

THE BEATITUDES

THOMAS WATSON



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Thomas Watson



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A rich series of expository sermons on Christ's **Sermon on the Mount** (Matthew 5), exploring each of the eight Beatitudes with pastoral depth and Puritan precision. Watson examines **poverty of spirit**, mourning, meekness, hunger for righteousness, mercy, **purity of heart**, peacemaking, and suffering for Christ — showing how each virtue leads to genuine blessedness. Accompanied by additional discourses on the soul, grace, hope, love, and practical obedience, the work is a comprehensive guide to **Christian character and heavenly happiness**.



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DEDICATION TO THE EARL AND COUNTRESS OF CLARE



The many civilities and favors, received from your honors, have laid no small obligations upon me; and I knew not wherein I might better testify my gratitude to you both, than by presenting you with something of this kind, as a specimen of that solemn respect and service which I owe to you. My Lord, the soul being a blossom of eternity, what should so preponderate, and bear sway with us as those things which help to raise the soul to its full [in non-Latin alphabet] of happiness, and set it off in its orient splendor! Blood may ennoble, learning may adorn, but religion puts the garland of salvation upon a man. In this consists true wisdom. [in non-Latin alphabet] My Lord, the study of this subject which I here offer to your view, will with the blessing of God much expedite and help forward the true progress of religion. For the author of this Sermon on the Mount, behold, a greater than Solomon is here; Christ himself is the preacher; as his lips did ever drop like a honeycomb, so most eminently, in these divine aphorisms. The duties here enjoined are weighty; the rewards annexed, glorious. Here we may see a Christian clothed in his white linen of purity, and scarlet robe of blessedness. Here we may see grace and glory meeting together, and kissing each other. Let no man ever think to

get heaven, who does not ascend this Jacob's ladder. Would he be rich, he must be poor in spirit; would he enjoy happiness, he must embrace holiness; My Lord, I could not be so exact as I desired in discussing this subject, having much other work lying on my hands; but I know, such is your noble candor, that you will rather cover than censure what you see amiss. I will not further preface it, but craving your Lordship's patronage, and favorable acceptance of these unpolished labors of mine, I shall continue an earnest orator at the throne of grace, for the distillation of all heavenly benedictions upon you, and your nobly descended family, and remain

Your Lordship's humble servant in Christ, Thomas Watson.
From my study at St. Walbrook, July 6, 1660.

THE BEATITUDES: A DISCOURSE
UPON CHRIST'S SERMON ON THE
MOUNT



Matthew 5:1-2: And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him. And he opened his mouth, and taught them.

CHAPTER 1



The introduction into the ensuing discourse.

The blessed Evangelist Saint Matthew, the penman of this sacred history was at first by profession a publican or gatherer of toll; and Christ having called him from the custom-house, made him a gatherer of souls. This holy man in the first chapter sets down Christ's birth and genealogy; in the second his dignity; a star ushers in the wise men to him, and as a king he is presented with gold and frankincense and myrrh (verse 9, 11). In the third chapter the Evangelist records his baptism; in the fourth his temptations; in the fifth his preaching; which chapter is like a rich mine, every vein has some gold in it. There are four things in this chapter which offer themselves to our view.

- 1. The preacher. - 2. The pulpit. - 3. The occasion. - 4. The sermon.

1. The preacher. Jesus Christ. The best of preachers.

He went up.] He, in whom there was a combination of virtues, a constellation of beauties; He whose lips were not only sweet as the honeycomb, but did drop as the honeycomb; his words an ora-

cle, his works a miracle, his life a pattern, his death a sacrifice, He went up into a mountain and taught. Jesus Christ was every way ennobled and qualified for the work of the ministry.

1. Christ was an intelligent preacher. He had the Spirit without measure (John 3:34), and knew how to speak a word in due season, when to humble, when to comfort. We cannot know all the faces of our hearers, Christ knew the hearts of his hearers, He understood what doctrine would best suit with them; as the husbandman can tell what sort of grain is proper for such a soil.

2. Christ was a powerful preacher, He spoke with authority (Matthew 7:29). He could set men's sins before them, and show them their very hearts (John 4:29). Come see a man which told me all things which ever I did. That is the best glass not which is most richly set with pearl, but which shows the truest face; Christ was a preacher to the conscience, He breathed as much zeal as eloquence; he often touched upon the heartstrings. What is said of Luther, is more truly applicable to Christ, He spoke as if he had been within a man. He could drive the wedge of his doctrine in the most knotty piece; He was able with his two-edged sword to pierce a heart of stone. Never man spoke like this man (John 7:46).

3. Christ was a successful preacher; He had the art of converting souls. John 10:40: Many believed on him; yes, persons of rank and quality (John 12:42). Among the chief rulers many believed. He who had grace poured into his lips (Psalm 45:2), could pour grace into his hearers' hearts; He had the Key of David in his hand, and when he pleased did open the hearts of men, and make way both for himself and his doctrine to enter. If he did blow the trumpet his very enemies would come under his banner, upon his summons none dared but surrender.

4. Christ was a lawful preacher; as He had his unction from his Father, so his mission (John 8:18). The Father that sent me bears witness of me. Christ (in whom were all perfections centered, yet,) would be solemnly sealed, and inaugurated into his ministerial as well as mediatory office; if Jesus Christ would not enter upon the work of the ministry without a commission, how absurdly impudent are they who without any warrant dare invade this holy function! There must be a lawful admission of men into the ministry. Hebrews 5:4: No man takes this honor to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. Our Lord Christ as he gave Apostles and Prophets which were extraordinary ministers, so Pastors and Teachers which were initiated and made in an ordinary way (Ephesians 4:11), and He will have a ministry perpetuated (Matthew 28:20). Lo I am with you always even unto the end of the world. Surely, there is as much need of ordination now, as in Christ's time, and the time of the Apostles, there being then extraordinary gifts in the church which are now ceased.

Object 1. But why should not the ministry lie in common? Has the Lord spoken only by Moses (Numbers 12:2)? Why should not one preach as well as another?

Answer. Because God (who is the God of order) has made the work of the ministry a select distinct office from any other. As in the body natural the members have a distinct office, the eye is to see, the hand to work; you may as well say, why should not the hand see as well as the eye? Because God has made the distinction, He has put the visual faculty into the one, and not the other. So here, God has made a distinction between the work of the ministry and other work.

Quest. Where is this distinction?

Answer 1. We find in Scripture a distinction between pastor and people (1 Peter 5:2). The elders (or ministers) I exhort, Feed the flock of God which is among you. If any one may preach, by the same rule all may, and then what will become of the Apostle's distinction? Where will the flock of God be if all be pastors?

2. God has cut out the minister his work which is proper for him, and does not belong to any other. 1 Timothy 4:13: Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, give yourself wholly to them; or as it is in the Greek, [in non-Latin alphabet], be wholly in them. This charge is peculiar to the minister, and does not concern any other. It is not spoken to the tradesman that he should give himself wholly to doctrine and exhortation, no, let him look to his shop; it is not spoken to the plowman that he should give himself wholly to preaching, no, let him give himself to his plow. It is the minister's charge; the Apostle speaks to Timothy, and in him, to the rest who had the hands of the Presbytery laid on them; and 2 Timothy 2:15: Study to show yourself approved, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, [in non-Latin alphabet], rightly dividing the word of truth. This is spoken peculiarly to the minister. Every one that can read the word aright, cannot divide the word aright. So that the work of the ministry does not lie in common, it is a select, peculiar work. As none might touch the ark but the priests; none may touch this temple-office but such as are called to it.

Object 2. But if a man has gifts, is not this sufficient? I answer, no; as grace is not sufficient to make a minister, so neither gifts. The Scripture puts a difference between gifting and sending (Romans 10:15). How shall they preach unless they be sent? If gifts were enough to constitute a minister, the Apostle should have said, How shall they preach unless they be gifted? But he says unless

they be sent; as in other callings gifts do not make a magistrate; the attorney that pleads at bar may have as good gifts as the judge that sits upon the bench, but he must have a commission before he sit as judge. If it be thus in matters civil, much more ecclesiastical and sacred; which are as Bucer says, things of the highest importance. Those therefore that do usurp the ministerial work without any special designation and appointment, do discover more pride than zeal. They act out of their sphere; and are guilty of thievery; they steal upon a people: And as they come without a call, so they stay without a blessing. Jeremiah 23:32: I sent them not, therefore they shall not profit this people at all. And so much for the first, the preacher.

2. The pulpit where Christ preached: He went up into a mountain.

The law was at first given on the Mount; and here Christ expounds it on the Mount. This Mount as is supposed by Hierom and others of the learned, was Mount Tabor. It was a convenient place to speak in, being seated above the people, and in regard of the great confluence of hearers.

3. The occasion of Christ's ascending the Mount: seeing the multitude.

The people thronged to hear Christ, and he would not dismiss the congregation without a sermon, but seeing the multitude he went up. Jesus Christ came from heaven as a factor for souls, he lay a while here, preaching was his business; the people could not be so desirous to hear, as he was to preach; he who did compassionate faint bodies (Matthew 15:32), did much more pity dead souls; it was his meat and drink to do his Father's will (John 4:34).

And seeing the multitude, he goes up into the Mount and preaches. This he did not only for the consolation of his hearers, but the imitation of his ministers.

Doctrine. From where observe: That Christ's ministers according to Christ's pattern must embrace every opportunity of doing good to souls; praying and preaching, and studying must be our work (2 Timothy 4:2). Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season. Peter seeing the multitude, lets down the net, and at one draught catches three thousand souls (Acts 2:41). How zealously industrious have God's champions been in former ages, in fulfilling the work of their ministry; as we read of Chrysostom, Austin, Basil the great, Calvin, Bucer, and others, who for the work of Christ were near unto death. The reasons why the ministers of Christ (according to his pattern) should be ambitiously desirous of all opportunities for soul-service, are

1. Their commission: God has entrusted them as ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20). Now you know an ambassador waits for a day of audience, and as soon as a day is granted, he does faithfully and impartially deliver the mind of his prince: Thus Christ's ministers having a commission delegated to them to negotiate for souls, should be glad when there is a day of audience, that they may impart the mind and will of Christ to his people.

2. Their titles. 1. Ministers are called God's seedsmen (1 Corinthians 9:11), therefore they must upon all occasions be scattering the blessed seed of the word: The sower must go forth and sow; yes, though the seed fall upon stones (as usually it does) yet we must disseminate, and scatter the seed of the word upon stony hearts, because even of these stones God is able to raise up children to himself. 2. Ministers are called stars; therefore they must

shine by word and doctrine in the firmament of the church. Thus our Lord Christ has set them a pattern in the text: Seeing the multitude, he went up into the Mountain; here was a light set upon a hill; the bright morning star shining to all that were round about. Christ calls his ministers, light of the world (Matthew 5:14), therefore they must be always giving forth their luster; their light must not go out till it be in the socket, or till violent death as an extinguisher put it out.

3. Christ's ministers must catch at all occasions of doing good to others, in regard of the work which they are about — saving of souls. What a precious thing is a soul? Christ takes a pair of scales and puts the world in one and the soul in the other, and the soul outweighs: Matthew 16:26. The soul is of a noble original, of a quick operation; it is a flower of eternity — here in the bud, in heaven fully ripe and blown. The soul is one of the richest pieces of embroidery that ever God made; the understanding bespangled with light, the will invested with liberty, the affections like musical instruments tuned with the finger of the Holy Ghost. The soul is Christ's partner, the angels' familiar; now if the souls of men are of so noble an extract and made capable of glory, oh how zealously industrious should Christ's ministers be to save these souls! If Christ did spend his blood for souls, well may we spend our sweat. It was Austin's prayer that Christ might find him either praying or preaching. What a sad sight is it to see precious souls as so many pearls and diamonds cast into the dead sea of hell?

4. The ministers of Christ seeing the multitude, must ascend the Mount, because there are so many emissaries of Satan who lie at the catch to subvert souls: How does the old serpent cast out of his mouth floods of water after the woman to drown her

(Revelation 12:15)? What floods of heresy have been poured out in city and country, which have overflowed the banks, not only of religion, but civility. Ignatius calls error, the invention of the devil; and Bernard calls it a sweet poison: Men's ears like sponges have sucked in this poison: Never were the devil's commodities more marketable in England than now; a fine tongue can put off bad wares; the Jesuit can silver over his lies, and dress error in truth's coat; a weak brain is soon intoxicated; when flattery and subtlety meet with the simple, they easily become a prey: The Roman whore entices many to drink down the poison of her idolatry and filthiness, because it is given in a golden cup (Revelation 17:4). If all who have the plague of the head should die, it would much increase the bill of mortality; Now if there be so many emissaries of Satan abroad, who labor to make converts to the Church of Rome, how does it concern them whom God has put into the work of the ministry, to bestir themselves, and lay hold on all opportunities, that by their spiritual antidotes they may convert sinners from the error of their way and save their souls from death (James 5, last verse)! Ministers must not only be pastors, but fighters; in one hand they must hold the bread of life, and feed the flock of God; in the other hand, they must hold the sword of the Spirit, and fight against those errors which carry damnation in their front.

5. The ministers of Christ should wait for all opportunities of soul-service, because the preaching of the word has so many hindrances that impede the progress and success of it; never did pilot meet with so many cross winds in a voyage, as the spiritual pilots of God's church do when they are transporting souls to heaven.

1. Some hearers have bad memories (James 1:25). Their memories are like leaking vessels; all the precious wine of holy doctrine that is poured in, runs out presently: Ministers cannot by study find a truth so fast as others can lose it; if the meat does not stay in the stomach, it can never breed good blood; if a truth delivered does not stay in the memory, we can never be as the Apostle says, nourished up in the words of faith (1 Timothy 4:6). How often does the devil, that fowl of the air, pick up the good seed that is sown! If thieves steal away people's money, they tell every one, and make their complaint they have been robbed; but there is a worse thief they are not aware of! How many sermons has the devil stolen from them! How many truths have they been robbed of, which might have been so many deathbed cordials! Now if the word preached slides so fast out of the memory, ministers had need the more often go up the preaching Mount, that at last some truth may abide, and be as a nail fastened by the masters of assemblies.

2. The ears of many of our hearers are stopped with earth; I mean, the cares of the world, that the word preached will not enter; according to that in the parable, Hearing they hear not (Matthew 13:13). We read of Saul, his eyes were open, yet he saw no man (Acts 9:8). A strange paradox! And is it not as strange that men's ears should be open, yet in hearing hear not? They mind not what is said: Ezekiel 33:31: They sit before you as my people sits, but their heart goes after their covetousness. Many sit and stare the minister in the face, yet scarce know a word he says; they are thinking of their wares and drugs, and are often casting up accounts in the church. If a man be in a mill, though you speak never so loud to him, he does not hear you for the noise of the mill. We preach to men about matters of salvation, but the mill of worldly

business makes such a noise, that they cannot hear; in hearing they hear not. It being thus, ministers who are called sons of thunder, had need often ascend the Mount, and lift up their voice like a trumpet; that the deaf ear may be cleansed and unstopped, and may hear what the Spirit says to the churches (Revelation 2:7).

3. Others, as they have earth in their ears, so they have a stone in their hearts. Zechariah 7:12: They made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law. The ministers of Christ therefore must be frequently brandishing the sword of the Spirit, and striking at men's sins, that if possible, they may at last pierce the heart of stone. When the earth is scorched with the sun, it is so hard, and crusted together, that a shower of rain will not soften it; there must be shower after shower before it will be either moist or fertile; such a hardened piece is the heart of man naturally; it is so stiffened with the scorplings of lust, that there must be precept upon precept (Isaiah 28:10). Our doctrine must distill as the dew, as the small rain on the tender herb, and the showers upon the grass (Deuteronomy 32:2).

6. Christ's ministers according to the example of their Lord and Master, should take all occasions of doing good, not only in regard of God's glory, but their own comfort. What triumph is it, and cause of gladness, when a minister can say on his deathbed, Lord, I have done the work which you gave me to do, I have been trading for souls! When a minister comes to the Mount of glory, the heavenly Mount, it will be a great comfort to him that he has been so often upon the preaching Mount. Certainly if the angels in heaven rejoice at the conversion of a sinner (Luke 15), how shall that minister rejoice in heaven over every soul that he has been instrumental to convert? Every convert gained, as it shall add a member to

Christ's body, so a jewel to a minister's crown (Daniel 12:3). They that are wise, or as the original carries it, [in non-Latin alphabet] they that are teachers shall shine (not as lamps or tapers, but) as stars; not as planets, but fixed stars in the firmament of glory forever.

And though Israel be not gathered, yet shall God's ministers be glorious in the eyes of the Lord (Isaiah 49:5). God will reward them, not according to their success, but their diligence. When they are a savor of death to men, yet they are a sweet savor to God. In an orchard, the laborer that fells a tree, is rewarded as well as he that plants a tree; the surgeon's bill is paid though the patient die.

Use 1. Let me crave liberty to speak a word to my reverend and honored brethren in the ministry. You are engaged in a glorious service, God has put great renown upon you; he has entrusted you with two the most precious jewels, his truths, and the souls of his people; never was this honor conferred upon any angel to convert souls; What princely dignity can parallel this? The pulpit is higher than the throne; for a truly constituted minister represents no less than God himself. 2 Corinthians 5:20: As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God. Give me leave to say as the Apostle (Romans 11:13), I magnify my office. Whatever our persons are, the office is sacred: The ministry is the most honorable employment in the world; Jesus Christ has graced this calling by his entering into it; other men work in their trade, ministers work with God. 1 Corinthians 3:9: We are laborers together with God. O high honor! God and his ministers have one and the same work, they both negotiate about souls: Let the sons of the prophets wear this as their crown and diadem; but while I tell you of your dignity, do not forget your duty: Imitate this

blessed pattern in the text, the Lord Jesus, who seeing the multitudes, he went up and taught. He took all occasions of preaching; sometimes he taught in the temple (Mark 14:49), sometimes in a ship (Mark 4:1), and here upon the Mount; his lips were a tree of life that fed many: How often did he neglect his food, that he might feast others with his doctrine! Let all the ministers of Christ tread in his steps; make Christ not only your Savior, but your example; suffer no opportunities to slip wherein you may be helpful to the souls of others; be not content to go to heaven yourselves, but be as the first mover, which draws other orbs along with it; be such shining lamps, that you may light others to heaven with you: I will conclude with that of the Apostle (1 Corinthians 15:58): Therefore my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Let me turn myself to the flock of God, Use 2. If ministers must take all opportunities to preach, you must take all opportunities to hear. If there were twice or three times a week a certain sum of money to be distributed to all comers, then people would resort there; now think thus with yourselves, when the word of God is preached, the bread of life is distributed, which is more precious than thousands of gold and silver (Psalm 119:72). In the word preached heaven and salvation is offered to you; in this field the pearl of price is hid: How should you flock like doves to the windows of the sanctuary (Isaiah 60:8)! We read, the gate of the temple was called beautiful (Acts 3:2). The gate of God's house is the beautiful gate; lie at these posts of wisdom's doors (Proverbs 8:34).

Branch 2. Not only hear the word preached, but encourage those ministers who do preach. 1. By liberal maintaining of them. Though I hope all who have God's Urim and Thummim written upon them, can say as the Apostle (2 Corinthians 12:14), I seek not yours, but you; yet that Scripture is still canonical (1 Corinthians 9:14): So has the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. Are not laborers in a vineyard maintained by their labors? says Peter Martyr; And the Apostle puts the question, Who plants a vineyard and eats not the fruit of it (1 Corinthians 9:7)? Hypocrites love a cheap religion; they like a gospel that will put them to no charges; they are content so they may have golden bags, to have wooden priests. How many by saving their purses have lost their souls! Julian the Apostate robbed the ministers, pretending conscience; I need not tell you how vengeance pursued him. Is it not pity the fire on God's altar should go out for want of pouring on a little golden oil? David would not offer that to God which cost him nothing (2 Samuel 24:24).

2. Encourage God's ministers by your fruitfulness under their labors; when ministers are upon the Mount, let them not be upon the rocks. What cost has God laid out upon this city! Never I believe since the Apostles' times was there a more learned, orthodox, powerful ministry than now; God's ministers are called stars (Revelation 1:20). In this city every morning a star appears, besides the bright constellation on the Lord's day; Oh you that feed in the green pastures of ordinances, be fat and fruitful; you that are planted in the courts of God, flourish in the courts of God (Psalm 92:13). How sad will it be with a people that shall go laden to hell with gospel blessings! The best way to encourage your ministers, is, to let them see the travail of their souls in your new birth. It is a

great comfort when a minister does not only woo souls, but win souls (Proverbs 11:30). He that wins souls is wise. This is a minister's glory (1 Thessalonians 2:19): For what is our joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even you? A successful preacher wears two crowns, a crown of righteousness in heaven, and a crown of rejoicing here upon earth; Are not you our crown?

3. Encourage your ministers by praying for them. Their work is great, it is a work that will take up their head and heart, and all little enough; it is a work fitter for angels than men. Who is sufficient for these things (1 Corinthians 2:16)? Oh pray for them. Christ indeed when he ascended the Mount, and was to preach, needed none of the people's prayers for him; He had a sufficient stock by him, the divine nature to supply him; but all his under-officers in the ministry need prayer. If Saint Paul who abounded in the graces of the Spirit, and supernatural revelations, did beg prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:25), then surely other ministers need prayer who pretend not to any such revelations. And pray for your ministers, that God will direct them what to preach, that he will cut out their work for them; that God will go forth with their labors, for else they toil and catch nothing. It is not the hand that scatters the seed which makes it spring up, but the dews and influences of heaven: So it is not our preaching, but the divine influence of the Spirit that makes grace grow in men's hearts. Oh then pray for us, that God will make his work prosper in our hands.

1. That God will direct them what to preach, that he will cut out their work for them (Jonah 3:2): Go preach the preaching that I bid you. It is a great matter to preach suitable truths; these are acceptable words (Ecclesiastes 12:10).

2. Pray that God will go forth with their labors; for else they toil and catch nothing. God's Spirit must fill the sails of our ministry. It is not the hand that scatters the seed which makes it spring up, but the dews and influences of heaven: So it is not our preaching, but the divine influence of the Spirit that makes grace grow in men's hearts: We are but pipes and organs, it is God's Spirit blowing in us that makes the preaching of the word by a divine enchantment allure souls to Christ. Ministers are but stars to light you to Christ, the Spirit is the magnet to draw you. All the good done by our ministry, is through the virtue and efficacy of the Lord. Oh then pray for us, that God will make his work prosper in our hands; this may be one reason why the word preached does profit no more, because people pray no more; perhaps you complain the tool is dull, the minister is dead and cold; you should have whetted and sharpened him by your prayer; if you would have the door of a blessing opened to you through our ministry, you must unlock it by the key of prayer.

CHAPTER 2



Showing, that there is a blessedness in reversion.
Matthew 5:3: Blessed are the poor in spirit.

Having done with the occasion, I come now, fourthly, to the sermon itself; Blessed are the poor in spirit. Christ does not begin his Sermon on the Mount, as the law was delivered on the Mount, with commands and threats; the trumpet sounding, the fire flaming, the earth quaking, and the hearts of the Israelites too for fear; but our Savior (whose lips dropped as the honeycomb) begins with promises and blessings: So sweet and ravishing was the doctrine of this heavenly teacher, that like music, it was able to charm the most savage natures, yes, to draw hearts of stone to him. To begin then with this first word, Blessed.

If there be any blessedness in knowledge, it must needs be in the knowledge of blessedness. For the illustration of this, I shall lay down two aphorisms or conclusions.

1. That there is a blessedness in reversion.
2. That the godly are in some sense already blessed:

1. That there is a blessedness in reversion: The people of God meet with many knotty difficulties, and sinking discouragements in the way of religion; their march is not only tedious, but dangerous, and their hearts are ready to despond: It will not be amiss therefore to set the crown of blessedness before them, to animate their courage, and to inflame their zeal. How many scriptures bring this olive-branch in their mouth, the tidings of blessedness to believers! Matthew 24:46: Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he comes shall find so doing. Matthew 25:34: Come you blessed of my Father. Blessedness is the perfection of a rational creature; it is the whetstone of a Christian's industry; the height of his ambition; the flower of his joy; blessedness is the desire of all men. Aquinas calls it the ultimate end; this is the white every man aims to hit; to this center all the lines are drawn.

Answer. Millions of men mistake both the nature of blessedness, and the way to it: Some of the learned have set down two hundred eighty-eight several opinions about blessedness, and all have shot wide of the mark. I shall show wherein it does not consist, and then wherein it does consist.

1. Wherein blessedness does not consist: It does not lie in the acquisition of worldly things; happiness cannot by any art of chemistry be extracted here: Christ does not say, Blessed are the rich, or blessed are the noble; yet too many idolize these things: Man by the fall has not only lost his crown, but his head. How ready is he to terminate his happiness in external things? Which makes me call to mind that definition which some of the heathen philosophers gave of blessedness; that it was to have a sufficiency of subsistence, and to thrive well in the world: And are there not many who go for Christians, that seem to be of this philosophical

opinion? If they have but worldly accommodations, they are ready to sing a requiem to their souls, and say with that brutish fool in the gospel, Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years, take your ease (Luke 12:19). Alas, the tree of blessedness does not grow in an earthly paradise. Has not God cursed the ground for sin (Genesis 3:17)? Yet many are digging for felicity here, as if they would fetch a blessing out of a curse; a man may as well think to extract oil out of a flint, or fire out of water, as blessedness out of these terrestrial things.

King Solomon arrived at more than any man; he was the most magnificent prince that ever held the scepter. 1. For his parentage; he sprang from the royal line; not only that line of which many kings came, but of which Christ himself came. Jesus Christ was of Solomon's line and race; so that for heraldry and nobility none could show a fairer coat of arms. 2. For the situation of his palace; it was in Jerusalem, the princess and paragon of the earth. Jerusalem for its renown, was called the city of God; it was the most famous metropolis in the world, Where the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord (Psalm 122:4). 3. For wealth; his crown was hung full of jewels; he had treasures of gold and pearl, and gave silver as stones (1 Kings 10:27). 4. For worldly joy, he had the flower and quintessence of all delights; sumptuous fare, stately edifices, vineyards, fishponds, all sorts of music to enchant and ravish the senses with joy; if there were any rarity, it was a present for King Solomon's court; thus did he bathe himself in the perfumed waters of pleasure. 5. For wisdom, he was the oracle of his time; when the Queen of Sheba came to pose him with hard questions, he gave a solution to all her doubts (1 Kings 10:3). He had a key of knowledge to unlock nature's dark cabinet; so that if wisdom had

been lost, it might have been found here, and the whole world might have lit their understanding at Solomon's lamp. He was an earthly angel; so that a carnal eye surveying his glory, would have been ready to imagine that Solomon had entered into that paradise out of which Adam was once driven, or that he had found another as good; never did the world cast a more smiling aspect upon any man; yet when he comes to give in his impartial verdict, he tells us that the world has vanity written upon its frontispiece; and all those golden delights he enjoyed, were but a painted felicity, a glorious misery (Ecclesiastes 2:8). And behold all was vanity. Blessedness is too noble and delicate a plant to dwell in nature's soil.

That blessedness does not lie in externals, I shall prove by these five demonstrations.

1. Those things which are not commensurate to the desires of the soul, can never make a man blessed; but transitory things are not commensurate to the desires of the soul; therefore they cannot render him blessed; nothing on earth can satisfy. Ecclesiastes 5:10: He that loves silver, shall not be satisfied with silver; riches are unsatisfying.

1. Because they are not real; the world is called a fashion (1 Corinthians 7:31). The word [in non-Latin alphabet], signifies a mathematical figure, sometimes a show or apparition. Riches are but tinned over; they are like alchemy, which glisters a little in our eyes, but at death all this alchemy will be worn off. Riches are but sugared lies, pleasant impostures; like a gilded cover, which has not one leaf of true comfort bound up in it.

2. Because they are not suitable: The soul is a spiritual thing, riches are of an earthly extract, and how can these fill a spiritual substance? A man may as well fill his chest with grace, as his heart with gold; if a man were crowned with all the delights of the world, nay, if God should build him a house among the stars, yet the restless eye of his unsatisfied mind would be looking still higher, he would be peering beyond the heavens for some hidden rarities which he thinks he has not yet attained to; so unquenchable is the thirst of the soul, till it comes to bathe in the river of life, and to center upon true blessedness.

2. That which cannot quiet the heart in a storm, cannot entitle a man to blessedness; but earthly things accumulated, cannot rock the troubled heart quiet, therefore they cannot make one blessed. If the Spirit be wounded, can the creature pour in wine and oil into these wounds? If God sets on conscience, and it flies in a man's face, can worldly comforts take off this angry fury? Is there any harp to drive away the evil Spirit? Outward things can no more cure the agony of conscience, than a silk stocking can cure a gouty leg. When Saul was sorely distressed (1 Samuel 28:15), could all the jewels of his crown comfort him? If God be angry, whose fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him (Nahum 1:6), can a wedge of gold be a screen to keep off this fire? Ezekiel 7:19: They shall cast their silver in the streets; their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord. King Belshazzar was carousing; he drank wine in the golden vessels of the temple (Daniel 5:3), but when the fingers of a man's hand appeared, his countenance was changed (verse 6); his wine grew sour, his feast was spoiled with that dish

which was served in upon the wall. The things of the world will no more keep out trouble of spirit, than a paper screen will keep out a bullet.

3. That which is but for a season, cannot make one blessed; but all things under the sun are but [in non-Latin alphabet] for a season, therefore they cannot enrich with blessedness: Sublunary delights are like those meats which we say are for a while in season, and then presently grow stale, and are out of request: The world passes away (1 John 2:17). Worldly delights are winged; they may be compared to a flock of birds in the garden, that stay a little while, but when you come near to them, they take their flight and are gone. So riches make themselves wings, they fly away as an eagle towards heaven (Proverbs 23:5). They are like a meteor that blazes, but spends and annihilates; they are like a castle made of snow, lying under the torrid beams of the sun: Austin said of himself, When any preferment smiled upon him, he was afraid to accept of it, lest it should on a sudden give him the slip. Outward comforts are as Plato says, like tennis-balls, which are bandied up and down from one to another; had we the longest lease of worldly comforts, it would soon be run out: Riches and honor are still fleeing, they pass away like a swift stream, or like a ship that is going full sail. While they are with us, they are going away from us; they are like a posy of flowers, which withers while you are smelling it; like ice, which melts away while it is in your hand. The world (says Bernard) cries out, I will leave you, and be gone; it takes its salute and farewell together.

4. Those things which do more vex than comfort, cannot make a man blessed; but such are all things under the sun, therefore they cannot have blessedness affixed to them: As riches are com-

pared to wind (Hosea 12:1), to show their vanity; so to thorns (Matthew 13:17), to show their vexation: Thorns are not more apt to tear our garments, than riches are to tear our hearts; they are thorns in the gathering, they prick with care; and as they pierce the head with care of getting, so they wound the heart with fear of losing; God will have our sweetest wine run to dregs, yes, and taste of a musty cask too, that we may not think this is the wine of paradise.

5. Those things which (if we have nothing else) will make us cursed, cannot make us blessed; but the sole enjoyment of worldly things will make us cursed; therefore it is far from making us blessed: Riches are kept for the hurt of the owner (Ecclesiastes 5:13). Riches to the wicked, are fuel for pride: Ezekiel 28:5: Your heart is lifted up because of your riches; and fuel for lust: Jeremiah 5:7: When I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery. Riches are a snare: 1 Timothy 6:9: But they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition. How many have pulled down their souls to build up an estate! A ship may be so loaded with gold that it sinks; many a man's gold has sunk him to hell. The rich sinner seals up money in his bag, and God seals up a curse with it. Habakkuk 2:6: Woe to him that loads himself with thick clay. Austin says, that Judas for money sold his salvation, and the Pharisees bought their damnation; so that happiness is not to be fetched out of the earth; they who go to the creature for blessedness, go to the wrong box.

Use 1. If there is such blessedness not in externals, then let us not place our blessedness here; this is to seek the living among the dead; as the angel told Mary concerning Christ, He is not here, he

is risen (Matthew 28:6). So I may say of blessedness, it is not here, it is risen, it is in a higher region: How do men thirst after the world, as if the pearl of blessedness did hang upon an earthly crown? O says one, if I had but such an estate, then I should be happy! Had I but such a comfort, then I should sit down satisfied? Well, God gives him that comfort, and lets him suck out the very juice and spirits of it; but alas, it falls short of his expectation, it cannot fill the longing of his soul, which still cries Give, give (Proverbs 30:15). Just like a sick man, if says he, I had but such a food, I could eat it; and when he has it, his stomach is bad, and he can hardly endure to taste it; God has put not only an emptiness, but bitterness into the creature, and it is good for us that there is no perfection here, that we may raise our thoughts higher, to more noble and generous delights. Could we distil, and draw out the quintessence of the creature, we should say as once the Emperor Severus, who grew from a mean estate to be head of the greatest empire in the world, I have run through all conditions, yet could never find full contentment.

Use 2. To such as are cut short in their allowance, whose cup does not overflow, but their tears; Be not too much troubled; remember these outward comforts cannot make you blessed; you might live rich, and die cursed; you might treasure up an estate, and God might treasure up wrath: Be not perplexed about those things, the want of which cannot make you miserable, nor the enjoyment make you blessed.

Having shown wherein blessedness does not consist, I shall next show wherein it does consist. Blessedness does stand in the fruition of the chief good. 1. It consists in fruition; there must not be only possession, but fruition. A man may possess an estate, yet

not enjoy it; he may have the dominion of it, but not the comfort; as when he is in a lethargy, or under the predominance of melancholy; but in true blessedness there must be a sensible enjoyment of that which the soul does possess. 2. Blessedness lies in the fruition of the chief good; it is not every good that makes a man blessed, but it must be the supreme good, and that is God. Psalm 144:15: Happy is that people whose God is the Lord. God is the rest of the soul, here the soul does rest: Psalm 116:7. Now that only in which the soul does acquiesce and rest, can make it blessed. The globe or circle, as is observed in mathematics, is of all others the most perfect figure, because the last point of the figure ends in that first point where it began: So when the soul meets in God, from where it sprang as its first original, then it is completely blessed. That which makes a man blessed, must have six qualifications or ingredients in it, and these are found nowhere, but in God the chief good.

1. In true blessedness there must be superiority; that which fills with blessedness, must be such a good as is better than a man's self. If you would ennoble a piece of silver, it must be by putting something to it which is better than silver, as by putting gold or pearl to it: So that which does ennoble the soul, and enrich it with blessedness, must be by adding something to it which is more excellent than the soul, and that is God; the world is below the soul; it is but the soul's footstool; therefore cannot crown it with happiness.

2. Another ingredient is delightfulness; that which brings blessedness, must have a delicious taste in it, such as the soul is infinitely ravished with; there must be in it spirits of delight, and quintessence of joy; and where can the soul suck those pure com-

forts which do amaze it with wonder, and crown it with delight, but in God? The love of God is a honeycomb, which drops such infinite sweetness, and satisfaction into the soul, as is unspeakable, and full of glory (1 Peter 1:8). A kiss from God's mouth puts the soul into a divine ecstasy, so that now it cries out, It is good to be here.

3. The third ingredient into blessedness, is plenty; that which makes a man blessed, must not be too scanty; it is a full draught which quenches the soul's thirst; and where shall we find plenty but in deity? Psalm 36:8: You shall make him drink of the river of your pleasures, not drops but rivers. The soul bathes itself, and is laid as it were steeped in the water of life; the river of paradise overflows, and empties its silver streams into the souls of the blessed.

4. In true blessedness there must be variety: Plenty without variety is apt to nauseate; in God there is [in non-Latin alphabet] all fullness (Colossians 1:19). What can the soul want, but it may be had in the chief good? God is good in whom all good things are; he is a sun, a shield, a portion, a fountain, a rock of strength, a horn of salvation; In God there is a complication of all excellencies; there are every moment fresh beauties and delights springing from God.

5. To make up blessedness there must be perfection; the joy must be perfect, the glory perfect. Hebrews 12:23: Spirits of just men made perfect. Goodness consists in integrality; if there be the least defect, it destroys the nature of blessedness; as the least symptom of a disease takes away the right temperature of the body.

6. True blessedness must have eternity stamped upon it. Blessedness is a fixed thing, it admits of no change or alteration. God says of every child of his, I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed: As the sunshine of blessedness is without clouds, so it never sets. John 10:28: I give unto them eternal life. 1 Thessalonians 4:17: And so shall we ever be with the Lord. Eternity is the highest link of the chain of blessedness: Thus we have seen that this diamond of blessedness is only to be found in the Rock of Ages. Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord.

Use 1. If there is such blessedness in reversion, be convinced of the truth of this, set it down as an article of your faith. We live in times wherein many are grown atheists, they have run through all opinions; and now of professors they are turned epicures; they have drunk in so much of the poison of error, that they are quite intoxicated, and fallen asleep, and begin to dream there is no such thing as a state of blessedness after this life; and this opinion is to them above the Bible. When men have the spiritual staggers, it sadly presages they will die. Oh it is a dangerous thing to hesitate and waver about fundamentals; like Pythagoras, who doubted whether there was a God or no! So, whether there be a blessedness or no. Doubting of principles, is the next way to the denying of principles. Let it be a maxim with every good Christian, There is a blessedness in reversion, there remains a rest for the people of God (Hebrews 4:9).

Use 2. Revolve this truth often in your mind; there are many truths that swim in the brain, which do not sink into the heart, and those do us no good: Chew the cud: Let a Christian think seriously with himself, There is a blessedness attainable, and I am capable of enjoying it, if I do not lay bars in the way, and block up my own

happiness. Though within I see nothing but guilt, without nothing but curses; yet there is a blessedness to be had, and to be had for me too in the use of means.

The serious meditation of this will be a forcible argument to make the sinner break off his sins by repentance, and work hard till he find the golden mine of blessedness; I say, it would be the break-neck of sin; how would a man offer violence to himself by mortification, and to heaven by supplication, that at last he may arrive at a state of blessedness. What, is there a crown of blessedness to be set upon my head? A crown hung with the jewels of honor, delight, magnificence; a crown reached out by God himself; and shall I by sin hazard this? Can the pleasure of sin counterbalance the loss of blessedness? What more powerful motive to repentance than this: Sin will deceive me of the blessing! If a man knew certainly that a king would settle all his crown revenues on him after such a term of years, would he offend that regal majesty, and cause him to reverse and alter his will? There is a blessedness promised to all that live godly: 1 John 2:25: This is the promise that he has promised us, even eternal life. We are not excluded, but may come in for a child's part; now shall we by living in sin provoke God, and forfeit this blessedness? O what madness is this! Well may the Apostle call them foolish and hurtful lusts (1 Timothy 6:9), because every lust does what in it lies to cut off the entail of mercy, and block up the way to happiness; every sin may be compared to the flaming sword, which keeps the heavenly paradise that the sinner cannot enter.

Use 3. Let us so conduct ourselves, that we may express to others that we do believe a blessedness to come; and that is by seeking after an interest in God; for the beams of blessedness shine only

from his face; it is our union with God the chief good that makes us blessed: Oh let us never rest till we can say, This God is our God forever and ever (Psalm 48:14). Most men think because God has blessed them with an estate, therefore they are blessed; alas, God often gives these things in anger: He grants in anger what he refuses in favor: He loads his enemies with gold and silver; as Plutarch reports of Tarpeia a vestal nun, who bargained with the enemy to betray the Capitol of Rome to them, in case she might have the golden bracelets on their left hands, which they promised; and being entered into the Capitol, they threw not only their golden bracelets, but their shields too upon her, through the weight of which she was pressed to death. God often lets men have the golden bracelets, the weight of which sinks them into hell: Oh let us aspire to things above, get our eyes fixed, and our hearts united to God the supreme good; this is to pursue blessedness as in a chase.

2. Let us proclaim to the world that we do believe a blessedness to come, by living blessed lives; walk as becomes the heirs of blessedness; A blessed crown, and a cursed life will never agree. Many tell us they are bound for heaven, but they steer their course a quite contrary way; the devil is their pilot, and they sail hellward; as if a man should say he were going a voyage to the east, but sails quite westward. The drunkard will tell you he hopes for blessedness, but he sails another way; you must go weeping to heaven, not reeling. The unclean person talks of blessedness, but he is fallen into that deep ditch (Proverbs 23:27), where he is sooner likely to find hell, than heaven. A beast may as well be made an angel, as an unclean person in his leprosy enter into the paradise of God. The covetous person (of whom it may be said, He is a worm, and no

man (Psalm 22:6), he is ever creeping in the earth, yet) he would lay a claim to blessedness; but can earth ascend? Shall a lump of clay be made a bright star in the firmament of glory? Be assured they shall never be blessed, who bless themselves in their sins; if says God (Deuteronomy 29:19): the sinner blesses himself, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst; the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven. A man can no more extract blessedness out of sin, than he can suck health out of poison. O let us lead blessed lives, and so declare plainly that we seek a country (Hebrews 11:14).

Use 4. To you that have any good hope through grace that you have a title to blessedness, let me say as the Levites did to the people (Nehemiah 9:5): Stand up and bless the Lord your God forever and ever. What infinite cause have you to be thankful that the lot of free grace is fallen upon you! Though you had forfeited all, yet God has provided a haven of happiness, and he is carrying you there upon the sea of Christ's blood, the gale of his Spirit blowing your sails; you are in a better condition through Christ, than when you had the robes of innocency upon you; God has raised you a step higher by your fall. How many has God passed by, and looked upon you? Millions there are who shall lie forever under the bitter vials of God's curses, whereas he will bring you into his banqueting house, and pour out the flagons of wine, and feast you eternally with the delicacies of heaven. O adore free grace, triumph in this love of God; spend and be spent for the Lord; dedicate yourselves

to him in a way of resignation, and lay out yourselves for him in a way of gratitude; never think you can do enough for that God who will shortly set you ashore on the land of promise.

CHAPTER 3



Showing that the godly are in some sense already blessed.

I proceed now to the second aphorism, or conclusion, that the godly are in some sense already blessed. The saints are blessed not only when they are comprehensores, but while they are viatores. They are blessed before they are crowned. This seems a paradox to flesh and blood; what — reproached, and maligned, yet blessed! A man that looks upon the children of God with a carnal eye, and sees how they are afflicted, and like the ship in the Gospel which was covered with waves (Matthew 8:24), would think they were far from blessedness. Saint Paul brings a catalogue of his sufferings (2 Corinthians 11:24–26): Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, etc. And those Christians of the first magnitude, of whom the world was not worthy, had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; they were sawn asunder, they were slain with the sword (Hebrews 11:36–37). What? and were all these during the time of their sufferings blessed? A carnal man would think, If this be to be blessed, God deliver him from it.

But, however sense and reason would give their vote, our Savior Christ pronounces the godly man blessed, though a mourner, though a martyr, yet blessed. Job on the dunghill was blessed Job. The saints are blessed when they are cursed; Shimei did curse David (2 Samuel 16:5), yet when he was cursed David, he was blessed David. The saints though they are bruised, yet they are blessed. Not only they shall be blessed, but they are so: Psalm 119:1, Blessed are the undefiled; Psalm 3:8, Thy blessing is upon thy people.

Question. How are the saints already blessed?

Answer 1. In that they are enriched with heavenly blessings (Ephesians 1:3). They are partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), not by an incorporation into the divine essence, but by a transformation into the divine likeness. This is beatitudo inchoata, blessedness begun; as the newborn babe is said to have life in it as well as he who is fully grown. So the saints who are partakers of the divine nature have an inchoative blessedness, though they have not arrived yet at perfection. Believers have the seed of God in them (1 John 3:9), and this is a seed of blessedness. The flower of glory grows out of the seed of grace; grace and glory differ not in kind but degree; the one is the root, the other the fruit; grace is glory in the dawning, and glory is grace in the meridian. The saints have the Spirit of God in them (2 Timothy 1:14): The Holy Ghost which dwells in us. How can the blessed Spirit be in a man and he not be blessed? A godly man's heart is a paradise planted with the choicest fruit, and God himself walks in the midst of this paradise — must he not be blessed?

2. The saints are already blessed, because their sins are not imputed to them (Psalm 32:2). God's not imputing iniquity signifies God's making sin as if it were not; it is as if the man had never sinned; the debt-book is cancelled in Christ's blood. God's not imputing sin means he will never call for the debt; or if it should be called for, it shall be hidden out of sight. Jeremiah 50:20: In those days the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found. Now such a man who has not sin imputed to him is blessed; because if sin be not imputed, then the curse is taken away; and if the curse is taken away, then he must needs be blessed.

3. The saints are already blessed, because they are in covenant with God. This is clear by comparing two scriptures: Jeremiah 31:33, I will be their God; and Psalm 144:15, Happy is that people whose God is the Lord. This is the crowning blessing, to have the Lord for our God; it is impossible that God should be our God and we not be blessed. This sweet word, I will be your God, implies:

1. Propriety, that all that is in God shall be ours: his love ours, his Spirit ours, his mercy ours.

2. It implies all relations. First, the relation of a Father: 2 Corinthians 6:18, I will be a Father unto you. The sons of a prince are happy; how blessed are the saints who are of the true blood royal? Second, it implies the relation of a husband: Isaiah 54:5, Thy Maker is thy husband. The spouse being contracted to her husband is happy by having an interest in all he has; the saints being contracted by faith are blessed, though the solemnity of the marriage be kept for heaven. Third, it implies terms of friendship: they who are in covenant with God are favorites of heaven.

Abraham my friend (Isaiah 41:8). It is counted a subject's happiness to be in favor with his prince, though he may live a while from court; how happy must he needs be who is God's favorite?

4. The saints are already blessed, because they have a reversion of heaven. As on the contrary, he who has hell in reversion is said to be already condemned: John 3:18, He that believes not is condemned already. So he who has heaven in reversion may be said to be already blessed. A man that has the reversion of a house after a short lease is run out looks upon it as his already: This house, he says, is mine. So a believer has a reversion of heaven after the lease of life is run out, and he can say at present, Christ is mine, and glory is mine. He has a title to heaven, and he is a blessed man that has a title to show; nay, faith turns the reversion into a possession.

5. The saints are already blessed, because they have the first fruits of blessedness here. We read of the earnest of the Spirit and the seal (2 Corinthians 1:22), and the first fruits (Romans 8:23). Heaven is already begun in a believer: Romans 14:17, The kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. This kingdom is in a believer's heart: Luke 17:21. The people of God have a prelibation and taste of blessedness here. As Israel tasted a bunch of grapes before they were actually possessed of Canaan, so the children of God have those secret incomes of the Spirit, those smiles of Christ's face, those kisses of his lips, those love-tokens that are as bunches of grapes. Often the Comforter is let down to the soul in an ordinance, and now the soul is in the suburbs of the Jerusalem above. A Christian sees heaven by faith, and tastes it by joy — and what is this but blessedness?

6. The saints may be said in this life to be blessed, because all things tend to make them blessed. Romans 8:28: All things work for good to them that love God. We say to him that has everything falling out for the best, You are a happy man. The saints are very happy, for all things have a tendency to their good; prosperity does them good, adversity does them good; nay, sin turns to their good. Every trip makes them more watchful; their maladies are their medicines. Are not they happy persons, that have every wind blowing them to the right port?

7. A saint may be said to be blessed, because part of him is already blessed; he is blessed in his head; Christ his head is in glory; Christ and believers make one mystical body, and their head is gotten into heaven.

Use 1. Branch 1. See the difference between a wicked man and a godly man. Let a wicked man have never so many comforts, still he is cursed; let a godly man have never so many crosses, still he is blessed. Let a wicked man have the candle of God shining on him (Job 29:3), let his way be so smooth that he meets with no rubs, let him have success — yet still there is a curse entailed upon him. You may read the sinner's inventory: Deuteronomy 28:16–18. He is not more full of sin than he is full of a curse; though perhaps he blesses himself in his wickedness, yet he is heir to God's curse. All the curses of the Bible are his portion, and at the day of death this portion is sure to be paid. But a godly man in the midst of all his miseries is blessed; he may be under the cross, but not under a curse.

Branch 2. It shows the privilege of a believer; he not only shall be blessed, but he is blessed; blessedness is begun in him. Psalm 115:15: You are blessed of the Lord. Let the condition of the righteous be never so sad, yet it is blessed. He is blessed in affliction:

Psalm 94, Blessed is he whom you chasten. Blessed in poverty: James 2:5, Poor in the world, rich in faith. Blessed in disgrace: 1 Peter 4:14, The Spirit of God and of glory rests upon you. This may be a cordial to the fainting Christian — he is blessed in life and death; Satan cannot supplant him of the blessing.

Branch 3. How may this take away murmuring and melancholy from a child of God? Will you repine and be sad when you are blessed? Esau wept because he wanted the blessing (Genesis 27:38): Bless me, even me also, O my Father, and Esau lifted up his voice and wept. But shall a child of God be immoderately cast down, when he has the blessing? Adam sinned in the midst of Paradise; how evil is it to be blessed, and yet to murmur?

Branch 4. What an encouragement is this to godliness? We are all ambitious of a blessing, then let us espouse religion. Psalm 112:1: Blessed is the man that fears the Lord. But you will say, this way is everywhere spoken against. It is no matter, seeing this is the way to get a blessing. Suppose a rich man should adopt another for his heir, and others should reproach him — he cares not, as long as he is heir to the estate. So, what though others may reproach you for your religion, as long as it entails a blessing upon you? The same day you become godly, you become blessed.

CHAPTER 4



Matthew 5:[illegible]: Blessed are the poor in spirit.

Having spoken of the general notion of blessedness, I come next to consider the subjects of this blessedness, and these our Savior has described to be the poor in spirit, the mourners, etc. But before I touch upon these, I shall briefly preface or paraphrase upon this sermon of the Beatitudes.

1. Observe the divinity in this sermon, which goes beyond all philosophy; The philosophers use to say one contrary expels another; but here one contrary begets another; poverty usually expels riches; but here poverty begets riches; for how rich are they that have a kingdom? Mourning usually expels joy; but behold here mourning begets joy. They shall be comforted. Water usually quenches the flame, but the water of tears kindles the flame of joy. Persecution usually expels happiness, but here it makes happy. Blessed are they that are persecuted. These are the sacred paradoxes in our Savior's sermon.

2. Observe how Christ's doctrine and the opinion of carnal men differ. They think, blessed are the rich; The world would count him blessed who could have Midas' wish, that all he touched might be turned into gold. But Christ says, Blessed are the poor in spirit.

The world thinks, Blessed are they on the pinnacle; but Christ pronounces them blessed who are in the valley; Christ's reckonings and the world's do not agree.

3. Observe the nature of true religion; poverty leads the van, and persecution brings up the rear. Every true saint (says Luther) is heir to the cross! Some there are who would be thought religious, displaying Christ's colors by a glorious profession; but to be poor in spirit, and persecuted, they cannot take down this bitter pill; they would wear Christ's jewels, but wave his cross; these are strangers to religion.

4. Observe the certain connection between grace and its reward; they who are poor in spirit, shall have the kingdom of God; They are as sure to go to heaven, as if they were in heaven already. Our Savior would encourage men to religion, by sweetening commands with promises; he ties duty and reward together. As in the body, the veins carry the blood, and the arteries the spirits; so one part of these verses carries duty, and the other part carries reward. So our Lord Christ having set down several qualifications of a Christian, poor in spirit, pure in heart, etc., draws these heavenly virtues in their fair colors of blessedness, and sets the magnificent crown of reward upon them, that by this beauty, he might the more set forth their unparalleled beauty, and entice holy love.

5. Observe hence the concatenation of the graces, poor in spirit, meek, merciful, etc. Where there is one grace, there is all. As they say of the cardinal virtues, the virtues are chained together; so we may say of the graces of the Spirit, they are linked and chained together; he that has poverty of spirit, is a mourner; he that is a mourner, is meek; he that is meek, is merciful, etc. The Spirit of God plants in the heart a habit of all the graces; the new creature

has all the parts and lineaments; as in the body there is a composition of all the elements, and a mixture of all the humors. The graces of the Spirit are like a row of pearl, which hang together upon the string of religion, and serve to adorn Christ's bride: This I note, to show you a difference between a hypocrite, and a true child of God: The hypocrite flatters himself with a pretense of grace; but in the mean time he has not a habit of all the graces; he has not poverty of spirit, nor purity of heart; whereas a child of God has all the graces in his heart, at least radically, though not in full measure. These things being premised, I come in particular to those heavenly dispositions of soul to which Christ has affixed blessedness: And the first is, poverty of spirit.

Blessed are the poor in spirit.

Chrysostom and Theophylact are of opinion that this was the first sermon that ever Christ made, therefore it may challenge our best attention. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Our Lord Christ being to raise a high and stately building of blessedness, lays the foundation of it low, in poverty of spirit; but all poverty is not blessed. I shall use a fourfold distinction.

1. I distinguish between poor in estate, and poor in spirit; there are the devil's poor, poor and wicked; whose clothes are not more torn than their conscience. There are some whose poverty is their sin; who through improvidence or excess, have brought themselves to want; these may be poor in estate, but not poor in spirit.

2. I distinguish between spiritually poor, and poor in spirit; he who is without grace, is spiritually poor; but he is not poor in spirit; he knows not his own beggary. Revelation 3:17: You know

not that you are poor: He is in the worst sense poor, who has no sense of his poverty.

3. I distinguish between poor-spirited, and poor in spirit. They are said to be poor-spirited, who have mean, base spirits, who act below themselves. 1. As they are men; such are those misers, which having great estates, yet can hardly afford themselves bread; who live sneakingly, and are ready to wish their own throats cut, because they are forced to spend something in satisfying nature's demands: This Solomon calls an evil under the sun. Ecclesiastes 6:2: There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, a man to whom God has given riches, so that he wants nothing for his soul of all that he desires, yet God gives him not power to eat of it. Religion makes no man a miser; though it teaches prudence, yet not sordidness. 2. Who act below themselves as they are Christians, while they sinfully comply and prostitute themselves to the humors of others; a base kind of character that will take any stamp; they will for a piece of silver part with the jewel of a good conscience, they will be of the state religion; they will dance to the devil's pipe, if their superior commands them; These are poor-spirited, but not poor in spirit.

4. I distinguish between poor in an evangelical sense, and in a popish sense; the papists give a wrong gloss upon the text; by poor in spirit, they understand those who renouncing their estates, vow a voluntary poverty, living retiredly in their monasteries; but Christ never meant these; he does not pronounce them blessed who make themselves poor, leaving their estates, and their callings, but such as are evangelically poor.

Well then, what are we to understand by poor in spirit? The Greek word for poor, [in non-Latin alphabet], is not only taken in a strict sense for those who live upon alms; those who have nothing left; but in a more broad sense, for those who are destitute as well of inward as outward comfort: Poor in spirit then signifies those who are brought to the sense of their sins, and seeing no goodness in themselves, despair in themselves, and sue wholly to the mercy of God in Christ. Poverty of spirit is a kind of self-annihilation; such an expression I find in Calvin; The poor in spirit (says he) are they who see nothing in themselves, but flee to mercy for sanctuary; such a one was the publican (Luke 18:13): God be merciful to me a sinner. Of this temper was Saint Paul (Philippians 3:9): That I may be found in Christ, not having my own righteousness; these are the poor which are invited as guests to wisdom's banquet (Proverbs 7:3-4). Here several questions may be proposed.

1. Why does Christ here begin with poverty of spirit? Quest. 1. Why is this put in the forefront? I answer, Christ does it, to show that poverty of spirit is the very basis and foundation of all the other graces that follow: You may as well expect fruit to grow without a root, as the other graces without this; till a man be poor in spirit, he cannot mourn: Poverty of spirit is like the fire under the still, which makes the water drop from the eyes; when a man sees his own defects and deformities, and looks upon himself as undone, then he mourns after Christ; the springs run in the valleys (Psalm 104:10). When the heart becomes a valley, and lies low by poverty of spirit, now the springs of holy mourning run there. Till a man be poor in spirit, he cannot hunger and thirst after righteous-

ness; he must first be sensible of want, before he can hunger; therefore Christ begins with poverty of spirit, because this ushers in all the rest.

Quest. 2. The second question is, What is the difference between poverty of spirit and humility? Answer. These are so alike, that they have been taken one for the other. Chrysostom by poverty of spirit, understands humility; yet I think there is some difference; they differ as the cause and the effect. Tertullian says, none are poor in spirit, but the humble; he seems to make humility the cause of poverty of spirit; I rather think poverty of spirit is the cause of humility; for when a man sees his want of Christ, and how he lives on the alms of free grace, this makes him humble; he that is sensible of his own emptiness and indigence, with the violet, hangs down his head in humility; humility is the sweet spice that grows from poverty of spirit.

Quest. 3. What is the difference between poverty of spirit and self-denial? I answer, in some things they agree, in some things they differ. In some things they agree; for the poor in spirit is an absolute self-denier; he renounces all opinion of himself; he acknowledges his dependence on Christ and free grace; but in some things they differ; the self-denier parts with the world for Christ, the poor in spirit parts with himself for Christ; that is, his own righteousness; the poor in spirit sees himself nothing without Christ, the self-denier will leave himself nothing for Christ: And thus I have shown what poverty of spirit is. The words thus opened, present us with this truth.

Doctrine. That Christians must be poor in spirit; or thus, poverty of spirit is the jewel which Christians must wear. As the best creature was made out of nothing, namely, light; so when a

man sees himself nothing, out of this nothing God makes a most beautiful creature; it is God's usual method to make a man poor in spirit, and then fill him with the graces of the Spirit; as we deal with a watch, we take it first in pieces, and then set all the wheels and pins in order: So the Lord does first take a man all in pieces, shows him his undone condition, and then sets him in frame.

The reasons are:

1. Till we are poor in spirit, we are not capable of receiving grace; he who is swelled with an opinion of self-excellency and self-sufficiency, is not fit for Christ; he is full already; what is within prevents what is without; if the hand be full of pebbles, it cannot receive gold; the glass is first emptied before you pour in wine; God does first empty a man of himself, before he pours in the precious wine of his grace; none but the poor in spirit are within Christ's commission. Isaiah 61:1: The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted; that is, such as are broken in the sense of their unworthiness.

2. Till we are poor in spirit, Christ is never precious; before we see our own wants, we never see Christ's worth; poverty of spirit, is the salt and seasoning, the sauce which makes Christ relish sweet to the soul; mercy is most welcome to the poor in spirit; he who sees himself clad in filthy rags (Zechariah 3:4-5), what will he give for change of raiment, the righteousness of Christ? What will he give to have the fair crown of salvation set upon his head? When a man sees himself almost wounded to death, how precious will the balm of Christ's blood be to him? When he sees himself deep in arrears with God, and is so far from paying the debt, that he cannot even sum up the debt, how glad would he be of a surety? The pearl of price is only precious to the poor in spirit; he that wants bread,

and is ready to starve, will have it whatever it costs; he will lay his garment to pledge; bread he must have, or he is undone: So to him that is poor in spirit, that sees his want of Christ, how precious is a Savior! Christ is Christ, and grace is grace to him; he will do anything for the bread of life; therefore will God have the soul thus qualified, to raise the price of his market, to enhance the value and estimate of the Lord Jesus.

3. Till we are poor in spirit, we cannot go to heaven: Theirs is the kingdom of heaven; this does tune and prepare us for heaven: By nature a man is big with self-confidence, and the gate of heaven is so strait that he cannot enter; now poverty of spirit does lessen the soul, it pares off its superfluity, and now he is fit to enter in at the strait gate. The great cable cannot go through the eye of the needle; but let it be untwisted, and made into small threads, and then it may: Poverty of spirit untwists the great cable, it makes a man little in his own eyes, and now an entrance shall be made unto him, richly into the everlasting kingdom (2 Peter 1:11). Through this temple of poverty we must go into the temple of glory.

Use 1. It shows wherein a Christian's riches do consist; namely, in poverty of spirit. Some think if they can fill their bags with gold, then they are rich; but they who are poor in spirit are the rich men, they are rich in poverty. This poverty entitles them to a kingdom. How poor are they that think themselves rich! How rich are they that see themselves poor! I call it the jewel of poverty. There are some paradoxes in religion that the world cannot understand; for a man to become a fool that he may be wise (1 Corinthians 3:18), to save his life by losing it (Matthew 16:25), and by being poor, to be rich; reason laughs at it; but, blessed are the poor, for theirs is the

kingdom; Then this poverty is to be striven for more than all riches; under these rags is hid cloth of gold; out of this carcass comes honey.

Use 2. If blessed are the poor in spirit, then by the rule of contraries, cursed are the proud in spirit (Proverbs 16:5). There is a generation of men who do commit idolatry with themselves; (no such idol as self.) They admire their own parts, moralities, self-righteousness; and upon this stock graft the hope of their salvation. There are many are too good to go to heaven; they have commodities enough of their own growth, and they scorn to live upon the borrow, or be beholden to Christ. These bladders the devil has blown up with pride, and they are swelled in their own conceit; but it is like the swelling of a dropsied man whose bigness is his disease; thus it was with that proud self-righteous man (Luke 18:11). The Pharisee stood and prayed, God I thank you that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican; I fast twice in the week, I give tithes, etc. Here was a man setting up the top-sail of pride; but the publican who was poor in spirit, he stood afar off, and would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast saying, God be merciful to me a sinner; This man carried away the garland; I tell you (says Christ) this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; Saint Paul before his conversion thought himself in a very good condition, Touching the law blameless (Philippians 3:6). He thought to have built a tower of his own righteousness, the top of which should have reached to heaven; but at last God showed him there was a crack in the foundation, and then he gets into the Rock of Ages (Philippians 3:9): That I may be found in him; There is not a more dangerous precipice than self-righteousness; this was

Laodicea's temper (Revelation 3:17): because you say I am rich, and have need of nothing, and know not that you are wretched and miserable, etc. She thought she wanted nothing, when indeed she had nothing. How many does this damn! We see some ships that have escaped the rocks, yet are cast away upon the sands: so some who have escaped the rocks of gross sins, yet are cast away upon the sands of self-righteousness; and how hard is it to convince such men of their danger! They will not believe but they may be helped out of the dungeon with these rotten rags; they cannot be persuaded their case is so bad as others would make it. Christ tells them they are blind, but they are like Seneca's maid who was born blind, but she would not believe it; she said the house is dark, not I. Christ tells them they are naked, and offers his white robes to cover them, but they are of a different persuasion; and because they are blind, they cannot see themselves naked; how many have perished by being their own saviors! O that this might drive the proud sinner out of himself; a man never comes to himself till he comes out of himself; and no man can come out, till first Christ come in.

Use 3. If poverty of spirit be so necessary, How shall I know that I am poor in spirit? Answer. By the blessed effects of this poverty: which are;

1. He that is poor in spirit is weaned from himself (Psalm 131:2). My soul is even as a weaned child; it is hard for a man to be weaned from himself. The vine catches hold of every thing that is near, to stay itself upon. There is some bough or other a man would be catching hold of to rest upon; how hard is it to be

brought quite off himself! The poor in spirit are divorced from themselves; they see they must go to hell without Christ; My soul is even as a weaned child.

2. He that is poor in spirit, is a Christ-admirer; he has high thoughts of Christ; he sees himself naked, and flies to Christ, that in his garments he may obtain the blessing. He sees himself wounded; and as the wounded deer runs to the water, so he thirsts for Christ's blood, the water of life. Lord, says he, give me Christ or I die; conscience is turned into a fiery serpent, and has stung him; now all the world for a brazen serpent; he sees himself in a state of death; and how precious is one leaf of the tree of life, which is both for food and medicine! The poor in spirit sees all his riches lie in Christ, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, etc. In every need he flies to this magazine and storehouse; he adores the all-fullness in Christ. They say of the oil in Rheims, though they are continually almost spending it, yet it never wastes. And such is Christ's blood; it can never be emptied; he that is poor in spirit has recourse still to this fountain; he sets a high value and appreciation upon Christ; he hides himself in Christ's wounds; he bathes himself in his blood, he wraps himself in his robe; he sees a spiritual dearth and famine at home, but he makes out to Christ; Show me the Lord (says he) and it suffices.

3. He that is poor in spirit, is ever complaining of his spiritual estate; that look as it is with a poor man, he is ever telling you of his wants, he has nothing to help himself with, he is ready to be starved; so it is with him that is poor in spirit; he is ever complaining of his wants; I want a broken heart, a thankful heart; he makes himself the most indigent creature; though he dares not deny the work of grace (which were a bearing false witness against the

Spirit) yet he mourns he has no more grace: This is the difference between a hypocrite and a child of God; the hypocrite is ever telling what he has; a child of God complains of what he wants; the one is glad he is so good; the other grieves he is so bad; the poor in spirit goes from ordinance to ordinance for a supply of his wants, he would fain have his stock increased. Try by this if you are poor in spirit; while others complain they want children, they want estates, do you complain you want grace? This is a good sign; there is that makes himself poor, yet has great riches (Proverbs 13:7). Some beggars have died rich; the poor in spirit, who have lain all their lives at the gate of mercy, and have lived upon the alms of free grace, have died rich in faith, heirs to a kingdom.

4. He that is poor in spirit, is lowly in heart: Rich men are commonly proud and scornful, but the poor are submissive; the poor in spirit roll themselves in the dust, in the sense of their unworthiness: I abhor myself in dust (Job 42:6). He who is poor in spirit, looks at another's excellencies, and his own infirmities; he denies not only his sins, but his duties; the more grace he has, the more humble he is, because he now sees himself a greater debtor to God; if he can do any duty, he acknowledges it is Christ's strength more than his own (Philippians 4:13); as the ship gets to the haven more by the benefit of the wind, than the sail: So when a Christian makes any swift progress, it is more by the wind of God's Spirit, than the sail of his own endeavor; the poor in spirit, when he acts most like a saint, he confesses himself the chief of sinners; he blushes more at the defect of his graces, than others do at the excess of their sins; he dares not say he has prayed or wept; he lives, yet not he, but Christ lives in him (Galatians 2:20). He labors, yet not he, but the grace of God (1 Corinthians 15:10).

5. He who is poor in spirit, is much in prayer; he sees how short he is of the standard of holiness, therefore begs for more grace, Lord, more faith, more conformity to Christ: A poor man is ever begging; you may by this know one that is poor in spirit, he is ever begging for a spiritual alms; he knocks at heaven's gate; he sends up sighs; he pours out tears; he will not away from the gate, till he has his portion; God loves a modest boldness in prayer, such shall not be turned away.

6. The poor in spirit is content to take Christ upon his own terms; the proud sinner will bargain and deal with Christ; he will have Christ and his pleasure; Christ and his covetousness; but he that is poor in spirit, sees himself lost without Christ, and he is willing to have him upon his own terms, a Prince as well as a Savior. Philippians 3:8: Jesus my Lord. A castle that has been long besieged, and is ready to be taken, will deliver up on any terms to save their lives; he whose heart has been a garrison for the devil, and has held out long in opposition against Christ, when once God has brought him to poverty of spirit, and he sees himself damned without Christ, let God propose what articles he will, he will readily subscribe to them. Acts 9:6: Lord, what will you have me do? He that is poor in spirit, will do anything that he may have Christ; he will behead his beloved sin; he will with Peter, cast himself upon the water to come to Christ.

7. He that is poor in spirit, is an exalter of free grace; none so magnify mercy, as the poor in spirit; the poor are very thankful: When Paul had tasted mercy, how thankfully does he adore free grace! 1 Timothy 1:14: The grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant; [in non-Latin alphabet], it was super-exuberant; he sets the crown of his salvation upon the head of free grace; as a man

that is condemned, and has a pardon sent him, how does he proclaim the goodness and clemency of his prince! So Saint Paul displays free grace in its rich colors; he interlines all his epistles with free grace; as a vessel that has been perfumed, makes the wine taste of it: so Paul, who was a vessel perfumed with mercy, makes all his epistles to taste of this perfume of free grace; they who are poor in spirit, bless God for the least crumb that falls from the table of free grace.

Use 4. Labor for poverty of spirit: Christ begins with this, and we must begin here if ever we be saved; poverty of spirit is the foundation stone on which God lays the superstructure of glory. There are four things that may persuade Christians to be poor in spirit. 1. This poverty is your riches; you may have the world's riches and yet be poor; you cannot have this poverty but you must be rich; poverty of spirit entitles you to all Christ's riches. 2. This poverty is your nobility; God looks upon you as persons of honor; he that is vile in his own eyes is precious in God's eyes; the way to rise is to fall; God esteems the valley highest. 3. Poverty of spirit does sweetly quiet the soul; when a man is brought off himself to rest on Christ, what a blessed calm is in the heart! I am poor, but my God shall supply all my need (Philippians 4:19); I am unworthy, but Christ is worthy; I am indigent, Christ is infinite. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I (Psalm 61:2); a man is safe upon a rock; when the soul goes out of itself and centers upon the Rock Christ, now it is firmly settled upon its basis. 4. Poverty of spirit paves a causeway for blessedness; blessed are the poor in spirit. Are you poor in spirit? You are blessed persons, happy for you that ever you were born! If you ask wherein does this blessedness appear — read the next words: *Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

CHAPTER 5



Showing that the poor in spirit are enriched with a kingdom.
Matthew 5:3. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Here is high preferment for the saints — they shall be advanced to a kingdom. There are some who, aspiring after earthly greatness, talk of a temporal reign here; but then God's church on earth should not be militant but triumphant. Surely the saints shall reign in a glorious manner: theirs is the kingdom of heaven. A kingdom is held the highest pinnacle and top of all worldly felicity, and this honor have all the saints. By the kingdom of heaven is meant that state of glory which the saints shall enjoy when they shall reign with God and the angels forever, sin, hell, and death being fully subdued. For the illustration of this I shall show first wherein the saints in heaven are like kings.

Wherein the saints glorified may be compared to kings.

Kings have their insignia or regalia, their ensigns of royalty and majesty.

Kings have their crowns; so the saints after death have their crown royal (Revelation 2:10): be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life. Believers are not only pardoned but crowned; the crown is an ensign of honor, not for every one — it

only fits the heads of kings and persons of renown. The crown which the poor in spirit shall wear in heaven is an honorable crown; God himself installs them into their honor and sets the crown royal upon their head. This crown is divinely orient and illustrious, exceeding all others.

It is more pure; other crowns, though made of pure gold, yet are mixed metal — they have their troubles. A crown of gold cannot be made without thorns; it has so many vexations belonging to it that it is apt to make the head ache. Cyrus said that if men knew what cares he sustained under the imperial crown, they would not stoop to take it up. But the saints' crown is made without crosses; it is not mingled with care of keeping or fear of losing. This crown, like David's harp, drives away the evil spirit of sorrow and disquiet; there can be no more grief in heaven than there is joy in hell.

This crown of glory does not draw envy to it; David's own son envied him and sought to take his crown. A princely crown is often the mark for envy and ambition to shoot at; but the crown the saints shall wear is free from envy. One saint shall not envy another, because all are crowned; and though one crown may be larger than another, every one shall have as large a crown as he is able to carry.

This is a never-fading crown; *corona haec non fit ex rosis aut gemmis* — other crowns quickly wear away and tumble into the dust (Proverbs 27:4): does the crown endure to all generations? Henry the sixth was honored with the crowns of two kingdoms — France and England; the first was lost through the faction of his nobles, the other was twice plucked from his head. The crown has many heirs and successors; the crown is a withering thing; death is a worm that feeds in it. But the crown of glory is immarcessible, it

fades not away (1 Peter 5:4); it is not like the rose that loses its gloss and verdancy. This crown cannot be made to wither, but like the flower we call *Semper vivens* it keeps always fresh and splendid. Eternity is a jewel of the saints' crown.

Kings have their robes; the robe is a garment with which kings are arrayed. The king of Israel and the king of Judah sat clothed in their robes (2 Chronicles 18:19); the robe was of scarlet, or velvet lined with ermine, sometimes of a purple color, sometimes of an azure brightness. Thus the saints shall have their robes (Revelation 7:9): I beheld a great multitude which no man could number of all nations and kindreds, clothed in white robes. The saints' robes signify their glory and splendor; and white robes denote their sanctity — they have no sin to taint or defile their robes; in these robes they shall shine as the angels.

Kings have their scepters in token of rule and greatness; King Ahasuerus held out to Esther the golden scepter (Esther 5:2). The saints in glory have their scepter and palms in their hands (Revelation 7). It was a custom of great conquerors to have palm-branches in hand in token of victory; so the saints have palms, an emblem of victory and triumph over sin and hell (Revelation 12:11): they overcame by the blood of the Lamb.

Kings have their thrones; when Caesar returned from conquering his enemies, a chair of ivory was set for him. Thus the saints in heaven shall have a throne of glory (Revelation 3:21). It shall be a high throne, seated above all the kings and princes of the earth — far above all heavens (Ephesians 4). There is the aerial heaven, the space from earth to the sphere of the moon; the starry heaven, where are the stars and higher planets; and the empyrean heaven, called the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2). In this glorious sub-

lime place shall the throne of the saints be erected. It is also a safe throne; other thrones stand tottering (Psalm 73:18); but the saints' throne is sure (Revelation 3:21): he who overcomes shall sit with me upon my throne. O you people of God, think of this; though now you may be called to the bar, yet shortly you shall sit upon the throne.

Showing wherein the kingdom of heaven excels other kingdoms.

Having shown wherein the saints in glory are like kings, let us next see wherein the kingdom of heaven exceeds other kingdoms.

It exceeds in the founder and maker; other kingdoms have men for their builders, but this kingdom has God for its builder (Hebrews 11:10). Heaven is said to be made without hands (2 Corinthians 5:1), to show the excellency of it; neither man nor angel could ever lay a stone in this building; God himself erects this kingdom.

This kingdom excels in the riches of it; gold does not so much surpass iron as this kingdom surpasses all other riches. The gates are of pearl (Revelation 21:21) and the foundations are garnished with all precious stones. It is said kings shall throw down their crowns and scepters before it, counting all their glory but dust in comparison. This kingdom has deity itself to enrich it, and these riches are such as neither the heart of man can conceive nor the tongue of angel express.

This kingdom exceeds in the perfection of it; other kingdoms are defective — they must trade abroad to supply their wants at home. King Solomon sent for gold to Ophir (2 Chronicles 8:18); but there is no defect in the kingdom of heaven. Revelation 21:7:

he that overcomes shall inherit all things. Here is beauty, wisdom, glory, and magnificence; here is the tree of life in the midst of this paradise; all things are to be found here but sin and sorrow, the absence of which adds to the fullness.

It excels in security; other kingdoms fear either foreign invasions or intestine divisions. Solomon's kingdom was peaceable awhile, but at last he had an alarm given him by the enemy (1 Kings 11:4). But the kingdom of heaven is so impregnable that it fears no hostile assaults or inroads. The devils are said to be locked up in chains (Jude 6); the saints in heaven shall no more need fear them than a man fears a thief robbing who is hanged up in chains. The gates of this celestial kingdom are not shut at all by day (Revelation 21:25); we shut the gates of the city in a time of danger, but the gates of that kingdom always stand open, to show that there is no fear of the approach of an enemy. The kingdom has gates for the magnificence of it, but the gates are not shut because of the secureness of it.

This kingdom excels in its stability; other kingdoms have vanity written upon them — they cease and are changed; though they may have a head of gold, yet feet of clay. Hosea 1:4: I will cause the kingdom to cease. Kingdoms have their climacteric year: where is the glory of Athens? the pomp of Troy? What is become of the Assyrian, Grecian, Persian monarchy? Those kingdoms are demolished and laid in the dust. But the kingdom of heaven has eternity written upon it; it is an everlasting kingdom (2 Peter 1:11). Other kingdoms may be lasting, but not everlasting; the apostle calls it a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Hebrews 12:28). It is fastened upon a strong basis — the omnipotency of God; it runs parallel with eternity. Revelation 22:5: they shall reign for ever and ever.

Showing that this kingdom shall be certainly and infallibly entailed upon the saints.

I shall next clear the truth of this proposition — that the saints shall be possessed of this kingdom — from two grounds.

In regard of God's free-grace (Luke 12:32): it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. God has freely resolved to do this; it is his will and pleasure. God's will is the most unalterable thing in the world.

There is a price paid; Jesus Christ has shed his blood for it; all the saints' right to the kingdom is purchased by Christ's death. It is a purchased kingdom; Christ bought it with his blood — and shall we question whether the saints shall have what cost Christ so dear?

The several corollaries and inferences drawn from the point.

Use 1. Information. It shows us that religion is no unreasonable thing; God does not cut us out work and give no reward; godliness enthrones us in a kingdom. When we hear of the doctrine of repentance — steeping our souls in brinish tears for sin; the doctrine of mortification, pulling out the right eye, beheading the king-sin — we are ready to think it is hard to take down this bitter pill. But here is that in the text which may sweeten it; there is a kingdom behind, and that will make amends for all. This glorious recompense does as far exceed our thoughts as it does surpass our deserts; no man can say without wrong to God that he is a hard master. God gives double pay; he bestows a kingdom upon those that fear him. Satan may disparage the ways of God like those

spies that raised an ill report of the good land (Numbers 13:32), but will Satan mend your wages if you serve him? He gives damnable pay; instead of a kingdom, chains of darkness (Jude 6).

2. See here the mercy and bounty of God, that has prepared a kingdom for his people; it is a favor that we poor worms, and no men, should be suffered to live; but that worms should be made kings, this is divine bounty; it is mercy to pardon us, but it is rich mercy to crown us: Behold, what manner of love is this! Earthly princes may bestow great gifts on their subjects, but they keep the kingdom to themselves; though Pharaoh advanced Joseph to honor, and gave him a ring from his finger, yet he kept the kingdom to himself (Genesis 41:40): Only in the throne I will be greater than you; but God gives a kingdom to his people, he sets them upon the throne. How does David admire the goodness of God in bestowing upon him a temporal kingdom (2 Samuel 7:18)! Then went King David in, and sat before the Lord, and said, Who am I O Lord God! And what is my house, that you have brought me this far! He wondered that God should take him from the sheepfold, and set him on the throne! That God should turn his shepherd's staff into a scepter! O then how may the saints admire the riches of grace, that God should give them a kingdom, above all the princes of the earth; nay, far above all heavens! God thinks nothing too good for his children. We many times think much of a tear, a prayer, or to sacrifice a sin for him; but he does not think much to bestow a kingdom upon us: How will the saints read over the lessons of free grace in heaven, and trumpet forth the praises of that God who has crowned them with loving kindness!

3. It shows us that Christianity is no disgraceful thing. Wise men measure things by the end; what is the end of godliness? It brings a kingdom; a man's sin brings him to shame (Proverbs 13:5; Romans 6:21): What fruit had you in those things of which you are now ashamed? But religion brings to honor (Proverbs 4:8); it brings a man to a throne, a crown, it ends in glory; it is the sinner's folly to reproach a saint; it is just as if Shimei had reproached David, when he was going to be made king; it is a saint's wisdom to condemn a reproach; say as David, when he danced before the ark, I will yet be more vile (2 Samuel 6:22). If to pray and hear, and serve my God be to be vile, I will yet be more vile: This is my excellency, my glory; I am doing now that which will bring me to a kingdom: O think it no disgrace to be a Christian. I speak it chiefly to you who are entering upon the ways of God; perhaps you may meet with such as will reproach and censure you; bind their reproaches as a crown about your head, despise their censure as much as their praise; remember, there is a kingdom entailed upon godliness. Sin draws hell after it, grace draws a crown after it.

4. See here that which may make the people of God long for death; then they shall enter upon their kingdom. Indeed the wicked may fear death; it will not lead them to a kingdom, but a prison; hell is the jail where they must lie rotting forever with the devil and his angels. To every christless person death is the king of terror; but the godly may long for death, it will prefer them to a kingdom. When Scipio's father had told him of that glory the soul should be invested with in a state of immortality; why then says Scipio, do I tarry thus long upon the earth? Why do I not hasten to die? Believers are not perfectly happy till death. When Croesus asked Solon who he thought happy? He told him one Tellus, a man

that was dead; a Christian at death shall be completely installed into his honor; the anointing oil shall be poured on him, and the crown royal set upon his head. The Thracians in their funerals used music. The heathens had their funeral banquet, because of that felicity which they supposed the parties deceased were entered into; The saints are now heirs of the kingdom (James 2:5). Does not the heir desire to be crowned?

Truly, there is enough to wean us, and make us willing to be gone from here. The saints eat ashes like bread, they are here in a suffering condition. Psalm 141:7: Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cuts and cleaves wood upon the earth. When a man hews, and cuts a tree, the chips fly up and down, here and there a chip: so here a saint wounded, there a saint massacred; our bones fly like chips up and down; for your sake are we killed all the day long (Romans 8:36). But there is a kingdom coming, when the body is buried, the soul is crowned. Who would not be willing to sail in a storm if he were sure to be crowned as soon as he came ashore? How is it that the godly look so ghastly at the thoughts of death, as if they were rather going to their execution, than their coronation? Though we should be willing to stay here awhile to do service; yet we should with Saint Paul, desire to be dissolved and be with Christ. The day of a believer's dissolution is the day of his inauguration.

Containing a scrutiny, and trial whether we belong to this kingdom.

Use 2. But how shall we know that this glorious kingdom shall be settled upon us at death? 1. If God have set up his kingdom within us. Luke 17:21: The kingdom of God is within you; by the kingdom of God there is meant the kingdom of grace in the heart.

Grace may be compared to a kingdom, it sways the scepter, it gives out laws, there is the law of love; Grace beats down the devil's garisons, it brings the heart into a sweet subjection to Christ; Now is this kingdom of grace set up in your heart? Do you rule over your sins? Can you bind those kings in chains? Are you a king over your pride, passion, unbelief? Is the kingdom of God within you? While others aspire after earthly greatness, and labor for a kingdom without them, do you labor for a kingdom within you? Certainly if the kingdom of grace be in your heart, you shall have the kingdom of glory. If God's kingdom enters into you, you shall enter into his kingdom. But let not that man ever think to reign in glory, who lives a slave to his lusts.

If you are a believer, you shall go to this blessed Kingdom. James 2:5: Rich in faith, heirs of the Kingdom. Faith is an heroic act of the soul; it makes a holy adventure on God, by a promise; this is the crowning grace. Faith puts us into Christ, and our title to the Crown comes in by Christ. By faith we are born of God, and so we become children of the blood-royal. By faith our hearts are purified (Acts 15:9), and so we are made fit for a Kingdom; rich in faith, heirs of the Kingdom. Faith paves a causeway to heaven; believers die heirs to the Crown.

He that has a noble, kingly spirit, shall go to the heavenly Kingdom. Set your affection on things above (Colossians 3:2). Do you live in the world, above the world? The eagle does not catch flies; she soars aloft in the air. Do you pant after glory and immortality? Do you have a brave, majestic spirit, a heavenly ambition? Do you mind the favor of God, the peace of Zion, the salvation of your soul? Do you abhor what is sordid and below you? Alexander would not exercise at the Olympic games. Can you trample upon

all earthly things? Is heaven in your eye, and Christ in your heart, and the world under your feet? He who has such a kingly spirit, that looks no lower than a Crown, he shall dwell on high, and have his throne mounted far above all heavens.

A serious exhortation to Christians.

Use 3. Exhortation. And it has a double aspect; it looks, first, toward the wicked. Is there a Kingdom to be had, a Kingdom so enameled and bespangled with glory? Oh then do not by your folly make yourselves incapable of this preferment; do not for the satisfying a base lust forfeit a Kingdom. Do not drink away a Kingdom; do not for the lap of pleasure lose the Crown of life. If men before they committed a sin, would but sit down and rationally consider whether the present gain and sweetness in sin would make up for the loss of a Kingdom, I believe it would put them into a cold sweat, and give some check to their unbridled affections. Jacob took Esau by the heel. Look not upon the smiling face of sin, but take it by the heel; look at the end of it — it will deprive you of a Kingdom. And can anything make amends for that loss? Is it not madness, for the unfruitful works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11), to lose a Kingdom? How will the devil at the last day reproach and laugh at men that they should be so stupidly foolish as to forgo a Crown for a rattle! Like those Indians, who for pictures and glass beads will part with their gold. Surely it will much contribute to the vexation of the damned to think how foolishly they missed a Kingdom.

The exhortation looks toward the godly; and it exhorts to two things. First, is there a Kingdom in reversion? Then let this be a motive to duty; do all the service you can for God while you live; spend and be spent. The reward is honorable; the thoughts of a

Kingdom should add wings to prayer, and fire to zeal. What honor and dignity has been done to Mordecai? said King Ahasuerus (Esther 6:3). Inquire what has been done for God. What love have you shown to his Name? What zeal for his glory? Where is the head of that Goliath-lust you have slain for his sake? We should sometimes go aside into our closets and weep, to consider how little work we have done for God. What a vast disproportion there is between our service and our reward! What is all our weeping and fasting compared to a Kingdom? Improve all your interest for God; make seasons of grace, opportunities for service.

