A righteous man has more excellent **joys**. Religion does not **restrain** but **refine** his joy; what is the joy of a sinner! He takes joy in corn and wine, he sucks from the flower of pleasure; alas, what is this to the joy of the righteous? (Romans 5:11) **We joy in**

God. This joy arises from the pardon of sin, the first-fruits of the spirit, the prelibation and foretaste of glory; the gleanings of this heavenly joy, are better than the vintage of carnal joy. **Plato** told the musicians, that philosophers could dine and sup without them, much more a believer can be merry in the Lord, without the supplement of worldly comforts.

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

2. It is a more **unmixed** joy. Worldly joy is usually spiced with some bitterness; guilt eclipses it (Proverbs 14:13): **In laughter the heart is sorrowful.** One may drink wormwood in a golden cup; but the joy of the righteous like **David's harp** drives away sadness; it gives honey without gall; it has no alloy or umbrage.

3. The joy of the righteous is more **durable**. Other joy is like a flower which withers while you are smelling to it. I have read of a river in **America**, which runs in the day with a full torrent, but it is dry at night. The comforts of the world run strongly in the day of health and prosperity, but at the night of death they are dried up; but as joy **abounds** in the godly, so it **abides** (John 16:22). **Your joy no man takes from you**. Divine joy is but begun in this life, it is perfected in glory; here is but the tuning of the instrument, the sweet **consort** is reserved for heaven; here the saints do but sip of the cup, there they shall drink of the rivers of divine pleasure for evermore (Psalm 16:11).

3. A righteous man is more excellent than a wicked, in respect of what he **shall have**: he shall have a better reward; both righteous and wicked are rewarded, but there is a vast difference; the wicked shall have a reward of punishment, the righteous of mercy (Psalm 58:11). **So that a man shall say, verily there is a reward for the righteous**: they shall be rewarded with a **kingdom** (Luke 12:32). The height of men's ambition is a kingdom; earthly kingdoms are corruptible. What is become of the pride of **Babylon**, the glory of **Athens**, the pomp of **Troy**? They lie buried in their own ruins: but the kingdom of heaven **cannot be shaken** (Hebrews 12:28). It runs parallel with eternity: in that blessed kingdom we shall have a transforming sight of God (1 John 3:2). **We shall be like him**: as a pearl by the beams of the sun becomes bright and radiant like the sun; God's terror shall be then laid aside, majesty in God shall appear, but majesty shining with beauty, and sweetened with love; this will be **unspeakable and full of glory**.

And this reward is near at hand (Romans 13:11). **Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.** When **Columbus** his men were weary of their voyage, he desired them to go on but three days longer; they did so, and discovered **America**. While the righteous sail upon the waters of affliction, this may comfort them in their voyage, it is but going a little further, and they will see heaven; there the tree of life grows, and the crystal streams flow from **Lebanon**; the saints' salvation is now nearer than upon the birthday of their faith.

Thus I have beaten out this gold in the text into the leaf, and shown you wherein the righteous is more excellent than his neighbor.

2. The second thing is, **Why a righteous man is more excellent than another?**

The reason is in respect of that near relation he stands in to Christ.

1. There is **consanguinity**; he is brother to Christ (Hebrews 3:11). Christ partakes of his flesh, and he partakes of Christ's Spirit.

2. There is **unity**; a righteous man is one with Christ, as the members are one with the head (Ephesians 1:22-23). Then surely the righteous must needs have a surpassing dignity. If Christ be a **precious corner-stone** (1 Peter 2:6), those **lively stones** must needs be precious which are built upon him.

Use 1. See from hence what it is that raises the price of a person, it is righteousness; this puts a glory and excellency upon him. He that is graceless is worthless (Proverbs 10:20). **The heart of the wicked is little worth:** but righteousness makes the heart

like the heaven bespangled with stars: the graces are compared to **chains of gold**, for their value (Song of Solomon 1:10), and to **myrrh** and **cassia** for their fragrancy (Song of Solomon 4:13). As the precious stones did shine upon **Aaron's** breastplate; so does righteousness shine in the eyes of God and angels. What made Christ admire the woman of **Canaan**, but her graces! **Great is your faith** (Matthew 15:28). Christ was more taken with that, than with all the goodly buildings of the **Temple**. God esteems not the better of any man because he is rich or noble, or embellished with worldly ornaments, it is righteousness advances him: righteousness is to the soul as the diamond to the ring, as light to the world, which bespangles and adorns it.