That you may act more vigorously for God, know and be assured: the more work you do, the more glory you shall have. Every saint shall have a Kingdom; but the more service any man does for God, the greater will be his Kingdom. There are degrees of glory, which I prove thus:

First, because there are degrees of torments in hell (Luke 20, last verse): They shall receive greater damnation. They who make religion a cloak for their sin shall have a hotter place in hell. Now if there are degrees of torment in hell, then by the rule of contraries there are degrees of glory in the Kingdom of heaven.

Second, seeing God in his free grace rewards men according to their works, therefore the more service they do, the greater shall their reward be. Revelation 22:12: Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his works shall be. He that has done more shall receive more; he whose pound gained ten was made ruler over ten cities (Luke 19:16). This may very much excite to excellence in religion. The more the lamp of your grace shines, the more you shall shine in the heavenly realm. Would you have your Crown brighter, your Kingdom larger, your

palm branches more flourishing? Be Christians of degrees; do much work in a little time. While you are laying out, God is laying up; the more glory you bring to God, the more glory you shall have from God.

Walk worthy of this Kingdom (1 Thessalonians 2:12): That you would walk worthy of God who has called you to his Kingdom. Live as kings; let the majesty of holiness appear in your faces. Those who looked on Stephen saw his face as it had been the face of an angel (Acts 6:15). A kind of angelic brightness was seen in his face. When we shine in zeal, humility, and gravity, this beautifies and honors us in the eyes of others, and makes us look as those who are heirs apparent to a Crown.

Use 4. Here is comfort to the people of God in case of poverty; God has provided them a Kingdom. Theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. A child of God is often so low in the world that he has not a foot of land to inherit; he is poor in purse, as well as poor in spirit. But here is a fountain of consolation opened; the poorest saint who has lost all his golden fleece is heir to a Kingdom — a Kingdom which excels all the Kingdoms and Principalities of the world, more than pearl or diamond excels brass; it is peerless and endless. The hope of a Kingdom, says Basil, should carry a Christian with courage and cheerfulness through all his afflictions. And it is a saying of Luther: The sea of God's mercy overflowing in spiritual blessings should drown all the sufferings of this life. What though you go now in rags? You shall have your white robes. What though you are fed as Daniel with plain fare? You shall feast when you come into the Kingdom. Here you drink the water of tears, but shortly you shall drink the wine of Paradise. Be comforted with the thoughts of a Kingdom.

CHAPTER 6



Matthew 5:4: Blessed are they that mourn.

Here are eight steps leading to true blessedness; they may be compared to Jacob's Ladder, the top of which reached to heaven. We have already gone over one step, and now let us proceed to the second. Blessed are they that mourn. We must go through the valley of tears to Paradise. Mourning would be a sad and unpleasant subject to treat on, were it not that it has blessedness going before, and comfort coming after. Mourning is put here for repentance; it implies both sorrow, which is the cloud, and tears, which are the rain. In this golden shower, God comes down to us. The words fall into two parts. First, an assertion, that mourners are blessed persons. Second, a reason: because they shall be comforted. I begin with the first — the assertion: mourners are blessed persons. Luke 6:21: Blessed are you that weep now. Though the saints' tears are bitter tears, yet they are blessed tears.

Question: But will all mourning entitle a man to blessedness?

Answer: No; there is a twofold mourning which is far from making one blessed.

There is a carnal mourning. There is a diabolical mourning.

First, there is a carnal mourning, when we lament outward losses. Matthew 2:18: In Rama there was a voice heard, lamentation and weeping, and great mourning; Rachel weeping for her children. There are many such tears shed; many can mourn over a dead child, who cannot mourn over a crucified Savior. Worldly sorrow hastens our funerals. 2 Corinthians 7:10: The sorrow of the world works death.

Second, there is a diabolical mourning, and that is twofold.

First, when a man mourns that he cannot satisfy his impure lust; this is like the devil, whose greatest torture is that he can be no more wicked. Thus Amnon mourned and was sick, until he had defiled his sister Tamar (2 Samuel 13:2). Thus Ahab mourned for Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21:4): He laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread. This was a devilish mourning.

Second, when men are sorry for the good which they have done. Pharaoh grieved that he had let the children of Israel go (Exodus 14:5). Many are so devilish that they are troubled they have prayed so much and heard so many sermons; they repent of their repentance. But if we repent of the good which is past, God will not repent of the evil which is to come.

Showing the object of holy mourning.

To illustrate this point of holy mourning, I shall show you what is the full object of it. There are two objects of spiritual mourning: sin and misery.

First, sin; and that twofold: our own sin, and the sin of others.

First, our own sin; sin must have tears. Nothing is worthy of weeping except sin. While we carry the fire of sin about us, we must carry the water of tears to quench it. Ezekiel 7:16. They are not blessed (says Chrysostom) who mourn for the dead, but who mourn for sin. And indeed good reason we mourn for sin, if we consider: first, the guilt of sin, which binds us over to wrath. Will not a guilty person weep, who is to be bound over to the court? Every sinner is to be tried for his life, and is sure to be condemned, if mercy does not become an advocate for him. Second, the pollution of sin; sin is a plague-spot, and will you not labor to wash away this spot with your tears? Sin makes a man worse than a toad or serpent; the serpent has nothing but what God has put into it, and poison is medicinal. But the sinner has that which the devil has put into him (Acts 5:3): Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? What a strange transformation sin has made! The soul which was once of an azure brightness, sin has made of a dark color. We have in our hearts the seed of the unpardonable sin; we have the seeds of all those sins for which the damned are now tormented; and shall we not mourn? He that mourns not surely has lost the use of his reason. But not every mourning for sin is sufficient to entitle a man to blessedness. I shall show:

What is not the right gospel-mourning for sin. What is the right gospel-mourning for sin.

What is not the right gospel-mourning for sin; there is a five-fold mourning which is false and spurious.

First, a despairing kind of mourning; such was Judas's mourning. He saw his sin, he was sorry, he made confession, he justified Christ, he made restitution (Matthew 27). Judas, who is in hell, did more than many do today; he confessed his sin. He did not plead

necessity or good intentions, but he made an open acknowledgment of his sin: I have sinned. Judas made restitution; his conscience told him he came wickedly by the money. It was the price of blood, and he brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests (Matthew 27:3). But how many are there who invade the rights and possessions of others, but say not a word of restitution! Judas was more honest than they are. Well, wherein was Judas's sorrow blameworthy? It was a mourning joined with despair; he thought his wound broader than the plaster. He drowned himself in tears; his was not a repentance unto life, but rather unto death.

Second, a hypocritical mourning; the heart is very deceitful, it can betray as well by a tear as by a kiss. Saul looks like a mourner; as he was sometimes among the prophets (1 Samuel 10:12), so he seemed to be among the penitents (1 Samuel 15:25): And Saul said to Samuel, I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord. Saul played the hypocrite in his mourning; for first, he did not take shame to himself, but rather took honor to himself (verse 30): Honor me before the elders of the people. Second, he minimized and excused his sin that it might appear lesser; he laid his sin upon the people (verse 24): Because I feared the people; they would have me take the spoil, and I dared do no other. A true mourner labors to draw out sin in its true colors, and accent it with all its killing aggravations, that he may be deeply humbled before the Lord (Ezra 9:6): Our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespasses are grown up to heaven. The true penitent labors to make the worst of his sin; Saul labors to make the best of his sin — like a patient who makes the best of his

disease, lest the physician should prescribe him too sharp a remedy. How easy it is for a man to put a cheat upon his own soul, and by hypocrisy to weep himself into hell!

Third, a forced mourning; when tears are pumped out by God's judgments. These are like the tears of a man who has the stone, or who lies upon the rack. Such was Cain's mourning (Genesis 4:13): My punishment is greater than I can bear. His punishment troubled him more than his sin. To mourn only for fear of hell is like a thief who weeps for the penalty rather than the offense. The tears of the wicked are forced by the fire of affliction.

Fourth, an outward mourning; when sorrow lies only on the surface. They disfigure their faces (Matthew 6:16). The eye is tender, but the heart is hard. Such was Ahab's mourning (1 Kings 21:27): He tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his flesh, and went softly. His clothes were torn, but his heart was not torn; he had sackcloth, but no sorrow. He hung down his head like a bulrush, but his heart was like an adamant. There are many who may be compared to weeping marbles — they are both watery and flinty.

Fifth, a vain and fruitless mourning; some will shed a few tears, but are as bad as ever. They will cheat, and be unclean. Such a kind of mourning there is in hell; the damned weep, but they blaspheme.

What is the right gospel-mourning?

Answer: That mourning which will entitle a man to blessedness has these qualifications.

First, it is spontaneous and free; it must come as water out of a spring, not as fire out of a flint. Tears for sin must be like the myrrh which drops from the tree freely without cutting or forcing. Mary Magdalene's repentance was voluntary; she stood weeping (Luke 7). She came to Christ with ointment in her hand, with love in her heart, with tears in her eyes. God is for a freewill offering; he does not love to be forced.

Second, gospel-mourning is spiritual; that is, when we mourn for sin more than for suffering. Pharaoh said, Take away the plague; he never thought of the plague of his heart. A sinner mourns because judgment follows at the heels of sin. But David cries out, My sin is ever before me (Psalm 51). God had threatened that the sword should ride in circuit in his family; but David does not say, the sword is ever before me, but, my sin is ever before me. The offense against God troubled him; he grieved more for the treason than the bloody axe. Thus the penitent prodigal (Luke 15:21): I have sinned against heaven and before you. He does not say, I am almost starved among the husks, but, I have offended my father. In particular, our mourning for sin, if it is spiritual, must be under this threefold notion.

First, we must mourn for sin as it is an act of hostility and enmity. Sin does not only make us unlike God, but contrary to God (Leviticus 26:40): They have walked contrary to me. Sin affronts and resists the Holy Ghost (Acts 7:51). Sin is contrary to God's nature; God is holy; sin is an impure thing. Sin is contrary to his will; if God is of one mind, sin is of another; sin does all it can to spite God. The Hebrew word for sin signifies rebellion; a sinner rebels. Now when we mourn for sin as it is walking contrary to heaven, this is a gospel-mourning; nature will not bear contraries.

Second, we must mourn for sin as it is a piece of the highest ingratitude; it is a kicking against the breasts of mercy. God sends his Son to redeem us, his Spirit to comfort us; we sin against the blood of Christ, the grace of the Spirit — and shall we not mourn? We complain of the unkindness of others, and shall we not lay to heart our own unkindness against God? Caesar took it unkindly that his son Brutus should stab him — and you, my son? May not the Lord say to us, These wounds I have received in the house of my friends (Zechariah 13:6)! Israel took their jewels and earrings and made a golden calf of them; the sinner takes the jewels of God's mercies and makes use of them to sin. Ingratitude dyes a sin deep; hence they are called crimson sins (Isaiah 1:18). Sins against gospel-love are worse in some sense than the sins of the devils, for they never had an offer of grace tendered to them. Now when we mourn for sin as it has its accent of ingratitude upon it, this is an evangelical mourning.

Third, we must mourn for sin as it is a privation; it keeps good things from us; it hinders our communion with God. Mary wept for Christ's absence (John 20:13): They have taken away my Lord. So our sins have taken away our Lord; they have deprived us of his sweet presence. Will not he grieve who has lost a rich jewel? When we mourn for sin under this notion, as it makes the Sun of Righteousness withdraw from our horizon — when we mourn not so much that peace is gone and trading is gone, but God is gone (Song of Solomon 5:6): My beloved had withdrawn himself. This is a holy mourning. The mourning for the loss of God's favor is the best way to regain his favor. If you have lost a friend, all your weeping will not fetch him again; but if you have lost God's presence, your mourning will bring your God again.

Third, gospel-mourning sends the soul to God. When the prodigal son repented, he went to his father (Luke 15:18): I will arise and go to my father. Jacob wept and prayed (Hosea 12:3). The people of Israel wept and offered sacrifice (Judges 2:5). Gospel-mourning puts a man upon duty; the reason is, because in true sorrow there is a mixture of hope, and hope puts the soul upon the use of means. That mourning which, like the flaming sword, keeps the soul from approaching to God and beats it off from duty, is a sinful mourning — it is a sorrow hatched in hell. Such was Saul's grief, which drove him to the witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28:7). Evangelical mourning is a spur to prayer; the child who weeps for offending his father goes into his presence, and will not leave until his father is reconciled to him. Absalom could not be quiet until he had seen the king's face (2 Samuel 14:32-33).

Fourth, gospel-mourning is for sin in particular. It is with a true penitent as it is with a wounded man — he comes to the surgeon and shows him all his wounds. So a true penitent bewails all his particular sins (Judges 10:10): we have served the Baals. David lays his finger upon the sore and points to that very sin that troubled him (Psalm 51:4): I have done this evil. A wicked man will say he is a sinner; but a child of God says, I have done this evil. Peter wept for that particular sin of denying Christ. Clement of Alexandria says he never heard a cock crow but he fell a-weeping. There must be a particular repentance before we have a general pardon.

Fifth, gospel-tears must drop from the eye of faith (Mark 9:24): the father of the child cried out with tears, Lord, I believe. Our disease must make us mourn; but when we look up to our physician who has made a plaster of his own blood, we must not

mourn without hope. Though our tears drop to the earth, our faith must reach heaven. After the greatest rain, faith must appear as the rainbow in the cloud. The tears of faith are bottled as precious wine (Psalm 56:8).

Sixth, gospel-mourning is joined with self-loathing; the sinner admires himself, the penitent loathes himself. Ezekiel 20:42: you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils. A true penitent is troubled not only for the shameful consequence of sin, but the loathsome nature of sin — not only the sting of sin, but the deformed face. How did the leper loathe himself (Leviticus 13:45)? The Hebrew doctors say the leper pronounced unclean was to put a covering on his upper lip, both as a mourner and in token of shame. The true mourner cries out, O these impure eyes, this heart which is a conclave of wickedness! he not only leaves sin, but loathes sin; he that is fallen in the dirt, loathes himself.

Seventh, gospel-mourning must be purifying; our tears must make us more holy; we must so weep for sin as to weep out sin; our tears must drown our sins. We must not only mourn, but turn (Joel 2:12): turn to me with weeping. What is it to have a watery eye and a whorish heart? it is foolish to say it is day when the air is full of darkness; so to say you repent when you draw dark shadows in your life. It is an excellent saying of Augustine: he truly bewails the sins he has committed who never commits the sins he has bewailed. True mourning is like the water of jealousy — it makes the thigh of sin to rot (Numbers 5:12). Psalm 74:14: you broke the heads of the dragons in the waters; the heads of our sins, these dragons, are broken in the waters of true repentance. True tears are cleansing; they are like a flood that carries away all the rubbish of our sins. The waters of holy mourning are like the river Jordan,

in which Naaman washed and was cleansed of his leprosy. It is reported there is a river in Sicily where if the blackest sheep are bathed they become white; so though our sins be as scarlet, yet by washing in this river of repentance they become white as snow. Naturalists say of the serpent, before it goes to drink it vomits out its poison; in this be wise as serpents — before you think to drink down the sweet cordials of the promises, cast up the poison that lies at your heart; do not only mourn for sin, but break from sin.

Eighth, gospel-mourning must be joined with hatred of sin (2 Corinthians 7:11): what indignation? We must not only abstain from sin, but abhor sin; the dove hates the least feather of the hawk; a true mourner hates the least motion to sin — a true mourner is a sin-hater. Amnon hated Tamar more than ever he loved her (2 Samuel 13:5). To be a sin-hater implies two things: first, to look upon sin as the most deadly evil, a complicated evil that looks more ghastly than death or hell; second, to be implacably incensed against it. A sin-hater will never admit of any terms of peace; the war between him and sin is like the war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam (1 Kings 14:30): there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days. Anger may be reconciled; hatred cannot. True mourning begins in the love of God and ends in the hatred of sin.

Ninth, gospel-mourning in some cases is joined with restitution; it is as well a sin to violate the name as the chastity of another. If we have eclipsed the good name of others, we are bound to ask them forgiveness; if we have wronged them in their estate by unjust or fraudulent dealing, we must make them some compensation. Thus Zacchaeus (Luke 19:8): if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold, according to

that law (Exodus 22:1). Saint James bids us not only look to the heart, but the hand (James 4:8): cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts. If you have wronged another, cleanse your hands by restitution; be assured, without restitution, no remission.

Tenth, gospel-mourning must be a speedy mourning; we must take heed of adjourning our repentance and putting it off until death. As David said: I will pay my vows now (Psalm 116:18); so should a Christian say: I will mourn for sin now. Luke 6:21: blessed are you that weep now. As Popilius the Roman legate, when he was sent to Antiochus the king, made a circle round about the king and bade him make his answer before he went out of that circle — so God has encircled us in the compass of a little time and charges us presently to bewail our sins. Acts 17:30: now God calls everywhere to repent; we know not whether we may have another day granted us. Oh let us not put off our mourning for sin till the making of our will; do not think holy mourning is only a deathbed duty. You may seek the blessing with tears as Esau when it is too late. *Quamdiu cras?* says Augustine — how long shall I say I will repent tomorrow? why not at this instant? *Mora trahit periculum:* Caesar's deferring to read his letter before he went to the Senate house cost him his life. The true mourner makes haste to meet an angry God, as Jacob did his brother; and the present he sends before is the sacrifice of tears.

Eleventh, gospel-mourning for sin is constant; there are some who at a sermon will shed a few tears, but this landflood is soon dried up; the hypocrite's sorrow is like a vein opened and presently stopped. The Hebrew word for eye signifies also a fountain, to show that the eye must run like a fountain for sin and not cease. But it must not be like the Libyan fountain of the sun which the

ancients speak of — in the morning the water is hot, at midday cold; the waters of repentance must not overflow with more heat in the morning at the first hearing of the gospel, and at midday in the midst of health and prosperity grow cold and be ready to freeze. No, it must be *quotidianus planctus* — a daily weeping; as Paul said (1 Corinthians 15:31): I die daily; so should a Christian say: I mourn daily. Therefore keep open an issue of godly sorrow, and be sure it be not stopped till death (Lamentations 2:18): let not the apple of your eye cease. It is reported of holy Mr. Bradford that scarce a day passed him wherein he did not shed some tears for sin. Daily mourning is a good antidote against backsliding. I have read of one that had an epilepsy, or falling sickness, and being dipped in sea-water was cured; the washing of our souls daily in the brinish waters of repentance is the best way both to prevent and cure falling into relapses.

Even God's own children must mourn after pardon; for God in pardoning does not pardon at one instant sins past and future, but as repentance is renewed, so pardon is renewed. Should God by one act pardon sins future as well as past, this would make void part of Christ's office; what need were there of his intercession if sin should be pardoned before it be committed? There are sins in the godly of daily incursion which must be mourned for; though sin be pardoned, still it rebels; though it be covered, it is not cured (Romans 7:23). There is that in the best Christian which is contrary to God; there is that in him which deserves hell — and shall he not mourn? A ship that is always leaking must have the water continually pumped out; while the soul leaks by sin, we must be still pumping at the leak by repentance. Think not, O Christian, that your sins are washed away only by Christ's blood, but by water

and blood. The brazen laver (Exodus 30:18) that the people of Israel were to wash in might be a fit emblem of this spiritual laver — tears and blood. And when holy mourning is thus qualified, this is that sorrowing after a godly sort (2 Corinthians 7:11) which makes a Christian eternally blessed.

Showing that we must mourn for the sins of others.

As we must mourn for our own sins, so we must lay to heart the sins of others. The poets feign that Biblis was turned into a fountain; thus we should wish with Jeremiah that our eyes were a fountain of tears, that we might weep day and night for the iniquity of the times. Our blessed Savior mourned for the sins of the Jews (Mark 3:5), being grieved *super callo* — for the hardness or brawniness of their hearts. And holy David, looking upon the sins of the wicked, his heart was turned into a spring and his eyes into rivers (Psalm 119:136): rivers of tears run down my eyes, because they keep not your law. Lot's righteous soul was vexed with the unclean conversation of the wicked (2 Peter 2:7); Lot took the sins of Sodom and made spears of them to pierce his own soul. Cyprian says that in the primitive times, when a virgin who had vowed herself to religion had defiled her chastity, shame and grief filled the whole face of the congregation.

Have we not cause to mourn for the sins of others? The whole axletree of the nation is ready to break under the weight of sin; what an inundation of wickedness is there among us! Mourn for the hypocrisy of the times; Jehu said, come see my zeal for the Lord — but it was zeal for the throne. This is the hypocrisy of some: they entitle God to whatever they do; they make bold with God to use his name to their wickedness, as if a thief should pretend the king's warrant for his robbery. Micah 3:11: they build up

Zion with blood, the heads thereof judge for reward; yet will they lean upon the Lord and say, is not the Lord among us? Many with a religious kiss smite the gospel under the fifth rib; could not Ahab be content to kill and take possession, but must he usher it in with religion, and make fasting a preface to his murder (1 Kings 21:12)? The white devil is worst; a burning torch in the hand of a ghost is most affrighting; to hear the name of God in the mouths of scandalous hypocrites is enough to affright others from the profession of religion.

Mourn for the errors and blasphemies of the nation; there is now a free trade of error; toleration gives men a patent to sin. What cursed opinion that has been long ago buried in the church, but is now dug out of the grave, and by some worshipped! England has grown as wanton in her religion as she is antic in her fashions; the Jesuits' exchange is open, and every one almost is for an opinion of the newest cut. Did men's faces alter as fast as their judgments, we should not know them.

Mourn for covenant-violation; this sin is a flying scroll against England; breach of covenant is spiritual harlotry; and for this God may name us Lo-ammi and give us a bill of divorce.

Mourn for the pride of the nation — our condition is low, but our hearts are high. Mourn for the profaneness of the land; England is like that man in the gospel (Luke 4:33) who had a spirit of an unclean devil. Mourn for the removing of landmarks (Deuteronomy 27:17); mourn for the contempt offered to magistracy, the spitting in the face of authority. Mourn that there are so few mourners; surely if we mourn not for the sins of others, it is to

be feared we are not sensible of our own sins. God looks upon us as guilty of those sins in others which we do not lament; our tears may help to quench God's wrath.

That we must mourn for the miseries of the Church.

The saints are members of the body mystical as well as political, therefore they must be sensible of the injuries of God's Church. Psalm 137:1: we wept when we remembered Zion. The people of Israel, being debarred from the place of public worship, sat by the rivers weeping. They laid aside all their musical instruments: we hanged our harps upon the willows. We were as far from joy as those willows were from fruit. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? We were fitter to weep than to sing.

When we consider the miseries of many Christians in Germany, the Duchy of Savoy, and other foreign parts, who have been driven from their habitations because they would not desert the Protestant and embrace the Roman religion — when instead of a Bible, a crucifix; instead of prayers, the mass — when we consider these things, our eyes should run down. Mourn to see God's Church a bleeding vine. Mourn to see Christ's spouse with garments rolled in blood.

We hear England's passing bell; let us shed some tears over dying England. Let us bewail our internal divisions — England's divisions have been fatal, they brought in the Saxons, Danes, Normans. If a kingdom divided cannot stand, how do we stand but by a miracle of free grace? Truth is fallen and peace is fled; England's fine coat of peace is torn, and like Joseph's coat, dipped in blood. Peace is the glory of a nation; this top being cut off, we may truly say the body of the whole nation begins to wither.

Mourn for the oppressions of England; the people of this land have laid out their money only to buy mourning.

Showing the seasons of holy mourning.

Though we must always keep open the issue of godly sorrow, yet there are some seasons wherein our tears should overflow, as the water sometimes rises higher. There are three special seasons of extraordinary mourning, when it should be as it were high water in the soul.

First, when there are *indicia irae* — tokens of God's wrath breaking forth in the nation. England has been under God's black rod these many years; the Lord has drawn the sword, and it is not yet put up. O that our tears may blunt the edge of this sword; when it is a time of treading down, now is a time of breaking up the fallow ground of our hearts. Isaiah 22:4-5: therefore said I, look away from me, I will weep bitterly, for it is a day of treading down. Joel 2:2, 13: a day of darkness and of gloominess — therefore turn you even to me with weeping and with mourning. Rain follows thunder; when God thunders in a nation by his judgments, now the showers of tears must distil. When God smites upon our back, we must smite upon our thigh (Jeremiah 31:19). When God seems to stand upon the threshold of the temple, as if he were ready to take his wings and fly, then is a time to lie weeping between the porch and the altar (Ezekiel 10:4). If the Lord seems to be packing up and carrying away his gospel, it is now high time to mourn, that by our tears possibly his repentings may be kindled.

Second, before the performing of solemn duties of God's worship, as fasting or receiving the Lord's Supper. Christian, are you to seek God in an extraordinary manner? Seek him sorrowing

(Luke 2:48). Would you have the smiles of God's face, the kisses of his lips? Set open all the springs of mourning, and then God will draw near to you in an ordinance, and say, Here I am (Isaiah 58:9). When Jacob wept, then he found God in Bethel (Hosea 12:4); he named the place Peniel, for (said he) I have seen God face to face (Genesis 32:30). Give Christ the wine of your tears to drink, and in the Sacrament he will give you the wine of his blood to drink.

Third, after scandalous relapses; though I will not say with Donatus that there is no mercy for sins of relapse, yet I say there is no mercy without bitter mourning. Scandalous sins reflect dishonor upon religion (2 Samuel 12:14); therefore now our cheeks should be covered with blushing, and our eyes bedewed with tears. Peter after his denying Christ wept bitterly. Christian, has God given you over to any enormous sin, as a just reward of your pride and security? Go into the weeping bath. Sins of infirmity injure the soul, but scandalous sins wound the gospel. Lesser sins grieve the Spirit, but greater sins vex the Spirit (Isaiah 63:9); and if that blessed Dove weeps, shall not we weep? When the air is dark, then the dew falls; when we have by scandalous sin darkened the luster of the gospel, now is the time for the dew of holy tears to fall from our eyes.

Setting forth the degrees of mourning.

Next to the seasons of mourning, let us consider the degree of it; the mourning for sin must be a very great mourning. The Greek word imports a great sorrow, such as is seen at the funeral of a dear friend. Zechariah 12:10: they shall look on me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one that mourns for his only son. The sorrow for an only child is very great; such must

be the sorrow for sin. Verse 11: in that day there shall be great mourning, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. In that valley Josiah, that famous and pious prince, was cut off by an untimely death, at whose funeral there was bitter lamentation. Thus bitterly must we bewail — not the death, but the life — of our sins. Now to set forth the graduation of sorrow:

First, our mourning for sin must be so great as to exceed all other grief. Eli's mourning for the ark swallowed up the loss of his two children. Spiritual grief must outweigh all other; we should mourn more for sin than for the loss of friends or estate.

Second, we should endeavor to have our sorrow rise up to the same height and proportion as our sin. Manasseh was a great sinner and a great mourner (2 Chronicles 33:12): he humbled himself greatly. Manasseh made the streets run with blood, and he made the prison in Babylon run with tears. Peter wept bitterly. A true mourner labors that his repentance may be as eminent as his sin is transcendent.

Showing the opposite to holy mourning.

Having shown the nature of mourning, I shall next show what is the opposite to holy mourning. The opposite to mourning is hardness of heart, which in Scripture is called a heart of stone (Ezekiel 36). A heart of stone is far from mourning and relenting; this heart of stone is known by two symptoms.

First, insensibility: a stone is not sensible of anything; lay weight upon it, grind it to powder, it does not feel. So it is with a hard heart — it is insensible of sin or wrath. The stone in the kidneys is felt, but not the stone in the heart. Ephesians 4:19: Who being past feeling.

Second, a heart of stone is known by its inflexibility: a stone will not bend. What is hard does not yield to touch; so it is with a hard heart — it will not comply with God's command, it will not stoop to Christ's scepter. A heart of stone will sooner break by death than bend by repentance. It is so far from yielding to God that, like the anvil, it beats back the hammer. It resists the Holy Ghost (Acts 7:51).

Christians, if you would be spiritual mourners, take heed of this stone of the heart. Hebrews 3:7: Harden not your hearts. A stony heart is the worst heart; if it were bronze, it might be melted in the furnace; if iron, it might be bowed with the hammer. But a stony heart is such that only the arm of God can break, and the blood of God can soften. The misery of a hard heart is threefold. First, a hard heart is void of all grace; while the wax is hard, it will not take the impression of the seal. The heart while it is hard will not take the stamp of grace; it must first be made tender and melting. The plow of the Word will not go upon a hard heart. Second, a hard heart is good for nothing but to make fuel for hell-fire. Romans 2:5: After your hardness of heart you treasure up wrath. Hell is full of hard hearts; there is not one soft heart there; there is weeping there, but no softness. We read of vessels fitted for destruction (Romans 9:22). Impenitency fits these vessels for hell, and makes them like dry wood, which is fit to burn. Third, hardness of heart makes a man's condition worse than all his other sins besides. If one is guilty of great sins, yet if he can mourn, there is hope. Repentance unravels sin, and makes sin not to be. But hardness of heart binds guilt fast upon the soul; it seals a man under wrath. It is not the heinousness of sin, but hardness of heart that

damns. This makes the sin against the Holy Ghost incapable of mercy, because the sinner who has committed it is incapable of repentance.

CHAPTER 7



Use 1. This doctrine draws up a charge against several sorts. Reproof.

First, those who think themselves good Christians, yet have not learned this art of holy mourning. Luther calls mourning a rare herb. Men have tears to shed for other things, but have none to spare for their sins. There are many murmurers, but few mourners. Most are like the stony ground, which wanted moisture (Matthew 13). We have many cry out of hard times, but are not sensible of hard hearts. Hot and dry is the worst condition of the body; surely to be hot in sin, and to be so dry as to have no tears, is the worst condition of the soul. How many are like Gideon's dry fleece, and like the mountains of Gilboa — there is no dew upon them. Did Christ bleed for sin, and can you not weep? If God's bottle is not filled with tears, his vial will be filled with wrath. We have many sinners in Zion, but few mourners in Zion. It is with most people as with a man on the top of a mast: the winds blow, and the waves beat, and the ship is in danger of shipwreck, and he is fast asleep. So when the waves of sin have even covered men, and the stormy wind of God's wrath blows and is ready to blow them into hell, yet they are asleep in security.

Second, it reproves those who, instead of weeping for sin, spend their days in mirth and jollity. Instead of mourners, we have those who revel. They take the timbrel and harp; they spend their days in wealth (Job 21:13). They do not mourn in soul, but indulge the flesh. They live as Epicureans, and die as atheists. James bids us turn our laughter to mourning (James 4:9), but they turn their mourning to laughter. Samson was brought forth to make the Philistines sport (Judges 16:26); the jovial sinner makes the devil sport. It is a saying of Theophylact: It is one of the worst sights to see a sinner go laughing to hell. How unseasonable it is to take the harp and viol when God is taking the sword! Ezekiel 21:9-10: A sword, a sword is sharpened, and also polished; should we then make mirth? This is a sin that enrages God. Isaiah 22:12-13: In that day did the Lord of Hosts call to weeping and to mourning, and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine. And it was revealed in my ears by the Lord of Hosts: Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you until you die, says the Lord God of Hosts. That is, this your sin shall not be done away by any expiatory sacrifice, but vengeance shall pursue you forever.

Third, it reproves those who, instead of mourning for sin, rejoice in sin. Proverbs 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:12: Who take pleasure in iniquity. Wicked men are worse in this sense than the damned in hell; for the damned take little pleasure in their sins. There are some so impudently profane that they will make themselves and others merry with their sins. Sin is a soul-sickness (Luke 5:31). Will a man make merry with his disease? Ah, wretch — did Christ bleed for sin, and do you laugh at sin? Is that your mirth which grieves the Spirit? Is it a time for a man to crack jokes

when he is upon the scaffold and his head is to be struck off? You that laugh at sin now — the time is coming when God will laugh at your calamity (Proverbs 1:26).

Fourth, it reproves those who cry down mourning for sin; they are like the Philistines who stopped the wells (Genesis 26:15). These would stop the wells of godly sorrow. Antinomians say this is a legal doctrine; but Christ here preaches it: Blessed are they that mourn. And the apostles preached it (Mark 6:11): And they went out and preached that men should repent. Holy sincerity will put us upon mourning for sin; he that has the heart of a child cannot but weep for his unkindness against God. Mourning for sin is the very fruit and product of the Spirit of grace (Zechariah 12:10). Such as cry down repentance cry down the Spirit of grace. Mourning for sin is the only way to keep wrath off from us. Such as would break this pillar go about to pull down the vengeance of God upon the land. To all such, I say as Peter said to Simon Magus (Acts 8:22): Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. Repent that you have cried down repentance.

CHAPTER 8



Motives to holy mourning.

Use 2. Let me exhort Christians to holy mourning. I now persuade such a mourning as will prepare the soul for blessedness. Oh that our hearts were spiritual alembics, distilling the water of holy tears! Christ's doves weep. Ezekiel 7:16: They that escape shall be like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity. There are several divine motives to holy mourning.

First, tears cannot be put to a better use. If you weep for outward losses, you lose your tears; it is like a shower upon a rock, which does no good. But tears for sin are blessed tears; blessed are they that mourn. These poison our corruptions; salt water kills the worms. The briny water of repenting tears will help to kill that worm of sin which would gnaw the conscience.

Second, gospel-mourning is an evidence of grace. Zechariah 12:10: I will pour upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace, and they shall mourn. The Holy Ghost descended on Christ like a dove (Matthew 3). The dove is a weeping creature; where there is a dove-like weeping, it is a good sign the Spirit of God has descended there. Weeping for sin is a

sign of the new birth; as soon as the child is born, it weeps. Exodus 2:6: And behold, the baby wept. To weep sincerely for sin is a good sign we are born of God. Mourning shows a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26). A stone will not melt; when the heart is in a melting frame, it is a sign the heart of stone has been taken away.

Third, the preciousness of tears. Tears dropping from a mournful, penitent eye are like water dropping from roses — very sweet and precious to God. A fountain in the garden makes it pleasant; that heart is most delightful to God which has a fountain of sorrow running in it. Mary stood at Christ's feet weeping (Luke 7:38). Her tears were more fragrant and sweet than her ointment. The incense when it is broken smells sweetest; when the heart is broken for sin, now our services give forth their sweetest perfume. There is joy in heaven over a sinner that repents (Luke 15:7). Bernard calls tears the wine of angels. God delights much in tears, else he would not keep a bottle for them (Psalm 56:8). One calls tears a fat sacrifice, which under the law was most acceptable (Leviticus 3:3). Jerome calls mourning a plank after shipwreck. Chrysostom calls tears a sponge to wipe off sin. Tears are powerful advocates for mercy. Eusebius says there was an altar at Athens on which they poured no other sacrifice but tears, as if the heathens thought there was no better way to pacify their angry gods than by weeping. Jacob wept, and had power over the angel (Hosea 12:4). Tears melt the heart of God. When a criminal comes weeping to the bar, this melts the judge's heart toward him. When a man comes weeping in prayer and strikes on his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner, this melts God's heart toward him. Prayer (says Jerome) inclines God to show mercy; tears compel him. God seals his pardons upon melting hearts. Tears, though they are silent, yet

have a voice (Psalm 6:8). Tears wash away sin; rain melts and washes away a ball of snow. Repenting tears wash away sin. That sin (says Ambrose) which cannot be defended by argument, may be washed away by tears.

Fourth, the sweetness of tears; mourning is the way to solid joy. The sweetest wine is that which comes out of the winepress of the eyes. The soul is never more enlarged than when it can weep. Closet tears are better than court music. When the heart is sad, weeping eases it by giving vent. The soul of a Christian is most eased when it can vent itself by holy mourning. Chrysostom observes, David who was the great mourner in Israel, was the sweet singer in Israel. Psalm 42:3: My tears were my food. On which place Ambrose gives this gloss: No food so sweet as tears. The tears of the penitent, says Bernard, are sweeter than all worldly joy. A Christian thinks himself sometimes in the suburbs of heaven when he can weep. When Hannah had wept, she went away and was no more sad. Sugar when it melts is sweetest; when a Christian melts in tears, now he has the sweetest joy. When the daughter of Pharaoh descended into the river, she found a baby there among the reeds. So when we descend into the river of repenting tears, we find the baby Jesus there, who shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. Well, therefore, might Chrysostom solemnly bless God for giving to us this laver of tears to wash in.

Fifth, a mourner for sin does not only good to himself, but to others; he helps to keep wrath off a land. As when Abraham was going to strike the blow, the angel stayed his hand (Genesis 22:12), so when God is going to destroy a nation, the mourner stays his hand. Tears in the child's eye sometimes move the angry father to spare the child. Penitential tears melt God's heart, and bind his

hand. Jeremiah, who was a weeping prophet, was a great intercessor. God said to him, Pray not for this people (Jeremiah 7:16) — as if the Lord said, Jeremiah, so powerful are your prayers and tears that if you pray, I cannot deny you. Tears have a mighty influence upon God. Surely God has some mourners in the land, or he had destroyed us before now.

Sixth, holy mourning is preventive medicine; our mourning for sin here will prevent mourning in hell. Hell is a place of weeping (Matthew 8:12); the damned mingle their drink with weeping. God is said to hold his bottle for our tears (Psalm 56:8). They who will not shed a bottle full of tears shall hereafter shed rivers of tears. Luke 6:25: Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn. You have sometimes seen sugar lying in a damp place dissolve to water; all the sugared joys of the wicked dissolve at last to the water of tears. Now tears will do us good; now it is seasonable weeping — it is like a shower in the spring. If we do not weep now, it will be too late. If we could hear the language of the damned, they are now cursing themselves that they did not weep soon enough. Is it not better to have our hell here than hereafter? Is it not better to shed repenting tears than despairing tears? He that weeps here is a blessed mourner; he that weeps in hell is a cursed mourner. The physician, by letting the patient's blood, prevents death; by opening a vein of godly sorrow, we prevent the death of our souls.

Seventh, there is no other way the gospel prescribes to blessedness but this: Blessed are they that mourn. This is the road that leads to the new Jerusalem. There may be several ways leading to a city, some going one way, some another; but there is only one way to heaven, and that is by Bethlehem — the house of weeping (Acts 26:20). Perhaps a man may think thus: If I cannot mourn for sin, I

will get to heaven some other way; I will go to church, I will give alms, I will lead a civil life. But I tell you there is only one way to blessedness, and that is through the valley of tears; if you go not this way you will miss paradise. Luke 14:3: I tell you no, except you repent, you shall all likewise perish. There are many lines leading to the center; but the heavenly center has only one line leading to it, and that is a tear dropping from the eye of faith. A man may have a disease in his body that twenty medicines will heal; sin is a disease of the soul which makes it sick unto death; now there is only one medicine that will heal, and that is the medicine of repentance.

Eighth, consider what need every Christian has to be conversant in holy mourning. A man may take medicine when he has no need of it; many go to the bath when they have no need — it is out of curiosity rather than necessity. But what need there is for every one to go into the weeping bath! Think what a sinner you have been; you have filled God's book with your debts, and what need you have to fill his bottle with your tears! You that have lived in secret sin — God enjoins you this penance: mourn for sin. But perhaps some may say, I have no need of mourning, for I have lived a very civil life. Go home and mourn because you are only civil; many a man's civility, being rested upon, has damned him. It is sad for men to be without repentance, but it is worse to need no repentance (Luke 15:7).

Ninth, tears are but finite; it is but a while that we shall weep. After a few showers that fall from our eyes we shall have a perpetual sunshine. In heaven the bottle of tears is stopped (Revelation 7, last verse): God shall wipe away all tears. When sin shall cease,

tears shall cease. Psalm 30:5: Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning. In the morning of the ascension, then shall all tears be wiped away.

Tenth, the benefit of holy mourning; the best of our commodities come by water.

First, mourning makes the soul fruitful in grace. When a shower falls, the herbs and plants grow. Isaiah 16:9: I will water you with my tears, O Heshbon. I may allude to it: tears water our graces, and make them flourish. Psalm 104:10: He sends his springs into the valleys; that is the reason the valleys flourish with grain, because the springs run there. Where the springs of sorrow run, there the heart bears a fruitful crop. Leah was tender-eyed — she had a watery eye, and was fruitful. The tender-eyed Christian usually brings more of the fruits of the Spirit; a weeping eye is the watering pot to water our graces.

Second, mourning fences us against the devil's temptations. Temptations are called fiery darts (Ephesians 6:16), because indeed they set the soul on fire. Temptations enrage anger, inflame lust. Now the waters of holy mourning quench these fiery darts; wet powder will not soon take fire. When the heart is wetted and moistened with sorrow, it will not so easily take the fire of temptation. Tears are the best engines and water-works to quench the devil's fire. And if there is so much profit and benefit in gospel-sorrow, then let every Christian wash his face every morning in the laver of tears.

Eleventh and lastly, to have a melting frame of spirit is a great sign of God's presence with us in an ordinance. It is a sign the Sun of Righteousness has risen upon us when our frozen hearts thaw

and melt for sin. It is a saying of Bernard: By this you may know whether you have met with God in a duty — when you find yourselves in a melting and mourning frame. We are apt to measure all by comfort; we think we never have God's presence in an ordinance unless we have joy. In this we are like Thomas: Unless (said he) I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, I will not believe (John 20:25). So we are apt to say, Unless we have inflows of comfort, we will not believe that we have found God in a duty. But if our hearts can melt sincerely in tears of love, this is a real sign that God has been with us. As Jacob said (Genesis 28:16): Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. So Christian, when your heart breaks for sin and dissolves into holy tears, God is in this duty, though you know it not.

All that has been said should make us spiritual mourners. Perhaps we have tried to mourn, and cannot. But as a man that has dug so many fathoms deep for water and can find none at last digs until he finds a spring, so though we have been digging for the water of tears and can find none, yet let us weigh all that has been said and set our hearts again to work. Perhaps at last we may say as Isaac's servants (Genesis 26:32): We have found water. When the herbs are pressed, the watery juice comes out; these eleven serious motives may press out tears from the eye.

Question: But some may say, My constitution is such that I cannot weep; I may as well try to squeeze a rock as think to get a tear.

Answer: But if you cannot weep for sin, can you grieve? Intellectual mourning is best; there may be sorrow where there are no tears. The vessel may be full, though it lacks an outlet. It is not so much the weeping eye God respects as the broken heart. Yet I

would be loath to stop their tears who can weep. God stood looking on Hezekiah's tears (Isaiah 38:5): I have seen your tears. David's tears made music in God's ears (Psalm 6:8): The Lord has heard the voice of my weeping. It is a sight fit for angels to behold: tears as pearls dropping from a penitent eye.

CHAPTER 9



Showing the hindrances of mourning.

Question: But what shall we do to get our heart into this mourning frame?

Answer: Do two things. First, take heed of those things which will stop these channels of mourning.

Second, put yourselves upon the use of all means that will help forward holy mourning.

Take heed of those things which will stop the current of tears; there are nine hindrances of mourning.

First, the love of sin; the love of sin is like a stone in the pipe, which hinders the current of water. The love of sin makes sin taste sweet, and this sweetness in sin bewitches the heart. Jerome says it is worse to love sin than to commit it. A man may be overtaken with sin (Galatians 6:1), and he that has stumbled upon sin un-awares will weep. But the love of sin hardens the heart, keeps the devil in possession. In true mourning there must be a grieving for sin; but how can a man grieve for that sin which his heart is in love with? Take heed of this sweet poison; the love of sin freezes the soul in impenitency.

Second, despair; despair affronts God, undervalues Christ's blood, damns the soul. Jeremiah 8:12: They said there is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart. This is the language of despair: There is no hope; I had as good follow my sins still, and be damned for something. Despair presents God to the soul as a judge clothed in the garments of vengeance (Isaiah 59:17). Judas's despair was in some sense worse than his treason. Despair destroys repentance; for the proper ground of repentance is mercy. Romans 2:4: The goodness of God leads you to repentance. But despair hides mercy out of sight, as the cloud covered the ark (Exodus 39). Take heed of this; despair is an irrational sin — there is no ground for it. The Lord shows mercy to thousands; why may you not be one of a thousand? The wings of God's mercy, like the wings of the cherubim, are stretched out to every humble penitent. Though you have been a great sinner, yet if you are a weeping sinner, there is a golden scepter of mercy held forth (Psalm 103:11). Despair locks up the soul in impenitency.

Third, a notion that this mourning will make us melancholy; we shall drown all our joy in our tears. But this is a mistake. Lose our joy? Tell me what joy there can be in a natural condition. What joy does sin afford? Is not sin compared to a wound and a bruise (Isaiah 1:6)? David had his broken bones (Psalm 51). Is there any comfort in having the bones out of joint? Does not sin breed a palpitation and trembling of heart (Deuteronomy 28:66)? Is it any joy for a man to be a terror to himself? Surely of the sinner's laughter it may be said, it is madness (Ecclesiastes 2:2). Whereas holy

mourning is the breeder of joy; it does not eclipse but refine our joy, and make it better. The prodigal dated his joy from the time of his repentance (Luke 15:24): Then they began to be merry.

Fourth, checking the motions of the Spirit; the Spirit sets us a-mourning — it causes all our spring tides (Psalm 87:7): All my springs are in you. Often we meet with gracious motions to prayer and repentance. Now when we stifle these motions, which is called a quenching of the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19), then we do, as it were, hinder the tide from coming in. When the dew falls, then the ground is wet; when the Spirit of God falls as dew in its influences upon the soul, then it is moistened with sorrow. But if the Spirit withdraw, the soul is like Gideon's dry fleece. A ship can as well sail without the wind, a bird can as well fly without wings, as we can mourn without the Spirit. Take heed of grieving the Spirit; do not drive away this sweet Dove from the ark of your soul. The Spirit is a tender and delicate thing; if it is grieved, it may say, I will come no more. And if it once withdraws, we cannot mourn.

Fifth, presumption of mercy. Who will take pains with his heart or mourn for sin, that thinks he may be saved at a cheaper rate? How many, spider-like, suck damnation out of the sweet flower of God's mercy! Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save sinners, is the occasion of many a man's perishing. One says: Christ died for me, he has done all; what need I pray or mourn? Many a bold sinner plucks death from the tree of life, and through presumption goes to hell by that ladder of Christ's blood by which others go to heaven. It is sad when the goodness of God, which should lead to repentance (Romans 2:4), leads to presumption. Sinner, do not hope yourself into hell; take heed of being damned upon a mistake. You say God is merciful, therefore you go on se-

curely in sin. But who is mercy for — the presuming sinner or the mourning sinner? Isaiah 55:7: Let the wicked forsake his way, and return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him. No mercy without forsaking sin, and no forsaking sin without mourning. If a king should say to a company of rebels, Whoever comes in and submits shall have mercy — those who stood out in rebellion could not claim the benefit of the pardon. God makes a proclamation of mercy to the mourner; but those who are not mourners have nothing to do with mercy. The mercy of God is like the ark, which none but the priests were to handle; none may touch this golden ark of mercy but such as are priests to God, and have offered up the sacrifice of tears (Revelation 1:6).

Sixth, a notion of the smallness of sin. Genesis 19:20: Is it not a little one? The devil holds the small end of the perspective glass to sinners. To fancy sin less than it is, is very dangerous. An opinion of the littleness of sin keeps us from the use of means. Who will be earnest for a physician that thinks his is but a trivial disease? And who will seek to God with a penitent heart for mercy, that thinks sin is but a slight thing? But to take off this wrong notion about sin, and that we may look upon it with watery eyes, consider:

Sin cannot be little, because it is against the Majesty of heaven; there is no treason small, it being against the King's person.

Second, every sin is sinful, therefore damnable. A penknife or stiletto makes but a little wound, but either of them may kill as well as a greater weapon. There is death and hell in every sin (Romans 6:23). What was it for Adam to pluck an apple? But that lost him his crown. It is not with sin as it is with diseases, some mortal and some not mortal; the least sin without repentance will be a lock and bolt to shut men out of heaven.

Third, view sin in the red glass of Christ's sufferings; the least sin cost the price of blood. Would you take a true prospect of sin, go to Golgotha. Jesus Christ was forced to veil his glory, and lose his joy, and pour out his soul an offering for the least sin. Read the greatness of your sin in the depth of Christ's wounds. Do not let Satan cast such a mist before your eyes that you cannot see sin in its true colors. Remember, not only great rivers fall into the sea, but little brooks; not only great sins carry men to hell, but lesser ones too.

Seventh, procrastination; or an opinion that it is too soon yet to tune the penitential string. When the lamp is almost out, the strength exhausted, and old age comes on, then mourning for sin will be in season, but it is too soon yet. That I may show how pernicious this opinion is, and that I may roll away this stone from the mouth of the well, so that the waters of repentance may be drawn forth, let me propose these four serious and weighty considerations.

First, do you know what it is to be in the state of nature, and will you say it is too soon to get out of it? You are under the wrath of God (John 3:36) — is it too soon to get from under the dropping of this vial? You are under the power of Satan (Acts 26:18) — is it too soon to get out of the enemy's quarters?

Second, men do not reason thus in other cases; they do not say, It is too soon to be rich. They will not put off getting the world until old age; no, here they take the first opportunity. Is it not too soon to be rich, and is it too soon to be good? Is not repentance a matter of the greatest consequence? Is it not more needful for men to lament their sin than to augment their estate?

Third, God's call to mourning looks for present response (Hebrews 3:7-8): Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. A general besieging a garrison summons it to surrender on such a day, or he will storm it. Such are God's summons to repentance: Today, if you will hear his voice. Sinners, when Satan has tempted you to any wickedness, you have not said, It is too soon, Satan, but have presently embraced his temptation. Have you not put the devil off — and will you put God off?

Fourth, it is a foolish thing to postpone mourning for sin. First, the longer you put off holy mourning, the harder you will find the work when you come to it. A bone that is out of joint is easier set at first than if you let it go longer. A disease taken in time is sooner cured than if it is left until it reaches a crisis. You may easily wade over the waters when they are low; if you wait until they have risen, they will be beyond your depth. Sinner, the more treasons you commit, the more you incense heaven against you, and the harder it will be to get your pardon. The longer you spin out the time of your sinning, the more work you make for repentance. Second, to postpone mourning for sin is folly in respect of the uncertainty of life. How does the procrastinating sinner know that he shall live to be old? What is your life? It is but a vapor (James 4:14). How soon may sickness arrest you, and death strike off your head? May not your sun set at noon? What imprudence it is to put off mourning for sin and to make a long work, when death is about to make a short work! Caesar's deferring to read the letter sent him was followed by his being stabbed in the Senate house. Third, it is folly to put off all until last in respect of the improbability of finding mercy. Though God gives you space to repent, he may deny you grace to repent. When God calls for mourning and you are deaf,

when you call for mercy, God may be silent (Proverbs 1:24, 28). Think of it seriously: God may take the later time to judge you in, because you did not take the former time to repent in. Fourth, to defer our solemn turning to God until old age or sickness is high imprudence, because these late acts of devotion are for the most part false and spurious. Though true mourning for sin is never too late, yet late mourning is seldom true. That repentance is seldom sincere which is gray-headed. It is debatable whether these autumn tears are not shed more out of fear of hell than love to God. The mariner in a storm throws his goods overboard, not because he does not love them, but because he is afraid they will sink the ship. When men fall to weeping late, and would cast their sins overboard, it is for the most part only for fear lest they should sink the ship and drown in hell. It is a great question whether the sickbed penitent does not mourn because he can keep his sins no longer. All of which considered may make men take heed of running their souls upon such a desperate hazard as to put all their work for heaven upon the last hour.

Eighth, delay of the execution of justice. Ecclesiastes 8:11: Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. God forbears punishing, therefore men forbear repenting. He does not smite upon their back by correction, therefore they do not smite upon their thigh by humiliation (Jeremiah 31:19). The sinner thinks thus: God has spared me all this while; he has extended patience into long-suffering; surely he will not punish. Psalm 10:11: He has said in his heart, God has forgotten. God sometimes in infinite patience adjourns his judgments and puts off the sessions a while longer; he is not willing to punish (2 Peter 3:9). The bee nat-

urally gives honey, but stings only when it is angered. The Lord would have men make their peace with him (Isaiah 27:5). God is not like a hasty creditor that requires the debt and will give no time for payment; he is not only gracious, but waits to be gracious (Isaiah 30:18). God by his patience would draw sinners to repentance. But how is this patience abused! God's long-suffering hardens. Because God stops the vial of his wrath, sinners stop the conduit of tears. That the patience of God may not obstruct holy mourning, let sinners remember: First, God's patience has bounds set to it (Genesis 6:3). Though men will not set bounds to their sin, yet God sets bounds to his patience. There is a time when the sun of God's patience will set; and being once set, it never returns. The lease of patience will soon be run out. There is a time when God says, My Spirit shall no longer strive. The angel cried, The hour of his judgment is come (Revelation 14:7). Perhaps the next sin you commit, God may say, Your hour is now come. Second, to be hardened under patience makes your condition far worse. Incensed justice will revenge abused patience. God was patient toward Sodom, but not repenting, he made the fire and brimstone flame about their ears. Sodom, that was once the wonder of God's patience, is now a standing monument of God's severity. All the plants and fruits are destroyed; and as Tertullian says, that place still smells of fire and brimstone. Long forbearance is no forgiveness; God may keep off the stroke a while, but justice is not dead, only sleeping. God has leaden feet, but iron hands; the longer God is taking his blow, the sorer it will be when it comes. The longer a stone is falling, the heavier it will be at last; the longer God is sharpening his sword, the sharper it cuts. Sins against patience are of a deeper dye — these are worse than the sins of the devils; the fallen angels

never sinned against God's patience. How dreadful will their condition be who therefore sin, because God is patient! For every crumb of patience, God puts a drop of wrath into his vial; the longer God forbears a sinner, the more interest he is sure to pay in hell.

Ninth, mirth and music. Amos 6:5: That chant to the sound of the viol, and drink wine in bowls. Instead of the dirge, the anthem — many sing away sorrow, and drown their tears in wine. The sweet waters of pleasure destroy the bitter waters of mourning. How many go dancing to hell, like those fish which swim pleasantly down into the Dead Sea! Let us take heed of all these hindrances of holy tears. Let our harp be turned into mourning, and our organ into the voice of them that weep (Job 30:31).

CHAPTER 10



Showing some helps to mourning.

Having removed the obstructions, let me in the last place propose some helps to holy mourning.

First, set David's prospect continually before you. Psalm 51:4: My sin is ever before me. David, that he might be a mourner, kept his eye still upon sin. See what sin is, and then tell me if there is not enough in it to draw forth tears. I know not what name to give it bad enough; one calls it the devil's excrement. Sin is a complication of all evil; it is the spirits of mischief distilled. First, sin dishonors God; it denies God's omniscience, it derides his patience, it distrusts his faithfulness. Sin tramples upon God's law, slights his love, grieves his Spirit. Second, sin wrongs us. Sin shames us (Proverbs 14:34): Sin is a reproach to any people. Sin has made us naked; it has plucked off our robe and taken our crown from us; it has spoiled us of our glory. Not only has it made us naked, but impure. Ezekiel 16:6: I saw you polluted in your blood. Sin has not only taken off our cloth of gold, but has put upon us filthy garments (Zechariah 3:3). God made us after his likeness (Genesis 1:26), but sin has made us like the beasts that perish (Psalm 49, last verse). We are all become brutish in our affections. Nor has sin

made us only like the beasts, but like the devil (John 8:44). Sin has drawn the devil's picture upon man's heart. Sin also stabs us; the sinner, like the jailer, draws a sword to kill himself. He is bereaved of his judgment, and like the man in the gospel possessed with the devil, he cuts himself with stones — though he has such a stone in his heart that he does not feel it. Every sin is a stroke at the soul; so many sins, so many wounds. Every blow given to the tree helps forward the felling of the tree. Every sin is a hewing and chopping down of the soul for hell-fire. If then there is all this evil in sin, if this forbidden fruit has such a bitter core, it may make us mourn; our hearts should be the spring, and our eyes the rivers.

Second, if we would be mourners, let us be petitioners. Beg a spirit of contrition; pray to God that he will put us in mourning, that he will give us a melting frame of heart. Let us beg Achsah's blessing (Joshua 15:19): Springs of water. Let us pray that our hearts may be spiritual alembics, dropping tears into God's bottle. Let us pray that we who have the poison of the serpent may have the tears of the dove. The Spirit of God is a Spirit of mourning; let us pray that God would pour that Spirit of grace upon us, whereby we may look on him whom we have pierced, and mourn for him (Zechariah 12:10). God must breathe in his Spirit before we can breathe out our sorrows. The Spirit of God is like the fire in a still, that sends up the dews of grace in the heart, and causes them to drop from the eyes. It is this blessed Spirit whose gentle breath causes our spices to smell, and our waters to flow. And if the spring of mourning is once set open in the heart, there can be no lack of joy; as tears flow out, comfort flows in. Which leads to the second part of the text: they shall be comforted.

CHAPTER 11



Showing the comforts belonging to mourners.
Matthew 5:4: They shall be comforted.

Having already presented to your view the dark side of the text, I shall now show you the light side: they shall be comforted.

Observe first: mourning goes before comfort, as the lancing of a wound precedes the cure. The Antinomian talks of comfort, but cries down mourning for sin; he is like a foolish patient who, having a pill prescribed him, licks the sugar but throws away the pill. The libertine is all for joy and comfort; he licks the sugar but throws away the bitter pill of repentance. If ever we have true comfort, we must have it in God's way and method; sorrow for sin ushers in joy. Isaiah 57: I will restore comfort to him, and to his mourners. That is the true sunshine of joy which comes after a shower of tears. We may as well expect a crop without seed as comfort without gospel-mourning.

Observe second: God keeps his best wine until last. First he prescribes mourning for sin, and then sets flowing the wine of consolation. The devil does quite the contrary; he shows the best first, and keeps the worst until last. First he shows the wine sparkling in the glass, then comes the biting of the serpent (Proverbs 23:32).

Satan sets his dainty dishes before men; he presents sin to them colored with beauty, sweetened with pleasure, silvered with profit, and then afterward the sad reckoning is brought in. He showed Judas first the silver bait, and then struck him with the hook. This is the reason why sin has so many followers — because it shows the best first; first the golden crowns, and then come the lions' teeth (Revelation 9:7-8).

But God shows the worst first; first he prescribes a bitter potion, and then brings a cordial: they shall be comforted.

Observe third: gospel-tears are not lost; they are seeds of comfort. While the penitent pours out tears, God pours in joy. If you would be cheerful (says Chrysostom), be sad. Psalm 126:5: They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. It was the end of Christ's anointing and coming into the world, that he might comfort those that mourn (Isaiah 61:3). Christ had the oil of gladness poured on him (as Chrysostom says) that he might pour it upon the mourner. Well, then, may the apostle call it a repentance not to be repented of (2 Corinthians 7:10). A man's drunkenness is to be repented of, his uncleanness is to be repented of; but his repentance is never to be repented of, because it is the inlet to joy. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Here is sweet fruit from a bitter stock. Christ caused the earthen vessels to be filled with water, and then turned the water into wine (John 2:9). So when the eye, that earthen vessel, has been filled with water to the brim, then Christ will turn the water of tears into the wine of joy. Holy mourning, says Basil, is the seed out of which the flower of eternal joy grows.

The reason why the mourner shall be comforted is:

First, because mourning is made on purpose for this end; mourning is not prescribed for itself, but in order to another end, that it may lay a train for comfort. Therefore we sow in tears, that we may reap in joy. Holy mourning is a spiritual medicine; now a medicine is not prescribed for itself, but for health's sake; so gospel-mourning is appointed for this very end, to bring forth joy.

Second, the spiritual mourner is the fittest person for comfort. When the heart is broken for sin, now it is fittest for joy. God pours the golden oil of comfort into broken vessels. The mourner's heart is emptied of pride, and God fills the empty with his blessing. The mourner's tears have helped to purge out corruption; and after purging medicine, God gives a refreshing drink. The mourner is ready to faint away under the burden of sin, and then the bottle of strong water comes seasonably. The Lord would have the repentant person (upon his deep humiliation) to be comforted, lest he should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow (2 Corinthians 2:7).

This is the mourner's privilege — he shall be comforted. The valley of tears brings the soul into a paradise of joy. A sinner's joy brings forth sorrow; the mourner's sorrow brings forth joy. John 16:22: Your sorrow shall be turned into joy. The saints have a wet seedtime, but a joyful harvest. They shall be comforted.

Showing the mourner's comforts here.

Now to illustrate this, I shall show you what the comforts are that the mourners shall have. These comforts are of a divine infusion, and they are twofold: either here or hereafter.

First, comforts here. They are called the consolations of God (Job 15:11) — that is, great comforts, such as none but God can give; they exceed all other comforts as far as heaven does earth. The root on which these comforts grow is the blessed Spirit; he is called the Comforter (John 14:26), and comfort is said to be a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). Christ purchased peace; the Spirit speaks peace. Question: How does the Spirit comfort? Answer: Either mediately or immediately.

First, mediately; by helping us to apply the promises to ourselves, and draw water out of those wells of salvation. We lie as dead children at the breast, until the Spirit helps us to suck the breast of a promise; and when the Spirit has taught faith this art, now comfort flows in. How sweet is the breast-milk of a promise!

Second, the Spirit comforts immediately; the Spirit, by a more direct act, presents God to the soul as reconciled. It sheds his love abroad in the heart, from which flows infinite joy (Romans 5:5). The Spirit secretly whispers pardon for sin, and the sight of a pardon dilates the heart with joy (Matthew 9:2): Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you.

That I may speak more fully to this point, I shall show you the qualities and excellencies of these comforts which God gives his mourners. First, these comforts are real comforts; the Spirit of God cannot witness to what is untrue. There are many in this age who pretend to comfort, but their comforts are mere impostures. The body may as well swell with wind as with flesh; a man may as well be swelled with false as with true comforts. The comforts of the saints are certain; they have the seal of the Spirit set to them (Ephesians 1:13; 2 Corinthians 1:22). A seal is for confirmation;

when a deed is sealed, it is firm and unquestionable. When a Christian has the seal of the Spirit stamped upon his heart, now he is confirmed in the love of God.

Question: In what ways do these comforts of the Spirit, which are unquestionably sure, differ from those which are false and pretended?

Answer: three ways. First, the comforts of God's Spirit are laid in deep conviction (John 16:7-8); and when he — that is, the Comforter (verse 7) — is come, he shall reprove, or as the Greek word is, he shall convince, the world of sin.

Question: Why does conviction go before consolation?

Answer: Conviction fits for comfort; by conviction the Spirit sweetly disposes the heart to two things. First, to seek after Christ. When once the soul is convinced of sin, and the hell that follows it, now a Savior is precious. When the Spirit has shot in the arrow of conviction, now the poor soul says, Where may I meet with Christ? In what ordinance may I come to enjoy Christ? Did you see him whom my soul loves? All the world for one glimpse of my Savior. Second, the Spirit by conviction makes the heart willing to receive Christ upon his own terms. Man, by nature, would bargain with Christ; he would take half of Christ. He would take him as a Savior, not a Prince. He would accept of Christ as he has a head of gold (Song of Solomon 5:11), but not as he has the government upon his shoulders (Isaiah 9:6). But when God lets loose the spirit of bondage, and convinces a sinner of his lost, undone condition, now he is content to have Christ upon any terms. When Paul was struck down to the ground by a spirit of conviction, he cried out, Lord, what will you have me to do (Acts 9:6)? Let God propose what arti-

cles he will, the soul will subscribe to them. Now when a man is brought to Christ's terms, to believe and obey, then he is fit for mercy. When the Spirit of God has been a spirit of conviction, then it becomes a spirit of consolation; when the plow of the law has gone upon the heart, and broken up the fallow ground, now God sows the seed of comfort.

Those who boast of comfort, but were never yet convicted nor broken for sin, have cause to suspect their comfort to be a delusion of Satan. It is like a madman's joy, who fancies himself to be a king, but of his laughter it may be said, it is madness (Ecclesiastes 2:2). The seed which lacked depth of earth withered (Matthew 13); that comfort which lacks depth of earth, deep humiliation and conviction, will soon wither and come to nothing.

Second, the Spirit of God is a sanctifying before a comforting Spirit. As God's Spirit is called the Comforter, so he is called a spirit of grace (Zechariah 12:10). Grace is the work of the Spirit; comfort is the seal of the Spirit. The work of the Spirit goes before the seal. The graces of the Spirit are compared to water (Isaiah 44:3), and the comforts of the Spirit are compared to oil (Isaiah 61:1). First, God pours in the water of the Spirit, and then comes the oil of gladness. Hereby we shall know whether our comforts are true and genuine. Some talk of the comforting Spirit who never had the sanctifying Spirit; they boast of assurance, but never had grace. These are spurious joys; these comforts will leave men at death — they will end in horror and despair. God's Spirit will never set his seal to a blank. First, the heart must be an epistle written with the finger of the Holy Ghost, and then it is sealed with the Spirit of promise.

Third, the comforts of the Spirit are humbling. The soul says, Lord, what am I that I should have a smile from heaven, and that you should give me a private token of your love? The more water is poured into a bucket, the lower it descends. The fuller the ship is laden with sweet spices, the lower it sails. The more a Christian is filled with the sweet comforts of the Spirit, the lower he flows in humility. The fuller a tree is of fruit, the lower the bough hangs; the more full we are of the fruits of the Spirit — joy and peace (Galatians 5:22) — the more we bend down in humility. Paul, a chosen vessel filled with the wine of the Spirit, did not more abound in joy than in lowliness of mind (Ephesians 3:8): To me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given. He who was the chief of the apostles calls himself the least of saints.

Those who say they have comfort, but are proud — who have learned to despise others and are climbed above ordinances — their comforts are delusions. The devil is able not only to transform himself into an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:4), but he can transform himself into the Comforter. It is easy to counterfeit money, to silver over brass and put the king's image upon it. The devil can silver over false comforts and make them look as if they had the stamp of the King of heaven upon them. The comforts of God are humbling; though they lift the heart up in thankfulness, yet they do not puff it up in pride.

Second, the comforts God gives his mourners are unmixed; they are not tempered with any bitter ingredients. Worldly comforts are like wine that runs to dregs. There is that guilt within which checks and corrodes; in the midst of laughter the heart is sad (Proverbs 14:13). Queen Mary once said, if she were opened, they would find Calais lying at her heart. If the breast of a sinner

were anatomized and opened, you would find a worm gnawing at his heart. Guilt is a wolf which feeds in the breast of his comfort. A sinner may have a smiling countenance, but a chiding conscience. His mirth is like the mirth of a man in debt, who is every hour in fear of being arrested. The comforts of wicked men are spiced with bitterness; they are wormwood wine.

But spiritual comforts are pure; they are not muddled with guilt, nor mixed with fear. They are the pure wine of the Spirit; what the mourner feels is joy, and nothing but joy.

Third, these comforts God gives his mourners are sweet. Ecclesiastes 12:7: Truly the light is sweet; so is the light of God's countenance. How sweet are those comforts which bring the Comforter along with them (John 14:16)? Therefore the love of God shed into the heart is said to be better than wine (Song of Solomon 1:2). Wine pleases the palate, but the love of God cheers the conscience. The lips of Christ drop sweet-smelling myrrh (Song of Solomon 5:13). The comforts God gives are a Christian's music; they are the golden pot and the manna, the nectar and ambrosia of a Christian. They are the saints' festival, their banqueting goods. So sweet are these divine comforts that the church had her fainting fits for want of them (Song of Solomon 2:5): Stay me with flagons. By these flagons are meant the comforts of the Spirit. The Hebrew word signifies all variety of delights, to show the abundance of delight and sweetness in these comforts of the Spirit. Comfort me with apples; apples are sweet in taste, fragrant in smell, and so sweet and delicious are those apples which grow upon the tree in paradise. These comforts from above are so sweet that they make all other comforts sweet — health, estate, relations. They are like sauce which makes all our earthly possessions and enjoyments

come off with a better relish. So sweet are these comforts of the Spirit that they much abate and moderate our joy in worldly things. He who has been drinking strong spirits will not much thirst after water. And the man who has once tasted how sweet the Lord is (Psalm 34:8), and has drunk the cordials of the Spirit, will not thirst immoderately after earthly delights. Those who play with dogs and birds — it is a sign they have no children. Such as are inordinate in their desire and love of the creature declare plainly that they never had better comforts.

Fourth, these comforts which God gives his mourners are holy comforts; they are called the comforts of the Holy Ghost (Acts 9:31). Everything propagates in its own kind; the Holy Ghost can no more produce impure joys in the soul than the sun can produce darkness. He who has the comforts of the Spirit looks upon himself as a person engaged to do God more service: Has the Lord looked upon me with a smiling face? I can never pray enough; I can never love God enough. The comforts of the Spirit raise in the heart a holy antipathy against sin. The dove hates every feather that has grown upon the hawk. So there is a hatred of every motion and temptation to evil. He who has a principle of life in him opposes everything that would destroy life; he hates poison. So he that has the comforts of the Spirit living in him sets himself against those sins which would murder his comforts. Divine comforts give the soul more acquaintance with God (1 John 1:4): Our fellowship is with the Father and his Son Jesus.

Fifth, the comforts reserved for the mourners are filling comforts (Romans 15:13): The God of hope fill you with joy. John 16:24: Ask, that your joy may be full. When God pours in the joys of heaven, they fill the heart and make it run over (2 Corinthians

7:4): I overflow with joy, as a cup that is filled with wine until it runs over. Outward comforts can no more fill the heart than a triangle can fill a circle. Spiritual joys are satisfying (Psalm 63:5): My heart shall be satisfied as with marrow, and I will praise you with joyful lips. David's heart was full, and the joy broke out at his lips. Psalm 4:7: You have put gladness in my heart. Worldly joys put gladness into the face (2 Corinthians 5:12); but the Spirit of God puts gladness into the heart. Divine joys are heart-joys (Zechariah 10:7; John 16:22): Your heart shall rejoice. A believer rejoices (Luke 1:47): My spirit rejoices in God. And to show how filling these comforts of heavenly extraction are, the psalmist says they create greater joy than when grain and oil increase (Psalm 4). Wine and oil may delight, but not satisfy; they have their emptiness. We may say, as Zechariah 10:2: They comfort in vain. Outward comforts sooner cloy than cheer, and sooner weary than fill. Xerxes offered great rewards to him that could find out a new pleasure. But the comforts of the Spirit are satisfying; they refresh the heart (Psalm 94:19): Your comforts delight my soul. There is as much difference between heavenly comforts and earthly as between a banquet that is eaten and one that is painted on the wall.

Sixth, the comforts God gives his mourners in this life are glorious comforts. 1 Peter 1:8: Joy full of glory. First, they are glorious because they are a foretaste of that joy which we shall have in a glorified state. These comforts are an earnest of glory; they put us in heaven before our time (Ephesians 1:13-14): You were sealed with that Holy Spirit, which is an earnest of the inheritance. The earnest is part of the sum behind; so the comforts of the Spirit are the earnest — the cluster of grapes at Eshcol, the firstfruits of the heavenly Canaan (Numbers 13:23). Second, the joys of the Spirit

are glorious, in contrast to other joys, which compared with these are inglorious and vile. A carnal man's joy, as it is airy and flashy, so it is sordid; he sucks nothing but dregs. Amos 6:13: You rejoice in a thing of nothing. A carnal spirit rejoices because he can say this house is his, this estate is his. But a gracious spirit rejoices because he can say this God is his (Psalm 48:14): For this God is our God forever and ever. The ground of a Christian's joy is glorious; he rejoices in that he is an heir of the promise. The joy of a godly man is made up of that which is the angels' joy; he triumphs in the light of God's countenance. His joy is Christ's own joy; he rejoices in the mystical union which is begun here, and consummated in heaven. Thus the joy of the saints is a joy full of glory.

Seventh, the comforts which God gives his mourners are infinitely transporting and ravishing. So delightful and amazing are they that they cause a jubilation which, as some of the learned speak, is so great that it cannot be expressed. Of all things, joy is the most hard to be described. It is called joy unspeakable (1 Peter 1:8). You may sooner taste honey than tell how sweet it is. The most pathetic words can no more set forth the comforts of the Spirit than the most skilled painter can draw the life and breath of a man. The angels cannot express the joys they feel. Some have been so overwhelmed with the sweet raptures of joy that they have not been able to contain themselves — as Moses died with a kiss from God's mouth. Thus we have seen the glass often breaking with the strength of the liquor put into it.

Eighth, these comforts of the Spirit are powerful; they are strong cordials. So the apostle phrases it (Hebrews 6:18): strong consolation. Divine comfort, first, strengthens for duty. Nehemiah 8:10: The joy of the Lord is your strength. Joy sharpens industry; a

man that is animated with the comforts of God's Spirit goes with vigor and alacrity through the exercises of religion. He believes firmly, he loves fervently, he is carried full sail in duty; the joy of the Lord is his strength. Second, divine comfort supports under affliction. 1 Thessalonians 1:6: Having received the word in much affliction, with joy. The wine of the Spirit can sweeten the waters of Marah. Those who are possessed of these heavenly comforts can gather grapes from thorns, and fetch honey out of the lion's carcass. They are strong consolations indeed, that can stand against the fiery trial, and turn the flame into a bed of roses. How powerful is that comfort, which can make a Christian glory in tribulation (Romans 5:3)? A believer is never so sad but he can rejoice; the bird of paradise can sing in winter. 2 Corinthians 6:10: As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. Let sickness come; the sense of pardon takes away the sense of pain. Isaiah 33:24: The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick. Let death come; a Christian is above it. 1 Corinthians 15:55: O death, where is your sting? At the end of the rod a Christian tastes honey; these are strong consolations.

Ninth, the comforts God's mourners have are heart-quieting comforts; they cause a sweet acquiescence and rest in the soul. The heart of a Christian is in a kind of discomposure, like the needle in the compass — it shakes and trembles until the Comforter comes. Some creatures cannot live but in the sun; a Christian is even dead in the nest, unless he may have the sunlight of God's countenance. Psalm 143:7: Hide not your face from me, lest I be like those that go down into the pit. Nothing but the breast will quiet the child; it is only the breast of consolation that quiets the believer.

Tenth, the comforts of the Spirit are abiding comforts; as they abound in us, so they abide with us. John 14:16: He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever. Worldly comforts are still upon the wing, ready to fly; they are like a land flood, or a flash of lightning.

All things here are passing away; but the comforts with which God feeds his mourners are immortal. 2 Thessalonians 2:16: Who has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation. Though a Christian does not always have a full beam of comfort, yet he has a dawning of it in his soul. He has still a ground of hope, and a root of joy; there is that within him which bears up his heart, and which he would not on any terms part with.

Use. Behold the mourner's privilege — he shall be comforted. David, who was the great mourner of Israel, was the sweet singer of Israel. The weeping dove shall be covered with the golden feathers of comfort. How rare and exalted are these comforts!

Question: But may not God's mourners want these comforts?

Answer: Spiritual mourners have a title to these comforts, yet they may sometimes lack them. God is a free agent; he will have the timing of our comforts. The Holy One of Israel will not be limited; he will reserve his prerogative to give or suspend comfort as he wills. If we are a while without comfort, we must not quarrel with his dispensations. As the mariner is not to wrangle with providence because the wind blows out of the east when he desires it from the west, nor is the husbandman to murmur when God stops the bottles of heaven in time of drought, so neither is any man to dispute with God when he stops the sweet influence of comfort, but ought rather to acquiesce in his sacred will.

But though the Lord might by virtue of his sovereignty withhold comfort from the mourner, yet there may be many reasons why mourners lack comfort. First, in regard of God. Second, in regard of themselves.

In regard of God: he sees it fit to withhold comfort. First, that he may raise the value of grace; we are apt to esteem comfort above grace. Therefore God locks up our comforts for a time, that he may enhance the price of grace. When pennies go better than gold, the king will call in pennies, that the price of gold may be the more raised. Second, God would have his people learn to serve him for himself, and not for comfort only. It is a prostituted love to love the husband's money and tokens more than his person. Such as serve God only for comfort do not so much serve God as use him for their own ends.

That God's mourners lack comfort is most frequently in regard of themselves.

First, through mistake, which is twofold. First, they go not to the right spring for comfort; they go to their tears, when they should go to Christ's blood. It is a kind of idolatry to make our tears the ground of comfort; mourning is not meritorious. It is the way to joy, not the cause. Jacob got the blessing in the garments of his elder brother. True comfort flows out of Christ's side; our tears are stained, until they are washed in the blood of Christ. John 16, last verse: In me, peace. Second, the mistake is that mourners are privileged persons, and may therefore take more liberty — they may slacken the strings of duty and let loose the reins to sin. Christ has indeed purchased a liberty for his people, but a holy liberty; not a liberty for sin, but from sin. 1 Peter 2:16: You are a royal priesthood, a peculiar people; you are not in a state of slavery, but

royalty. What follows? Do not make Christian liberty a cloak for sin (verse 16): As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness. If we quench the sanctifying Spirit, God will quench the comforting Spirit. Sin is compared to a cloud (Isaiah 44:22); this cloud intercepts the light of God's countenance.

Second, God's mourners sometimes lack comfort through discontent and peevishness. David makes his disquiet the cause of his sadness (Psalm 43:5): Why are you cast down, O my soul? Why are you disquieted within me? A disquieted heart, like a rough sea, is not easily calmed; it is hard to make a troubled spirit receive comfort. This disquiet arises from various causes; sometimes from outward sorrow and melancholy; sometimes from a kind of envy — God's people are troubled to see others have comfort, and they lack it. Now in a fit they refuse comfort, and like a froward child, push away the breast. Psalm 77:2: My soul refused to be comforted. Indeed a disquieted spirit is no more fit for comfort than a distracted man is fit for counsel. And whence is the mourner's discontent but pride — as if God had not dealt well with him in stopping the influences of comfort? Christian, your spirit must be more humbled and broken before God empties out his golden oil of joy.

Third, the mourner is without comfort for want of applying the promises. He looks at that sin which may humble him, but not at that word which may comfort him. The mourner's eyes are so full of tears that he cannot see the promise. The virtue and comfort of a medicine is in the applying. When the promises are applied by faith, they bring comfort (Hosea 2:19; Isaiah 49:15-16). Faith milks the breast of a promise. That Satan may hinder us of comfort, it is his policy either to keep the promise from us, so that we may not

know it, or to keep us from the promise, so that we may not apply it. There is not a promise in the Bible but belongs to the mourner, had he but the skill and facility of faith to lay hold on it.

Fourth, the mourner may lack comfort through too much earthly-mindedness. By feeding immoderately on earthly comforts, we miss heavenly comforts. Isaiah 57:17: For the iniquity of his covetousness was I angry, and I hid myself. The earth puts out the fire; earthliness extinguishes the flame of divine joy in the soul. An eclipse occurs when the moon, which is a dense body, comes between; the moon is an emblem of the world (Revelation 12:1). When this comes between, then there is an eclipse in the light of God's face. Such as dig in mines say there is such a damp that comes from the earth as puts out the light of a candle. Earthly comforts send forth such a damp as puts out the light of spiritual joy.

Fifth, perhaps the mourner has had comfort, and lost it. Adam's rib was taken from him when he was asleep (Genesis 2:21); our comforts are taken away when we fall asleep in security. The spouse lost her beloved when she lay upon the bed of sloth (Song of Solomon 5:2, 6).

For these reasons God's mourners may lack comfort. But that the spiritual mourner may not be too much dejected, I shall reach forth the cup of consolation (Jeremiah 16:7), and speak a few words that may comfort the mourner in the want of comfort. First, Jesus Christ was without comfort — therefore no wonder if we are; our comforts are not better than his. He who was the Son of God's love was without the sense of God's love. Second, the mourner has a seed of comfort (Psalm 97:11): Light is sown for the righteous. Light is a metaphor for comfort, and it is sown. Though a child of

God does not always have comfort in the flower, yet he has it in the seed. Though he does not feel comfort from God, yet he takes comfort in God. Third, a Christian may be high in grace and low in comfort. The high mountains are without flowers; the mines of gold have little or no grain growing on them. A Christian's heart may be a rich mine of grace, though it be barren of comfort. Fourth, the mourner is heir to comfort; and though for a small moment God may forsake his people (Isaiah 54:7), yet there is a time shortly coming when the mourner shall have all tears wiped away, and shall be full of comfort. This joy is reserved for heaven, and this brings me to the second particular.

Showing the mourner's comforts hereafter.

Second, comforts hereafter. They shall be comforted. Though in this life some visits and love-tokens pass between God and the mourner, yet the great comforts are kept in store. In God's presence is fullness of joy. There is a time coming when the saints shall bathe themselves in the river of life, when they shall never see a frown on God's brow more — his face shall shine, his lips drop honey, his arms sweetly embrace them. The saints shall have a spring tide of joy, and it shall never be low water. The saints shall at that day put off their mourning, and exchange their black robes for white robes. Then shall the winter be past, the rain of tears be over and gone; the flowers of joy shall appear; and after the weeping of the dove, the time of the singing of birds shall come (Song of Solomon 2:11-12). This is the great consolation, the jubilee of the blessed, which shall never expire. In this life the people of God taste of joy, but in heaven the full vessels shall be opened. There is a river in the midst of the heavenly paradise, which has a fountain to feed it (Psalm 36:8-9).

The times we are cast into, being for the present sad and cloudy, it will not be amiss for the reviving of the hearts of God's people to speak a little of these comforts which God reserves in heaven for his mourners. They shall be comforted. The greatness of these celestial comforts is most fitly in Scripture expressed by the joy of a feast; mourning shall be turned into feasting. And it shall be a marriage-feast, which is usually kept with the greatest solemnity (Revelation 19:9): Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Bullinger and Gregory the Great understand this supper of the Lamb to mean the saints' supping with Christ in heaven. Men after hard labor go to supper; so when the saints shall rest from their labors, they shall sup with Christ in glory. Now to speak something of the last great supper:

It will be a great supper, first, in regard of the founder of this feast, God. It is the supper of a king, therefore sumptuous and magnificent. Psalm 95:3: The Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. Where should there be state and magnificence but in a king's court? Second, it will be a great supper in regard of the provision; this exceeds all hyperbole. What blessed fruit does the tree of life in paradise yield (Revelation 2:7)! Christ will lead his spouse into the banqueting house, and feast her with those rare viands, and cause her to drink that spiced wine, that heavenly nectar and ambrosia with which the angelic powers are infinitely refreshed.

First, every dish served at this heavenly supper shall be sweet to our palate; there is no dish here that we do not love. Christ will make such savory food as he is sure his spouse loves.

Second, there shall be no want here — there is no want at a feast. The various fullness in Christ will prevent a scarcity; and it will be a fullness without surfeit, because a fresh course will continually be served in.

Third, they who eat of this supper shall never hunger more. Hunger is a sharp sauce. The Lamb's supper shall not only satisfy hunger, but prevent it (Revelation 7:16): They shall hunger no more!

Third, it will be a great supper in regard of the company invited. Company adds to a feast, and is of itself a sauce to sharpen and provoke the appetite. Saints, angels, archangels will be at this supper; and Christ himself will be both founder and guest. The Scripture calls it an innumerable company (Hebrews 12). And what makes the society sweeter is that there shall be perfect love at this feast. The motto shall be: one heart, and one way. All the guests shall be linked together with the golden chain of charity.

Fourth, it will be a great supper in regard of the holy mirth (Ecclesiastes 10:19): A feast is made for mirth. At this supper there shall be joy, and nothing but joy (Psalm 16, last verse). There is no weeping at a feast. What triumph and acclamations will there be! There are two things at this supper of the Lamb that will create joy and mirth. First, when the saints shall think with themselves that they are kept from a worse supper. The devils have a supper — such a one as it is, a black banquet; there are two dishes served in: weeping, and gnashing of teeth. Every bit they eat makes their hearts ache. Who would deny them their dinner here, who must have such a supper? Second, it will be a matter of joy at the supper of the Lamb that the Master of the feast bids all his guests welcome. The saints shall have the smiles of God's face, the kisses of

his lips; he will lead them into the wine cellar, and display the banner of love over them. The saints shall be as full of solace as of sanctity. What is a feast without mirth? Worldly mirth is flashy and empty; this shall be infinitely delightful and ravishing.

Fifth, it will be a great supper for the music. This will be a marriage supper, and what better music than the Bridegroom's voice, saying, My spouse, my undefiled, take your fill of love. There will be the angels' anthems, the saints' triumphs. The angels, those trumpeters of heaven, shall sound forth the excellencies of Jehovah. And the saints, those noble choristers, shall take down their harps from the willows, and join in concert with the angels, praising and blessing God. Revelation 15:2-3: I saw them that had gotten the victory over the Beast, having the harps of God, and they sing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are your works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are your ways, you King of saints. The sweet harmony at this feast shall be music without discord.

Sixth, this supper is great in regard of the place where it shall be celebrated, in the paradise of God (Revelation 2:7). It is a stately palace, stately first for its situation — it is in the highest place. Second, for its prospect: all sparkling beauties are there concentrated. And the delight of the prospect is ownership; that is the best prospect, where a man can see furthest on his own ground. Third, for its amplitude; this royal feast shall be kept in a most spacious room, a room infinitely greater than the whole firmament. One star of which, if we may believe astronomers, is bigger than the whole earth. Though there is such a multitude as no man can number, of all nations, kindreds, peoples, and tongues (Revelation 7:9), yet the table is long enough, and the room spa-

cious enough for all the guests. The empyrean heaven, bespangled with light, arrayed with rich hangings, embroidered with glory, seated above all the visible orbs, is the place of the marriage supper. This infinitely transcends the most profound search; I am no more able to express it than I can span the firmament, or weigh the earth in a pair of balances.