2 Branch. Learn then that it is no disparagement to any person to be righteous, seeing it casts a splendor and renown on him, and makes him more excellent than others: some are loath to espouse religion, because they think it will be a stain to their reputation; but you see how righteousness does emblazon one's escutcheon, and give him a supereminency above others. **Novarinus** relates of an ancient king who invited a company of poor Christians, and set them above some of his nobles; and being asked why he showed so much respect to men of such mean birth and extract, he replied, I must needs honor these as the children of the high God, they will be kings and princes with me in another world. **Theodosius** thought it a greater renown to be **Membrum Christi**, than **Caput Imperii**; a member of Christ, than the head of an empire. The righteous are highly in favor with God, and he has enrolled their names in the Book of Life (Philippians 4:3). It was a custom among the **Romans** to write down the names of their senators in a book, therefore they were called **Patres**

Conscripti; this is the honor of the righteous, their names are written among the courtiers of heaven. Believers in regard of their mystical union with Christ, have a kind of excellency above the angels, the angels are **morning stars** (Job 38:7), but these are **clothed with the sun**: can it be any **shame** to be listed among the saints, when **God is not ashamed to be called their God?** (Hebrews 11:16).

3 **Branch**. See what high thoughts God has of the righteous, he looks upon them more excellent than others, and his judgment is best worth prizing; the saints have low thoughts of themselves, they overlook their own worth, like **Moses** who **knew not that his face shined** (Exodus 34:29). The eye though beautiful, does not see itself; yet as low thoughts as the righteous have of themselves, God has high thoughts of them (Isaiah 43:4). **Since you were precious in my sight you have been honorable**. The Lord **puts away the wicked like dross** (Psalm 119:119). The greatest man in the world wanting holiness, is **res nihili**, like **Naaman**, who was **captain of the king's host, and a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper** (2 Kings 5:1). A wicked man may be higher than others in nobility and worldly grandeur: a dunghill is higher than other ground, but it is never the better, it sends forth noisome vapors.

But God sets a high estimate upon the righteous, and that appears by bestowing more excellent titles upon them than upon any others.

1. God calls them his **jewels** (Malachi 3:17). He laid his best jewel to pawn for them: they are jewels,

1. For their **sparkling quality**; they shine in God's eye: the saints have **animas Angelificatas**, a kind of angelical brightness, as one of the ancients expresses it.

2. They are jewels for their **price**: diamonds (says **Pliny**) were not known a long time but among kings and emperors; the price of a saint is above others (Proverbs 28:6). **Better is the poor that walks in his uprightness, than he that perverts his ways, though he be rich.**

2. God calls the righteous **his hidden ones** (Psalm 83:3). They are hidden, first, for their **invisibility**; their excellency is not known to many; the world can see their infirmity, not their eminency; a saint has that internal glory as cannot be beheld by a carnal eye; the fair face is hid under a veil. 2. The righteous are hidden for their **safety**; diamonds are hid in the rock, so the saints' **life is hid in Christ**, the Rock of Ages (Colossians 3:3).

3. God calls the righteous **the excellent of the earth** (Psalm 16:2). Or the **magnificent**, as Junius renders it; they are the spiritual phoenixes, they are the cream and flower of the creation; they are **purior pars mundi**, the purer part of the world, **double-refined** (Zechariah 13:9).

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

5. God calls them **the apple of his eye** (Zechariah 2:8). The apple of the eye is the tenderest part of the eye, to express God's tenderness of them, says **Salvian**. God cannot endure to have his

eyeball touched.

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

7. God calls them his **plant of renown** (Ezekiel 34:19). He hedges in this noble plant with his protection, waters it with the silver-drops of his ordinances, blesses the springing of it, adorns it with fruit, transplants it into the heavenly Paradise where it grows continually in the sweet sunshine of his favor.

8. God calls them **joint-heirs with Christ** (Romans 8:17). Jesus Christ is a rich heir (John 16:15). He is **Lord of all** (Galatians 4:1; Hebrews 1:2), and the saints are co-heirs, they go sharers with Christ.

9. God calls them the luminaries of the world: they give light by their precepts and example (Philippians 2:15). **Among whom you shine as lights in the world: Lot** was a bright star in **Sodom**; the world would be dark, were it not for **the children of light** (1 Thessalonians 5:5).

10. God calls them a **peculiar people** (1 Peter 2:9). He has taken them out of the world as out of the wild forest, and enclosed them to himself by a **decree**; or, (as the **Greek** carries it) they are **a purchased people**; the righteous are the purchase of Christ's blood, he will not lose his purchase.

11. God calls them **a kingdom of priests** (Exodus 19:6).

1. They are **kings**, they have their **throne** (Revelation 3:21) and **white robes** (Revelation 6:11). **Robes** signify their dignity, and **white** their sanctity.