Seventh, it will be a great supper in regard of its continuance — it has no end. Epicureans have a short feast and a long reckoning; but those who shall sit down at the heavenly banquet shall not rise from the table. The cloth shall never be taken away, but they shall be always feeding upon those sweet delicacies set before them. We read that King Ahasuerus made a feast for his princes that lasted one hundred and eighty days (Esther 1:4). But this blessed feast reserved for the saints is forever. Psalm 16:11: At your right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

Use. Consolation. How may this be as a healing stone to keep the hearts of God's people from fainting! They shall be comforted. They shall sit with Christ upon the throne (Revelation 3:21), and sit down with him at the table. Who would not mourn for sin, that are sure to meet with such rewards! They shall be comforted. The marriage supper will make amends for the valley of tears. You saint of God, who are now watering your plants and weeping bitterly for sin — at this last and great feast your water shall be turned into wine. You who now mortify your corruptions, and beat down your body by prayer and fasting, shall shortly sup with Christ and angels. You who refused to touch the forbidden tree shall feed upon the tree of life in the paradise of God. You impoverished saint, who scarcely have a bit of bread to eat — remember for your comfort, in your Father's house there is bread enough, and he is

making ready a feast for you, where all the dainties of heaven are served in. Feed with delight upon the thoughts of this marriage supper; after your funeral begins your festival. Long for supper-time.

Christ has paid for this supper upon the cross, and there is no fear of a reckoning to be brought in; therefore comfort one another with these words.

CHAPTER 12



Matthew 5:5: Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

We are now come to the third step leading in the way to blessedness: Christian meekness. Blessed are the meek. See how the Spirit of God adorns the hidden man of the heart with a multiplicity of graces. The workmanship of the Holy Ghost is not only curious, but various; it makes the heart meek, pure, peaceable. The graces therefore are compared to needlework, which is different and various in its flowers and colors. In the words there is a duty, meekness; and that duty, like the dove, brings an olive leaf in the mouth of it: They shall inherit the earth.

The proposition I shall insist on is, that meek persons are blessed persons. For the right understanding of this, we must know there is a twofold meekness.

First, meekness toward God. Second, meekness toward man.

First, meekness toward God, which implies two things.

First, submission to God's will. Second, flexibility to his word.

First, submission to God's will; when we carry ourselves calmly without swelling or murmuring under the dispensations of providence. 1 Samuel 3:18: It is the Lord; let him do what seems him good. The meek-spirited Christian says thus: Let God do what he will with me; let him carve out what condition he pleases, I will submit. God sees what is best for me, whether a fertile soil or a barren. Let him pattern his work as he pleases; it suffices that God has done it. It was an unmeek spirit in the prophet to struggle with God (Jonah 4:9): I do well to be angry, even to death.

Second, flexibility to God's word; when we are willing to let the word bear sway in our souls, and become pliable to all its laws and maxims. He is spiritually meek who conforms himself to the mind of God, and does not quarrel with the instructions of the word, but with the corruptions of his heart. Cornelius's speech to Peter savored of a meek spirit (Acts 10:33): Now therefore we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded you of God. How happy it is when the word which comes with majesty is received with meekness (James 1:21)!

Second, meekness toward man; this Basil the Great calls the indelible character of a gracious soul. Blessed are the meek. To illustrate this, I shall show what this meekness is. Meekness is a grace whereby we are enabled by the Spirit of God to moderate our passion. First, it is a grace; the philosopher calls it a virtue, but the apostle calls it a grace, therefore reckoning it among the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23). It is of a divine origin. Second, by it we are enabled to moderate our passion. By nature the heart is like a troubled sea, casting forth the foam of anger and wrath. Now meekness calms the passions; it sits as moderator in the soul, quieting and giving check to its distempered motions. As the moon

serves to temper and allay the heat of the sun, so Christian meekness allays the heat of passion. Meekness of spirit not only fits us for communion with God, but for civil relations with men. Meekness has a divine beauty and sweetness in it; it credits religion, it wins upon all. This meekness consists in three things.

First, bearing of injuries. Second, forgiving of injuries. Third, recompensing good for evil.

First, meekness consists in bearing injuries. I may say of this grace: it is not easily provoked. A meek spirit, like wet tinder, will not easily take fire. Psalm 38:12-13: They that seek my hurt spoke mischievous things, but I as a deaf man heard not. Meekness is the bridle of anger; the passions are fiery and headstrong, and meekness gives check to them. Meekness bridles the mouth; it ties the tongue to its good behavior. Meekness observes that motto: bear and forbear. There are four things opposite to meekness.

First, meekness is opposed to hastiness of spirit (Ecclesiastes 7:9): Be not hasty in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the heart of fools. When the heart boils in passion, and anger sparkles forth in the eye, this is far from meekness. Anger rests in the heart of fools; anger may be in a wise man, but it rests in a fool. The angry man is like flax or gunpowder: no sooner do you touch him but he is all on fire. Basil calls anger drunkenness; and Jerome says there are more drunk with passion than with wine. Seneca calls anger a short fit of madness; sometimes it suspends the use of reason. In the best things we are cool enough; in religion we are all ice, in contention all fire. How unbecoming is rash anger, how it disguises and disfigures! Homer says of Agamemnon, that when he moderated his passion, he resembled the gods — he was like Jupiter in feature, like Pallas in wisdom. But when he was in his

fury, he was a very tiger; nothing of Jupiter appeared in him. As Plato counseled the great revelers and drinkers of his time, that they should view themselves in a glass when they were in their drunken state, and they would appear loathsome to themselves — so let a man disguised with passion view himself in the glass, and surely he would ever after be out of love with himself. Ephesians 4:26-27: Let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil. One says, He has wronged me, and I will never give place to him; but it is better to give place to him than to the devil. An hasty spirit is not a meek spirit. Caution: Not but that we may in some cases be angry. There is a holy anger; that anger is without sin which is against sin. Meekness and zeal may stand together. In matters of religion a Christian must be clothed with the spirit of Elijah, and be full of the fury of the Lord (Jeremiah 6:11). Christ was meek (Matthew 11:29), yet zealous (John 2:14-15): The zeal of your house has eaten me up.

Second, meekness is opposed to malice; malice is the devil's picture (John 8:44). Malice is mental murder (1 John 3:15); it unfits for duty. How can such a man pray? I have read of two men who lived in malice, who being asked how they could say the Lord's Prayer, one answered he thanked God there were many good prayers besides. The other answered that when he said the Lord's Prayer, he left out those words, As we forgive them that trespass against us. But Augustine brings in God replying: Because you do not say my prayer, therefore I will not hear yours. Were it not a sad judgment, if all that a man ate should turn to poison! To a malicious man all the holy ordinances of God turn to poison; the table of the Lord is a snare, he eats and drinks his own damnation. A malicious spirit is not a meek spirit.

Third, meekness is opposed to revenge; malice is the scum of anger, and revenge is malice boiling over. Malice is a vermin that lives on blood; revenge is Satan's delight. This is the savory meat which the malicious man dresses for the devil. The Scripture forbids revenge (Romans 12:19): Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves. This is to take God's office out of his hand, who is called the God of recompenses (Jeremiah 51:56) and the God of vengeance (Psalm 94:1). This I urge against those who challenge one another to duels. Indeed spiritual duels are lawful; it is good to fight with the devil (James 4:7): Resist the devil. It is good to duel with a man's self, the regenerate part against the carnal. Blessed is he that seeks a revenge upon his lusts (2 Corinthians 7:11): What revenge! But other duels are unlawful; avenge not yourselves. The Turks, though a barbarous people, in ancient times burned those who went to duel with hot coals of fire; they who were in the heat of revenge were punished fittingly with fire.

Objection: But if I am thus meek and tame in bearing injuries and incivilities, I shall lose my reputation; it will be a stain to my credit.

Answer, first: To pass by an injury without revenge is no eclipse to a man's credit. Solomon tells us it is the glory of a man to pass over a transgression (Proverbs 12:16). It is more honor to bury an injury than revenge it, and to slight it than to write it down. The weakest creatures soonest turn and sting upon every touch; the lion, a more majestic creature, is not easily provoked. The bramble tears; the oak and cedar are more peaceable. Passion implies weakness; a noble spirit overlooks an injury.

Answer, second: Suppose a man's credit should suffer with those whose censure is not to be valued — yet think, which is worse, shame or sin? Will you sin against God to save your credit? Surely it is little wisdom for a man to venture his blood to fetch back his reputation, and to run into hell to be counted valorous.

Caution, first: Not but that a man may stand up in defense of himself when his life is endangered. Some of the Anabaptists hold it unlawful to take up the sword upon any occasion; but unquestionably a man may take up the sword for self-preservation. Otherwise he comes under the breach of the sixth commandment — he is guilty of self-murder. In taking up the sword he does not so much seek another's death, as the safeguard of his own life. His intention is not to do hurt, but to prevent it. Self-defense is consistent with Christian meekness; the law of nature and religion justify it. That God who bids us put up our sword (Matthew 26:51) yet will allow us a shield in our own defense. He that will have us innocent as doves, not to offend others, will have us wise as serpents in preserving ourselves.

Caution, second: Though revenge is contrary to meekness, yet a magistrate may avenge the quarrels of others; indeed it is not revenge in him, but doing justice. The magistrate is God's lieutenant on earth; God has put the sword in his hand, and he is not to bear the sword in vain. He must be for the punishment of evildoers (1 Peter 2:14). Though a private person must not render to any man evil for evil (Romans 12:17), yet a magistrate may — the evil of punishment for the evil of offense. This rendering of evil is good. Private men must put their sword into the sheath; but the magistrate sins if he does not draw it out. As his sword must not surfeit through cruelty, so neither must it rust through partiality. Too

much leniency in a magistrate is not meekness but injustice. For him to indulge offenses and say with a gentle reproof, as Eli (1 Samuel 2:23-24): Why do you such things? Nay, my sons, it is not a good report that I hear — this is but to shave the head that deserves to be cut off. Such a magistrate makes himself guilty.

Fourth, meekness is opposed to evil-speaking (Ephesians 4:31): Let all evil-speaking be put away. Our words should be mild, like the waters of Siloah, which run softly. It is too usual for passionate spirits to break out into abusive language. The tongues of many are on fire, and it is the devil who lights the match. Therefore they are said in Scripture to be set on fire of hell (James 3:6). Men have learned of the old serpent to spit their venom at one another in disgraceful revilings. Matthew 5:22: Whoever shall say, you fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire. Under that word 'fool' all vilifying terms are by our Savior forbidden. Let us take heed of this; it is hateful to God. God is not in this fire, but in the still small voice (1 Kings 19:12).

Objection: But did not the apostle Paul call the Galatians fools (Galatians 3:1)?

Answer: Paul had an infallible spirit, which we have not. Besides, when Paul uttered those words, it was not by way of reproach, but reproof; not to defame the Galatians, but reclaim them; not to vilify them, but to humble them. Paul was grieved to see them so soon fall into a relapse. Well might he say, Foolish Galatians, in holy zeal, because they had suffered so much in the cause of religion, and now made a defection and fell off (verse 4): Have you suffered so many things in vain? But though Paul, guided by the Spirit of God, gave this epithet to the Galatians, it is no warrant for us, when any have wronged us, to use disgraceful

terms. Meekness does not vent itself in scurrility; it does not retaliate by railing (Jude 9): Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke you. Some understand by Michael, Christ; but more truly it is meant of one of the chief angels. The contest between the archangel and the devil was about the body of Moses. Some divines say that when God disposed of Moses's body, he employed the archangel to inter him so secretly that his burial place might not be known. It is likely that if his dead body had been found, the Israelites might have been ready in a preposterous zeal to have adored it. The devil opposed the archangel and contended about the dead body; but the archangel would not bear to bring a railing accusation. It seems the devil provoked him with evil language, and would fain have extorted passion from him, but the archangel was mild and said only, The Lord rebuke you. The angel would not even rail against the devil. We may learn meekness from the archangel (1 Peter 3:9): Not rendering railing for railing.

Not but that a Christian ought prudentially to clear himself from slanders. When the apostle Paul was charged to be mad, he vindicated himself (Acts 26:25): I am not mad, most noble Festus. Though a Christian's replies must not be wounding, they may be vindicating. Though he may not slander another, yet he may defend himself. There must be Christian prudence, as well as Christian meekness. It is not mildness, but weakness to part with our integrity (Job 27:6). To be silent when we are slanderously traduced is to make ourselves appear guilty. We must so embrace

meekness as not to lose the honor of innocence. It is lawful to defend our own name; the fault lies only when we retort injuries with reproachful terms, which is to pay a man back in the devil's coin.

The second branch of meekness is in forgiving of injuries. Mark 11:25: And when you stand praying, forgive — as if Christ said, It is to little purpose to pray unless you forgive. A meek spirit is a forgiving spirit. This is a Herculean work; nothing more crosses the stream of corrupt nature. Men forget kindnesses, but remember injuries. I once heard of a woman who lived in malice, and being requested by some of her neighbors when she lay on her deathbed to forgive, she answered, I cannot forgive, though I go to hell. This is cutting against the grain. Some can rather sacrifice their lives than their lusts. But forgive we must, and forgive as God forgives.

First, really; God does not make a show of forgiveness and keep our sins by him. He blots out our debts (Isaiah 43:25). God passes an act of oblivion (Jeremiah 31:34); he forgives and forgets. So the meek spirit does not only make a show of forgiving his neighbor, but does it from the heart (Matthew 18:35).

Second, fully; God forgives all our sins. He does not for eighty write down fifty, but gives a general release (Psalm 103:3): Who forgives all your iniquities. Thus a meek-spirited Christian forgives all injuries. False hearts pass by some offenses, but retain others; this is but half-forgiving. Is this meekness? Would you have God deal so with you? Would you have him forgive you your trespasses, as you forgive others?

Third, God forgives often; we are often sinning, we run every day afresh upon the score, but God often forgives. Therefore he is said to multiply pardon (Isaiah 55:7). So a meek spirit reiterates, and sends one pardon after another. Peter asks the question (Matthew 18:21): Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Until seven times? Christ answers him (verse 22): I say not to you, until seven times, but until seventy times seven.

Objection, first: Such an affront has been offered that flesh and blood cannot swallow it.

Answer: Flesh and blood shall not inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 15:50). Christians must walk contrary to themselves, and with the sword of the Spirit fight against the lusts of the flesh (Galatians 5:24).

Objection, second: But if I forgive one injury, I shall invite more.

Answer, first: It argues a devilish nature to be worse for kindness; but suppose we should meet with such monsters, yet it is our duty to be ready to forgive (Colossians 3:13). Shall we cease from doing good, because others will not cease from doing evil?

Answer, second: If the more you forgive injuries, the more injuries you meet with, this will make your grace shine the more. Another's vice will be a greater demonstration of your virtue. Often forgiving will add more to the weight of his sin, and the weight of your glory. If any shall say, I strive to excel in other graces; but as for this grace of meekness, bearing and forgiving injuries, I cannot arrive at it, I desire to be excused — what do you talk of other

graces? Where there is one grace, there are all; if meekness is wanting, it is but a counterfeit chain of grace. Your faith is a fable, your repentance is a lie, your humility is hypocrisy.

And whereas you say you cannot forgive, think of, first, your sin. Your neighbor is not so bad in offending you, as you are in not forgiving him. Your neighbor in offending you does but trespass against a man; but you, refusing to forgive him, trespass against God. Second, your danger. You who are implacable — though you may smother the fire of your rage, yet will not extinguish it — know that if you die this night, you die in an unpardoned condition. If you will not believe me, believe Christ (Mark 11:26): If you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses. He who lives without meekness, dies without mercy.

Third, the branch of meekness is in recompensing good for evil; this is a higher degree than the other. Matthew 5:44: Love your enemies, do good to those that hate you, pray for them which despitefully use you. Romans 12:20: If your enemy hungers, feed him. 1 Peter 3:9: Not rendering evil for evil, but contrariwise blessing. This threefold cord of Scripture should not easily be broken. To render evil for evil is brutish; to render evil for good is devilish; to render good for evil is Christian. The heathens had this maxim: Wrong no one unless first provoked by an injury. They thought it lawful to wrong none unless first provoked; but the sunlight of Scripture shines brighter than the lamp of reason. Love your enemies. When grace comes into the heart, it works a strange alteration. When a scion is grafted into the stock, it partakes of the nature and sap of the tree, and brings forth the same fruit. Take a crab-apple and graft it into a good stock, it brings forth the same fruit as the stock. So he who was once of a sour, crabby disposition,

given to revenge — when he once partakes of the sap of the heavenly olive, he bears generous fruit. He is full of love to his enemies. Grace allays the passion, and melts the heart into compassion. As the sun draws up many thick, noxious vapors from the earth and sea, and returns them in sweet showers; so a gracious heart returns all the unkindnesses and discourtesies of his enemies with the sweet influences and distillations of love. Thus David (Psalm 35:13): They rewarded me evil for good; but as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth, I humbled my soul with fasting. Some would have rejoiced; he wept. Some would have put on scarlet; David put on sackcloth. This is the rarity, or rather miracle, of meekness — it returns good for evil. Thus we have seen the nature of meekness.

Showing the character of a true saint.

Use 1. It shows us the badge of a true saint; he is of a meek, gracious spirit; he is not easily provoked. He takes everything in the best sense, and conquers malice with mildness. I would to God all who profess themselves saints were adorned with this grace. We are known to belong to Christ when we wear his livery. He is a saint whose spirit is so meekened that he can subdue prejudices and bury unkindnesses. A passion of tears becomes a Christian better than a passion of anger. Every saint is Christ's spouse (Song of Solomon 4:8). It becomes Christ's spouse to be meek; if any injury be offered to the spouse, she leaves it to her husband to avenge. It is unseemly for Christ's spouse to strike.

Containing a persuasive to meekness.

Use 2. Let me beseech all Christians to labor to be eminent in this excellent grace of meekness. Zephaniah 2:3: Seek meekness. Seeking implies we have lost it; therefore we must make an earnest search to find it. Colossians 3:12: Put on therefore, as the elect of God, meekness — put it on as a garment, never to be left off. Meekness is a necessary ingredient into everything. First, it is necessary in instruction (2 Timothy 2:25): In meekness instructing. Meekness conquers the opposers of truth; meekness melts the heart; soft words are softening. Second, meekness is necessary in hearing the word (James 1:21): Receive with meekness the engrafted word. He who comes to the word either with passion or prejudice gets no good, but hurt; he turns wine into poison, and stabs himself with the sword of the Spirit. Third, meekness is needful in reproofs (Galatians 6:1): If a man is overtaken with a fault, restore such a one with the spirit of meekness. The Greek word means put him in joint again. If a bone is out of joint, the surgeon must not use a rough hand, which might chance break another bone; but he must come gently to work, and afterward bind it up softly. So if a brother through inadvertency is overtaken, we must not come to him in a fury of passion, but with a spirit of meekness labor to restore him. I shall lay down several motives or arguments to meeken the spirits of men.

First, let me propose examples of meekness.

First, the example of Jesus Christ. Matthew 21:5: Your King comes to you meek. Christ was the pattern and example of meekness. 1 Peter 2:23: When he was reviled, he reviled not again. His enemies' words were more bitter than the gall they gave him; but Christ's words were smoother than oil. He prayed and wept for his enemies. He calls to us to learn of him (Matthew 11:29): Learn of

me, for I am meek. Christ does not bid us (says Augustine) learn of him to work miracles, to open the eyes of the blind, to raise the dead; but he would have us learn of him to be meek. If we do not imitate his life, we cannot be saved by his death.

Second, let us set before our eyes the examples of some of the saints who have shined in this grace. Moses was a man of unparalleled meekness. Numbers 12:3: Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men who were upon the face of the earth. How many injuries did he bear! When the people of Israel murmured against him, instead of falling into a rage, he fell to prayer for them (Exodus 15:24-25). The text says they murmured at the waters of Marah; surely the waters were not so bitter as the spirits of the people. But they could not provoke him to passion, but to petition. Another time when they wanted water, they fell a-chiding with Moses (Exodus 17:3): Why is it that you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children with thirst? As if they said, If we die, we will lay our death to your charge. Would not this exasperate? Surely it would have required the meekness of an angel to bear this. But behold Moses's meekness — he did not give them an unbecoming word! Though they were in a storm, he was in a calm; they chide, but he prays. Another eminent pattern of meekness was David. When Shimei cursed David, and Abishai, one of David's bodyguard, would have beheaded Shimei, King David said, Let him alone, and let him curse (2 Samuel 16:11). And when Saul had wronged and abused David, and it was in David's power to have found Saul napping and killed him (1 Samuel 26:7, 12), yet he would not touch Saul, but called God to be his judge (verse 23). Here was a mirror of meekness.

Third, the examples of heathens; though their meekness could not properly be called grace, because it grew not upon the right stock of faith, yet it was beautiful in its kind. Pericles, when one reviled him and followed him home to his gate at night, railing upon him, answered not a word, but commanded one of his servants to light a torch and bring the railer home to his own house. Frederick, Duke of Saxony, when he was angry, would shut himself up in his closet and let none come near him until he had mastered his passion. Plutarch reports of the Pythagoreans, that if they had chanced to fall out in the day, they would embrace and be friends before sundown. Cicero in one of his orations reports of Pompey the Great that he was a man of a meek disposition; he admitted all to come to him so freely, and heard the complaints of those that were wronged so mildly, that he excelled all the princes before him. He was of so sweet a temper that it was hard to say whether his enemies more feared his valor, or his subjects more loved his meekness. Julius Caesar not only forgave Brutus and Cassius his enemies, but advanced them; he thought himself most honored by acts of clemency and meekness. Did the spring of nature rise so high, and shall not grace rise higher? Shall we debase faith below reason? Let us write after these fair copies.

Second, meekness is a great ornament to a Christian (1 Peter 3:4): The ornament of a meek spirit. How amiable is a saint in God's eye when adorned with this jewel! What the psalmist says of praise, the same may I say of meekness — it is fitting for the righteous. No garment more becomes a Christian than meekness; therefore we are bid to put on this garment (Colossians 3:12): Put

on therefore, as the elect of God, meekness. A meek spirit credits religion, silences malice; it is the varnish that puts a luster upon holiness, and sets off the gospel with a better gloss.

Third, this is the way to be like God; God is meek toward those that provoke him. How many black mouths are opened daily against the Majesty of heaven? How do men tear his name? Vex his Spirit? Crucify his Son afresh? They walk up and down the earth as so many devils covered with flesh, yet the Lord is meek, not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3). How easily could God crush sinners and kick them into hell! But he moderates his anger; though he is full of Majesty, yet full of meekness. In him is mixed princely greatness and fatherly mildness; as he has his scepter of royalty, so his throne of grace. How should this make us fall in love with meekness! Hereby we bear a kind of likeness to God. It is not profession that makes us like God, but imitation. Where meekness is wanting, we are not like men; where it is present, we are like God.

Fourth, meekness argues a noble and excellent spirit; a meek man is a valorous man — he gets a victory over himself. Passion arises from weakness and feebleness; therefore we may observe old men and children are more irritable than others. Strength of passion argues weakness of judgment. But the meek man who is able to conquer his fury is the most powerful and victorious. Proverbs 16:32: He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that rules his spirit, better than he that takes a city. To yield to one's passion is easy; it is swimming along with the tide of corrupt nature. But to turn against nature, to resist passion, to over-

come evil with good — this is like a Christian. This is that spiritual chivalry and fortitude of mind that deserves the trophies of victory and the garland of praise.

Fifth, meekness is the best way to conquer and melt the heart of an enemy. When Saul lay at David's mercy, and David only cut off the skirt of his robe, how was Saul's heart affected with David's meekness (1 Samuel 24:16-17)! Is this your voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice and wept; and he said to David, You are more righteous than I; for you have rewarded me good, in that when the Lord had delivered me into your hand, you killed me not. This heaping of coals melts and thaws the heart of others. It is the greatest victory to overcome an enemy without striking a blow. The fire will go where the wedge cannot; mildness prevails more than fierceness. Passion makes an enemy of a friend; meekness makes a friend of an enemy. The meek Christian shall have letters testimonial even from his adversary. It is reported of Philip, King of Macedon, that when it was told him Nicanor openly railed against his majesty, the king, instead of putting him to death (as his council advised), sent Nicanor a rich present, which so overcame the man's heart that he went about to recant what he had said against the king, and highly extolled the king's clemency. Roughness hardens men's hearts; meekness causes them to relent. 2 Kings 6:22-23: When the king of Israel feasted the captives he had taken in war, they were more conquered by his meekness than by his sword; the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.

Sixth, consider the great promise in the text: The meek shall inherit the earth. This argument perhaps will prevail with those who desire to have earthly possessions. Some may object: If I for-

bear and forgive, I shall lose my right at last, and be turned out of all. But God has here entered into a bond: the meek shall inherit the earth. The unmeek man is in a sad condition; there is no place remaining for him but hell, for he has no promise made to him either of earth or heaven. It is the meek who shall inherit the earth.

Objection: How do the meek inherit the earth, when they are strangers in the earth (Hebrews 11:37)?

Answer: The meek are said to inherit the earth, not that the earth is their chief inheritance, or that they always have the greatest share here; but —

First, they are the inheritors of the earth, because though they may not always have the greatest part of the earth, yet they have the best right to it. The word 'inherit,' says Ambrose, notes the saints' title to the earth. The saints' title is best, being members of Christ, who is Lord of all. Adam did not only lose his title to heaven when he fell, but to the earth too; and until we are incorporated into Christ, we do not fully recover our title. I deny not but the wicked have a civil right to the earth which the laws of the land give them, but not a sacred right. Only the meek Christian has a scriptural title to his land. We count that the best title which is held in the head; the saints hold their right to the earth in their head Christ, who is the Prince of the kings of the earth (Revelation 1:5). In this sense, he who has but a foot of land inherits more than he who has a thousand acres, because he has a better and more secure right to it.

Second, the meek Christian is said to inherit the earth, because he inherits the blessing of the earth. The wicked man has the earth, but not as a fruit of God's favor; he has it as a dog has poisoned

bread — it does him more hurt than good. A wicked man lives in the earth as one who lives in an infected air; he is infected by his mercies. The fat of the earth will but make him fry and blaze the more in hell; so that a wicked man may be said not to have what he has, because he lacks the blessing. But the meek saint enjoys the earth as a pledge of God's love; the curse and poison is taken out of the earth. Psalm 37:11: The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. On which words Augustine gives this gloss: Wicked men may delight themselves in the abundance of cattle and riches, but the meek man delights himself in the abundance of peace; what he has, he possesses with inward serenity and quietness.

Caution: When it is said the meek shall inherit the earth, not that they shall inherit no more than the earth; they shall inherit heaven too. If they should only inherit the earth, then (says Chrysostom) how could it be said, Blessed are the meek? The meek have the earth only for their sojourning house; they have heaven for their mansion house. Psalm 149:4: He will beautify the meek with salvation. The meek beautify religion, and God will beautify them with salvation. Salvation is the port we all desire to sail to; it is the harvest and vintage of souls. The meek are they who shall reap this harvest; the meek shall wear the embroidered robe of salvation. The meek are lords of the earth, and heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:14).

Seventh, the mischief of an unmeek spirit. First, there is nothing that makes such room for the devil to come into the heart and take possession, as wrath and anger (Ephesians 4:26-27): Let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil. When men let forth passion, they let in Satan; the wrathful man

has the devil for his bedfellow. Second, passion hinders peace; the meek Christian has sweet quiet and harmony in his soul. But passion puts the soul into disorder; it not only clouds reason, but disturbs conscience. He does not possess himself, whom passion possesses. It is no wonder if they have no peace of conscience, who make so little conscience of peace. Wrathfulness grieves the Spirit of God (Ephesians 4:30-31), and if the Spirit is grieved, he will be gone. We care not to stay in smoky houses; the Spirit of God does not like to be in a heart that is so full of the vapors and fumes of disordered passion.

Eighth, another argument to cool the intemperate heat of our hearts is to consider that all the injuries and unkind usage we meet with from the world do not fall out by chance, but are disposed of by the all-wise God for our good. Many are like the foolish dog that snarls at the stone, never looking at the hand that threw it; or like the horse, who being spurred by the rider, bites the bridle. Did we look higher than instruments, our hearts would grow meek and calm. David looked beyond Shimei's rage (2 Samuel 16:11): Let him curse, for the Lord has bidden him. What wisdom it would be for Christians to see the hand of God in all the barbarisms and incivilities of men! Job eyed God in his affliction, and that meekened his spirit (Job 1:21): The Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. He does not say, the Chaldeans have taken away, but the Lord has taken away. What made Christ so meek in his sufferings? He did not look at Judas or Pilate, but at his Father (John 18:11): The cup which my Father has given me. When wicked men revile and injure us, they are but God's executioners; who is angry with the executioner?

And as God has a hand in all the affronts and discourtesies we receive from men (for they do but hand them over to us), so God will do us good by all, if we belong to him. David said (2 Samuel 16:12): Perhaps the Lord will look upon my affliction, and will repay me good for his cursing. Usually when the Lord intends us some signal mercy, he fits us for it by some eminent trial. As Moses's hand was first leprous before it worked salvation (Exodus 4:6), so God may let his people be stricken with the cursings and revilings of men before he showers down some blessing upon them. It may be the Lord will repay me good for his cursing this day.

Ninth, want of meekness evidences want of grace. True grace inflames love, and moderates anger. Grace is like the file which smooths the rough iron; it files off the roughness of a man's spirit. Grace says to the heart as Christ did to the angry sea (Mark 4:39): Peace, be still. So where there is grace in the heart, it stills the raging of passion, and makes a calm. He who is in a perpetual frenzy, letting loose the reins to wrath and malice, never yet felt the sweet efficacy of grace. It is one of the sins of the heathen: Implacable (Romans 1:31). A revengeful, cankered heart is not only heathenish but devilish (James 3:14-15): If you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, this wisdom descends not from above, but is devilish. The old serpent spits forth the poison of malice and revenge.

Tenth, if all that has been said will not serve to master this bedlam disposition of wrath and anger, let me tell you — you are the persons whom God speaks of, who hate to be reformed; you are rebels against the word. Read and tremble (Isaiah 30:8-9): Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come forever and ever, that this is a rebel-

lious people, children that will not hear the law of the Lord. If nothing yet will calm the wrathful devil, let me tell you, God has charged every man not to associate with you (Proverbs 22:24): Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man you shall not go. What a monster is he among men, that every one is warned to beware of and not come near, as one who is unfit for human society! Make no league with that man, says God. If you take him into your society, you take a snake into your bosom. With a furious man you shall not go. Will you walk with the devil? The furious man is possessed with a wrathful devil.

May all this help to meeken and sweeten Christians' spirits.

Objection: But it is my nature to be passionate.

Answer, first: This is sinful reasoning; it is secretly to lay our sin upon God. We learned this from Adam (Genesis 3:12): The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate. Rather than Adam would confess his sin, he would father it upon God — the woman you gave me. As if he had said, If you had not given me this woman, I would not have eaten. So says one: It is my nature; this is the froward, peevish nature God has given me. But you falsely charge God. God gave you no such nature; he made man upright (Ecclesiastes 7:29). God made you straight; you made yourself crooked. All your affections at first — your joy, love, anger — were set in order as the stars in their right orb. But you misplaced them, and made them move irregularly. At first the affections, like several musical instruments well-tuned, made a sweet concert; but sin was the jarring string that brought all out of tune. Vain man, plead not that it is your nature to be angry; thank yourself for it. Nature's spring was pure, until sin poisoned the spring.

Answer, second: Is it your nature to be fierce and angry? This is so far from being an excuse that it makes it so much the worse. It is the nature of a toad to poison; that makes it the more hateful. If a man were indicted for stealing, and he should say to the judge, Spare me, it is my nature to steal — would this be any excuse? The judge would say, You deserve rather to die. Sinner, get a new nature; flesh and blood cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.

How to attain this grace of meekness.

Question: How shall I do to be possessed of this excellent grace of meekness?

Answer, first: Often look upon the meekness of Christ; the scholar who would write well has his eye often upon the copy.

Answer, second: Pray earnestly that God will meeken your spirit. God is called the God of all grace (1 Peter 5:10). He has all the graces in his gift; sue to him for this grace of meekness. If one were patron of all the livings in the land, men would sue to him for a living. God is patron of all the graces; let us sue to him. Mercy comes in at the door of prayer. Ezekiel 36:26, 37: I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them. Meekness is the commodity we want; let us send prayer as our agent to heaven to procure it for us. And pray in faith; when faith sets prayer on work, prayer sets God on work. All divine blessings come streaming to us through this golden channel of prayer.

CHAPTER 13



Matthew 5:6: Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Describing the nature of spiritual hunger.

We are now come to the fourth step of blessedness: Blessed are they that hunger. The words fall into two parts.

First, a duty implied: Blessed are they that hunger. Spiritual hunger is a blessed hunger.

Question 1: What is meant by hunger?

Answer: Hunger is put for desire (Isaiah 26:9). Spiritual hunger is the rational appetite whereby the soul pants after that which it apprehends most suitable and proportionable to itself.

Question 2: From where is this hunger?

Answer: Hunger is from a sense of want; he who spiritually hungers has a real sense of his own indigence — he wants righteousness.

Question 3: What is meant by righteousness?

Answer: There is a twofold righteousness.

First, of imputation. Second, of implantation.

First, a righteousness of imputation, that is, Christ's righteousness. Jeremiah 23:6: He shall be called the Lord our righteousness. This is as truly ours to justify as it is Christ's to bestow. By virtue of this righteousness God looks upon us as if we had never sinned (Numbers 23:21). This is a perfect righteousness (Colossians 2:10): You are complete in him. This does not only cover, but adorn. He who has this righteousness is equal to the most illustrious saints; the weakest believer is justified as much as the strongest. This is a Christian's triumph: when he is defiled in himself, he is undefiled in his head. In this blessed righteousness we shine brighter than the angels. This righteousness is worth hungering after.

Second, a righteousness of implantation; that is, inherent righteousness — the graces of the Spirit; holiness of heart and life, which Cajetan calls universal righteousness. This a pious soul hungers after.

This is a blessed hunger; bodily hunger cannot make a man so miserable as spiritual hunger makes him blessed. This evidences life; a dead man cannot hunger; hunger proceeds from life. The first thing the child does when it is born is to hunger after the breast. Spiritual hunger follows upon the new birth (1 Peter 2:2). Bernard in one of his Soliloquies comforts himself with this: that surely he had the truth of grace in him, because he had in his heart a strong desire after God. It is happy when, though we do not have what we should, we desire what we have not. The appetite is as much from God as the food.

The inferences drawn from the proposition.

Use 1. See here at what a low price God sets heavenly things; it is but hungering and thirsting. Isaiah 55:1: Everyone that thirsts, come to the waters; buy without money. We are not bid to bring any merits, as the papists would; nor to bring a sum of money to purchase righteousness. All that is required is to bring an appetite. Christ has fulfilled all righteousness; we are only to hunger and thirst after righteousness. This is equitable and reasonable. God requires not rivers of oil, but sighs and tears; the invitation of the gospel is free. If a friend invites guests to his table, he does not expect them to bring money to pay for their dinner; only come with an appetite. So says God: It is not penance, pilgrimage, or self-righteousness I require; only bring a stomach — hunger and thirst after righteousness. God might have set Christ and salvation at a higher price; but he has much beaten down the price. Now as this shows the sweetness of God's nature — he is not a hard master — so it shows the inexcusableness of those who perish under the gospel. What apology can any man make at the day of judgment, when God shall ask: Friend, why did you not embrace Christ? I set Christ and grace at a low rate; if you had but hungered after righteousness, you might have had it, but you slighted Christ. You had such low thoughts of righteousness that you would not hunger after it. How do you think to escape who have neglected so great salvation? The easier the terms of the gospel are, the sorer punishment shall they be thought worthy of who unworthily refuse such an offer.

Second, it shows us a true character of a godly man — he hungers and thirsts after spiritual things. Isaiah 26:9; Psalm 73:25. A true saint is carried upon the wing of desire; it is the very constitution of a gracious soul to thirst after God. Psalm 42:2. In the

word preached, now he is full of desire; these are some of the pantings of his soul: Lord, you have led me into your courts; let me have your sweet presence, that your glory may fill the temple! This is your limning house; will you draw some sacred lineaments of grace upon my soul, that I may be more assimilated and changed into the likeness of my dear Savior? In prayer, how is the soul filled with passionate longings after Christ! Prayer is expressed by groans unutterable (Romans 8:26). The heart sends up whole volleys of sighs to heaven: Lord, one beam of your love, one drop of your blood!

Containing a reprehension of such as do not hunger after righteousness.

Use 2. It reproves such as have none of this spiritual hunger; they have no ardent desires; the edge of their affections is blunted. Honey is not sweet to those who are sick of a fever and have their tongues embittered with bile. So those who are soul-sick, and in the gall of bitterness, find no sweetness in God or religion. Sin tastes sweeter to them; they have no spiritual hunger. That men have not this hunger after righteousness appears by these seven demonstrations.

First, they never felt any emptiness; they are full of their own righteousness (Romans 10:3). Now the full stomach loathes the honeycomb. This was Laodicea's disease; she was full, and had no appetite for Christ's gold or eye salve (Revelation 3:17). When men are filled with pride, this flatulent disorder hinders holy longings, as when the stomach is full of wind, it spoils the appetite. None are so empty of grace as those who think they are full; he has most need of righteousness who least feels he needs it.

Second, that men do not hunger after righteousness appears because they can manage well enough without it. If they have oil in the cruse, with the world coming in, they are well content. Grace is a commodity that is least missed. You shall hear men complain they want health, they want trade, but never complain they want righteousness. If men miss a meal or two, they think themselves half undone; but they can stay away from ordinances, which are the conduits of grace. Do they hunger after righteousness, who are satisfied without it? And who desire to be excused from feeding upon the gospel-banquet? Surely he has no appetite who begs to be excused from eating (Luke 14:18).

Third, it is a sign they have none of this spiritual hunger, who desire rather sleep than food; they are more drowsy than hungry. Some there are who come to the word that they may get a nap, to whom I may say as Christ did to Peter (Mark 14:37): Could you not watch one hour? It is strange to see a man asleep at his meal. Others there are who have a deep sleep fallen upon them; they are asleep in security, and they hate a soul-awakening ministry. While they sleep, their damnation slumbers not (1 Peter 2:3).

Fourth, it appears men have no spiritual hunger, because they refuse their food. Christ and grace are offered, indeed pressed upon them, but they put away salvation from them, as the froward child pushes away the breast (Psalm 81:11; Acts 13:46). Such are the fanatics and enthusiasts who put away the blessed ordinances and pretend to revelations. That is a strange revelation, that tells a man he may live without food. These prefer husks before manna; they live upon airy notions, being fed by the prince of the air.

Fifth, it is a sign they have none of this spiritual hunger, who delight more in the garnishing of the dish than in the food. These are they who look more after elegance and novelty in preaching than solid matter. It argues either a wanton palate or a surfeited stomach to feed on salads and trifles, neglecting wholesome food. 1 Timothy 6:3-4: If any man consent not to wholesome words, he is proud, knowing nothing. The plainest truth has its beauty. They have no spiritual hunger who desire only to feast their fancy. Of such the prophet speaks (Ezekiel 33:32): You are to them as a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument. If a man were invited to a feast, and there being music at the feast, he so listened to the music that he did not mind his food — you would say, Surely he is not hungry. So when men are for jingling words, and prefer gallantry of speech to spirituality of matter, it is a sign they have surfeited stomachs and itching ears.

Sixth, they evidence little hunger after righteousness who prefer other things before it — their profits and recreations. If a boy, when he should be at dinner, is playing in the street, it is a sign he has no appetite to his meal. Were he hungry, he would not prefer his play before his food. So when men prefer vain things which cannot profit, before the blood of Christ and the grace of the Spirit, it is a sign they have no palate or stomach for heavenly things.

Seventh, it is a sign men have no spiritual hunger when they are more for disputes in religion than for practice. Robert Gallus thought he saw in a dream a great feast, and some were biting on hard stones. When men feed only on hard questions and controversies — like some of the schoolmen's endless distinctions, as whether one may partake with him who has not the work of grace in his heart, whether one ought not to separate from a church in

case of mal-administration, what is to be thought of infant baptism, and so on — when these niceties and criticisms in religion take up men's heads, while they neglect faith and holiness, they are picking bones and not feeding on the meat. Skeptics in religion have hot brains but cold hearts. Did men hunger and thirst after righteousness, they would propound to themselves such questions as these: How shall we do to be saved? How shall we make our calling and election sure? How shall we mortify our corruptions? But such as ravel out their time in fruitless and litigious disputes — I call heaven to witness — are strangers to this text; they do not hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Containing a reproof of those who hunger, but not after righteousness.

Second, it reproves those who, instead of hungering and thirsting after righteousness, thirst after riches. This is the thirst of covetous men; they desire mammon, not manna. Amos 2:7: That pant after the dust of the earth. This is the disease most are sick of — an immoderate appetite after the world. But these things will no more satisfy than drink will quench the thirst of a man with dropsy. Covetousness is idolatry (Colossians 3:5). Too many Protestants set up the idol of gold in the temple of their hearts. This sin of covetousness is the most hardly rooted out; commonly when other sins leave men, this sin remains. Wantonness is the sin of youth; worldliness is the sin of old age.

Third, it reproves those who hunger and thirst after unrighteousness; here I shall indict three sorts of persons.

First, it reproves such as thirst after others' lands and possessions; this the Scripture calls a mighty sin (Amos 5:12). Thus Ahab thirsted after Naboth's vineyard. This is a hungry age we live in; we have a great deal of this hungering and thirsting, which has made so many state-thieves. Men have fleeced others to feather themselves. What a brave challenge did Samuel make (1 Samuel 12:3): Behold, here I am; witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Or whose donkey have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whose hand have I received any bribe from? Few that have been in power can say thus: Whose ox have we taken? Goods unjustly gotten seldom go to the third heir. Read the plunderer's curse (Isaiah 33:1): Woe to you that spoil, and you were not spoiled; when you shall cease to spoil, you shall be spoiled. Ahab paid dearly for the vineyard, when the devil carried away his soul and the dogs licked his blood (1 Kings 21:19). He that lives on plunder dies a fool (Jeremiah 17:11): He that gets riches, and not by right, at his end shall be a fool.

Second, it reproves such as hunger and thirst after revenge; this is a devilish thirst. Though it were more Christian and safe to smother an injury, yet our nature is prone to this disease of revenge. We have the sting of the bee, not the honey. Malice, having broken the bars of reason, grows savage. Heathens will rise up against Christians who have stopped the vein of revengeful passion when it has begun to vent. I have read of Phocion, who being wrongfully condemned to die, desired that his son might not remember the injuries which the Athenians had done to him, nor revenge his blood.

Third, it reproves such as hunger and thirst to satisfy their impure lusts. Sinners are said to sin with greediness (Ephesians 4:19). So Amnon was sick until he had defiled Tamar's chastity. Never does a hungry man come with more eagerness to his food than a wicked man comes to his sin. And when Satan sees men have such an appetite, commonly he will provide a dish they love; he will set the forbidden tree before them. They that thirst to commit sin shall thirst as Lazarus did in hell for a drop of water to cool their tongue.

Showing the signs of spiritual hunger.

Use 3. Let us put ourselves upon a trial whether we hunger and thirst after righteousness; I shall give you five signs by which you may judge of this hunger.

First, hunger is a painful thing. Esau, when he returned from hunting, was almost dead with hunger (Genesis 25:32). And Psalm 107:5: Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. So a man that hungers after righteousness is in anguish of soul, and ready to faint away for it. He finds a want of Christ and grace; he is distressed and in pain until his spiritual hunger is stilled and allayed.

Second, hunger is satisfied with nothing but food. Bring a hungry man flowers, music, tell him pleasant stories — nothing will content him but food. Shall I die for thirst? said Samson (Judges 15:18). So a man that hungers and thirsts after righteousness says, Give me Christ, or I die. Lord, what will you give me, seeing I go Christless? What though I have gifts, wealth, honor and esteem in the world? All is nothing without Christ. Show me the Lord, and it

suffices. Let me have Christ to clothe me, Christ to feed me, Christ to intercede for me. While the soul is Christless, it is restless; nothing but the water-springs of Christ's blood can quench its thirst.

Third, hunger wrestles with difficulties, and makes an adventure for food; we say hunger breaks through stone walls (Genesis 42:1-2). The soul that spiritually hungers is resolved: Christ it must have, grace it must have. And to use Basil's expression, the hungry soul is almost distracted until it enjoys the thing it hungers after.

Fourth, a hungry man falls to his meal with an appetite; you need not make an oration to a hungry man and persuade him to eat. So he who hungers after righteousness feeds eagerly on an ordinance. Jeremiah 15:16: Your words were found, and I ate them. In the Sacrament he feeds with appetite upon the body and blood of the Lord. God loves to see us feed hungrily on the bread of life.

Fifth, a hungry man tastes sweetness in his food; so he that hungers after righteousness relishes a sweetness in heavenly things. Christ is to him all marrow, the very essence of delights. 1 Peter 2:3: If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. He that spiritually hungers tastes the promises sweet; indeed, tastes a reproof sweet. To the hungry every bitter thing is sweet (Proverbs 27:7). A bitter reproof is sweet; he can feed upon the myrrh of the gospel as well as the honey. By these signs we may judge of ourselves whether we hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Comfort to such as do hunger — wherein is shown the difference between true and false hunger.

Use 4. It may serve to comfort the hearts of those who do hunger and thirst after righteousness. I doubt not that it is the grief of many a good heart that he cannot be more holy, that he

cannot serve God better. Blessed are they that hunger. Though you have not so much righteousness as you would, yet you are blessed, because you hunger after it. Desire is the best discovery of a Christian. Actions may be counterfeit; a man may do a good action for a bad end, as Jehu did. Actions may be compulsory; a man may be forced to do that which is good, but not to will that which is good. Therefore we are to cherish good desires, and to bless God for them. Oftentimes a child of God has nothing to show for himself but desires (Nehemiah 1:11): Your servants who desire to fear your name. These hungerings after righteousness proceed from love; a man does not desire that which he does not love. If you did not love Christ, you could not hunger after him.

Objection 1: If my hunger were right, then I could take comfort in it; but I fear it is counterfeit — hypocrites have their desires.

Answer: That I may better settle a doubting Christian, I shall show the difference between true and false desires, spiritual hunger and carnal.

First, the hypocrite does not desire grace for itself; he desires grace only as a bridge to lead him over to heaven. He does not so much thirst after grace as glory. He does not so much desire the way of righteousness as the crown of righteousness. His desire is not to be made like Christ, but to reign with Christ. This was Balaam's desire (Numbers 23:10): Let me die the death of the righteous. Such desires as these are found among the damned; this is the hypocrite's hunger. But a child of God desires grace for itself, and Christ for himself. To a believer, not only heaven is precious, but Christ is precious (1 Peter 2:7).

Second, the hypocrite's desire is conditional; he would have heaven and his sins too — heaven and his pride, heaven and his covetousness. The young man in the gospel would have had heaven, provided he might keep his earthly possessions. Many a man would have Christ, but there is some sin he must not be uncivil to, but gratify. This is the hypocrite's hunger. But true desire is absolute. The soul says, Give me Christ on any terms. Let God propose what articles he will, I will subscribe to them. Would he have me deny myself? Would he have me mortify sin? I am content to do anything, so I may have Christ. Hypocrites would have Christ, but they are loath to part with a lust for him; they are like a man who would have a lease, but is loath to pay the fee.

Third, hypocrites' desires are mere desires; they are lazy and sluggish. When one urged Lipsius to the study of virtue, he said, My mind is inclined to it. Proverbs 21:25: The desire of the lazy person kills him, for his hands refuse to labor. Many stand like the man in the fable, crying, Help, Hercules, when his wagon stuck in the mud, when he should rather have put his shoulder to the wheel. Men would be saved, but they will take no pains. Does he desire water who will not let down the bucket into the well? But true desire is quickened into endeavor. Isaiah 26:9: With my soul I have desired you in the night; with my spirit within me I will seek you early. It is the violent who take heaven by force (Matthew 12:11). The love-sick spouse, though she was wounded and her veil taken away, yet follows after Christ (Song of Solomon 5:7). Desire is the weight of the soul, which sets it going. As the eagle which desires its prey makes haste to it (Job 39, last verse) — the eagle has

sharpness of sight to discover its prey, and swiftness of wing to fly to it — so the soul that hungers after righteousness is carried swiftly to it in the use of all holy ordinances.

Fourth, the hypocrite's desires are cheap; he would have spiritual things, but he will be at no cost for them. He cares not how much money he parts with for his lusts; he has money to spend upon a drunken companion, but has no money to part with for the maintaining of God's ordinances. Hypocrites cry up religion, but cry down the maintenance of ministers. But true desires are costly. David would not offer burnt offerings without cost (1 Chronicles 21:24). A hungry man will give anything for food, as fell out in the siege of Samaria (2 Kings 6:25). That man never hungered after Christ who thinks much of parting with a little silver for the pearl of great price.

Fifth, hypocrites' desires are flashy and transient; they are quickly gone, like the wind that stays not long in one place, or like a hot fit which is soon over. While the hypocrite is under legal terror or in affliction, he has some good desires, but the hot fit is soon over. His goodness, like a fiery comet, soon spends and evaporates. But true desire is constant. It is observable that the Greek word in the text is in the participle: Blessed are they that are hungering. Though they have righteousness, yet they are still hungering after more. The hypocrite's desire is like the motion of a watch that soon runs down. The desire of a godly man is like the beating of the pulse, which lasts as long as life (Psalm 119:20): My soul breaks for the longing that it has to your judgments. And that we might not think this pang of desire would soon be over, he adds, at all times. David's desire after God was not a high color in a fit, but the constant complexion of his soul. In the temple the fire was not to go

out by night (Leviticus 6:13): The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar. There was, says Cyril, a mystery in it, to show that we must ever be burning in holy affections and desires.

Sixth, hypocrites' desires are unseasonable; they are not well timed. They put off their hungering after righteousness until it is too late. They are like the foolish virgins who came knocking when the door was shut (Matthew 25:10). In time of health and prosperity the stream of the affections ran another way; it was sin the hypocrite desired, not righteousness. When he is dying and can keep his sins no longer, now he would have grace as a passport to carry him to heaven. This is the hypocrite's fault: his faith was too early, and his desires are too late. His faith began to bud in the morning of his infancy — he believed ever since he could remember — but his desires after Christ do not begin to put forth until the evening of old age. He sends forth his desires when his last breath is going forth, as if a man should desire a pardon after the sentence is passed. These deathbed desires are suspicious. But true desires are timely and seasonable; a gracious heart seeks first the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33). David's thirst after God was early (Psalm 63:1). The wise virgins got their oil beforehand before the bridegroom came. Thus we see the difference between true and false hunger. They who can find this true hunger are blessed, and may take comfort in it.

Objection 2: But my hunger after righteousness is so weak that I fear it is not true.

Answer, first: Though the pulse beats but weakly, it shows there is life. That weak desires should not be discouraged, there is a promise made to them (Matthew 12:20): A bruised reed he will not break. A reed is a weak thing, but especially when it is bruised;

yet this bruised reed shall not be broken, but like Aaron's dry rod, bud and blossom. In case of weakness, look to Christ your high priest; he is merciful, therefore will bear with your infirmities; he is mighty, therefore will help them.

Answer, second: If your desires after righteousness seem to be weak and languid, yet a Christian may sometimes take a measure of his spiritual estate as well by the judgment as by the affections. What is it that you esteem most in your judgment? Is it Christ and grace? This is a good evidence for heaven. It was a sign that Paul bore entire love to Christ, because he esteemed this pearl above all; he counted other things but rubbish, that he might gain Christ (Philippians 3:8).

Objection 3: A child of God says, That which much clouds my comfort is, I have not that hunger which once I had. There was a time when I hungered after the Sabbath, because then the manna fell; I called the Sabbath a delight. I remember the time when I hungered after the body and blood of the Lord. I came to a Sacrament as a hungry man to a feast. But now it is otherwise with me; I have not those hungerings as formerly.

Answer: It is indeed an ill sign for a man to lose his appetite. But though it is a sign of the decay of grace to lose the spiritual appetite, yet it is a sign of the truth of grace to bewail the loss. It is sad to lose our first love, but it is happy when we mourn for the loss of our first love.

Answer, second: If you have not that appetite after heavenly things as formerly, yet be not discouraged, for in the use of means you may recover your appetite. The ordinances are for the recover-

ing of the appetite when it is lost. In other cases feeding takes away the appetite, but here, feeding on an ordinance begets an appetite.

Containing a persuasion to spiritual hunger.

Use 5. It exhorts us all to labor after this spiritual hunger. Hunger less after the world, and more after righteousness. Say concerning spiritual things, Lord, evermore give me this bread; feed me with this angels' food. That manna is most to be hungered after which will not only preserve life, but prevent death (John 6:50). That is most desirable which is most durable. Riches are not forever (Proverbs 27:24), but righteousness is forever (Proverbs 8:18). The beauty of holiness never fades; the robe of righteousness never wears out. Hunger after that righteousness which delivers from death (Proverbs 10:2). This is the righteousness which God himself is in love with (Proverbs 15:9): He loves him that follows after righteousness. All men are ambitious of the king's favor — but what is a prince's smile but a transient beatitude? This sunshine of his royal countenance soon masks itself with a cloud of displeasure. But you who are endued with righteousness are God's favorite, and how sweet is his smile (Psalm 63:3): Your loving-kindness is better than life.

Containing an excitation to spiritual hunger.

To persuade men to hunger after this righteousness, consider two things.

First, unless we hunger after righteousness, we cannot obtain it. God will never throw away his blessings upon those who do not desire them. If a king shall say to a rebel, Do but desire a pardon, and you shall have it — if through pride and stubbornness he disdains to sue out his pardon, he justly deserves to die. God has set

spiritual blessings at a low rate: Do but hunger, and you shall have righteousness. But if we refuse to come up to these terms, there is no righteousness to be had for us. God will stop the current of his mercy, and set open the sluice of his indignation.

Second, if we do not thirst here, we shall thirst when it is too late. If we do not thirst as David did (Psalm 42:2): My soul thirsts for God — we shall thirst as the rich man did in hell for a drop of water (Luke 16:24). Those who thirst not for righteousness shall be in perpetual hunger and thirst; they shall thirst for mercy, but no mercy to be had. Heat increases thirst; when men shall burn in hell and be scorched with the flames of God's wrath, this heat will increase their thirst for mercy, but there will be nothing to allay their thirst. Is it not better to thirst for righteousness while it is to be had, than to thirst for mercy when there is none to be had? Sinners, the time is shortly coming when the drawbridge of mercy will be quite pulled up.

I shall next briefly prescribe some helps to spiritual hunger.

First, avoid those things which will hinder your appetite. Windy things: when the stomach is full of wind, a man has little appetite to his food. So when one is puffed up with a windy opinion of his own righteousness, he will not hunger after Christ's righteousness. He who is puffed up with pride, thinking he has grace enough already, will not hunger after more. These windy vapors spoil the stomach. Second, sweet things destroy the appetite; so by feeding immoderately upon the sweet, luscious delights of the world, we lose our appetite to Christ and grace. You never knew a man surfeit himself upon the world and be sick with love to Christ. While Israel fed with delight upon garlic and onions, they never hungered after manna. The soul cannot be carried to two ex-

tremes at once; as the eye cannot look intently on heaven and earth at once, so a man cannot at the same instant hunger excessively after the world and after righteousness. The earth puts out the fire; the love of earthly things will quench the desire for spiritual things (1 John 2:15). Love not the world; the sin is not in the having, but in the loving.

Second, do all that may provoke a spiritual appetite. There are two things that provoke appetite. First, exercise; a man by walking and stirring gets an appetite to his meal. So by the exercise of holy duties the spiritual appetite is increased (1 Timothy 4:7): Exercise yourself to godliness. Many have left off closet prayer; they hear the word but seldom, and for want of exercise they have lost their appetite for religion.

Second, sauce; sauce whets and sharpens the appetite. There is a twofold sauce that provokes holy appetite. First, the bitter herbs of repentance; he that tastes the gall and vinegar in sin, hungers after the body and blood of the Lord. Second, affliction; God often gives us this sauce to sharpen our hunger after grace. Reuben found mandrakes in the field (Genesis 30:14); the mandrakes are a plant of a very strong savor, and among their virtues they are chiefly medicinal for those who have weak, bad stomachs. Afflictions may be compared to these mandrakes, which sharpen men's desires after that spiritual food which in time of prosperity they began to loathe. Penury is the sauce which cures the surfeit of plenty. In sickness people hunger more after righteousness than in health. The full stomach loathes the honeycomb. Christians when well-fed despise the rich cordials of the gospel. I wish we do not slight those truths now which would taste sweet in a prison. How precious was a leaf of the Bible in Queen Mary's days! The wise

God sees it good sometimes to give us the sharp sauce of affliction, to make us feed more hungrily upon the bread of life. And so much for the first part of the text: Blessed are they that hunger.

CHAPTER 14



Matthew 5:6: For they shall be filled.
Showing that the spiritual hunger shall be satisfied.

I proceed now to the second part of the text, a promise annexed: They shall be filled. A Christian's fighting with sin is not like one that beats the air (1 Corinthians 9:26), and his hungering after righteousness is not like one that sucks in only air. Blessed are they that hunger, for they shall be filled.

Those that hunger after righteousness shall be filled; God never bids us seek him in vain. Here is a honeycomb dropping into the mouths of the hungry: they shall be filled. Luke 1:53: He has filled the hungry with good things. Psalm 107:9: He satisfies the longing soul. God will not let us lose our longing. Here is the excellency of righteousness above all things; a man may hunger after the world, and not be filled. The world is fading, not filling; cast three worlds into the heart, yet the heart is not full. But righteousness is a filling thing; indeed it so fills as it satisfies. A man may be filled, and not satisfied; a sinner may take his fill of sin, but that is a sad filling, it is far from satisfaction. Proverbs 14:14: The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways. He shall have his belly full of sin, he shall have enough of it. But this is not a filling

to satisfaction; this is such a filling as the damned in hell have — they shall be full of the fury of the Lord. But he that hungers after righteousness shall be satisfyingly filled. Jeremiah 31:14: My people shall be satisfied with goodness. Psalm 63:5: My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow. Joseph first opened the mouths of the sacks, and then filled them with grain (Genesis 42:25). So God first opens the mouth of the soul with desire, and then fills it with good things (Psalm 81:10). For the illustration of this, consider these three things.

First, that God can fill the hungry soul. Second, why he fills the hungry soul. Third, how he fills the hungry soul.

First, that God can fill the hungry soul; he is called a fountain (Psalm 36:9): With you is the fountain of life. The cistern may be empty, and cannot fill us; creatures are often broken cisterns (Jeremiah 2:13). But the fountain is filling; God is a fountain. If we bring the vessels of our desires to this fountain, he is able to fill them. The fullness in God is, first, an infinite fullness. Though he fills us, and the angels who have larger capacities to receive, yet he has never the less himself — as the sun, though it shines, has never the less light. Luke 8:46: I perceive that virtue has gone out of me. Though God lets virtue go out of him, yet he has never the less. The fullness of the creature is limited; it rises just to such a degree and proportion. But God's fullness is infinite; as it has its splendor, so its abundance — it knows neither bounds nor bottom.

Second, it is a constant fullness; the fullness of the creature is a mutable fullness — it ebbs and changes. I could (says one) have helped you, but now my estate is low. The blossoms of the fig tree are soon blown off; creatures cannot do for us what once they could. But God is a constant fullness (Psalm 102:27): You are the

same. God can never be exhausted; his fullness is overflowing and ever-flowing. Then surely it is good to draw near to God (Psalm 73:28). It is good bringing our vessels to this spring-head; it is a never-failing goodness.

Second, why God fills the hungry soul. The reasons are:

First, God will fill the hungry soul out of his tender compassion. He knows else the spirit would fail before him, and the soul which he has made (Isaiah 57:16). If the hungry man is not satisfied with food, he dies. God has more compassion than to suffer a hungry soul to be famished. When the multitude had nothing to eat, Christ was moved with compassion, and wrought a miracle for their supply (Matthew 15:32). Much more will he have compassion on such as hunger and thirst after righteousness. When a poor sinner sees himself almost starved in his sins — as the prodigal among his husks — and begins to hunger after Christ, saying, There is bread enough in my Father's house, God will then out of his infinite compassions bring forth the fatted calf, and refresh this soul with the provisions of the gospel. The melting of God's compassions toward a hungry sinner! Hosea 11:8: My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled. We cannot see a poor creature at the door ready to perish with hunger, but our hearts begin to relent and we afford them some relief. And will the Father of mercies let a poor soul that hungers after the blessings of the gospel go away without an alms of free grace? No, he will not, he cannot. Let the hungry sinner think thus: Though I am full of wants, yet my God is full of compassion.

Second, God will fill the hungry that he may fulfill his word. Psalm 107:9; Jeremiah 41:14; Luke 6:21: Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be filled. Isaiah 44:3: I will pour water

upon him that is thirsty; I will pour my Spirit upon your seed. Has the Lord spoken, and shall it not come to pass? Promises are obligatory; if God has passed a promise, he cannot go back. You that hunger after righteousness have God engaged for you; he has, to speak reverently, pawned his truth for you. As his compassions fail not (Lamentations 3:22), so he will not suffer his faithfulness to fail (Psalm 89:33). If the hungry soul should not be filled, the promise should not be fulfilled.

Third, God will fill the hungry soul, because he himself has excited and stirred up this hunger. He plants holy desires in us — and will he not satisfy those desires which he himself has wrought in us? As in case of prayer, when God prepares the heart to pray, he prepares his ear to hear (Psalm 17:1). So in case of spiritual hunger, when God prepares the heart to hunger, he will prepare his hand to fill. It is not rational to imagine that God should deny to satisfy that hunger which he himself has caused. Nature does nothing in vain; should the Lord inflame the desire after righteousness, and not fill it, he might seem to do something in vain.

Fourth, God will fill the hungry, from those sweet relations he stands in to them — they are his children. We cannot deny our children when they are hungry; we will rather spare from ourselves. Luke 11:13: When one born of God shall come and say, Father, I hunger, give me Christ; Father, I thirst, refresh me with the living streams of your Spirit — can God deny? Does God hear the raven when it cries, and will he not hear the righteous when they cry? When the earth opens its mouth and thirsts, God satisfies it (Psalm 65:9-10). Does the Lord satisfy the thirsty earth with showers, and will he not satisfy the thirsty soul with grace?

Fifth, God will satisfy the hungry, because the hungry soul is most thankful for mercy. When the restless desire has been drawn out after God, and God fills it, how thankful is a Christian! The Lord loves to bestow his mercy where he may have most praise; we delight to give to those who are thankful. Musicians love to play where there is the best sound; God loves to bestow his mercies where he may hear of them again. The hungry soul sets the crown of praise upon the head of free grace (Psalm 50:23): Whoever offers praise glorifies me.

Third, how God fills the hungry soul.

Answer: There is a threefold filling.

First, with grace. Second, with peace. Third, with bliss.

First, God fills the hungry soul with grace; grace is filling, because suitable to the soul. Stephen was full of the Holy Ghost (Acts 7:55). This fullness of grace is in respect of parts, not of degrees. There is something of every grace, though not perfection in any grace.

Second, God fills the hungry soul with peace (Romans 15:13): The God of hope fill you with joy and peace. This flows from Christ. Israel had honey out of the rock; this honey of peace comes out of the Rock Christ. John 16, last verse: That in me you might have peace. So filling is this peace that it sets the soul a-longing after heaven; this cluster of grapes quickens the appetite and pursuit after the full crop.

Third, God fills the hungry soul with bliss; glory is a filling thing. Psalm 17, last verse: When I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness. When a Christian awakes out of the sleep of death, then he shall be satisfied, having the glorious beams of God's im-

age shining upon him. Then shall the soul be filled to the brim. The glory of heaven is so sweet that the soul shall still thirst; yet so infinite that it shall be filled.

Those who drink of you, O Christ, refreshed by the sweet stream, shall thirst no more — and yet shall thirst still.

Use. What an encouragement this is to hunger after righteousness! Such shall be filled. God charges us to fill the hungry (Isaiah 58:10). He blames those who do not fill the hungry (Isaiah 32:6). And do we think he will be slack in that which he blames us for not doing? Come with hungerings after Christ, and be assured of satisfaction. God keeps open house for hungry sinners; he invites his guests and bids them come without money (Isaiah 55:1-2). God's nature inclines him, and his promise obliges him to fill the hungry. Consider: why did Christ receive the Spirit without measure (John 3:34)? It was not for himself; he was infinitely full before. But he was filled with the holy unction for this end — that he might distill his grace upon the hungry soul. Are you ignorant? Christ was filled with wisdom that he might teach you. Are you polluted? Christ was filled with grace that he might cleanse you. Shall not the soul then come to Christ, who was filled on purpose to fill the hungry? We love to knock at a rich man's door. In our Father's house there is bread enough. Come with desire, and you shall go away with comfort; you shall have the virtues of Christ's blood, the influences of his Spirit, the communications of his love.

Here are two objections made against this.

Objection 1, from the carnal man: I have hungered after righteousness, yet am not filled.

Answer, first: You say you hunger, and are not satisfied; perhaps God is not satisfied with your hunger. You have opened your mouth wide, but have not opened your ear. When God has called you to family prayer and mortification of sin, you have like the deaf adder stopped your ear against God (Zechariah 7:11). No wonder then that you have not that comfortable filling as you desire. Though you have opened your mouth, yet you have stopped your ear. The child that will not hear his parent is made to do penance by fasting.

Second, perhaps you thirst as much after a temptation as after righteousness. At a Sacrament you seem inflamed with desire after Christ; but the next temptation that comes, whether to drunkenness or unchastity, you fall in and close with the temptation. Satan does but beckon to you, and you come; you open faster to the tempter than to Christ. And do you wonder that you are not filled with the fat things of God's house?

Third, perhaps you hunger more after the world than after righteousness. The young man in the gospel would have Christ, but the world lay nearer his heart than Christ. Hypocrites pant more after the dust of the earth than the water of life. Israel had no manna while their dough lasted; such as feed immoderately upon the dough of earthly things must not expect to be filled with manna from heaven. If your money is your god, never look to receive another God in the Sacrament.

Objection 2, from the godly man: I have had genuine desires after God, but am not filled.

Answer, first: You may have a filling of grace, though not of comfort. If God does not fill you with gladness, yet with goodness (Psalm 107:9). Look into your heart, and see the distillations of the Spirit; the dew may fall, though the honeycomb does not yet drop.

Second, wait a while, and you shall be filled. The gospel is a spiritual banquet, feasting the soul with grace and comfort. None eat of this banquet but such as wait at the table. Isaiah 25:6, 9: In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make to all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines well refined; and it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. Spiritual mercies are not only worth desiring, but worth waiting for.

Third, if God should not fill his people to satisfaction here, yet they shall be filled in heaven; the vessels of their desires shall be filled, as those water jars at Cana (John 2), up to the brim.

CHAPTER 15



Matthew 5:7: Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Containing a discourse of mercifulness.

These verses, like the stairs of Solomon's temple, cause our ascent to the Holy of Holies. We are now mounting up a step higher: Blessed are the merciful. There was never more need to preach of mercifulness than in these unmerciful times wherein we live. It is reported in the life of Chrysostom that he did much preach on this subject of mercifulness, and for his much pressing Christians to mercy, he was called by many the alms-preacher, or the preacher for mercy. Our times need many Chrysostoms.

Blessed are the merciful. Mercy stands both in the van and rear of the text; in the beginning of the text it stands as a duty; in the end of the text it stands as a reward. The Hebrew word for godly signifies merciful; the more godly, the more merciful. The doctrine I shall gather out of the words, which will comprehend the whole, is this:

That the merciful man is a blessed man. As there is a curse hanging over the head of the unmerciful man (Psalm 109:6-9): Let Satan stand at his right hand; when he shall be judged, let him be

condemned, and let his prayer become sin; let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow; let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg; let the extortioner catch all that he has, and let the stranger spoil his labor; let there be none to extend mercy to him; let his posterity be cut off, and in the following generation let their name be blotted out. Why? Verse 16: Because he remembered not to show mercy. See what a long vial full of the plagues of God is poured out upon the unmerciful man! So by the rule of contraries, the blessings of the Almighty crown and encompass the merciful man. 2 Samuel 22:26; Psalm 37:26; Psalm 41:1: The merciful man is a blessed man. For the illustration of this, I shall show: first, what is meant by mercifulness; second, the several kinds of mercy.

First, what is meant by mercifulness? I answer: it is a melting disposition, whereby we lay to heart the miseries of others, and are ready on all occasions to be instrumental for their good.

Question 1: How do mercy and love differ?

Answer: In some things they agree, in some things they differ; like waters that may have two different springs, but meet in the stream. Love and mercy differ thus: love is more extensive; the sphere that love walks and visits is larger. Mercy properly respects those who are miserable; love is of a larger consideration. Love is like a friend that visits those who are well; mercy is like a physician that visits only those who are sick. Again, love acts more out of affection; mercy acts out of a principle of conscience. Mercy lends its help to another; love gives its heart to another. Thus they differ. But love and mercy agree in this: they are both ready to do good offices; both of them have compassionate hearts and healing under their wings.

The spring-head of mercifulness rises higher than nature; mercy, taken in its full latitude, proceeds from a work of grace in the heart. By nature we are far enough from mercy. The sinner is a bramble, not a fig tree yielding sweet fruit. It is the character of a natural man to be unmerciful (Romans 1:31). A wicked man, like Jehoram, has his compassion fallen out (2 Chronicles 21:19). Therefore he is compared to an adamant (Zechariah 7:11), because his heart melts not in mercy. Before conversion the sinner is compared to a wolf for his savageness, to a lion for his fierceness, to a bee for his sting (Psalm 118:12), to an adder for his poison (Psalm 140:3). By nature we do not send forth oil, but poison; not the oil of mercifulness, but the poison of maliciousness.

Besides that inbred unmercifulness which is in us, there is something infused too by Satan. The prince of the air works in men (Ephesians 2:2). He is a fierce spirit, therefore called the red dragon (Revelation 12:3). If he possesses men, no wonder if they are implacable and without mercy. What mercy can be expected from hell? So if the heart is tuned into mercifulness, it is from the change that grace has made. When the sun shines, then the ice melts. When the Sun of Righteousness once shines with beams of grace upon the soul, now it melts in mercy and tenderness. You must first be a new man, before a merciful man; you cannot help a member of Christ, until first you yourself are a member.

Second, the several kinds of mercy, or how many ways a man may be said to be merciful. Mercy is a fountain that runs in five streams; we must be merciful to the: first, souls of others; second, names of others; third, estates of others; fourth, offenses of others; fifth, wants of others.

Showing that mercy is to be extended to the souls of others.

First, we must be merciful to the souls of others; this is a spiritual alms. Indeed, soul-mercy is the chief; the soul is the most precious thing. It is a vessel of honor; it is a bud of eternity; it is a spark lighted by the breath of God; it is a rich diamond set in a ring of clay. The soul has the blood of God to redeem it, the image of God to beautify it. It being therefore of so high a descent, sprung from the Ancient of Days, that mercy which is shown to the soul must needs be the greatest. This soul-mercy to others stands in four things.

First, in pitying them. If I weep (says Augustine) for that body from which the soul is departed, how should I weep for that soul from which God is departed? Had we seen that man in the gospel cutting himself with stones and fetching blood from himself, it would have moved our pity (Mark 5:5). To see a sinner stabbing himself, and having his hands stained in his own blood, should cause relentings in our hearts. Our eye should affect our heart. God was angry with Edom, because he cast off all pity (Amos 1:11).

Second, soul-mercy is in advising and exhorting sinners. Tell them in what a sad condition they are, in the gall of bitterness. Show them their danger; they tread upon the banks of the bottomless pit, and if death gives them a nudge, they tumble in. We must dip our words in honey, use all the mildness we can (2 Timothy 2:25): In meekness instructing. Fire melts, ointment softens; words of love may melt hard hearts into repentance. This is soul-mercy. God made a law (Exodus 23:5) that whoever saw his enemy's donkey lying under a burden, he should help him. On which words Chrysostom says: We will help a beast that is fallen under a burden; and shall we not extend relief to those who are fallen under a worse burden of sin?

Third, soul-mercy is in reproofing stubborn sinners. There is a cruel mercy, when we see men go on in sin, and we let them alone. And there is a merciful cruelty, when we are sharp against men's sins, and will not let them go to hell quietly. Leviticus 19:17: You shall not hate your brother in your heart; you shall in any wise rebuke your neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him. Fond pity is no better than cruelty. Titus 1:13: Rebuke them sharply — the Greek word means, cuttingly. The surgeon cuts and lances the flesh, but it is in order to a cure; these are healing wounds. So by a cutting reproof, when we lance men's consciences and let out the blood of sin, we exercise spiritual surgery; this is showing mercy. Jude 23: Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire. If a man were in the fire, though you hurt him a little in pulling him out, he would be thankful and take it as a kindness. Some men when we tell them of sin say, O this is bitterness; no, it is showing mercy. If a man's house were on fire, and another saw it and did not tell him for fear of waking him — would not this be cruelty? When we see others sleeping the sleep of death, and the fire of God's wrath ready to burn about their ears, and we are silent, is not this to be accessory to their death?

Fourth, soul-mercy is in praying for others. This is like medicine used in a desperate case, and it often recovers the sick patient. James 5:16: The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. As it cures the sick body, so the sin-sick soul. There is a story of one who gave his soul to the devil, who was recovered through the prayers of Luther. When Eutychus fell down from a high loft and was taken up dead, Paul fell on him — that is, he effectually prayed over him — and he prayed him alive (Acts

20:9, 11). By sin the soul has fallen from a high loft, that is, a state of innocency; now, fervent prayer often fetches life into such a dead soul.

Use 1. See what a blessed work the work of the ministry is! The preaching of the word is nothing but showing mercy to souls. This is a mighty and glorious instrument in the hand of the Lord of Hosts for the beating down of the devil's strongholds. The ministry of the word does not only bring light with it, but eye-salve, anointing the eyes to see that light. It is a sin-killing and soul-quickenning ordinance; it is the power of God to salvation. What enemies are they to their own souls that oppose the ministry! They say the people who live under the equator curse the sun and are glad when the sun sets, because of its burning heat. Foolish sinners curse the sun-rising of the ministry, and are offended at the light of it, because it comes near their sins and scorches their consciences — though in the end it saves their souls.

Use 2. It reproves those that have no mercy to souls.

First, evil magistrates, who either take away the key of knowledge, or give a toleration to wickedness, allowing men to sin by a license. The meaning of such toleration is this: if men will go to hell, none shall stop them. Is not nature enough poisoned? Do not men sin fast enough, but must they have such political engines as screw them up higher in wickedness? Must they have such favorable winds from the breath of great ones as serve to carry them full sail to the devil? This is far from soul-mercy. What a heavy reckoning will these statesmen have in the day of the Lord!

Second, evil ministers. First, such as have no compassion to the souls of their people; they do not pity them, pray for them; they seek not them, but theirs. They preach not for love, but for gain; their care is more for tithes than souls. How can they be called spiritual fathers who are without compassion? These are hirelings, not ministers.

Second, such as feed not the souls of their people with solid truths. When Christ sent out his apostles, he gave them their text and told them what they must preach (Matthew 10:7): Preach, saying, The Kingdom of heaven is at hand. On which place Luther says: The ministers of Christ must preach things that pertain to the Kingdom of God — pardon of sin, sanctification, living by faith. They are unmerciful to souls who, instead of breaking the bread of life, fill their people's heads with mere speculations and notions; who tickle the fancy rather than touch the conscience, and give precious souls music rather than food.

Third, such as darken knowledge with words, and preach so as if they were speaking in an unknown tongue. Some ministers love to soar aloft, like the eagle, and fly above their people's capacities, endeavoring rather to be admired than understood. They are like some crabbed authors who cannot be read without a commentary. God calls his ministers ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20), but they must not be like foreign ambassadors who cannot be understood without an interpreter. It is unmerciful to souls to preach so as not to be understood. Ministers should be stars to give light, not clouds to obscure the truth. Paul was learned, yet plain. Clearness and clarity is the grace of speech. It is cruelty to souls when we go

about to make easy things hard. This many are guilty of in our age, who go into the pulpit only to tie knots, and think it their glory to amuse the people. This savors more of pride than mercifulness.

Fourth, such as see others going on in sin, but do not tell them of it. When men declare their sin as Sodom, it is the minister's duty to lift up his voice like a trumpet, and show the house of Jacob their sin (Isaiah 58:1). Zeal in the ministry is as proper as fire on the altar. He who lets another sin, and holds his peace, is a man-slayer. That sentinel deserves death, who sees the enemy approaching and gives not warning (Ezekiel 3:20).

Fifth, such as poison souls with error; how dangerous is the leprosy of the head! A frenzy is worse than a fever. What shall we say to such ministers as give poison to their people in a golden cup? Are not these unmerciful? Others there are — unworthy the name of ministers — itinerants, the devil's journeymen, who ride up and down, compassing the earth to devour souls. It would pity one's heart to see poor, unstable creatures misled by rude and illiterate men, who feed the people with blasphemy and nonsense, and make them fitter for Bedlam than the New Jerusalem. All these are unmerciful to souls.

Let me beseech all that fear God to show soul-mercy. Strengthen the weak, reclaim the wandering, raise up those that are fallen. James 5:20: He which converts the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death.

Showing that Christians must be tender of one another's names.

Second, we must be merciful to the names of others. A good name is one of the greatest blessings upon earth; no chain of pearl so adorns as this. It being so, we ought to be very tender of names. They are to be accounted in a high degree unmerciful who make no conscience of taking away the good names of their brothers. Their throats are open graves to bury the fame and renown of men (Romans 3:13). It is great cruelty to murder a man in his name. Song of Solomon 5:7: The watchmen found me, they took away my veil from me. Some expositors interpret this of her honor and fame, which covered her as a beautiful veil. The root of this unmerciful treatment of names is:

First, pride. Pride is such a thing as cannot endure to be outshone; it does not love to see itself exceeded in gifts and eminence. Therefore it will behead another in his good name, that he may appear somewhat lower. The proud man pulls down others in their reputation, and so by their eclipse thinks he shall shine the brighter. The breath of a proud man causes a blight or mildew upon fame.

Second, envy (1 Peter 2:1). An envious man maligns the dignity of another, therefore seeks to harm him in his name. Religion teaches us to rejoice in the esteem and fame of others. Romans 1:8: I thank my God for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. A good report is a credit to religion (Hebrews 11:4). If persons professing godliness have not a good name, religion will have no very good name. But envy, consulting with the devil, lays a train, and fetches fire from hell to blow up the good name of another.

Question: How many ways may we be unmerciful to the names of others?

Answer, first: By misreporting them, a sin forbidden (Exodus 23:1): You shall not raise a false report. Eminence is commonly blasted by slander. Psalm 64:3: Their tongues are as arrows shot out. The tongue of a slanderer shoots out words to wound the fame of another, and make it bleed to death. The saints of God in all ages have met with unmerciful men, who have fathered things upon them that they were not guilty of. Surius the Jesuit reported of Luther that he learned his divinity of the devil, and that he died drunk. But Melancthon, who wrote his life, affirms that he died in a most pious, holy manner, and made a most excellent prayer before his death. It was David's complaint (Psalm 35:11): They laid to my charge things which I knew not. The Greek word for devil signifies slanderer. 1 Timothy 3:11: Not slanderers. Some think it is no great matter to defame and traduce another; but know, this is to act the part of a devil. How many unmerciful men are there who go for Christians, but play the devil in venting their lies and slanders! Wicked men in Scripture are called dogs (Psalm 22:16). Slanderers are not like those dogs which licked Lazarus's sores to heal them, but like the dogs that ate Jezebel — they rend and tear the precious names of men. Valentinian the emperor decreed that he who was openly convicted of this crime of slander should die for it. And Pope Gregory decreed that such a person should be excommunicated and not have the Communion given him; I think it was a just decree.

Answer, second: We are unmerciful to the names of others when we receive a slander, and then report what we hear. Leviticus 19:16: You shall not go up and down as a talebearer among your people. A good man does not evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor (Psalm 15:3). We must not only not

raise a false report, but not take it up. To divulge a report before we speak with the party and know the truth of it is unmerciful, and cannot acquit itself of sin. The same word in the Hebrew means both to raise a slander and to receive it (Exodus 23:1). The receiver is even as bad as the thief; it is well if none of us have received stolen goods in this sense. When others have stolen away the good names of their brothers, have we not received these stolen goods? There would not be so many to spread false rumors, but that they see this liquor pleases other men's taste.

We deal unmercifully with the names of others when we diminish from their just worth and dignity — when we make more of their infirmities and less of their virtues. James 4:11: Speak not evil of one another. I have read a story of one Idor, an Abbot, that he was never heard to speak evil of any man. Augustine could not endure that any should eclipse and lessen the fame of others. Wicked men are still paring off the credit of their neighbors, and they make thick parings; they pare off all that is good, leaving nothing but something that may tend to their disparagement. Unmerciful men know how to reduce a man's merit to nothing; they have a devilish art to so extenuate and lessen the merit of others that it is boiled away to nothing. Some, though they have not the power of creation, yet they have the power of annihilation. They can sooner annihilate the good which is in others than imitate it.

We are unmerciful to the names of others when we know them to be falsely accused yet do not vindicate them. A man may sometimes wrong another by silence as much as by slander. He who is merciful to his brother is an advocate to plead in his behalf when he is unjustly accused. When the apostles, who were filled with the

wine of the Spirit, were charged with drunkenness, Peter vindicated them openly (Acts 2:15). A merciful man will take the dead fly out of the box of ointment.

They are in a high degree unmerciful to the names of others who bear false witness against them. Exodus 23:1: Put not your hand with the wicked to be a false witness. Putting the hand is taking an oath falsely, as when a man puts his hand upon the book and swears to a lie. A false witness is compared to a hammer (Proverbs 25:18), because he is hardened — first in impudence, he blushes at nothing; second in unmercifulness, there is no softness in a hammer, nor is there any relenting to be found in a false witness. All these ways men are unmerciful to the names of others.

Let me persuade all Christians, as they make conscience of religion, so to show mercy to the names of others; be very careful and tender of men's good names. Consider:

First, what a sin it is to defame any man (Titus 3:2; 1 Peter 2:1): Laying aside all envies and evil speakings — envy and evil speaking are put together.

This word means 'putting away,' as a man would put away a thing from him with indignation, as Paul shook off the viper (Acts 28:5).

Second, consider the injuriousness of it. You that take away the good name of another wound him in that which is most dear to him; better take away a man's life than his name. By eclipsing his name you bury him alive; it is an irreparable injury. A wound in the name is like a flaw in a diamond or a stain in fine cloth which will never come out; no physician can heal the wounds of the tongue.

Third, God will require it at men's hands; if idle words must be accounted for, shall not reproachful slanders? God will make inquisition one day as well for names as for blood. Let all this persuade to caution and circumspection; you would be loath to steal the goods of others, and a man's name is of more worth. He that takes away the good name of another does more sin than if he had taken the corn out of his field or the wares out of his shop.

Especially, take heed of wounding the names of the godly: God has set a crown of honor on their head, and will you take it off? Numbers 12:8: Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? To defame the saints is no less than defaming God himself, they having his image drawn upon them and being members of Christ. Oh, think how ill Christ will take this at your hand another day! It was under the old law a sin to defame a virgin, and what is it to slander Christ's spouse? Are the names of the saints written in heaven, and will you blot them out upon earth? Be merciful to the names of others.

Showing that mercy in some cases must be extended to the estates of others, and that Christians must not insist on the full letter of the law.

Third, be merciful to the estates of others. If a man is your debtor and Providence has frowned upon him so that he cannot pay, do not crush him when he is sinking, but remit something of the rigor of the law. Blessed are the merciful. The wicked are compared to beasts of prey that live upon plunder and spoil, caring not what mischief they do. Psalm 10:9: He lies in wait secretly, as a lion in his den; he catches the poor when he draws him into his net. Chrysostom says the drawing into the net is when the rich draw the poor into bonds, and in case of non-payment, seize upon

all they have. It is not justice but cruelty, when others lie at our mercy, to be like that hard-hearted creditor in the gospel who took his debtor by the throat saying, 'Pay me what you owe' (Matthew 18:28). God made a law (Deuteronomy 24:6): No man shall take the lower or upper millstone to pledge, for he takes a man's life to pledge. We should in this imitate God, who in the midst of anger remembers mercy. God does not take the full extremity of the law upon us; but when we have nothing to pay, if we confess the debt, he freely forgives (Proverbs 28:13; Matthew 18:27).

Not but that we may justly seek what is our own; but if others are brought low and submit, we ought in conscience to remit something of the debt. Blessed are the merciful.

Showing that Christians must be merciful to the offenses of others.

We must be merciful to the offenses of others — be ready to show mercy to those who have injured you. Thus Stephen the first martyr (Acts 7:60) knelt down and cried with a loud voice, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' When he prayed for himself, he stood; but when he came to pray for his enemies, he knelt down — to show, said Bernard, his earnestness in prayer and how greatly he desired that God would forgive them. This is a rare kind of mercy. Proverbs 19:11: It is a man's glory to pass over a transgression. Mercy in forgiving injuries, as it is the touchstone, so it is the crown of Christianity. Bishop Cranmer was of a merciful disposition; if any who had wronged him came to ask a favor, he would do all that lay in his power for him, insomuch that it grew to a proverb: 'Do Cranmer an injury, and he will be your friend as long

as he lives.' To overcome evil with good and answer malice with mercy is truly heroic and renders religion glorious in the eyes of all.

That mercy must be extended to the supplying of the wants of others.

We must be merciful to the wants of others. This the text chiefly intends. A good man does not, like the snake, twist within himself; his motion is direct, not circular. He is ever merciful and lends (Psalm 37:26). This merciful charity to the wants of others stands in three things.

First, a judicious consideration (Psalm 41:1): Blessed is he that considers the poor. And you must consider four things.

First, it might have been your own case; you yourselves might have stood in need of another's charity, and then how welcome and refreshing would those streams have been to you?

Second, consider how sad a condition poverty is. Though Chrysostom calls poverty the highway to heaven, yet he that keeps this road will go weeping along it. Consider the poor — behold their tears, their sighs, their dying groans; look upon the deep furrows made in their faces and consider if there is not reason why you should scatter your seed of mercy in these furrows. The poor man feeds upon sorrow, he drinks tears (Psalm 80:5); like Jacob, in a windy night he has the clouds for his canopy and a stone for his pillow.

Furthermore, consider that poverty often becomes not only a cross but a snare; it exposes men to much evil, which made Agur pray, 'Give me not poverty' (Proverbs 30:8). Want puts men upon

indirect courses. The poor will venture their souls for money. If the rich would wisely consider this, their alms might prevent much sin.

Third, consider why the wise God has suffered an inequality in the world: it is for this very reason, because he would have mercy exercised. If all were rich, there would be no need of alms, nor could the merciful man have been known. If the man who traveled to Jericho had not been wounded and left half dead, the good Samaritan who poured oil and wine into his wounds would not have been known.

Fourth, consider how quickly the balance of Providence may turn; we ourselves may be brought to poverty, and then it will be no small comfort that we relieved others while we were in a capacity to do it. Ecclesiastes 11:2: Give a portion to seven, and also to eight, for you do not know what evil shall be upon the earth. We cannot promise ourselves always calm days; the cup which now runs over with wine may be filled with the waters of bitterness. Ruth 1:21: I went out full, and the Lord has brought me home empty. How many have we seen who were invested with great possessions, who have on a sudden brought their manor to a morsel?

So it is wisdom in this sense to consider the wants of others. Remember how soon the scene may alter; we may be put in the poor man's clothes. And if adversity comes, it will be no trouble of mind to think that while we had an estate we laid it out upon Christ's needy members. This is the first thing in mercifulness: a judicious consideration.

Second, a tender compassion (Isaiah 58:10): If you draw out your soul to the hungry. Bounty begins in pity. The Hebrew word for mercy signifies 'bowels.' Christ first had compassion on the multitude, then worked a miracle to feed them (Matthew 15:32). Charity which lacks compassion is brutish. True religion begets tenderness; as it melts the heart in tears of contrition toward God, so also in bowels of compassion toward others. Isaiah 16:11: My heart shall sound as a harp. When our bowels of pity sound, then our alms make sweet music in the ears of God.

Third, mercifulness consists in a liberal contribution. Deuteronomy 15:8: If there is a poor man within your gates, you shall open your hand wide to him. The word 'to disperse' (Psalm 112:9) signifies a largeness of bounty; it must be like water that overflows the banks. If God has enriched men with estates and made his candle shine upon their tabernacle, they must not enclose and hoard all to themselves, but be as the moon which, having received its light from the sun, lets it shine to the world. The ancient writers made oil the emblem of charity; the golden oil of mercy, like Aaron's oil, must run down upon the poor who are the lower skirts of the garment. This liberal giving to the wants and necessities of others, God commands, and grace compels.

First reason: God commands. There is an express statute-law (Leviticus 25:35): If your brother grows poor and falls into decay with you, you shall relieve him. The Hebrew word means 'you shall strengthen him' — put under him a silver crutch when he is falling. It is worth observing what great care God took of the poor. Besides what was given to them privately, God made many laws for the public relief of the poor. Exodus 23:11: The seventh year you shall let the land rest and lie still, that the poor of your people may eat.

God's intention in this law was that the poor should be liberally provided for; they might freely eat of anything that grew of itself that seventh year, whether herbs, vines, or olive trees.

There is another law made (Leviticus 19:9): When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, neither shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. Some corners of the field were for the poor's sake to be left uncut; and when the owners did reap, they must not go too close to the ground with their sickle. Something like an after-crop must be left; the shorter ears of corn and such as lay bending to the ground were to be reserved for the poor.

And God made another law in favor of the poor (Deuteronomy 14:28): At the end of three years you shall bring forth the tithe of your increase that same year and shall lay it up within your gates, and the Levite and the fatherless and the widow within your gates shall come and eat and be satisfied. The Hebrew writers record that every third year, besides the first tithe given to Levi — called the perpetual tithe (Numbers 18:21) — the Jews set apart another tithe of their increase for the use of widows and orphans, called the tithe of the poor. Besides, at the Jews' solemn festivals, the poor were to have a share (Deuteronomy 16:11).

And as relieving the needy was commanded under the law, so it stands in force under the gospel. 1 Timothy 6:17-18: Charge those who are rich in this world to do good, to be rich in good works. It is not only a counsel but a charge, and the non-compliance with it brings men into a gospel-level offense. What benefit is there of gold while it is buried and locked up in the mine? And what is the better to have a great estate if it is so hoarded and closeted as never to see the light?

Second reason: As God commands, so grace compels to works of mercy and beneficence. 2 Corinthians 5:14: The love of Christ constrains. Grace comes with majesty upon the heart. Grace does not lie as a dormant habit in the soul, but will put forth itself in vigorous and glorious actions. Grace can no more be concealed than fire; like new wine, it will have vent. Grace does not lie in the heart as a stone in the earth, but as seed in the earth — it will spring up into good works.

Containing a vindication of the Church of England.

Use 1 may serve to justify the Church of England against the calumny of malevolent men. Julian upbraided the Christians for being those who relied on faith alone, and the Church of Rome lays upon us the aspersion that we are against good works. Indeed we do not plead for the merit of them, but we are for the use of them. Titus 3:14: Let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary use. We read the angels had wings, and hands under their wings (Ezekiel 1:8) — emblematic of the truth that Christians must not only have the wings of faith to fly, but hands under their wings to work the works of mercy. Titus 3:8: This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to maintain constantly, that those who have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. The lamp of faith must be filled with the oil of charity; faith alone justifies, but justifying faith is not alone. You may as well separate weight from lead or heat from fire as works from faith. Good works, though they are not the causes of salvation, yet they are evidences; though they are not the foundation, yet they are the superstructure. Faith must not be built upon works, but works must be built upon faith. Romans 7:4: You are married to another, that you should bring forth fruit to God. Faith is the grace which marries

Christ, and good works are the children which faith bears. For the vindication of the doctrine of our church and in honor of good works, I shall lay down these four propositions.

First proposition: Works are distinct from faith. It is vain to imagine that works are included in faith as the diamond is enclosed in the ring. No, they are distinct, as the sap in the vine is different from the clusters that grow upon it.

Second proposition: Works are the touchstone of faith. James 2:18: Show me your faith by your works. Works are faith's letters of credential to show. If, said Bernard, you see a man full of good works, then by the rule of charity you are not to doubt his faith. We judge of the health of the body by the pulse, where the blood stirs and operates. Christian, judge of the health of your faith by the pulse of mercy and charitableness. It is with faith as with a deed in law — to make a deed valid there are three things required: the writing, the seal, and the witnesses. So for the testing and confirmation of faith there must be these three things: the writing (the Word of God), the seal (the Spirit of God), and the witnesses (good works). Faith justifies works; works testify faith.

Third proposition: Works honor faith. These fruits adorn the trees of righteousness. Let the liberality of your hand (said Clement of Alexandria) be the ornament of your faith, and wear it as a holy bracelet about your wrists. Job 29:15: I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame; I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. While Job was the poor man's benefactor and advocate, this was the badge of his honor — it clothed him as a robe and crowned him as a diadem.

This is what takes away reproach and makes others speak well of religion, when they see good works as handmaids waiting upon this queen.

Fourth proposition: Good works are in some sense more excellent than faith — in two respects.

First, because they are of a more noble, diffusive nature. Though faith is more needful for ourselves, yet good works are more beneficial to others. Faith is a receptive grace — it is all for self-interest, moving within its own sphere. Works are for the good of others, and it is a more blessed thing to give than to receive.

Second, good works are more visible and conspicuous than faith. Faith is a more hidden grace; it may lie in the heart and not be seen. But when works are joined with it, now it shines forth in its native beauty. Though a garden be never so decked with flowers, they are not seen until the light comes. So the heart of a Christian may be enriched with faith, but it is like a flower in the night — it is not seen until works come. When this light shines before men, then faith appears in its true colors.

A check to the unmerciful.

Use 2: If this is the mark of a good man, that he is of a merciful disposition, then it sharply reproves those who are far from this temper. Their hearts are like the scales of the Leviathan, shut up together as with a close seal (Job 41:15). They move only within their own circle but do not indulge the necessities of others. They have a flourishing estate, but like the man in the gospel, they have a withered hand and cannot stretch it out to good uses. These are akin to the churlish Nabal. 1 Samuel 25:11: Shall I take my bread

and my water and give them to men I do not know? It was said of the Emperor Pertinax that he had a large empire but a narrow, scanty heart.

There was a temple at Athens called the Temple of Mercy, dedicated to charitable uses, and it was the greatest reproach to be told you had never been in the Temple of Mercy. It is the greatest disgrace to a Christian to be unmerciful. Covetous men, while they enrich themselves, debase themselves, setting up a monopoly and committing idolatry with money. In the time of pestilence it is sad to have your houses shut up, but it is worse to have your hearts shut up. How miserable to have a sea of sin and not a drop of mercy? Covetous hearts are firm as a stone (Job 41:24); one may as well extract oil from flint as the golden oil of charity from their flinty hearts. The coldness of the heart is a sign of death: when men's affections to works of mercy are frozen, this coldness at heart sadly suggests that they are dead in sin. We read in the law that the shellfish was accounted unclean — possibly because the meat of it was enclosed in the shell and hard to come by. They are to be reckoned among the unclean who enclose all their estate within the shell of their own cabinet and will not let others be the better for it. How many have lost their souls by being so saving!

There are some who will give the poor good words, and that is all. James 2:15-16: If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' yet you give them not those things which are needful — what does it profit? Good words are but a cold kind of charity; the poor cannot live on air. Let your words be as smooth as oil — they will not heal the wounded. Let them drop as the honeycomb — they will not feed the hungry. 1 Corinthians 13:1: Though I speak

with the tongue of angels and have not charity, I am but as a tinkling cymbal. It is better to be charitable as a saint than eloquent as an angel. Such as are cruel to the poor — know that you unchristian yourselves; unmercifulness is the sin of the heathen (Romans 1:31). While you put off the bowels of mercy, you put off the badge of Christianity. Ambrose said that when we do not relieve one whom we see ready to perish with hunger, we are guilty of his death. James 2:13: He shall have judgment without mercy who showed no mercy. How do they think to find mercy from Christ, who never showed mercy to Christ in his members? Dives denied Lazarus a crumb of bread, and Dives was denied a drop of water. At the last day we see the sinner's indictment (Matthew 25:42): I was hungry and you gave me no food; I was thirsty and you gave me no drink. Christ does not say 'you took away my food,' but 'you gave me none.' When Christ's poor come to your doors and you bid them depart, the time may come when you shall knock at heaven's gate and Christ will say, 'Depart from me, you cursed.'

In short, covetousness is a foolish sin. God gave the rich man in the gospel the title 'Fool' (Luke 12:20). The covetous man does not enjoy what he possesses; he embitters his own life, tormenting himself with care, whether how to get, how to increase, or how to secure an estate. And what is the result? Often as a just reward of sordid stinginess, God blasts and withers him in his outward estate. God many times lets the thief take away and the moth consume what is unjustly and unmercifully withheld from the poor.

Before I leave this point, I am sorry that any who go for honest men should be brought under the indictment — that any professors should be guilty of covetousness and unmercifulness. God's elect are told to put on bowels of mercy (Colossians 3:12). I tell

you, these devout misers are the reproach of Christianity; they are blemishes in the face of religion. Aelian reports in his history that in India there is a griffin having four feet and wings — it is hard to rank him among the beasts or the fowl. So I may say of stingy religious professors: they have the wings of profession by which they seem to fly to heaven, but the feet of beasts walking on the earth and licking the dust. Oh, take heed that since your religion will not destroy your covetousness, your covetousness does not in the end destroy your religion. Covetousness, though it has many fair pretenses to insinuate itself into the heart, once let in will never stop prickling until it has choked all good beginnings and thrust all religion out of your hearts.

Persuading to mercifulness.

Use 3: I proceed next to the exhortation — to beseech all Christians to put on bowels of mercies, to be ready to indulge the miseries and necessities of others. Ambrose calls charity the sum of Christianity; and the apostle makes it the very definition of religion (James 1:27): Pure religion and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. The Hebrew word for 'poor' signifies one who is empty or drawn dry. So the poor are exhausted of their strength, beauty, and substance — like ponds they are dried up; therefore let them be filled again with the silver streams of charity. The poor are, as it were, in the grave; the comfort of their life is buried. God sends his springs into the valleys (Psalm 104:10); let the springs of your liberality run among the valleys of poverty. Your sweetest and most gentle influences should fall upon the lower grounds. What is all your seeming devotion without bounty and mercifulness? Basil said he had known many who prayed and fasted but did not relieve those

in distress — they are for a zeal that will put them to no cost. What are they the better for all their seeming virtue? We read that the incense was to be laid upon the fire (Leviticus 16:13); the flame of devotion must be perfumed with the incense of charity. Aaron was to have a bell and a pomegranate; the pomegranate, as some of the learned observe, was a symbol of good works. They want the pomegranate who have no good works. The wise men did not only bow the knee to Christ but presented him with gold, myrrh, and frankincense (Matthew 2:11). Pretenses of zeal are insufficient; we must not only worship Christ but bestow something upon his members. Isaac would not bless Jacob by the voice alone but felt and handled him, and supposing them to be Esau's hands, he blessed him. God will not bless men by their voice alone, their loud prayers, their devout discourses; but if he feels Esau's hands — if their hands have worked good works — then he blesses them.

Let me exhort you therefore to deeds of mercy; let your fingers drop with the myrrh of liberality; sow your golden seed. Remember that excellent saying of Augustine: 'Give to the poor those things you cannot keep, that you may receive those things you cannot lose.' There are many occasions for exercising your mercifulness; poverty is everywhere. Hear the orphan's cry, pity the widow's tears. Some there are who want employment — it would do well to set their work going. Others who are past employment — be eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. Some whole families are sinking if some merciful hand does not help to shore them up. Before I press arguments to liberality and generosity, there are three objections in the way which I shall endeavor to remove.

Objection 1: We may give, and so in time come ourselves to want.

Answer: Let Basil answer this: 'Wells which have their water drawn spring ever more freely' (Proverbs 11:25). The liberal soul shall be made fat. Luther speaks of a monastery in Austria which was very rich while it gave annually to the poor, but when it left off giving, the monastery began to decay. There is nothing lost by doing our duty; an estate may be shared yet not impaired. The flowers yield honey to the bee yet do not hurt their own fruit. When the candle of prosperity shines upon us, we may light our neighbor who is in the dark and have no less light ourselves. Whatever is disbursed to godly uses, God brings it in by some other way; as the loaves in the breaking multiplied, or as the widow's oil increased by pouring out (1 Kings 17:16).

Objection 2: I cannot do as much as others — erect churches, build hospitals, endow libraries, maintain scholars at the university.

Answer: If you cannot do so much, yet do something. Let there be quality of virtue, though not quantity of mass. The widow's two mites cast into the treasury were accepted (Luke 21). God, as Chrysostom observes, looked not at the smallness of her gift but the largeness of her heart. In the law, he that could not bring a lamb for an offering, if he brought but two turtle-doves, it sufficed. We read (Exodus 35) the people brought gold and silver and goats' hair to the building of the tabernacle. On which Origen says: 'I desire, Lord, to bring something to the building of your temple — if not gold to make the mercy-seat, if not silk to make the curtains, yet a little goats' hair, that I may not be found in the number of those who have brought nothing to your temple.'

Objection 3: But I have nothing to bestow upon the necessities of others.

Answer 1: Do you have nothing to bestow upon your lusts? Do you have money to feed your pride, your self-indulgence? And can you find nothing to relieve the poor members of Christ?

Answer 2: Granting this excuse to be real — that you have not such an estate — yet you may do something whereby you may express your mercy to the poor. You may sympathize with them, pray for them, speak a word of comfort to them. Isaiah 40:2: Speak comfortably to Jerusalem. If you can give them no gold, you may speak a word in season which may be as apples of gold in pictures of silver. More than that, you may be helpful to the poor by stirring up others who have estates to relieve them. As it is with the wind — if a man is hungry, the wind will not fill him, but it can blow the sails of the mill and make it grind corn for the use of man. So though you have not an estate yourself to help one in want, yet you may stir up others to help him; you may blow the sails of their affections, causing them to show mercy, and so may help your brother by a proxy.

Having answered these objections, let me now pursue the exhortation to mercifulness. I shall lay down several arguments which I desire may be weighed in the balance of reason and conscience.

Argument 1: To be diffusively good is the great end of our creation. Ephesians 2:10: Created in Christ Jesus to good works. Every creature answers the end of its creation; the star shines, the bird sings, the plant bears. The end of life is service. He that does not answer his end in respect of usefulness cannot enjoy his end in respect of happiness. Many, said Seneca, have been long in the world but have not lived — they have done no good. An unprof-

itable person serves for nothing but to cumber the ground, and because he is barren in figs, he shall be fruitful in curses (Hebrews 6:8).

Argument 2: By this we resemble God, who is a God of mercy. He is said to delight in mercy (Micah 7:18). His mercies are over all his works (Psalm 145:9). He repays good for evil; like the clouds, which receive ill vapors from us but return them to us as sweet showers. There is not a creature that lives but tastes of the mercies of God. But men and angels taste in a more particular manner the cream and quintessence of God's mercies.

First, what temporal mercies have you received! Every time you draw your breath, you suck in mercy; every bit of bread you eat, the hand of mercy carves it to you; you never drink but in a golden cup of mercy.

Second, what spiritual mercies has God enriched some of you with — pardoning, adopting, saving mercy! The picture of God's mercy can never be drawn to the full. You cannot take the breadth of his mercy, for it is infinite; nor the height of it, for it reaches above the clouds; nor the length of it, for it is from everlasting to everlasting (Psalm 103:17). The works of mercy are the glory of the Godhead. Moses prayed, 'Lord, show me your glory' (Exodus 33:18); God replied, 'I will make all my goodness pass before you' (verse 19). God accounts himself most glorious in the shining robes of his mercy. Now by works of mercy we resemble the God of mercy. Luke 6:36: Be merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

Argument 3: Alms are a sacrifice. Hebrews 13:16: To do good and to share, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. When you are distributing to the poor, it is as if you were

praying, as if you were worshipping God. There are two sorts of sacrifices — expiatory (the sacrifice of Christ's blood) and gratulatory (the sacrifice of alms). This, said the godly Richard Greenham, is more acceptable to God than any other sacrifice. Acts 10:4: The angel said to Cornelius, 'Your alms have come up for a memorial before God.' The backs of the poor are the altar on which this sacrifice is to be offered.

Argument 4: We ourselves live upon alms; other creatures do liberally contribute to our necessities. The sun has not its light for itself but for us; the earth brings us a fruitful crop. One creature gives us wool, another oil, another silk; we are all beggars to the creation. Shall every creature be for the good of man, and man only be for himself? How absurd and irrational this is!

Argument 5: We are to extend our liberality by virtue of membership. Isaiah 58:7: Hide not yourself from your own flesh. The poor are of the same clay; they are fellow-members of the same body. The members by a law of equity and sympathy contribute to one another; the eye conveys light to the body, the heart blood, the head spirits. That is a dead member in the body which does not communicate to the rest. So it is in the body politic. It is a pity if that hand should be cut off which disdains to pluck a thorn out of the foot. It is spoken in honor of the Empress of Theodosius the great that she did herself visit the sick and prepare relief for them with her own imperial hands.

Argument 6: We are not lords of an estate but stewards. And how soon may we hear that word, 'Give an account of your stewardship, for you may be no longer steward' (Luke 16:2). An estate is a talent to trade with; it is as dangerous to hide our talent as to

spend it (Matthew 25:25-30). If the covetous man keeps his gold too long, it will begin to rust, and the rust of it will witness against him (James 5:3).

Argument 7: The examples of others who have been renowned for acts of mercy and generosity.

First, our Lord Christ — a great example of charity; he was not more full of merit than bounty. Trajan the emperor tore off a piece of his own robe to wrap his soldier's wounds. Christ did more: he tore his flesh; he made a medicine of his body and blood to heal us. Isaiah 53:5: By his wounds you are healed. Here was a pattern of charity without a parallel.

Second, the Jews are noted in this kind. It is a rabbinical observation that those who live devoutly among the Jews distribute a tenth part of their estate among the poor. They give so freely, said Philo the Jew, as if by giving they hoped to receive some great reward. Now if the Jews are so devoted to works of mercy — who live without priest, without temple, without Messiah — shall not we much more who profess our faith in the blessed Messiah?

Third, let me tell you of heathens. I have read of Titus Vespasian, who was so accustomed to works of mercy that remembering he had given nothing that day, he cried out, 'I have lost a day.' It is reported of some among the Turks that they employ servants on purpose to seek out their poor and send relief to them. The Turks have a saying that if men knew what a blessed thing it were to distribute alms, rather than spare they would give some of their own flesh to relieve the poor. And shall not a Christian's creed be better than a Turk's?

Let all this persuade to works of mercy.

When poor, needy creatures — like Moses — are laid in the ark of bulrushes weeping, ready to sink in the waters of affliction, be as temporal saviors to them and draw them out of the waters with a golden cord. Let the breasts of your mercy nurse the poor. Be like the trees of the sanctuary, both for food and medicine (Ezekiel 47:12). When distressed and even starved souls are fainting, let your costly ingredients revive and restore spirits in them. Let others see the coats and garments you have made for the poor (Acts 9:39).

Argument 8: The sin of unmercifulness. First, the unmerciful man is an ungrateful man — and what can be said worse? You to whom the Lord has given an estate, your cup runs over, but you have a miserly heart and will not part with anything for good uses. Know that you are in the highest degree ungrateful; you are not fit for human society. The Scripture has put these two together: unthankful, without natural affection (2 Timothy 3:2-3). God may repent that he ever gave such men estates and may say, as in Hosea 2:9: Therefore will I return and take away my grain and my wine in their season, and will recover my wool and my flax.

Second, the unmerciful man lacks love to Christ. All men would be thought to love Christ and would be very angry with anyone who questioned their love. But do they love Christ who let the members of Christ starve? No — these love their money more than Christ, and come under that fearful condemnation (1 Corinthians 16:22).

Argument 9: Lastly, I shall use but one more argument to persuade to works of mercy — the reward which follows almsgiving. Giving of alms is a glorious work, and let me assure you, it is no unfruitful work. Whatever is given to the poor is given to Christ.

Matthew 25:40: Insomuch as you have done it to one of the least of these my brothers, you have done it to me. The poor man's hand is Christ's treasury, and there is nothing lost that is put there. The text says the merciful shall obtain mercy. What is it we need most? Is it not mercy — pardoning and saving mercy? What is it we desire most on our deathbed? Is it not mercy? You that show mercy shall find mercy; you that pour in the oil of compassion to others, God will pour in the golden oil of salvation to you (Matthew 7:2). The Shunammite woman showed mercy to the prophet, and she received kindness from him in return (2 Kings 4); she welcomed him to her house, and he restored her dead child to life. They that sow mercy shall reap in kind — they shall obtain mercy. Such is the sweetness and mercifulness of God's nature that he will not suffer any man to be a loser. No kindness shown to him shall be unregarded or unrewarded. God will be in no man's debt for a cup of cold water; he shall have a draught of Christ's warm blood to refresh his soul. Hebrews 6:10: God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward his name, in that you have ministered to the saints. God's mercy is tender, pure, and rich; mercy shall follow and overtake the merciful man. He shall be rewarded first in this life, and second in the life to come.

First, the merciful man shall be rewarded in this life. He shall be blessed:

First, in his person. Psalm 41:1: Blessed is he that considers the poor. Let him go wherever he will, a blessing goes along with him; he is in favor with God.

Second, blessed in his name. Psalm 112:6: He shall be had in everlasting remembrance. When the miser's name shall rot, the name of a merciful man shall be embalmed with honor and give

forth its scent as the wine of Lebanon.

Third, blessed in his estate. Proverbs 11:25: The liberal soul shall be made fat. He shall have the fat of the earth and the dew of heaven.

Fourth, blessed in his posterity. Psalm 37:26: He is ever merciful and lends; his seed is blessed. He shall not only leave an estate behind but a blessing behind to his children, and God will see that the entail of that blessing shall not be cut off.

Fifth, blessed in his negotiations. Deuteronomy 15:10: For this thing the Lord your God shall bless you in all your works, and in all that you put your hand to. The merciful man shall be blessed in his building, planting, and journeying; whatever he is about, a blessing shall empty itself upon him. He shall be a prosperous man; the honeycomb of a blessing shall be still dropping upon him.

Sixth, blessed with long life. Psalm 41:2: The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive. He has helped to keep others alive, and God will keep him alive. Is there anything then lost by mercifulness? It spins out the silver thread of life. Many are taken away the sooner for their unmercifulness; because their hearts are narrowed, their lives are shortened.

Second, the merciful man shall be rewarded in the life to come. God will reward the merciful man hereafter, though not for his works, yet according to his works. Revelation 20:12: I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. As God has a bottle to put our tears in, so he has a book to write our alms in. As God will put a veil over his people's sins, so he will in free grace set a

crown upon their works. The way to lay up is to lay out. Other parts of our estate are left behind, but that which is given to Christ's poor is hoarded up in heaven. That is a blessed kind of giving which, though it makes the purse lighter, makes the crown heavier.

You that are mercifully inclined, remember whatever alms you distribute:

First, you shall have good security. Ecclesiastes 11:1; Luke 6:38; Proverbs 19:17: He that gives to the poor lends to the Lord, and that which he has given will he pay back again. There is God's own bond to save you harmless — better security than any public faith. Yet here is our unbelief and atheism: we will not take God's bond; we commonly put our deeds of mercy among our desperate debts.

Second, you shall be paid with over-measure. For a wedge of gold which you have parted with, you shall have a weight of glory; for a cup of cold water, you shall have rivers of pleasure which run at God's right hand for evermore. The interest comes to infinitely more than the principal. Pliny writes of a country in Africa where the people for every bushel of seed they sow receive a hundred and fifty fold increase. For every penny you drop into Christ's treasury, you shall receive above a thousandfold increase. Your after-crop of glory will be so great that, though you are still reaping, you will never be able to bring in the whole harvest. Let all this persuade rich men to honor the Lord with their substance.

Containing directions in showing mercy.

Before I conclude this subject, let me lay down some rules briefly concerning works of mercy.

Rule 1: Charity must be free. Deuteronomy 15:10: You shall give, and your heart shall not be troubled — that is, you shall not be troubled at parting with your money. He that gives grudgingly gives not freely; it is not a gift but a tax. Charity must flow like spring-water; the heart must be the spring, the hand the pipe, the poor the cistern. God loves a cheerful giver. Do not give to the poor as if you were delivering your purse on the highway. Charity without eagerness is rather a fine than an offering; it is more like doing penance than giving alms. Charity must be like the myrrh which drops from the tree without cutting or forcing.

Rule 2: We must give that which is our own. Isaiah 58:7: Deal your bread to the hungry — it must be from your own bread. The word for alms in the Syriac signifies 'justice,' to show that alms must be of that which is justly gotten. The Scripture puts them together (Micah 6:8): to do justice, to love mercy. We must not make a sacrifice of sacrilege. Isaiah 61:8: For I the Lord love justice; I hate robbery for burnt-offering. He that builds an almshouse or hospital with goods ill-gotten displays the badge of his pride and sets up the monument of his shame.

Rule 3: Do all in Christ and for Christ.

First, do all in Christ; labor that your persons may be in Christ. We are accepted in him (Ephesians 1:6). Origen, Chrysostom, and Peter Martyr affirm that the best works not springing from faith are lost. The Pelagians thought to have stumped Augustine with the question whether it was sin for a heathen to clothe the naked. Augustine answered rightly: the doing of good is not in itself simply evil, but proceeding from unbelief it becomes evil. Titus 1:15: To those who are unbelieving, nothing is pure. That fruit is most

sweet and genuine which is brought forth in the vine (John 15:4). Out of Christ all our almsdeeds are but the fruit of the wild olive; they are not good works but dead works.

Second, do all for Christ — namely, for his sake, that you may testify your love to him. Love mellows and ripens our almsdeeds; it makes them a precious perfume to God. As Mary out of love brought her ointments and sweet spices to anoint Christ's dead body, so out of love to Christ, bring your ointments and anoint his living body — that is, the saints and members.

Rule 4: Works of mercy are to be done in humility; away with ostentation. The worm breeds in the fairest fruit, the moth in the finest cloth. Pride will be creeping into our best things; beware of this dead fly in the box of ointment. When Moses's face did shine, he put a veil over it. So while your light shines before men and they see your good works, cover yourself with the veil of humility. As the silkworm, while she weaves her curious works, hides herself within the silk and is not seen, so we should hide ourselves from pride and vainglory.

'Twas the sin of the Pharisees, while they were distributing alms, they did blow the trumpet (Matthew 6:2). They did not give their alms, but sell them for applause. A proud man casts his bread upon the waters, as a fisherman casts his angle upon the waters, he angles for vain-glory. I have read of one Cosmus Medices, a rich citizen of Florence, that he confessed to a near friend of his, he built so many magnificent structures, and spent so much on scholars and libraries, not for any love to learning, but to raise up to himself trophies of fame and renown. A humble soul denies himself, indeed, even annihilates himself; he thinks how little it is he can do for God; and if he could do no more, it were but a due debt;

therefore looks upon all his works as if he had done nothing. The saints are brought in at the last day as disowning their works of charity (Matthew 25:37): Lord, when did we see you hungry, and fed you? A good Christian does not only empty his hand of alms, but empties his heart of pride; while he raises the poor out of the dust, he lays himself in the dust; works of mercy must be like the cassia, which is a sweet spice, but grows low.

Rule 5. Dispose your alms prudentially; it is said of the merciful man, he orders his affairs with discretion (Psalm 112:5). There is a great deal of wisdom in distinguishing between them that have sinned themselves into poverty, and who by the hand of God are brought into poverty. Discretion in the distribution of alms consists in two things.

1. In finding out a fit object. 2. In taking a fit season.

1. In finding out a fit object, and that comes under a double notion. 1. Give to those who are in most need; raise the hedge where it is lowest; feed the lamp which is going out. 2. Give to those who may probably be more serviceable; though we bestow cost and dressing upon a weak plant, yet not upon a dead plant; breed up such as may help to build the house of Israel (Ruth 4:11), that may be pillars in church and state, not caterpillars, making your charity to blush.

2. Discretion in giving alms is in taking the fit season: give to charitable uses in time of health and prosperity; distribute your silver and gold to the poor, before the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken (Ecclesiastes 12:6). He who gives quickly gives twice; make your hands your executors; not as some, who do reserve all they give till the term of life is ready to expire; and truly,

what is then bestowed, is not given away, but taken away by death; it is not charity, but necessity. Oh do not so marry yourselves to money, that you are resolved nothing shall part you but death; be not like the medlar, which is never good till it be rotten. A covetous man may be compared to a Christmas-box, he receives money, but parts with none, till death breaks this box in pieces; then the silver and gold comes tumbling out: give in time of health; these are the alms which God takes notice of, and (as Calvin says) puts into his book of accounts.

6. Give thankfully: they should be more thankful that give an alms, than they that receive it. We should (says Nazianzene) give a thank-offering to God that we are in the number of givers, and not receivers. Bless God for a willing mind; to have not only an estate, but a heart, is matter of gratulation.

CHAPTER 16



Matthew 5:8: Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Describing heart-purity.

The holy God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, calls here for heart-purity; and to such as are adorned with this jewel, he promises a glorious and beatific vision of himself — they shall see God. Two things are to be explained.

First, the nature of purity. Second, the subject of purity.

First, the nature of purity. Purity is a sacred, refined thing; it stands directly opposed to filthiness or whatever defiles. We must distinguish kinds of purity. First, there is a primitive purity which is in God originally and essentially, as light is in the sun. Holiness is the glory of the Godhead (Exodus 15:11); God is the pattern and prototype of all holiness.

Second, there is a created purity; holiness is in the angels, and was once in Adam. Adam's heart had not the least spot or taint of impurity. We call wine pure which has no adulteration, and gold pure which has no dross mingled with it. Such was Adam's holiness — like wine fresh from the grape, having no mixture. But this is not to be found on earth; we must go to heaven for it.

Third, there is an evangelical purity, when grace is mingled with some sin — like gold in the ore, like air in the twilight, like wine with a dash in it, like fine cloth with a coarse edge, like Nebuchadnezzar's image — part silver and part clay (Daniel 2:35). This mixture God calls purity in a gospel sense, as a face may be called fair which has some freckles in it. Where there is a pursuit of purity and a loathing of ourselves for our impurity, this is to be pure in heart.

Some by 'pure in heart' understand chastity; others understand sincerity (Psalm 32:2). But I suppose purity here is to be taken in a larger sense, for the several kinds and degrees of holiness. They are said to be pure who are consecrated persons having the oil of grace poured upon them. This purity is much mistaken.

First, civility is not purity; a man may be clothed with moral virtues — justice, prudence, temperance — yet go to hell.

Second, profession is not purity. A man may have a name to live and yet be dead (Revelation 3:1). He may be swept by civility and garnished by profession, yet the devil may dwell in the house. The blazing comet is no star; the hypocrite's tongue may be silver, yet his heart stone. Purity consists in two things: first, rectitude of mind — a prizing of holiness in the judgment (Psalm 119:30); second, conformity of will — an embracing of holiness in the affections (Psalm 119:97). A pure soul is cast into the mold of holiness; holiness is a blood that runs in his veins.

Second, the subject of purity: the heart. Purity of heart does not exclude purity of life, any more than the pureness of the fountain excludes the pureness of the stream. But it is called purity of heart because this is the main thing in religion, and there can be

no purity of life without it. A Christian's great care should be to keep the heart pure, as one would especially preserve the spring from being poisoned. In a duel, a man will chiefly guard and fence his heart; so a wise Christian should above all things keep his heart pure. Take heed that the love of sin does not get in there, lest it prove mortal.

Doctrine: Christians should above all things breathe after heart-purity. 1 Timothy 3:9: Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience. Justification causes our happiness; sanctification evidences it.

The reasons for purity, and the reasons why purity must especially be in the heart.

The reasons for purity are: First, purity is called for in Scripture. 1 Peter 1:16: Be holy, for I am holy. It is not only the minister who bids you be holy, but God himself calls for it. What should the holy God do with unholy servants? Second, because of that filthy and cursed condition we are in before purity is wrought in us. We are a lump of clay and sin mingled together. Sin does not only blind us but defile us; it is called 'filthiness' (James 1:21), and is compared to a plague-sore (1 Kings 8:38), to spots (Deuteronomy 32:5), to vomit (2 Peter 2:22), to an infant tumbling in blood (Ezekiel 16:6), and to a menstruous cloth (Isaiah 30:22). All the legal washings God appointed were but to put men in mind of their loathsomeness before they were washed in the blood of Christ. If all the evils in the world were put together and their quintessence strained out, they could not make a thing so black and polluted as sin. A sinner is a devil in man's shape. When Moses's rod was turned into a serpent, he fled from it; would God open men's eyes and show them their deformities and damnable

spots, they would be afraid and flee from themselves. When grace comes it washes off this hellish filth; of Ethiopians, it makes Israelites; it turns ravens into swans; it makes those who are as black as hell become white as snow.

Third, because none but the pure in heart are interested in the covenant of grace. Covenanted persons have the sprinkling with clean water (Ezekiel 36:25). Now until we are thus sprinkled, we have nothing to do with the new covenant and by consequence with the new Jerusalem. If a will is made only to persons with certain qualifications, none can come in for a share but those who have those qualifications. So God has made a will and covenant that he will be our God and will settle heaven upon us by inheritance, but with this clause in the will: that we be purified persons having the clean water sprinkled upon us. Until then, we have nothing to do with God or mercy.

Fourth, purity is the end of our election. Ephesians 1:4: He has chosen us that we should be holy — not for holiness but to holiness. Romans 8:29: Whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son. God predestinates us to Christ's image, which consists in righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:24). So until you are holy, you cannot show any sign of election upon you, but rather the devil's brand-mark.

Fifth, purity is the end of our redemption. If we could have gone to heaven in our sins, Christ needed not have died. Why did he shed his blood but to redeem us from a vain way of living (1 Peter 1:18-19)? Titus 2:14: Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify to himself a peculiar people. Christ shed his blood to wash off our filth; the cross was both an altar and a fountain. Jesus Christ died not only to save us from

wrath (1 Thessalonians 1:10) but to save us from sin (Matthew 1:21). Out of his side came water, which signifies our cleansing, as well as blood, which signifies our justifying (1 John 5:6). Indeed, it would be to make the body of Christ monstrous if the head should be pure and not the members.

Second, why purity must chiefly be in the heart. First, because if the heart is not pure, we differ nothing from a Pharisaical purity. The Pharisees' holiness consisted chiefly in externals; theirs was an outside purity; they never minded the inside of the heart. Matthew 23:25: Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside you are full of extortion. Verse 27: You are like whitewashed tombs, which appear beautiful outward but within are full of dead men's bones. The Pharisees were good only on the surface — not white but whitewashed; they were like a rotten post painted in red. We must go further and be pure in heart, like the king's daughter, all glorious within (Psalm 45:13). Otherwise ours is but a Pharisaical purity; and Christ says (Matthew 5:20): Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Second, the heart must especially be kept pure because the heart is the chief seat of God's residence. God dwells in the heart; he takes up the heart for his own lodging (Isaiah 57:15; Ephesians 3:17). Therefore it must be pure and holy. A king's palace must be kept from defilement, especially his presence-chamber. The heart is God's presence-chamber — how holy ought that to be? If the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19), the heart is the Holy of Holies. Take heed of defiling the room where God is to come; let that room be washed with holy tears.

Third, the heart must especially be pure because it is the heart that sanctifies all we do. If the heart is holy, all is holy — our affections holy, our duties holy. The altar sanctified the gift; the heart is the altar that sanctifies the offering. The Romans kept their springs from being poisoned; the heart is the spring of all our actions. Let us keep this spring from poison. Be pure in heart.

Showing the true beauty of the soul.

Use 1: See here what is the beauty that sets off a soul in God's eye — purity of heart. You who are never so beautiful are but a spiritual leper until you are pure in heart. God is in love with the pure heart, for he sees his own picture drawn there. Holiness is a beam of God; it is the angels' glory. Take away purity from an angel and he is no more an angel but a devil. You who are pure in heart have the angels' glory shining in you; you have the embroidery and workmanship of the Holy Spirit upon you. The pure heart is God's paradise where he delights to walk; it is his lesser heaven. The dove delights in the purest air; the Holy Spirit, who descended in the likeness of a dove, delights in the purest soul. God says of the pure in heart, as Psalm 132:14: This is my rest forever; here will I dwell. God loves the fairest complexion; the pure in heart is Christ's bride, decked and bespangled with the jewels of holiness. Song of Solomon 4:9: You have ravished my heart with one of your eyes — that is, your graces, which as a chain of pearl have drawn my heart to you. Of all hearts, God loves the pure heart best. You who dress yourself by the glass of the Word and adorn the hidden person of your heart are most precious in God's eyes. Though you may be bleary-eyed as Leah, lame as Barzillai, yet being pure in heart, you are the mirror of beauty. Isaiah 49:5: Yet shall I be glo-

rious in the eyes of the Lord. How this should raise the esteem of purity! This is a beauty that never fades and which makes God himself fall in love with us.

That Christians must not rest in outside purity.

If we must be pure in heart, then we must not rest in outward purity. Civility is not sufficient; a swine may be washed yet remain a swine still. Civility does but wash a man; grace changes him. Civility is like a star — it may shine in the eyes of the world, but it differs as much from purity as crystal from diamond. Civility is but strewing flowers on a dead corpse. A man may be wonderfully moralized yet be but a tamed devil. How many have made civility their savior! Morality may as well damn as vice; a vessel may be sunk with gold as well as with dung.

First, the civil person, though he will not commit gross sins, is not sensible of heart-sins. He does not discern the law in his members (Romans 7:23). He is not troubled for unbelief, hardness of heart, or vanity of thoughts. He abhors sins that lead to prison, not gospel-sins.

Second, the civil person has a secret aversion to religion; his heart rises against holiness. The snake is of a fine color but has a deadly sting. The civil man is fair to look at but has a secret antipathy against the ways of God. He hates grace as much as vice; zeal is as odious to him as uncleanness. So civility is not to be rested in. The heart must be pure. God would have Aaron wash the inwards of the sacrifice (Leviticus 9). Civility does but wash the outside; the inwards must be washed. Blessed are the pure in heart.

Showing the signs of an impure heart.

Let us put ourselves to the test, whether we are pure-hearted or not. Here I shall show the signs of, first, an impure heart, and second, a pure heart.

First, an ignorant heart is an impure heart; to be ignorant of sin or Christ argues impurity of heart. Nahash the Ammonite would enter into covenant with the men of Jabesh-Gilead, provided he might put out their right eyes (1 Samuel 11:2). Satan leaves men their left eye — in worldly knowledge they are sharp-sighted enough — but the right eye of spiritual knowledge is quite put out (2 Corinthians 4:4). Ignorance is Satan's stronghold (Acts 26:18). The devils are bound in chains of darkness (Jude 6); so are all ignorant persons. It is impossible for an ignorant heart to be good; it is knowledge that makes the heart good. Proverbs 19:2: The soul without knowledge is not good. For anyone to say that though their mind is ignorant their heart is good, they may as well say that though they are blind their eyes are good. In the law, when the plague of leprosy was in a man's head, the priest was to pronounce him unclean; this is the case of an ignorant man — the leprosy is in his head. Grace cannot reign where ignorance reigns. An ignorant man can have no love to God — you cannot desire what you do not know. He cannot have faith; knowledge must usher in faith (Psalm 9:10). He cannot worship God aright (John 4:22). Ignorance is the root of sin; blindness leads to lasciviousness (Ephesians 4:18-19). Ignorance is the mother of pride (Revelation 3:17), the cause of error (2 Timothy 3:6). And what is worst is a willful ignorance — there is a difference between not knowing and not wanting to know. Many are in love with ignorance; they hug their disease (Job 21:14; 2 Peter 3:5). Ignorant minds are impure; there is no going to heaven in the dark.

Second, that heart is impure which sees no need of purity. Revelation 3:17: I am rich and have need of nothing. Not to be sensible of a disease is worse than the disease. There are some who need no repentance (Luke 15:7); some sinners are too well to be cured. Heart-purity is as great a wonder to a natural man as the new birth was to Nicodemus (John 3:4). It is sad to think how many go on confidently, blessing themselves, never suspecting their condition until it is too late.

Third, he has an impure heart who regards iniquity in his heart. Psalm 66:18: If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. In the original, 'if I look upon sin' — that is, with a lustful look. Sin-regarding is inconsistent with heart-purity.

Question: What is it to regard iniquity? Answer 1: When we indulge sin — when sin not only lives in us but we live in sin. Some will leave all their sins but one; Jacob would let all his sons go but Benjamin. Satan can hold a man by one sin; the fowler holds the bird fast enough by a wing or claw. Others hide their sins, like one who shuts up his shop windows but follows his trade within doors. Many deal with their sins as Moses's mother dealt with him — she hid him in the ark of bulrushes as if she had left him; but her eye was still upon him, and in the end she became his nurse (Exodus 2:9). So many seem to leave their sins but only hide them from the eyes of others; their heart still goes after them, and at last they nurse and give their breast to their sins.

Answer 2: To regard iniquity is to delight in iniquity. A child of God, though he sins, does not take pleasure in sin. Romans 7:15: What I hate, that do I. But impure souls make a recreation of sin. 2 Thessalonians 2:12: They had pleasure in unrighteousness. Never

did one feed with more delight on a dish he loves than a wicked man feeds upon the forbidden fruit. This delight shows the will is in the sin.

Answer 3: To regard iniquity is to lay in provision for sin. Romans 13:14: Make no provision for the flesh. Sinners are caterers for their lusts — a metaphor taken from those who make provision for a household or supply a garrison. The Greek word there signifies a projecting and planning in the mind how to bring a thing about. This is to make provision for the flesh: when one studies to gratify the flesh and lay in fuel for lust. Thus Amnon made provision for the flesh (2 Samuel 13:5): he feigned himself sick and his sister Tamar must be his nurse, must cook and dress his food for him, by which means he defiled her. It is sad when men's care is not to discharge conscience but to satisfy lust.

Answer 4: To regard iniquity is to give it respect and entertainment, as Lot showed respect to the angels (Genesis 19:2): he bowed himself with his face toward the ground and said, 'Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you.' When the Spirit of God comes, it is repulsed and grieved; but when temptation comes, the sinner bows to it, sets open the gates, and says, 'Turn in, my lord.' This is to regard iniquity.

Answer 5: He is said to regard sin who does not regard the threatenings of God against sin. We read of seven thunders uttering their voice (Revelation 10:3). How many thunders in Scripture utter their voice against sin! Psalm 68:21: God shall wound the hairy scalp of such a one as goes on still in his trespasses. Here is a thundering Scripture, but sinners fear not this thunder. Let a minister come clothed with the spirit of Elijah and denounce all the

curses of God against men's sins — they regard it not, they can laugh at the shaking of a spear (Job 41:29). This is to regard iniquity and argues an impure heart.

Fourth, an unbelieving heart is an impure heart. The Scripture calls it expressly 'an evil heart of unbelief' (Hebrews 3:12). An unbelieving heart is evil to the highest degree; it is full of the poison of hell. Unbelief is the root and receptacle of all sin.

First, unbelief is a God-affronting sin. It puts the lie upon God; it calls into question his power, mercy, and truth. 1 John 5:10: He who believes not has made God a liar. And can a greater affront be cast upon the God of glory? Second, it makes us trust to secondary causes, which is to set the creature in the room of God. 2 Chronicles 16:12: Asa in his disease sought not to the Lord but to the physicians. He relied more on the physician than upon God. Saul seeks to the witch of Endor. What a high affront it is to lean upon the reed and neglect the Rock of Ages!

Second, unbelief hardens the heart. These two sins are linked together (Mark 16:14): He upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart. Unbelief breeds the stone of the heart. He that believes not God's threatenings will never fear him; he that believes not God's promises will never love him. What is said of the Leviathan is true of the unbeliever (Job 41:24): His heart is as firm as a stone. Unbelief first pollutes the heart, and then hardens it.

Third, unbelief breeds hypocrisy. Atheists believe not that God is a jealous God and will call them to account; therefore they put on a mask of religion and are saints in jest that they may play the

devil in earnest. 2 Timothy 3:4-5: They pretend to serve God, but self is the idol they worship. Like boatmen, they look one way and row another. The unbeliever is the greatest hypocrite.

Fourth, unbelief causes the fear of men. Fear is a debasing thing; it unmans a man and makes him afraid to be good. The fearful man studies compliance rather than conscience. Proverbs 29:25: The fear of man brings a snare. What made Abraham equivocate, David feign himself mad, Peter deny Christ? Was it not their fear? And where does fear spring from but from unbelief? Therefore the Scripture joins them together (Revelation 21:8): the fearful and unbelieving.

Fifth, unbelief is the root of apostasy. Hebrews 3:12: An evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. What is the reason those who once seemed zealous now despise preaching and leave off prayer in their families? Is it not their unbelief? They believe not that God is, and that he is a rewarder of those who seek him (Hebrews 11:6). Unbelief is the cause of apostasy. And if unbelief breeds and foment so much sin, then the unbelieving heart must be an impure heart.

Fifth, a covetous heart is an impure heart. The earth is the most impure element; the purity of the heart lies in the spirituality of it, and what is more opposed to spiritualness than earthiness? Covetousness is the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10).

First, covetousness is the root of discontent. Why do any complain about their condition, but because they think they do not have enough? The Greek word for covetousness signifies an im-

moderate desire of getting. Covetousness is a dry dropsy; and because the thirst is not satisfied, the heart frets through discontent and impatience.

Second, covetousness is the root of theft. Achan's covetous desire made him steal that wedge of gold which served to cleave asunder his soul from God (Joshua 7:21).

Third, covetousness is the root of treason. It made Judas betray Christ (Matthew 26:15): What will you give me and I will deliver him to you? Absalom's covetousness made him attempt to pluck the crown from his father's head. He that is a Demas will soon prove a Judas. 2 Timothy 3:2-3: Men shall be covetous — and it follows in the next verse — traitors. Where covetousness is in the premises, treason will be in the conclusion.

Fourth, covetousness is the root of murder. Why did Ahab stone Naboth to death but to possess the vineyard (1 Kings 21:13)? Covetousness has made many swim to the crown in blood. And can the heart be pure when the hands are full of blood?

Fifth, covetousness is the root of perjury. 2 Timothy 3:2-3: Men shall be covetous — and it follows — truce-breakers. For love of money men will take a false oath and break a just oath. He that lives as Midas will die a perjurer.

Sixth, covetousness is the root of sorcery. Why do persons deal with the devil but for money? They study the black art for yellow gold. Alexander the Sixth pawned his soul to the devil for a popedome.

Seventh, it is the root of fraud and deceit in dealings. Such as would be over-rich will over-reach; it is the covetous hand that holds false weights (Amos 8:5).

Eighth, covetousness is the root of bribery and injustice; it makes the courts of justice into places of robbery, as Augustine speaks. At Athens, causes were bought and sold for money.

Ninth, it is the cause of unchastity. The Scripture mentions the hire of a prostitute (Deuteronomy 23:18). For money, both conscience and chastity are set for sale.

Tenth, covetousness is the root of idolatry. Colossians 3:5: Covetousness, which is idolatry. The covetous person bows down to the image of gold. His money is his god, for he puts his trust in it. Money is his creator — when he has abundance of wealth, he thinks he is made. It is his redeemer — if he is in any trouble, he flies to his money, and that must redeem him. It is his comforter — when he is sad, he counts over his money, and with this golden harp he drives away the evil spirit. When you see a covetous man, you may say, 'There goes an idolater.'

Eleventh, covetousness is the cause of unprofitableness under the means. In the parable, the thorns choked the seed (Matthew 13:7). This is the reason the word preached does so little good; the seed often falls among thorns. Thousands of sermons lie buried in earthly hearts.

Twelfth, covetousness is the root of stinginess and baseness; it hinders hospitality. A covetous man has a withered hand — he cannot reach it out to clothe or feed those in want. The covetous person is so sordid that if his estate may flourish he is content to let his name lie dead and buried. What a cursed sin is avarice! And can he be pure in heart who has such a root of bitterness growing in him? We may as well say the wine is pure that runs with dregs, or the body is pure that is full of plague-spots.

Sixth, those hearts are impure who are haters of purity. Micah 3:2: Who hate the good. Proverbs 1:29: They hated knowledge. Some things in nature have an antipathy; the serpent will not come near the boughs of the wild ash tree. There is an antipathy in a carnal heart against holiness. And when hatred is boiled up to malice, it is dangerous. Thus Julian did maliciously oppose holiness; and receiving a mortal wound in battle, he threw up a handful of his blood into the air in indignation, saying, 'Galilean, have you overcome me?'

Seventh, he that derides purity has an impure heart. Luke 16:14; 2 Peter 3:3: There shall come in the last days scoffers. There are some who make a joke of religion. It is a sign of an Ishmael spirit to scoff at holiness. Are we not commanded to be perfect as God is (Matthew 5:48)? One would wonder that those who dare open their mouths in derision against holiness are not swallowed up as Korah and Dathan were. These are devils covered over with flesh; they have damnation written on their foreheads. Lucian, who in the time of Emperor Trajan had professed religion, afterwards became so profane as to mock the Christians; and going about to rend religion with his jeers, at last he himself was rent asunder and devoured by dogs. When the scab of leprosy appeared, the person was to be shut out of the camp (Leviticus 13:9). Those who flout at religion, if God gives them not repentance, are sure to be shut out of the camp of heaven.

Showing the signs of a pure heart.

I shall next show the signs of a pure heart.

First, a sincere heart is a pure heart. Psalm 32:2: In whose spirit there is no guile. There are four characteristics of a sincere-hearted Christian. A sincere heart serves God with the whole heart.

First characteristic: he serves God with the heart. The hypocrite makes only a show of obedience. Jeremiah 12:2: You are near in their mouth and far from their inner being. There may be a fair complexion when the lungs and vitals are rotten. The hypocrite is fair to look on — he has a devout eye but a hollow heart. But he who is sincere has his inside as his best side. In the law God would have the inwards offered up (Leviticus 4:11). A good Christian gives God the inwards; when he prays his heart prays. 1 Samuel 1:13: Hannah prayed in her heart. In his thanksgivings the heart is the chief instrument of praise (Psalm 111:1). Then is the sweetest music when we make melody in our hearts to the Lord (Colossians 3:16).

Second characteristic: the sincere Christian serves God with the whole heart (Psalm 119:2). Hypocrites have a double heart (Psalm 12:2) — a heart for God and a heart for sin (Hosea 10:2). Their heart is divided. God loves a broken heart, but not a divided heart. An upright heart is a whole heart; the full stream of the affections runs out after God. A sincere heart follows God fully (Numbers 14:24).

Third characteristic: a sincere heart is willing to come under trial. Psalm 139:23: Search me, O God, and try me. That metal is to be suspected which men are afraid to bring to the touchstone. A sound heart welcomes the touchstone of the Word; he is for a searching ministry. Hypocrites flee from that light which would discover sin; they hate that medicine of the Word which, meeting

with their ill humors, begins to make them sick and trouble their conscience. A gracious soul loves that preaching best which makes a heart-anatomy.

Fourth characteristic: a sincere heart dares not act against his conscience in the least. He is most courageous yet most fearful of sin (Proverbs 28:1; Genesis 39:9). He dares not get an estate by sinful means or rise upon the ruins of another. Jacob got his father's blessing by fraud, but that is not the way to get God's blessing.

Fifth characteristic: a sincere heart is a self-suspicious heart. The hypocrite suspects others and has charitable thoughts of himself; the sincere Christian has charitable thoughts of others and suspects himself. He calls himself often to account: 'O my soul, do you have any evidence for heaven? Are you not seeking when you should be showing? Is there no flaw in your evidences? You may mistake common grace for saving grace. Weeds in the cornfield look like flowers. The foolish virgins' lamps looked as if they had oil in them. O my soul, is it not so with you?' The sincere soul, ever jealous, plays the critic upon himself, and so examines things in the court of conscience as if he were presently to be cited to God's bar. This is to be pure in heart.

Second sign: a pure heart breathes after purity. If God should stretch out the golden scepter and say, 'Ask, and it shall be given you, even to half the kingdom,' he would say, 'Lord, a pure heart. Let my heart have this inscription, Holiness to the Lord. Let my heart be your temple, and do you dwell in it. Lord, what should I do in heaven with this unholy heart? What conversation could I have with God or angels?' A gracious soul is so in love with purity that he prizes a pure heart above all blessings.

First, above riches. He knows he may be clothed in purple and fine linen and yet go to hell. He is content to be poor, so he may be pure. He knows heart-purity is a special certificate of God's love; the pure in heart shall see God.

Second, above gifts. Gifts do not at all set us off in God's eye; a pure heart is the jewel. Matthew 15:28: O woman, great is your faith! It was not her rhetorical language Christ was taken with, but her faith. Hypocrites have had rare gifts; Saul had the spirit of prophecy; Judas no doubt could make an eloquent speech. There may be illumination without sanctification. A small diamond is better than a great deal of brass; a little grace excels the most flourishing natural gifts. Now if the outgoings of your soul are after holiness — you desire rather a pure heart than an eloquent tongue — you have the oil of the Spirit poured upon you and shall be crowned with a sight of God.

Third sign of a pure heart: a pure heart abhors all sin. A man may forbear and forsake sin yet not have a pure heart.

A man may forbear sin, as one may hold his breath while he dives under water and then breathe again. A man may forbear sin: first, for want of occasion — the gunpowder makes no noise until the fire is put to it; the clock stands still until the weights are put on. Let a temptation come, which is like the hanging on of the weights, and the heart goes as fast into sin as ever. Second, he may forbear sin for fear; a man forbears a dish he loves for fear it should bring on his illness. There is a conflict in a sinner between desire and fear. Desire spurs him on to sin, but fear as a curb-bit checks him; yet it is not the crookedness of the serpent he fears, but the sting. Third, he may forbear sin out of design; he has a plot

in hand, and his sin might spoil his plot. How good was Joash while Jehoiada the priest lived! Prudence as well as conscience may restrain from sin.

A man may forsake sin yet not have a pure heart. It is a great matter, I confess, to forsake sin; sin is so dear to men that they will part with the fruit of their body for the sin of their souls (Micah 6:7). Sin is the Delilah that bewitches, and it is much to see men divorced from it. This is some fruit of the ministry — to civilize. But sin may be forsaken on wrong principles. First, from morality: moral arguments may suppress sin. I have read of a debauched heathen who, hearing Socrates read an ethical lecture on virtue and vice, went away changed and no more followed his former excesses. Cato, Seneca, Aristides, seeing a beauty in virtue, led blameless lives. Second, from policy: a man may forsake sin not out of respect to God's glory but his own credit. Vice will waste his estate and eclipse the honor of his family; therefore out of policy he will divorce his sin. Third, from necessity: perhaps he can now follow the trade of sin no longer. The adulterer is grown old, the drunkard poor; his heart is toward sin, but either his purse fails him or his strength. This man who is forced to stop sinning does not so much forsake sin as sin forsakes him.

But he is pure in God's eye who abhors sin. Psalm 119:104: I hate every false way. This is excellent, because now the love of sin is crucified. A hypocrite may leave sin yet love it, as the serpent casts its coat yet keeps its sting. But when a man can say he abhors sin, now sin is killed at the root. A pure heart abstains from sin as a man does from a dish he has an antipathy against. This is a sign

of a new nature — when a man hates what he once loved. And because he hates sin, therefore he fights against it with the sword of the Spirit, as a man who hates a serpent seeks its destruction.

Fourth sign: a pure heart avoids the appearance of evil. 1 Thessalonians 5:22: Abstain from all appearance of evil. A pure heart avoids what may be interpreted as evil. He that is loyal to his prince not only forbears to take part in treason but takes heed of what has a show of treason. A gracious heart is shy of what looks like sin. When Joseph's mistress took hold of him and said, 'Lie with me,' he left his garment in her hand and fled from her (Genesis 39:12). He avoided the appearance of evil; he would not be seen in her company. A pure heart avoids whatever may have the suspicion of sin.

First reason: because the appearance of evil is often an occasion of evil. Lewd dalliance is an appearance of evil and often occasions evil. Had Joseph been familiar with his mistress in a wanton, sporting manner, he might in time have been drawn to commit folly with her. Some out of novelty and curiosity have gone to hear errors and have come home with the plague in their heads. When Dinah went out gadding, she lost her chastity (Genesis 34:2). A pure heart, foreseeing the danger, avoids the appearance of evil. It is dangerous to go near a hornets' nest. The men who went near the furnace were burned (Daniel 3:22). Second reason: because the appearance of evil may eclipse his good name. A good name is a precious ointment, better than fine gold (Proverbs 22:1). It commends us to God and angels in a way riches cannot. A godly man avoids the appearance of evil lest he wound his good name.

A pure heart avoids the suspicion of sin out of reverence and respect to the holiness of God. God hates the very appearance of evil. God abhors hypocrites because they have no more than the appearance of good; and he is angry with his children when they have so much as the appearance of evil. A gracious heart knows God is a jealous God and cannot endure that his people should border upon sin; therefore he keeps far off and will not come near the smell of infection.

Third, a pure heart avoids the show of sin in regard of the godly. The appearance of evil may scandalize a weak brother. A gracious heart is not only fearful lest he should defile his own conscience but lest he should offend his brother's conscience. Even in a thing indifferent, if it is an appearance of evil and may grieve another, we are to forbear. For when we sin against the brethren and wound their weak conscience, we sin against Christ (1 Corinthians 8:12). The weak Christian is a member of Christ; therefore sinning against a member is sinning against Christ.

Fourth, a pure heart avoids the very appearance of evil in regard of the wicked. The apostle would have us walk wisely toward those who are outside (1 Thessalonians 4:12). The wicked watch for our stumbling; how glad would they be of anything to reproach religion! Professors are placed as stars in the highest sphere of the church, and if there is but the appearance of any irregular motion, the wicked would presently open their mouths with a fresh cry against religion. To a godly heart the fame and honor of the gospel is so dear that he would rather die than impeach or eclipse it. By this let us try ourselves whether we are pure in heart. Do we avoid the least appearance of sin? Alas, how many run themselves into occasions of sin — they tempt the devil to tempt them. Some go to

places that are the very fuel and temptation to lust. Others frequent erroneous meetings; and God in just judgment often leaves them to the acts of sin who do not avoid the appearance of sin. Psalm 106:35: They were mingled among the heathen and learned their works. Pure hearts flee the occasion. John would not endure the company of Cerinthus in the bath. Polycarp would have no conference with Marcion the heretic. Basil said that the Christians in his time avoided the meetings of sectarians as the very schools of error. Oh, avoid the appearance of evil; the apostle bids us to follow those things that are of good report (Philippians 4:8).

Fifth sign: a pure heart performs holy duties in a holy manner. This holy manner, or due order, consists in three things.

First, preparing the heart before a duty. An unholy heart cares not how it rushes upon an ordinance; it comes without preparation and goes away without profit. The pure heart is a prepared heart; it dresses itself before it comes to a duty, by examination and brief prayer. When the earth is prepared, then it is fit to receive the seed; when the instrument is prepared and tuned, it is fit for music.

Second, watching the heart in a duty. A holy heart labors to be affected and moved; his heart burns within him. There was no sacrifice without fire; a pure saint labors to have his heart broken in a duty. Psalm 51:17: The incense when it was broken gave out the sweetest fragrance. Impure souls care not in what a dead, perfunctory manner they serve God (Ezekiel 33:31). They pray more out of fashion than out of faith. They are no more affected with an ordinance than the tombs of the church. God complains of offering up

the blind (Malachi 1:8) — and is it not as bad to offer up the dead? O Christian, say to yourself, 'How can this deadness of heart stand with pureness of heart? Do not dead things putrefy?'

Third, outward reverence. Purity of heart will express itself by the reverent gesture of the body — the lifting up of the eye and hand, the uncovering of the head, the bending of the knee. Constantine the Emperor bore great reverence to the Word. When God gave the law, the mount was on fire and trembled (Exodus 19:18), that the people might prostrate themselves more reverently before the Lord. The ark wherein the law was put was carried upon poles so that the Levites might not touch it (Exodus 25:11-14), to show what reverence God would have about holy things. Sitting in prayer (unless in case of weakness) and keeping the head covered in prayer is a very unbecoming, irreverent practice; let such as are guilty reform it. We must not only offer up our souls but our bodies (Romans 12:1). The Lord takes notice what posture and gesture we use in his worship. If a man were to deliver a petition to the king, would he deliver it with his hat half on? The careless irreverence of some would make us think they did not much care whether God heard them or not. We have run from one extreme to another — from superstition to rudeness. Let Christians think of the dreadful majesty of God who is present. Genesis 28:17: How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. The blessed angels cover their faces, crying, 'Holy, holy' (Isaiah 6:1). A holy heart will have a holy gesture.

Sixth sign: a pure heart will have a pure life. 2 Corinthians 7:1: Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. Where there is a good conscience, there will be a good conduct. Some bless God they

have good hearts, but their lives are evil. Proverbs 30:12: There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes yet are not washed from their filthiness. If the stream is corrupt, we may suspect the spring to be impure. Aaron was called the saint of the Lord (Psalm 106:16). He had not only a holy heart, but there was a golden plate on his forehead on which was written 'Holiness to the Lord.' Purity must not only be woven into the heart but engraved upon the life. Grace is most beautiful when it shines abroad with its golden beams. The clock has not only its motion within but the finger moves without upon the dial; pureness of heart shows itself upon the dial of the conversation.

First, a pure soul talks of God (Psalm 37:30). His heart is seen in his tongue. He that is pure in heart has his mouth full of heaven.

Second, he walks with God (Genesis 6:9). He is still doing angels' work — praising God, serving God; he lives as Christ lived on earth. Holy duties are the Jacob's ladder by which he is still ascending to heaven. Purity of heart and life are in Scripture made twins (Ezekiel 36:27): I will put my Spirit within them — there is purity of heart — and they shall walk in my statutes — there is purity of life. Shall we account those pure whose conduct is not in heaven but rather in hell? Micah 6:11: Shall I count them pure with wicked balances and with the bag of deceitful weights? How justly may others reproach religion when they see it kicked down with our unholy feet! A pure heart has a golden face; grace like new wine will have vent — it can no more be concealed than light. The saints are called jewels (Malachi 3) because of that shining luster they cast in the eyes of others (Philippians 3:20).

Seventh sign: a pure heart is so in love with purity that nothing can draw him off from it.

1. Let others reproach purity, he loves it; as David, when he danced before the ark, and Michal scoffed; if (says he) this be to be vile, I will yet be more vile (2 Samuel 6:22). So says a pure heart, if to follow after holiness be to be vile, I will yet be more vile. Let water be sprinkled upon the fire, it burns the more: the more others deride holiness, the more does a gracious soul burn in love and zeal to it. If a man had an inheritance befallen him, would he be laughed out of it? What is a Christian the worse for another's reproach? It is not a blind man's disparaging a diamond that makes it sparkle the less.

2. Let others persecute holiness, a pure heart will pursue it. Holiness is the queen every gracious soul is espoused to, and he will rather die than be divorced. Paul would be holy, though bonds and persecutions did abide him (Acts 20:23). The way of religion is often thorny and bloody; but a gracious heart prefers inward purity before outward peace. I have heard of one who having a jewel he much prized, the king sent for his jewel; tell the king (says he) I honor his majesty, but I will rather lose my life, than part with my jewel. He who is enriched with the jewel of holiness, will rather die than part with this jewel: when his honor and riches will do him no good, his holiness will stand him instead (Romans 6:22). You have your fruit to holiness, and the end everlasting life.

Exhorting to heart-purity.

Use 3. Let me persuade Christians to heart-purity; the harlot wipes her mouth (Proverbs 30:20), but that is not enough. Wash your heart, O Jerusalem (Jeremiah 4:14). And here I shall lay down some arguments or motives to persuade to heart-purity.

1. The necessity of heart-purity; it is necessary:

1. In respect of ourselves: till the heart be pure, all our holy things are polluted; they are splendida peccata. To the unclean all things are unclean (Titus 1:15); their offering is unclean. Under the law, if a man who was unclean by a dead body, did carry a piece of holy flesh in his skirt, the holy flesh could not cleanse him, but he polluted that (Haggai 2:12-13). He who had the leprosy, whatever he touched was unclean; if he had touched the altar or sacrifice, the altar had not cleansed him, but he had defiled the altar; a foul hand defiles the purest water; an impure heart defiles prayers, sacraments; he drops poison upon all. A pure stream running through muddy ground is polluted; the holiest ordinances are stained running through an impure heart. A sinner's works are called dead works (Hebrews 6:1), and those works which are dead cannot please God; a dead wife cannot please her husband.

2. Heart-purity is necessary in respect of God: God is holy; purity is the chief robe with which God himself is clothed (Habakkuk 1:13). You are of purer eyes than to behold evil: and will this holy God endure to have an impure heart come near him? Will a man lay a viper in his bosom? The holy God and the sinner cannot dwell together. None can dwell together but friends; but there is no friendship between God and the sinner, both of them being of a contrary judgment and disposition. An impure heart is more odious to God than a serpent; God gave the serpent its venom, but Satan fills the heart with sin (Acts 5:3). Why has Satan filled your heart? The Lord abhors a sinner, he will not come near him, having his plague-sores running (Zechariah 11:8). My soul loathed them.

3. Heart-purity is necessary in regard of the angels; they are pure creatures: the cherubim, which typified the angels, were made of fine gold, to denote the purity of their essence; no unholy thought enters into the angels; therefore there must be purity of heart, that there may be some resemblance between us and them. What should unholy hearts do among those pure angelical spirits?

4. In regard of the saints glorified: they are pure, being refined from all lees and dregs of sin. Their title is, spirits of just men made perfect (Hebrews 12:23). Now what should profane spirits do among spirits made perfect? I tell you, if you who wallow in your sins, could come near God and angels, and spirits of men made perfect, and have a sight of their luster, you would soon wish yourselves out of their company; as a man that is dirty, and in his rags, if he should stand before the king and his nobles, and see them glistening in their cloth of gold, and sparkling with their jewels, he would be ashamed of himself, and wish himself out of their presence.

5. There must be heart-purity in regard of heaven; heaven is a pure place, it is an inheritance undefiled (1 Peter 1:4). No unclean beasts come into the heavenly ark; there shall not enter into it anything that defiles (Revelation 21:27). The Lord will not put the new wine of glory into a musty, impure heart; all which considered shows the necessity of heart-purity.

2. It is the will of God that we should be pure in heart (1 Thessalonians 4:3). This is the will of God, your sanctification. Are you low in the world? Perhaps it is not the will of God that you should be rich; but it is the will of God that you should be holy;

this is the will of God, your sanctification. Let God have his will by being holy, and you shall have your will in being happy. God's will must either be fulfilled by us, or upon us.

3. Purity of heart is the characteristic note of God's people (Psalm 73:1). God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. Heart-purity denominates us the Israel of God. It is not profession which makes us the Israel of God; it makes us of Israel indeed; but all are not Israel which are of Israel (Romans 9:6). Purity of heart is the jewel which is hung only upon the elect. As chastity distinguishes a virtuous woman from a harlot; so the true saint is distinguished from the hypocrite by his heart-purity. This is like the nobleman's star, or garter, which is a peculiar ensign of honor, differing him from the common; when the bright star of purity shines in a Christian's heart, it does distinguish him from a formal professor.

4. Purity of heart makes us like God; it was Adam's unhappiness once, he aspired to be like God in omniscience; but we must endeavor to be like God in sanctity. God's image consists in holiness; those who have not his image and superscription upon them, he will say, I do not know you. God delights in no heart but where he may see his own face and likeness. You cannot see your face in a glass when it is dusty: God's face cannot be seen in a dusty impure soul; a pure heart (like a clean glass) gives forth some idea and representation of God. There is little comfort in being like God in other things besides purity. Are we like God in that we have a being? So have stones. Are we like him in that we have motion? So have stars. Are we like him in that we have life? So have trees and birds. Are we like him in that we have knowledge? So have devils.

There is no likeness to God that will prove comfortable and blessed, but our being like him in purity; God loves the pure in heart; love is founded upon likeness.

5. The excellency of the heart lies in the purity of it. Purity was the glory of the soul in innocency; the purer a thing is, the better; the purer the air is, and the more free from noxious vapors, the better it is; the spirits of water distilled are most precious; the purer the gold is, the more valuable; the purer the wine is when it is taken off from the lees and dregs, the more excellent it is; the more the soul is clarified by grace, and taken off from the lees and dregs of sin, the more precious account God makes of it; the purer the heart is, the more spiritual it is; and the more spiritual, the more fit to entertain him who is a Spirit.

6. God is good to the pure in heart (Psalm 73:1). God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. We all desire that God should be good to us; it is the sick man's prayer, the Lord be good to me. God is good to such as are of a clean heart.

Quest. But how is God good to them?

Answ. Two ways: 1. To them that are pure, all things are sanctified (Titus 1:15). To the pure all things are pure. Estate is sanctified, relations are sanctified; as the temple did sanctify the gold, and the altar did sanctify the offering. To the unclean nothing is clean; their table is a snare, their temple-devotion is sin. There is a curse entailed upon a wicked man; but holiness removes the curse, and cuts off the entail; to the pure all things are pure. 2. The pure-hearted have all things work for their good (Romans 8:28). Mercies and afflictions shall turn to their good; the most poi-

sonous drug shall be medicinal; the most cross providence shall carry on the design of their salvation; who then would not be pure in heart? God is good to such as are of a clean heart.

7. Heart purity makes way for heaven; the pure in heart shall see God. Happiness is nothing but the quintessence of holiness; purity of heart is heaven begun in a man; holiness is called in Scripture the anointing of God (1 John 2:27). Solomon was first anointed with the holy oil, and then he was made king (1 Kings 1:39). The people of God are first anointed with the oil of the Spirit, and made pure in heart, and then the crown of glory is set upon their head: and is not purity to be highly valued? It lays a train for glory; purity of heart, and seeing of God, are linked together.

8. The examples of those who have been eminent for heart-purity: the Lord Jesus was a pattern of purity (John 8:46). Which of you convinces me of sin? In this we are to imitate Christ; we are not to imitate him in raising the dead, or in working miracles, but in being holy (1 Peter 1:16). Besides this golden pattern of Christ, we are to write after the fair copy of those saints who have been of a dove-like purity. David was so pure in heart, that he was a man after God's heart; Abraham so purified by faith, that he was one of God's cabinet-council. Moses so holy, that God spoke with him face to face; what were the rest of the patriarchs, but so many plants of renown flourishing in holiness? The fathers in the primitive church were exemplary for purity; Gregory Nazianzene, Basil, Augustine, they were so inlaid and adorned with purity, that envy itself could not tax them; therefore as Caesar wished he had such soldiers as were in the time of Alexander the Great; so we may wish we had such saints as were in the primitive times; so just

were they in their dealings, so decent in their attire, so true in their promises, so devout in their religion, so unblameable in their lives, that they were living sermons, walking Bibles, real pictures of Christ, and did help to keep up the credit of godliness in the world.

9. Heart-purity is the only jewel you can carry out of the world; have you a child you delight in, or an estate? You can carry nothing out of the world (1 Timothy 6:7). Purity of heart is the only commodity that can be with comfort transported, this is that which will stay longest with you; usually we love those things that will last longest; we prize a diamond or piece of gold above the most beautiful flower, because fading; heart-purity has perpetuity; it will go with us beyond the grave.

Means for heart-purity.

But how shall we attain to heart-purity? 1. Often look into the word of God (John 15:3). Now you are clean through the word (Psalm 119:140). Your word is very pure: God's word is pure, not only for the matter of it, but the effect, because it makes us pure: Sanctify them through your truth, your word is truth (John 17:17). By looking into this pure crystal we are changed into the image of it; the word is both a glass to show us the spots of our souls, and a basin to wash them away; the word breathes nothing but purity; it irradiates the mind, it consecrates the heart.

2. Go to the bath: there are two baths Christians should wash in.

1. The bath of tears: go into this bath; Peter had sullied and defiled himself with sin, and he washed himself with penitential tears. Mary Magdalen who was an impure sinner, stood at Jesus' feet weeping (Luke 7:38). Mary's tears did wash her heart, as well

as Christ's feet. Oh sinners, let your eyes be a fountain of tears; weep for those sins which are so many, as have passed all arithmetic; this water of contrition is healing and purifying.

2. The bath of Christ's blood; this is that fountain opened for sin, and for uncleanness (Zechariah 13:1). A soul steeped in the briny tears of repentance, and bathed in the blood of Christ, is made pure; all the legal washings and purifications were but types and emblems, representing Christ's blood; this blood lays the soul a-whitening.

3. Get faith: it is a soul-cleansing grace (Acts 15:9). Having purified their hearts by faith. The woman in the Gospel, that did but touch the hem of Christ's garment was healed; a touch of faith heals. If I believe Christ and all his merits are mine, how can I sin against him? We do not willingly injure those friends which we believe love us: nothing can have a greater force and efficacy upon the heart to make it pure, than faith; faith will remove mountains; the mountains of pride, lust, envy; faith and the love of sin are inconsistent.

4. Breathe after the Spirit; it is called the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13). It purges the heart, as lightning purges the air: that we may see what a purifying virtue the Spirit has, it is compared

1. To fire (Acts 2:3). Fire is of a purifying nature; it does refine and cleanse metals; it separates the dross from the gold; the Spirit of God in the heart does refine and sanctify it; it burns up the dross of sin.

2. The Spirit is compared to wind (Acts 2:2). There came a sound from heaven as of a mighty rushing wind, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. The wind does purify the air; when the air by reason of foggy vapors is unwholesome, the wind is a fan to winnow and purify it. Thus when the vapors of sin arise in the heart, vapors of pride and covetousness, earthly vapors, the Spirit of God arises and blows upon the soul, and so purges away these impure vapors. The spouse in the Canticles prays for a gale of the Spirit, that she might be made pure (Song of Solomon 4:16).

3. The Spirit is compared to water (John 7:38-39). He that believes on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water, but this he spoke of the Spirit. The Spirit is like water, not only to make the soul fruitful, (for it causes the desert to blossom as the rose, Isaiah 32:15; Isaiah 35:1), but the Spirit is like water to purify: whereas before the heart of a sinner was unclean, and whatever he touched had a tincture of impurity (Numbers 19:22), when once the Spirit comes into the heart, it does with its continual showers and lavors wash off the filthiness of it, making it pure, and fit for the God of the spirits to dwell in.

5. Take heed of familiar conversation and intercourse with the wicked. One vain mind makes another; one hard heart makes another; the stone in the body is not infectious, but the stone in the heart is. One profane spirit poisons another; beware of the society of the wicked.

Quest. But what hurt is in this? Did not Jesus Christ converse with sinners (Luke 5:29)?

Ans. 1. There was a necessity for that: if Jesus Christ had not come among sinners, how could any have been saved? He went among sinners, not to join with them in their sins, but to heal them of their sins. He was not a companion of sinners, but a physician of sinners.

2. Though Christ did converse with sinners, he could not be polluted with their sin; his divine nature was a sufficient antidote to preserve him from infection. Christ could be no more defiled with their sin, than the sun is defiled by shining on a dunghill. Sin could no more stick on Christ, than a bur on a glass of crystal; the soil of his heart was so pure, that no viper of sin could breed there. But the case is altered with us; we have a stock of corruption within, and the least thing will increase this stock; therefore it is dangerous mingling ourselves among the wicked. If we would be pure in heart, let us shun their society. He that would preserve his garment clean avoids the dirt; the wicked are as the mire (Isaiah 57:20). The fresh waters running among the salt taste brackish.

6. If you would be pure, walk with them that are pure; as the communion of saints is in our Creed, so it should be in our company (Proverbs 13:20). He that walks with the wise shall be wise; and he that walks with the pure shall be pure. The saints are like a bed of spices; by intermixing ourselves with them we shall partake of their savoriness; association begets assimilation; sometimes God blesses good society to the conversion of others.

7. Wait at the posts of wisdom's doors, reverence the word preached; the word of God sucked in by faith, transforms the heart into the likeness of it (Romans 6:17). The word is a holy seed, which being cast into the heart, makes it partake of the divine nature.

8. Pray for heart-purity. Job propounds the question, who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean (Job 15:14)? God can do it; out of an impure heart he can produce grace; make that prayer of David (Psalm 51:10). Create in me a clean heart, O God. Most men pray more for full purses, than pure hearts; we should pray for heart-purity fervently; it is a matter we are most nearly concerned in; without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Our prayer must be with sighs and groans (Romans 8). There must not only be elocution, but affection. Jacob wrestled in prayer (Genesis 32:24). Hannah poured out her soul (1 Samuel 1:15). We often pray so coldly, (our petitions even freezing between our lips) as if we would teach God to deny: we pray, as if we cared not whether God heard us or not. Oh Christian, be earnest with God for a pure heart; lay your heart before the Lord, and say, Lord, you who have given me a heart, give me a pure heart. My heart is good for nothing as it is, it defiles everything it touches. Lord, I am not fit to live with this heart, for I cannot honor you; nor to die with it, for I cannot see you; oh purge me with hyssop; let Christ's blood be sprinkled upon me, let the Holy Spirit descend upon me, create in me a clean heart, O God. You who bid me give you my heart, Lord, make my heart pure, and you shall have it.

CHAPTER 17



Matthew 5:8: They shall see God.

The blessed privilege of seeing God explained.

These words are linked to the former, and they are a great incentive to heart-purity; the pure heart shall see the pure God. There is a twofold sight which the saints have of God.

First, in this life — that is, spiritually, by the eye of faith. Faith sees God's glorious attributes in the glass of his Word; faith beholds him showing forth himself through the lattice of his ordinances. Thus Moses saw him who was invisible (Hebrews 11:27). Believers see God's glory as it were veiled over; they behold his back-parts (Exodus 33:23).

Second, in the life to come; and this glorious sight of God is meant in the text — they shall see God. A pleasant prospect! This divines call the beatific vision. At that day the veil will be pulled off, and God will show himself in all his glory to the soul, as a king on a coronation day shows himself in all his royalty and magnificence. This sight of God will be the heaven of heaven. We shall indeed have a sight of angels, and that will be sweet; but the quintessence of happiness, the diamond in the ring, will be this: we shall see God. If the sun is absent, it is night for all the stars. The angels

are called stars (Job 38:7), but it would be night in heaven if the Sun of righteousness did not shine there. It is the king's presence that makes the court. This sight of God in glory is partly mental and intellectual — we shall see him with the eyes of our mind. If there were not an intellectual sight of God, how would the spirits of just men made perfect see him? It is also partly bodily — not that we can with bodily eyes behold the bright essence of God. God is a spirit (John 4:24), and being a spirit, is invisible (1 Timothy 1:17). He cannot be beheld by bodily eyes (1 Timothy 6:16). A sight of his glory would overwhelm us; this wine is too strong for our weak heads.

But when I say our seeing of God in heaven is bodily, my meaning is we shall with bodily eyes behold Jesus Christ, through whom the glory of God — his wisdom, holiness, and mercy — shall shine forth to the soul. Put a backing of steel to the glass, and you may see a face in it; so the human nature of Christ is as it were a backing through which we may see the glory of God. In this sense that scripture is to be understood (Job 19:26): With these eyes shall I see God.

Setting forth the excellence of the beatific vision.

Now concerning this blessed sight of God, it is so sublime and sweet that I can but draw a dark shadow of it; we shall better understand it when we come to heaven. Only at present I shall lay down these nine maxims.

First, our sight of God in heaven shall be a transparent sight. Here we see him through a glass darkly (1 Corinthians 13:12), but through Christ we shall behold God in a very illustrious manner. God will so far unveil himself and show forth his glory as the soul

is capable to receive. If Adam had not sinned, it is probable he should never have had such a clear sight of God as the saints in glory shall. 1 John 3:2: We shall see him as he is. Now we see him as he is not — not mutable, not mortal. Then shall I know, even as also I am known (1 Corinthians 13:12) — that is, clearly. As their love to God, so their sight of God shall be perfect.

Second, this sight of God will be a transcendent sight, surpassing in glory. Such glittering beams shall sparkle forth from the Lord Jesus as shall infinitely amaze and delight the eyes of the beholders. Imagine what a blessed sight it will be to see Christ wearing the robe of our human nature and to see that nature sitting in glory above the angels. If God is so beautiful here in his ordinances — Word, prayer, sacraments — if there is such excellence in him when we see him by the eye of faith through the glass of a promise, what will it be when we shall see him face to face? When Christ was transfigured on the mount, he was full of glory (Matthew 17:2). If his transfiguration were so glorious, what will his coronation be? Isaiah 33:17: You shall see the king in his beauty. All lights are but eclipses compared with that glorious vision; the greatest artist's brush would blot, angels' tongues would but disparage it.