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

12. God calls them **a crown of glory and diadem in his hand** (Isaiah 62:3). That is (says a learned writer) they are exceeding eminent and renowned above other people; as the crown is an ensign of the highest state and honor; nay, the Lord calls them expressly, **his glory** (Isaiah 46:13). **Israel my glory**; as if God's glory lay in his people: all which shows what a high estimate God puts upon the righteous, in giving them such illustrious titles of honor. They are **princes in all lands** (Isaiah 45:16). Kings do **minister to them** (Isaiah 60:10), yea angels (Hebrews 1:14). The Lord will give **whole kingdoms** to ransom them (Isaiah 43:3). **I gave Egypt for your ransom**: that was when God destroyed **Egypt** in the Red Sea for the saving of **Israel**; nay, God gave his own Son to die for their ransom (1 Peter 1:18).

And if God esteem so highly of his people now **on earth**, how much more will he value them when they are in heaven? If when the righteous are **afflicted**, they are so excellent, how much more when they are **crowned**? If when with the **emerald** they have their blemishes, they are precious; then how much more when all their imperfections shall be done away, and they shall be presented to the Father **without spot and wrinkle!** (Ephesians 5:27). If

gold be valuable in the wedge and the ore, then how precious is it when it is fully refined! If wheat be excellent when it is mingled with chaff, then how much worth has it when it is fanned and made pure! If God reposes the righteous more excellent than others when conflicting with infirmities; oh how incomparably excellent and glorious will they appear in his eye, when they shall be clarified from all lees of corruption, and shall shine with knowledge as the air with light. If a man makes any account of his friend when he sees him under distempers of body, which cause frowardness, how much more will he prize him when he sees him in perfect health, and his spirit is calm and sedate. If God esteem the righteous better than others in the present juncture of time when they have their untoward passions, and fainting fits of unbelief, what will he do when they shall be perfectly holy, and as the angels of God?

4. **Branch.** See the different esteem that God has of the righteous, and that men have of them: The men of the world esteem lightly of the saints; they disdain them, and scarce allow them half an eye; they think, of all things the people of God may be best spared. They look upon them as the burden and refuse of the earth (1 Corinthians 4:13). **We are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.** The apostles who were the eyes of the world, the breasts of the church, earthly angels; yet were counted by some like the **dungcart**, that goes through the city, into which every one throws his filth. The saints are loaded with invectives, and are not judged worthy to live in the world (Acts 22:22). **Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that [reconstructed: he] should live.**

But God puts another [reconstructed: estimate] and value upon the righteous; he thinks the world is not worthy of them (Hebrews 11:38). **Of whom the world was not worthy.** Hence it is he takes his children so fast away by death, and places them among the cherubims: God looks upon the righteous as his curious needlework wrought with the finger of the Holy Ghost, and glory of the creation. He would soon break up house in the world, were it not for their sakes. This excellent esteem God has of them, will be best seen when he shall separate between the **precious** and the **vile**, and shall say to the wicked, **Go you cursed;** and to the godly, **Come you blessed.**

5. **Branch.** See how dearly God loves the righteous, and how near to his heart they lie; **they are more excellent;** the word [**excellent**] carries **affection** in it. Things we prize we love. The righteous are God's **treasure** (Psalm 135:4), and where his treasure is, there is his heart: they are God's delicious garden, where he plants the flower of his love (Psalm 146:8). They are **the dearly beloved of his soul** (Jeremiah 12:7). They are his **Hephzibah**, or darling (Isaiah 62:4). **He engraves them upon the palms of his hands**, that they may be never out of his eye (Isaiah 49:16). **He rejoices over them with joy, and rests in his love** (Zephaniah 3:17). It is no ordinary affection that God bears to the righteous; the sun shining upon a **burning glass**, sets on fire only the object which is near the glass; the beams of God's love are more intensely inflamed towards them who are near him by grace; these have the strength and spirits of his love distilled; he loves them as he loves Christ (John 17:26). Indeed in one sense God's love to Christ and believers is not alike; for Christ is loved purely for his own sake, but believers are loved for Christ's

sake; yet in another sense God the Father loves believers as he loves Christ: it is the same love for the **quality**, the same for the **unchangeableness** of it; God will no more cease to love believers, than he will to love Christ.

6. **Branch.** See from hence what a venerable opinion we should have of the righteous, they are to be prized by us above others (Psalm 15:4). **He honors them that fear the Lord.** A saint in rags is better than a sinner in scarlet: we prize things that have an excellency in them; why do we value gold and pearl, but because they excel glass-bugles? Oh then esteem the righteous as most worthy, because of their intrinsic holiness, whereby they outshine their neighbors. The righteous carry Christ about them (Galatians 2:20). **Christ lives in me.** Queen **Cleopatra** put a jewel in her cup, which contained the price of a kingdom; how rich are they who carry **the pearl of price** about them? Despise not the saints for their worldly poverty, but honor them for their virtue; we esteem of a ruby or diamond, though it be in the dust. **John Baptist** was girt with a leather girdle, yet he was **more than a prophet** (Matthew 11:9). He was honored to usher in the King of Glory into the world: **John** was so eminent a person, that doubtless **Herod** might have kept his oath, though he had not beheaded him, for he swore to the damsel to give her what she asked **unto half of the kingdom** (Mark 6:23). But **John Baptist** was more worth than all his kingdom. A saint's **facing** may be mean, but he has a rich **lining**; the outside of the tabernacle was goats hair, but within it was embellished with gold (Psalm 45:13). **The King's daughter is glorious within.** Jesus Christ himself was outwardly mean, yet in him **are hid all the treasures of wis-**

dom (Colossians 2:3). A soul inspired by the Almighty, and beautified with grace, does exceed others more than the light of the sun does exceed the light of a taper.