Third, this sight of God will be a transforming sight. 1 John 3:2: We shall be like him. The saints shall be changed into glory, as when the light springs into a dark room the room may be said to be changed from what it was. The saints shall so see God as to be changed into his image. Here God's people are darkened and sullied with infirmities, but in heaven they shall be as the dove, covered with silver wings. They shall have some rays and beams of God's glory shining in them. As the crystal by having the sun shine on it sparkles and looks like the sun, so the saints by beholding the

brightness of God's glory shall have a tincture of that glory upon them. Not that they shall partake of God's very essence — for as the iron in the fire becomes fire yet remains iron still, so the saints by beholding the luster of God's majesty shall be glorious creatures, but yet creatures still.

Fourth, this sight of God will be a joyful sight. Acts 2:28: You will make me full of joy with your presence. After a sharp winter, how pleasant it will be to see the Sun of righteousness displaying himself in all his glory! Does faith breed joy? 1 Peter 1:8: In whom, though now you see him not, yet believing you rejoice with joy unspeakable. If the joy of faith is such, what will the joy of vision be? The sight of Christ will amaze the eye with wonder and ravish the heart with joy. If the face of a friend whom we dearly love so affects us and drives away sorrow, how cheering will the sight of God be to the saints in heaven! Then indeed it may be said, 'Your heart shall rejoice' (John 16:22). And there are two things which will make the saints' vision of God in heaven joyful.

First, through Jesus Christ the dread and terror of the divine essence shall be taken away. Majesty shall appear in God to preserve reverence, but withal majesty clothed with beauty and tempered with sweetness to excite joy in the saints. We shall see God as a friend — not as guilty Adam did, who was afraid and hid himself (Genesis 3:10) — but as Queen Esther looked upon King Ahasuerus holding forth the golden scepter (Esther 5:2). Surely this sight of God will not be formidable but comfortable.

Second, the saints shall not only have vision but fruition; they shall so see God as to enjoy him. True blessedness comprehends both: it lies partly in the understanding by seeing the glory of God richly displayed, and partly in the will by a sweet, delicious taste of

it and the soul's acquiescence in it. We shall so see God as to love him, and so love him as to be filled with him; the seeing of God implies fruition. Matthew 25:21: Enter into the joy of your Lord — not only behold it, but enter into it. Psalm 36:9: In your light we shall see light — there is vision. Psalm 16:11: At your right hand there are pleasures forevermore — there is fruition. So great is the joy which flows from the sight of God as will make the saints break forth into triumphant praises and hallelujahs.

Fifth, this sight of God will be a satisfying sight. Cast three worlds into the heart and they will not fill it; but the sight of God satisfies. Psalm 17:15: I shall be satisfied when I awake with your likeness. Solomon says the eye is not satisfied with seeing (Ecclesiastes 1:8), but there the eye will be satisfied with seeing. God and nothing but God can satisfy. The saints shall have their heads so full of knowledge and their hearts so full of joy that they shall find no lack.

Sixth, it will be an unwearying sight. Let a man see the rarest sight there is, he will soon be sated; when he comes into a garden and sees delightful walks, fair arbors, pleasant flowers, within a little while he grows weary. But it is not so in heaven — there is no surfeiting. We shall never be weary of seeing God; for the divine essence being infinite, there shall be every moment new and fresh delights springing forth from God into the glorified soul. The soul shall not so desire God but it shall still be full; nor shall it be so full but it shall still desire. So sweet will God be that the more the saints behold God, the more they will be ravished with desire and delight.

Seventh, it will be a beneficial sight, tending to the bettering and advantage of the soul. Some colors while they delight the eyes hurt them, but this vision of God shall better the soul and tend to its infinite happiness. Eve's looking upon the tree of knowledge damaged her sight — she grew spiritually blind upon it. But the saints can receive no hurt from the sight of glory; this sight will be beatific. The soul will never be in its perfection until it comes to see God; this will be the crowning blessing.

Eighth, this sight of God shall be perpetuated. Here we see objects for a while and then our eyes grow dim. But the saints shall always behold God; as there shall be no cloud upon God's face, so the saints shall have no mote in their eye. Their sight shall never grow dim, but they shall be to all eternity looking on God, that beautiful and beatific object. O what a soul-ravishing sight this will be! God must make us able to bear it; we can no more endure a sight of glory than a sight of wrath. But the saints after this life shall have their capacities enlarged and be qualified and made fit to receive the penetrating beams of glory.

Ninth, it will be a speedy sight. There are some who deny that the soul is immediately after death admitted to the sight of God. But I shall make good this assertion: the saints shall have an immediate transition from death to glory. As soon as death has closed their eyes, they shall see God. If the soul is not immediately after death translated to the beatific vision, then what becomes of the soul in that interval until the resurrection?

First, does the soul go into torment? That cannot be, for the soul of a believer is a member of Christ's mystical body. If this soul should go to hell, then something of Christ should go to hell — a

member of Christ might for a time be damned. But that is impossible.

Second, does the soul sleep in the body, as some drowsily imagine? How then shall we make sense of this scripture? 2 Corinthians 5:8: We are willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. If the soul at death is absent from the body, then it cannot sleep in the body.

Third, does the soul die? So the Lucianists held that the soul was mortal and died with the body. But as Scaliger observes, it is impossible that the soul, being of a spiritual uncompounded nature, should be subject to corruption. Those who say the soul dies — I would demand of them in what way the soul of a man at death then differs from the soul of a brute. By all which it appears that the soul of a believer after death goes immediately to God. Luke 23:43: This day shall you be with me in paradise. The word 'with me' shows clearly that the thief on the cross was translated to heaven, for there Christ was (Ephesians 4:10). And the word 'this day' shows that the thief on the cross had an immediate passage from the cross to paradise. So the souls of believers have a speedy vision of God after death; it is but a moment's closing of the eyes, and they shall see God.

The sinner's misery — that he shall not see God.

Use 1: See the misery of an impure sinner — he shall not be admitted to the sight of God. The pure in heart only shall see God. Such as live in sin, whose souls are dyed black with the filth of hell, shall never come where God is. They shall have a terrifying vision of God, but not a beatific vision. They shall see the flaming sword and the burning lake, but not the mercy-seat. God in Scripture is

sometimes called a consuming fire, sometimes the Father of lights. The wicked shall feel the fire but not see the light. Impure souls shall be covered with shame and darkness as with a mantle and shall never see the King's face. They who would not see God in his ordinances shall not see him in his glory.

That we should labor to be rightly qualified for this vision.

Use 2: Is there such a blessed privilege after this life? Then let me persuade all who hear me today: first, to get into Christ. We cannot come to God but by Christ; we cannot see God but through Christ. Moses when he was in the rock did see God (Exodus 33:22). In this blessed Rock, Christ, we shall see God. Second, be purified persons. It is only the pure in heart who shall see God; only a clear eye can behold a bright transparent object. Those only who have their hearts cleansed from sin can have this blessed sight of God. Sin is such a cloud that if it is not removed, it will forever hinder us from seeing the Sun of righteousness. Christian, do you have upon your heart holiness to the Lord? Then you shall see God. There are many, said Augustine, who could be content to go to heaven but are loath to take the way that leads there; they would have the glorious vision but neglect the gracious union.

There are several sorts of eyes that shall never see God: the ignorant eye, the unchaste eye, the scornful eye, the malicious eye, the covetous eye. If you would see God when you die, you must be purified persons while you live. 1 John 3:2-3: We shall see him as he is; and every man that has this hope in him purifies himself.

A cordial for the pure in heart.

Use 3: Let me turn to the pure in heart. First, stand amazed at this privilege — that you who are worms crept out of the dust should be admitted to the blessed sight of God to all eternity. It was Moses's prayer: 'I beseech you, show me your glory' (Exodus 33:18). The saints shall behold God's glory; the pure in heart shall have the same blessedness that God himself has, for what is the blessedness of God but the contemplating of his own infinite beauty.

Second, begin your sight of God here; let the eye of your faith be still upon God. Moses by faith saw him who is invisible (Hebrews 11:27). Often look upon him with believing eyes, whom you hope to see with glorified eyes. Psalm 25:15: My eyes are ever toward the Lord. While others are looking toward the earth as if they would fetch all their comforts there, let us look up to heaven; there is the best prospect. The sight of God by faith lets much joy into the soul. 1 Peter 1:8: Though now you see him not, yet believing you rejoice with joy unspeakable.

Third, let this be as a cordial to revive the pure in heart. Be comforted with this: you shall shortly see God. The godly have many sights here that they would not see — they see a body of death, they see the sword unsheathed, they see rebellion wearing the mask of religion, they see the white devil. These sights occasion sorrow. But there is a blessed sight coming: they shall see God, and in him are all sparkling beauties and ravishing joys to be found.

Fourth, be not discouraged at sufferings; all the hurt that affliction and death can do is to give you a sight of God. As one martyr said to his fellow-martyr: 'One half-hour in glory will make us forget our pain.' The sun arising, all the dark shadows of the night flee away. When the pleasant beams of God's countenance shall begin

to shine upon the soul in heaven, then sorrows and sufferings shall be no more. The thoughts of this beatific vision should carry a Christian full sail with joy through the waters of affliction. This made Job so willing to embrace death (Job 19:25-26): I know that my Redeemer lives, and though worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.

CHAPTER 18



Matthew 5:9: Blessed are the peacemakers, etc.

This is the seventh step of the golden ladder which leads to blessedness. The name of peace is sweet, and the work of peace is a blessed work. Blessed are the peacemakers. Observe the connection: the Scripture links together pureness of heart and peaceableness of spirit. James 3:17: The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable. Hebrews 12:14: Follow peace and holiness. And here Christ joins them: pure in heart and peacemakers. As if there could be no purity where there is not a pursuit of peace; that religion is suspect which is full of faction and discord.

In the words there are three parts.

First, a duty implied — peaceable-mindedness. Second, a duty expressed — to be peacemakers. Third, a title of honor bestowed — they shall be called the children of God.

First, the duty implied: peaceable-mindedness. For before men can make peace among others, they must be of peaceable spirits themselves; before they can be promoters of peace, they must be lovers of peace.

Doctrine 1: Christians must be peaceable-minded. This peaceableness of spirit is the beauty of a saint; it is a jewel of great price. 1 Peter 3:4: The ornament of a quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price. The saints are Christ's sheep (John 10:27); the sheep is a peaceable creature. They are Christ's doves (Song of Solomon 2:14); therefore they must be without gall. It becomes not Christians to be Ishmaels but Solomons. Though they must be lions for courage, yet lambs for peaceableness. God was not in the earthquake nor in the fire, but in the still, small voice (1 Kings 19:12). God is not in the rough, fiery spirit but in the peaceable spirit. There is a fourfold peace that we must study and cherish.

First, household peace — peace in families. It is called the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3). Without this, all falls apart. Peace is a girdle that ties together the members of a family; it is a golden clasp that knits them together that they do not fall in pieces. We should endeavor that our houses should be houses of peace. It is not the fairness of rooms that makes a house pleasant, but the peaceableness of dispositions. There can be no comfort in our dwellings until peace is entertained as a resident in our houses.

Second, there is a parish peace — when there is a sweet harmony, a tuning and chiming together of affections in a parish. When all draw one way and, as the apostle says, are perfectly joined together in the same mind (1 Corinthians 1:10). One jarring string brings all the music out of tune; one bad member in a parish endangers the whole. 1 Thessalonians 5:13: Be at peace among yourselves. It is little comfort to have our houses joined together if our hearts are asunder; a geographical union will do little good without a moral one.

Third, there is a political peace — peace in city and country. This is the fairest flower of a prince's crown; peace is the best blessing of a nation. It is well with bees when there is a noise, but it is best with Christians when, as in the building of the temple, there is no noise of hammer heard. Peace brings plenty along with it; how many miles would some go on pilgrimage to purchase this peace! Therefore the Greeks made peace to be the nurse of Pluto, the god of wealth. Political plants thrive best in the sunshine of peace. Psalm 147:14: he makes peace in your borders and fills you with the finest of the wheat. *Omnia pace vigent*. The ancients made the harp the emblem of peace; how sweet would the sounding of this harp be after the roaring of the cannon! All should study to promote this political peace; the godly man when he dies enters into peace (Isaiah 57:2), but while he lives, peace must enter into him.

Fourth, there is an ecclesiastical peace — a church-peace. When there is unity and truth in the church of God, never does religion flourish more than when her children spread themselves as olive plants around her table. Unity in faith and discipline is a mercy we cannot prize enough. This is what God has promised (Jeremiah 32:39) and what we should pursue (Zechariah 8:19). Ambrose said of Emperor Theodosius that when he lay sick, he took more care for the church's peace than for his own recovery.

The reasons why we should be peaceable-minded are two. First, we are called to peace (1 Corinthians 7:15). God never called any man to division; that is a reason why we should not be given to strife. But God has called us to peace. Second, it is the nature of grace to change the heart and make it peaceable. By nature we are of a fierce, cruel disposition. When God cursed the ground for

man's sake, the curse was that it should bring forth thorns and thistles (Genesis 3:18). The heart of man naturally lies under this curse — it brings forth nothing but the thistles of strife and contention. But when grace comes into the heart, it makes it peaceable; it infuses a sweet, loving disposition; it smooths and polishes the most knotty piece. Grace turns the vulture into a dove, the brier into a myrtle tree, the lion-like fierceness into a lamb-like gentleness. Isaiah 11:7-8: The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid. This is spoken of the power the gospel shall have upon men's hearts — it shall make such a transformation that those who before were full of rage and antipathy shall now be made peaceable and gentle.

Use 1: This shows us the character of a true saint — he is given to peace; he is the keeper of the peace; he is a son of peace.

Caution: not but that a man may be of a peaceable spirit yet seek to recover what is his due. If peace has otherwise been sought and cannot be attained, a man may go to law and yet be a peaceable man. It is with going to law as it is with going to war when the rights of a nation are invaded. When peace can be purchased by no other means than war, it is lawful to beat the plowshare into a sword. So when there is no other way of recovering one's right but by going to law, a man may commence a lawsuit and yet be of a peaceable spirit. Going to law in this case is not so much striving with another as contending for one's own; it is not to do another wrong but to do oneself right; it is a desire for equity rather than victory. As the apostle says (1 Timothy 1:8): the law is good if a man uses it lawfully.

Question: Is all peace to be sought? How far is peace lawful?

Answer: Peace with men must have this twofold limitation.

First, the peace a godly man seeks is not to have a league of friendship with sinners. Though we are to be at peace with their persons, yet we are to have war with their sins. We are to have peace with their persons as they are made in God's image, but to have war with their sins as they have made themselves in the devil's image. David was for peace (Psalm 120:7) but he would not sit upon the ale-bench with sinners (Psalm 26:4-5). Grace teaches good nature; we are to be civil to the worst, but not to be bound together in close friendship — that would be to be brothers in iniquity. Ephesians 5:11: Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Jehoshaphat, though a good man, was blamed for this (2 Chronicles 19:2): Should you help the ungodly and love those who hate the Lord? The fault was not that he maintained civil peace with Ahab, but that he had a league of friendship and was an assistant to Ahab when he went contrary to God. We must not so far have peace with others as to endanger ourselves. If a man has the plague, we will be helpful to him and send him our best remedies, but we are careful not to have too much of his company or breathe in his infectious breath. So we may be peaceable toward all — nay, helpful; pray for them, counsel them, relieve them — but let us take heed of too much familiarity, lest we breathe in their infection. In short, we must so make peace with men that we do not break our peace with conscience. Hebrews 12:14: Follow peace and holiness. We must not purchase peace with the loss of holiness.

Second, we must not so seek peace with others as to wrong truth. Proverbs 23:23: Buy the truth and sell it not. Peace must not be bought with the sale of truth. Truth is the ground of faith, the rule of manners. Truth is the most precious gem of the church's

crown; truth is a deposit that God has entrusted us with. God trusts us with our souls; he trusts us with his truths. We must not let any of God's truths fall to the ground; the least fragment of this gold is precious. We must not so seek the flower of peace as to lose the pearl of truth.

Some say let us unite, but we ought not to unite with error. What communion has light with darkness (2 Corinthians 6:14)? There are many who would have peace with the destroying of truth — peace with Arminianism, Socinianism, those against Scripture. This is a peace of the devil's making. Cursed be that peace which makes war with the Prince of peace. Though we must be peaceable, yet we are bidden to contend earnestly for the faith (Jude 3). We must not be so in love with the golden crown of peace as to pluck off the jewels of truth. Rather let peace go than truth; the martyrs would rather lose their lives than let go the truth.

Containing a reproof of such as are unpeaceable.

If Christians must be peaceable-minded, what shall we say to those who are given to strife and contention — who, like flax or gunpowder, if they be but touched, are all on fire? How far is this from the spirit of the gospel? It is made the mark of the wicked (Isaiah 57:20): they are like a troubled sea; there is no rest or quietness in their spirits, but they are continually casting forth the foam of passion and fury. James 3:14-15: If you have bitter envy and strife, this wisdom does not come down from above but is devilish. The lustful man is brutish; the wrathful man is devilish. Everyone is afraid to dwell in a house which is haunted with evil spirits; yet how little afraid are men of their own hearts, which are haunted with the evil spirit of wrath and implacableness.

And which is much to be laid to heart: the divisions of God's people. God's own tribes go to war. In Tertullian's time it was said, 'See how the Christians love one another!', but now it may be said, 'See how the Christians snarl at one another!' Wicked men agree together, when those who pretend to be led by higher principles are full of animosities and heart-burnings. Was it not sad to see Herod and Pilate uniting, and to see Paul and Barnabas falling out (Acts 15:39)? When the disciples called for fire from heaven, Christ said, 'You do not know what manner of spirit you are of' (Luke 9:56). As if the Lord said: 'This fire you call for is not zeal, but the wildfire of your own passions; this spirit of yours does not suit the Master you serve, the Prince of peace, nor the work I am sending you about, which is an embassy of peace.' It is Satan who kindles the fire of contention in men's hearts and then stands and warms himself at the fire. Discords and animosities among Christians bring their godliness much into question, for the wisdom which is from above is peaceable, gentle, and easy to be persuaded (James 3:17).

Containing an exhortation to peaceable-mindedness.

Use 3: Be of a peaceable disposition. Romans 12:18: If it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men. The curtains of the tabernacle were to be joined together (Exodus 26:3-4); so should the hearts of Christians be looped together in peace and unity. That I may persuade to peaceable-mindedness, let me speak both to reason and conscience.

First, a peaceable spirit seems to be agreeable to the natural frame and constitution of man. Man by nature seems to be a peaceable creature, fitter to handle the plow than the sword. Other creatures are naturally armed with some weapon to defend them-

selves: the lion has his paw, the boar his tusk, the bee his sting. Only man has none of these weapons — he comes naked and unarmed into the world, as if God would have him a peaceable creature. Man has his reason given him that he should live amicably and peaceably.

Second, a peaceable spirit is honorable. Proverbs 20:3: It is an honor for a man to cease from strife. We think it a brave thing to give way to strife and let loose the reins to our passions. But no — it is an honor to cease from strife. Noble spirits are such lovers of peace that they need not be bound to the peace. It is the bramble that rends and tears whatever is near it; the cedar and fig tree — those more noble plants — grow pleasantly and peaceably. Peaceableness is the badge and ornament of a noble mind.

Third, to be of a peaceable spirit is highly prudent. James 3:17: The wisdom from above is peaceable. A wise man will not meddle with strife; it is like putting one's finger into a hornets' nest. Or to use Solomon's simile (Proverbs 17:14): the beginning of strife is as when one lets out water. To set out the folly of strife, it is like letting out water in two respects.

First, when water begins to be let out, there is no end of it; so there is no end of strife once begun.

Second, the letting out of water is dangerous: if a man should break down a bank and let in an arm of the sea, the water might overflow his fields and drown him in the flood. So is he that meddles with strife; he may mischief himself and open such a sluice as may engulf and swallow him up. True wisdom espouses peace; a prudent man will keep away from the briers as much as he can.

Fourth, to be of a peaceable spirit brings peace along with it. A contentious person vexes himself and eclipses his own comfort. He is like the bird that beats itself against the cage; he troubles his own flesh (Proverbs 11:17). He is like one who pares off the sweetness of the apple and eats nothing but the core. So a quarrelsome man pares off all the comfort of his life and feeds only upon the bitter core of disquiet; he is a self-tormentor. The wicked are compared to a troubled sea (Isaiah 57:20), and it follows, 'There is no peace to the wicked' (verse 21). Froward spirits do not enjoy what they possess. But peaceableness of spirit brings the sweet music of peace along with it; it makes a calm and harmony in the soul. Therefore the psalmist says it is not only good but pleasant to live together in unity (Psalm 133:1).

Fifth, a peaceable disposition is a godlike disposition.

First, God the Father is called the God of peace (Hebrews 13:20). Mercy and peace are about his throne; he signs the articles of peace and sends the ambassadors of peace to publish them (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Second, God the Son is called the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). His name is Emmanuel — God with us — a name of peace. His office is to be a mediator of peace (1 Timothy 2:5). He came into the world with a song of peace; the angels sang it (Luke 2:14): Peace on earth. He went out of the world with a legacy of peace (John 14:27): Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you.

Third, God the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of peace; he is the Comforter. He seals up peace (2 Corinthians 1:22). This blessed dove brings the olive branch of peace in his mouth. Now a peace-

able disposition evidences something of God in a man; therefore God loves to dwell there. Psalm 76:2: In Salem is God's tabernacle. Salem signifies peace; God dwells in a peaceable spirit.

Sixth, Christ's earnest prayer was for peace. He prayed that his people might be one (John 17:11, 21, 23) — of one mind and heart. And observe the argument Christ uses in prayer: verse 22, 'That they may be one, even as we are one.' There was never any discord between God the Father and Christ. Though God parted with Christ out of his bosom, yet not out of his heart. There was ever dearness and oneness between them. Now Christ prays that as he and his Father were one, so his people might all be one in peace and concord. Did Christ pray so earnestly for peace, and shall not we endeavor what is in us to fulfill Christ's prayer? How do we think Christ will hear our prayer if we cross his?

Seventh, Christ not only prayed for peace but bled for it. Colossians 1:20: Having made peace through the blood of his cross — all manner of peace. He died not only to make peace between God and man, but between man and man. Christ suffered on the cross that he might cement Christians together with his blood. As he prayed for peace, so he paid for peace; Christ was himself bound to bring us into the bond of peace.

Eighth, strife and contention hinder the growth of grace. Can good seed grow in a ground where there is nothing but thorns and briars? Matthew 13: the thorns choked the seed. When the heart is stuck with thorns and is ever tearing and rending, can the seed of grace ever grow there? Historians report of the Isle of Patmos that the natural soil of it is such that nothing will grow upon that earth. A contentious heart is like the Isle of Patmos — nothing of grace will grow there until God changes the soil and makes it peaceable.

How can faith grow in an unpeaceable heart? For faith works by love. It is impossible that one should bring forth the sweet fruits of the Spirit who is in the gall of bitterness. If a man has received poison into his body, the most excellent food will not nourish until he takes some antidote to expel that poison. Many come to the ordinances with seeming zeal, but being poisoned with wrath and animosity, they receive no spiritual nourishment. Christ's mystical body edifies itself in love (Ephesians 4:16). There may be praying and hearing, but no spiritual growth, no edifying of the body of Christ without love and peace.

Ninth, peaceableness among Christians is a powerful magnet to draw the world to receive Christ. Not only gifts and miracles and preaching may persuade men to embrace the truth of the gospel, but peace and unity among those who profess it. When as there is one God and one faith, so there is one heart among Christians — this is as cummin seed which makes the doves flock to the windows. The temple was adorned with goodly stones (Luke 21:5). This makes Christ's spiritual temple look beautiful and the stones of it appear goodly when they are cemented together in peace and unity.

Tenth, unpeaceableness of spirit is to make Christians turn heathens. It is the sin of the heathens — implacable (Romans 1:31). They cannot be pacified; their hearts are like adamant — no oil can soften them, no fire can melt them. It is a heathenish thing to be so fierce and violent, as if with Romulus, men had suckled the milk of wolves.

Eleventh, to add yet more weight to the exhortation: it is the mind of Christ that we should live in peace. Mark 9:50: Have peace with one another. Shall we not be at peace for Christ's sake? If we

ought to lay down our life for Christ's sake, shall we not lay down our strife for his sake?

To conclude: if we will neither be under counsels nor commands, but still nurse a spirit of dissension and unpeaceableness, Jesus Christ will never come near us. The people of God are said to be his house (Hebrews 3:6). When the hearts of Christians are a spiritual house adorned with the furniture of peace, then they are fit for the Prince of peace to inhabit. But when this pleasant furniture is wanting, and instead of it nothing but strife and debate, Christ will not own it for his house nor grace it with his presence. Who will dwell in a house which is smoky and all on fire?

Showing some helps to peaceableness.

Question: How shall we attain to peaceableness?

First, take heed of those things which will hinder it. There are several impediments of peace which we must beware of — either outward or inward.

Outward impediments: whisperers (Romans 1:29). There are some who will buzz things in our ears on purpose to provoke. Among these we may rank talebearers (Leviticus 19:16). The talebearer carries reports up and down; the devil sends his letters by this messenger. The talebearer is an incendiary — he blows the coals of contention. 'Do you hear what such a one says of you? Will you put up with such a wrong? Will you suffer yourself to be so abused?' Thus by throwing in his fireballs he foment differences and sets men at each other's throats. We are commanded to provoke one another to love (Hebrews 10:24), but nowhere to provoke to anger. We should stop our ears to such persons as are known to come on the devil's errand.

Second, take heed of inward hindrances to peace.

First, self-love (2 Timothy 3:2): Men shall be lovers of themselves — and it follows, they shall be fierce (verse 3). The setting up of this idol of self has caused so many lawsuits, plunderings, and massacres in the world. Philippians 2:21: All seek their own. Self-love sets up monopolies and enclosures; it is a bird of prey, living upon plunder. Self-love cuts asunder the bond of peace. Lay aside self.

Second, pride (Proverbs 28:25): He that is of a proud heart stirs up strife. Pride and contention are born together. A proud man thinks himself better than others and will contend for superiority. 3 John 9: Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence. A proud man would have all strike sail to him. Because Mordecai would not bow to Haman, he got a bloody warrant signed for the death of all the Jews (Esther 3:9). What made all the strife between Pompey and Caesar but pride? Their spirits were too high to yield to each other. When this wind of pride gets into a man's heart, it causes sad earthquakes of division. Let us shake off this viper of pride; humility solders Christians together in peace.

Third, envy stirs up strife. The apostle has linked them together (1 Timothy 6:4): envy, strife. Envy cannot endure a superior. An envious man, seeing another to have a fuller crop or a better trade, is ready to pick a quarrel with him. Proverbs 27:4: Who can stand before envy? Envy is a pest that lives on blood; take heed of it; peace will not dwell with this inmate.

Fourth, credulity (Proverbs 14:15): The simple believes every word. A credulous man is akin to a fool — he believes all that is told him, and this often creates differences. As it is a sin to be a

talebearer, so it is a folly to be a tale-believer. A wise man will not take a report at the first hearing, but will sift and examine it before he gives credit to it.

Second, let us labor for those things which will maintain and cherish peace.

First, faith. Faith and peace keep house together. Faith believes the Word of God; the Word says, 'Live in peace' (2 Corinthians 13:11). And as soon as faith sees the King of heaven's warrant, it obeys. Faith persuades the soul that God is at peace, and it is impossible to believe this and live in variance. Nourish faith; faith knits us to God in love, and to our brothers in peace.

Second, Christian fellowship. There should not be too much estrangement among Christians. The primitive saints had their love-feasts. The apostle, exhorting to peace, brings this as an expedient (Ephesians 4:32): Be kind one to another.

Third, look not upon the failings of others but upon their graces. There is no perfection here. We read of the spots of God's children (Deuteronomy 32:5). The most golden Christians are some measure too light. Let us not so quarrel with the infirmities of others as to pass by their virtues. If in some things they fail, in other things they excel. It is the manner of the world to look more upon the sun in an eclipse than when it shines in its full luster.

Fourth, pray to God that he will send down the Spirit of peace into our hearts. We should not, as vultures, prey upon one another, but pray for one another. Pray that God will quench the fire of contention and kindle the fire of compassion in our hearts one

toward another. So much for the first thing in the text implied: that Christians should be peaceable-minded. I proceed to the second, expressed: that they should be peacemakers.

Pressing Christians to be peacemakers.

Doctrine 2: All good Christians ought to be peacemakers. They should not only be peaceable themselves but make others to be at peace. As in the body, when a joint is out we set it again; so it should be in the body politic. When a garment is rent, we sew it together again; when others are rent asunder in their affections, we should with a spirit of meekness sew them together again. I confess it is often a thankless office to go about to reconcile differences. Acts 7:27: Handle a brier never so gently, it will go near to scratch. He who goes to interpose between two combatants often receives the blow. But this duty, though it may want success from men, shall not want a blessing from God. Blessed are the peacemakers. O how happy were England if it had more peacemakers! Abraham was a peacemaker (Genesis 13:8); Moses was a peacemaker (Exodus 2:13). And that ever-to-be-honored Emperor Constantine, when he called the bishops together at the first Council of Nicaea to end church controversies, and they instead prepared bitter invectives and accusations against one another, he took their papers and tore them, gravely exhorting them to peace and unanimity.

Use 1: Reproof. It sharply reproves those who are so far from being peacemakers that they are peace-breakers. If blessed are the peacemakers, then cursed are the peace-breakers. If peacemakers are the children of God, then peace-breakers are the children of the devil. Heretics destroy the truth of the church by error; schismatics destroy the peace of it by division. The apostle sets a brand

upon such (Romans 16:17): Mark those who cause divisions and avoid them. Have no more to do with them than with witches or murderers. The devil was the first peace-breaker — he divided man from God; he set all on fire. There are too many troublemakers in England whose sweetest music is in discord; who never unite but to divide. Sectaries unite to set the church's peace on fire. These are the persons God's soul hates (Proverbs 6:19): sowers of discord among brothers. These are the children of a curse (Deuteronomy 27:24): Cursed be he that smites his neighbor secretly — that is, who backbites and so sets one friend against another. If there is a devil in man's shape, it is the incendiary.

Use 2: It exhorts to two things.

First, let us take up a bitter lamentation for the divisions of England. The wild beast has broken down the hedge of our peace. We are like a house falling to ruin if the Lord does not mercifully support and shore us up. Will not an ingenuous child grieve to see his mother torn in pieces? It is reported of Cato that from the time the civil wars began in Rome between Caesar and Pompey, he was never seen to laugh, or shave his beard, or cut his hair. That our hearts may be sadly affected with these church and state divisions, let us consider the mischief of divisions.

First, they are a sign of much evil to a nation. When the veil of the temple did rend in pieces, it was a sad omen and forerunner of the destruction of the temple. The rending of the veil of the church's peace betokens the ruin of it. Josephus observes that the city of Jerusalem, when it was besieged by Titus Vespasian, had three great factions in it which destroyed more than the enemy and was the occasion of its taking. How fatal have internal divisions been to this land? Our dissensions and mutinies have been

the scaling ladder by which the Romans and Normans formerly got into the nation. How is the bond of peace broken? We have so many schisms in the body and have run into so many particular churches that God may justly unchurch us, as he did Asia.

Second, it may afflict us to see the garment of the church's peace rent, because divisions bring reproach and scandal upon religion. These make the ways of God evil spoken of, as if religion were the fomentor of strife and sedition. Julian in his invectives against the Christians said they lived together as tigers, rending and devouring one another. And shall we make good Julian's words? It is unseemly to see Christ's doves fighting, to see his lily become a bramble. Alexander Severus, seeing two Christians contending, commanded them to no longer take the name of Christians upon them, for 'you dishonor your Master Christ.' Let men either lay down their contentions or lay off the coat of their profession.

Third, divisions obstruct the progress of piety. The gospel seldom thrives where the apple of strife grows. The building of God's spiritual temple is hindered by the confusion of tongues. Division eats as a worm and destroys the peaceable fruits of righteousness (Hebrews 12:11). In the church of Corinth, when they began to divide into parties — one for Paul, another for Apollos — there were but few for Christ. I am confident England's divisions have made many turn atheists.

Second, let us labor to heal differences and be repairers of breaches. Blessed are the peacemakers. First, Jesus Christ was a great peacemaker — he took a long journey from heaven to earth to make peace. Second, peace and unity is a great means for the strengthening and consolidating the church of God. The saints are

compared to living stones, built up for a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5). The stones in an arch or structure help to preserve and support one another. When the Christians in the primitive church were of one heart (Acts 4:32), what support this was! How did they counsel, comfort, and build up one another in their holy faith! We see that while the members of the body are united, they administer help and nourishment one to another; but if they are divided and broken off, they are of no use and the body languishes. Therefore let us endeavor to be peacemakers; the church's unity tends much to her stability.

Third, peace makes the church of God on earth in some measure like the church in heaven. The cherubim, representing the angels, are set out with their faces looking toward one another, to show their peace and unity. There are no jars or discords among the heavenly spirits. One angel is not of a different opinion from another. Though they have different orders, they are not of different spirits. They are seraphim and therefore burn, but not in the heat of contention — in love. The angels serve God not only with pure hearts but with united hearts. By a harmonious peace we might resemble the church triumphant.

Fourth, he who sows peace shall reap peace. Proverbs 12:20: To the counselors of peace is joy. The peacemaker shall have peace with God, peace in his own bosom — and that is the sweetest music which is made in a man's own breast. He shall have peace with others; the hearts of all shall be united to him. All shall honor him; he shall be called the repairer of the breach (Isaiah 58:12). To conclude: the peacemaker shall die in peace; he shall carry a good con-

science with him and leave a good name behind him. So I have done with the first part of the text — blessed are the peacemakers. I proceed to the next.

CHAPTER 19



Matthew 5:9: They shall be called the children of God.

In which words the glorious privilege of the saints is set down. Those who have made their peace with God and labor to make peace among brothers receive this great honor: they shall be called the children of God.

They shall be 'called' — that is, they shall be so reputed and esteemed of God. God never miscalls anything; he does not call them children who are no children. Luke 1:76: You shall be called the prophet of the Highest — that is, you shall be so. They shall be called the children of God — that is, they shall be accounted and received as children.

Doctrine: Peacemakers are the children of the Most High. God is said in Scripture to have many children.

First, by eternal generation; so Christ only is the natural Son of his Father. Psalm 2:7: You are my Son; this day have I begotten you.

Second, by creation; so the angels are the sons of God. Job 1:6 and 38:7: When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.

Third, by participation of dignity; so kings and rulers are called children of the Most High. Psalm 82:6: I have said you are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High.

Fourth, by visible profession; so God has many children. Hypocrites forge a title of son-ship. Genesis 6:2: The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair.

Fifth, by real sanctification; so all the faithful are peculiarly and eminently the children of God.

That believers may draw much sweetness out of this gospel flower, I shall discuss and demonstrate these seven particulars.

First, that naturally we are not the children of God. Second, what it is to be the children of God. Third, how we come to be made children. Fourth, the signs of God's children. Fifth, the love of God in making us children. Sixth, the honor of God's children. Seventh, the privileges of God's children.

Showing that by nature we are not God's children.

First, that naturally we are not the children of God. We are not born God's children but made so. By nature we are strangers to God — swine, not sons (2 Peter 2:22). Will a man settle his estate upon his swine? He will give them his acorns, not his jewels. By nature we have the devil for our father (John 8:44): You are of your father the devil. A wicked man may search the records of hell for his pedigree.

Showing what it is to be children.

Second, what it is to be the children of God. This childship consists in two things.

First, adoption. Second, infusion of grace.

First, childship consists in adoption. Galatians 4:5: That we might receive the adoption of sons.

Question: Wherein does the true nature of adoption consist?

Answer: In three things.

First, a transition or translation from one family to another. He who is adopted is taken out of the old family of the devil and hell (Ephesians 2:2-3), to which he was heir apparent, and is made of the family of heaven — a noble family (Ephesians 2:19). God is his Father, Christ is his Elder Brother, the saints are co-heirs, the angels fellow-servants in that family.

Second, adoption consists in an exemption from all the laws of the former family. Psalm 45:10: Forget also your father's house. He who is spiritually adopted has now no more to do with sin. Ephraim shall say, 'What have I to do any more with idols?' (Hosea 14:8). A child of God has indeed to do with sin — as with an enemy against which he does battle — but not as with a lord to whom he yields obedience. He is free from sin (Romans 6:18). I do not say he is free from duty; was it ever heard that a child should be freed from duty to his parents? That is such a freedom as rebels take.

Third, adoption consists in a legal investiture into the rights and royalties of the family into which the person is adopted. These are chiefly two.

First royalty: a new name. He who is divinely adopted assumes a new name — before a slave, now a son; of a sinner, a saint. This is a name of honor better than any title of prince or monarch. Revelation 2:17: To him who overcomes I will give a white stone, and in the stone a new name written. The white stone signifies remission; the new name signifies adoption. The new name is put in

the white stone to show that our adoption is grounded upon our justification. And this new name is written to show that God has all the names of his children enrolled in the book of life.

Second royalty: a giving of the adopted party an interest in the inheritance. Making one an heir implies a relation to an inheritance. A man does not adopt another to a title but to an estate. So God in adopting us for his children gives us a glorious inheritance (Colossians 1:12): the inheritance of the saints in light.

First, it is pleasant — it is an inheritance in light.

Second, it is safe. God keeps the inheritance for his children (1 Peter 1:4) and keeps them for the inheritance (1 Peter 1:5), so that they cannot be hindered from taking possession.

Third, there is no disinheriting, for the saints are co-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17). They are members of Christ (Colossians 1:18); the members cannot be disinherited unless the head is.

Fourth, the heirs never die; eternity is a jewel of their crown. Revelation 22:5: They shall reign forever and ever.

Here a question may arise: How does God's adopting differ from man's adopting?

First, man adopts to supply a defect, because he has no children of his own. But God does not adopt upon this account; he had a Son of his own, the Lord Jesus. He was his natural Son and the Son of his love, as testified by a voice from heaven (Matthew 3:17): This is my beloved Son. He was such a Son as was more worth than all the angels in heaven (Hebrews 1:4): Being made so much better than the angels. So God adopts not out of necessity but out of pity.

Second, when a man adopts, he adopts but one heir. But God adopts many. Hebrews 2:10: In bringing many sons to glory. Oh, may a poor trembling Christian say, why should I ever look for this privilege of being a child of God! It is true, if God did as a man, if he adopted only one son, then you might despair. But he adopts millions; he brings many sons to glory. Indeed, this may be the reason a man adopts but one — he does not have enough estate for more. But God has land enough to give to all his children. John 14:2: In my Father's house are many mansions.

Third, man when he adopts does it with ease — it is but sealing a deed and the thing is done. But when God adopts, it puts him to far greater cost; it sets his wisdom to work to find out a way to adopt us. It was no easy thing to reconcile hell and heaven, to make the children of wrath the children of the promise. And when God in his infinite wisdom had found out a way, it was no easy way; it cost God the death of his natural Son to make us his adopted sons. When God was about to constitute us sons and heirs, he could not seal the deed but by the blood of his own Son. It did not cost God as much to make us creatures as to make us sons. To make us creatures cost but the speaking of a word; to make us sons cost the outpouring of blood.

Fourth, man when he adopts settles only earthly privileges upon his heir. But God settles heavenly privileges — justification, glorification. Men entail their land upon those they adopt; God does more — he not only entails his land upon his children but entails himself upon them. Hebrews 8:10: I will be their God. Not only heaven is their portion, but God is their portion.

Second, God's making of children is by the infusion of grace. When God makes any his children, he stamps his image upon them. This is more than any man can do; a man may adopt another but cannot alter his disposition. If he is of a morose, rugged nature, a man cannot alter it. But God in making children prepares and sanctifies them for this privilege; he changes their disposition, he smooths the ruggedness of their nature; he makes them not only sons but saints. They are of another spirit (Numbers 14:24). They become meek and humble; they are partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

Showing how we come to be God's children.

Third, how we come to be the children of God.

Answer: There is a twofold cause of our sonship.

First, the impulsive cause is God's free grace. We were rebels and traitors — and what could move God to make sinners sons, but free grace? Ephesians 1:5: Having predestinated us to the adoption of children, according to the good pleasure of his will. Free grace gave the casting vote; adoption is a mercy spun out of the bowels of free grace. It would be much for God to take a clod of earth and make it a star; but it is more for God to take a piece of clay and sin and instate it into the glorious privilege of son-ship. How will the saints read over the lessons of free grace in heaven!

Second, the instrumental cause of our son-ship is faith. Baptism does not make us children; that is indeed a badge and livery and gives us right to many external privileges. But the thing which makes God take cognizance of us as children is faith. Galatians 3:26: You are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Before faith is wrought, we have nothing to do with God; we

are, as the apostle speaks in another sense, illegitimate and not sons (Hebrews 12:7). An unbeliever may call God his Judge but not his Father. Wicked men may draw near to God in ordinances and hope God will be their Father, but while they are unbelievers they are illegitimate, and God will not father them. You are the children of God by faith; faith legitimates us, confers upon us the title of son-ship, and gives us right to inherit.

How then should we labor for faith! Without faith we are creatures, not children; without faith we are spiritually illegitimate. This word 'illegitimate' carries two meanings.

First, it is a term of infamy; those who are illegitimate are looked upon with disgrace. You who ruffle in your silks and velvets but are in the state of nature — you are illegitimate. God looks upon you with an eye of scorn and contempt; you are a vile person, a son of the earth, of the seed of the serpent.

Second, this word 'illegitimate' imports infelicity and misery. Persons who are illegitimate cannot inherit legally; the land goes only to lawful heirs. Until we are the children of God, we have no right to heaven. And there is no way to be children but by faith. You are the children of God by faith.

Here two things are to be discussed.

First, what faith is. Second, why faith makes us children.

First, what faith is. If faith instates us into son-ship, it concerns us to know what faith is. There is a twofold faith.

First, a more general faith — when we believe the truth of all that is revealed in the holy Scriptures. This is not the faith which privileges us in son-ship; the devils believe all the articles in the creed. The bare knowledge of a medicine or believing its sovereign

virtue will not cure one who is ill. This general faith will not save. A man may have it and yet not love God. He may believe that God will come to judge the living and the dead and hate him, as the prisoner believes the judge's coming to the assizes and abhors the thought of him. Take heed of resting in a general faith; you may have this and be no better than devils.

Second, there is a special faith — when we do not only believe the report we hear of Christ but rest upon him, embrace him, taking hold of the horns of this altar, resolving there to abide. In the body there are sucking veins which draw the food into the stomach and digest it there. So faith is the sucking vein which draws Christ into the heart and applies him there. This is the son-making faith; by this we are made the children of God. And wherever this faith is, it is not like medicine in a dead man's mouth, but is exceeding operative; it obliges to duty; it works by love (Galatians 5:6).

Second, why does faith make us children and not as well other graces such as repentance or love?

Answer 1: Because faith is appointed by God and honored to this work of making us children. God's institution gives faith its value and validity. It is the king's stamp that makes the coin pass as currency; if he would put his stamp upon brass or leather, it would go as current as silver. The great God has authorized and put the stamp of his institution upon faith, and that makes it pass for current and gives it a privilege above all the graces to make us children.

Answer 2: Faith makes us children as it is the vital principle. Habakkuk 2:4: The just shall live by faith. All God's children are living — none of them are stillborn. By faith we live. As the heart is

the fountain of life in the body, so faith is the fountain of life in the soul.

Answer 3: Faith makes us children as it is the uniting grace; it knits us to Christ. The other graces cannot do this. By faith we are one with Christ, and so we are akin to God. Being united to the natural Son, we become adopted sons. The kinship comes in by faith. God is the Father of Christ; faith makes us Christ's brothers, and so God comes to be our Father (Hebrews 2:11).

Setting forth the signs of God's children.

Fourth, the signs of God's children. It concerns us to know whose children we are. Augustine said all mankind are divided into two ranks: either they are the children of God or the children of the devil.

First sign: tenderness of heart. 2 Chronicles 34:27: Because your heart was tender. A child-like heart is a tender heart; he who before had a flinty heart has now a fleshy heart. A tender heart is like melting wax to God — he may set whatever seal he will upon it. This tenderness of heart shows itself three ways.

First, a tender heart grieves for sin. A child weeps for offending his father. Peter showed a tender heart: when Christ looked upon him and he remembered his sin, he wept as a child. Clement of Alexandria said he never heard a rooster crow but he wept. Some learned writers tell us that by much weeping there seemed to be as it were channels made in his blessed face. The least hair makes the eye weep; the least sin makes the heart smite. David's heart smote him when he cut off the lap of King Saul's garment — what would it have done if he had cut off his head?

Second, a tender heart melts under mercy. Though when God thunders by affliction the rain of tears falls from a gracious eye, yet the heart is never so kindly dissolved as under the sunbeams of God's mercy. See how David's heart was melted with God's kindness. 2 Samuel 7:18: Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me to this? There was a gracious thaw upon his heart. So says a child of God: 'Lord, who am I — a piece of dust and sin kneaded together — that the bright beams of free grace should shine upon me! Who am I, that you should pity me when I lay in my blood and spread the golden wings of mercy over me?' The soul is overcome with God's goodness; the tears drop; the love flames. Mercy has a melting influence upon the soul.

Third, a tender heart trembles under God's threatenings. Psalm 119:120: My flesh trembles for fear of you. 2 Chronicles 34:27: Because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God when you heard his words against this place, and tore your clothes. If the father is angry, the child trembles. When ministers denounce the threats of God against sin, tender souls sit in a trembling posture. God delights in this frame of heart. Isaiah 66:2: To this man will I look, even to him who trembles at my word. A wicked man like the Leviathan is made without fear (Job 41:33). He neither believes the promises nor dreads the threatenings. Let judgment be denounced against sin — he laughs at the shaking of a spear. He thinks either that God does not see or cannot punish. The mountains quake before the Lord, the hills melt, the rocks are thrown down by him (Nahum 1:5). But the hearts of sinners are more obstinate than the rocks. A child-like heart is a tender heart; the stone is taken away.

Second sign: assimilation. Colossians 3:10: You have put on the new man who is renewed in the image of him that created him. The child resembles the father. God's children are like their heavenly Father; they bear his very image and impression. Wicked men say they are the children of God, but there is too great a dissimilarity. The Jews boasted they were Abraham's children, but Christ disproves them by this argument (John 8:40): You seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard of God — this Abraham did not do. If you are Abraham's children and would kill an innocent, you are more like Satan than Abraham (verse 44): You are of your father the devil. Such as are proud, earthly, and malicious may say, 'Our father who art in hell.' It is blasphemy to call God our Father and make the devil our pattern. God's children resemble him in meekness and holiness; they are his walking pictures. As the seal stamps its print and likeness upon the wax, so does God stamp the print and image of his own beauty upon his children.

Third sign: they have the Spirit of God. It is called the Spirit of adoption (Romans 8:15): You have received the Spirit of adoption.

Question: How shall we know that we have received the Spirit of adoption and so are in the state of adoption?

Answer: The Spirit of God has a threefold work in those who are made children.

First, a regenerating work. Whomsoever the Spirit adopts, it regenerates. God's children are said to be born of the Spirit (John 3:5): Unless a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. We must first be born of the Spirit before we are baptized with this new name of sons and daughters.

We are not God's children by creation but by renovation — not by our first birth but by our new birth. This new birth, produced by the Word as the material cause and by the Spirit as the efficient cause, is nothing else but a change of nature (Romans 12:2). Though it is not a perfect change, yet it is a thorough change (1 Thessalonians 5:23). This change of heart is as necessary as salvation.

Question: How shall we know that we have this regenerating work of the Spirit?

By the pangs. By the products.

First, by the pangs. There are spiritual pangs before the new birth — some brokenness of soul, some groanings and cryings out, some strugglings in the heart between flesh and spirit. Acts 2:37: They were pricked at their heart. The child has sharp pangs before birth; so it is in the new birth. I grant the new birth admits of more and less; all do not have the same pangs of humiliation, yet all have pangs. All feel the hammer of the law upon their heart, though some are more bruised by this hammer than others. God's Spirit is a Spirit of bondage before it is a Spirit of adoption (Romans 8:15). What then shall we say to those who are as much at a loss about the new birth as Nicodemus? John 3:4: How can a man be born when he is old? The new birth is a mockery to the impious, though it is a great mystery to the godly. Some thank God they never had any trouble of spirit — they were always quiet. These bless God for the greatest curse; it is a sign they are not God's children. The child of grace is always born with pangs.

Second, the new birth is known by its products, which are three.

First, sensibility. The infant that is newly born is sensible to the slightest touch. If the Spirit has regenerated you, you are sensible of the first stirrings and risings of sin, which before you did not perceive. Paul cries out of the law in his members (Romans 7:23). The new-born saint sees sin in the root.

Second, circumspection. He who is born of the Spirit is careful to preserve grace; he uses the breast of the ordinances (1 Peter 2:2). He is fearful of what may endanger his spiritual life (1 John 5:18). He lives by faith yet passes the time of his sojourning in fear (1 Peter 1:17). This is the first work of the Spirit in those who are made children: a regenerating work.

Second, the Spirit of God has a supplicating work in the heart. The Spirit of adoption is a spirit of supplication. Romans 8:15: You have received the Spirit of adoption, by which we cry, 'Abba, Father.' While the child is in the womb it cannot cry; while men lie in the womb of their natural state, they cannot pray effectually. But when they are born of the Spirit, then they cry, 'Abba, Father.' Prayer is nothing else but the soul breathing itself into the bosom of its Father. It is a sweet and familiar intercourse with God. As soon as ever the Spirit of God comes into the heart, it sets it praying. No sooner was Paul converted but the next word is, 'Behold, he prays' (Acts 9:11). It is reported that when Luther prayed, it was with so much reverence as if he were praying to God and with so much boldness as if he had been speaking to his friend. Eusebius reports that Emperor Constantine every day shut himself up in some secret place in his palace and there on bended knees made his devout prayers and soliloquies to God. God's Spirit tunes the strings of the affections, and then we make melody in prayer. For any to say in derision, 'You pray by the Spirit,' is a blasphemy

against the Spirit. It is a main work of the Spirit of God in the hearts of his children to help them to pray. Galatians 4:6: Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father.'

Question: But many of God's children do not have such ability to express themselves in prayer; how then does the Spirit help their infirmities?

Answer: Though they do not always have the gifts of the Spirit in prayer, yet they have the groans of the Spirit (Romans 8:26). Gifts are the ornament of prayer but not the life of prayer. A corpse may be hung with jewels. Though the Spirit may deny fluency of speech, yet it gives fervency of desire, and such prayers are most prevailing. The prayers which the Spirit indites in the hearts of God's children have these threefold qualities.

First, the prayers of God's children are believing prayers. Prayer is the key; faith is the hand that turns it. Faith feathers the arrow of prayer and makes it pierce the throne of grace. Matthew 21:22: Whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive. Jerome said, 'I would not presume to pray unless I bring faith along with me.' To pray and not believe is a kind of mockery offered to God, as if we thought either he did not hear or would not grant.

That faith may be animated in prayer, we must bring Christ in our arms when we appear before God. 1 Samuel 7:9: Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it for a burnt-offering, and Samuel cried to the Lord for Israel, and the Lord heard him. This suckling lamb typified Christ. When we come to God in prayer, we must bring the

Lamb Christ along with us. Themistocles carried the king's son in his arms and so pacified the king when he was angry. The children of God present Christ in the arms of their faith.

Second, the prayers of God's children indited by the Spirit are ardent prayers. Romans 8:15: You have received the Spirit, by which we cry, 'Abba, Father.' 'Father' implies faith; 'we cry' implies fervency. The incense was to be laid upon burning coals (Leviticus 16:12); the incense was a type of prayer, the burning coals of ardency in prayer. Elijah prayed earnestly (James 5:17); in the Greek it is 'in praying he prayed' — that is, he did it with vehemency. In prayer the heart must boil over with heat of affection. Prayer is compared to unutterable groans (Romans 8:26), alluding to a woman in labor. We should be in labor when we are travailing for mercy. Such prayer commands God himself (Isaiah 45:11).

Third, the prayers of God's children are heart-cleansing prayers — they purge out sin. Many pray against sin and then sin against prayer; but God's children do not only pray against sin, they pray down sin.

Third, the Spirit of God has a witnessing work in the heart. God's children have not only the influence of the Spirit but the witness. Romans 8:16: The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. There is a threefold witness a child of God has: the witness of the Word, the witness of conscience, and the witness of the Spirit. The Word makes the major proposition: he who is in such a manner qualified is a child of God. Conscience makes the minor: but you are so divinely qualified. The Spirit makes the conclusion: therefore you are a child of God. The Spirit joins with the witness of conscience (Romans 8:16). The Spirit

teaches conscience to search the records of Scripture and find its evidences for heaven; it helps conscience to spell out its name in a promise. It bears witness with our spirit.

Question: But how shall I know the witness of the Spirit from a delusion?

Answer: The Spirit of God always witnesses according to the Word, as the echo answers the voice. Enthusiasts speak much of the Spirit but they leave the Word. That inspiration which is either without the Word or against it is an imposture. The Spirit of God indited the Word (2 Peter 1:21). Now if the Spirit should witness otherwise than according to the Word, the Spirit should be divided against itself — it would be a spirit of contradiction, witnessing one thing as truth in the Word and another thing different from it in a man's conscience.

Fourth sign: zeal for God. God's children are zealous for his day, his truth, his glory. Those who are born of God are impatient of his dishonor. Moses was cool in his own cause but hot in God's; when the people had made the golden calf, he broke the tablets. When Paul saw the people of Athens given to idolatry, his spirit was stirred in him (Acts 17:16); in the Greek it is he was bitter in spirit, or in a burning fit of zeal. He could not contain himself but with this fire of zeal discharged against their sin. As we shall answer for idle words, so for sinful silence. David says the zeal of God's house had consumed him (Psalm 69:9). Many Christians whose zeal once had almost consumed them have now consumed their zeal; they have grown lukewarm and neutral. The breath of prosperity blowing upon them has cooled their heat. I can never believe that he has the heart of a child in him who can be patient when God's glory suffers. Can an ingenuous child endure to hear

his father reproached? Though we should be silent under God's displeasure, yet not under his dishonor. When there is a holy fire kindled in the heart, it will break forth at the lips. Zeal tempered with holiness gives the soul its best complexion.

Of all others, let ministers be impatient when God's glory is impeached and eclipsed. A minister without zeal is like salt that has lost its savor. Zeal will make men take injuries done to God as done to themselves. It is reported of Chrysostom that he reproved any sin against God as if he himself had received a personal wrong. Let not ministers be shaken with fear or seduced with flattery. God never made ministers to be as false mirrors, to make bad faces look fair. For want of this fire of zeal, they are in danger of another fire — the burning lake (Revelation 21:8), into which the fearful shall be cast.

Fifth sign: those who are God's children, being born of God, are of a more noble and heavenly spirit than worldly men. They set their minds on things above (Colossians 3:2). 1 John 5:4: Whatever is born of God overcomes the world. The children of God live in a higher region; they are compared to eagles (Isaiah 40:31) in regard of their sublimeness and heavenly-mindedness. Their souls have soared aloft; Christ is in their heart (Colossians 1:27) and the world is under their feet (Revelation 12:1). Men of the world are ever wallowing in thick clay; they are sons of the earth, not eagles but earthworms. The saints are of another spirit; they are born of God and walk with God as a child walks with his father. Noah walked with God (Genesis 6:9). God's children show their high pedigree in their heavenly conversation (Philippians 3:20).

Sixth sign: love to those who are children. God's children are knit together with the bond of love, as all the members of the body are knit together by various nerves and ligaments. If we are born of God, then we love the brotherhood (1 Peter 2:17). He who loves the person loves the picture. The children of God are his walking pictures; and if we are of God, we love those who have his image drawn upon their souls. If we are born of God, we love the saints notwithstanding their infirmities. Children love one another though they have some imperfections of nature — a squinting eye or a crooked back. We love gold in the ore though it has some drossiness in it. The best saints have their blemishes; we read of the spots of God's children (Deuteronomy 32:5). A saint in this life is like a fair face with a scar in it. If we are born of God, we love his children though they are poor; we love to see the image and picture of our Father though hung in the poorest frame.

And if we are children of the Highest, we show our love to God's children in two ways.

First, by prizing their persons above others. He who is born of God honors those who fear the Lord (Psalm 15:4). The saints are the dearly beloved of God's soul (Jeremiah 12:7). They are his jewels (Malachi 3:17). They are of the true blood-royal, and he who is divinely adopted sets a higher value upon these than upon others.

Second, we show our love to the children of God by prizing their company above others. Children love to be together. The fellowship of the saints is precious. Christ's doves will flock together. Psalm 119:63: I am a companion of all those who fear you. Though a child of God is courteous to all — we read that Abraham bowed

himself to the children of Heth (Genesis 23:7) — a child of God has a love of civility to all, but a love of delight only to those who are fellow-heirs with him of the same inheritance.

By this persons may test their adoption. It appears plainly that they are not the children of God who hate those who are born of God. They soil and blacken the silver wings of Christ's doves by their slanderous reproaches; they cannot endure the company of the saints. As vultures hate sweet smells and are killed by them, so the wicked do not love to come near the godly; they cannot abide the precious fragrance of their graces. It is a sign they are of the serpent's brood who hate the seed of the woman.

Seventh sign: he who is a child of God delights to be much in God's presence. Children love to be in the presence of their father. Where the King is, there is the court; where the presence of God is, there is heaven. God is in a special manner present in his ordinances; they are the ark of his presence. Now if we are children, we love to be much in holy duties. In the use of ordinances we draw near to God; we come into our Father's presence. In prayer we have secret conference with God; the soul while it is praying is as it were communing with God. In the Word we hear God speaking from heaven to us, and how does every child of God delight to hear his Father's voice! In the sacrament God kisses his children with the kisses of his lips; he gives them a smile of his face and a pledge of his love. Oh, it is good to draw near to God (Psalm 73:28). It is sweet to be in his presence. Every true child of God says, 'A day in your courts is better than a thousand' (Psalm 84:10). Those who slight the ordinances are none of God's children, because they care not to be in his presence; they love the tavern better than the temple. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord (Genesis 4:16).

Not that he could go out of God's sight (Psalm 139:7), but the meaning is that Cain went from the church of God, where the Lord gave visible signs of his presence to his people.

Eighth sign: compliance with the will of our heavenly Father. A child-like heart answers to God's call as the echo answers the voice. It is like the flower that opens and closes with the sun; so it opens to God and closes to temptation. This is the motto of a newborn saint (1 Samuel 3:9): Speak, Lord, your servant hears. When God bids his children pray in their closets, mortify sin, and suffer for his name, they are eager to obey; they will lay down their lives at their Father's call. Hypocrites court God and speak him fair but refuse to go on his errand; they are not children but rebels.

Ninth sign: he who is a child of God will labor to make others the children of God. The holy seed of grace propagates (Galatians 4:19). He who is of the royal seed will be eagerly desirous to bring others into the family. If you are divinely adopted, you will studiously endeavor to make your child a child of the Most High. There are two reasons why a godly parent will endeavor to bring his child into the heavenly family.

First, out of conscience. A good parent sees the injury he has done his child; he has conveyed the plague of sin to him, and in conscience he will endeavor to make some recompense. In the old law, he who had struck and wounded another was bound to see him healed and pay for his cure. Parents have given their children a wound in their souls and therefore must do what lies in them — by admonition, prayers, and tears — to see the wound healed.

Second, out of a flaming zeal for the honor of God. He who has tasted God's love in adoption looks upon himself as bound to bring God all the glory he can. If he has a child or acquaintance who are strangers to God, he would gladly promote the work of grace in their hearts. It is a glory to Christ when multitudes are born to him.

How far are they from being God's children who have no care to bring others into the family of God! Too much to blame are those masters who care more for their servants' work than their souls. Too much to blame are those parents who are careless of their children — they do not drop in principles of knowledge but suffer them to do as they please. They will let them lie and swear but not ask for a blessing; they will let them read storybooks but not Scripture.

Objection 1: But some say to catechize and teach our children is to take God's name in vain.

Answer 1: Is the fulfilling of God's command taking his name in vain? Deuteronomy 6:6-7: These words which I command you this day, you shall teach them diligently to your children. Proverbs 22:6: Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. Ephesians 6:4: Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This threefold cord of Scripture is not easily broken.

Answer 2: The saints of old were continually grafting principles of holy knowledge into their children. Genesis 18:19: I know that Abraham will command his children, and they shall keep the way of the Lord. 1 Chronicles 28:9: And you, Solomon my son, know

the God of your father and serve him with a perfect heart. Surely Abraham and David did not take God's name in vain. What need there is of instilling holy instructions to overtop the poisonous weeds of sin that grow! As farmers, when they have planted young trees, set stakes around them to keep them from bending. Children are young plants; the heavenly precepts of their parents are like stakes set around them to keep them from bending to error and profaneness. When can there be a fitter season to instill knowledge into children than in their minority? Now is the time to give them the breast and let them suck in the sincere milk of the Word (1 Peter 2:2).

Objection 2: But it is to no purpose to teach our children the knowledge of God; they have no sense of spiritual things, nor are they the better for our instructions.

Answer 1: We read in Scripture of children who, by virtue of instruction, had their tender years sanctified. Timothy's mother and grandmother taught him the Scriptures from his cradle (2 Timothy 3:15): From a child you have known the holy Scriptures. Timothy sucked in religion as it were with his milk. We read of young children who cried 'Hosanna' to Christ and trumpeted forth his praises (Matthew 21:15). And surely those children of Tyre had some seeds of good worked in them, showing their love to Paul as they accompanied him to the seashore. Acts 21:5: They all brought us on our way, with wives and children. Paul had a convoy of young saints to bring him to his ship.

Answer 2: Suppose our counsel and instruction does not at present prevail with our children — it may afterwards take effect. The seed a man sows in his ground does not spring up immediately, but in its season brings forth a crop. He who plants a wood

does not see the full growth until many years later. If we must not instruct our children because they do not at present reap the benefit, by the same reasoning we should not baptize our children because they do not at present have the sense of baptism. Indeed, by the same reasoning ministers should not preach the Word, because at present many of their hearers receive no benefit.

Answer 3: If our counsels and admonitions do not prevail with our children, yet we have delivered our own souls. There is comfort in the discharge of conscience. We must leave issues and outcomes alone; duty is our work, success is God's.

All of which should make parents sharpen holy instructions upon their children. They who are of the family of God and whom he has adopted for children will endeavor that their children may be more God's children than theirs. They will labor in birth until Christ is formed in them. A true saint is a magnet that is ever drawing others to God. Let this suffice for the signs of adoption. I proceed.

Discovering God's love in making us children.

The next particular is the love of God in making us children. 1 John 3:1: Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! God showed power in making us creatures, but love in making us sons. Plato gave God thanks that he had made him a man and not a beast; but what cause have they to adore God's love, who has made them children! The apostle puts an exclamation upon it: 'Behold!' That we may better behold God's love in making us children, consider three things.

First, we were deformed. Ezekiel 16:6-8: When I passed by you and saw you polluted in your own blood, it was the time of love. Mordecai adopted Esther because she was fair; but we were in our blood when God adopted us. He did not adopt us when we were clothed with the robe of innocence in paradise, when we were hung with the jewels of holiness and were white and ruddy. But when we were in our blood and had our leprous spots upon us — the time of our loathing was the time of God's loving.

Second, as we did not deserve to be made children, so neither did we desire it. No landed man will force another to become his heir against his will. If a king should go to adopt a beggar and make him heir of the crown, and the beggar should refuse the king's favor, saying, 'I had rather be as I am, I would remain a beggar,' the king would take it as a high contempt of his favor and would not adopt him against his will. Thus it was with us — we had no willingness to be made children. We would have remained begging still. But God out of his infinite mercy and indulgence not only offers to make us children but makes us willing to embrace the offer. Behold what manner of love is this!

Third, and this is the wonder of love: that God should adopt us for his children when we were enemies. If a man would make another heir of his land, he would adopt one near akin to him; no man would adopt an enemy. But that God should make us children when we were enemies — that he should make us heirs to the crown when we were traitors to the crown! O amazing, astonishing love! Behold what manner of love is this! We were not akin to God; we had by sin lost and forfeited our pedigree. We had done God all the injury and spite we could — defaced his image, violated his law, trampled upon his mercies — and when we had angered him, he

adopted us. What stupendous love was this! Such love was never shown to the angels. When they fell — though they were of a more noble nature and in probability might have done God more service than we can — yet God never vouchsafed to them the privilege of adoption. He did not make them children but prisoners; they were heirs only to the treasures of wrath.

Let all who are thus nearly related to God stand admiring his love. When they were like Saul, breathing out enmity against God; when their hearts stood out as garrisons against him — the Lord conquered their stubbornness with kindness and not only pardoned but adopted them. It is hard to say which is greater, the mystery or the mercy. This is such amazing love as we shall be searching into and adoring to all eternity; the bottom of it cannot be fathomed by any angel in heaven. God's love in making us children is:

First, a rich love. It is love in God to feed us, but it is rich love to adopt us; it is love to give us a crumb, but it is rich love to make us heirs to a crown.

Second, it is a distinguishing love. That when God has passed by so many millions, he should cast a favorable eye upon you! Most are cut out for fuel and are made vessels of wrath. And that God should say to you, 'You are my son' — here is the mirror of mercy, the meridian of love! Who can tread upon these burning coals and not have his heart burn in love to God?

Declaring the honor of God's children.

Sixth, the honor and renown of God's children. For the illustration of this, observe two things.

First, God makes a precious account of them. Second, he looks upon them as persons of honor.

First, God makes a precious account of them. Isaiah 43:4: Since you were precious in my sight. A father prizes his child above his estate. How dearly did Jacob prize Benjamin — his life was bound up in the life of the lad (Genesis 44:30). God makes a precious valuation of his children. The wicked are of no account with God; they are vile persons (Nahum 1:14). Therefore the wicked are compared to chaff (Psalm 1:4) and to dross (Psalm 119:119). There is little use of a wicked man while he lives and no loss of him when he dies; there is only a little chaff blown away, which may well be spared. But God's children are precious in his sight; they are his jewels (Malachi 3:17). The wicked are but lumber serving only to cumber the ground; but God's children are his jewels, locked up in the cabinet of his decree from all eternity. God's children are the apple of his eye (Zechariah 2:8) — very dear and tender to him — and the eyelid of his special providence covers them. The Lord accounts everything of his children precious.

First, their name is precious. The wicked leave their name for a curse (Isaiah 65:15). The names of God's children are embalmed (Isaiah 60:15). So precious are their names that God enters them in the book of life and Christ carries them on his breast. How precious must their names be, who have God's own name written upon them? Revelation 3:12: Him who overcomes, I will write upon him the name of my God.

Second, their prayers are precious. Song of Solomon 2:14: O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, let me hear your voice, for sweet is your voice. Every child of God is this dove; prayer is the voice of the dove, and sweet is this voice. The prayer of God's children is as

sweet to him as music. A wicked man's prayer is as the howling of a dog (Hosea 7:14). The prayer of the saints is as the singing of a bird; the finger of God's Spirit touching the strings of their hearts, they make melody to the Lord. Isaiah 56:7: Their sacrifices shall be accepted on my altar.

Third, their tears are precious — they drop as pearls from their eyes. Isaiah 38:5: I have seen your tears. The tears of God's children drop as precious wine into God's bottle. Psalm 56:8: Put my tears into your bottle. A tear from a broken heart is a present for the King of heaven.

Fourth, their blood is precious. Psalm 116:15: Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. This is the blood God will chiefly make inquisition for. Athaliah shed the blood of the king's children (2 Kings 11:1). The saints are the children of the Most High, and such as shed their blood shall pay dearly for it. Revelation 16:6: You have given them blood to drink, for they are worthy.

Second, God looks upon his children as persons of honor. Isaiah 43:4: Since you were precious in my sight, you have been honorable.

First, God esteems them honorable. He calls them a crown and a royal diadem (Isaiah 62:3). He calls them his glory (Isaiah 46:13): Israel my glory.

Second, God makes them honorable. As a king creates dukes, marquesses, earls, and barons, so God installs his children into honor; he creates them noble persons, persons of renown. David thought it no small honor to be the king's son-in-law (1 Samuel 18:18): Who am I, that I should be son-in-law to the king? What an

infinite honor it is to be the children of the High God, to be of the blood-royal of heaven! The saints are of an ancient family; they are sprung from the Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:9). That is the best pedigree which is fetched from heaven. Here the youngest child is an heir — a co-heir with Christ, who is heir of all (Hebrews 1:2; Romans 8:17).

Consider the honor of God's children.

First, they have the titles of honor. They are called kings (Revelation 1:6), the excellent of the earth (Psalm 16:3), vessels of honor (2 Timothy 2:21).

Second, they have their coat of arms. The Scripture has set forth their heraldry. Sometimes they bear the lion, in regard of their courage (Proverbs 28:1). Sometimes they bear the eagle, in regard of their sublimeness — they are ever flying up to heaven upon the two wings of faith and love (Isaiah 40:31): They shall mount up with wings as eagles. Sometimes they bear the dove, in regard of their meekness and innocence (Song of Solomon 2:14). This shows the children of God to be persons of renown.

Second, consider the honor of God's children comparatively. This comparison is twofold.

Compare the children of God, first with Adam, and second with the angels.

First, compare the children of God with Adam in a state of innocency. Adam was a person of honor, the sole monarch of the world; all the creatures bowed to him as their sovereign. He was placed in the garden of Eden, a paradise of pleasure; he was crowned with all the contentments of the earth. More than this, Adam was God's living picture — made in the likeness of God him-

self. Yet the state of the meanest of God's children by adoption is far more excellent and honorable than the state of Adam when he wore the robe of innocence. For Adam's condition, though glorious, was mutable and was soon lost; Adam was a bright star, yet a falling star. But God's children by adoption are in an unalterable state. Adam had the possibility of not sinning; but believers have the impossibility of finally falling. Once adopted, and ever adopted. As Isaac said when he had given the blessing to Jacob, 'I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed' (Genesis 27:33). So may we say of all God's children: they are adopted, and they shall be adopted. God's children are in a better and more glorious condition now than Adam was in all his regal honor and majesty.

Second, let us ascend as high as heaven and compare God's children with the glorious and blessed angels. God's children are equal to the angels, in some sense above them, and then surely they must be persons of honor.

First, God's children are equal to the angels. This is acknowledged by some of the angels themselves. Revelation 19:10: I am your fellow-servant. Here is a parallel made between John the divine and the angel; the angel says to John, 'I am your fellow-servant.'

Second, the children of God by adoption are in some sense above the angels in two ways.

1. The angels are servants to God's children (Hebrews 1:14). Though they are glorious spirits, yet ministering spirits. The angels are the saints' servants; we have examples in Scripture of angels attending the persons of God's children; we read of angels waiting upon Abraham, Moses, Daniel, the Virgin Mary, etc. Nor do the

angels only give service to God's children while they live, but at their death too. Lazarus had a convoy of angels to carry him into the paradise of God; thus we see the children of God have a preeminence and dignity above the angels; the angels are their servants both living and dying, and this is the more to be observed, because it is never said in Scripture that the children of God are servants to the angels.

2. God's children are above the angels, because Christ by taking their nature, has ennobled and honored it above the angelical (Hebrews 2:16). He in no wise took the nature of angels. God by uniting us to Christ, has made us nearer to himself than the angels; the children of God are members of Christ (Ephesians 5:30). This was never said of the angels; how can they be the members of Christ, who are of a different nature from him? Indeed metaphorically and improperly Christ may be called the head of the angels, as they are subject to him (1 Peter 3:22), but that Christ is head of the angels in that near and sweet conjunction, as he is the head of believers, we nowhere find in Scripture; in this respect therefore I may clearly assert the children of God have a superiority and honor even above the angels; though by creation they are a little lower than the angels, yet by adoption, and mystical union, they are above the angels.

Use. How may this comfort a child of God in the midst either of calumny or poverty! He is a person of honor, he is above the angels. A gentleman that is fallen to decay, will sometimes boast of his parentage and noble blood; so a Christian who is poor in the world, yet by virtue of his adoption, he is of the family of God, he has the true blood-royal running in his veins, he has a fairer coat of arms to show than the angels themselves.

The high privileges of God's children.

7. The seventh particular to be explained, is, to show the glorious privileges of God's children; and what I shall say now, belongs not to the wicked; it is children's bread: the fruit of paradise was to be kept with a flaming sword; so these sweet and heart-ravishing privileges are to be kept with a flaming sword, that impure sensual persons may not touch them. There are twelve rare privileges which belong to the children of God.

1. If we are children, then God will be full of tender love and affection towards us; a father has compassion on his child (Psalm 103:13). Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear him. Oh the yearning of God's compassion to his children (Jeremiah 31:20)! Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? My heart is troubled for him, I will surely have mercy upon him, says the Lord. Towards the wicked God's wrath is kindled (Psalm 2:12). Towards them that are children, God's compassion is kindled (Hosea 11:8). Mercy and pity does as naturally flow from our heavenly Father, as light does from the sun.

Object 1. But God is angry, and writes bitter things; how does this stand with love?

Answ. God's love and his anger towards his children are not opposites, but different; they may stand together, he is angry in love (Revelation 3:19). As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; we have as much need of afflictions as ordinances: a bitter pill may be as needful for preserving health as a julep or cordial. God afflicts with the same love as he adopts; God is most angry, when he is not angry; his hand is heaviest when it is lightest; affliction is an argument of sonship (Hebrews 12:7). If you endure chastening, God

deals with you as with sons. Oh says one, sure God does not love me, I am none of his child, because he does follow me with such severe afflictions: why, it is a sign of childhood to be sometimes under the rod; God had one son without sin, but no son without stripes; God puts his children to the school of the cross, and there they learn best. God speaks to us in the word, children be not proud, do not love the world, walk circumspectly: but we are dull of hearing; indeed, we stop the ear (Jeremiah 22:21). I spoke to you in your prosperity, but you said I will not hear. Now says God, I shall lose my child if I do not correct him; then God in love smites, that he may save; Aristotle speaks of a bird that lives among thorns, yet sings sweetly; God's children make the best melody in their heart, when God hedges their way with thorns (Hosea 2:14). Afflictions are refining (Proverbs 17:3). The refining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold. Fiery trials make golden Christians; afflictions are purifying (Daniel 12:10). Many shall be tried, and made white. We think God is going to destroy us, but he only lays us a-whitening: some birds will not hatch but in time of thunder. Christians are commonly best in affliction; God will make his children at last bless him for sufferings; the eyes that sin shuts, affliction opens; when Manasseh was in chains, then he knew the Lord was God (2 Chronicles 33:13). Afflictions fit for heaven first; the stones in Solomon's temple were hewn and polished, and then set up into a building. First the saints (who are called living stones) must be hewn and carved by sufferings, as the cornerstone was, and so made fit for the celestial building; and is there not love in all God's fatherly chastisements?

Object 2. But sometimes God's children are under the black clouds of desertion; is not this far from love?

Concerning desertion, I must needs say this is the saddest condition that can befall God's children; when the sun is gone, the dew falls; when the sunlight of God's countenance is removed, then the dew of tears falls from the eyes of the saints. In desertion God rains hell out of heaven (to use Calvin's expression). The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison of which drinks up my spirits (Job 6:4). This is the poisoned arrow that wounds to the heart. Desertion is a taste of the torments of the damned. God says, in a little wrath I hid my face from you (Isaiah 54:8). I may here gloss with Saint Bernard, Lord, do you call that a little wrath when you hide your face? Is it but a little? What can be more bitter to me than the eclipsing of your face? God is in Scripture called a light and a fire; the deserted soul feels the fire, but does not see the light. But yet, you who are adopted may spell love in all this. They say of Hercules' club, that it was made of the wood of olive; the olive is an emblem of peace; so God's club by which he beats down the soul in desertion, has something of the olive; there is peace and mercy in it. I shall hold forth a spiritual rainbow, in which the children of God may see the love of their Father in the midst of the clouds of desertion. Therefore I answer,

1. In time of desertion God leaves in his children a seed of comfort (1 John 3:9). His seed remains in him. This seed of God, is a seed of comfort. Though God's children in desertion lack the seal of the Spirit, yet they have the unction of the Spirit (1 John 2:27). Though they lack the sun, yet they have a day-star in their hearts; as the tree in winter, though it has lost its leaves and fruit, yet there is sap in the root: so, in the winter of desertion, there is the sap of grace in the root of the heart; as it is with the sun masking itself with a cloud, when it denies light to the earth, yet it gives

forth its influence: so though God's dear adopted ones may lose the light of his countenance, yet they have the influence of his grace.

Quest. What grace appears in the time of desertion?

Answ. 1. A high prizing of God's love. If God should say to the deserted soul, what will you, and it shall be granted to half of the kingdom? He would reply, Lord, that I might see you, as I was accustomed in the sanctuary; that I may have one golden beam of your love; the deserted soul slights all other things in comparison; it is not gardens, or orchards, or the most delicious objects that can give him contentment; they are like music to a sad heart; he desires as Absalom, to see the king's face.

2. A lamenting after the Lord. It is the saddest day with him when the sun of righteousness is eclipsed; a child of God can better bear the world's stroke than God's absence; he is even melted into tears, the clouds of desertion produce spiritual rain; and from where is this weeping but from love?

3. Willingness to suffer anything so he may have a sight of God. A child of God could be content with Simon of Cyrene, to carry the cross, if he were sure Christ were upon it; he could willingly die, if with Simeon he might die with Christ in his arms. Behold here, the seed of God in a believer; the work of sanctification, when he lacks the wine of consolation.

Answ. 2. I answer, God has a design of mercy in hiding his face from his adopted ones.

First, it is for the trial of grace; and there are two graces brought to trial in time of desertion.

1. Faith. When we can believe against sense and feeling; when we lack an experience, yet can trust to a promise; when we have not the kisses of God's mouth, yet can cleave to the word of his mouth; this is faith indeed; here is the sparkling of the diamond.

2. Love. When God smiles upon us, it is not much to love him; but when he seems to put us away in anger, now to love him, and be as the lime, the more water is thrown upon it, the hotter it burns, this is love indeed. That love surely is strong as death which the waters of desertion cannot quench (Psalm 27:9; Song of Solomon 8:6).

Secondly, it is for the exercise of grace: we are all for comfort; if it might be put to our choice, we would be ever upon Mount Tabor, looking into Canaan: we are loath to be in trials, agonies, desertions, as if God could not love us except he had us in his arms. It is hard to lie long in the lap of spiritual joy, and not fall asleep. Too much sunshine causes a drought in our graces; often times when God lets down comfort into the heart, we begin to let down care. As it is with musicians, before they have money they will play you many a sweet lesson, but as soon as you throw them down money they are gone, you hear no more of them. Before joy and assurance, oh the sweet music of prayer and repentance! But when God throws down the comforts of his Spirit, we either leave off duty, or at least slacken the strings of our viol, and grow remiss in it. You are taken with the money, but God is taken with the music; grace is better than comfort. Rachel is more fair, but Leah is more fruitful. Comfort is fair to look on, but grace has the fruitful womb; now, the only way to exercise grace, and make it more vigorous and lively, is sometimes to walk in darkness and have no light (Isaiah 50:10). Faith is a star that shines brightest in the

night of desertion; I said I am cast out of your sight, yet will I look again toward your holy temple (Jonah 2:4). Grace usually puts forth its most heroic acts at such a time.

3. I answer, God may forsake his children in regard of vision, but not in regard of union. Thus it was with Jesus Christ when he cried out, my God, my God. There was not a separation of the union between him and his Father, only a suspension of the vision. God's love through the interposition of our sins may be darkened and eclipsed, but still he is a Father. The sun may be hid in a cloud, but it is not out of the firmament. The promises in time of desertion may be as it were sequestered, we have not that comfort from them as formerly, but still the believer's title holds good in law.

4. I answer, when God hides his face from his child, his heart may be towards him; as Joseph when he spoke roughly to his brothers, and made them believe he would take them for spies, still his heart was towards them, and he was as full of love as ever he could hold; he was fain to go aside and weep. So, God is full of love to his children, even when he seems to look strange. And as Moses' mother when she put her child into the ark of bulrushes, and went away a little from it, yet still her eye was toward it, the babe wept; indeed and the mother wept too; so God, when he goes aside as if he had forsaken his children, yet he is full of sympathy and love towards them. God may change his countenance, but not break his covenant. It is one thing for God to desert, another thing to disinherit (Hosea 8:11). How shall I give you up, O Ephraim! It is a metaphor taken from a father going to disinherit his son, and while he is setting his hand to the deed, his heart begins to melt, and to yearn over him, and he thinks thus within himself, though he be a prodigal child, yet he is a child, I will not cut off the entail;

so says God, how shall I give you up? Though Ephraim has been a rebellious son, yet he is a son, I will not disinherit him. God's thoughts may be full of love, when there is a veil upon his face; the Lord may change his dispensation towards his children, but not his disposition; he may have the look of an enemy, but the heart of a Father: so that the believer may say, I am adopted, and let God do what he will with me, let him take the rod, or the staff, it is all one, he loves me.

2. The second adoptional privilege is this, if we are children, then God will bear with many infirmities. A father bears much with a child he loves (Malachi 3:17). I will spare them, as a man spares his own son that serves him. We often grieve the Spirit, abuse kindness; God will pass by much in his children (Numbers 23:21). He has not seen iniquity in Jacob; his love does not make him blind; he sees sin in his people, but not with an eye of revenge, but pity; he sees sin in his children, as a physician does a disease in his patient; he has not seen iniquity in Jacob so as to destroy him; God may use the rod (2 Samuel 7:14), not the scorpion. Oh how much is God willing to pass by in his children, because they are children! God takes notice of the good that is in his children, and passes by the infirmity. God does quite contrary to us; we often take notice of the evil that is in others, and overlook the good. Our eye is upon the flaw in the diamond, but we observe not its sparkling. But God takes notice of the good that is in his children; God sees their faith, and winks at their failings (1 Peter 3:6). Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham calling him Lord; the Holy Spirit mentions not her unbelief, and laughing at the promise, but takes notice of the good in her, namely her obedience to her husband; she obeyed Abraham calling him Lord. God puts his finger upon the

fears and infirmities of his children; how much did God wink at in Israel his firstborn! Israel often provoked him with their murmurings (Deuteronomy 1:27), but God answered their murmurings with mercies; he spared them as a father spares his son.

3. The third privilege is this, if we are children, then God will accept of our imperfect services. A parent takes anything in good part from his child; God accepts of the will for the deed (2 Corinthians 8:12). Often times we come with broken prayers, but if we are children, God spells out our meaning, and will take our prayers as a grateful present; a father loves to hear his child speak, though he does but lisp and stammer (Isaiah 38:14). Like a crane, so did I chatter. Good Hezekiah looked upon his praying as chattering, yet that prayer was heard (verse 5). A sigh and groan from a humble heart goes up as the smoke of incense (Psalm 38:9). My groaning is not hid from you. When all the glittering shows of hypocrites evaporate, and come to nothing, a little that a child of God does in sincerity is crowned with acceptance; a father is glad of a letter from his son, though there are blots in the letter, though there are false spellings and broken English; oh what blottings are there in our holy things? What broken English sometimes? Yet coming from broken hearts it is accepted; though there be weakness in duty, yet if there be willingness, the Lord is much taken with it. Says God, it is my child, and he would do better (Ephesians 1:6). He has accepted us in the beloved.

4. If we are children, then God will provide for us; a father will take care for his children; he gives them allowance, and lays up a portion (2 Corinthians 12:14), so does our heavenly Father.

1. He gives us our allowance (Genesis 48:15). The God which fed me all my life long to this day. From where is our daily bread, but from his daily care? God will not let his children starve, though our unbelief is ready sometimes to question his goodness, and say, can God prepare a table? See what arguments Christ brings to prove God's paternal care for his children (Matthew 6:26). Behold the birds of the air, they sow not, neither do they reap, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Does a man feed his bird, and will he not feed his child (Luke 12:27)? Consider the lilies how they grow, they toil not, they spin not; if then God so clothes the grass, etc.? Does God clothe the lilies, and will he not clothe his lambs (1 Peter 5:7)? The Lord cares for us. As long as his heart is full of love, so long his head will be full of care. This should be as medicine to kill the worm of unbelief.

2. As God gives his children provisions for the way, so he lays up a portion for them (Luke 12:32). It is your Father's good pleasure to give you a kingdom; our Father keeps the purse, and will give us enough to bear our charges here, and when at death we take shipping, and shall be set upon the shore of eternity, then will our heavenly Father bestow upon us a kingdom immutable, and unfading; behold here a portion which can never be summed up!

5. If we are children, then God will shield off dangers from us; a father will protect his child from injuries; God ever lies sentinel to keep off evil from his children.

1. God screens off temporal evil. There are many casualties and contingencies which are incident to life; God mercifully prevents them; he keeps watch and ward for his children (Psalm 7:10). My defense is of God (Psalm 121:4). He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The eye of providence is ever awake; God gives

his angels charge over his children (Psalm 91:11), a believer has a guard of angels for his life-guard; we read of the wings of God in Scripture: as the breast of his mercy feeds his children, so the wings of his power cover them; how miraculously did God preserve Israel his firstborn! He did with his wings sometimes cover, sometimes carry them (Exodus 19:4). He bore you as upon eagles' wings; an emblem of God's providential care; the eagle fears no bird from above to hurt her young, only the arrow from beneath; therefore she carries them upon her wings, that the arrow must first hit her before it can come at her young ones. Thus God carries his children upon the wings of providence; and they are such, that there is no clipping these wings, nor can any arrow hurt them.

2. God shields off spiritual evils from his children (Psalm 91:10). There shall no evil befall you. God does not say, no afflictions shall befall us, but no evil.

Quest. But sometimes evil in this sense befalls the godly, they spot themselves with sin.

Answ. But that evil shall not be mortal; as quicksilver is in itself dangerous, but by ointments it is so tempered that it is killed; so sin is in itself deadly, but being tempered with repentance, and mixed with the sacred ointment of Christ's blood, the venomous damning nature of it is taken away.

6. If we are children, then God will reveal to us the great and wonderful things of his law (Matthew 11:25). I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them to babes. A father will teach his children; the child goes to his father, Father, teach me my lesson; so David goes to God (Psalm 143:10),

teach me to do your will for you are my God. The Lord glories in this title (Isaiah 48:17). I am the Lord your God, which teaches you to profit. God's children have that anointing which teaches them all things necessary to salvation; they see those mysteries which are veiled over to carnal eyes; as Elisha saw those horses and chariots of fire, which his servant did not see (2 Kings 6:17). The adopted see their own sins, Satan's snares, Christ's beauty, which they whom the god of the world had blinded, cannot discern; from where was it that David understood more than the ancients (Psalm 119:100)? He had a Father to teach him, God was his instructor (Psalm 71:17). O God you have taught me from my youth. Many a child of God complains of ignorance and dullness; remember this, your Father will be your tutor; he has promised to give his Spirit to lead you into all truth (John 16:13). And God does not only inform the understanding, but incline the will; he does not only teach us what we should do, but enable us to do it (Ezekiel 36:27). I will cause you to walk in my statutes. What a glorious privilege is this, to have the star of the world pointing us to Christ, and the lodestone of the Spirit drawing!

7. If we are children, this gives boldness in prayer; the child goes with confidence to his father, and he cannot find in his heart to deny him (Luke 11:13). How much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him? All the father has, is for his child; if he comes for money, who is it for but his child? If you come to God for pardon, for brokenness of heart, God cannot deny his child: who does he keep his mercies in store for, but his children?

And that which may give God's children holy boldness in prayer, is this; when they consider God not only in the relation of a Father, but as having the disposition of a Father. Some parents are of a morose, rugged nature; but God is the Father of mercies (2 Corinthians 1:3). He begets all the compassion in the world; in prayer we should look upon God under this notion, a Father of mercy, sitting upon a throne of grace; we should run to this heavenly Father in all conditions.

1. In our sins; as that sick child (2 Kings 4:19), he said to his father, my head, my head! As soon as he found himself not well, he ran to his father to succor him: so in case of sin, run to God, my heart, my heart! Oh this dead heart, Father quicken it; this hard heart, Father soften it; Father, my heart, my heart!

2. In our temptations: a child, when another strikes him, runs to his Father and complains; so when the devil strikes us by his temptations, let us run to our Father; Father, Satan assaults, and hurls in his fiery darts; he would not only wound my peace, but your glory; Father, take off the tempter; it is your child that is worried by this red dragon; Father, will you not bruise Satan under my feet! What a sweet privilege is this, when any burden lies upon our spirits, we may go to our Father, and unload all our cares and griefs into his bosom!

8. If we are children, then we are in a state of freedom. Claudius Lysias valued his freedom of Rome at a high rate; a state of sonship is a state of freedom; this is not to be understood in an antinomian sense, that the children of God are freed from the rule of the moral law; this is such a freedom as rebels take: was it ever

heard that a child should be freed from duty to his parents? But the freedom which God's children have, is a holy freedom; they are freed from the law of sin (Romans 8:2).

This is the sad misery of an unregenerate person, he is in a state of bondage, he is under the tyranny of sin. Justin Martyr used to say, it is the greatest slavery in the world for a man to be subject to his own passions. A wicked man is as much a slave as he that works in the galley; look into his heart, and there are legions of lusts ruling him; he must do what sin will have him; a slave is at the service of a usurping tyrant; if he bids him dig in the mine, hew in the quarries, tug at the oar, he must do it. Thus every wicked man must do what corrupt nature inspired by the devil bids him; if sin bids him be drunk, be unchaste, he is at the command of sin, as the ass is at the command of the driver; sin first enslaves, and then damns.

But the children of God, though they are not freed from the in-being of sin, yet they are freed from the law of sin; all sin's commands are like laws repealed, which are not in force; though sin live in a child of God, yet it does not reign (Romans 6:14). Sin shall not have dominion over you: sin has not a coercive power over a child of God; there is a principle of grace in his heart which gives check to corruption: this is a believer's comfort, though sin be not removed, yet it is subdued; and though he cannot keep sin out, yet he keeps sin under; the saints of God are said to crucify the flesh (Galatians 5:24). Crucifying was a lingering death; first one member died, then another; every child of God crucifies sin, some limb of the old man is ever and anon dropping off; though sin does not die perfectly, it dies daily; this is the blessed freedom of God's children, they are freed from the law of sin, they are led by the Spirit of

God (Romans 8:14). This Spirit makes them free and cheerful in obedience (2 Corinthians 3:17). Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

9. If we are children, then we are heirs apparent to all the promises; the promises are called precious (2 Peter 1:4). The promises are a cabinet of jewels, they are breasts full of the milk of the Gospel; the promises are enriched with variety, and are suited to a Christian's present condition. Does he want pardoning grace? there is a promise that carries forgiveness in it (Jeremiah 31:34). Does he want sanctifying grace? there is a promise of healing (Hosea 14:4). Does he want corroborating grace? there is a promise of strength (Isaiah 41:10). And these promises are the children's bread; the saints are called heirs of the promise (Hebrews 6:17). There is Christ and heaven in a promise; and there is never a promise in the Bible, but an adopted person may lay a legal claim to it, and say, this is mine. The natural man who remains still in the old family, has nothing to do with these promises; he may read over the promises (as one may read over another man's will or inventory) but has no right to them; the promises are like a garden of flowers, fenced in and enclosed, which no stranger may gather, only the children of the family. Ishmael was the son of the bondwoman, he had no right to the family; cast out the bondwoman and her son, as Sarah once said to Abraham (Genesis 21:10). So the unbeliever is not adopted, he is none of the household, and God will say at the day of judgment, cast out this son of the bondwoman into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

10. If we are children, then we shall have our Father's blessing (Isaiah 61:9). They are the seed which the Lord has blessed. We read that Isaac blessed his son Jacob (Genesis 27:28). God give you of the dew of heaven; which was not only a prayer for Jacob, but a prophecy of that happiness and blessing which should come upon him and his posterity. Thus every adopted child has his heavenly Father's benediction, there is a special blessing distilled into all that he possesses (Exodus 23:25; Psalm 29:11). The Lord will bless his people with peace: he will not only give them peace, but they shall have it with a blessing; the wicked have the things they enjoy with God's permission, but the adopted have them with God's love; the wicked have them by providence, the saints by promise. Isaac had but one blessing to bestow (Genesis 27:38). Have you but one blessing, my father? But God has more blessings than one for his children; he blesses them in their souls, bodies, names, estate, posterity; he blesses them with the upper springs, and the nether springs; he multiplies to bless them, and his blessing cannot be reversed; as Isaac said concerning Jacob, I have blessed him, indeed and he shall be blessed (Genesis 27:33), so God blesses his children, and they shall be blessed.

11. If we are children, then all things that fall out shall turn to our good (Romans 8:28). All things work together for good to them that love God.

1. Good things work for good to God's children.

1. Mercies shall do them good.

1. The mercies of God shall soften them. David's heart was overcome with God's mercy (2 Samuel 7:18). Who am I? and what is my house? I who was of a mean family, I who held the

shepherd's staff, that now I should hold the royal scepter! Indeed, you have spoken of your servant's house for a great while to come: you have made a promise that my children shall sit upon the throne, indeed, that the blessed Messiah shall come of my line and race; and is this the manner of man, O Lord God? As if he had said, do men show such kindness undeserved? See how this good man's heart was dissolved and softened by mercy! The flint is soonest broken upon a soft pillow.

2. Mercies make the children of God more fruitful; the ground bears the better crop for the cost that is laid upon it. God gives his children health, and they spend, and are spent for Christ; he gives them estates, and they honor the Lord with their substance; the backs and bellies of the poor are the field where they sow the precious seeds of their charity; a child of God makes his estate a golden clasp to bind his heart faster to God, a footstool to raise him up higher towards heaven.

2. Ordinances shall work for good to God's children.

1. The word preached shall do them good; it is a savor of life, it is a lamp to their feet, and a basin to their hearts; the word preached is a chariot of salvation; it is an engrafting, and a transforming word; it not only brings a light with it, but eye-salve, anointing their eyes to see that light; the preaching of the word is the lattice where Christ looks forth, and shows himself to his saints; this golden pipe of the sanctuary conveys the water of life. To the wicked the word preached works for evil, even the word of life becomes a savor of death; the same cause may have diverse, indeed contrary effects; the sun dissolves the ice, but hardens the clay. To the unregenerate and profane, the word is not humbling, but hardening. Jesus Christ the best of preachers, was to some a

rock of offense; the Jews sucked death from his sweet lips; it is sad that the breast should kill any; the wicked suck poison from that breast of ordinances where the children of God suck milk, and are nourished to salvation.

2. The sacrament works for good to the children of God; in the word preached the saints hear Christ's voice, in the sacrament they have his kiss. The Lord's Supper is to the saints a feast of rich things; it is a healing, and a sealing ordinance; in this dish, or rather chalice, a bleeding Savior is brought in to revive drooping spirits. The sacrament has glorious effects in the hearts of God's children; it quickens their affections, strengthens their faith, mortifies their sin, revives their hopes, increases their joy; it gives a foretaste of heaven.

2. Evil things work for good to God's children (Psalm 112:4). To the upright arises light in darkness.

1. Poverty works for good to God's children; it starves their lusts, it enriches their graces (James 2:5). Poor in the world, rich in faith. Poverty sends to prayer; when God has clipped his children's wings by poverty, they fly swiftest to the throne of grace.

2. Sickness works for their good; it shall bring the body of death into a consumption (2 Corinthians 4:16). Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day; like those two laurels at Rome, when the one did wither, the other did flourish; when the body withers, the soul of a Christian does flourish. How often have we seen a lively faith in a languishing body? Hezekiah was better on his sick bed, than upon his throne; when he was upon his sick bed he humbles himself and weeps; when he

was on his throne, he grew proud (Isaiah 39:2). God's children recover by sickness; in this sense, out of weakness they are made strong (Hebrews 11:34).

3. Reproach works for good to God's children, it increases their grace and their glory.

1. Disgrace increases their grace; the husbandman by dunging his ground makes the soil more rich and fertile; God lets the wicked dung his people with reproaches and calumnies, that their hearts may be a richer soil for grace to grow in.

2. Reproach increases their glory; he that unjustly takes from a saint's credit, shall add to his crown; the sun shines brighter after an eclipse; the more a child of God is eclipsed by reproaches, the brighter he shall shine in the kingdom of heaven.

4. Persecution to God's children works for good; the godly may be compared to that plant which Gregory Nazianzene speaks of, it lives by dying, and grows by cutting: the zeal and love of the saints is blown up by sufferings, their joy flourishes. Tertullian says the primitive Christians rejoiced more in their persecutions than in their deliverance.

5. Death works for good to the children of God; it is like the whirlwind to the prophet Elijah, which blew off his mantle, but carried him up to heaven; so death to a child of God is like a boisterous whirlwind, which blows off the mantle of his flesh, (for the body is but the mantle the soul is wrapped in) but it carries up the soul to God; this is the glorious privilege of the sons of God; everything that falls out shall do them good; the children of God when they come to heaven (as Chrysostom speaks) shall bless God for all cross providences.

12. And lastly, if we are children, we shall never finally perish (John 5:24; John 10:28). Those who are adopted, are out of the power of damnation (Romans 8:1). There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ. Will a father condemn his own son? God will never disinherit any of his children; fathers may disinherit for some fault: Reuben for incest lost the prerogative of his birthright (Genesis 49:4). What is the reason parents disinherit their children? Surely this, because they can make them no better, they cannot make them fit for the inheritance; but when we are bad, our heavenly Father knows how to make us better, he can make us fit to inherit (Colossians 1:12). Giving thanks to the Father, who has made us fit for the inheritance: therefore it being in his power to make us better, and to work in us a fitness for the inheritance, certainly he will never finally disinherit.

Because this is so sweet a privilege, and the life of a Christian's comfort lies in it, therefore I shall clear it by arguments, that the children of God cannot finally perish; the entail of hell and damnation is cut off; not but that the best of God's children have that guilt which deserves hell; but Christ is the friend at court which has begged their pardon; therefore the damning power of sin is taken away, which I prove thus.

1. The children of God cannot finally perish, because God's justice is satisfied for their sins; the blood of Christ is the price paid, not only meritoriously, but efficaciously, for all them that believe; this being the blood of God, justice is fully satisfied, and proceeds not to condemn those for whom this blood was shed, and to whom it is applied. Jesus Christ was a surety, he stood bound for every child of God; he said to justice, have patience with them, and I will pay you all; so that the believer cannot be liable to wrath. God will

not require the debt twice, both of the surety and the debtor (Romans 3:24-26). God is not only merciful in pardoning his children, but righteous (1 John 1:9). He is just to forgive; it is an act of God's equity and justice to spare the sinner, when he has been satisfied in the surety.

2. A condemnatory sentence cannot pass upon the children of God, because they are so God's children, as also they are Christ's spouse (Song of Solomon 4:11). There is a marriage union between Christ and the saints; every child of God is a part of Christ, he is Christ mystical. Now, shall a member of Christ perish? A child of God cannot perish, but Christ must perish. Jesus Christ who is the husband, is the Judge, and will he condemn his own spouse?

3. Every child of God is transformed into the likeness of Christ; he has the same spirit, the same judgment, the same will, he is a living picture of Christ; as Christ bears the saints' names upon his breast, so they bear his image upon their hearts (Galatians 4:19). Will Christ suffer his own image to be destroyed? Theodosius counted them traitors who defaced his image; Christ will not let his image in believers be defaced and torn; he will not endure to see his own picture take fire; the sea has not only stinking carrion, but jewels thrown into it; but none of God's jewels shall ever be thrown into the dead sea of hell.

4. If God's children could be capable of final perishing, then pardon of sin would be no privilege; the Scripture says, blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven (Psalm 32:1). But what blessedness would there be in having sin forgiven, if afterwards a final and condemnatory sentence should pass upon the heirs of promise? What would a man be the better for the king's pardon, if he were condemned after he were pardoned?

5. If the children of God should be finally disinherited, then the Scripture could not be fulfilled, which tells us of glorious rewards (Psalm 58:11). Doubtless there is a reward for the righteous. God sweetens his commands with promises, he ties duty and reward together. As in the body the veins carry the blood, and the arteries carry the spirits; so one part of the word carries duty in it, and another part of the word carries reward; now if the adopted of God should eternally miscarry, what reward would there be for the righteous? And Moses did wisely in looking to the recompense of reward (Hebrews 11:26). And so by consequence there would be a door opened to despair.

By all which it appears that the children of God cannot be disinherited or reprobated; if they should lose happiness, Christ should lose his purchase, and should die in vain.

Thus we have seen the glorious privileges of the children of God. What an encouragement is here to religion? How may this draw men to turn godly? Can the world compete with a child of God? Can the world give such privileges as these? As Saul said (1 Samuel 22:7), will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields, and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands? Can the world do that for you, as God does for his children? Can it give you pardon of sin, or eternal life? Are not the gleanings of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? Is not godliness gain? What is there in sin that men should love it? The work of sin is drudgery, and the wages death. They who see more in sin than in the privileges of adoption, let them go on, and have their ears bored to the devil's service.

CHAPTER 20



Containing several uses drawn from the proposition.

Use 1. Reproof. Here is a bill of indictment against those who declare to the world they are not the children of God; all profane persons; these have damnation written upon their forehead.

1. Scoffers at religion; it were blasphemy to call these the children of God; will a true child jeer at his father's picture?

2. Drunkards, who drown reason, and stupefy conscience; these declare their sin at Sodom, they are children indeed, but cursed children (2 Peter 2:14).

Use 2. Exhortation; which consists of two branches.

1. Let us prove ourselves to be the children of God.

2. Let us carry ourselves as the children of God.

1. Let us prove ourselves to be the children of God; there are many false and unscriptural evidences.

1. Says one, the gravest ministers in the country think me to be godly, and can they be mistaken? Are the seers blind?

Answ. Others can but see your outward carriage and deportment; if that be fair, they by the rule of charity judge well of you; but what says God and conscience? Are these your advocates? Are you a saint in God's calendar? It is a poor thing to have an applauding world, and an accusing conscience.

2. Oh but says another, I hope I am a child of God, I love my heavenly Father.

Answ. Why do you love God? Perhaps because God gives you grain and wine; this is a mercenary love, a love to yourself more than to God; you may lead a sheep all the field over with a bottle of hay in your hand; but throw away the hay, now the sheep will follow you no longer: so the squint-eyed hypocrite loves God only for the provisions; when this fails, his affection fails too.

But leaving these vain and false evidences of adoption, let us inquire for a sound evidence; the main evidence of adoption is sanctification: search (O Christian) whether the work of sanctification has passed upon your soul! Is your understanding sanctified to discern the things which are excellent? Is your will sanctified to embrace heavenly objects? Do you love where God loves, and hate where God hates? Are you a consecrated person? This argues the heart of a child; God will never reject those who have his image and superscription upon them.

2. Let us carry ourselves as becomes the children of God; and let us deport ourselves as the children of the most high God.

1. In obedience (1 Peter 1:14). As obedient children. If a stranger bids a child do a thing, he regards him not; but if his father commands, he presently obeys: obey God out of love, obey him readily, obey every command. If he bids you part with your

bosom-sin, leave and loathe it (Jeremiah 35:5). I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups, and I said to them, drink wine; but they said, we will drink no wine; for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father, commanded us, saying, you shall drink no wine, neither you, nor your sons forever. Thus when Satan and your own heart would be tempting you to a sin, and set cups of wine before you, refuse to drink; say, my heavenly Father has commanded me not to drink. Hypocrites will obey God in some things which are consistent either with their credit or profit, but in other things they desire to be excused: like Esau, who obeyed his father in bringing him venison, because probably he liked the sport of hunting, but refused to obey him in a business of greater importance; namely, in the choice of his wife.

2. Let us carry ourselves as God's children in humility (1 Peter 5:5). Be clothed with humility, it is a becoming garment. Let a child of God look his face every morning in the glass of God's word, and see his sinful spots; this will make him walk humbly all the day after; God cannot endure to see his children grow proud; he suffers them to fall into sin, as he did Peter, that their plumes may fall, and they may learn to go on lower ground.

3. Let us walk as the children of God in sobriety (1 Thessalonians 5:8). But let us who are of the day be sober: God's children must not do as others, they must be sober.

1. In their speeches; not rash, not unseemly (Colossians 4:6). Let your speech be seasoned with salt: grace must be the salt which seasons our words, and makes them savory; our words must be solid and weighty, not feathery; God's children must speak the lan-

guage of Canaan; many pretend to be God's children, but their speech betrays them; their lips do not drop as a honeycomb, but are like the sink, where all the filth of the house is carried out.

2. The children of God must be sober in their opinions; hold nothing but what a sober man would hold; error, as Saint Basil says, is a spiritual intoxication, a kind of frenzy; if Christ were upon the earth again, he might have patients enough; there are abundance of spiritual lunatics among us which need healing.

3. The children of God must be sober in their attire (1 Peter 3:3). Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, etc. But let it be the hidden man of the heart. God's children must not be conformed to the world (Romans 12:2). It is not for God's children to do as others, taking up every fashion. What is a naked breast, but a glass in which you may see a vain heart? What is spotting of faces, but learning the black art? God may turn these black spots into blue; walk soberly.

4. Let us carry ourselves as the children of God in diligence; we must be diligent in our calling. Religion does not seal warrants to idleness; it was Jerome's advice to his friend, to be always well employed: six days shall you labor; God sets all his children to work, they must not be like the lilies which toil not, neither do they spin; heaven indeed is a place of rest (Revelation 14:13). They rest from their labors; there the saints shall lay aside all their working-tools, and take the harp and viol; but while we are here, we must labor in a calling; God will bless our diligence, not our laziness.

5. Let us carry ourselves as the children of God in magnanimity and heroicism. The saints are high-born, they are of the true blood-royal, born of God, they must do nothing sneakingly or sordidly, they must not fear the faces of men; as that brave-spirited Nehemiah, shall such a man as I flee (Nehemiah 6:11)? So should a child of God say, shall I be afraid to do my duty? Shall I unworthily comply and prostitute myself to the lusts and humors of men? The children of the Most High should do nothing to stain or dishonor their noble birth. A king's son scorns to do anything which is below him.

6. Let us carry ourselves as God's children in sanctity (1 Peter 1:16). Holiness is the crown of beauty, in this let us imitate our heavenly Father; a debauched child is a disgrace to his father; there is nothing that does more cast a reflection on our heavenly Father, than the irregular actions of such as profess themselves his children. What will others say, are these the children of the Most High, is God their Father (Romans 2:24)? The name of God is blasphemed through you Gentiles. Oh let us do nothing unworthy of our heavenly Father.

7. Let us carry ourselves as the children of God in cheerfulness. It was the speech of Jonadab to Amnon, why are you, being the king's son, lean (2 Samuel 13:4)? Why do the children of God walk so pensively? Are they not heirs of heaven? Perhaps they may meet with hard usage in the world, but let them remember they are of the royal seed, and are of the family of God. Suppose a man were in a strange land, and should meet there with unkind usage, yet he rejoices that he is son and heir, and has a great estate in his own country: so should the children of God comfort themselves with this, though they are now in a strange country, yet they have a title

to the Jerusalem above; and though sin does at present cling to them (for they still have some relics of their disease) yet shortly they shall get rid of it; at death they shall shake off this viper.

8. And lastly, let us carry ourselves as the children of God in holy longings and expectations. Children are still longing to be at home (2 Corinthians 5:2). We groan earnestly, etc. There is bread enough in our Father's house, how should we long for home! Death carries a child of God to his Father's house; Saint Paul therefore desired to be dissolved; it is comfortable dying, when by faith we can resign up our souls into our Father's hands (Luke 23:46). Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.

CHAPTER 21



Matthew 5:10._ Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

We are now come to the last Beatitude, blessed are they which are persecuted, etc. Our Lord Christ would have us reckon the cost (Luke 14:27-28). Which of you intending to build a tower, sits not down first, and counts the cost, whether he has enough to finish it? Religion will cost us the tears of repentance, and the blood of persecution; but we see here a great encouragement that may keep us from fainting in the day of adversity; for the present blessed, for the future crowned.

The words fall into two general parts.

1. The condition of the godly in this life, they are persecuted.
2. Their reward after this life, theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

I shall speak chiefly of the first, and bring in the other in the applicatory.

Doctr. The observation is, that true godliness is usually attended with persecution (Acts 14:22). We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 13:50). The Jews stirred up the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against

Paul, etc. Luther makes it the very definition of a Christian, a Christian is as one crucified; though Christ died to take away the curse from us, yet not to take away the cross from us: those stones which are cut out for a building, are first under the saw and hammer to be hewn and squared; the godly are called living stones (1 Peter 2:5), and they must be hewn and polished by the persecutor's hand, that they may be fit for the heavenly building; the saints have no charter of exemption from trials; though they be never so meek, merciful, pure in heart, their piety will not shield them from sufferings; they must hang their harp on the willows, and take the cross; the way to heaven is thorny and bloody; though it be full of roses in regard of the comforts of the Holy Spirit, yet it is full of thorns in regard of persecutions. Before Israel got to Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey, they must go through a wilderness of serpents, and a red sea: so the children of God in their passage to the holy land, must meet with fiery serpents, and a red sea of persecution. It is a saying of Ambrose, there is no Abel but has his Cain: Saint Paul fought with beasts at Ephesus (1 Corinthians 15:32). Set it down as a maxim, if you will follow Christ, you must see the swords and staves; put the cross in your creed. For the amplification of this, there are several things we are to take cognizance of.

1. What is meant by persecution.
2. The several kinds of persecution.
3. Why there must be persecution.
4. The chief persecutions are raised against the ministers of Christ.
5. What that persecution is which makes a man blessed.

Showing what is meant by persecution.

1. What is meant by persecution? The Greek word, to persecute, signifies to vex and molest, sometimes to prosecute another, to arraign him at the bar, and to pursue him to the death; a persecutor is a pricking briar, therefore the church is described to be a lily among thorns (Song of Solomon 2:2).

Setting forth the several kinds of persecution.

2. What are the several kinds of persecution? There is a two-fold persecution.

A persecution of the hand. A persecution of the tongue.

1. A persecution of the hand (Acts 7:52). Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted (Romans 8:36)? For your sake are we killed all the day long (Galatians 4:29). This I call a bloody persecution, when the people of God are prosecuted with fire and sword: so we read of the ten persecutions in the time of Nero, Domitian, Trajan, etc. And the Marian persecution; England for five years drank a cup of blood; and lately Piedmont, and the confines of Bohemia have been scourged to death with the rod of the persecutor; God's church has always like Abraham's ram, been tied in a bush of thorns.

2. The persecution of the tongue, which is two-fold.

1. Reviling; this few think of, or lay to heart; but it is called in the text persecution; when men shall revile and persecute you; this is tongue-persecution (Psalm 55:21). His words were drawn swords. You may kill a man as well in his name, as in his person; a good name is as precious ointment (Ecclesiastes 7:21). A good conscience and a good name, is like a gold ring set with a rich diamond. Now to smite another in his name, is by our Savior called persecution: thus the primitive Christians endured the persecution

of the tongue (Hebrews 11:36). They had trial of cruel mockings. David was the song of the drunkards (Psalm 69:12). They would sit on their alehouse-bench, and jeer at him; how frequently do the wicked cast out the squibs of reproach at God's children, these are the holy ones! Little do they think what they do; they are now doing Cain's work and Julian's, they are persecuting.

2. Slandering; so it is in the text, when they shall persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely. Slandering is tongue-persecution; thus Saint Paul was slandered in his doctrine; it was reported he should preach, men might do evil that good might come of it (Romans 3:8). Thus Christ who did cast out devils, was charged to have a devil (John 8:48). The primitive Christians were falsely accused for killing their children, and for incest (Psalm 35:11). They laid to my charge things that I knew not.

Let us take heed of becoming persecutors: some think there is no persecution but fire and sword; indeed, there is the persecution of the tongue; there are many of these persecutors nowadays, who by a devilish chemistry can turn gold into dung, the precious names of God's saints into reproach and disgrace. There have been many punished for clipping of coin; of how much more severe punishment shall they be thought worthy, who clip the names of God's people to make them weigh lighter.

Declaring the causes of persecution.

3. Why there must be persecution.

I answer for two reasons.

1. In regard of God.

1. His decree. 2. His design.

1. God's decree (1 Thessalonians 3:3). We are appointed to it: whoever brings the suffering, God sends it; God did bid Shimei curse; Shimei's tongue was the arrow, but it was God that did shoot it.

2. God's design; God has a two-fold design in the persecutions of his children.

1. Trial (Daniel 12:10). Many shall be tried: persecution is the touchstone of sincerity; it discovers true saints from hypocrites; unsound hearts pretend fair in prosperity, but in a time of persecution fall away (Matthew 13:20-21). Hypocrites cannot sail in stormy weather; they will follow Christ to Mount Olivet, but not to Mount Calvary; like green timber, they shrink in the scorching sun of persecution; if trouble arises, hypocrites will rather make Demas' choice, than Moses' choice; they will prefer thirty pieces of silver before Christ; God will have persecutions in the world to make a discovery of men; suffering times are sifting times (Job 23:10). When I am tried, I shall come forth as gold. Job had a furnace-faith; a Christian of the right breed (who is born of God) whatever he loses, will hold fast his integrity (Job 2:3). Christ's true disciples will follow him upon the water.

2. Purity; God lets his children be in the furnace, that they may be partakers of his holiness (Hebrews 12:10). The cross is medicine, it purges out pride, impatience, love of the world; God washes his people in bloody waters, to get out their spots, and make them look white (Daniel 12:10). I am dark, but lovely (Song of Solomon 1:5). The torrid zone of persecution made the spouse's skin dark, but her soul fair; see how differently afflictions work upon the wicked and godly; they make the one worse, the other better. Take a cloth that is rotten, if you scour and rub it, it frets

and tears; but if you scour a piece of plate, it looks brighter. When afflictions are upon the wicked, they fret against God, and tear themselves in impatience; but when the godly are scoured by these, they look brighter.

2. There will be persecutions in regard of the enemies of the church; these vultures prey upon God's turtledoves: the church has two sorts of enemies.

1. Open enemies; the wicked hate the godly; there is enmity between the seed of the woman and the serpent (Genesis 3:15). As in nature there is an antipathy between the vine and the bay-tree; the elephant and the dragon. Vultures have an antipathy against sweet smells; so in the wicked there is an antipathy against the people of God, they hate the sweet perfumes of their graces; it is true, the saints have their infirmities; but the wicked do not hate them for these, but for their holiness; and from this hatred arises open violence; the thief hates the light, therefore would blow it out.

2. Secret enemies; who pretend friendship, but secretly raise persecutions against the godly; such are hypocrites and heretics. Saint Paul calls them false brothers (1 Corinthians 11:26). The church complains that her own sons had vexed her (Song of Solomon 1:6). That is, those who had been bred up in her bosom, and pretended religion and sympathy, these false friends vexed her; the church's enemies are them of her own house; such as are open pretenders, but secret opposers of the faith, are ever worst. A wen seems to be a part of the body, but is indeed an enemy to it, it does disfigure and endanger it; they are the vilest and basest of men, who hang forth Christ's colors, yet fight against him.

Showing that the keenest edge of persecution is turned against the ministers.

4. The fourth particular is, that the chief persecutions are raised against the ministers; our Lord Christ turns himself directly to the apostles, whom he was ready to commission, and send abroad to preach; blessed are you when men shall persecute you (verse 11). So persecuted they the prophets before you (verse 12). Take my brothers the prophets for an example of suffering affliction (James 5:10). No sooner is any man a minister, but he is part of a martyr. The ministers of Christ are his chosen vessels; now as the best vessel of gold and silver passes through the fire, so God's chosen vessels pass often through the fire of persecution: all times are not like the silver age in which Constantine lived; he was an honorer of the ministry; he would not sit down in the Council of Nicaea, till the bishops who were convened there, did come and beseech him; he would say, if he saw an infirmity in the clergy, he would cover it with his own purple robe. Ministers must not always look for such shines of the prince's favor, they must expect an alarm. Peter a famous preacher, who knew how to cast the net on the right side of the ship; at one sermon he converted three thousand souls, yet neither the divinity of his doctrine, nor the sanctity of his life could exempt him from persecution (John 21:18). When you shall be old, another shall gird you, and carry you where you would not; it alludes to his suffering death for Christ; he was (says Eusebius) bound with chains, and afterwards crucified at Jerusalem with his head downwards. Saint Paul a holy man, who is steeled with courage, fired with zeal, as soon as he entered into the ministry, bonds and persecutions did abide him (Acts 9:15-16). He was made up of sufferings (2 Timothy 4:6). I am ready to be of-

ferred up; he alludes to the drink-offerings, wherein the wine or blood used in sacrifice was poured out, thereby indicating by what manner of death he should glorify God; not by being sacrificed in the fire, but by pouring out his blood, which was when he was beheaded; and that it might seem no strange thing for God's ministers to be under the heat and rage of persecution, Stephen puts the question (Acts 7:52). Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? Ignatius was torn with wild beasts; Cyprian, Polycarp martyred: Maximinus the emperor (as Eusebius relates) gave charge to his officers to put none to death, but the governors and pastors of the church.

The reasons why the storm of persecution has chiefly fallen upon the ministers, are:

1. They have their corruptions as well as others; and least they should be lifted up through the abundance of revelation, God lets loose some messenger of Satan to vex and persecute them. God sees they have need of the flail to thresh off their husks; the fire God puts them into, is not to consume, but refine them.

2. The ministers are Christ's standard-bearers to carry his colors; they are the captains of the Lord's host, therefore are most shot at (Philippians 1:17). I am set for the defense of the gospel. The Greek word alludes to a soldier that is set in the forefront of the battle, and has all the bullets flying about his ears. The minister's work is to preach against men's sins, which are as dear to them as their right eye, and they cannot endure this. Every man's sin is his king, to which he yields love and subjection; now as Pilate said, shall I crucify your king? Men will not endure to have their king-sin crucified; this therefore being the work of the ministry to divide between men and their lusts, to part these two

old friends, no wonder it meets with so much opposition. When Paul preached against Diana, all the city was in an uproar: we preach against men's Dianas, those sins which bring them in pleasure and profit, this causes an uproar.

3. From the malice of Satan: the ministers of Christ come to destroy his kingdom, therefore the old serpent will spit all his venom at them; if we tread upon the devil's head, he will bite us by the heel; the devil sets up several forts and garrisons in men's hearts, pride, ignorance, unbelief; now the weapons of the ministry beat down these strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:4), therefore Satan raises his militia, all the force and power of hell against the ministry: the kingdom of Satan is a kingdom of darkness (Acts 26:18; Revelation 16:10), and God's ministers are called the lights of the world (Matthew 5:14). They come to enlighten those that sit in darkness, this enrages Satan; therefore he labors to eclipse the lights, to pull down the stars, that his kingdom of darkness may prevail; the devil is called a lion (1 Peter 5:8). The souls of people are the lion's prey, the minister's work is to take away the prey from this lion; therefore how will he roar upon them, and seek to destroy them!

Use 1. It shows us what a work the ministry is; though full of dignity, yet full of danger; the persecution of the tongue is the most gentle persecution that can be expected; it is not possible (says Luther) to be a faithful preacher, and not meet with trials and oppositions.

Use 2. It shows the corruption of men's nature since the fall, they are their own enemies, they persecute those who come to do them most good. What is the work of the ministry but to save men's souls? To pull them as brands out of the fire; yet they are

angry at this. We hate not the physician who brings such medicine as makes us sick, because it is to make us well; nor the surgeon, who lances the flesh, because it is in order to a cure; why then should we quarrel with the minister? What is our work but to bring men to heaven (2 Corinthians 5:20)? We are ambassadors for Christ, etc., we would have a peace made up between you and God; yet this is the folly of depraved nature, to repay evil for good. Aristoxenus did use to moisten his flowers with wine, honey, and perfumes, that they might not only smell more fragrantly, but put forth more vigorously: so should we do with our ministers, give them wine and honey, encourage them in their work, that they might act more vigorously; but instead of this, we give them gall and vinegar to drink, we hate and persecute them. Most deal with their ministers, as Israel did with Moses; he prayed for them, and worked miracles for them, yet they were still quarreling with him, and sometimes ready to take away his life.

Use 3. If the fury of the world be against the ministers, then you that fear God had better pray much for them (2 Thessalonians 3:2). Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men. People should pray for their ministers, that God would give them the wisdom of the serpent, that they may not betray themselves to danger by indiscretion; and the boldness of the lion, that they may not betray the truth by fear.

Showing what that persecution is which makes one blessed.

5. The next thing to be explained, is, what that suffering persecution is which makes a man blessed.

1. I shall show what that suffering is which will not make us blessed.

1. That suffering is not reckoned for martyrdom, when we pull a cross upon ourselves, there is little comfort in such suffering. Augustine speaks of some in his time that were called Circumcellions, who out of an itch (rather than zeal) of martyrdom, would run themselves into sufferings; these were accessories to their own death; like Saul, who fell upon his own sword; we are bound by all lawful means to preserve our own lives. Jesus Christ did not suffer till he was called to it; suspect that to be a temptation which bids us cast ourselves down into sufferings; when men through precipitancy and rashness run themselves into trouble, it is a cross of their own making, and not of God's laying upon them.

2. That is not to be accounted martyrdom, when we suffer for our offenses (1 Peter 4:15). Let none of you suffer as an evildoer (Luke 23:41). We indeed suffer justly. I am not of Cyprian's mind, that the thief on the cross suffered as a martyr; no, he suffered as an evildoer; Christ indeed took pity on him, and saved him; he died a saint, but not a martyr. When men suffer by the hand of the magistrate for their uncleanness, blasphemies, etc., these do not suffer persecution, but execution; they die not as martyrs, but malefactors; they suffer evil, for being evil.

3. That suffering will not make men blessed, when they suffer out of sinister respects, to be cried up as the head of a party, or to keep up a faction. The apostle implies that a man may give his body to be burned, yet go to hell (1 Corinthians 13:3). Ambitious men may sacrifice their lives to purchase fame; these are the devil's martyrs.

2. What that suffering persecution is which will make us blessed, and shall wear the crown of martyrdom.

Answ. 1. When we suffer in a good cause; so it is in the text, blessed are they which suffer for righteousness' sake; it is the cause that makes a martyr: when we suffer for the truth, and espouse the quarrel of religion, this is to suffer for righteousness' sake (Acts 28:20). For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.

2. When we suffer with a good conscience: a man may have a good cause, and a bad conscience; he may suffer for righteousness' sake, yet he himself be unrighteous. Saint Paul, as he had a just cause, so he had a pure conscience (Acts 23:1). I have lived in all good conscience to this day. Paul kept a good conscience to his dying day; a good conscience will make a man suffer with comfort, it has made the saints go as cheerfully to the stake, as if they had been going to a crown; look to it, that there be no flaw in conscience. A ship that is to sail upon the waters, must be preserved from leaking; when Christians are to sail on the waters of persecution, let them take heed there be no leak of guilt in their conscience; he who suffers (though it be in God's own cause) with a bad conscience, suffers two hells; a hell of persecution, and a hell of damnation.

3. When we have a good call (Matthew 10:18). When you shall be brought before kings, etc. There is no question but a man may so far consult for his safety, that if God by his providence opens a door, he may flee in time of persecution (Matthew 10:23). But when he is brought before kings, and the case is such, that either he must suffer, or the truth must suffer; here is a clear call to suffering, and this is reckoned for martyrdom.

4. When we have good ends in our suffering; namely, that we may glorify God, set a seal to the truth, show our love to Christ (Matthew 10:18). When you shall be brought before kings for my sake. The primitive Christians did burn more in love than in fire; when we look at God in our sufferings, and are willing to make his crown flourish, though it be in our ashes, this is that suffering which carries away the garland of glory.

5. When we suffer as Christians (1 Peter 4:16). If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed: to suffer as a Christian, is to suffer with such a spirit as becomes a Christian, which is,

1. When we suffer with patience (James 5:10). Take my brothers the prophets for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. A Christian must not repine, but say, shall I not drink the cup of martyrdom which my Father has given me? There should be such a spirit of meekness in a Christian's suffering, that it should be hard to say which is greater, his persecution or his patience. When Job had lost all, he kept the breastplate of innocence, and the shield of patience; an impatient martyr is a solecism.

2. To suffer as Christians, is, when we suffer with courage. Courage is a Christian's armor of proof, it steels and animates him. The three children (or rather the three champions) were of brave heroic spirits; they do not say to the king we ought not serve your gods, but we will not (Daniel 3:18). Neither Nebuchadnezzar's music, nor his furnace could alter their resolution. Tertullian was called an adamant for his invincible courage: holy courage makes us (as one of the fathers says) have such faces of brass, that we are not ashamed of the cross; this is to suffer as Christians, when we are meek, yet resolute. The more the fire is blown, the more it flames; so it is with a brave-spirited Christian; the more opposition

he meets with the more his zeal and courage flames forth: what a spirit of gallantry was in Luther, who writing to Melanchthon, said, if the cause we are embarked in is not God's, let us desert it; if it is his cause, and will bear us out, why do we not stand to it?

3. To suffer as Christians, is to suffer with cheerfulness. Patience is bearing the cross, cheerfulness is taking up the cross. Christ suffered for us cheerfully, his death was a free-will offering (Luke 12:50). He thirsted to drink of that cup of blood; such must our sufferings be for Christ; cheerfulness perfumes martyrdom, and makes it the sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savor to God. Thus Moses suffered cheerfully (Hebrews 11:24-25). Moses when he was come to years, chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Observe,

1. When he was come to years; it was no childish act, it was not in his minority, but when he was of years of discretion.

2. He chose to suffer affliction; suffering was not so much his task, as his choice; the cross was not so much imposed, as embraced; this is to suffer as Christians, when we are volunteers, we take up the cross cheerfully, indeed joyfully (Acts 5:41). They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. The original says they rejoiced that they were so far graced, as to be disgraced for the name of Christ. Tertullian says of the primitive Christians, they took more comfort in their sufferings, than in their deliverance: and indeed well may a Christian be joyful in suffering, because it is a great favor when God honors a man to be a witness to the truth. Christ's marks in Saint Paul's body, were prints of glory; the saints

have worn their sufferings as ornaments. Ignatius' chains were his jewels; never have any princes been so famous for their victories, as the martyrs for their sufferings.

4. We suffer as Christians; when we suffer and pray (Matthew 5:44). Pray for them which spitefully use you and persecute you.

There are two reasons why we should pray for our persecutors.

1. Because our prayers may be a means to convert them. Stephen prayed for his persecutors (Acts 7:60). Lord, lay not this sin to their charge; and this prayer was effectual to some of their conversions. Augustine says, the church of God was beholden to Stephen's prayer for all that benefit which was reaped by Paul's ministry.

2. We should pray for our persecutors, because they do us good, though against their will; they shall increase our reward; every reproach shall add to our glory; every injury shall serve to make our crown heavier; as Gregory Nazianzene speaks in one of his orations, every stone which was thrown at Stephen, was a precious stone, which enriched him, and made him shine brighter in the kingdom of heaven. Thus I have shown what that suffering is which makes us blessed, and shall wear the crown of martyrdom.

Inferences drawn from the proposition.

1. It shows us what the nature of Christianity is, namely sanctity joined with suffering; a true saint carries Christ in his heart, and the cross on his shoulders (2 Timothy 3:12). All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution. Christ and his cross are never parted; it is too much for a Christian to have two heavens; one here, and another hereafter. Christ's kingdom on earth is the kingdom of the cross: what is the meaning of the shield of

faith, the helmet of hope, the breastplate of patience? But to imply that we must encounter with sufferings. It is one of the titles given to the church, afflicted (Isaiah 54:11). Persecution is the legacy bequeathed by Christ to his people (John 16, last verse). In the world you shall have tribulation. Christ's spouse is a lily among thorns. Christ's sheep must expect to lose their golden fleece; this the flesh does not like to hear of; therefore Christ calls persecution the cross (Matthew 16:24), because it is cross to flesh and blood; we are all for reigning (Acts 1:7). When will you restore the kingdom again to Israel? But the apostle tells us of suffering before reigning (2 Timothy 2:12). If we suffer, we shall reign with him. How loath is corrupt flesh to put its neck under Christ's yoke, or stretch itself upon the cross! But religion gives no charter of exemption from suffering; to have two heavens, is more than Christ had. Was the head crowned with thorns, and do we think to be crowned with roses (1 Peter 4:12)? Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial. If we are God's gold, it is not strange to be cast into the fire. Some there are that picture Erasmus half in heaven, and half out: methinks it represents a Christian in this life; in regard of his inward consolation he is half in heaven, in regard of his outward persecution he is half in hell.

2. See hence that persecutions are not signs of God's anger, or fruits of the curse; for blessed are they that are persecuted: if they are blessed who die in the Lord, are not they blessed who die for the Lord? We are very apt to judge them hated and forsaken of God, who are in a suffering condition (Matthew 26:40). If you be the Son of God, come down from the cross. The Jews made a question of it, they could hardly believe Christ was the Son of God when he hung upon the cross: would God let him be reproached and for-

saken if he were the Son of God? When the barbarians saw the viper on Paul's hand, they thought he was a great sinner (Acts 28:4). No doubt this man is a murderer: so when we see the people of God afflicted, and the viper of persecution fastens on them, we are apt to say, these are greater sinners than others, and God does not love them; this is for want of judgment: blessed are they that are persecuted. Persecutions are pledges of God's love, badges of honor (Hebrews 12:7). In the sharpest trial there is the sweetest comfort; God's fanning his wheat is but to make it purer.

Use 2. 1. It reproves such as would be thought good Christians, but will not suffer persecution for Christ's sake; their care is not to take up the cross, but to avoid the cross (Matthew 13:21). When persecution arises because of the word, by and by he is offended. There are many professors who speak Christ fair, but will suffer nothing for him; these may be compared to the crystal which looks like pearl, till it comes to the hammering, then it breaks; many when they see the palm-branches and garments spread, cry hosanna to Christ; but if the swords and staves appear, then they slink away; as King Henry the 4th of Navarre told Beza, who urging him to engage himself in the Protestant religion, said, he would not launch out too far into the deep, but that if a storm should arise, he might retreat back to shore. It is to be feared there are some among us, who if persecutions should come, would rather make Demas' choice, than Moses' choice; and would study rather to keep their skin whole, than their conscience pure. Erasmus highly extolled Luther's doctrine; but when the emperor threatened all that should favor Luther's cause, he unworthily deserted it. Hypocrites will sooner renounce their baptism, than take up the cross; if ever we would show ourselves Christians in earnest, we

must with Peter, throw ourselves upon the water to come to Christ. He that refuses to suffer, let him read over that sad Scripture (Matthew 10:33). Whoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

2. It reproves them who are the opposers and persecutors of the saints; how great is their sin? They resist the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51-52). You do always resist the Holy Spirit; which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? Persecutors offer affront to Christ in heaven, they tread his jewels in the dust, touch the apple of his eye, pierce his sides (Acts 9:4-5). Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? When the foot was trodden on, the head cried out; as the sin is great, so the punishment shall be proportionable (Revelation 16:6). They have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink, for they are worthy. Will not Christ avenge those who die in his quarrel? What is the end of persecutors? Diocletian proclaimed that the Christian churches and temples should be razed down, their Bibles burned; he would not permit any man that was a Christian to hold an office; some of the Christians he cast alive into boiling lead, others had their hands and lips cut off, only they had their eyes left, that they might behold the tragedy of their own miseries, what was the end of this man? He ran mad, and poisoned himself. Felix, captain to Emperor Charles the 5th, being at supper at Augsburg, vowed he would ride up to the spurs in the blood of the Lutherans; a flux of blood came up that night into his throat, with which he was choked; it were easy to tell how God's hand has so visibly gone out against persecutors, that they might read their sin in their punishment.

That Christians should possess themselves beforehand with thoughts of suffering.

Use 3. 1. Let it exhort Christians to think beforehand, and make account of sufferings; this reckoning beforehand can do us no hurt, it may do us much good.

1. The forethoughts of suffering will make a Christian very serious; the heart is apt to be feathery and frothy, the thoughts of suffering persecution would consolidate it; why am I thus light? Is this a posture fit for persecution? Christians grow serious in the casting up their spiritual accounts, they reckon what religion must cost them, and may cost them; it must cost them the blood of their sins, it may cost them the blood of their lives.

2. The forethoughts of persecution will be as sauce to season our delights, that we do not surfeit upon them. How soon may there be an alarm sounded? How soon may the clouds drop blood? The thoughts of this would take off the heart from the immoderate love of the creature. Our Savior at a great feast breaks out into mention of his death (Mark 14:3). She has prepared this against my burial: so the forethoughts of a change would be an excellent antidote against a surfeit.

3. The forethoughts of sufferings would make them lighter when they come; the suddenness of an evil adds to the sadness; this was ill news to the fool in the Gospel, (who reckoned without his host) this night shall your soul be required of you. This will be an aggravation of Babylon's miseries (Revelation 18:8). Her plagues shall come in one day; not that Antichrist shall be destroyed in a day, but suddenly; the blow shall come unawares, when he does not think of it; the reckoning beforehand of suffer-

ing, does alleviate and take off the edge of it when it comes; therefore Christ to lighten the cross, still forewarns his disciples of sufferings, that they might not come unlooked for (John 16:33; Acts 1:7).

4. Forethoughts of persecution would put us in mind of getting our armor ready; it is dangerous as well as imprudent, to have all to seek when the trial comes; as if a soldier should have his weapons to get when the enemy is in the field. Caesar seeing a soldier whetting his sword when he was just going to fight, dismissed him; he that reckons upon persecution, will be in a ready posture for it; he will have the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit ready, that he may not be surprised unawares.

2. Let us prepare for persecution; a wise pilot in a calm will prepare for a storm. God knows how soon persecution may come, there seems to be a cloud of blood hanging over the nation.

Showing how we may be armed for sufferings.

Quest. How shall we prepare for sufferings?

Answ. Do three things.

1. Be persons rightly qualified for suffering. 2. Avoid those things which will hinder suffering. 3. Promote all helps to suffering.

1. Labor to be persons rightly qualified for suffering; be righteous persons; that man who would suffer for righteousness' sake, must himself be righteous; I mean evangelically righteous; in particular I call him righteous,

1. Who breathes after sanctity (Psalm 119:5). Though sin cleaves to his heart, yet his heart does not cleave to sin; though sin has an alliance, yet no allowance (Romans 7:15). What I do I do not allow! A good man hates that sin to which Satan does most tempt, and his heart most incline (Psalm 119:128).

2. A righteous person is one who makes God's glory his center; the glory of God is more worth than the salvation of all men's souls. He who is divinely qualified, is so zealously ambitious of God's glory, that he cares not what he loses, so God may be a gainer; he prefers the glory of God before credit, estate, relations. It was the speech of Kiliaz that blessed martyr, had I all the gold in the world to dispose of, I would give it to live with my relations, (though in prison) yet Jesus Christ is dearer to me than all.

3. A righteous person is one who values the jewel of a good conscience at a high rate; a good conscience is a saint's festival, his music, his paradise, and he will rather hazard anything than violate his conscience. They say of the Irish, if they have a good weapon they had rather take a blow on their arm, than their weapon should be hurt. To this I may compare a good conscience; a godly man had rather sustain hurt in his body or estate, than his conscience should be hurt; he had rather die, than violate the virginity of his conscience; such a man as this, is evangelically righteous; and if God calls him to it, he is fit to suffer.

2. Avoid those things which will hinder suffering.

1. The love of the world; God allows us the use of the world (1 Timothy 6:7), but take heed of the love of it; he that is in love with the world, will be out of love with the cross (2 Timothy 4:10). Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world; he not

only forsook Paul's company, but his doctrine. The love of the world chokes our zeal; a man wedded to the world, will for thirty pieces of silver betray Christ and a good cause. Let the world be as a loose garment, that you may throw off at pleasure; before a man can die for Christ, he must be dead to the world. Paul was crucified to the world (Galatians 6:14). It will be an easy thing to die, when we are dead before in our affections.

2. Carnal fear. There is a two-fold fear.

1. A filial fear; when a man fears to displease God; when he fears lest he should not hold out, this is a good fear; blessed is he that fears always; if Peter had feared his own heart, and said, Lord Jesus, I fear I shall forsake you, Lord strengthen me, doubtless Christ would have kept him from falling.

2. There is a cowardly fear; when a man fears danger more than sin; when he is afraid to be good, this fear is an enemy to suffering. God proclaimed that those who were fearful should not go to the wars (Deuteronomy 20:8). The fearful are unfit to fight in Christ's wars; a man possessed with fear, does not consult what is best, but what is safest. If he may save his estate, he will snare his conscience (Proverbs 29:25). In the fear of man there is a snare. Fear made Peter deny Christ; Abraham equivocate; David feign himself mad; fear will put men upon indirect courses, making them study rather compliance, than conscience. Fear makes sin appear little, and suffering great; the fearful man sees double, he looks upon the cross through his lens twice as big as it is; fear argues baseness of spirit, it will put one upon things most ignoble and unworthy; a fearful man will vote against his conscience; fear enfeebles, it is like the cutting off Samson's locks; fear melts away the courage (Joshua 5:1). Their hearts melt because of you; and

when a man's strength is gone, he is very unfit to carry Christ's cross; fear is the root of apostasy. Spira's fear made him abjure and recant his religion; fear does one more hurt than the adversary; it is not so much an enemy without the castle, as a traitor within that endangers it; it is not so much sufferings without, as traitorous fear within which undoes a man; a fearful man is versed in no posture so much as in retreating; oh take heed of this, be afraid of this fear (Luke 12:4). Fear not them that can kill the body. Persecutors can but kill that body which must shortly die; the fearful are set in the forefront of them that shall go to hell (Revelation 21:8). Let us get the fear of God into our hearts; as one wedge drives out another, so the fear of God will drive out all other base fear.

3. Take heed of a facile spirit; a facile-spirited man will be turned any way with a word; he will be worked as wax; he is so tame, that you may lead him wherever you will (Romans 16:18). With fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple. A facile Christian is malleable to anything, he is like wool that will take any dye; he is a weak reed that will be blown any way with the breath of men; one day you may persuade him to engage in a good cause, the next day to desert it; he is not made of oak but of willow, he will bend every way: oh take heed of a facile spirit; it is not ingenuity, but folly to suffer oneself to be abused. A good Christian is like Mount Zion, that cannot be moved (Psalm 125:1). He is like Fabricius, of whom it was said, a man might as well alter the course of the sun, as turn him aside from doing justice. A good Christian must be firm to his resolution; if he be not a fixed, he will be a falling star.

4. Take heed of listening to the voice of the flesh. Saint Paul did not confer with flesh and blood (Galatians 1:16). The flesh will give bad counsel; first Saul consulted with the flesh, and afterwards he consulted with the devil, he sends to the witch of Endor; oh says the flesh, the cross of Christ is heavy, there is a nail in the yoke which will tear, and draw blood; be as a deaf adder, stopping your ears to the charmings of the flesh.

3. Promote those things which will help to suffer.

1. Inure yourselves to suffering (2 Timothy 2:3). As a good soldier of Christ endure hardship. Jacob made the stone his pillow (Genesis 28:18). It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth (Lamentations 3:27). The bearing of a lighter cross will fit for bearing a heavier: learn to bear a reproach with patience, and then you will be fitter to bear an iron chain. Saint Paul did die daily; he began with lesser sufferings, and so by degrees learned to be a martyr; as it is in sin, a wicked man learns to be expert in sin by degrees; first he commits a lesser sin, then a greater, then he arrives at custom in sin, then he grows impudent in sin, then he glories in sin (Philippians 3:19), so it is in suffering, first a Christian takes up the chips of the cross, a disgrace, a prison, and then he carries the cross itself.

Alas how far are they from suffering, who indulge the flesh (Amos 6:4)! That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches; a very unfit posture for suffering. That soldier is likely to make but poor work of it, who is stretching himself upon his bed, when he should be in the field exercising his arms. What shall I say says Jerome, to those Christians who make it all their care to perfume their clothes, to crisp their hair, to sparkle their diamonds; but if sufferings come, and the way to heaven has

any water in it, they will not endure to set their feet upon it! Most people are too effeminate, they use themselves too nicely and tenderly; those silken Christians (as Tertullian calls them) that pamper the flesh, are unfit for the school of the cross; the naked breast and bare shoulder is too soft and tender to carry Christ's cross; inure yourselves to hardship, do not make your pillow too easy.

2. Be well skilled in the knowledge of Christ; a man can never die for him he does not know (2 Timothy 1:12). For which cause I suffer these things, for I know whom I have believed. Blind men are always fearful; a blind Christian will be fearful of the cross; enrich yourselves with knowledge; know Christ in his virtues, offices, privileges; see the preciousness in Christ (1 Peter 1:7). To you that believe he is precious; his name is precious, it is as ointment poured forth; his blood is precious, it is as balm poured forth; his love is precious, it is as wine poured forth; Jesus Christ is made up of all sweets and delights. He is himself entirely desirable; he is light to the eye, honey to the taste, joy to the heart; get but the knowledge of Christ, and you will part with all for him; you will embrace him, though it be in the fire; an ignorant man can never be a martyr; he may set up an altar, but he will never die for an unknown God.

3. Prize every truth of God; the filings of gold are precious, the least ray of truth is glorious (Proverbs 23:23). Buy the truth, and sell it not. Truth is the object of faith (2 Thessalonians 2:13), the seed of regeneration (James 1:18), the spring of joy (1 Corinthians 13:6). Truth crowns us with salvation (1 Timothy 2:4). If ever you would suffer for the truth, prize it above all things; he that does not prize truth above life, will never lay down his life for the truth. The blessed martyrs sealed to the truth with their blood. There are two

things God counts most dear to him, his glory and his truth. I will, says Bishop Jewel, deny my bishopric, I will deny my name and credit, but the truths of Christ I cannot deny.

4. Keep a good conscience; if there be any sin allowed in the soul, it will unfit for suffering: a man that has a boil upon his shoulders, cannot carry a heavy burden; guilt of conscience is like a boil; he that has this, can never carry the cross of Christ; if a ship be sound, and well rigged, it will sail upon the water; but if it be full of holes, and leaks, it will sink in the water: if conscience be full of guilt, (which is like a leak in the ship) it will not hold in the bloody waters of persecution. A house will not stand in a storm, if the pillars of it are rotten; if a man's heart be rotten, he will never stand in a storm of tribulation; how can a guilty person suffer, when for ought he knows he is likely to go from the fire at the stake to hell-fire! Let conscience be pure (1 Timothy 3:9). Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience. A good conscience will abide the fiery trial; this made the martyrs' flames, beds of roses; a good conscience is a wall of bronze; with the leviathan, it laughs at the shaking of a spear (Job 41:29). Let one be in prison, a good conscience is a bird that can sing in this cage; Augustine calls it the paradise of a good conscience.

5. Make the Scripture familiar to you (Psalm 119:50). The Scripture well digested by meditation will fit for suffering; the Scripture is a Christian's fortress, his magazine and stronghold; it may be compared to the tower of David, on which there hang a thousand shields (Song of Solomon 4:3). From these breasts of Scripture divine strength flows into the soul (Colossians 3:16). Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Jerome speaks of one who by frequent studying the Scripture made his breast the library of

Christ. The blessed Scripture as it is a honeycomb for comfort, so an armory for strength; first, the martyrs' hearts did burn within them by reading the Scripture, and then their bodies were fit to burn. The Scripture arms a Christian both against temptation and persecution.

1. Against temptation. Christ himself when he was tempted by the devil, ran to Scripture for armor, it is written. Three times he wounds the old serpent with this sword. Jerome says of Saint Paul he could never have gone through so many temptations but for his Scripture-armor. Christian, are you tempted? Go to Scripture, gather a stone from it, to sling in the face of a Goliath-temptation; are you tempted to pride? Read that Scripture (1 Peter 5:5): God resists the proud. Are you tempted to lust? Read James 1:15: when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin, and sin when it is finished brings forth death.

2. Against persecution. When the flesh draws back, the Scripture will recruit us, it will put armor upon us, and courage into us (Revelation 2:10). Fear none of those things which you shall suffer; behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison that you may be tried, and you shall have tribulation ten days: be faithful to death, and I will give you a crown of life. Oh says the Christian I am afraid to suffer; fear none of those things you shall suffer. But why should I suffer? I love God, and is not this sufficient? Indeed, but God will try your love; it is that you may be tried. God's gold is best tried in the furnace. But this persecution is so long. No, it is but for ten days; it may be lasting, but not everlasting: what are ten days put in the balance with eternity? But what am I the better if I suffer? what comes of it? I will (says God) give you a crown of life: though your body be martyred, your soul

shall be crowned. But I shall faint when trials come. My grace shall be sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:9). The weak Christian has omnipotency to underprop it.

6. Get a suffering frame of heart.

Quest. What is that?

Answ. A self-denying frame (Matthew 16:24). If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up the cross. Self-denial is the foundation of godliness; and if this be not well laid, the whole building will fall. If there be any lust in our souls which we cannot deny, it will turn at length either to scandal or apostasy. Self-denial is the thread which must run along through the whole work of religion; the self-denying Christian will be the suffering Christian; let him deny himself, and take up his cross.

For the further explanation of this, I shall do two things.

1. Show what is meant by this word deny.

2. What is meant by self.

1. What is meant by deny; the Greek word, to deny, signifies to lay aside, to put off, to annihilate oneself. Beza renders it, let him renounce himself.

2. What is meant by self; self is taken four ways.

1. A man must deny worldly self; that is, his estate (Matthew 19:27). Behold we have forsaken all, and followed you. The gold of Ophir must be denied for the pearl of price; let their money perish with them (said that noble Marquess of Vico) who esteem all the gold and silver in the world worth one hour's communion with Christ.

2. A man must deny relative self, his dearest relations if God calls; if our nearest alliance, father or mother stand in our way, and would hinder us from doing our duty, we must either leap over them, or tread upon them (Luke 14:26). If any man comes to me, and does not hate father and mother, and wife, and children, etc., he cannot be my disciple. Relations must not weigh heavier than Christ.

3. A man must deny natural self; he must be willing to become a sacrifice, and make Christ's crown flourish, though it be in his ashes (Luke 14:26; Revelation 12:11). They loved not their lives to the death: Jesus Christ was dearer to them than their own heart-blood.

4. A man must deny carnal self; this I take to be the chief sense of the text.

1. He must deny self-ease; the flesh cries out for ease, it is loath to put its neck under Christ's yoke, or stretch itself upon the cross; the flesh cries out there is a lion in the way (Proverbs 22:13). We must deny our self-ease; they that lean on the soft pillow of sloth, will hardly take up the cross (2 Timothy 2:3). You as a good soldier of Christ endure hardness. We must force a way to heaven through sweat and blood. Caesar's soldiers did fight with hunger and cold.

2. A man must deny self-opinion; every man by nature has a high opinion of himself, he is drunk with spiritual pride; and a proud man is unfit for suffering, he thinks himself too good to suffer. What, says he, I that am of such a noble descent, such high parts, such repute and credit in the world, shall I suffer? A proud

man disdains the cross; oh deny self-opinion; how did Christ come to suffer? He humbled himself, and became obedient to death (Philippians 2:8). Let the plumes of pride fall.

3. A man must deny self-confidence; Peter's confidence undid him (Matthew 26:33-34). Though all men shall be offended because of you, yet will I never be offended; though I should die with you, yet will I not deny you. How did this man presume upon his own strength, as if he had more grace than all the apostles besides? His denying Christ, was for want of denying himself; oh deny your own strength; Samson's strength was in his locks; a Christian's strength lies in Christ; he who trusts to himself, shall be left to himself; he who goes out in his own strength, comes off to his own shame.

4. A man must deny self-wisdom: we read of the wisdom of the flesh (2 Corinthians 1:12). Self-wisdom is carnal policy; it is wisdom (says the flesh) to keep out of suffering; it is wisdom not to declare against sin; it is wisdom to find out subtle distinctions to avoid the cross; the wisdom of the flesh is to save the flesh. Indeed there is a Christian prudence to be used; the serpent's eye must be in the dove's head; wisdom and innocency do well, but it is dangerous to separate them; cursed be that policy which teaches to avoid duty; this wisdom is not from above, but is devilish (James 3:17), it is learned from the old serpent; this wisdom will turn to folly at last; it is like a man, who to save his gold, throws himself overboard into the water; so the politician to save his skin, will damn his soul.

5. A man must deny self-will; Saint Gregory calls the will the commander in chief of all the faculties of the soul; indeed in innocency Adam had rectitude of mind, and conformity of will; the will

was like an instrument in tune, it was full of harmony, and did tune sweetly to God's will; but now the will is corrupt, and like a strong tide carries us violently to evil; the will has not only an indisposition to good, but an opposition (Acts 7:51). You have always resisted the Holy Spirit; there is not a greater enemy than the will, it is up in arms against God (2 Peter 2:10). The will loves sin, and hates the cross. Now if ever we suffer for God, we must cross our own will; the will must be martyred; a Christian must say, not my will Lord, but your will be done.

6. A man must deny self-reasonings; the fleshy part will be reasoning and disputing against sufferings (Mark 2:8). Why do you reason these things in your hearts? Such reasonings as these will begin to arise in our hearts.

1. Persecution is bitter.

Answ. Oh but it is blessed (James 1:12)! Blessed is he that endures temptation, etc. The cross is heavy, but the sharper the cross, the brighter the crown.

2. But it is sad to part with estate and relations.

Answ. But Christ is better than all, he is manna to strengthen, he is wine to comfort, he is salvation to crown.

3. But liberty is sweet.

Answ. This restraint makes way for enlargement (Psalm 4:1). You have enlarged me in distress; when the feet are bound with irons, the heart may be sweetly dilated and enlarged.

Thus should we put to silence those self-reasonings which are apt to arise in the heart against sufferings.

This self-denying frame of heart is very hard; this is to pluck out the right eye; one says, a man has not so much to do in overcoming men and devils, as in overcoming himself. He is stronger who overcomes himself than he who conquers the mightiest walls. Self is the idol; and how hard is it to sacrifice this idol, and to turn self-seeking into self-denial? But though it be difficult, it is essentially necessary to suffering; a Christian must first lay down self, before he can take up the cross.

Alas how far are they then from suffering, that cannot deny themselves in the least things? In their diet or apparel; who instead of martyring the flesh, pamper the flesh; instead of taking up the cross, take up their cups; is this self-denial, to let loose the reins to the flesh? It is sure, they who cannot deny themselves, if sufferings come, they will deny Christ. Oh Christians, as ever you would be able to carry Christ's cross, begin to deny yourselves; consider,

1. Whatever you deny for Christ, you shall find again in Christ (Matthew 19:29). Everyone that has forsaken houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. Here is a very saving bargain; is it not gain enough to have ten in the hundred, indeed, above a hundred for one?

2. It is but equity that you should deny yourselves for Christ; did not Jesus Christ deny himself for you? He denied his joy, he left his Father's bosom, he denied his honor, he endured the shame (Hebrews 12:2). He denied his life, he poured out his blood as a sacrifice upon the altar of the cross (Colossians 1:20). Did Christ deny himself for you, and will not you deny yourselves for him?

3. Self-denial is the highest sign of a thorough-paced Christian; hypocrites may have great knowledge, and make large profession, but it is only the true-hearted saint that can deny himself for Christ. I have read of a holy man who was once tempted by Satan, to whom Satan said, why do you take all this pains? You watch and fast, and abstain from sin, O man, what do you do more than I? Are you no drunkard, no adulterer? no more am I. Do you watch? let me tell you I never slept. Do you fast? I never eat; what do you do more than I? Why, says the good man, I will tell you Satan, I pray, I serve the Lord, indeed more than all, I deny myself; indeed, says Satan, you go beyond me, for I exalt myself; and so he vanished. Self-denial is the best touchstone of sincerity; by this you go beyond hypocrites.

4. To deny yourselves, is but what others have done before you. Moses was a self-denier, he denied the honors and profits of the court (Hebrews 11:25). Abraham denied his own country at God's call (Hebrews 11:8). Marcus Arethusus who lived in the time of Julian the emperor, endured great torments for religion; if he would but have given a halfpenny towards the rebuilding of the idols' temple, he might have been released; but he would not do it, though the giving of a halfpenny might have saved his life; here was a self-denying saint.

5. There is a time shortly coming, that if you do not deny the world for Christ, the world will deny you; the world now denies satisfaction, and before long it will deny house-room; it will not suffer you so much as to breathe in it, it will turn you out of possession; and which is worse, not only the world will deny you, but Christ will deny you (Matthew 10:33). Whoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

7. Get suffering graces, these three in particular.

1. Faith. 2. Love. 3. Patience.

1. Suffering grace is faith (Ephesians 6:16). Above all taking the shield of faith; the pretense of faith is one thing, the use of faith another; the hypocrite makes faith a cloak, the martyr makes it a shield; a shield is useful in time of danger, it defends the head, it guards the vitals; such a shield is faith, faith is a furnace-grace (1 Peter 1:7). Though it be tried with fire, it is found to praise and honor. Faith like Hercules' club, beats down all oppositions; by faith we resist the devil (1 Peter 5:9). By faith we resist to blood (Hebrews 11:34). Faith is a victorious grace; the believer will make Christ's crown flourish, though it be in his own ashes; an unbeliever is like Reuben, unstable as water, he shall not excel (Genesis 49:4). A believer is like Joseph, who, though the archers shot at him, his bow abode in strength. Cast a believer upon the waters of affliction, he can follow Christ upon the water, and not sink; cast him into the fire, his zeal burns hotter than the flame; cast him into prison, he is enlarged in spirit; Paul and Silas had their prison songs (Psalm 91:13). You shall tread upon the lion and the adder. A Christian armed with faith as a coat of mail, can tread upon those persecutions which are fierce as the lion, and sting as the adder; get faith.

Quest. But how comes faith to be such armor of proof?

Answ. Six manner of ways.

1. Faith unites the soul to Christ, and that blessed head sends forth spirits into the members (Philippians 4:13). I can do all things through Christ, etc. Faith is a grace that lives all upon the borrow; as when we lack water, we go to the well and fetch it; when

we lack gold, we go to the mine; so faith goes to Christ, and fetches his strength into the soul, whereby it is enabled both to do and suffer; hence it is faith is such a wonder-working grace.

2. Faith works in the heart a contempt of the world; faith gives a true map of the world (Ecclesiastes 2:11). Faith shows the world in its night-dress, having all its jewels pulled off; faith makes the world appear in an eclipse; the believer sees more eclipses than the astronomer; faith shows the soul better things than the world; it gives a sight of Christ and glory, it gives a prospect of heaven; as the mariner in a dark night climbs up to the top of the mast, and cries out, I see a star; so faith climbs up above sense and reason into heaven, and sees Christ, that bright morning star; and the soul having once viewed his superlative excellencies, becomes crucified to the world; oh says the Christian, shall I not suffer the loss of all these things, that I may enjoy Jesus Christ!

3. Faith gets strength from the promise; faith lives in a promise; take the fish out of the water, and it dies; take faith out of a promise, and it cannot live; the promises are breasts of consolation; the child by sucking the breast gets strength; so does faith by sucking the breast of a promise. When a garrison is besieged, and is ready almost to yield to the enemy, auxiliary forces are sent in to relieve it; so when faith begins to be weak, and is ready to faint in the day of battle, then the promises muster their forces together, and all come in for faith's relief, and now it is able to hold out in the fiery trial.

4. Faith gives the soul a right notion of suffering; faith draws the true picture of sufferings; what is suffering? says faith; it is but the suffering of the body, that body which must shortly by the course of nature drop into the dust. Persecution can but take away

my life; an ague or fever may do as much; now faith giving the soul a right notion of sufferings, and taking (as it were) a just measure of them, enables a Christian to prostrate his life at the feet of Christ.

5. Faith reconciles providences and promises; as it was in Saint Paul's voyage, providence did seem to be against him, there was a cross wind that arose, called Euroclydon (Acts 27:14), but God had given him a promise that he would save his life, and the lives of all that sailed with him in the ship (verse 24), therefore when the wind blew never so contrary, Paul believed it would at least blow him to the haven; so when sense says, here is a cross providence, sufferings come, I shall be undone; then says faith, all things shall work for good to them that love God (Romans 8:28). This providence, though bloody, shall fulfill the promise; affliction shall work for my good, it shall heal my corruption, and save my soul. Thus faith making the wind and tide go together, the wind of a providence with the tide of the promise, enables a Christian to suffer persecution.

6. Faith picks sweetness out of the cross; faith shows the soul God reconciled, and sin pardoned; and then how sweet is every suffering? The bee gathers the sweetest honey from the bitterest herb. So faith from the sharpest trials gathers the sweetest comforts, faith looks upon suffering as God's love token. Afflictions (says Nazianzene) are sharp arrows, but they are shot from the hand of a loving Father; faith can taste honey at the end of the rod; faith fetches joy out of suffering (John 16:20). Faith gets a honeycomb in the belly of the lion, it finds a jewel under the cross; and

thus you see how faith comes to be such armor of proof; above all taking the shield of faith; a believer having cast his anchor in heaven, cannot sink in the waters of persecution.

2. Suffering grace is love; get hearts fired with love to the Lord Jesus; love is a grace both active and passive.

1. Love is active, it lays a law of constraint upon the soul (2 Corinthians 5:14). The love of Christ constrains me; love is the wing of the soul that sets it a flying, and the weight of the soul that sets it a going; love never thinks it can do enough for Christ; as he who loves the world, never thinks he can take pains enough for it; love is never weary, it is not tired, unless with its own slowness.

2. Love is passive, it enables to suffer; a man that loves his friend, will suffer anything for him rather than he shall be wronged. The Curtii laid down their lives for the Romans, because they loved them; love made our dear Lord suffer for us; as the pelican out of her love to her young ones, when they are bitten with serpents, feeds them with her own blood to recover them again; so when we had been bitten by the old serpent, that Christ might recover us, he did feed us with his own blood. Jacob's love to Rachel, made him almost hazard his life for her. Many waters cannot quench love (Song of Solomon 8:7), no not the waters of persecution; love is strong as death (Song of Solomon 8:6). Death makes its way through the greatest oppositions; so love will make its way to Christ through the prison and the furnace. But all pretend love to Christ; how shall we know that we have such a love to him as will make us suffer?

1. True love is a love of friendship, which is genuine and ingenuous, when we love Christ for himself; there is a mercenary and meretricious love, when we love divine objects for something else: a man may love the queen of truth for the jewel at her ear, because she brings preferment; a man may love Christ for his head of gold, because he enriches with glory; but true love is when we love Christ for his loveliness, namely, that infinite and superlative beauty which shines in him, as a man loves sweet wine for itself.

2. True love is a love of desire, when we desire to be united to Christ as the fountain of happiness; love desires union; the soul that loves Christ, is ambitious of death, because this dissolution tends to union; death slips one knot, and ties another.

3. True love is a love of benevolence; when so far as we are able we endeavor to lift up Christ's name in the world; as the wise men brought him gold and frankincense (Matthew 2:11), so we bring him our tribute of service, and are willing that he should rise, though it be by our fall. In short, that love which is kindled from heaven, makes us give Christ the preeminence of our affection (Song of Solomon 8:2). I would cause you to drink of spiced wine, and the juice of my pomegranates. If the spouse has a cup which is more juicy and spiced, Christ shall drink of that; indeed we can never love Christ too much; we may love gold in the excess, but not Christ; the angels do not love Christ to his worth. Now when love is boiled up to this height, it will enable us to suffer; love is strong as death; the martyrs first burned in love, and then in fire.

3. The third suffering grace is patience; patience is a grace made and cut out for suffering; patience is a sweet submission to the will of God, whereby we are content to bear anything that he is pleased to lay upon us. Patience makes a Christian invincible, it is

like the anvil that bears all strokes. We cannot be men without patience; passion does unman a man, it puts him beside the use of reason; we cannot be martyrs without patience, patience makes us endure (James 5:10). We read (Revelation 13:2) of a beast like a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and the dragon gave him his power, etc. This beast is to be understood of the antichristian power. Antichrist may be compared to a leopard for subtlety and fierceness; and on his head was the name of blasphemy (verse 1), which agrees with that description of the man of sin (2 Thessalonians 2:4). He sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God; and the dragon gave him power (verse 2), that is the devil; and it was given to him to make war with the saints (Revelation 13:7). Well, how come the saints to bear the heat of this fiery trial? Verse 10: here is the patience of the saints; patience overcomes by suffering. A Christian without patience, is like a soldier without arms; faith keeps the heart up from sinking, patience keeps the heart down from murmuring; patience is not provoked by injuries, it is sensible, but not peevish; patience looks to the end of sufferings; this is the motto: God will give these also an end. As the watchman waits for the dawning of the morning, so the patient Christian suffers and waits, till the day of glory begins to dawn upon him; faith says, God will come; and patience says, I will wait his pleasure; these are those suffering graces which are a Christian's armor of proof.

8. Treasure up suffering promises; the promises are faith's floats to keep it from sinking, they are the breast-milk a Christian lives on in time of sufferings, they are honey at the end of the rod; hoard up promises.

1. God has made promises of direction, that he will give us a spirit of wisdom in that hour, teaching us what to say (Luke 21:15). I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to contradict or resist. You shall not need to study, God will put an answer into your mouth; this many of God's sufferers can set their seal to; the Lord has on a sudden darted such words into their mouths, as their enemies could easier censure than contradict.

2. God has made promises of protection (Acts 18:9). No man shall set on you to hurt you. How safe was Paul, when he had omnipotency itself to screen off danger? And (Luke 21:18): there shall not a hair of your head perish. Persecutors are lions, but chained lions.

3. God has made promises of his special presence with his saints in suffering (Psalm 91:15). I will be with him in trouble. If we have such a friend to visit us in prison, we shall do well enough; though we change our place, we shall not change our keeper; I will be with him. God will hold our head and heart when we are fainting! What if we have more afflictions than others, if we have more of God's company? God's honor is dear to him; it would not be for his honor to bring his children into sufferings, and leave them there; he will be with them to animate and support them; indeed when new troubles arise (Job 5:19), he shall be with you in six troubles.

4. The Lord has made promises of deliverance (Psalm 91:15). I will deliver him, and honor him; God will open a back-door for his people to escape out of sufferings (1 Corinthians 10:13). He will with the temptation make a way to escape. Thus he did to Peter (Acts 12:10). Peter's prayers had opened heaven, and God's angel

opens the prison; God can either prevent a snare, or break it (Psalm 68:20). To God the Lord belong the issues from death. He who can strengthen our faith, can break our fetters; the Lord sometimes makes the enemies instruments of breaking those snares which themselves have laid (Esther 8:8).

5. In case of martyrdom God has made promises of consolation (John 16:22). Your sorrow shall be turned into joy; there is the water turned into wine (Acts 23:11). Be of good cheer, Paul. In time of persecution God broaches the wine of consolation; cordials are kept for fainting. Philip, Landgrave of Hesse, professed he had sensed divine consolations such as the martyrs felt. Stephen saw the heavens opened (Acts 7:56). Glover that blessed martyr cried out at the stake in a holy rapture, he is come, he is come, meaning the Comforter.

6. Promises of compensation; God will abundantly recompense all our sufferings, in this life a hundredfold, and in the world to come life everlasting (Matthew 19:29). This Augustine calls the best and greatest usury; our losses for Christ are gainful (Matthew 10:39). He that loses his life for my sake shall find it. These suffering promises should we treasure up, and by holy meditation suck sweetness and strength out of them.

Set before your eyes suffering examples — look upon others as patterns to imitate (James 5:16): take, my brethren, the prophets for an example of suffering affliction. Examples have more influence upon us than precepts; the one instructs, the other animates. As they show elephants the blood of grapes and mulberries to make them fight the better, so the Holy Ghost shows us the blood of saints and martyrs to infuse a spirit of zeal and courage into us. Micaiah was in the prison, Jeremiah in the dungeon, Isaiah was

sawn asunder. The primitive Christians, though their flesh was boiled, roasted, and dismembered, yet like adamant they remained invincible; such was their zeal and patience in suffering that their persecutors stood amazed, and were more weary in tormenting than the martyrs were in enduring. John Huss, when he was brought to be burned, they put upon his head a triple crown of paper printed with red devils; when he saw it, said he, My Lord Jesus Christ wore a crown of thorns for me — why should I not wear this crown, however ignominious? Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, when he came before the proconsul who bade him deny Christ and swear by the emperor, replied: I have served Christ these eighty-six years, and he has not once hurt me — shall I deny him now? Sanders that blessed martyr said: Welcome the cross of Christ; my Savior began with me in a bitter cup — and shall not I pledge him? Baynham said: You Papists who look for miracles, I feel no more pain in the fire than if I were in a bed of down. Another of the martyrs said: The ringing of my chain has been sweet music in my ears; what a comforter is a good conscience! Another martyr, kissing the stake, said: I shall not lose my life, but change it for a better; instead of coals I shall have pearls! Another, when the chain was fastening to him, said: Blessed be God for this wedding girdle! These suffering examples we should lay up. God is still the same God — he has as much love in his heart to pity us, and as much strength in his arm to help us. Consider what courage even the heathens showed in their sufferings: Julius Caesar, when foretold of a conspiracy against him in the Senate house, answered he had rather die than fear. Mutius Scevola, having his hand held over the fire till the flesh fried and his sinews began to shrink, bore it with an undaunted spirit. Quintus Curtius reports of Lysimachus that

being adjudged to be cast naked to a lion, when the lion came roaring upon him, Lysimachus wrapped his shirt about his arm, thrust it into the lion's mouth, and taking hold of his tongue, killed the lion. Did nature infuse such a spirit of courage and gallantry into heathens — how should grace much more do so in Christians! Let us be of Paul's mind (Acts 20:24): not counting my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy.

Lay in suffering considerations — a wise Christian is thoughtful and prepared.

Consider who we suffer for: it is for Christ, and we cannot suffer for a better friend. There is many a man who will suffer shame and death for his lusts — he will suffer disgrace for a drunken lust, he will suffer death for a revengeful lust. Shall others die for their lusts, and shall we not die for Christ? Will a man suffer for that lust which damns him, and shall we not suffer for that Christ who saves us? Remember, we take up God's own cause, and he will not allow us to be losers; if no man shall kindle a fire on God's altar for nothing (Malachi 1:10), then surely no man shall sacrifice himself for God in the fire for nothing.

It is a great honor to suffer persecution. It is a great honor to be singled out to bear witness to the truth (Acts 5:41). They departed from the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. It is a title that has been given to kings: defenders of the faith; a martyr is in a special manner a defender of the faith. Kings are defenders of the faith by their swords; martyrs by their blood. What an honor to be one of Christ's trained band? A bloody cross is more honorable than a purple robe. Persecution is called the fiery trial (1 Peter 4:12); God has two fires — one where he puts his gold, and another where he puts his

dross. The fire where he puts his dross is hell; the fire where he puts his gold is the fire of persecution. God honors his gold when he puts it into the fire (1 Peter 1:7). Persecution, as it is a badge of our order, so it is a sign of our glory. What greater honor can be put upon a mortal man than to stand up in the cause of God, and not only to die in the Lord, but to die for the Lord? Ignatius called his fetters his spiritual pearls; Paul gloried more in his iron chain than if it had been a golden chain (Acts 28:20).

Consider what Jesus Christ endured for us; Calvin says Christ's whole life was a series of suffering. Christian, what is your suffering? Are you poor? So was Christ (Matthew 8:20): foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. Are you surrounded with enemies? So was Christ (Acts 4:27): against your holy child Jesus whom you have anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles were gathered together. Do our enemies lay claim to religion? So did his (Matthew 27:6): the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, it is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood — godly persecutors! Are you reproached? So was Christ (Matthew 27:29): they bowed the knee before him and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews. Are you slandered? So was Christ (Matthew 9:34): he casts out demons through the prince of demons. Are you ignominiously used? So was Christ (Mark 14:65): some began to spit upon him. Are you betrayed by friends? So was Christ (Luke 22:48): Judas, do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss? Is your estate seized? Do the wicked cast lots for it? So Christ was dealt with (Matthew 27:34): they parted his garments, casting lots. Do we suffer unjustly? So did Christ — his very judge acquitted him (Luke 23:4): I find no fault in this man.

Are you dragged away to suffering? So was Christ (Matthew 27:2): when they had bound him, they led him away. Do you suffer death? So did Christ (Luke 23:33): when they were come to Calvary, there they crucified him. Christ underwent not only the blood of the cross, but the curse of the cross (Galatians 3:13); his soul was exceeding sorrowful unto death (Matthew 26:38). The soul of Christ was overcast with a cloud of God's displeasure; the Greek church speaking of the sufferings of Christ calls them unknown sufferings. Did the Lord Jesus endure all this for us, and shall we not suffer persecution for his name? Say as holy Ignatius: I am willing to die for Christ, for Christ my love was crucified. Our cup is nothing to the cup which Christ drank; his cup was mixed with the wrath of God; and if he bore God's wrath for us, well may we bear man's wrath for him.

Great is the honor we bring to Christ and the gospel by suffering. It is an honor to Christ that he has soldiers enlisted under him who will leave all for him. It proclaims him to be a good Master when his servants will wear his livery, though it be stained with disgrace and lined with blood. Paul's iron chain made the gospel wear a golden chain. Tertullian says of the saints in his time that they took their sufferings more gratefully than if they had received deliverance. What a glory it was to the truth when they dared embrace it in the flame! As the saints' sufferings adorn the gospel, so they propagate it. The zeal and constancy of the martyrs in early times caused some of the pagans to become Christians.

The showers of blood have always made the church fruitful (Philippians 1:13). Paul's being bound caused the truth to spread more widely. The gospel has always flourished in the ashes of martyrs.