7 Branch. If the righteous are more excellent than others, then how severe will God be against those that wrong them; the wicked are thorns in the sides of the godly; Saint **Paul** was scourged by cruel hands (1 Corinthians 11:25). **Thrice was I beaten with rods;** [reconstructed: and] if you should see a scullion whip the king's son; but **shall not God avenge his elect?** Surely he will; **Isaiah** 34:6, 8. **The sword of the Lord is filled with blood, for it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion.** As if the prophet had said, the time appointed is now come for God's avenging **Zion's** wrongs. **Jeremiah** 50:10, 11. **Chaldea shall be a spoil, says the Lord, because [reconstructed: ye] were glad, because you rejoiced, O you destroyers of my heritage.** **Jeremiah** 30:16. **All that prey upon you, will I give for a prey.** The saints are persons of honor, they are God's **first-born;** Oh how enraged will the Lord be against such as offer injury to them; they trample God's pearls in the dust, they strike **at the apple of his eye.** The righteous are God's **royal diadem** (Isaiah 62:3). Will a king endure to have his robes spit upon, and his crown thrown in the dirt? What is done to the righteous, is done to God himself. When the king's favorite is struck at, the king himself is struck at (2 Kings 19:22). **I know your rage against me:** The rage of **Sennacherib** was against the person of **Hezekiah,** but (there being a league between God and his people) the Lord took it as done to himself, **I know your rage against me:** Certainly it shall not go unpunished (Psalm 105:14). **He re-**

proved kings for their sakes. What became of **Julian, Nero, Diocletian?** One of them had his death-wound from heaven, others of them had their bowels come out, and died raving. **Charles** the ninth of **France**, who had glutted himself with the blood of so many Christians in the massacre at **Paris**, was in such inward horror, that he never dared be waked without music, and at length blood issued out at so many parts of his body, that he died bleeding. These were set up as public monuments of God's vengeance.

2 **Use.** Let us try whether we are in the number of these righteous ones; then we are more excellent than others.

1. A righteous man is a **humble** man; he who is proud of his righteousness, is unrighteous. Luke 18:1. **God I thank you that I am not as other men are, I fast, I give tithes:** Here was a triple crown of pride the **Pharisee** wore; righteousness though it raises the name, it depresses the heart (Job 15:10). **If I am righteous, I will not lift up my head.** The violet is a sweet flower, yet hangs down the head; such a flower was **Job**. The righteous are like the silkworm, while she weaves her curious works, she hides herself in the silk: the righteous man is more in judging himself, than in playing the critic upon another. He shrinks into nothing in his own thoughts (2 Corinthians 12:11). [illegible], **Though I be nothing. David** cries out, I am a worm and no man (Psalm 22:6). Though a **saint**, though a **king**, yet a worm: Saint **Austin**, Lord, **I am not worthy of Thy love:** Bishop **Hooper**, Lord, **I am hell, but Thou art heaven.** One of the martyrs subscribed his letter, **The most hard-hearted sinner, John Bradford.** He who is righteous puts a greater value upon others than upon himself (Philippians 2:3). **Let each esteem other better than themselves.** The higher grace is, the lower the heart is; the more

gold you put in the scale, the lower it descends; the richer the ship is laden, the lower it sails. When the soul looks black in its own eye, it is most comely (Isaiah 57:15). **I dwell with him also that is of a humble spirit.** God has two heavens, and the humble heart is one of them.

2. A righteous man is devoted to holiness: the priests under the law were not only washed in the great laver, but adorned with glorious apparel (Exodus 28:2), the emblem of a righteous man who is not only washed from gross sin, but adorned with inward sanctity; he is what he seems; he has not only holiness painted on him, but living in him. It is said of **Zachary** and **Elizabeth**, they were **both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless** (Luke 1:6). A good Christian is **God's temple**; his body is the outward court of the temple, and his soul the sanctuary, or **holy of holies**: He is **pure in heart** (Matthew 5:8). His work is to serve God, and his end is to enjoy him: man having a principle of **reason**, must not live as a beast; and having a principle of **righteousness**, he must not live as a sinner; he is now metamorphosed; he lives [illegible], **godly** (Titus 2:13). Christ is not only his **priest**, but his **pattern**: as he makes use of Christ's death for his salvation, so of Christ's life for his imitation.