It is what we have committed ourselves to in baptism; there we received our commission. We solemnly vowed that we would be true to Christ's cause, and fight under his banner to the death. How often have we in the Lord's Supper taken the oath of allegiance to Jesus Christ, that we would be his devoted servants, and that death should not separate us! Now if when called to it we refuse to suffer persecution for his name, Christ will bring our baptism as an indictment against us. Christ is called the Captain of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10) — we have enlisted by name under this Captain. If for fear we flee from our colors, it is perjury in the highest degree. That oath which is not kept inviolably shall be punished infallibly.

Our sufferings are light (2 Corinthians 4:17): this light affliction. It is heavy to flesh and blood, but it is light to faith; affliction is light in a threefold sense.

Affliction is light in comparison to sin. He who feels sin as heavy feels suffering as light. Sin made Paul cry out: O wretched man that I am (Romans 7)! He does not cry out about his iron chain, but about his sin. The greater noise drowns the lesser; when the sea roars, the rivers are silent. He who is taken up with his sins, and sees how he has provoked God, thinks the yoke of affliction light (Micah 7:9).

Affliction is light in comparison to hell. What is persecution compared to damnation? What is the fire of martyrdom compared to the fire of the damned? It is no more than the pricking of a pin compared to a death wound. Who can know the power of your anger (Psalm 90:11)? Christ himself could not have borne that anger had he not been more than a man.

Affliction is light in comparison to glory. The weight of glory makes persecution light. Chrysostom says if the torments of all the men in the world could be laid upon one man, it would not be worth one hour's being in heaven. Since persecution is light, we should in a manner set light by it. Let us neither faint through unbelief, nor fret through impatience.

Our sufferings are short (1 Peter 5:10): after you have suffered a little while. Our sufferings may be lasting, but not everlasting. Affliction is compared to a cup (Lamentations 4:21); the wicked drink of a sea of wrath which has no bottom and will never be emptied, but it is only a cup of martyrdom, and God will say: Let this cup pass away. The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous (Psalm 125:3); the rod may be there, it shall not rest. Though persecution has a sting to torment, yet it has a wing to fly. Sorrow shall fly away (Isaiah 35:10); it is but a little while when the saints shall have a grant of ease given them — they shall weep no more, suffer no more. They shall be taken off the torturing rack and laid in Christ's embrace. The people of God shall not always be in the iron furnace — a year of jubilee will come.

While we suffer for Christ, we suffer with Christ (Romans 8:17): if we suffer with him, etc. Jesus Christ bears part of the suffering with us. A believer may say: I am not alone, my Christ is with me, he bears the heaviest end of the cross. My grace is sufficient for you (2 Corinthians 12:9). Underneath are the everlasting arms (Deuteronomy 33:27); if Christ puts the yoke of persecution upon us, he will put his arms under us. The Lord Jesus will not only crown us when we conquer, but he will enable us to conquer. When the dragon fights against the godly, Christ is that Michael who stands up for them and helps them overcome (Daniel 12:1).

He who refuses to suffer persecution shall never be free from suffering.

He faces internal sufferings; he who will not suffer for conscience shall suffer in conscience. Thus Francis Spira, after he had for fear renounced the doctrine he once professed, was in great terror of mind and became a mere skeleton. He confessed he felt the very pains of the damned in his soul; he who was afraid of the stake was set upon the rack of conscience.

He faces external sufferings too. Pendleton who refused to suffer for Christ — not long after, his house was on fire, and he was burned in it. He who would not burn for Christ was afterward made to burn for his sins.

He faces eternal sufferings: suffering the vengeance of eternal fire (Jude 7).

These present sufferings cannot hinder a man from being blessed. Blessed are they that are persecuted (Matthew 5:10). We think: blessed are they that are rich — no, but blessed are they that are persecuted. Blessed is the man that endures temptation (James 1:12). If you suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are you (1 Peter 3:14).

That persecution cannot hinder us from being blessed, I shall prove by four demonstrations.

They are blessed who have God for their God (Psalm 144:15): happy is that people whose God is the Lord. But persecution cannot hinder us from having God for our God (Daniel 3:17): our God is able to deliver us. Though persecuted, yet they could say: Our God — therefore persecution cannot hinder us from being blessed.

They are blessed whom God loves, but persecution cannot hinder the love of God (Romans 8:35): who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall persecution? The goldsmith loves his gold as well when it is in the fire as when it is in his safe. God visits his children in prison (Acts 23:11): be of good cheer, Paul. God sweetens their sufferings (2 Corinthians 1:5): as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds. As a mother having given her child a bitter pill gives it afterward a lump of sugar — persecution is a bitter pill, but God gives the comforts of his Spirit to sweeten it. If persecution cannot hinder God's love, then it cannot hinder us from being blessed.

They are blessed for whom Christ prays, but such as are persecuted have Christ praying for them (John 17:12): keep through your own name those whom you have given me. If persecution cannot hinder Christ's prayer for us, then it cannot obstruct our blessedness.

They are blessed whose sin is purged out; but persecution purges out sin (Isaiah 27:9; Hebrews 12:11). Persecution is a corrosive to eat out the proud flesh, it is a fan to winnow us, a fire to refine us. Persecution is the medicine God applies to his children to carry away their ill humors. That which purges out sin surely cannot hinder blessedness.

The great suffering consideration is the glorious reward which follows sufferings: theirs is the kingdom of heaven. The hope of reward is very powerful and moving (Hebrews 11:26); Moses had an eye on the recompense of reward. A merchant does not mind a few storms at sea, but thinks of the gain when the ship comes home loaded; so a Christian should not be overly troubled about his present sufferings, but think of the rich reward when he arrives at

the heavenly port. Great is your reward in heaven (Matthew 5:12). The cross is a golden ladder by which we climb up to heaven. A Christian may lose his life, but not his reward; he may lose his head, but not his crown. If he who gives a cup of cold water shall not lose his reward, then much less he who gives a draft of warm blood. The reward of glory should sweeten all the bitter waters; it should be a spur to martyrdom.

Not that we can merit this reward by our sufferings (Revelation 2:10): I will give you a crown of life. The reward is the legacy which free grace bequeaths. Alas, what proportion is there between a drop of blood and a weight of glory? Christ himself, as he was man only (setting aside his Godhead), did not merit by his sufferings; for first, Christ as he was man only was a creature, and a creature cannot merit from the Creator; second, Christ's sufferings as he was man only were finite, and therefore could not merit infinite glory. Indeed, as he was God, his sufferings were meritorious, but considered purely as man, they were not. This I urge against the Papists: if Christ's sufferings as he was man only — though as man he was above the angels — could not merit, then what man upon earth, what prophet or martyr, is able to merit anything by his sufferings?

Though we have no reward by merit, we shall have it by grace (Matthew 5:12): great is your reward in heaven. The thoughts of this reward should animate Christians. Look upon the crown, and faint if you can; the reward is as far above your thoughts as it is beyond your deserts. A man who is to wade through deep water fixes his eyes upon the firm land before him; while Christians are wad-

ing through the deep waters of persecution, they should fix the eyes of their faith on the land of promise. They who bear the cross patiently shall wear the crown triumphantly.

Christ's suffering saints shall have greater degrees of glory (Matthew 19:28). God has his highest seats, yes, his thrones for his martyrs. It is true that he who has the least degree of glory — a doorkeeper in heaven — will have enough. But as Joseph gave to Benjamin a double portion above the rest of his brothers, so God will give to his sufferers a double portion of glory. Some spheres in heaven are higher, some stars brighter; God's martyrs shall shine more brightly in the heavenly horizon.

Often look upon the recompense of reward. Not all the silks of Persia, the spices of Arabia, the gold of Ophir can be compared to this glorious reward. When they threatened Basil with banishment, he comforted himself with the thought that he should be either under heaven or in heaven. It was the hope of this reward which so animated the early martyrs who, when incense was put into their hands and nothing more was required of them for saving their lives than to sprinkle a little upon the altar in honor of the idol, would rather die than do it. This glorious reward in heaven is called a reigning with Christ (2 Timothy 2:12): if we suffer, we shall reign with him. First martyrs, then kings. After the saints' crucifixion follows their coronation — they shall reign. The wicked first reign, and then suffer; the godly first suffer, and then reign. Who would not swim through blood to this crown? Christ says be exceedingly glad (Matthew 5:12); Christians should have their spirits elevated and filled with joy when they contemplate the weight of glory.

If you would be able to suffer, pray much — beg of God to clothe you with a spirit of zeal and magnanimity. It is given to you on behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake (Philippians 1:29). It is a gift of God to be able to suffer — pray for this gift. Do not think you can of yourselves lay down life and liberty for Christ; Peter was overconfident of himself (John 13:37): I will lay down my life for your sake. Peter had habitual grace, but he lacked auxiliary grace. Christians need fresh impulses from heaven; pray for the Spirit to animate you in your sufferings. As fire hardens the potter's vessel, which is at first weak and limber, so the fire of the Spirit hardens men against sufferings. Pray that God will make you like the anvil, that you may bear the blows of persecutors with invincible patience.

CHAPTER 22



John 5:3 — His commandments are not grievous.

1

Containing an appendix to the Beatitudes.

You have seen what Christ calls for: poverty of spirit, purity of heart, meekness, mercifulness, cheerfulness in suffering persecution, and more. Now, that none may hesitate or be troubled at these commands of Christ, I thought it good as a closing to the former discourse to address the objections and prejudices in men's spirits, by this sweet, soothing scripture: His commandments are not grievous.

The world objects against religion that it is difficult and irksome (Malachi 1:13): behold, what a weariness it is! Therefore the Lord, that he may invite and encourage us to obedience, draws religion in its fair colors and represents it as beautiful and pleasant in these words: His commandments are not grievous. This may well be called a sweetening ingredient in religion, and may serve to remove the harshness and severity which the carnal world would put upon the ways of God.

For the clarification of the terms, let us consider two things.

What is meant here by commandments?

By this word commandments, I understand gospel precepts: faith, repentance, self-denial, and so forth.

What is meant by not grievous?

The Greek word signifies they are not tedious, or heavy to be borne; there is a meiosis in the words — his commands are not grievous — that is, they are easy, sweet, excellent.

Observe: none of God's commands are grievous. When he calls us to be meek, merciful, pure in heart, these commandments are not grievous (Matthew 11:30): my burden is light. The Greek word there for burden signifies the ballast of a ship, which glides through the waves so swiftly and easily as if the ship had no weight in it. Christ's commandments are like the ballast of a ship — useful, but not troublesome. All his precepts are sweet and easy; therefore called pleasantness (Proverbs 3:17). To illustrate this, consider two things.

First, why Christ lays commands upon his people. Second, that these commands are not grievous.

Why does Christ lay commands upon his people? There are two reasons.

In regard to Christ: it is suitable to his dignity and state; he is Lord Supreme. This name is written on his robe and on his thigh: King of Kings (Revelation 19:16). Shall not a King appoint laws to his subjects? It is one of the royal privileges — one of the crown jewels — to enact laws and statutes. Shall not Christ, by whom kings reign (Proverbs 8:15), put forth his royal decrees by which the world shall be governed?

In regard to the saints: it is well for the people of God that they have laws to bind and restrain the unruly tendencies of their hearts. How far would the vine spread its wild branches were it not pruned and tied? The heart would be ready to run wild in sin if it had not affliction to prune it and the laws of Christ to bind it. The precepts of Christ are called a yoke (Matthew 11:30); the yoke is useful — it keeps the oxen from straying and running off. So the precepts of Christ as a yoke keep the godly from straying into sin. Where should we not run, into what damnable opinions and practices, if Christ's laws did not lay a check and restraint upon us? Blessed be God for precepts — that is a blessed yoke which yokes our corruptions. We would run to hell were it not for this yoke. The laws of Christ are a spiritual fence which keeps the people of God within the pastures of his ordinances. Some who have broken this fence and wandered are now in the devil's pasture.

The second thing to demonstrate is that Christ's commands are not grievous. I confess they are grievous to the unregenerate person — to mourn for sin, to be pure in heart, to suffer persecution for righteousness' sake is hard to flesh and blood. Therefore Christ's commands are compared to bands and cords (Psalm 2) because carnal people look upon them that way. A carnal person is like an untamed heifer which will not endure the yoke but kicks and flings. To a person in the state of nature, Christ's commands are grievous.

Even to a child of God, so far as corruption prevails — for he is only partly renewed — Christ's laws may seem irksome. The flesh cries out that it cannot pray or suffer; the law in the members rebels against Christ's law. Only the spiritual part prevails and

makes the flesh submit to Christ's requirements. A renewed person, so far as he is renewed, does not count God's commandments grievous — they are not a burden, but a delight.

Divine commands are not grievous if we consider them positively, in eight particulars.

A Christian consents to God's commands, therefore they are not grievous (Romans 7:16): I consent to the law that it is good. What is done with consent is easy; a godly person in his judgment approves of Christ's laws, and in his will consents to them, therefore they are not grievous. A wicked person is like a slave chained to the galley who must work whether he will or not, forced to pull the rope and tug at the oar. But a godly person is like a free subject who consents to his sovereign's laws and obeys out of choice, seeing the fairness and reasonableness of them. Thus a gracious heart sees the beauty and equity in the commands of heaven such that it draws forth consent, and this consent makes them not grievous.

They are Christ's commands, therefore not grievous. Take my yoke (Matthew 11:29); gospel commands are not the laws of a tyrant, but of a Savior. The husband's commands are not grievous to a loving wife; it is her desire to obey. So says a gracious soul: Lord, if it is you who would have me mourn for sin and breathe after heart-purity; if it is you, dear Savior, who bids me do these things, I will cheerfully obey. Your commandments are not grievous. A soldier at the word of his general makes a brave advance.

Christians obey out of a principle of love, and then God's commandments are not grievous. Therefore in scripture, serving and loving God are put together (Isaiah 56:6). Nothing is grievous to him who loves; love lightens a burden and adds wings to obedi-

ence. A heart that loves God counts nothing tedious but its own dullness and slowness of motion; love makes sin heavy and Christ's burden light.

A Christian is carried by the help of the Spirit, and the Spirit makes every duty easy (Romans 8:26): the Spirit helps our weaknesses. The Spirit works in us both to will and to do (Philippians 2). When God enables us to do what he commands, then his commandments are not grievous. If two carry a burden it is easier; the Spirit of God helps us to do duties and bear burdens, drawing as it were in the yoke with us. If the teacher guides the child's hand and helps it form its letters, it is not hard for the child to write. If the Holy Spirit as a divine magnet draws and moves the heart, it is not hard to obey. When the bird has wings given to it, it can fly. Though the soul of itself is unable to do what is good, yet having two wings given to it — the wing of faith and the wing of the Spirit — it now flies swiftly in obedience (Ezekiel 11:1). The heart is lifted heavenward in prayer when the Spirit lifts it up. The sails of a mill cannot move of themselves, but when the wind blows they turn round; when a breath of the Spirit blows upon the soul, the sails of the affections move swiftly in duty.

All Christ's commands are beneficial, therefore not grievous (Deuteronomy 10:12-13): what does the Lord your God require of you but to fear the Lord your God, to love him, to keep his statutes which I command you this day for your good? Christ's commands carry blessing in them — salvation runs along in every precept. To obey Christ's laws is not so much duty as privilege; all Christ's commands center in blessedness. Medicine is in itself very unpleasant, yet because it tends to health no one refuses it. Divine precepts may be irksome to the flesh, yet having such excellent ef-

fect as to make us both holy and happy, they are not to be counted grievous. The apprentice willingly wrestles with the hard difficulties of arts and sciences because they both ennoble and advance him. That suffering is not grievous which leads to a crown. This made Paul say: I take pleasure in weaknesses, in persecutions (2 Corinthians 12:10).

It is honorable to be under Christ's commands; therefore they are not grievous. The precepts of Christ do not burden us, but adorn us. It is an honor to be employed in Christ's service. How cheerfully did the rowers row the barge that carried Caesar; the honor makes the precept easy. A crown of gold is in itself heavy, but the honor of the crown makes it light and easy to be worn. I may say of every command of Christ as Solomon speaks of wisdom (Proverbs 4:9): she shall give to your head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory shall she deliver to you. It is honorable working at court; the honor of Christ's yoke makes it easy and eligible.

Christ's commands are sweetened with joy, and then they are not grievous. Cicero asks whether that can properly be called a burden which is carried with joy and pleasure. When the wheels of a chariot are oiled they run swiftly; when God pours in the oil of gladness, how fast does the soul run in the ways of his commandments! Joy strengthens for duty (Nehemiah 8:10): the joy of the Lord is your strength. And the more strength, the less weariness; God sometimes drops down comfort, and then a Christian can run in the yoke.

Gospel commands are finite, therefore not grievous. Christ will not always be laying his commands upon us; he will shortly take off the yoke from our neck and set a crown upon our head. A time is coming when we shall be free not only from our sins but from

the forms of our duties too. In heaven there will be no need for prayer or repentance; duties shall cease there. In heaven the saints shall love God, but love is no burden. In heaven the saints shall praise God, but their praising of him shall be so sweetened with delight that it will not be a duty any more, but part of their reward. It is the angels' heaven to praise God. This then makes Christ's commands not grievous — though they are spiritual, they are temporary; it is but a little while and duties shall be no more. The saints shall not so much be under commands as in the embrace of God.

Let us consider Christ's commands comparatively, and we shall see they are not grievous. Compare gospel commands with four things.

The list: with the severity of the moral law; with the commands of sin; with the torments of the damned; with the glory of heaven.

Christ's commands in the gospel are not grievous compared with the severity of the moral law. The moral law was such a burden as neither we nor our fathers could bear (Galatians 3:10): cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things written in the book of the law to do them. The golden mandates of the gospel are comparatively easy.

In the gospel, if there is a desire to keep God's commandments, it is accepted (Nehemiah 1:11; 2 Corinthians 8:12): if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted. Though a person had had the best intentions to fulfill the moral law, it would not have been accepted — he must actually have obeyed (Galatians 3:12). But in the gospel,

God crowns the desire. If a Christian says in humility: Lord, I desire to obey you, I would be more holy — this desire, springing from love, is accepted.

In the gospel a surety is admitted. The law would not admit of a surety; it required personal obedience. But now God so graciously provides that what we cannot of ourselves do, we may do through a substitute. Christ is called the guarantor of a better covenant (Hebrews 7:22). We cannot walk so exactly; we fall short in everything. But God looks upon us in our surety, and Christ having fulfilled all righteousness, it is as if we had fulfilled the law in our own persons.

The law commanded and threatened, but gave no strength to perform. But now God with his commands gives power; gospel precepts are sweetened with promises. God commands: make yourself a new heart (Ezekiel 18:31). Lord, can I make a new heart? I can as well make a new world. But see Ezekiel 36:26: a new heart also will I give you. God commands us to cleanse ourselves (Isaiah 1:16): wash you, make yourselves clean. Then see the precept turned into a promise (Ezekiel 36:25): from all your filthiness and from your idols will I cleanse you. If when the child cannot walk the father takes it by the hand and leads it, it is not hard for the child to walk. When we cannot walk, God takes us by the hand (Hosea 11:3): I taught Ephraim also to walk, taking them by their arms.

In the gospel God overlooks weaknesses where the heart is right. The law called for perfect obedience; it would have meant death to fall even slightly short of the mark. It is as with our best duties as with gold — put the gold in the fire and you will see dross come out. But in the gospel, though God will not endure willful

halting, yet he will pass by frailty. Thus Christ's commands in the gospel are not grievous compared with the severity of the moral law.

Christ's commands are not grievous compared with the commands of sin. Sin lays a heavy yoke upon people. Sin is compared to a talent of lead (Zechariah 5:7), to show its heaviness. The commands of sin are burdensome; let a man be under the power and rage of any lust — whether covetousness or ambition — how he tires and tortures himself! They weary themselves to commit iniquity (Jeremiah 9:5). Are not Christ's precepts easy and sweet in comparison of sin's harsh and inexorable commands? Chrysostom says well that virtue is easier than vice; temperance is less burdensome than drunkenness; doing justice is less burdensome than violence. There is more difficulty and perplexity in the contrivance and pursuit of wicked ends than in obeying the sweet and gentle precepts of Christ. A wicked person is said to labor with iniquity (Psalm 7:14), showing what anxious pain and trouble he has in bringing about his wickedness. Many have gone with more pain to hell than others have to heaven.

Christ's commands are not grievous compared with the grievous torments of the damned. The rich man cries out: I am tormented in this flame (Luke 16:24). Hell-fire is so inconceivably tormenting that the wicked know not how either to bear or to avoid it. The torment of the damned may be compared to a yoke, and it differs from other yokes — usually the yoke is laid only on the neck of the beast, but the hell-yoke is laid upon every part of the sinner. His eyes shall behold nothing but bloody tragedies; his ears shall hear the groans and shrieks of blaspheming spirits. He shall suffer in every member of his body and every faculty of his

soul, and this agony, though violent, is perpetual. The yoke of the damned shall never be taken off. Sinners might break the golden chain of God's commands, but they cannot break the iron chain of his punishments.

Are not gospel commands easy in comparison to the torments of hell? What does Christ command? He bids you repent — is it not better to weep for sin than bleed for it? Christ bids you pray in your families and private rooms; is not praying better than crying out in anguish? He bids you keep the Sabbath holy; is it not better to keep a holy rest to the Lord than to be forever without rest? Hell is a restless place; there is no intermission of torment for a single moment. Are not Christ's commands sweet and easy in comparison to the unbearable pains of the condemned? Is not obeying better than being damned? Are not the cords of love better than the chains of darkness?

Gospel commands are not grievous compared with the glory of heaven. What an infinite difference there is between service and reward! What are all the saints' labors and struggles in religion compared with the crown of recompense? The weight of glory makes duty light.

Here is an encouraging argument for religion: how this may make us in love with the ways of God! His commandments are not grievous. Believers are not now under the thundering curses of the law, nor the ceremonies of it, which were both numerous and burdensome. The ways of God are just; his statutes are desirable. He bids us mourn, that we may be comforted. He bids us be poor in spirit, that he may settle a kingdom upon us. God is no hard Master; his commandments are not grievous. Serve God out of

choice. Think of the joy, the honor, the reward of godliness. Never grudge God your service; whatever he prescribes, let your heart subscribe.

This reproves those who refuse to obey these sweet and gentle commands of Christ (Psalm 81:11): Israel would have none of me. The generality of men choose rather to put their neck in the devil's yoke than to submit to the sweet and easy yoke of Christ. What should be the reason that, when God's commandments are not grievous, his ways are pleasantness and his service perfect freedom, yet men should not submit to Christ's scepter nor bow to his laws?

The cause is the inborn hatred which is naturally in people's hearts against Christ. Sinners are called God-haters (Romans 1:30); sin begets not only a dislike of the ways of God, but hatred. From disaffection flows disloyalty (Luke 19:14): his citizens hated him, and sent a message saying, we will not have this man to reign over us.

Besides this inborn hatred against Christ, the devil works to fan the coals and increase this hostility. He spreads an evil report upon religion, as those spies did concerning Canaan (Numbers 13:32): they brought up an evil report of the land. Satan says God is a hard Master and his commandments are grievous. It is the devil's design, as the sons of Eli did, to make the offering of God to be despised (1 Samuel 2:17). The devil raises in people's hearts two particular prejudices against Christ and his ways.

The first prejudice is the small number of those who embrace religion. The way of Christ is but a narrow path (Psalm 119:35), while the way of pleasure and vanity is the broad road. Many igno-

rantly conclude that the way most people travel must be the best way.

There are but few who are saved — and will you not be saved because so few are saved? A person does not argue this way in other things: there are but few who are rich, therefore I will not be rich. Rather, he strives all the more to be rich. Why should we not argue wisely about our souls? There are but few who go to heaven, therefore we will labor all the more to be of that number.

What a weak argument this is: there are but few who embrace religion, therefore you will not? Those things which are most excellent are most rare; there are but few pearls and diamonds. The small number of those who embrace religion argues that the way of religion is excellent.

We are warned not to go with the crowd (Exodus 23:2); most fish go into the devil's net.

The second prejudice is that the ways of religion are made to appear ugly by the scandals of those who profess it.

I acknowledge the luster of religion has been much eclipsed and sullied by the scandals of people; this is an age of scandals. Many have made the pretense of religion a key to open the door to all ungodliness; never was God's name more taken in vain. This is what our Savior foretold (Matthew 18:7): it must needs be that offenses come. But to remove this prejudice: consider first, scandals are not from religion, but for want of religion. Second, religion is not the worse, though some abuse it. To dislike religion because some of its professors are scandalous is as if one should say: because the servant is dishonest, therefore I will not have a good opinion of his master. Is Christ the less glorious because some that

wear his livery are scandalous? Is religion the worse because some of her followers are bad? Is wine the worse because some are intemperate? Shall a woman dislike chastity because some of her neighbors are unchaste? Let us argue soberly; judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment (John 7:24).

God sometimes allows scandals to occur in the church out of design.

As a just judgment upon hypocrites — these double-minded devotees who serve God for their own ends, the Lord in justice allows to fall into disgraceful practices, that he may expose their baseness to the world. Judas: first a sly hypocrite, afterward a visible traitor.

Scandals also serve to harden the profane; some desperate sinners would never be won by religion — they shall be wounded by it. God lets scandals occur to be a stumbling block to people, drawing them deeper into sin. Christ is to some a rock of offense (Romans 9:33); his blood which is to some a balm is to others a poison. If the beauty of religion does not attract, the scandals of some of its followers shall drive people toward ruin.

Scandals in the church are also for the caution of the godly; the Lord would have his people walk carefully (Romans 11:20): be not proud, but fear. The scandals of professors are not to discourage us, but to warn us; let us tread more carefully. The failures of others are warnings for the saints to heed. Let all this serve to remove these prejudices from religion; though Satan may try to make the gospel seem repulsive, there is beauty and glory in it. God's commandments are not grievous.

Let me persuade all people to heartily embrace the ways of God; his commandments are not grievous. God never burdens us but to unburden us of our sins. His commands are our privileges; there is joy in the way of duty, and heaven at the end.

APPENDIX



FINIS.

CHRIST'S VARIOUS FULLNESS



Colossians 3:11: But Christ is all in all.

The philosopher says, every science takes its dignity from the object; the more noble the object, the more rare the knowledge. Hence it is that Jesus Christ being the most sublime and glorious object, that knowledge which leads us to Christ must needs be most excellent; it is called the excellency of the knowledge of Christ (Philippians 3:8). So sweet is this knowledge that Saint Paul determined to know nothing but Christ (1 Corinthians 2:2). And indeed what needed he to know more? For Christ is all in all.

In the text there is a negation and an assumption; something the Apostle sets down negatively, and something positively.

First, negatively. Saint Paul tells the Colossians what will not avail them — neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails, etc. Circumcision was a great privilege; it was a badge and cognizance to distinguish the people of God from those who were exterior and foreign; it was a fence between the garden enclosed and the common. The people of circumcision were a people of God's circumspection; they were under his eye and his wing; they were his household family. Rather than they should want, God would make

the heavens a granary and rain down manna upon them; he would set the rock flowing and make it a living spring. How glorious was circumcision! Romans 9:4-5: Who are Israelites, to whom pertains the adoption and the glory, whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came. What rich jewels hung upon Israel's crown! But in matters of salvation, all this was nothing — neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, etc. From where we may observe:

Doctrine. That external privileges commend no one to God; whether wise, or rich, or noble, this does not set us off in God's eye. 1 Corinthians 1:26: Not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. God sees not as man sees; we are taken with beauty and abilities; but these things do not avail with God. God lays his left hand on these, as Jacob did upon Manasseh (Genesis 48:14). God often passes by those who cast a greater splendor and luster in the world, and looks upon those of an inferior alloy. The reason is that no flesh should glory in his presence (1 Corinthians 1:29). If God should graft his grace only upon wisdom and abilities, some would be ready to say, My wisdom, or my eloquence, or my nobility has saved me. Therefore not many wise, not many noble are called. God will have no pride or vaunting in the creature.

Use. Rest not in outward privileges or excellencies; these are not foundations to graft the hopes of salvation upon. Many of Christ's kindred went to hell. Paul is called the servant of the Lord (Romans 1:1), and James is called the brother of the Lord (Galatians 1:19). It is better to be the servant of the Lord than the brother of the Lord. The Virgin Mary was saved not as she was the mother of Christ, but as she was the daughter of faith. It is grace,

not blood, that gives the precedency. A heart that has Christ formed in it is God's delight — and this brings me to the next point.

Second, the Apostle sets down something positively: but Christ is all in all — in which words there is:

First, the subject: Christ. His name is sweet; it is as ointment poured forth (Song of Solomon 1:3). It was Job's wish: Oh that my words were now written, that they were graven with an iron pen and laid in the rock for ever (Job 19:23). And it is my wish — O that this sweet name of Christ were now written, that it were graven with the pen of the Holy Ghost in our hearts for ever. The name of Christ has in it, says Chrysostom, a thousand treasures of joy.

Second, the predicate: all in all. Christ is all fullness, all sweetness; he is all that is imaginable, all that is desirable. He who has Christ can have no more, for Christ is all.

The proposition from the words is this doctrine: that Jesus Christ is the quintessence of all good things — he is all.

First, sometimes faith is said to be all (Galatians 5:6): nothing avails but faith. Faith is all instrumentally, as it is an instrument to lay hold on Christ, whereby we are saved — as a man is saved by catching hold of a bough.

Second, sometimes the new creature is said to be all (Galatians 6:15): nothing avails but a new creature. The new creature is all dispositively, as it qualifies and fits us for glory. Without holiness no one shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). It is a saying of Chrysostom: at the day of judgment God will ask that question as our Savior did (Matthew 22:20): Whose image and superscription

is this? So will God say, Whose image is this? If you cannot show him his image consisting in holiness, he will reject you. Thus the new creature is all.

Third, here in the text Christ is said to be all — but in what sense is Christ all?

First, Christ is all by way of eminence; all good things are eminently to be found in him, as the sun virtually contains in it the light of the lesser stars.

Second, Christ is all by way of derivation; all good things are transmitted and conveyed to us through Christ. As rich commodities, jewels, and spices come by sea, so all heavenly blessings sail to us through the red sea of Christ's blood. Romans 11:36: Through him are all things. Christ is that spiritual pipe through which the golden oil of mercy empties itself into the soul.

Reason. Christ must needs be all; for in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead (Colossians 2:9). He has a partnership with God the Father. John 16:15: All that the Father has is mine. So there is enough in him to scatter all our fears, to remove all our burdens, to supply all our wants. There can be no defect in that which is infinite.

Use 1. Information. And it has six branches.

Branch 1. It shows us the glorious fullness of Jesus Christ — he is all in all. Christ is a full armor, a magazine and storehouse of all spiritual riches. You may go with the bee from flower to flower and suck here and there a little sweetness, but you will never have enough until you come to Christ, for he is all in all.

Now in particular, Christ is all in six respects.

Christ is all in regard to righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30): he is made to us righteousness. The robe of innocency, like the veil of the temple, is rent in two; ours is a ragged righteousness. Isaiah 64:6: Our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. As under rags the naked body is seen, so under the rags of our righteousness the body of death is seen. We can defile our duties, but they cannot justify us. But Christ is all in regard to righteousness. Romans 10:4: Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to those who believe. That is, through Christ we are as righteous as if we had satisfied the law in our own persons. Jacob received the blessing in the garment of his elder brother; so in the garment of Christ our elder brother we obtain the blessing. Christ's righteousness is a coat woven without seam. 2 Corinthians 5, last verse: We are made the righteousness of God in him.

Christ is all in regard to sanctification (1 Corinthians 1:30): he is made to us sanctification. Sanctification is the spiritual beauty and embroidery of the soul; it is nothing else but God's putting upon us the jewels of holiness. The angels glory by it; we are made as the king's daughter, all glorious within (Psalm 45:13). This disposes the soul toward heaven; it turns iron into gold; it makes the heart, which was Satan's portrait, into Christ's letter. The virgins of the court (Esther 2:12) had their days of purification; they were first to be perfumed and anointed, and then they were to stand before the king. We must have the anointing of God (1 John 2:27) and be perfumed with the graces of the Spirit, those sweet odors, and then we shall stand before the King of heaven. There must be first our days of purification before our days of glorification. What a blessed work this is! A soul beautified and adorned with grace is like the starry sky, the firmament spangled with glittering stars. I

may allude to that in Song of Solomon 3:6: Who is this that comes out of the wilderness with myrrh and frankincense and all the powders of the merchant? So, who is this that comes out of the wilderness of sin, perfumed with all the graces of the Spirit? Holiness is the signature and engraving of God upon the soul. But whence does this come? Christ is all — he is made to us sanctification. He it is that sends his Spirit into our hearts to be a refiner's fire, to burn up our dross and make our graces sparkle like gold in the furnace. Christ arises upon the soul with healing in his wings (Malachi 4:2). He heals the understanding and says, Let there be light; he heals the heart by dissolving its stone in his blood; he heals the will by filing off its rebellion. Thus he is all in regard to sanctification.

Christ is all in regard to divine acceptance (Ephesians 1:6): he has made us accepted in the beloved — that is, he has made us favorites. So Chrysostom and Theophylact render it; through Christ God is favorable toward us and takes all we do in good part.

A wicked person being out of Christ is out of favor; as his plowing is sin (Proverbs 21:14), so his praying is an abomination (Proverbs 15:8). God will not come near him; his breath is infectious. God will hear his sins, and not his prayers. But now in Christ God accepts us. Ecclesiastes 9:7: Go your way, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God now accepts your works. As Joseph presented his brothers before Pharaoh and brought them into favor with the king (Genesis 47:2), so the Lord Jesus carries the names of the saints upon his breast and presents them before his Father, bringing them into repute and honor. Through Christ God will deal and negotiate with us; he speaks to us as in Isaiah 62:4: You shall no more be called forsaken, but you

shall be called My delight is in her, for the Lord delights in you. Through a red glass everything appears of a red color; through the blood of Christ we look of a healthy and beautiful complexion in God's eyes.

Christ is all in regard to divine assistance; a Christian's strength lies in Christ. Philippians 4:13: I can do all things through Christ. From where does it come that a Christian is able to do duty, to resist temptation, but through Christ's strengthening? From where does it come that a spark of grace lives in a sea of corruption with the storms of persecution blowing, but that Christ holds this spark in the hollow of his hand? From where does it come that the roaring lion has not devoured the saints, but that the Lion of the tribe of Judah has defended them? Christ not only gives us our crown but our shield; not only the garland when we overcome, but the strength whereby we overcome. Revelation 12:11: They overcame him — that is, the accuser of the brothers — by the blood of the Lamb. Christ keeps the fortress of grace so it is not blown up. Peter's shield was bruised, but Christ kept it from being broken: I prayed for you that your faith might not fail (Luke 22:31) — that it might not be in a total eclipse. The crown of all the saints' victories must be set upon the head of Christ. Romans 8:38: In all these things we are more than conquerors through Christ. Write the name of Michael upon all your conquests.

Christ is all in regard to pacification; when conscience is in an agony, burning with the sense of God's wrath, Christ is all — he pours the balm of his blood into these wounds and makes the storm a calm. Christ makes peace not only in the court of heaven, but peace in the court of conscience. He not only makes peace above us, but within us (John 16:33): that in me you might have

peace. All our golden streams of peace flow from this fountain. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you (John 14:27). Jesus Christ not only purchased peace for us, but speaks peace to us; he is called the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). Peace is a crown jewel of his reign; he whispers his love to the soul and sends his Spirit, that blessed dove, which brings an olive branch of peace in its mouth. The peace which Christ gives is peace in the midst of trouble (Micah 5:5): this man shall be our peace, when the enemy comes into our land. Kings can proclaim war in a time of peace, but Christ proclaims peace in a time of war. This peace surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7); it is a foretaste of glory, a cluster of grapes from the true vine which cheers the heart. Thus Christ is all in regard to pacification — he makes peace for us and within us.

Christ is all in regard to reward; he it is who crowns us after all our labors and sufferings. He died to advance us; his lying in the winepress was to bring us into the wine cellar. He is gone before to take possession of heaven in the name of all believers (Hebrews 6:20): where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus. Christ has gone to prepare a place for the saints (John 14:2); he makes heaven ready for them and makes them ready for heaven. Thus Christ is all in regard to reward (Revelation 22:12): behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me.

If Christ is all, it shows us what a vast difference there is between Christ and created things. There is as much difference as between being and nothing. Christ is all in all, and the creature is nothing at all. Why would you set your eyes on that which is not? (Proverbs 23:5). When Solomon had sifted out the finest quality and distilled the best of all created excellence, the result was: all was vanity (Ecclesiastes 2:11). The Greek word for vain signifies

empty. All earthly comforts are said to be void — void of that which we think is in them, void of satisfaction. Therefore they are compared to wind (Hosea 12:1); a person can no more fill his heart with the world than fill his belly with the air he breathes. The creature is said to be nothing in three senses.

It is nothing to a person in trouble of spirit; if the spirit is wounded, outward things give no more ease than a crown of gold cures a headache.

The creature is nothing to a person who has heaven in view; when Paul had seen that light from heaven surpassing the glory of the sun (Acts 26:13), though his eyes were open he saw no one (Acts 9:8). So he who has the glory of heaven in view is blind to the world; he sees nothing in it to attract him or make him willing to stay.

The creature is nothing to one who is dying; a person at the hour of death is most serious and able to give the truest verdict of things. At such a time the world is nothing — its sorrow is real, but its joy imaginary. What a vast difference then between Christ and created things! Christ is all in all, and the creature nothing at all. Yet how many destroy their souls for nothing?

It shows where the soul should turn in the want of all — go to Christ who is all in all. Do you lack grace? Go to Christ (Colossians 2:3): in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Christ is the great Lord Treasurer; go to him and say: Lord, I am poor in grace, but in you are all my springs of supply. Lord, I am blind — you have eye salve to heal me; I am defiled — you have water to cleanse me; my heart is hard — you have blood to soften it; I am empty of grace — bring your fullness to my emptiness. In all

our spiritual needs we should come to Christ, as Jacob's sons went to their brother Joseph, who opened all the storehouses and gave his brothers grain and provision for the journey (Genesis 41:56; 42:25). The Lord has made Christ our Joseph, in whom are hidden all treasures (Colossians 2:3). Go to Christ; he is all in all. And to encourage you to come to him: there is in him not only fullness but freeness — come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters. Christ is not only full as the honeycomb, but flows as the honeycomb.

If Christ is all, see here a Christian's inventory — how rich is he who has Christ! He has all that can make him completely happy. When asked where his riches were, the true saint says: Christ is my riches. A true saint cannot be poor; if you look into his house, perhaps he has scarcely a bed to lie on. Even to this present hour we hunger and thirst and are naked and have no certain dwelling place (1 Corinthians 4:11). Yet he can at the same time triumph with the apostle: as having nothing, yet possessing all (2 Corinthians 6:10). He has Christ who is all. When a believer can call nothing his own, he can say all is his. The tabernacle was covered with rough skins on the outside (Exodus 25), yet most of it was gold within. So a saint may have a poor covering, ragged clothes, but he is inlaid with gold — Christ is formed in his heart, and so he is all glorious within.

If Jesus Christ is all, then a Christian should be satisfied with Christ. What though he lacks other things — is not Christ enough? If a man has sunshine, he does not complain that he lacks a candle. Does not he have enough who has the unsearchable riches of Christ? I have read of a godly man who being blind, his friend asked if he was not troubled by the loss of his sight. His friend replied: Are you troubled because you lack what flies have, when

you have what angels have? So I say to a Christian: why are you troubled for lacking what the reprobate has, when you have what the glorified saints have? Suppose a father should deny his son furniture for his house, but settle all his land upon him — has the son any cause to complain? If God denies you a little furnishing in the world, but settles his land upon you and gives you the field where the pearl of price is hidden, have you any cause to complain? A Christian who lacks necessities, yet having Christ, has the one thing needful. You are complete in him (Colossians 2:10). Complete in Christ and not content with Christ? Luther says the sea of God's mercy should swallow up our particular afflictions. Surely this sea of God's love in giving us Christ should drown all our complaints. Let the Christian take the harp and the violin and bless God.

If Christ is all, see the deplorable condition of a person without Christ; he is poor, he is worth nothing (Revelation 3:17): you are wretched, and miserable, and poor. The sadness of a person who lacks Christ will appear in these seven particulars.

He has no justification; what a glorious thing it is when a poor sinner is absolved from guilt and declared righteous! But this privilege flows from Christ; all pardons are sealed in his blood (Acts 13:39): through him all who believe are justified. He who is outside of Christ is unjustified; the guilt of sin clings to him; he must be answerable to justice in his own person, and the curse stands in full force against the sinner.

He who lacks Christ lacks the beauty of holiness. Jesus Christ is a living spring of grace (John 1:14): full of grace and truth. A person without Christ is without grace — he has not one thread of holiness. The branch must first be grafted into the stock before it can

receive sap and life from the root. We must first be grafted into Christ before we can of his fullness receive grace upon grace (John 1:16). A person outside of Christ is red with guilt and black with filth; he is an unholy person, and dying in that condition is unable to see God (Hebrews 12:14).

He who lacks Christ has no true nobility. It is through Christ that we are kin to God, of the royal blood of heaven. It is through Christ that God is not ashamed to be called our God (Hebrews 11:16). But outside of Christ we are regarded as ignoble persons; whoever is his natural father, the devil is his spiritual father (John 8:44).

He who lacks Christ lacks his freedom (John 8:36): if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed. A person outside of Christ is a slave even when he sins most freely.

He who lacks Christ has no ability for service; he is as Samson when his hair was cut — his strength is gone. He lacks a vital principle; he cannot walk with God. He is like a dead limb in the body, with neither strength nor motion (John 15:5): without me you can do nothing. The organ will make no sound unless you blow into it; so unless Christ by his Spirit breathes into the soul, it cannot make any harmony or put forth strength to any holy action.

He who lacks Christ has no consolation; Christ is called the consolation of Israel (Luke 2:25). A person without Christ is without comfort. How can such a soul have comfort when he comes to die? He is in debt and has no surety; his wounds bleed and he has no physician; he sees the fire of God's wrath approaching and has no shield to keep it off. He is like a ship in a tempest — sickness begins to make a tempest in his body, and sin to make a tempest in

his conscience, and he has nowhere to take shelter. Their faces shall be as flames (Isaiah 13:8) — such fear and horror shall seize upon sinners in the evil day that their countenances shall change and grow pale. What are all the comforts of the world to a dying sinner? He looks upon his friends, but they cannot comfort him. Bring him his bags of gold and silver — they grieve him to part with. Bring him music — what comfort is the harp and violin to a condemned person? Those who die without Christ, who is the consolation of Israel, are in such hellish anguish that no music can cure them.

He who lacks Christ has no salvation (Ephesians 5:23): he is the Savior of the body. He saves only those who are members of his mystical body. Christ leaped into the sea of his Father's wrath only to save his people from drowning. Those who die outside of Christ are cut off from all hope of salvation.

This reproves those who busy themselves with other things while neglecting Christ. If you gain all the world, you are but golden beggars without Christ. The physician finds out bodily diseases but is ignorant of soul-diseases, and while he gets remedies to cure others, he neglects the remedy of Christ's blood to cure himself. The lawyer, while he clears other men's titles to their land, himself lacks a title to Christ. The tradesman is busy buying and selling, but neglects to trade for the pearl of price. Those who so fix their minds on the world as to neglect Christ — their work is but spider-work (Habakkuk 2:13): is it not of the Lord that the people shall labor in the fire and weary themselves for nothing?

If Christ is all, set a high value upon Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:7): to you who believe he is precious. If there were a jewel which contained in it the worth of all jewels, would you not prize it? Such a

jewel is Christ. So precious is he that Paul counted all things loss that he might gain Christ (Philippians 3:8). Prize Christ above your estates, above your relations. That person does not deserve Christ at all who does not prize Christ above all. Jesus Christ is an incomprehensible blessing; whatever God can require for satisfaction or we can desire for salvation is to be found in Christ. Let him be the highest in our esteem. Bernard said: no writing shall please me unless I read the name of Christ there. The name of Christ is the only music to a Christian's ear, and the blood of Christ is the only cordial to a Christian's heart.

If Jesus Christ is all, then make sure of Christ; never leave seeking in ordinances until you have gotten this pearl of price. In Christ there is the accumulation of all good things. Oh let not your souls be quiet until this cluster of myrrh lies between your breasts (Song of Solomon 1:13). In other things we strive for ownership — this house is mine, these jewels are mine — and why not: this Christ is mine? There are only two words which will satisfy the soul: deity and ownership. Augustine says: what is God to me if he is not mine? What was it to the world in Noah's day that there was an ark, as long as they did not get into the ark? And to persuade all to get Christ, let me show you what an enriching blessing Christ is.

Christ is a supreme good; put what you will in the balance with Christ, he infinitely outweighs. Is life sweet? Christ is better! He is the life of the soul (Colossians 3:4); his loving-kindness is better than life (Psalm 63:3). Are relationships sweet? Christ is better; he is the friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Christ is a sufficient good; he who has Christ needs no more. He who has the ocean needs not a cistern. If one had a manuscript containing all manner of learning — all the arts and sciences — he

need look in no other book. So he who has Christ needs look no further. Christ gives grace and glory (Psalm 84:11) — the one to cleanse us, the other to crown us. As Jacob said: it is enough, Joseph is yet alive (Genesis 45:28). So he who has Christ may say: it is enough, Jesus is yet alive.

Christ is a suitable good; in him dwells all fullness (Colossians 1:19). He is whatever the soul can desire. Christ is beauty to adorn, gold to enrich, balm to heal, bread to strengthen, wine to comfort, salvation to crown. If we are in danger, he is a shield; if we are disconsolate, he is a sun. He has enough in his wardrobe abundantly to furnish the soul.

Christ is a sanctifying good; he makes every condition happy to us, sweetens all our comforts, and sanctifies all our crosses.

Christ sweetens all our comforts; he turns them into blessings. Health is blessed, estate is blessed, relationships are blessed. Christ's love is like pouring sweet water on flowers, which makes them give a more fragrant scent. A wicked person cannot have that comfort in outward things that a godly person has; he may possess more, but he enjoys less. He who has Christ may say: this mercy is reached to me by the hand of my Savior — this is a love-token from him, an earnest of glory.

Christ sanctifies all our crosses so they shall be medicinal to the soul; they shall work sin out and work grace in. God's stretching the strings of his instrument is to tune it and make the music better. Christ sees to it that his people lose nothing in the furnace but their impurities.

Christ is a rare blessing; there are but few who have him. The best things when they become common begin to be despised; when silver was in Jerusalem as stones (1 Kings 10:27), it was apt to be trodden upon. Christ is a jewel that few are enriched with, which should both raise our esteem of him and quicken our pursuit after him. Those to whom God has given both the Indies, he has not given them Christ; they have the fat of the earth but not the dew of heaven. There are many who have Christ sounded in their ears, but few who have Christ formed in their hearts. Those who are without Christ should be restless.

Christ is a select and choice good; God shows more love in giving us Christ than in giving us crowns and kingdoms. God may give us other things and hate us; but in giving Christ he bestows the highest pledge of his love. God may give the men of the world the blessings of the footstool, but in giving Christ to a person he gives the blessings of the throne. Abraham sent away the sons of the concubines with gifts, but he gave all he had to Isaac (Genesis 25:5). God may send away others with a little gold and silver; but if he gives you Christ, he gives you all that he has. For Christ is all and in all (Psalm 145:16): you open your hand and satisfy every living thing. In bestowing the world, God does but open his hand; but in bestowing Christ, he opens his heart. Christ is a crowning blessing.

Christ is such a good that without him nothing is good. Without Christ health is not good — it is fuel for lust; riches are not good — they are golden snares. Ordinances are not good without Christ; though good in themselves, they profit nothing without him. They are as breasts without milk, as bottles without wine.

Without Christ they will not only be a dead letter but a savor of death — for want of Christ, millions go loaded to hell with ordinances.

Christ is an enduring good; other things are like a lamp which, while it shines, spends itself. The heavens shall grow old like a garment (Psalm 102:26). But Jesus Christ is a permanent good; with him are durable riches (Proverbs 8:18) that last as long as eternity itself lasts.

Christ is a giving and communicative good; he is full, not only as a vessel, but as a spring; he is willing to give himself to us. He calls: come to me all you who are weary. He would gladly have the match made up between us and him; if only we were as willing as Christ is! Now, if there is all this variety of excellence in Jesus Christ, it should make us eagerly desirous of an interest in him.

But how shall I get a part in Christ?

See your need of Christ — know that you are undone without him. The furnace of hell is heating for you, and what will you do without Christ? It is only the Lord Jesus who can stand as a screen to keep off the fire of God's wrath from burning you. Is there not need of Christ? Though Christ is offered to sinners, yet he will not throw himself away upon those who see no need of him. See yourself wounded, and then Christ that good Samaritan will pour in wine and oil into your wounds. He who believes not is condemned already (John 3:18). He who dies in his sin, not laying hold on Christ by faith, is as sure to be condemned as if he were condemned already.

Be importunate after Christ — Lord, give me Christ or I die. As Achsah said to her father Caleb: you have given me a southern land, give me also springs of water (Joshua 15:19). So should a poor soul say: Lord, you have given me an estate in the world, but this southern land will not quench my thirst — give me also springs of water. Give me those living springs which flow from my Savior's blood. Lord, I thirst after Jesus Christ; nothing but Christ will satisfy me; I am dead, I am lost without him. When the blind man was importunate, Jesus stood still (Luke 18:40) and healed him. Christ cannot deny a praying soul. As the tender mother opens her breast when the child cries for it, so when a humble, thirsty sinner cries importunately to heaven, God will open the breast of free grace and say: Here, take my Christ — be satisfied with him, let him be to you all in all, both for food and medicine.

Be content to have Christ as Christ is offered — a Prince and a Savior (Acts 5:31). Be sure you do not bargain with Christ; some would have Christ and their sins too. Is Christ all, and will you not part with something for this all? Christ would have you part with nothing but what will damn you if you keep it — namely your sins. Repent of this poison, and Christ will pour in the wine of his blood to cheer your heart.

Some bid fair for Christ; they will part with some sins, but keep a reserve. If you leave but one sin in your heart, it will be an egg for Satan to brood upon. If a man parts with many sins but retains love for one sin, he has an adulterous heart, and Christ will not make a covenant with him. Part with all for him who is all — part with your lusts, even your life if Christ calls.

This also exhorts us not only to get Christ, but to labor to know that we have Christ (1 John 2:3): by this we know that we know him. Some theologians call this the perception or sensible feeling of faith. Concerning this knowledge that Christ is ours — which is the same as assurance — I shall lay down four conclusions.

First, that this knowledge is attainable — it may be had (1 John 5:13): these things I have written to you who believe, that you may know you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God. The meaning is: the apostle wrote to these believers that they might know they were believers and might be assured Christ was theirs. Indeed the papists deny this certainty of knowledge; it is inserted in one of their canons: let him be accursed who holds assurance. But that we may arrive at it, I shall demonstrate by these arguments.

Why else does God bid us make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10), and to test ourselves whether we are in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5), if assurance cannot be had? The Greek word for testing signifies to pierce through a piece of metal to see whether it is gold within. A Christian may thus pierce his heart by examination to see whether Christ is formed within him.

What are all the signs which Scripture gives of a man in Christ but so many marks, if the knowledge of this interest cannot be obtained? We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brothers (1 John 3:14). Hereby we know that we dwell in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit (1 John 4:13). These signs are in vain if assurance cannot be arrived at.

There are some duties commanded in Scripture which are utterly impossible if the knowledge of an interest in Christ is not attainable. We are commanded to rejoice in God (Philippians 4:4) and to rejoice in tribulation (1 Peter 4:13). How can one rejoice in suffering who does not know whether Christ is his or not?

Why has Christ promised to send the Comforter (John 14:16), whose very work it is to bring the heart to assurance, if assurance that Christ is ours cannot be obtained? In Scripture we read of the seal of the Spirit (Ephesians 1:13), the earnest and firstfruits (2 Corinthians 1:22; Romans 8:23). The promise of the Comforter would be in vain, the earnest and witness of the Spirit mere phantoms, if the assurance of union with Christ were not feasible.

Some of the saints have arrived at this certainty, therefore it can be obtained. Job knew that his Redeemer lived (Job 19:25); Paul had this assurance (2 Timothy 1:12; Galatians 2:20). The apostle speaks of it as common to believers (Romans 8:35): who shall separate us from the love of Christ? He says not who shall separate me, but us — so by all this it appears that a believer may come to know his interest in Christ.

Caution one: not that the saints always have the same certainty, or that they have such assurance as excludes all doubt and conflict. There will be ebbs and flows in their comforts as well as in their graces. Sometimes David says God's loving-kindness was before his eyes (Psalm 26:3); at another time he cries: where are your loving-kindnesses? (Psalm 89:49). Paul at one time sets up the trophies of victory and sings his triumphant song (Romans 8:37): we are more than conquerors. At another time how did the feathers of his confidence fall — he was as a man in the middle of the sea, struggling with the waves, crying out: O wretched man that I am!

(Romans 7:24). A saint in this life is like a ship at anchor — though safe, yet tossed upon the water. These doubts God allows in his children sometimes so they may long the more for heaven, where they shall have a constant flood-tide of joy.

Caution two: not that all believers have the same assurance.

Assurance is rather the fruit of faith than faith itself. As the root of a rose may be alive where the flower is not visible, so faith may live in the heart where the flower of assurance does not appear. Yet this is certain: there is so much wrought in the heart of every believer by God's Spirit that he can build his hope upon it. As for instance: a high prizing of Christ, a resting in Christ, a rejoicing in his image, a delighting in his word. The weakest believer has so much to show that he would not part with it for a world.

Assurance is difficult to obtain; it is a rare jewel, but hard to come by; not many Christians have this jewel.

God sometimes withdraws assurance from his people so that they may walk humbly. Through the corruption of our nature we are apt to abuse the richest mercies; the moth breeds in the finest cloth, the worm in the sweetest fruit. Pride is apt to breed in this sweet fruit of assurance. It is hard for Christians to lack assurance and be content, and to have it and be humble.

Satan does what he can to obstruct our assurance. He is called the red dragon (Revelation 12:3) — how he troubles the waters of a Christian's peace! If the devil cannot keep a believer from heaven, he will do what he can to keep him from a heaven on earth. He racks him with fears and anxieties. If he cannot blot a Christian's

evidence, yet sometimes he casts such a mist before his eyes that he cannot read his evidence. The devil envies that God should have any glory, or the soul any comfort.

That we lack assurance is for the most part our own fault. We walk carelessly, neglect our spiritual watch, let go our hold of promises, comply with temptations. No wonder then if we walk in darkness and cannot tell whether Christ is ours or not. Our uneven walk grieves the Spirit, whose work it is to seal up assurance. If we quench the graces of the Spirit, no wonder if God quenches the comforts of the Spirit.

Assurance is very sweet; this wine of paradise cheers the heart. For lack of this knowledge — that Christ is ours — we often hang our harps on the willows and sit weeping (Psalm 137:1-2). A man who has a rich mine of gold in his field, yet if he does not know it is there, cannot take comfort from it. Hagar had a well of water beside her, but her eyes being held so that she did not see the well, she sat weeping. It is the knowledge of an interest that gives comfort. My spirit rejoices in God my Savior (Luke 1:47) — not a Savior, but my Savior. He who knows Christ is his has a kiss from Christ's lips; he dies triumphing. Assurance puts a person in heaven before his time.

Assurance is very useful; it will put us upon service for Christ.

It will put us upon active obedience; assurance will not breed security in the soul as the Catholics claim, but agility. It will make us mount up with wings as eagles in holy duties. Faith makes us living; assurance makes us lively. If we know that Christ is ours, we shall never think we can love him enough or serve him enough. The love of Christ constrains us (2 Corinthians 5:14). Assurance is

like wings to the bird, like oil to the lamp, like weights to the clock — it sets all the wheels of obedience going. Assurance is a whetstone to the graces; it stirs up hope, love, zeal. Faith makes a Christian walk; assurance makes him run. The joy of the Lord is your strength (Nehemiah 8:10). Assurance breeds such joy in the soul as derives strength for duty.

Assurance will put us upon passive obedience (Romans 5:3-5): we glory in tribulation, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. He who has Christ's love shed into his heart will be willing to shed his blood for Christ. He who knows Christ is his will come to him with Peter upon the waters. He comforts himself with this: though he loses all for Christ, he shall find all in Christ. That person who is assured Christ is his will risk the loss of all for him. He knows that though he may be a loser for Christ, he cannot be a loser by Christ; for Christ is all and in all. No wonder Paul was willing to be bound and die for Christ (Acts 21:13) when he knew that Christ loved him and had given himself for him (Galatians 2:20).

But how shall I get this jewel of assurance?

Make duty familiar to you; when the bride sought Christ diligently, she found him joyfully (Song of Solomon 3:4). The ordinances are the lattice where Christ looks forth and gives the soul a smiling aspect. As Christ was made known to his disciples in the breaking of bread (Luke 24:35), so in the use of holy ordinances Christ makes a glorious discovery of himself to the soul. Christ's parents found him in the temple (Luke 2:46). Those who would find Christ with comfort and have the kisses of his lips shall be sure to meet with him in the temple.

Preserve the purity of conscience; when the glass is dirty you will not pour wine into it, but when it is clean. So when the soul is cleansed from the love of every sin, now God will pour in the sweet wine of assurance. Let us draw near in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience (Hebrews 10:22). Guilt clips the wings of joy; he who is conscious to himself of secret sin cannot draw near to God in full assurance. Assurance is a flower that grows only in a pure heart. Before David prays for joy, he first prays for a pure heart (Psalm 51:10): create in me a clean heart, O God.

Be much in the active exercise of faith; the more active the child is in obedience, the sooner he has his father's smile. If faith is ready to die (Revelation 3:2), if it is like armor hung up or a sleeping habit in the soul, never look for assurance. God will not speak peace to you when you are asleep; it is the lively faith which flourishes into assurance. Abraham had a vigorous, sparkling faith (Romans 4:18): who against hope believed in hope. That is, against the hope of his senses he believed in the hope of the promise. How sweetly did God manifest himself to Abraham — he calls him his friend, he makes him of his inner counsel (Genesis 18:17): shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do? Would you have Christ reveal his love to you? Keep faith active. This is the bird which soars aloft and plucks a cluster of grapes from the true vine.

If Christ is all, then make him so to you.

Make Christ all in your understanding — be eager to know nothing but Christ (1 Corinthians 2:2): I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ. Augustine said of Cicero: he liked his eloquence, but he could not take so much delight in reading him because he could not find the name of Christ there.

What will all other knowledge avail a person at his death who is ignorant of Christ? What is it to have knowledge in medicine, to be able to discourse of the causes and symptoms of disease, and in the meantime to be ignorant of the healing under Christ's wings? What is it to have knowledge in astronomy, to discourse of the stars and planets, and to be ignorant of Christ, that bright morning star which leads to heaven? What is it to be skilled in trade and ignorant of that commodity which both enriches and crowns? What is it to be well versed in music and ignorant of Christ, whose blood makes peace in heaven and music in the conscience? O make Christ all — be willing to know nothing but Christ; let the knowledge of Jesus Christ have the preeminence, as the sun among the lesser planets.

This is the crowning knowledge (Proverbs 4:18): the prudent are crowned with knowledge.

We cannot know ourselves unless we know Christ; he it is who lights us into our own hearts and shows us the spots of our souls, whereby we abhor ourselves. Christ shows us our own emptiness and need; and until we see our own emptiness, we are not fit to be filled with the golden oil of mercy.

We cannot know God except through Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). Outside of Christ God is terrible — he is a consuming fire. It is through Christ that we know God as a friend. Treasure up the knowledge of Christ; he is the golden ladder by which we ascend to heaven. To be ignorant of Christ is like a man who is poisoned, and there is an herb in the garden that could cure him, but he is ignorant of that herb.

Make Christ all in your affections.

Desire nothing but Christ; he is the accumulation of all good things. You are complete in him (Colossians 2:10); Christ is the Christian's perfection. What should the soul desire less? What can it desire more? Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you (Psalm 73:25). David had his crown and his throne to delight in, but it was the presence of Christ he chiefly thirsted after. Without Christ all his other comforts were not only emptiness but bitterness.

Love nothing but Christ; love is the choicest affection, the purest stream of the soul, the richest jewel the creature has to bestow. If Christ is all, love him better than all; let your rivers still run into this golden sea. In Christ there are unsearchable riches (Ephesians 3:8). Though the angels have lived so long in heaven, yet to this day they do not know how rich Christ is. Neither man nor angel can set the full value of the pearl of price. Shall not Jesus Christ lie nearest our hearts? Shall he not have the best of our love?

If you love other things, when they perish your love is lost; but Christ lives forever to return your love.

You may love other things in excess, but you cannot love Christ in excess. Mary loved much (Luke 7:47), but not too much. If Christ cannot be prized enough, he cannot be loved too much; the angels in heaven cannot love Christ to his worth.

When you love other things, you love what is less than yourself; a fair house, a pleasant garden — these things are less than yourself. If I would love anything more intensely, it should be some-

thing better than myself, and that is Jesus Christ. He who is all — let him have all; give him your love who desires it most and deserves it best.

Make Christ all in your abilities — do all in his strength (Ephesians 6:10): be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. When you are to resist a temptation or mortify a corruption, do not go out in your own strength but in the strength of Christ. Some go out to duty in the strength of their gifts and go out against sin in the strength of resolutions, and they come home defeated. Do as David when he was to go against Goliath: I come to you in the name of the Lord. So say to your Goliath-lust: I come to you in the name of Christ. We conquer when the Lion of the tribe of Judah marches before us. Christ is called a horn of salvation (Luke 1:69); the strength of a creature lies in his horn, and so the strength of a believer lies in this horn of salvation. The bird might as well fly without wings as we can do anything effective without Christ (1 Samuel 2:9): by strength shall no man prevail.

Make Christ all in your aims — do all to his glory (1 Peter 4:11). Let Christ be the center to which all the lines of your actions are drawn. The hypocrite pretends Christ but drives on some self-interest (Hosea 10:1) — like one who pretends to court for his friend but is a suitor for himself. How many make the name of Christ a stepping stone to get into the saddle of honor and advancement? Make Christ all in your aims and designs. In every action ask yourself: will this make for the honor of Christ? Will this bring any revenue into his treasury? How happy were it if it might be said of us, as the angel said to the two Marys (Matthew 28:5): I know that you

seek Jesus who was crucified! He who does not take a right aim can never hit the mark. He who does not aim at God's glory can never hit the mark of his own salvation.

Make Christ all in your trust — rely on none but Christ for salvation. The Roman church makes Christ something but not all; they trust partly to Christ and partly to their own merits. They pray to Christ and to angels; to Christ as Mediator of Redemption and to angels as mediators of intercession. They invoke the Virgin Mary for mercy, so mixing her milk with Christ's blood. But what is given to others superstitiously is taken from Christ sacrilegiously. The eagle's feathers will not mix with other feathers; Christ will not endure having his blood mixed with the merits of saints or the prayers of angels. Christ will be all in all, or nothing at all.

Is there not naturally a trace of this error in our own hearts? We would be grafting happiness upon the stock of our own righteousness. As Luther said: every man is born with a pope in his heart. How ready are we to idolize our duties and graces, drawing so much from the stream as to neglect the spring! Make Christ all in regard to trust; let him be your city of refuge to flee to, your ark to shelter in. Luther said: if I could keep the whole moral law, I would not trust to this for justification — I would bow to Christ's merits.

Make Christ all in your joy (Galatians 6:14): God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. My spirit rejoices in God my Savior (Luke 1:47). The Virgin Mary did not so much rejoice that she was Christ's mother as that Christ was her Savior. How glad was Simeon when he took Christ in his arms! (Luke 2:29) How cheerful may that man be who has taken Christ

in the arms of his faith! When the wise men saw the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy (Matthew 2:10). Christian, have you seen the Lord Jesus? Has this morning star shined into your heart? Then rejoice and be exceeding glad. Shall others rejoice in the world, and will you not rejoice in Christ? God has given the men of the world a crutch to lean on; he has given you a Christ to lean on. It reflects shame upon Christ when his saints are sad and drooping. Is not Christ yours — what more would you have?

But someone says: I am poor in the world, and that removes the wheels from my joy, and makes me drive heavily.

But do you not have Christ? And is not Christ all (Psalm 16:5-6): the Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup; the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places. He who is united to Christ by faith has a title to all Christ's riches. A beggar married to a prince has a right and title to all his revenues.

If indeed I knew Christ were mine, then I could rejoice — but how shall I know that?

Is your soul filled with pantings and longings after Christ? Do you desire the water from Christ's side to cleanse you, as well as the blood from his side to save you? These sighs and groans are stirred up by the Spirit of God; by the beating of this pulse, judge of the life of faith in you. A wicked person has none of these breathings after Christ (Job 21:14): they say to God, depart from us. If the heart moves toward Christ, the Spirit as a divine magnet has been drawing it.

Have you given yourself up in universal submission to Christ? Are you his not only by upbringing but by dedication? This is a good sign that Christ is yours (Psalm 27:8): when you said, Seek

my face, my heart said to you, Your face, Lord, will I seek.

Be thankful for Christ; God has done more for you in giving you Christ than if he had set you with the princes of the earth (Psalm 113:8). He has done more for you than if he had made you angels; for by virtue of your marriage-union with Christ, you are richer than the angels. God in giving you Christ has done more for you than if he had given you the whole world. He can make more worlds, but he has only one Son. As Naomi said to her daughters: are there any more sons in my womb? (Ruth 1:11) God cannot give a greater gift than Christ; for in giving Christ, he gives himself to us. All this calls aloud for thankfulness.

Here is a breast of comfort to every person who has Christ: Christ is all, and it is good to lie at this fountainhead. When a Christian sees a deficiency in himself, he may see an all-sufficiency in his Savior. Happy is that people whose God is the Lord (Psalm 144). That servant need not lack who has his master's full purse at command; he need not lack who has Christ, for Christ is all and in all. What though the fig tree does not flourish, if you have Christ the tree of life with all fruit growing there? In the hour of death a believer may rejoice — when he leaves all, he is possessed of all. As Ambrose said: I do not fear death because I have a good Lord. So may a godly person say: I do not fear death because I have a Christ to go to; death will but carry me to that torrent of divine pleasure which runs at his right hand forevermore. Therefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:18).

THE PRECIOUSNESS OF THE SOUL



Matthew 16:26 — For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Every person carries a treasure about him — a divine soul. Our Savior here sets a price upon it; he lays the soul in the balance against the whole world, and the soul weighs heaviest. What is a man profited if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?

The world is a stately structure, enriched with beauty and excellence; it is like a curious piece of tapestry set about with diverse colors. It is a bright mirror in which much of the wisdom and majesty of God is resplendent. But as glorious as this world is, every person carries a more glorious world about him — a precious soul. A great thing is the soul. It would bankrupt the world to give half the price of a soul; it will undo the world to buy it, and undo the person who shall sell it. If we can save our souls though we lose the world, it is a gainful loss. If we lose our souls though we gain the world, our very gains will undo us. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

The words divide into five parts.

First, a supposal of a purchase: if a man shall gain. Christ does not say he shall gain — he puts a case. It is only supposed.

Second, the purchase itself — the world.

Third, the extent of the purchase — the whole world, the world with all its revenues and benefits.

Fourth, the terms of this purchase — he shall lose his soul. Not that his soul shall be annihilated — that were happy — but he shall lose the end of his creation; he shall miss glory. The loss of the soul is amplified by two things.

First, the identity — his own soul, that which is nearest to him, that which is most himself. The soul is the most noble part; it is the innermost person of the person — he shall lose his own soul.

Second, the irrecoverableness of the loss: what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? The words contain an understatement — less is said than is meant. What shall he give? As if Christ had said: he has nothing to give. Or if he had something to give, nothing would be accepted for it. The soul cannot be exchanged; there shall be no bail taken for it. What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Fifth, our Savior's verdict on this purchase: for what is a man profited? As if Christ had said: he will have a hard bargain of it, he will repent of it at last. It is the fool's purchase: for what is a man profited?

Observe: the soul of man is a jewel more precious than a world. All souls are of one price; the soul of prince and peasant — all are equal. Every soul is of more value than a world. For the illustration of this doctrine there are two things to be demonstrated.

First, that the soul is very precious.

Second, that it is more precious than a world.

That the soul is very precious. What Job says of wisdom I may fitly apply to the soul: man does not know the price of it; it cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx or the sapphire; the gold and crystal cannot equal it, and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold (Job 28:13-17). The soul is the glory of creation. The inscription of it may be this: The soul is a beam of God; it is a sparkle of celestial brightness, as Damascene calls it; it is, according to Plato, a glass of the Trinity. There is in the soul an image and resemblance of God — an analogy of similitude, as the schoolmen speak. If David so admired the rare texture and workmanship of his body (Psalm 139:13-15): I am wonderfully made, I was intricately wrought in the lowest parts of the earth — if the case is so curiously wrought, what is the jewel inside? How richly and gloriously is the soul embroidered — divinely inlaid and enameled! The body is but the sheath (Daniel 7:15): I was grieved in the midst of my body — in the Chaldean, in the midst of my sheath. The most beautiful body is but like a velvet sheath; the soul is the blade of admirable metal. The soul is a sparkling diamond set in a ring of clay. The soul is a vessel of honor; God himself is served in this vessel. The soul is the bird of paradise that soars aloft; it may be compared to the wings of the cherubim, having a winged swiftness to fly to heaven. The soul is capable of communion with God and angels. The soul is God's house that he has made to dwell in (Hebrews 3:6); the understanding, will, and affections are the three stories in this house. What a pity that this goodly building should be let out with the devil as its tenant! The preciousness of the soul is seen in two particulars.

It has an intrinsic worth and an estimated worth.

The soul has an intrinsic worth, which appears in two things.

Spirituality: the soul is a spiritual substance. The ancients said our souls are formed in the same mold as the heavenly spirits. The soul is spiritual in three ways: in its essence, its object, and its operation.

In its essence. In its object. In its operation.

The soul is spiritual in its essence. God breathed it in (Genesis 2:7) — it is a spark lit by the breath of God. The soul may be compared to the spirits of the wine, the body to the dregs; the spirits are the more pure and refined part of the wine — such is the soul; the body is more coarse, the soul is the more refined and sublimated part of man. Do not misunderstand me: when I say the soul is spiritual and a beam of God, I do not mean it is of the same substance as him. Servetus, Osiander, and others erroneously thought that when God breathed into man the breath of life, the soul conveys into man the spirit and substance of God — which opinion is absurd and sinful. For if the soul were part of the Divine Essence, then the Essence of God would be subject not only to change and passion, but, worse, to sin — which it is blasphemy to assert. So when we say the soul is spiritual, the meaning is: God has invested it with many noble endowments; he has made it a mirror of beauty and printed upon it a surpassing excellence. As the sun shining upon a crystal conveys its beauty, not its being.

The soul is spiritual in its object; it contemplates God and heaven. God is the sphere and center where the soul fixes itself. If you could lift a stone into the highest region, though it broke into a hundred pieces, it would fall to its center. God is the end toward

which the soul moves, as to its rest (Psalm 116:7): return to your rest, O my soul. He is the ark to which this dove flies. Nothing but God can fill a heaven-born soul; if the earth were turned into a globe of gold, it could not fill the heart — it would still cry, Give, give. The soul being spiritual, God alone can be its adequate object.

The soul is spiritual in its operation; being immaterial, it does not depend upon the body in its working. The senses of seeing, hearing, and the rest of the organs of the body cease and die with the body, because they are parts of the body and have their dependence upon it. But the soul, as Aristotle says, has a nature distinct from the body; it moves and operates of itself though the body be dead, and has no dependence upon or coexistence with the body. Thales Milesius, an ancient philosopher, defines the soul as self-moving — it has an intrinsic principle of life and motion though it be separate from the body. And thus you have seen the soul's spirituality.

The preciousness of the soul appears also in its immortality. There are some who say the soul is mortal; indeed it were well for those who do not live like men if they might die like beasts. But as Julius Scaliger well observes, it is impossible for anything of a spiritual, uncompounded nature to be subject to death and corruption. The souls of believers are with Christ after death (Philippians 1:23). Oecolampadius said to his friend who came to visit him on his deathbed: Good news, I shall shortly be with Christ my Lord. And the devout soul shall be ever with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:18). The pagans had some glimmerings of the soul's immortality. Cicero says the swan was dedicated to Apollo because it sings sweetly before its death; by this symbol they signified the joy of virtuous men before dying, imagining the delights they should en-

joy after this life. And we read it was a custom among the Romans that when their great men died, they caused an eagle to fly aloft in the air, signifying that the soul was immortal and did not die as the body.

The soul's immortality may be proved by this argument: that which is not capable of being killed is not capable of dying. But the soul is not capable of being killed. Our Savior Christ proves the minor proposition: Luke 12:4: do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more they can do. Therefore the soul, not being capable of being killed, is not in a possibility of dying. The essence of the soul is metaphysical; it has a beginning but no end; it is eternal going forward. The soul does not grow old; it lives forever — which can be said of no earthly created glory. Worldly things are as full of change as of motion, and like Jonah's gourd, have a worm eating at the root.

The soul has an estimated worth.

Jesus Christ has set a high value and estimate upon the soul; he made it and he bought it, therefore he best knows its price. He sold himself to buy the soul. Zechariah 11:12: they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. He was content not only to be sold, but to die; this enhances the price of the soul — it cost the blood of God (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 1:19): you were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. God must die that the soul may live; the heir of heaven was mortgaged and laid to pawn for the soul of man. What could Christ give more than himself? What in himself was dearer than his blood? O precious soul, that has the image of God to beautify it and the blood of God to redeem it! Christ was the priest, his divine

nature the altar, his blood the sacrifice which he offered up as an atonement for our souls. Now reckon what a drop of Christ's blood is worth, and then tell me what a soul is worth.

Satan also values souls — he knows their worth. He says as the king of Sodom said to Abraham: give me the persons, and take the goods to yourself. So Satan says: give me the persons. He does not strive to take away your estates, but your souls. Whence come all his warlike strategies and subtle snares but to catch souls? Why does this lion roar but for his prey? He envies the soul its happiness. He lays the whole train of temptation to blow up the entire fortress of the soul. Why does he lay such suitable baits? He allures the ambitious person with a crown, the covetous with a golden apple, the sensual with beauty. The devil is angling for the precious soul. If Satan the lion must be kept in his hellish den, it is all the heaven he hopes for — to reach forth his paw and pull others in with him.

Having shown the soul's preciousness, the next thing to demonstrate is that the soul is more precious than a world. The world is made of a cruder material; the soul is heaven-born, of finer quality, of more noble descent. The world is a great book in which we read the majesty and wisdom of its Maker. But the soul is the image of God (Genesis 1). The soul is a studied piece; when God made the world it was but a word — let it be, and it was done. But when he made the soul, all the persons of the Trinity sat together at the council table (Genesis 1:26): let us make man in our own likeness. The soul is a glass in which some rays of divine glory shine. The soul since the fall may be compared to the moon in its

new phase, very much obscured by sin. But when it is sanctified by the Spirit and translated to heaven, it shall be as the full moon, shining forth in its perfect glory.

If the soul is so precious, see what worship God expects and accepts — namely, that which comes from the most noble part of the soul. Psalm 25:1: To you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. David did not only lift up his voice, but his soul. Though God will have the eye and the knee — the service of the body — yet he complains of those who draw near with their lips while their hearts are far from him (Isaiah 29:13). The soul is the jewel. David did not only put his lute and viol in tune, but his soul in tune to praise God. Psalm 103:1: Bless the Lord, O my soul — his affections joining together in worship made up the concert. The soul is both altar, fire, and incense; it is the altar on which we offer up our prayers, the fire which kindles our prayers, and the incense which perfumes them. God's eye is chiefly upon the soul; bring a hundred dishes to table, he will take from none but this — this is the savory meat he loves. He who is best will be served with the best; when we give him the soul in a duty, now we give him the flower and the cream. A soul inflamed in service is the cup of spiced wine and the juice of the pomegranate which the spouse makes Christ drink (Song of Solomon 8:2). Without the worship of the soul, all our religion is but bodily exercise (1 Timothy 4:8), which profits nothing; without the soul we give God but a corpse. What are all the papists' fastings, penances, and pilgrimages but going to hell in more pomp and state? What are the formalist's prayers, which even cool between his lips, but dead devotion? It is not sacrifice, but sacrilege; he robs God of that which he has a right to — the soul.

If the soul is so precious, then of what precious account should ordinances and ministers be?

Ordinances are the golden ladder by which the soul climbs up to heaven; they are channels of the water of life. Those who are against ordinances are against being saved.

Of how precious account should ministers be, whose very work is to save souls; their feet should be beautiful.

Their labors should be precious; they labor with God and they labor for your souls. All their sweat, their tears, their prayers are for you; they plead for your souls, and often spend their lives in the cause.

The liberties of faithful ministers should be precious. Constantine was a great honorer of the ministry. If you see any of those in this holy function who are like a drug that is hot in the mouth but cold in operation — if you see them either idle or ravenous, if they do not rightly divide the word and live uprightly — censure them without hesitation. In the law the lips of the leper were to be covered; a minister who is by office an angel but by his life a leper deserves silencing. A good preacher but a bad liver is like a physician who has the plague; though his advice and prescriptions may be good, his plague infects the patient. If you find a Hophni and Phinehas among the sons of Levi, whose unholy conduct makes the offering of God to be despised, you will save God a labor in removing them. But be sure to distinguish between the precious and the vile; while you let out bad blood, be careful to preserve the heart's blood; while purging out ill humors, do not destroy the vital spirits; while removing the snuffs, do not eclipse the lights of God's sanctuary. It is work fit for a Julian to suppress the orthodox min-

istry and open the temple of the idol. The Romans sacked the city of Corinth and razed it to the ground for an insult offered to their ambassador; God will avenge the affronts offered to his ministers (Psalm 105:15). If souls are of such infinite value, how precious should the liberties of those whose very design and negotiation is to save souls be! (1 Timothy 4:16; Jude 23)

If the soul is so precious, take heed of abusing your souls. Socrates exhorted young men that they should look their faces in a glass, and if they were fair, they should take care to do nothing unworthy of their beauty. Christians, God has given you souls that sparkle with divine beauty; do nothing unworthy of these souls, do not abuse them. There are four sorts of persons who abuse their souls.

Those that degrade their souls.

Those who set the world above their souls; who pant after the dust of the earth (Amos 2:7). As if a man's house were on fire and he took care to preserve the furniture but let his child burn in the fire.

Those who make their souls servants to their bodies. The body is but the brutish part; the soul is the angelic. The soul is the queen regent, adorned with the jewels of knowledge and wielding the scepter of liberty. What a pity that this excellent soul should be made a vassal and put to grind in the mill, while the body sits in a chair of state! Solomon complains of an evil under the sun (Ecclesiastes 10:7): I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants on the earth. Is it not an evil under the sun to see the body riding in pomp and triumph, and the soul — that royal and heaven-born thing — walking as a servant on foot?

Those who abuse their souls, that sell their souls.

The covetous person sells his soul for money; as it is said of the lawyer that he has a tongue to be sold for a fee, so the covetous man has a soul for sale. Achan sold his soul for a wedge of gold; Judas sold his soul for silver — and what cheap bargains he made! For thirty pieces he sold Christ, who was worth more than heaven, and his own soul, which was worth more than a world! How many have damned their souls for money (1 Timothy 6:9-10)! It is observed that eagle's quills mixed with hen's feathers will in time consume them; such is the world to the soul. If you mix these earthly things with your soul and let them lie too near you, they will in time consume and undo your soul.

The ambitious person sells his soul for honor. As Alexander the Sixth sold his soul to the devil for a popedom. And what is honor but an imaginary thing? A torch lit by the breath of people, with the least puff of censure blown out! It is a miserable thing to depend on the fame of others. How many souls have been blown to hell with the wind of popular applause?

The sensual person sells his soul for pleasure. Heliogabalus drowned himself in sweet water; so many drown their souls in the sweet perfumed waters of pleasure. Plato calls pleasure the bait that catches souls — they are caught as fish on a hook. Pleasure is a silken halter, a flattering devil; it kills with embracing.

Those who abuse their souls that poison their souls. Error is a sweet poison; Ignatius calls it the invention of the devil. A man may as well damn his soul by error as by vice, and may as soon go to hell for a drunken opinion as for a drunken life.

Those who abuse their souls, that starve their souls — those who say they are above ordinances. But surely we shall not be above ordinances until we are above sin. The apostle says that in the blessed sacrament we are to remember the Lord's death until he comes (1 Corinthians 11:26) — that is, until Christ comes to judgment. How then can anyone omit the sacraments without a contempt and affront to Christ himself? If Paul and the apostles — those giants in grace — needed the Lord's Supper to confirm and strengthen them, how much more do we need such holy ordinances, who have but infant-faith! Satan likes these fasting days — he would have men fast from ordinances; if the body is kept from food, it cannot live long.

If the soul is so precious a thing, take heed that you do not lose your soul; consider what a loss it is, as appears in two things.

It is a foolish loss to lose the soul (Luke 12:20): you fool, this night your soul shall be required of you. It is a foolish loss in a threefold respect.

It is a foolish loss because there is a possibility of saving the soul; we have time to work in, we have light to work by, we have the Spirit offering help. The soul is like a ship laden with jewels; the Spirit is a wind to blow. If we would but loosen anchor from sin, we might arrive at the port of happiness.

It is a foolish loss because we lose the soul for things of no value; worldly things are infinitely below the soul. The world is but an enchantment; these things glitter in our eyes. But at death we shall say we have set our eyes on that which is not. To lose the soul for such poor things is foolish — it is as if one should throw a diamond at a pear tree and lose his diamond.

It is a foolish loss for a person to lose his soul when he himself has a hand in it; is it not folly to give oneself poison? A sinner has his hands dipped in the blood of his own soul (Hosea 13:9): your destruction is from yourself. They lay wait for their own blood (Proverbs 1:18). The foolish sinner nourishes those lusts that kill his soul. The tree breeds the worm, and the worm eats the tree. Were it not folly for a garrison to open its gates to the enemy that besieges it? The sinner opens to those lusts which war against his soul (1 Peter 2:11). This is a foolish loss.

It is a fatal loss to lose the soul.

It is an unparalleled loss because in losing the soul so many things are lost with it. As a merchant in losing his ship loses many things with it — his money, plate, jewels, spices. So he who loses his soul loses Christ, loses the Comforter, loses the society of angels, loses heaven.

It is an irreparable loss; other losses may be made up again. If a man loses his health he may recover it; if he loses his estate he may regain it. But if he loses his soul, this loss can never be made up. Are there any more Saviors to die for the soul? As Naomi said to her daughters: are there yet any more sons in my womb? (Ruth 1:11) Has God any more sons, or will he send his Son again into the world? No — if the soul is lost, Christ's next coming is not to save it, but to judge it. Christian, remember you have but one soul, and if that be gone, all is gone. God, says Chrysostom, has given you two eyes; if you lose one, you have another — but you have but one soul, and if that perishes, you are completely undone. The merchant who ventures everything in one ship — if that ship is lost, he is quite ruined.

The loss of the soul is an eternal loss; the soul once lost is lost forever. He that loses his soul may say as that wicked doctor of Paris on his deathbed: *Parcite funeribus, mihi nil prodesse valebit; Heu infelicem, cur me genuere parentes? Ah miser aeternos vado damnatus ad ignes.* The sinner and the furnace shall never be parted (Isaiah 33:14). As the sinner's heart will never be emptied of sin, so God's vial shall never be emptied of wrath; it is an eternal loss.

Do what you can to secure the most important thing — to save these precious souls. In times of danger people call in their debts and labor to secure their estates. All who are yet in their natural state — your souls are mortgaged. If your land were mortgaged you would endeavor to redeem it; your souls are mortgaged. Sin has mortgaged them, sin has laid your souls in pawn — where do you think your souls are? The pawn is in the devil's hand; a person in the state of nature is said to be under the power of Satan (Acts 26:18). There are but two ways to fetch home the pawn, both set down in Acts 20:21: repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Unravel all your works of sin by repentance; honor Christ's merits by believing. Upon this wing the soul flies to the ark Christ and is secured from danger.

THE SOUL'S MALADY AND CURE



Luke 5:31 — They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

The occasion of the words is set down in the context; Levi was called from the tax collector's table. Christ called him, and there went out power with the word — Levi left all, rose up, and followed him (verse 28). Levi did not consult with flesh and blood; he did not say: what shall I do for my salary? How shall I live? I will lose many a sweet deal at the custom house — and besides, if I follow Christ I must espouse persecution. He does not reason thus; but having a call, he hastens after Christ. And to give Christ a pledge of his love, he makes him a feast (verse 29): Levi made him a great feast in his own house. Christ always came with his cost; Levi feasted Christ with his provisions, and Christ feasted him with salvation. Well, Christ being at this feast, the Pharisees begin to murmur (verse 30): why do you eat and drink with tax collectors? The Pharisees were offended that he went in and ate with tax collectors, who were counted the worst of sinners. They also accused Christ: why do you eat with tax collectors and sinners? Malice will never lack matter for accusation. Though the demons proclaimed Christ's holiness (Luke 4:34): I know who you are, the Holy One of God — yet the Pharisees taxed him for a sin-

ner. See what malice will do: it will make a man say what even the devil will not say. If Christ who was a lamb without spot could not escape the world's censures, no wonder if his people are loaded with the slanders of the wicked.