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

4. A righteous man serves God out of a principle of love: grace does new bias the heart, and carry it strongly towards God in ardent **affections**; a righteous man's serving God is not **by constraint**, but **consent**; it is his heaven to serve God: he mounts up in the fiery chariot of love, and breathes forth his soul into his Savior's bosom: love is the **Shibboleth** which differentiates a righteous man from others. The carnal man says, **What a weariness is it to serve the Lord** (Malachi 1:13). The righteous man says, What a pleasure is it! **I delight in the law of God in the inner man** (Romans 7:22). As the **bee** delights to suck the flower, so does a holy person to obey God; it is **amor elicitus**, he does duty out of love to duty; he prays out of love to prayer: when he sings, **he makes melody in his heart to the Lord** (Ephesians 5:19). Love lines the yoke of religion, and makes it easy (Matthew 11:13). As a bride delights in putting on her jewels, as a musician delights in playing on his viol, so a gracious soul delights in obeying God: love to duty is better than duty; serving God with delight is angelical: the seraphims are described with wings (Isaiah 6:2), to show as well their cheerfulness as their celerity in God's service.

5. A righteous man perseveres in religion: he who gives over his work before he has finished it, is but half a workman; and he that gives over in religion before he has finished his faith, is but half a Christian. The promise is, **To him that overcomes** (Revelation 3:10). Who makes reckoning of corn that sheds before harvest? It was the glory of the church of **Thyatira**, her **last works were more than her first** (Revelation 2:19). Perseverance carries away the garland; a true Christian does not only set out in the race, but hold out; **The righteous also shall**

hold on his way (Job 15:9): be the way what it will, though strewed with thorns, though there be a **lion in the way**, he is resolved to hold on his way. **Bonds and afflictions abide me, but none of these things move me** (Acts 20:24). The troubles a godly man meets with for conscience, do by a holy **antiperistasis**, the more inflame his zeal: sufferings cannot make Christ leave loving the saints, nor make the saints leave loving of Christ; **Job** though he lost all, held fast his integrity (Job 2:3). Unsound hearts when they see **the swords and staves are up**, leave Christ and shift for themselves: a right-spirited saint is made of metal that will not wear out. **Athanasius** was the glory of his age, he had a counter-motion to the times; he kept his piety when the world turned **Arian**. **Melanchthon**, who was called the Phoenix of **Germany**, was (as Saint **Ambrose** says) like the cypress-tree which keeps its verdure and greenness in the winter-season. The church of **Pergamus** held fast Christ's name, though she dwelt where Satan's seat was (Revelation 2:13). This is to be righteous to be **faithful to the death**, and not suffer the breastplate of holiness to be shot through. **My foot has held his steps: his way have I kept, and not declined** (Job 23:11). And whoever is thus divinely qualified, is entitled to this privilege in the text, he is **more excellent** than others.

Use 3. If the righteous are thus excellent, let it encourage us all to true piety; no sooner do we become **gracious**, but we become **precious**. **This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you** (Joshua 5:9): that day we become righteous, our reproach is rolled away from us. Faith raises our fame; righteousness exchanges our fetters for a crown. **A crown of glory shall she deliver to you** (Proverbs 4:9). By espousing godliness,

we are **better** than others (Ecclesiastes 7:8). And **richer**, being possessed of a golden mine; that is, **The unsearchable riches of Christ** (Ephesians 3:8). We have from Christ the riches of justification, and consolation, and glorification; we are as rich as the angels; oh then let this excite every one to be godly; righteousness puts a splendid excellency upon a man, as if you should see a clod of dust turned into a star.

2 **Branch.** If the righteous are so excellent in God's eye, then let God be excellent in their eye: if they are high in God's thoughts, let God be high in theirs; let the saints have adoring thoughts of God. **Thy righteousness, O God, is very high** (Psalm 71:19). **Thou whose Name is Jehovah, art the most high over all the earth** (Psalm 83:18). God is the most super-eminent blessing. **Who can show forth all his praise?** (Psalm 106:2). God surpasses the praises of the archangels; he is encircled with glory and majesty (Psalm 104:1). He does infinitely outvie all the powers of the earth: princes hold their crowns by immediate tenure from him (Proverbs 8:15); his dominions are largest, his possession longest. **Thy Throne, O God, is for ever and ever** (Hebrews 1:8). Those excellencies which lie scattered in the creature, are infinitely united in God. Saint **Austin** complains that men can admire the magnitude of the stars, and not admire him who is **the father of lights**. Oh esteem God most excellent.

1. God's **wisdom** is excellent. **He is wise in heart** (Job 9:4); he knows the **causes** of things; yea, at **one instant**; the angels light their lamps at this sun.

2. God's **power** is excellent. He is **El Shaddai**, Almighty (Genesis 17:1). What cannot he do that can create? His power is as large as his will: **What his soul desires, even that he does**

(Job 23:13): he bridles the proud waves (Job 38:11). He **cuts off the spirit of princes** (Psalm 76:12).

3. God's **holiness** is excellent. This is the most sparkling jewel of his crown. **Glorious in Holiness** (Exodus 15:11). God is first **transcendently** holy. **There is none holy as the Lord** (1 Samuel 2:2). The blessed seraphims cover their faces, and cry **holy, holy**, but what angels can take the just dimensions of his sanctity? they are too low of stature to measure these pyramids. 2. God is **communicatively** holy; **I am the Lord which sanctifies you** (Leviticus 20:8). He is not only a **pattern** of holiness, but a **fountain**: he empties his golden oil through the pipes of the sanctuary. His holiness is **imparted**, though not **impaired**. 3. God is **unchangeably** holy; his holiness can no more cease, than his Godhead: he never lost a drop of his holiness; as he cannot have more holiness, because he is perfectly holy; so he cannot have less holiness, because he is **unchangeably** holy.

4. God's **love** is excellent (Psalm 36:7). **How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God!** This drops as the honeycomb; it dulcifies and sweetens the **waters of Marah**; it is **better than life** (Psalm 63:3). It has a hyper-hyperbole in it; it **passes knowledge** (Ephesians 3:19). God's love may be **felt**, but not **fathomed**. Oh then let the saints have God-admiring thoughts; the Psalmist esteemed him above the glory of heaven, and the comforts of the earth (Psalm 73:25). God is the marrow and quintessence of all good: His beauty is amazing, his love is ravishing: all divine perfections meet in God, as the lines in the center. Let us then with Saint **Paul**, count all things **loss** for him; if God puts such a value and appreciation upon the righteous, they are highest in his esteem, let him be highest in theirs.

3 **Branch.** If God has so honored the righteous and made them better than others, let not the righteous debase themselves, or lose any of their excellency; has God made them precious, let not them make themselves vile.

1. Let them not debase themselves with **earth**: An **earthly saint**, is as great a contradiction as an **orthodox heretic**. It is called filthy lucre (1 Peter 5:2), because it does so befily a person. Earthliness is an enemy to grace. It is **Aristotle's** observation, dogs cannot hunt among sweet flowers, because the smell of the flowers diverts the scent of the hare: Those can scarce run after Christ in the **savor of his ointments**, who are diverted by the smell of earthly delights; whom the **Helena** of the world kisses, it betrays. It is below a Christian, and does too much resemble Satan, to be always **compassing the earth** (Jeremiah 45:5). **And do you seek great things for yourself?** As if God had said, what you **Baruch?** who are by your new birth excellent, akin to angels; by your **office** excellent; a **Levite**; do you seek earthly things? and what, seek them **now?** I am going to pluck up, and are you planting? the ship is sinking, and are you trimming your cabin? Oh **Baruch** do not so degrade yourself of your honor! **Do you seek great things, seek them not.** Though the wicked like eels wrap themselves in the mud, yet let the birds of Paradise fly aloft; the higher grace is, the less earthly-minded should Christians be; the higher the sun is, the shorter is the shadow.

2. Let not the righteous debase themselves by sinful compliance: Such as profess themselves to be regenerate, should not be malleable to every opinion and humor; shall the excellent cedar bend like the pliant willow? **Issachar is a strong ass, couching down between two burdens** (Genesis 49:14). **Issachar** was a

strong tribe, but wanted courage: You who are righteous, be not too **couchant**, do not **choose iniquity rather than affliction** (Job 36:21). Do not so value your liberty as to wound your integrity. God is a great God, dare not to offend him; he is a good God, venture not to lose him; be not swayed with the evil examples of others; dead fish only swim down the stream. The righteous do much lessen both their **esteem** and **reward** by symbolizing with sinners. Let not the godly force their conscience; the dust will be wiped off this glass, and then it will represent guilt. When **Cranmer** had with some renitency of mind subscribed to the Popish Articles, he was afterwards in great horror: his conscience was like **Moses'** rod, turned into a serpent; he could have no peace till he had recanted his subscription: By sordid unworthy actions the Holy Spirit will be grieved, the godly will be offended, the wicked will insult, and conscience will accuse: Conscience is like a **bee**; if a man does well, it gives honey; if ill, it puts forth a sting.

4 **Branch**. If the righteous be more excellent than others, let not them envy the prosperity of the wicked (Proverbs 23:17). **Let not your heart envy sinners**. God has made you better than they; he has given you his Spirit to sanctify you, and his Son to save you. Envy is an ill humor; it is **vulnus occultum** (says **Cyprian**) it hurts a man's self most; envy drinks its own venom; it corrodes the body as canker does iron.

—Simul peccat & plectitur—

The first man born in the world was envious. **Theodoret** observes, it was not so much **Cain's** own sin troubled him, as to see his brother's offering accepted. It becomes not God's people to feed this fretting disease; it is bad to feed an enemy. What if God wring out the water of a full cup to the wicked, it is but a sugared poison;

prosperity like **Circe**, with its enchantments turns men into swine; it makes them grow worse; the moon never suffers an eclipse, but when it is at the full. The world is given to the wicked in anger. When **Belshazzar** was in the midst of his jollity, the hand of God was writing bitter things against him: The hot day of prosperity presages thunder at night. **Haman's** banquet was but a preface to the halter. O Christian, shake off envy, as **Paul** did the viper. God has made you more excellent than others, he has given you better riches and preferment; they have a **golden apple**, you have a **crown** (2 Timothy 4:7). God keeps the best wine till last; let this divine harp drive away the **evil spirit** of envy and discontent.

5 **Branch.** If the righteous be so excellent, let it persuade people to get into their company, and choose to be of their acquaintance. Next to being good, it is wisdom to converse with them that are so (Psalm 16:2). **The excellent in whom is all my delight.** Be not like swine which had rather lie in the dung, than in a fair meadow. The righteous are **the light** of the world, and it is prudence to follow them that carry the light. Seek for the olive, but if the bramble take hold of you, cast it away. There is much good to be gotten in the society of the godly; their speeches edify, their prayers quicken, their examples teach. Graft among the saints. A slip grafted into a good stock, partakes of the virtue and influence of the root. The righteous are **more excellent**; be often among these spices, and you will smell of them (Proverbs 13:20). **He that walks with wise men, shall be wise.**

6 **Branch.** It exhorts the righteous to walk worthy of the high honor which God has raised them to (Ephesians 5:8). **Walk as children of light.** As you are more excellent by your **high call-**

ing, so be more excellent in your walking; adorn religion by your prudent holy carriage; **shine as lights in the world** (Philippians 2:15). Some **Antinomians** of old taught, that whatever a man's life was, yet he was justified, so he believed the Gospel; whom **Luther** confuted. Such as are a **Royal Priesthood** should be a **peculiar people** (1 Peter 2:9). The Lord has dignified the righteous above the rest of the world, and they must not take the same latitude which others do (Proverbs 31:4). **It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes strong drink.** It becomes not them who are highborn to be intemperate. So it is not for you who are of a sacred pedigree, whom God has made superior to others, to be vain and loose in your behavior. **Alexander** would have the **Grecians** known not only by their garments, but their virtues. A child of God should be known by the exemplariness of his life (1 Peter 1:15). **Be you holy in all manner of conversation.** Christ has anointed his people with the graces, as those virgins were purified with **sweet odors**; and he looks that they should send abroad a sweet perfume of holiness. Christians must observe that which is lovely, and **of good report** (Philippians 4:8). They had need walk **accurately** (Ephesians 5:15), because so many **watch for their halting**. If the wicked find anything in the people of God dishonorable to their profession, they lay the blame upon religion. It is **Salvian's** note, What will the pagans say, when they see Christians loose and vicious? **The Christians live so bad because Christ taught them no better.** How should the righteous **cut off occasion from them that seek occasion** (2 Corinthians 11:12)? **Daniel's** piety sealed up the lips of his enemies (Daniel 6:4). **Martin Bucer** was **Tantae Sanctimoniae vir**, so unblameable in his life, that those

who did most malign him had nothing justly to lay to his charge. Oh Christians look to your steps, when you have prayed against sin, then watch against temptation; a spot in a royal robe cannot be hid; a dash of ink would quickly have been spied in **Aaron's** white linen. If there be a blemish in a professor every one's eye is upon it; the sin of such a person causes blushing among the saints; as the patriarchs could not choose but be ashamed when the **cup** was found in their sack. Oh that all who profess the name of Christ would **depart from iniquity** (2 Timothy 2:19). Dare not to blaspheme that **worthy name by which you are called** (James 2:7). Such as are more excellent than others, God expects **some singular thing** from them; they should bring more glory to God, and by their exemplary piety make proselytes to religion: better fruit is expected from a vineyard, than from a wild forest.

7 **Branch.** Has God so ennobled the righteous, and given them a superexcellency above others? Then let the righteous be thankful (Psalm 113:7). **He raises the poor out of the dust, that he may set him with princes.** God has raised you out of the low estate wherein you were by nature, and has made you more illustrious than others, that he may set you with angels, those princes above. Oh let **the high praises of God be in your mouth** (Psalm 149:6). God has done more for believers, than for all the world besides. He has given them the **holy anointing**, the **new name**, the **white stone**, which is **the earnest of the inheritance**; and at the day of judgment Jesus Christ will **confess their names before his Father and the Holy Angels.** And their souls and bodies being re-united, shall be fully invested with glory. And after their **session** at Christ's right-hand, it shall be proclaimed, **Thus shall it be done to the persons whom the**

King of Heaven will honor. Does not all this deserve thankfulness (Psalm 100:1)? **Make a joyful noise unto the Lord.** In the **Hebrew** it is, Sound forth his praise **as with a trumpet:** Praise God with the best instrument, **the heart;** and let it be screwed up to the highest peg; do it with the **whole** heart. You who are righteous, speak well of God, and tell others what he has done for you. His blessings bestowed are legacies, not debts. Praise is a **glorifying of God** (Psalm 50:23), and will not you cheerfully pay this peppercorn? Will you not do it **constantly** (Psalm 146:2)? **I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.** The **Carthaginians** used at first to send the tenth of their yearly revenue to **Hercules;** but by degrees, they grew weary and left off sending. Christians fail much in their thank-offering: Be not like them that play a fit or two of music in a year, and then the viol must be hung up. Be often upon **Mount Gerizim,** blessing God. Consider, thankfulness is **the work of heaven;** you who shall have angels' reward, do angels' work. Sound forth the memorial of God's holiness, and celebrate his fame; praise is the music of heaven, let not God want his music. While others murmur do you bless. Wait and long for that time when you shall be called up to the heavenly mount, and placed among the glorious cherubims, where your employment to eternity, will be to breathe forth love, and sound forth praise.

Use 4. Consolation to the righteous, who are under dejection of spirit. God esteems them more excellent than others. It is comfort,

1. When they are humbled by sin, they have mean thoughts of themselves, and see so much corruption, that they think they have no grace: I, but here is comfort, God sees an excellency in them,

though they can see none in themselves; he can distinguish between the grace in them, and the infirmity; and he judges of them, not by their worst part, but by their best. God prizes his people, notwithstanding their failings; a man values his corn though it be mingled with chaff.

2. It is comfort when the righteous are humbled by affliction (Lamentations 3:16). **He has covered me with ashes.** My outward comforts are as it were in the grave, and have ashes thrown upon them; the godly are apt to mistake and think God does not care for them, because he afflicts them (Judges 6:13). **If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?**

But let not the righteous be troubled, or cast away their anchor; still God makes great account of them: and though they are **more afflicted** than others, yet they are **more excellent**. God esteemed highly of **Hezekiah** on his sick-bed, he heard his prayer and bottled his tears. **Job** when full of boils and sores, was dear to God. **Job** on the dunghill was more excellent than **Pharaoh** on the throne. God boasts of **Job** to Satan (**Job** 2:3). **None like him in the earth.** The Lord esteems not the worse of the righteous, because he makes them pass under the rod. A goldsmith esteems his gold though it be in the furnace; God sees an excellency in the saints, when they are bleeding under their sufferings. A piece of plate is of great value though it be battered. Grapes are precious though they are in the winepress. Jesus Christ was on the cross, yet proclaimed to be God's beloved Son by a voice from heaven (**Matthew** 3:17).

3. It is comfort when the righteous are humbled by desertion (**Job** 6:4). **The arrows of the Almighty are within me.** The **Hebrew** word for **arrow** comes from a radix that signifies to **cut**;

to show that the poisoned arrow of desertion cuts to the heart. **Heman** cries out (**Psalm 88:7**). **Thy wrath lieth hard upon me**; like a mountain of lead it even sinks my spirits; in this forlorn state, the saints think God esteems them vile, and has cast them off (**Psalm 88:14**). **Lord, why castest thou off my soul?** God holds his deserted ones as it were over the fire of hell, and they think they are ready to drop in. But Christian, you may be sorely deserted, yet God may judge you excellent. **Zion** thought she was quite forsaken (**Isaiah 49:14**). **Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me.** But at that time God had a dear respect for her (**Isaiah 49:16**). **I have graven thee upon the palms of my hand.** God may have the face of an enemy, yet the heart of a father. The Lord deserts his people, [illegible], **for their profit** (**Hebrews 12:10**). While he is humbling them, he is healing them; he seems to put them away from him, but it is to draw them nearer to him, he would exercise their faith and prayer the more. God is all this while preparing the saints for the sweet embraces of his love. Desertion is like purging-physic; the Lord will purge out some **ill humor** of sin, and afterwards will manifest his love to his children. The cordial is kept till the working of the physic is over.

THANKS FOR READING



If you spotted a typo or have feedback, the email is **sam@goodsoilapps.com** — or use the in-app feedback form in *Christian Reader*.