But let us examine the charge they bring against Christ and see how groundless it was. They indicted Christ for going in with sinners.

First, Christ did nothing but what was according to his commission; the commission he received from his Father was that he should come to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15).

Second, Christ went in with sinners not to join them in their sins, but to heal them of their sins. To accuse Christ was — as Augustine says — like accusing a physician because he goes among those sick with the plague. This groundless accusation Christ overhears, and in the text gives these envious Pharisees a silencing answer: they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. As if Christ had said: you Pharisees think yourselves righteous — you need no Savior. But these poor tax collectors are sick and ready to die, and I come as a physician to cure them. Therefore do not be angry at a work of mercy; though you will not be healed, do not hinder me from healing others.

In the words there are two general parts.

First, the dying patients. Second, the healing physician.

First, the dying patients — them that are sick. Observe:

Sin is a soul-disease (Psalm 103:8; Isaiah 53:4): he has borne our griefs — in the Hebrew: our sicknesses. Man at first was created in a healthy condition; he had no sickness of soul, he suffered nothing. The soul had its perfect beauty and glory; the eye was

clear, the heart pure, the affections tuned by the finger of God into a most sweet harmony. God made man upright (Ecclesiastes 7:29), but Adam by eating the apple fell sick, and would have died forever had not God found a way for his recovery. For the amplification of this doctrine, there are three things to be considered.

First, in what sense sin is compared to sickness. Second, what the diseases of the soul are. Third, that sin-sickness is the worst.

In what sense sin is compared to sickness.

Sin may be compared to sickness in the manner of catching.

Sickness is caught often through carelessness; some get cold by leaving off clothing. So when Adam grew careless of God's command and laid aside the garment of his innocency, he caught a sickness. His sin turned the world, which was a paradise, into a hospital.

Sickness is caught sometimes through excess and intemperance. When our first parents lost the golden restraint of temperance and ate of the forbidden tree, they and all their descendants fell into sickness. The tree of knowledge had sickness and death under its leaves. We all grew desperately sick by eating of this tree. Adam's excess has brought us to fasting and weeping. Besides that disease caught at first through inheritance, we have added to it by our own personal transgressions. We have increased our sickness — therefore sinners are said to grow worse and worse (2 Timothy 3:13).

Sin may be compared to sickness for its nature. Sickness is of a spreading nature; it spreads all over the body, working into every part, disordering the whole. So sin does not rest in one part but spreads into all the faculties of the soul and members of the body

(Isaiah 1:5-6): the whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint; from the sole of the foot to the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and open sores.

Sin corrupts the understanding; Gregory Nazianzene calls the understanding the lamp of reason, and this lamp burns dim (Ephesians 4:18): having their understanding darkened. Sin has drawn a veil over the understanding, casting a mist before our eyes, so that we neither know God nor ourselves. Naturally we are only wise to do evil (Jeremiah 4:22); witty at sin, wise to damn ourselves. The understanding is defiled (1 Corinthians 2:14); we can no more judge of spiritual objects until the Spirit anoints our eyes than a blind man can judge of colors. Our understandings are subject to mistakes; we call evil good and good evil (Isaiah 5:20). A straight stick under water appears crooked; so to a natural understanding the straight line of truth appears crooked.

The memory is diseased; the memory at first was like a golden cabinet in which divine truths were safely kept. But now it is like a colander or leaking vessel which lets all that is good run out. The memory is like a sieve that sifts out the fine flour but keeps the bran. So the memory lets saving truths go and holds nothing but froth and vanity. Many a person can remember a story when he has forgotten his creed. The memory is like a bad stomach that lacks the power to retain food — all the meat comes up again. So the most precious truths will not stay in the memory, but are gone again.

The will is diseased; the will is the soul's commander in chief, the master wheel. But how irregular and erratic it is! In creation the will was like the golden restraint that was said to guide and rule the winged horse; it answered to God's will. This was the lan-

guage of the will in innocence: I delight to do your will, O God (Psalm 40:8). But now it is distempered; it is like an iron sinew that refuses to yield and bend to God (Isaiah 48:4). You will not come to me that you may have life (John 5:40). People will rather die than come to their physician. The will is a rebel against God (Acts 7:51): you always resist the Holy Spirit. The will is diseased.

The affections are sick.

First, the affection of desire; a sick person desires what is harmful for him — he calls for wine in a fever. So the natural person being sick desires what is harmful; he has no desire after Christ, does not hunger and thirst after righteousness. But he desires poison — he desires to take his fill of sin; he loves death (Proverbs 8:36).

Second, the affection of grief; a person grieves for the loss of an estate but not for the lack of God's favor. He grieves to see the plague or cancer in his body, but not for the plague of his heart.

Third, the affection of joy; many can rejoice in a wedge of gold but not in the cross of Christ. The affections are sick and disordered.

The conscience is diseased (Titus 1:15): their mind and conscience is defiled. Conscience is either erroneous — binding to what is sinful (Acts 26:9): I truly thought I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus. Or it is dumb — it will not tell people of sin; it is a silenced preacher. Or it is dead (Ephesians 4:19): conscience is deadened and insensible; the habit of sinning has taken away the sense of sinning. Thus the sickness of sin has gone over the whole soul, like that cloud which overspread the face of the heavens (1 Kings 18:45).

Sickness debilitates and weakens the body; a sick person is unfit to walk. So this sickness of sin weakens the soul (Romans 5:6): when we were without strength Christ died. In innocence Adam was in some sense like the angels — he could serve God with winged swiftness and filial cheerfulness. But sin brought sickness into the soul, cutting the source of his strength; he is now stripped of all ability for service. And where grace has begun to work, though a Christian is not as ill as before, yet he is very faint. When we find ourselves dead in duty, our holy affections languishing, think thus: this is my sickness; sin has made me weak. As Jephthah said to his daughter (Judges 11:35): alas, my daughter, you have brought me very low. So may the soul say: alas, my sin, you have brought me very low, almost to the gates of death.

Sickness eclipses the beauty of the body (Psalm 39:11): when you with rebukes correct man, you make his beauty consume away like a moth. Thus sin is a soul-sickness; it has eclipsed the glory of the soul, turning radiance into paleness. That beauty of grace which once sparkled as gold — how is this gold become dim! The soul which once had a brilliant brightness in it, with the understanding spangled with knowledge, the will crowned with liberty, the affections like so many seraphs burning in love to God — now the glory is departed. Sin has turned beauty into deformity. As some faces by sickness are so disfigured they can hardly be recognized; so the soul of man is by sin so sadly transformed — having lost the image of God — that it can hardly be recognized (Joel 2:31). Sin has turned that sun of beauty which shone in the soul into a Cimmerian darkness.

Sickness takes away the taste; a sick person does not taste sweetness in his food. So the sinner by reason of soul-sickness has lost his taste for spiritual things. The word of God is bread to strengthen and wine to comfort; but the sinner tastes no sweetness in the word. A child of God who has been made spiritual by grace tastes a savoring in ordinances — the promise drops as a honey-comb (Psalm 19:10). But a natural person is sick and his taste is gone; since tasting the forbidden tree, he has lost his taste.

Sickness takes away the comfort of life; a sick person has no joy in anything; his life is a burden to him. So the sin-sick soul is empty of all true comfort, and his laughter is but the pleasant dream of a sick person. He has no true title to comfort; his sin is not pardoned — he may be in hell before night for all he knows.

Sickness ushers in death; it is the prologue to death. Sickness is as it were the cutting of the tree, and death is the falling of the tree. So this disease of sin, if not cured in time, brings the second death.

What the diseases of the soul are. Adam by breaking the vessel of original righteousness has filled the soul full of diseases. The body is not subject to as many diseases as the soul. Pride is the swelling tumor of the soul; lust is the fever; error the gangrene; unbelief the plague of the heart; hypocrisy the scurvy; hardness of heart the stone; anger the frenzy; malice the wolf in the breast; covetousness the dropsy; spiritual sloth the wasting sickness; apostasy the seizure. Here are eleven soul-diseases, and when they reach their full height, they are dangerous and most frequently prove fatal.

The third thing to demonstrate is that sin is the worst sickness. To have a body full of plague sores is sad; but to have the soul spotted with sin is far worse; as appears in these considerations.

The body may be diseased and the conscience quiet (Isaiah 33:24): the inhabitant shall not say I am sick — he would scarcely feel his sickness because sin was pardoned. But when the soul is sick of any reigning lust, the conscience is troubled (Isaiah 57:21): there is no peace to the wicked, says my God. When Francis Spira had renounced his former faith, his conscience burned as hell, and no spiritual medicine that ministers applied could ever allay that inflammation.

A person may have bodily diseases yet God may love him. Asa was diseased in his feet and had the gout, yet was a favorite with God (2 Kings 15:23). God's hand may go out against a person, yet his heart may be toward him. But soul-diseases are symptoms of God's anger; as he is a holy God, he cannot but hate sin (Psalm 138:6): God beholds the proud from afar. God hates a sinner for his plague-sores (Zechariah 11:8): my soul loathed them.

Sickness at worst only separates from the society of friends; but this disease of sin, if not cured, separates from the society of God and angels. The leper was to be shut out of the camp; this leprosy of sin without the interposition of mercy shuts people out of the camp of heaven (Revelation 21:8). This is the misery of those who die in their sins — they are cut off from God's presence forever, in whose presence is fullness of joy.

See into what a sad condition sin has brought us; it has made us desperately sick. O how many sick, bedridden souls there are in the world — sick with pride, sick with lust! Sin has turned our

houses and churches into hospitals, full of sick persons. What David's enemies said reproachfully of him is true of every natural person (Psalm 41:8): an evil disease clings to him. He has the plague of the heart (1 Kings 8). Even those who have been renewed are cured only in part; they have some lingering of the disease, some stirrings of corruption. From this sin-sickness arises all other diseases: plague, gout, stone, fever (1 Corinthians 11:29-30): for this cause many are weak and sickly among you.

If sin is a soul-sickness, then how foolish are those who hide their sins! It is folly to hide a disease. The wicked take more care to have sin covered than cured; if they can but sin in private and not be suspected, they think all is well. But there is a curse on him who puts sin in a secret place (Deuteronomy 27:15). The hiding and concealing of a disease proves fatal (Proverbs 28:13): he who covers his sins shall not prosper.

If sin is a soul-sickness, then what need there is of the ministry! Ministers are physicians under God to cure sick souls (Ephesians 4:11); they are a college of physicians. Their work is to find out diseases and apply medicines; it is a hard work. While ministers are curing others, they themselves are often near unto death (Philippians 2:30). They find their people sick with various diseases — some poisoned with error, some surfeited with love of the world, some stabbed at the heart with gross sin. How hard it is to heal all these gangrenous souls! Many ministers sooner wear themselves out by preaching than cure their patients. But though the work of the ministry is laborious, it is needful; while there are sick souls, there will be need of spiritual physicians. How unworthy then are those who malign and persecute the ministers of God (1 Corinthians 4:9)! Would it not be cruelty and barbarism if there

were a law that all physicians should be banished from the land? And is it not worse to see multitudes of sick souls lying and bleeding, with their spiritual physicians removed from them? This is a wrath-provoking sin (2 Chronicles 36:16): they abused his prophets until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, until there was no remedy. The Lord will wither that arm which is stretched out against his prophets.

If sin is a soul-disease, let this serve to humble us. If any consideration will humble, this may; sin is a soul-disease. If a woman had a fair face but a cancer in her breast, it would keep her from being proud of her beauty. So Christian, though you are endued with knowledge and morality which are fair to look upon, remember you are diseased in your soul — here is a cancer in the breast to humble you. This is certainly one reason why God leaves sin in his own children: that the sight of their sores may make their plumes of pride fall. There are two humbling sights: a sight of God's glory, and a sight of our diseases. Though the saints have their golden graces, yet they have their leprous spots. Since sin has made us vile, let it make us humble; since it has taken away our beauty, let it take away our pride. Christians are never more lovely in God's eyes than when they are loathsome in their own. Those sins which humble shall never damn.

If sin is a soul-disease, and the most damnable disease, let us be afraid of it. Had we diseases in our bodies — an ulcer in the lungs or a consuming fever — we would fear lest they should bring death. Fear sin-sickness lest it bring the second death. You who are a drunkard or a swearer, tremble at your soul-maladies. Why do not people fear sin? Why do they not shake with this disease? The reason is:

Stupidity; as they have the fever of sin, so they also have a lethargy (1 Timothy 4:2): having their conscience seared with a hot iron. He who has an unbelieving heart and a seared conscience — that person's case is desperate.

Presumption. Many fancy that they can treat the boil themselves; though they are sick, they can make themselves well. It is but saying a few prayers, but a sigh or a tear, and they shall presently recover. But is it so easy to be healed of sin? Is it easy to make old Adam bleed to death? Take heed of a spiritual lethargy; fear your disease lest it prove fatal. Physicians speak of a disease which makes people die laughing; so Satan tickles many with the pleasure of sin, and they die laughing.

If sin is a soul-distemper, then count as your best friends those who would reclaim you from your sins. The patient is thankful to the physician who tells him of his disease and uses means to recover him. When ministers tell you in love of your sins and would reclaim you, take it in good part; the worst they intend is to cure you of your sickness. David was glad of a healing rebuke (Psalm 141:5): let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness. Ministers are charged by virtue of their office to reprove (2 Timothy 4:2). They must come with cutting medicines as well as soothing ones (Titus 1:13): rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith. The word is cutting — as a surgeon searches a wound and then lances and cuts out the gangrenous flesh. So must the ministers of Christ rebuke sharply in order to save their dying patients. Who is angry with the physician for prescribing a bitter medicine? Why should anyone be angry with Christ's ministers for reproof,

when by their office they are physicians and by their love they are fathers? But how few are they who will take a reproof kindly (Amos 5:10): they hate him who rebukes in the gate.

People do not love reproof because they are in love with their sins; a strange thing that anyone should love their disease, but so it is (Proverbs 1:22). Sin is the poison of the soul, yet people love it; and he who loves his sin hates a reproof.

Sin possesses people with a kind of madness (Luke 15:7); people are mad in sin (Jeremiah 50:38). When sickness grows so violent that people lie raving and are mad, they quarrel with their physician and say he comes to kill them. So when sin grows to a head and the disease turns to frenzy, then people quarrel with those who tell them of their sins. It argues wisdom to receive a reproof (Proverbs 9:8): rebuke a wise man and he will love you. A wise person would rather drink a sharp medicine than die of his disease.

If sin is a soul-sickness, do not feed this disease. He who is wise will avoid those things that increase his disease. If he has a fever, he avoids wine which would inflame it; if he has the stone, he avoids salty food. Why should not people be as wise for their souls? You who have a drunken lust, do not feed it with wine; you who have a malicious lust, do not feed it with revenge. You who have an unclean lust, make no provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14). He who feeds a disease feeds an enemy. Either kill your sin, or your sin will kill you.

If sin is a soul-disease, then labor to be sensible of this disease. There are few who are sensible of their soul-sickness; they think they are well and suffer nothing. The church of Laodicea was a sick

patient, but she thought she was well (Revelation 3:17): you say I am rich and have need of nothing. Come to many a person and ask about the state of their soul, and they will say they have a good heart and do not doubt they shall be saved. What should be the reason that when people are so desperately sick in their souls and ready to drop into hell, they yet imagine themselves to be in a very good condition?

There is a spiritual film upon their eye; they do not see their sores. Laodicea thought herself rich because she was blind (Revelation 3:17). The god of this world blinds people's eyes so that they can neither see their disease nor their physician. Many bless God their condition is good, not from the knowledge of their happiness, but from ignorance of their danger. When Haman's face was covered, he was near execution. Pray with David: lighten my eyes that I sleep not the sleep of death (Psalm 13:3).

People who are sick think themselves well because of the haughtiness of their spirits. Alexander thought himself for a while to be the son of Jupiter and no less than a god. What an arrogant creature is man! Though he is sick unto death, he thinks it too great a humiliation to acknowledge a disease. Either he is not sick, or he can heal himself. If he is poisoned, he runs to the herb of his own righteousness to cure him (Romans 10:3).

People who are sick imagine themselves well through self-love. He who loves another will not believe any evil report of him. People are self-lovers (2 Timothy 3:2); every man is a dove in his own eyes. Therefore he does not suspect himself of any disease; he will sooner question the Scripture's truth than his own malady.

Self-deceit and the deceit of the heart appears in two things.

In hiding the disease; the heart hides sin as Rachel hid her father's idols (Genesis 31:34). Hazael did not think he was as sick as he was; he could not imagine that so much wickedness lay lurking in him (2 Kings 8:13): is your servant a dog that he should do this great thing? As the viper has his teeth hidden in his gums, so though there is much corruption in the heart, yet the heart hides it and draws a veil over it.

The heart holds a false mirror before the eye, making a person appear fair and his condition very good. The heart can deceive with counterfeit grace. Hence it is that people are insensible of their spiritual condition and think themselves well when they are sick unto death.

People take up an exalted opinion of themselves and fancy their spiritual condition better than it is through mistake, and this mistake is twofold.

They enjoy glorious privileges; they were born within the sound of the church bells, they were baptized, they have been fed with the bread of heaven. Therefore they hope they are in a good condition (Judges 17:13): then said Micah, now I know the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite as my priest. But this is a mistake; outward privileges do not save. What is anyone the better for ordinances unless he is better by ordinances? A child may die with the breast in its mouth. Many of the Jews perished though Christ himself was their preacher.

The other mistake is described by the apostle (2 Corinthians 10:12): they measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves among themselves are not wise. Here is a double error.

They measure themselves by themselves; that is, they see they are not as bad as they were, therefore they judge their condition is good. A dwarf may be taller than he was, yet still a dwarf. The patient may be less sick than he was, yet far from well. A person may be better than he was, yet not good.

They compare themselves among themselves; they see they are not as wicked and profane as others, therefore they think themselves well because they are not as sick as others. This is a mistake; one may as well die of a consumption as of the plague. One man may not be as far from heaven as another, yet may not be near heaven. To the law, to the testimony; the word of God is the true standard by which we are to judge of the state of our souls.

Let us take heed of this danger — fancying our condition better than it is. Let us take heed of a spiritual numbness — being sick in our souls yet not sensible of this sickness. What do people talk of a light within them? The natural light within them is not sufficient to show them the diseases of their souls; this light tells them they are whole and have no need of a physician.

What an infinite mercy it is for a person to be made sensible of sin, and seeing himself sick, to cry out with David: I have sinned against the Lord (2 Samuel 12:13). Were it not a mercy for a person who is deranged to be restored to the use of his reason? So for him who is spiritually distempered and in a lethargy to come to himself and see both his wound and his remedy! Until the sinner is made sensible of his disease, the medicine of mercy does not belong to him.

If sin is a soul-sickness, then labor to get this disease healed. If a person had a disease in his body — a pleurisy or cancer — he would use all means for a cure. The woman in the gospel who had a bleeding disease spent her whole estate upon the physicians (Luke 8:43). Be more earnest to have your soul cured than your body. Make David's prayer (Psalm 41:4): heal my soul, for I have sinned. Do you have a wasting body? Pray even more to God to heal the consumption in your soul. Go to God first for the cure of your soul (James 5:14): is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him. The apostle does not say: let him call for the physician; but the elders — that is, the ministers. Most people send first for the physician and then for the minister, showing they are more concerned for the recovery of their bodies than their souls. But if soul-diseases are more dangerous and deadly, then we should prefer the spiritual cure before the bodily. Heal my soul, for I have sinned.

Until we are cured, we are not fit to do God any service. A sick person cannot work; while the disease of sin is violent, we are not fit for any heavenly employment. We can neither work for God nor work out our own salvation. So long as we are diseased with sin, we are lame and bedridden, unfit for work. We read indeed of a sinner's works, but they are dead works (Hebrews 6:1).

If we are not cured, we are under a curse; if our disease remains upon us, the wrath of God remains upon us.

But how shall we get this disease of sin cured? This brings us to the second part of the text — the healing physician: they that are whole need not a physician.

Jesus Christ is a soul-physician. Ministers are physicians, whom Christ in his name sends abroad into the world. He says to the apostles, and through them to all his ministers: Lo, I am with you always to the end of the world (Matthew 28:20). That is: I am with you to assist and bless you, and to make your ministry healing. But though ministers are physicians, they are only under-physicians. Jesus Christ is the chief physician. He it is who teaches us all our prescriptions and goes forth with our labors — else the medicine we prescribe would never work. All the ministers under heaven would not accomplish any cure without the help of this great physician. I shall show: first, that Christ is a physician; second, why he is a physician; third, that he is the only physician; fourth, how he heals his patients; fifth, that he is the best physician.

That Christ is a physician — it is one of his titles (Exodus 15:26): I am the Lord who heals you. He is a physician for the body; he anointed the blind, cleansed the lepers, healed the sick, raised the dead (Matthew 8:16). He it is who puts virtue into medicine and makes it healing. And he is a physician for the soul (Psalm 147:3): he heals the brokenhearted. We are all as so many helpless, diseased persons. Christ is a soul-physician who heals these diseases. To set forth his healing virtue, Christ is compared in Scripture to the following:

The bronze serpent (Numbers 21:9): those who were stung were cured by looking on the bronze serpent. So when the soul is stung by the old serpent, it is cured by looking to Christ.

The good Samaritan (Luke 10:33-34): a certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves, which stripped him and wounded him and departed, leaving him half

dead. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was, and when he saw him had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in wine and oil. We have wounded ourselves by sin, and the wound would have been incurable, had not Christ that good Samaritan poured in wine and oil.

The trees of the sanctuary (Ezekiel 47:12): the fruit thereof shall be for food, and the leaf thereof for medicine. Thus the Lord Jesus, that tree of life in paradise, has a healing virtue; he heals our pride, unbelief, and more. As he feeds our graces, so he heals our corruptions.

Why Christ is a physician.

In regard to his calling; God the Father called him to practice as a physician; he anointed him to the work of healing (Luke 4:18): the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted. Christ came into the world as into a hospital to heal sin-sick souls. Though it was a glorious work, yet Christ would not undertake it until he was commissioned by his Father. Christ was anointed and appointed to the work of a physician — this is for our imitation. We are not to meddle in any matters without a calling; that is acting outside our sphere.

Jesus Christ undertook this healing work because of the need we were in of a physician. Christ came to be our physician not because we deserved him, but because we needed him. Not our merit but our misery drew Christ from heaven. Had he not come, we must have perished and died of our wounds. Our disease was not

ordinary — it had seized on every part; it made us not only sick, but dead. And such remedies were required as none but Christ could give.

Christ came as a physician out of the sweetness of his nature; he is like the good Samaritan who had compassion on the wounded man (Luke 10:33). A physician may come to the patient only for gain — not so much to help the patient as to help himself. But Christ came purely out of sympathy; there was nothing in us to tempt Christ to heal us. As sin made us sick, so it made us poor; so Christ came as a physician not out of hope to receive anything from us, but prompted by his own goodness. I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely (Hosea 14:4). Love set Christ to work — not only his Father's commission, but his own compassion moved him.

The third particular is that Christ is the only physician. Acts 4:12: Neither is there salvation in any other. Not many physicians but one will suffice. The Roman church would have other healers besides Christ; they would make angels their physicians. But all the angels in heaven cannot heal one sick soul; they are indeed described by their wings (Isaiah 6:2), but they have no healing under their wings. The Roman church would also have people heal themselves by their own merits. Adam ate that apple which made him and his descendants sick, but he could find no herb in paradise to cure him. Our merits are rather damning than healing. To make use of other physicians and medicines is as if the Israelites, in contempt of that bronze serpent Moses set up, had erected other bronze serpents. In bodily sickness it is lawful to seek multiple physicians; but the sick soul, if it joins any other physician with Christ, surely dies.

How Christ heals his patients.

There are four things in Christ that are healing.

His word is healing (Psalm 107:20): he sent his word and healed them. His word in the mouth of his ministers is healing; when the spirit is wounded in desertion, Christ creates lips that speak peace (Isaiah 57:19). The word written is a repository in which God has laid up sovereign oils and balsams to recover sick souls. The word preached is the pouring out of these oils and applying them to the sick patient. We look upon the word as a weak thing — what is the breath of a person to save a soul? But the power of the Lord is present to heal (Luke 5:17). Christ makes his word convincing, converting, comforting.

Caution: not that the word heals all; to some it is not a healing but a killing word (2 Corinthians 2:16): to the one we are a savor of death unto death. Two sorts of patients die of their disease.

Those who sin presumptuously — though they know a thing is sin, yet they will do it (Job 24:13): they are of those who rebel against the light. David prays (Psalm 19): keep back your servant from presumptuous sins.

Those who sin maliciously — when the disease comes to this point, the patient will die (Hebrews 10:29). But to those who belong to the election of grace, the word is the healing medicine Christ uses. He sent his word and healed them.

Christ's wounds are healing (Isaiah 53:5): with his stripes we are healed. Christ made a medicine of his own body and blood; the physician died to cure the patient. The pelican when her young ones are bitten by serpents feeds them with her own blood to recover them. Thus when we were bitten by the old serpent, Jesus

Christ prescribes a receipt of his own blood to heal and restore us. *Sanguis Christi salus Christiani*. The blood of Christ, being the blood of one who was God as well as man, had infinite merit to appease God and infinite virtue to heal us. This, this is the balm of Gilead that recovers a soul which is sick even to death. Balm, as naturalists say, is a juice which a little shrub (being cut with glass) does weep out; this was anciently of very precious esteem — the savor of it was odoriferous, the virtue of it sovereign; it would cure ulcers and the stinging of serpents. This balm may be an emblem of Christ's blood — it has a most sovereign virtue in it; it heals the ulcer of sin, the stinging of temptation; it merits for us justification (Romans 5:9). O how precious is this balm of Gilead! By this blood we enter into heaven.

Christ's Spirit is healing; the blood of Christ heals the guilt of sin; the Spirit of Christ heals the pollution of sin. The Spirit is compared to oil — the anointing of the Spirit (Isaiah 61) — showing the healing virtue of the Spirit; oil is healing. Christ by his Spirit heals the rebellion of the will, the stone of the heart. Though sin is not removed, it is subdued.

Christ's rod is healing (Isaiah 27:9); Christ never wounds but to heal. The rod of affliction is to recover the sick patient. David's bones were broken that his soul might be healed. God uses affliction as the surgeon uses his lance — to let out the venom and corruption of the soul and make way for a cure.

But if Christ is a physician, why are not all healed?

Because all do not know they are sick; they do not see the sores and ulcers of their souls. Will Christ cure those who see no need of him? Many ignorant people thank God they have good hearts; but

that heart can no more be good which lacks grace than a body can be sound which lacks health.

All are not healed because they love their sickness (Psalm 52:3): you love evil. Many embrace their disease. Augustine says that before his conversion he prayed against sin, but his heart whispered: not yet, Lord. How many love their disease better than their physician! While sin is loved, Christ's medicines are loathed.

All are not healed because they do not seek a physician. If they have any bodily ailment, they presently send to the physician; but their souls are sick and they do not seek their physician Christ. You will not come to me that you may have life (John 5:40). Christ takes it as an undervaluing of him that we will not send to him. Christ refuses those patients who make use of him only as a last resort. You who scorn Christ in time of health — Christ may despise you in the time of sickness.

All are not healed because they would be self-healers; they would make their duties their saviors. The Roman church would have people be their own physicians. But Christ will have the honor of the cure, or he will never heal us. Not our tears, but his blood saves.

All are not healed because they do not take the medicine which Christ prescribes. They would be cured, but they are unwilling to put themselves into a course of treatment. Christ prescribes them to drink the bitter potion of repentance and take the pill of mortification, but they cannot endure this. They would rather die than take medicine. If the patient refuses to take the prescriptions the physician gives, no wonder he is not healed. Christians, you have had many prescriptions — have you taken them? Ask your con-

science. There are many hearers of the word who are like foolish patients who send to the doctor for medicine, but when they have it, let the medicine stand by in the glass and do not take it. It is probable you have not taken the prescriptions the gospel gives, because the word has had no operation on your hearts — you are as proud, as worldly, as malicious as ever.

All are not healed because they have no confidence in their physician. When Christ came to work any cure, he first asked: do you believe that I am able to do this? (Matthew 9:28). This undoes many: O says the sinner, there is no mercy for me, Christ cannot heal me. Take heed — your unbelief is worse than all your other diseases. Did not Christ pray for those who crucified him: Father, forgive them? Some of those who had a hand in shedding his blood were saved! Why then do you say Christ cannot heal you? Unbelief dishonors Christ, hinders from a cure, closes the wounds of Christ. Millions die of their disease because they do not believe in their physician.

The fifth and last particular is that Christ is the best physician. To set forth the praise and honor of Jesus Christ, let me show you wherein he excels all other physicians.

He is the most skillful physician; there is no disease too hard for him (Psalm 103:3): who heals all your diseases. The pool of Bethesda might be an emblem of Christ's blood (John 5:4): whosoever first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. There are certain diseases physicians cannot cure — a consumption in the lungs, some kinds of obstructions and gangrenes; *non est in medico semper relevetur ut ager*; some diseases are *opprobria medicorum*, the reproaches of physicians. But there is no *immedicabile vulnus* — no disease

can pose Christ's skill; he can cure the gangrene of sin when it is come to the heart. He healed Mary Magdalene, an unchaste sinner; he healed Paul who breathed out persecution against the church — insomuch that Paul stands and wonders at the cure (1 Timothy 1:13): I obtained mercy. Christ heals head-distempers and heart-distempers — which may keep poor trembling souls from despair. O says the sinner, never was any so diseased as I! But look up to your physician Christ, who has healing under his wings. He can melt a heart of stone and wash away black sins in the crimson of his blood; there are no desperate cases with Christ. Indeed, there is one disease which Christ does not heal — the sin against the Holy Ghost, called a sin unto death (1 John 5:16); there is no healing for this disease. Not that Christ could not cure this, but the sinner will not be cured; the king could pardon a traitor, but if he will have no pardon, he must die. The sin against the Holy Ghost is unpardonable because the sinner will have no pardon; he scorns Christ's blood, despites his Spirit, therefore his sin has no sacrifice (Hebrews 10:26-29).

Christ is the best physician because he cures the better part — the soul. Other physicians can cure the liver or spleen; Christ cures the heart. They can cure tainted blood; Christ cures the defiled conscience (Hebrews 9:14): how much more shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience from dead works? Galen and Hippocrates might cure the stone in the kidneys, but Christ cures the stone in the heart. He is the best physician who cures the more excellent part. The soul is immortal and angelic; man was made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) not in regard of his body, but his soul. Since the soul is so divine and noble, the cure of the soul far exceeds the cure of the body.

Christ is the best physician because he causes us to feel our disease. The disease of sin, though most damnable, is least discernible. Many a person is sin-sick, but the devil has given him such deadening medicine that he sleeps the sleep of death, and all the thunders of the word cannot awaken him. But the Lord Jesus, this blessed physician, awakes the soul out of its lethargy, and then it is in a hopeful way of recovery. The jailor was never so near a cure as when he cried out: sirs, what must I do to be saved? (Acts 16:30)

Christ shows more love to his patients than any other physician; which appears in five ways.

In that long journey he took from heaven to earth.

In that he comes to his patients without being sent for. The sick send to their physicians and use many entreaties; here the physician comes unsent for. I am found of those who did not seek me (Isaiah 65:1). He prevents us with mercy; he entreats us to be healed. If Christ had not first come to us and like the good Samaritan poured in wine and oil, we must have died of our wounds.

This physician lets himself bleed to cure his patient (Isaiah 53:5): but he was wounded for our transgressions — through his wounds we may see his heart.

Our rejections and unkindnesses do not drive Christ away from us. Physicians if provoked by their patients go away in a rage and will come no more. We abuse our physician, thrust him away, bolt him out. Yet Christ does not forsake us, but comes again and applies his sovereign oils and balsams. I have spread out my hands

all the day to a rebellious people (Isaiah 65:2). Christ puts up wrongs and returns, resolved to go through with the cure. O the love of this heavenly physician!

Christ himself drank that bitter cup which we should have drunk, and by his taking the medicine we are healed and saved. Thus Christ has shown more love than any physician ever showed to a patient.

Christ is the most affordable physician; sickness is not only a consumption to the body but to the purse. Physicians' fees are burdensome, but Jesus Christ gives us our medicine freely without charge (Isaiah 55:1): come without money and without price. He desires us to bring nothing to him but broken hearts. And when he has cured us he desires nothing from us but our love — which would seem very reasonable.

Christ heals with more ease than any other; other physicians apply pills, potions, and bleeding. Christ cures with more facility — with a word. Christ made the demon go out with a word of speaking (Mark 9:25). So when the soul is spiritually oppressed, Christ can heal with a word. He can even cure with a look: when Peter had fallen into a relapse, Christ looked on Peter, and he wept. Christ's look melted Peter into repentance — it was a healing look. If Christ does but cast a look upon the soul, he can recover it. Therefore David prays for a look from God (Psalm 119:132): look upon me and be merciful to me.

Christ is the most tender-hearted physician. He has ended his passion, yet not his compassion. How he pities sick souls! He is not more full of skill than of sympathy (Hosea 11:8): my heart is turned within me. Christ shows his compassion in that he propor-

tions his medicine to the strength of the patient. Medicine if it is too sharp for the constitution endangers life; Christ gives such gentle medicine as shall work kindly and savingly. Though he will press sinners, yet he will not break the bruised reed. O the movements of Christ's heart toward poor souls that feel themselves heartsick with sin! He holds their head and heart when they are fainting; he brings the cordials of his promises to keep the sick patient from dying away. Christians, you perhaps may have hard thoughts of your physician Christ and think he is cruel and intends to destroy you. But O the workings of his heart toward humble and broken-hearted sinners! Psalm 147:3: He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. Every groan of the patient goes to the heart of this physician.

Physicians often prescribe medicine that is harmful to the patient in two cases: either in case they do not find out the cause of the disease, and then they may give what is contrary — hot things instead of cooling; or in case they do find out the cause, they may give what is good for one thing and bad for another. As it falls out when the liver and spleen are both distempered — the physic which helps the liver may hurt the spleen. But Christ always prescribes that physic which is suitable, and withal he blesses the physic. If the disease of the soul is pride, he humbles it with affliction; God turned Nebuchadnezzar to grass to cure him of his tympany. If the disease of the soul is sloth, Christ applies some awakening scripture (Matthew 12:11; Luke 13:24; 1 Peter 4:18). If the disease is the stone of the heart, Christ uses proper medicines — sometimes the terrors of the law, sometimes mercies, sometimes he dissolves the stone in his own blood. If the soul is fainting through unbelief, Christ brings some scripture cordial to revive it

(Matthew 12:20): a bruised reed he will not break. Isaiah 57:16: I will not contend forever, neither will I be always wroth; for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made. Thus the Lord Jesus always prescribes that physic which is proper for the disease and shall work effectually to the cure.

Christ never fails of success. Physicians may have skill but not always success; patients often die under their hands. But Christ never undertakes to heal any but he makes a certain cure (John 17:12): those whom you gave me I have kept, and none of them is lost. Judas was not given to Christ to be healed; but never any who was given to Christ has perished.

How shall I know that I am given to Christ to be cured?

If it is with you as with a sick patient who sees himself dying without a physician — are you undone without Christ? Do you perceive yourself bleeding to death without the balm of Gilead? Then you are one of Christ's sick patients, and you shall never perish under his hands. How can any of those be lost whom Christ undertakes to cure? As he pours in the balm of his blood, so he pours out the perfume of his prayers for them (John 17:11): Holy Father, keep through your own name those whom you have given me. Satan could never charge Christ with losing any of his sick patients.

Other physicians can only cure those who are sick, but Christ cures those who are dead (Ephesians 2:1): you he has made alive who were dead in trespasses and sins. A sinner has all the signs of death on him; the pulse of his affections does not beat, he breathes

not after holiness. But Christ is a physician for the dead; of everyone whom Christ cures it may be said: he was dead and is alive again (Luke 15:32).

Christ cures not only our diseases but our deformities. The physician can make the sick person well; but if he is deformed, he cannot make him fair. Christ gives not only health, but beauty. Sin has made us ugly and misshapen; Christ's medicines do not only take away our sickness, but our spots. He does not only make us whole, but fair (Hosea 14:4-6): I will heal their backsliding; his beauty shall be as the olive tree. Jesus Christ never thinks he has fully healed us until he has drawn his own beautiful image upon us. Christ does not only heal but adorn. He is called the Sun of Righteousness (Malachi 4:2) not only because of the healing under his wings, but because of those rays of beauty which he puts upon the soul.

Christ is the most generous physician. Other patients enrich their physicians, but here the physician enriches the patient. Christ promotes all his patients; he does not only cure them, but crown them (Revelation 2:10). Christ does not only raise from the bed, but to the throne; he gives the sick person not only health, but heaven.

Good news today: there is balm in Gilead; there is a physician to heal sin-sick souls. The angels that fell had no physician sent to them — we have. But the Sun of Righteousness is risen in our world, with healing in his wings. If a person were poisoned, what a comfort to hear there was an herb in the garden that could heal him! O sinner, you are full of corrupting humors, you have a gan-

grenous soul; but there is a physician who can recover you. Though there is an old serpent to sting us with his temptations, yet there is a bronze serpent to heal us with his blood.

If Christ is a physician, then let us make use of this physician for our diseased souls. When the sun was setting, all those who had sick with various diseases brought them to Jesus, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them (Luke 4:40). You who have neglected a physician all this while — now when the sun of the gospel and the sun of your life is even setting, bring your sick souls to Christ to be cured. Christ complains that though people are sick even to death, yet they will not come to the physician (John 5:40): you will not come to me that you might have life. In bodily diseases the physician is the first sought; in soul-diseases the physician is the last sought. But here there are many objections that poor souls make against coming to Christ their physician.

Objection one: I am discouraged from going to Christ to cure me because of my unworthiness. Just like the centurion who sent to Christ about his sick servant (Luke 7:6): Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof. So says many a trembling soul: Christ is a physician, but who am I that Christ should come under my roof or heal me! I am unworthy of mercy, as Mephibosheth said to King David (2 Samuel 9:8): what is your servant, that you should look upon such a dead dog as I am? To such as have their hearts broken with a sense of their unworthiness, and are discouraged from coming to Christ, let me say five things in reply.

Who did Christ shed his blood for but those who are unworthy (1 Timothy 1:15): Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Christ came into the world as into a hospital, among a company of

lame, bedridden souls.

Though we are not legally worthy, we may be evangelically worthy; it is part of our worthiness to see our unworthiness. Do not fear, you worm Jacob (Isaiah 41:14). You may be a worm in your own eyes, yet a dove in God's eyes.

Though we are unworthy, yet Christ is worthy. We do not deserve a cure, but Christ has merited mercy for us; he has store of blood to supply our lack of tears.

Who was ever yet saved because he was worthy? What worthiness was there in Paul before his conversion? What worthiness was there in Mary Magdalene, out of whom seven demons were cast? But free grace did pity and heal them. God does not find us worthy, but makes us worthy.

If we will never come to Christ to be healed until we are worthy, we must never come. And let me tell you, this talk of worthiness savors of pride — we would have something of our own. If we had such preparations and self-excellencies, then we think Christ would accept us; this is to pay our physician. Do not let the sense of unworthiness discourage; go to Christ to be healed (Mark 10:49): arise, he calls you.

Objection two: I fear I am not within Christ's commission — I am not of the number of those who shall be saved; and then though Christ is a physician, I shall not be healed.

We must take heed of drawing desperate conclusions against ourselves. It is high presumption for us to make ourselves wiser than the angels. All the angels in heaven are not able to resolve this question: who are elected and who are reprobated?

You who say you are not within Christ's commission — read over Christ's commission; see whom he comes to heal (Luke 4:18): he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted. Has God touched your heart with remorse? Do you lay to heart your gospel-unkindnesses? Do you weep more out of love to Christ than fear of hell? Then you are a brokenhearted sinner and are within Christ's commission. A bleeding Christ will heal a broken heart.

Objection three: my sins are so many that surely I shall never be healed — I am sick with many diseases at once.

You have the more need of a physician. Is it a good argument to say to a physician: I am diseased, therefore depart from me? No — therefore come and heal me. Our sins should serve to humble us, not to beat us away from Christ. If we had no diseases, Christ would have no work to do in the world.

Objection four: my disease is inflamed and grown to a crisis; my sin is greatly heightened.

The plaster of Christ's blood is broader than your sore. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7). All diseases are alike to Christ's blood; he can cure the greatest sin as well as the least. Do you have a flowing wound of sin? The wound in Christ's side can heal yours.

Objection five: mine is an old, deep-rooted disease, and I fear it is incurable.

Though your disease is chronic, Christ can heal it. Christ does not say: if this disease had been taken in time, it might have been cured; he is good at old sores. The thief on the cross had an old festering disease, but Christ cured it. Zacchaeus was an old sinner — a tax collector who had wronged many — but Christ cured him.

Christ sometimes grafts his grace upon an old stock. We read that Christ cured at sun-setting (Luke 4:40) — he heals some sinners at the sun-setting of their lives.

Objection six: after I have been healed, my disease has broken forth again; I have relapsed into the same sin — therefore I fear there is no healing for me.

It is rare that the Lord leaves his children to these relapses, though through the suspension of grace and the power of temptation it is possible to fall back into sin. These sins of relapse are sad — they open the mouth of conscience to accuse and stop the mouth of God's Spirit which should speak peace. But if the soul is deeply humbled, if the relapsing sinner is a repenting sinner, let him not cast away the anchor of hope, but have recourse to his soul-physician. Jesus Christ can cure a relapse; he healed David's relapse and Cranmer's relapse. If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (1 John 2:1). Christ appears in the court as advocate for the client. As he poured out his blood upon the cross, so he pours out his prayers at the altar in heaven (Hebrews 7:25): he ever lives to make intercession for us. Therefore do not be discouraged from going to your physician; though your disease has broken out again, Christ has fresh sprinklings of his blood for you; he can cure a relapse.

Objection seven: there is no healing for me — I fear I have sinned the sin against the Holy Spirit.

The fear of sinning it is a sign you have not sinned it.

Let me ask: why do you think you have sinned the sin against the Holy Spirit? I have grieved the Spirit of God.

Every grieving of the Spirit is not that fatal sin. We grieve the Spirit when we sin against the light of it; the Spirit being grieved may depart for a time, carrying away all its comfort, leaving the soul in darkness (Isaiah 50:10). But every grieving the Spirit is not the sin against the Holy Spirit. A child of God when he has sinned, his heart smites him; and he whose heart smites him for sin has not committed the unpardonable sin. A child of God having grieved the Spirit does as Noah — when the dove flew out of the ark, he opened the window to let it back in. A godly person does not shut his heart against the Spirit as a wicked person does (Acts 7:51); he opens his heart to let in the Spirit. Christian, is it not so with you? Then be of good comfort — you have not sinned the sin against the Holy Spirit. That sin is a malicious despising of the Spirit, which you tremble to think of.

Therefore laying aside all these disputes, whatever the diseases of your soul are, come to Christ for a cure. Believe in his blood and you may be saved. You see what a skillful and able physician Christ is, what sovereign oils and balsams he has, how willing he is to cure sick souls. What remains but that you cast yourselves upon his merits to heal and save you! Of all sins, unbelief is the worst, because it casts disparagement on Christ, as if he were not able to work a cure. O Christian, believe in your physician (John 3:15): that whoever believes in him should not perish. Say as Queen Esther (Esther 4:16): I will go in to the King, which is not according to the law, and if I perish, I perish. So say: the Lord Jesus is a physician to heal me — I will venture on his blood; if I perish, I perish. I have a promise which invites me to come to Christ (John 6:37): he who comes to me I will in no wise cast out. Faith is a healing grace. We read that when the Israelites were burying a

man and cast him for haste into the grave of Elisha, as soon as he was down and touched the dead body of the prophet, he revived and stood upon his feet (2 Kings 13:21). So if a person is dead in sin, yet let him be cast into Christ's grave and by faith touch Christ who was dead and buried — he will revive and his soul will be healed. There is no way for a cure but by believing. A plaster, though never so rare and excellent, if it is not applied to the wound, will do no good. Though the plaster be made of Christ's own blood, yet it will not heal unless applied by faith. The bronze serpent was a sovereign remedy, but if they had not looked upon it, they received no benefit. So though there is healing virtue in Christ, unless we look upon him by the eye of faith, we cannot be cured. Above all things, labor for faith; this is the all-healing grace; this hand touching Christ fetches virtue from him.

Not that faith has more worthiness than other graces; but only it is effective as it makes us one with Christ. If a person had a stone in a ring that could heal many diseases, we say the ring heals — but it is not the ring, but the stone in the ring that does the cure. So faith saves and heals not by its own virtue, but as it lays hold on Christ and fetches down his sacred influences into the soul.

If Jesus Christ is a spiritual physician, let us labor to hasten the cure of our souls.

What a little time we have to stay here — and let that hasten the cure. Solomon says there is a time to be born and a time to die (Ecclesiastes 3:2), but mentions no time of living, as if that were so short it were not worth naming. The body is called a vessel (1 Thessalonians 4:4); this vessel is filled with breath; sickness draws out its contents, and death empties it. Hasten your soul's cure;

death is on its swift march, and if it surprises you suddenly, there is no cure to be worked in the grave (Ecclesiastes 9:10): there is no work, nor device, nor wisdom in the grave where you go.

Now is properly the time of healing; now is the day of grace; now Christ pours out his balsams, now he sends abroad his ministers and Spirit. Now is the accepted time (2 Corinthians 6:2). There were certain healing days when the king healed those who had the king's evil; the day of grace is a healing day. If we neglect the day of grace, the next will be a day of wrath (Romans 2:5). Hasten the cure of your soul; rather neglect your food than your cure; sin will not only kill, but damn.

To get a cure:

Come to the healing pool of the sanctuary; the Spirit of God may on a sudden stir these waters. The next Sunday, for all you know, may be a healing day to your soul.

Pray for others to pray for you; when any disease is upon your body, you desire the prayers of others. The prayers of the saints are precious balsams and medicines to cure sick souls.

Is Jesus Christ a soul-physician? Then let me speak to you who are in some measure healed of your damnable disease. I have four things to say.

Break forth into thankfulness; though sin is not quite cured and there are still some grudgings of the disease, yet the reigning power of it is taken away. You are so healed that you shall not die (John 3:16; John 11:26). Those who were cured by the bronze serpent afterwards died; but such as are healed by Christ shall never die. Sin may molest, it shall not damn. Oh then, what cause have you to admire and love your physician! The Lord Jesus has taken

out the core of your disease and the curse; publish your experiences (Psalm 66:16): I will tell you what God has done for my soul. As a man who has been cured of an old disease — how glad and thankful is he? He will tell others of the medicine that cured him. So say: I will tell you what God has done for my soul — he has cured me of an old disease, a hard and unbelieving heart, a disease that has sent millions to hell. Truly we may cheerfully bear any other sickness if this soul-sickness is cured. Lord, said Luther, strike and wound where you will, if sin be pardoned. Oh let the high praises of God be in your mouth (Psalm 149:6). God expects thankfulness as a tribute; he wonders men bring not their thank-offering (Luke 17:17): were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine?

Are you healed? Take heed of coming into infected company, lest you catch the infection; the wicked are devils to tempt to sin. Lot was the world's wonder in that he lived in Sodom when it was a pesthouse, yet did not catch the disease.

Take heed of relapses: men are afraid of a relapse after they are cured, so beware of soul-relapses. Has God softened your heart? Take heed of hardening it. Has he cured you in some measure of deadness? Do not relapse into a drowsy security. You may have such an uproar and agony in your conscience as may make you go weeping to your grave. Oh, take heed of falling sick again; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you (John 5:14).

Pity your friends that are sick unto death; show your piety in your pity. Have you a child that is well and healthy in body but has a sick soul? Pity him, pray for him. David wept and fasted for his sick child (2 Samuel 12:16). Your child has the plague of the heart, and you have conveyed the plague to him; weep and fast for your

child. Have you a wife or husband who — though they do not keep to their bed — the Lord knows they are sick, under the raging power of sin? Let your heart yearn over them; lift up a prayer for them. The prayer of faith may save a sick soul. Prayer is the best medicine that can be used in a desperate case. You who have felt the disease of sin and the mercy of your physician, learn to pity others.

Is Christ a soul-physician? Then let us go to Christ to cure this sick, dying nation. England (God knows) is a sick patient; the whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint. The body politic has a kakexia — it is ill all over. Magistracy, ministry, and commonalty are diseased, and those who pretended to be our healers are physicians of no value. We have spent our money upon these physicians, but our sores are not healed (Jeremiah 14:19): why have you smitten us and there is no healing for us? Instead of healing us, those who should have been our physicians have increased the nation's malady by giving a toleration — this is like giving strong drink in a fever, which inflames the disease further. Sick England, because sinful England — sick of error, uncleanness, drunkenness — so sick that we may fear our funerals are approaching. And the worst symptom is that though balm has been poured into our wounds and the precious ordinances of God have been applied, yet we are not healed — a sign of ill flesh that is so difficult to cure.

This sin-sickness in the land has brought forth many dreadful effects: division, oppression, bloodshed — the very bowels and arteries of the nation are almost torn asunder, so that God has fulfilled that threatening upon us (Micah 6:13): I will make you sick with smiting you. We have made ourselves sick with sinning, and God has made us sick with smiting. What remains but that we

should go to the great physician of souls — whose blood sprinkles many nations — that he would apply some healing medicines to dying England? God can with a word heal; he can give repentance as well as deliverance; he can put us in joint again. Let all the people of the land lie between the porch and the altar, saying: spare your people, O Lord (Joel 2:17). Our prayers and tears may set Christ to work to heal us (Psalm 106:23): therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood in the breach to turn away his wrath. Let us never leave imploring our heavenly physician, till he lay a fig on England's boil and cause it to recover.

THE BEAUTY OF GRACE



Peter 1:2. Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied.

1 The blessed apostle, having felt the efficacy and sovereignty of grace, is taken up with the thoughts of it; and so sweet is this wine of paradise that he commends it to these dispersed Christians to whom he writes, wishing them all increase.

Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied.

The words run in the form of a salutation: grace unto you, and peace. When we salute our friends, we cannot wish them a greater blessing than grace and peace. Other mercies lie without the pale and are dispersed in common to men; but grace is a special gift bestowed on those who are the favorites of heaven. In the words observe: 1. The connection. 2. The order.

The connection: grace and peace. The way to have peace is to have grace; grace is the breeder of peace; the one is the root, the other the flower; peace is the sweet water that drops from the limbeck of a gracious heart.

The order: first grace, then peace; grace has the priority. Grace and peace are two sisters, but grace is the elder sister. Give me leave at this time to prefer the elder before the younger — grace

unto you be multiplied. For the illustration, consider: 1. What is meant by grace. 2. The author of it. 3. Why it is called grace. 4. The cogency of it.

What is meant by grace. This word grace has various meanings in Scripture.

Grace is sometimes taken for the favor of God (Genesis 6:8): Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord; God did cast a gracious aspect upon him.

Grace is taken for beauty; as we say such a thing is graceful (James 1:11): the flower falls, and the grace of the fashion of it perishes.

Grace is taken figuratively and improperly for the show of grace; as we call that a face in the glass which is but the idea and resemblance of a face; so John 2:23 — many believed in his name; that believing was but a show of faith, as Augustine and Theophylact note.

Grace is taken in a genuine and proper sense — so in the text: grace be multiplied. It may admit of this description: grace is the infusion of a new and holy principle into the heart, whereby it is changed from what it was and is made after God's own heart. Grace makes not only a civil but a sacred change; it biases the soul heavenward and stamps upon it the image and superscription of God.

The author or efficient of grace is the Spirit of God, who is therefore called the Spirit of grace (Zechariah 12:10). The Spirit is the fountain from which crystal streams of grace flow. Man, as Clement of Alexandria observes, is God's harp or timbrel; the harp will not sound unless touched with the finger; so the heart of man

cannot put forth any gracious harmony until first it be touched with the finger of God's Spirit. This blessed Spirit works grace in the subject: 1. Universally. 2. Progressively.

Universally (1 Thessalonians 5:23): the God of peace sanctify you wholly. The Spirit of God infuses grace into all the faculties of the soul; though grace be wrought but in part, yet in every part — in the understanding, light; in the conscience, tenderness; in the will, consent; in the affections, harmony. Therefore grace is compared to leaven (Matthew 13:33), because it swells itself into the whole soul and makes the conversation rise as high as heaven.

The Spirit of God works grace progressively, carrying it on from one degree to another. The Pelagians hold that the beginning of grace is from God, but the progress of grace is from ourselves — so God shall be the author of faith and we the finishers, God shall lay the first stone and we the superstructure. But there needs the continual influence of the Spirit to carry on the work of grace in our hearts. Should God withdraw his Spirit from the most holy men, their grace might fail and annihilate. If the sun withdraws its light, though never so little, there follows darkness in the air. We need not only habitual grace, but assisting, exciting, and subsequent grace. The ship needs not only the sails but the wind to carry it; there needs not only the sails of our abilities and endeavors, but the wind of the Spirit to blow us to the heavenly port.

Why is the work of holiness in the heart called grace?

Because it has a super-eminency above nature; it is a flower which does not grow in nature's garden — it is of a divine extraction (James 3:17). By reason we live the life of men; by grace we live the life of God.

It is called grace because it is a work of free grace; every link in the golden chain of our salvation is wrought and enameled with free grace. That one should be sanctified and not another — this is of grace. That God should pass by many of the noble, rich, and learned, and graft his heavenly endowments upon a more wild and luxuriant stock, a crabbed nature and weaker parts — well may it be called grace.

But why is grace not bestowed upon all?

We must hold with Zanchi that there is always a just reason of God's will; but in particular, I answer.

God gives grace to one and denies it to another to show his prerogative; God is not bound to give grace to all (Romans 9:15): I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. Suppose two malefactors brought before the king — one he will pardon, but not the other; if any demand the reason, he will answer it is his prerogative. So God will give grace to one and not to another; he will make one a vessel of mercy and the other a vessel of wrath — this is his prerogative. The apostle has silenced all disputes of this kind (Romans 9:20-21): who are you that replies against God? Has not the potter power over the clay? If we could suppose a plant to speak — why was I not made a bird? or a beast — why should I not have reason? — just so it is when vain man enters into contest with God, why should I not have grace as well as another? Dispute not against prerogative; let not the clay syllogize with the potter.

God may justly deny his grace to any wicked man for two reasons.

Because once he had grace and lost it; if a father gives his son a stock to trade with and the son goes bankrupt, the father is not bound to set him up again. God gave Adam a stock of grace to begin the world with; Adam broke and made all his children bankrupts; God is not tied to give him grace again.

God may justly deny his grace to every wicked man because he is a despiser of grace — he tramples this pearl under foot (Proverbs 1:7). Is God bound to give grace to those who despise it? If a king's pardon is rejected once, he is not bound to tender it again.

The cogency and necessity of grace: it is most needful because it fits us for communion with God (2 Corinthians 6:14): what communion has light with darkness? God can no more converse with an ungracious soul than a king can converse with a swine; it is by grace that we keep a constant intercourse with heaven.

Let me with the greatest zeal and earnestness persuade all who have souls to save to endeavor after grace; this is the one thing necessary. Grace will be desirable at death; it is as useful now and more seasonable to look after (Proverbs 4:7): with all your getting, get understanding. Alexander, being presented with a rich cabinet of King Darius, reserved it to put Homer's works in as being of great value. The heart is a spiritual cabinet into which the jewel of grace should be put; we should desire grace above other things — above the gifts of the Spirit, yes, even above the comforts of the Spirit. Comfort is sweet, but grace is better than comfort; bread is better than honey. We may go to heaven without comfort, but not without grace; it is grace that makes us blessed in life and death. I shall show you twelve rare excellencies in grace: I shall set this fair virgin of grace before you, hoping that you will be tempted to fall in love with it.

Excellency 1. Grace has a soul-quickenning excellency in it (Hebrews 10:38): the just shall live by faith. Men void of grace are dead; they have breath yet lack life; they are walking ghosts (Ephesians 2:1). The life of sin is the death of the soul; a sinner has all the signs of one who is dead: no pulse, no sense (Ephesians 4:19). Dead things have no beauty; there is no beauty in a dead flower; dead things cannot receive privileges — the dead heir is not crowned. But grace is the vital artery of the soul; it does not only irradiate but animate; therefore it is called the light of life (John 8:12). And believers are said to have their grave-clothes pulled off and to be alive from the dead (Romans 6:13). By grace the soul is grafted into Christ the true vine (John 15:5) and is made not only living but lively (1 Peter 1:3). Grace puts forth a divine energy into the soul.

Excellency 2. Grace has a soul-enriching excellency (1 Corinthians 1:5): you are enriched in all knowledge. As the sun enriches the world with its golden beams, so knowledge bespangles and enriches the mind. Faith is an enriching grace (James 2:5): rich in faith; faith brings Christ's riches into the soul, it entitles to the promises. The promises are full of heavenly riches — justification, adoption, glory; faith is the key that unlocks this cabinet of promises and empties out their treasure into the soul. The riches of grace excel all other riches; the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver (Proverbs 3:14).

These riches make a man wise; wisdom is the best possession; other riches cannot make one wise. A man may have a full purse and an empty brain; many a rich heir, though he lives to come of age, yet never comes to years of discretion. But these riches of grace have power to make a man wise (Psalm 111:10): the fear of

the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The saints are compared to wise virgins (Matthew 25); grace makes a man wise to know Satan's devices and subtleties (2 Corinthians 2:11), and wise unto salvation (2 Timothy 3:15). Grace gives the serpent's eye in the dove's head.

These spiritual riches sanctify other riches. Riches without grace are hurtful — they are not wealth but snares; they are the bellows of pride, the fuel of lust; they are unblessed blessings. But grace sanctifies our riches, corrects the poison, takes away the curse, and makes them beneficial to us. Riches become certificates of God's love, wings to lift us up to paradise. Thus grace by a divine chemistry extracts heaven out of earth, and gives us not only the venison but the blessing.

Grace satisfies; other riches cannot (Ecclesiastes 5:10). Riches can no more fill the heart than a triangle can fill a circle; but grace fills up every chink and hiatus of the soul; it dilates the heart, it ravishes the affections with joy (Romans 15:13), which joy, as Chrysostom says, is a foretaste of heaven.

Excellency 3. Grace has a soul-adorning excellency; it puts beauty and luster upon a person (1 Peter 3:4-5): let your adorning not be the outward adorning of braiding the hair and wearing of gold, but let it be the hidden person of the heart, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is very precious. If a man has plate and jewels, cloth of gold, and hangings of tapestry, these adorn the house, not the man; the glory of a man is grace (Proverbs 4:9): she shall give to your head an ornament of grace. The graces are a chain of pearls that adorns Christ's bride; the heart inlaid and enameled with grace is like the king's daughter, all glorious within (Psalm 45:13). A gracious soul is the image

of God, curiously drawn with the pen of the Holy Ghost; a heart beautified with grace is the angels' joy (Luke 15:7) and is God's lesser heaven (Isaiah 57:15; Ephesians 3:17). Reason does not so far exceed sense as grace does reason; grace changes corruption into perfection. Grace is the purest complexion of the soul, for it makes it like God. Grace is the flower of delight which Christ loves to breathe; grace is to the soul as the eye to the body, as the sun to the world, as the diamond to the ring. A soul decked with grace is as the dove covered with silver wings and golden feathers.

Excellency 4. Grace has a soul-cleansing excellency. By nature we are defiled; sin is an impure issue, a defiling thing (2 Corinthians 7:1). A sinner's heart is so black that nothing but hell can pattern it; but grace is the spiritual laver — therefore it is called the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5). The grace of repentance cleanses; Mary's tears, as they washed Christ's feet, so they washed her heart; faith has a cleansing virtue (Acts 15:9): having purified their hearts by faith. Grace lays the soul a-whitening; it takes out the leopard's spots and turns the cypress into an azure beauty. Grace is of a celestial nature; though it does not wholly remove sin, it subdues it; though it does not keep sin out, it keeps it under; though sin in a gracious soul does not die perfectly, yet it dies daily. Grace makes the heart a spiritual temple with this inscription upon it: holiness to the Lord.

Excellency 5. Grace has a soul-strengthening excellency; it enables a man to do that which exceeds the power of nature. Grace teaches us to mortify our sins, to love our enemies, to prefer the glory of Christ before our own lives. Thus the three children by the power of grace marched in the face of death: neither the sound of the music could allure them nor the heat of the furnace affright

them (Daniel 3:17). Grace is a Christian's armor of proof which does more than any other armor; it not only defends him but puts courage into him. Tertullian calls Athanasius an invincible adamant; grace makes a Christian not only bear suffering but glory in it (Romans 5:3). A soul steeled and animated with grace can tread upon the lion and adder (Psalm 91:13) and with Leviathan can laugh at the shaking of a spear (Job 41:29). Thus grace infuses a heroic spirit and derives strength into a man, making him act above the sphere of nature.

Excellency 6. Grace has a soul-raising excellency; it is a divine sparkle that ascends. When the heart is divinely touched with the lodestone of the Spirit, it is drawn up to God (Proverbs 15:24): the way of life is above for the wise. Grace raises a man above others; he lives in the heights while others creep on the earth; a Christian by the wing of grace flies aloft; the saints mount up as eagles (Isaiah 40:31). A believer is a citizen of heaven; there he trades by faith; grace shoots the heart above the world (Psalm 139:17; Philippians 3). Grace gives us conformity to Christ and communion with Christ (1 John 1:3): our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus. A man full of grace has Christ in his heart and the world under his feet; grace humbles, yet elevates.

Excellency 7. Grace has a perfuming excellency; it makes us a sweet odor to God. Hence grace is compared to those spices which are most fragrant — myrrh, cinnamon, frankincense (Song of Solomon 4:13). There is a double perfume that grace sends forth.

Grace perfumes our names (Hebrews 11:2): by faith the elders obtained a good report. Grace was the spice which perfumed their names. How renowned was Abraham for his faith, Moses for his meekness, Phinehas for his zeal? What a fresh perfume do their

names send forth to this day! The wicked cannot but see a splendid majesty in the graces of the saints; and though with their tongues they revile grace, yet with their hearts they reverence it. Thus grace is aromatic; it embalms the names of men; a gracious person when he dies carries a good conscience with him and leaves a good name behind.

Grace perfumes our duties (Psalm 141:2): let my prayer be set forth before you as incense. Noah's sacrifice was a perfume (Genesis 8:21): the Lord smelled a sweet savor. The sighs of a wicked man are an unsavory breath; his solemn sacrifice is dung (Malachi 2:3); there is such a noisome stench from a sinner's duties that God will not come near (Amos 5:21): I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. But grace gives a fragrance and sweetness to our holy things (Hebrews 11:4): by faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, God testifying of his gifts. Abel's sacrifice was better scented — God smelled a sweet savor of it; Jerome says God set his sacrifice on fire from heaven, testifying his acceptance of Abel's offering. If grace does so perfume you, wear this flower not in your bosoms but your hearts.

Excellency 8. Grace has a soul-ennobling excellency; it ennobles a man: grace makes us vessels of honor, setting us above princes and nobles. Theodosius thought it more dignity to be Christ's servant and wear his livery laced with the silver graces of the Spirit than to be great and renowned in the world (Isaiah 43:4): since you were precious in my sight, you have been honorable. Sin debases a man; Christ tells wicked men their pedigree (John 8:44): you are of your father the devil. The Hebrew word for vile signifies to be lightly esteemed; there is nothing so vile but an ungracious man will do — he is ductile and facile to anything, like

wire which will be bent awry. But grace ennobles; he who is divinely born (1 John 3:1) acts suitably to his birth, hating whatever is disingenuous and sordid. The saints are called kings and priests for their dignity (Revelation 1:6) and jewels for their value (Malachi 3:17).

Excellency 9. Grace has a soul-securing excellency; it brings safety along with it. You all desire to be safe in dangerous times; if sword or pestilence come, if death peeps in at your windows, would you not be safe? Nothing will secure you in times of danger but grace; grace is the best life-guard; it sets Christians out of gunshot and frees them from the power of hell and damnation. Proverbs 10:2: Righteousness delivers from death. Do not righteous men die? Yes, but righteousness delivers from the sting of the first death and the fear of the second. It was the saying of one: I am not afraid to die, but to be damned. But here is a believer's comfort: the fire of God's wrath can never kindle upon him. Grace is God's own image stamped on the soul, and he will not destroy his own image. Xerxes the Persian, when he destroyed all the temples in Greece, caused the temple of Diana to be preserved for its beautiful structure; that soul which has the beauty of holiness shining in it shall be preserved for the glory of the structure — God will not suffer his own temple to be demolished. Would you be secured in evil times? Get grace and fortify this garrison; a good conscience is a Christian's royal fort. David's enemies lay round about him, yet he says: I laid me down and slept (Psalm 3:5). A good conscience can sleep in the mouth of a cannon. Grace is a Christian coat of mail which fears not the arrow or bullet; true grace may be shot at,

but can never be shot through. Grace puts the soul into Christ, and there it is safe — as the bee in the hive, as the dove in the ark. Romans 8:1: There is no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus.

Excellency 10. Grace has a heart-establishing excellency (Hebrews 13:9): it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace. Before the infusion of grace, the heart is like a ship without ballast — it wavers and tosses, being ready to overturn. Therefore a man void of grace is called a double-minded man (James 1:8) — today of one mind, tomorrow of another. Hearts unsanctified will be unsettled; they will face about to the rising side, following not what is best but what is safest. They are for that religion not which has the Word to guide it but the sword to back it; this Seneca calls a mind that rolls up and down and settles nowhere.

But grace consolidates and fixes the heart (Psalm 57:7): my heart is fixed, O God. Hypocrites are like meteors in the air; David was a fixed star; grace keeps the heart upright. The more sincere, the more steadfast; grace carries the heart to God as the center, and there it rests. A gracious heart cleaves to God, and let whatever changes come, the soul is settled as a ship at anchor.

Excellency 11. Grace has a preparatory excellency; it prepares and fits for glory. Glory is the highest pinnacle of our felicity, transcending all our thoughts; glory can have no hyperbole. Now grace tunes and fits the soul for glory (2 Peter 1:3): who has called us to glory and virtue — virtue leads to glory. First you cleanse the vessel, then pour in the wine; God first cleanses us by his grace, then pours in the wine of glory. The silver link of grace draws the golden

link of glory after it; grace is glory in the bud, and glory is grace in the flower. In short, glory is nothing else but grace commencing and taking its degrees.

Excellency 12. Grace has an abiding excellency; temporal things are for a season, but grace has eternity stamped upon it — it is called durable riches (Proverbs 8:18). Other riches take wings and fly from us; grace takes wings and flies with us to heaven. Seeming grace may be lost, as a blazing comet spends and evaporates; saving grace may fail in degree and suffer an eclipse. But still there is sap in the vine, and the seed of God remains (1 John 3:9); grace is a blossom of eternity, called the anointing that abides (1 John 2:27). Grace is compared to a river of the water of life (John 7:38); this river can never be dried up, for the Spirit of God is the spring that feeds it. God settles grace on the saints as an inheritance, and he will see that the entail shall never be cut off. He who has true grace can no more fall away than the angels, who are fixed stars in their heavenly orbs.

The arguments to prove the perpetuation of grace are:

God's election (Romans 8:29-30): whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate. Predestination is the grand cause of the saints' preservation; God chooses as well unto salvation as unto faith (2 Thessalonians 2:13). What shall make God's election void?

The power of God (1 Peter 1:5): we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. The saints' graces of themselves may break as glasses, but these glasses in the hand of God shall never break.

God's solemn engagement: the Lord has passed it under hand and seal, giving bond for the saints' perseverance (Jeremiah 32:40): I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, and they shall not depart from me. A believer's charter is confirmed under the broad seal of heaven. If grace does not endure to eternity, it is either because God lacks power to make good what he has decreed or truth to make good what he has promised — either of which to assert would be blasphemy.

Jesus Christ our blessed high priest appears in the court; and as he poured out blood on the cross, so he pours forth prayers in heaven for the saints' perseverance (Hebrews 7:25): he ever lives to make intercession for them. Christ is not only a priest but a Son, and therefore likely to prevail. What Christ prays for as man, he has power to give as God (John 17:24): Father, I will — there he prays as man; I will — there he gives as God.

So grace is an abiding thing; Christians, you may lose your friends, your estates, your lives, but you shall never lose your grace. Those who hold the doctrine of falling away from grace would make a believer wear Cain's mark — a continual shaking and trembling; they would spill a Christian's cordial and break a link in the chain of salvation.

Let us try whether our grace be true. There is something that looks like grace which is not; Chrysostom says the devil has a counterfeit chain for all the graces. Lapidaries have ways to try their precious stones; let us try our grace by a scripture touchstone — the painted Christian shall have a painted paradise.

The truth of grace is seen by a displeasure and antipathy against sin (Psalm 119:104): I hate every false way. Grace sets itself against characteristic sins (Psalm 18:23) and against the sins of the times (Revelation 2:2).

Grace is known by the growth of it; growth evidences life. Dead things do not grow; a picture will not grow; a hypocrite, who is but a picture of religion, does not grow. A good Christian grows in love to Christ, in humility, in good works (Psalm 92:12; Hosea 14:5): he shall grow as the lily, his branches shall spread. When the Spirit of God distills as dew upon the soul, it makes grace flourish and put forth into maturity.

True grace will make us willing to suffer for Christ; grace is like gold — it will abide the fiery trial (1 Peter 1:7). And if upon a serious scrutiny we find that we have the right jewel, the grace of God in truth (Colossians 1:6), this will be a deathbed cordial; we may with Simeon depart in peace, being assured that though we cannot resist death, yet we shall overcome it.

Let me lay down two or three directions for the attaining of grace.

If we would be enriched with this jewel of grace, let us take pains for it; we are bid to search for knowledge as a man searches for a vein of gold (Proverbs 2:2-3). Our salvation cost Christ blood; it will cost us sweat.

Second, let us go to God for grace; he is called the God of all grace (1 Peter 5:10). We could lose grace of ourselves, but we cannot find it of ourselves. The sheep can wander from the fold, but cannot return without the help of the shepherd. Go to the God of all grace; God is the first planter, the promoter, the perfecter of

grace. God is the Father of lights (James 1:17); he must light up this candle of grace in the soul. Grace is in his gift — it is not acquired but bestowed. Oh then go to God in prayer, lay your heart before him: Lord, I want grace; I want a humble, believing heart, and you are the God of all grace — all my springs are in you. Oh enrich me with grace; deny me not this before I die. What is gold in the bag if I have no oil in my lamp? Give me that anointing of God. I read in your Word of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22); Lord, my heart is a barren soil — plant some of these supernatural fruits in me, that I may be more useful and serviceable. Lord, I cannot be put off with other things. Who will you give grace to, if not to such as ask and are resolved not to give over asking?

If you would have grace, engage the prayers of others on your behalf; he is likely to be rich who has several stocks going; he is in the way of spiritual thriving who has several stocks of prayer going for him. If you had a child that were sick, you would beg the prayers of others; you have a soul that is sick — sick of pride, lust, sick unto death; oh beg the prayers of godly friends, that God will heal you with his grace. A Moses and a Jacob have much power with God; believers can prevail sometimes not only for themselves, but for their friends (James 5:16). A godly man's prayers may do you more good than if he should bestow upon you all his lands of inheritance.

If you would have grace, frequent the means of grace; lie at the pool of Bethesda, wait at the posts of wisdom's door. Inward grace is wrought by outward means; the preaching of the Word is God's engine for working grace — it is called the rod of his strength (Psalm 110:2) and the breath of his lips (Isaiah 11:4). By this he causes breath to enter; out of this golden pipe of the sanctuary,

God empties the golden oil of grace into the soul. The ministry of the gospel is called the ministry of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:8) because the Spirit of God ordinarily makes use of it to work grace; this ministry is to be preferred before the ministry of angels.

Why is the Word preached the ordinary means to convey grace? Why not conference or reading?

The reason is, because God has appointed it to this end, and he will honor his own ordinances (1 Corinthians 1:21). What reason could be given why the waters of Damascus should not have as sovereign virtue to heal Naaman's leprosy as the waters of Jordan? Only this: because the Lord appointed and sanctified one to this work and not the other. If therefore we would have grace, let us wait where the manna falls and there expect the dew of the Spirit to fall with it; the power of God goes along with his Word.

How should we delight in ordinances! Sleidan says there was a church in France formerly which the Protestants called paradise, as if they thought themselves in paradise while they were in the house of God. Those ordinances should be our paradise which are the power of God unto salvation.

THE SPIRITUAL WATCH



Proverbs 4:23. Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

This book of Proverbs is full of many divine aphorisms; other parts of scripture are like a golden chain where the verses are linked together by coherence, but this book is like a heap of gold rings — many precious sentences lie scattered up and down in it, as so many jewels or sparkling diamonds. Solomon was the wisest of kings; as his kingdom was a map of the world's glory, so his head was an epitome of the world's wisdom. He was endued with a divine Spirit; while he wrote, the Holy Ghost dictated; and surely among all his golden sentences, none is more weighty and important than this: keep your heart with all keeping, for out of it are the issues of life. The text is about matter of life and death; I shall first explain, then apply.

Keep: the Hebrew word to keep has various significations.

Sometimes it signifies to arm or fence; a stroke at the heart kills — fence your heart.

Sometimes it signifies to take care of a thing that it be not lost, as one would take care of a piece of plate that it not be taken away.

Sometimes it signifies to keep in safe custody; so keep your heart — lock it up safe, that it may be forthcoming when God calls for it.

Your heart: the heart is taken diversely in scripture — sometimes for the vital part (Judges 19:5), for the soul (Deuteronomy 13:3), for the mind (Proverbs 10:8), for the conscience (1 John 3:20), for the will and affections (Psalm 119:36). I shall take it in its full latitude, for the whole soul with all its noble faculties; this is the deposit or charge every man is entrusted with — the heart.

With all diligence: the original carries it with all keeping; the Hebrew word signifies to keep with watch and ward — a Christian is to set a continual guard about his heart. Some read: keep your heart above all keeping; nothing requires such strict custody; a Christian's heart must ever be in his eye.

For out of it are the issues of life: as the heart is the fountain of life — if the heart lives, the body lives; if the heart be touched, death follows. So the soul is a spiritual fountain; from this spring-head flow the streams either of salvation or damnation.

In the words there is:

A duty: keep your heart.

The manner: with all diligence.

The reason: for out of it are the issues of life.

Doctrine: it must be a Christian's great care with all keeping to keep his heart. We are to keep our eyes — Job set a watch there (Job 31:1): I made a covenant with my eyes. We are to keep our lips — David bridled his tongue (Psalm 39:1): I will keep my mouth as with a bridle. But especially we are to look to our hearts: keep your

heart with all keeping. The heart, like Dinah, will be gadding abroad, and it seldom returns home but it is defiled. It was the saying of a heathen: I never come home with such good desires as I went out with. The serpent, when any danger is near, keeps his head; and to preserve his head, will expose his whole body to injury; so a wise Christian should especially keep his heart — he should adventure his skin to keep a wound from his heart. I shall show that the heart must be kept: 1. With all kinds of keeping. 2. At all times. 3. The reasons enforcing.

The heart must be kept with all kinds of keeping.

Keep your heart as you would keep a temple; the temple was a hallowed place set apart for God's worship; so the heart is Augustissimum Dei Templum — the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16). This heart-temple must be kept pure and holy; no filth must lie here; sweep the dust out of the temple. The vessels of the temple were cleansed (2 Chronicles 29:15); thus the memory, affections, conscience — these temple-vessels must be cleansed (2 Corinthians 7:1). Christ whipped the buyers and sellers out of the temple (John 2); the cares of the world will be crowding into the heart — get a whip made of the threatenings of the law and drive these money-changers out of the temple of your heart. Let not God's temple be made an exchange; the temple had a fire burning on the altar — take heed of strange fire; keep the fire of zeal and devotion flaming upon the altar of your heart; do temple-work, offer up the sacrifice of a broken heart. When the heart is Dei sacrarium — a consecrated place, an holy of holies — God will walk there. Many a man's heart is a pest-house, a bedlam, being polluted with

sin — this is to put swine into God's room, this is to let the devil come into God's temple. David's heart was a temple dedicated (Psalm 119:38).

Keep your heart as you would keep a treasure; a man who has a great treasure will keep it with lock and bolt, that it not be stolen. Christian, you carry a precious treasure about you — a heart; the devil and the world would rob you of this jewel. Oh keep your heart as you would keep your life; few know the value of their hearts, therefore they prefer other things. Keep your heart as a treasure.

Keep your heart as you would keep a garden; your heart is a garden — weed sin out of your heart. Among the flowers of the Spirit weeds will be growing: the weeds of pride, malice, covetousness (these grow without planting); therefore every day be weeding your heart by prayer, examination, and repentance.

Weeds hinder the herbs and flowers from growing; the weeds of corruption hinder the growth of grace; where the weed of unbelief grows, it hinders the flower of faith from growing.

Weeds spoil the walks; Christ will not walk in a heart overgrown with weeds and briars. Christ was sometimes among the lilies (Song of Solomon 6:3), never among the thistles. Poor sinner, you complain that you have no communion with God; a time was when God made himself known to you, but now he has grown strange. This is the reason: sin has spoiled Christ's walks; your heart lies like the field of the sluggard (Proverbs 24:30). Oh weed your heart daily; let not your heart be a thicket for Satan.

Keep your heart as you would keep a garrison; the heart of man is a garrison or fort-royal, and this garrison is besieged — the devil shoots his fiery darts of temptation. Now keep your heart as a

tower or castle.

Keep close sentinel in your heart (Habakkuk 2:1): I will stand upon my watch and set me upon the tower. Discover where Satan labors to make a breach, what grace he most shoots at, and there set a double guard and fortify.

Make use of all your spiritual ammunition — meditation and prayer. Prayer is the great ordnance; discharge this cannon and be sure to put the bullet of faith in (Matthew 21:22; 1 Peter 5:9). If the devil takes the garrison by storm, it will be sad; it is easier letting Satan in than getting him out. If the devil gets the garrison of your heart, you are his slave — and remember he gives no quarter.

Keep your heart as you would keep a prisoner; the heart is guilty and is ready ever and anon to break prison — we must lay bolts and fetters upon it. A prisoner in the jail may promise fair that he will not stir, but when he sees an opportunity and you do not watch him, he will file off his fetters and be gone. So the heart promises fair that it will keep from such sins, but if you are not careful it will steal out to vanity. Say to your heart as John the Baptist said to Herod (Mark 6:18): it is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife. So say to your heart: it is not lawful for you to meddle with the forbidden fruit; lay the commands of God upon your heart. Let it be kept close prisoner.

Keep your heart as you would keep a watch; the heart will be unwinding toward the earth, therefore wind it up every morning and evening by prayer. The motion of a watch is not constant — sometimes faster, sometimes slower; so set this spiritual watch by the sun-dial of the Word.

The heart must be kept at all times.

Keep your heart when you are alone; it was Satan's subtlety to set upon Eve when she was alone and less able to resist. He is like a cunning suitor who woos the daughter when her parents are from home; the devil breaks over the hedge commonly where it is weakest. Privacy and retirement is good; had a Christian a fruitful heart, what sweet thoughts might he have of God when alone! But alas, by reason of innate corruption, how many vain, proud, and impure thoughts will be stealing into our hearts when we are most secluded from the world! The fowls will be coming at the sacrifice; the devil will be shooting in his balls of wildfire, and when we least suspect him will be treating with us to deliver up the castle of our heart to him.

Keep your heart when you are in company; vain company is the bait by which Satan is angling for the heart. In the law, he who touched a dead body was unclean (Numbers 5:2); the heart is apt to be defiled by being among those who are dead in sin. It is easy to catch a disease in company. Since the fall, our hearts are ready to pollute and infect one another — being like that withered vine the poet speaks of, which took away the fresh color and sap from its neighbor vine. If you mingle bright and rusty metal together, the rusty will not be made bright, but the bright will become rusty; so an evil companion who is rusted with sin rubs ever and anon some of his unholy rust upon a man brightened with grace. Nay, Christians, look to your hearts even in good company; those who may have some good thing in them, yet there may be much levity of discourse — and if no filth or scum, yet froth may boil up; these are most dangerous because less suspicious. Who would suspect the plague in perfumed linen? The devil does that hurt sometimes by a good instrument which he cannot do by a bad; he hands over

a temptation by such — he tempted Christ by an apostle; the devil once crept into the serpent, here into the dove; but Christ spied his cloven foot (Matthew 16:23): get behind me, Satan. How watchful had we need be in company!

Keep your heart especially after good duties; when Christ had been praying and fasting, then the devil came and tempted him (Matthew 4:2-3). When we have been most enlarged in our services, now will Satan tempt to pride and security. Many Christians' hearts, like bows, stand unbent after shootings — they are apt to grow more remiss, as if duty were a sufficient spell and antidote against temptation. Do we not know Satan always lies at the catch? He is more mad against us after duty; those prayers which appease God, incense Satan. And if we lay down our weapons, he will fall on and wound us. After David's victory over the Assyrians he grew lustful and defiled Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:4); after we have gotten a victory over Satan in duty, now let us fear lest our hearts give us the slip. When God drove Adam out of the garden, he placed a flaming sword at the east of it to keep the tree of life (Genesis 3); when we have cast out the devil by prayer and fasting, let us set a strong guard about our hearts that the enemy does not make a re-entry.

Keep your heart in time of adversity; the devil makes use of all winds to toss the soul and make it suffer shipwreck. Adversity has its temptations; not more ships than souls have been cast away in a storm. In adversity the devil tempts to atheism and desperation. Satan used Job's wife as a ladder by which he would have scaled the impregnable tower of Job's faith (Job 2:9): do you still retain your integrity? A cutting kind of speech; as if the devil had said, God has pulled down your hedge, he has smitten you in your chil-

dren — and are you so senseless as still to serve and worship God? What have you got by his service? Where are your earnings? What have you to show but your boils? Throw off religion, curse God, and die! Satan's physic always poisons (Malachi 3:14): you have said it is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance? We have mourned and fasted, and have almost fasted away all we have — we will fast no longer. When a man's estate is low and his spirit troubled, now Satan begins to throw in his angle. Oftentimes Satan makes use of poverty to put a man upon indirect courses; Agur feared his heart in poverty (Proverbs 30:8-9). Oh keep your heart in adversity; beware of taking the forbidden fruit.

Keep your heart in time of prosperity; the moon, the fuller it is, the more remote from the sun, and often the more full a man is of the world, the further his heart is from God. Deuteronomy 32:15: Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked; it is hard to abound in prosperity and not abound in sin. A full cup is hardly carried without spilling; the trees are never more in danger of the wind than when they blossom. Pride, idleness, and luxury are the three daughters bred of plenty. Samson fell asleep in Delilah's lap; millions in the lap of prosperity have slept the sleep of death. Agur prayed: give me not riches (Proverbs 30:8); he knew his heart would be ready to run wild; the world's golden apple bewitches. When God sets a hedge of prosperity about us, we had need set a hedge of caution and circumspection.

The next thing is, why we must be so careful about keeping our hearts? The reasons are:

Because the heart is a slippery piece (Jeremiah 17:9): the heart is deceitful above all things; in the Hebrew it is — the heart is a Jacob above all things — the heart is a supplanter. If we are not very cautious and watchful, our hearts will put a cheat upon us. There is deceit in coin, in friends, in books; but the heart has an art of deceiving beyond all — it is a desperate impostor; the way of the heart is like a serpent upon a rock. O the pleats and folds, the subtleties and labyrinths of a self-deceiving heart! Let us a little trace the heart in its fallacies and stratagems, and see if there be not reason to lie sentinel continually and set a strong guard about it. The heart will deceive us about things sinful, lawful, and religious.

The heart will deceive us about things sinful.

The heart will tell us sin is but small, and being small, it is venial.

The heart will apologize for sin, masking over bad transactions with golden pretences.

The heart will tell a man he may keep his sin and keep his religion too (2 Kings 17:33): they feared the Lord and served their own gods. The heart will secretly suggest that as long as a man goes to church and gives alms, he may secretly indulge corruption — as if duty gave a man a patent and license to sin.

The heart will quote scripture to justify sin (1 Corinthians 9:20, 22): to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews. O subtle heart, that can find out scripture to damn itself! Though Paul in things indifferent would conform to others to save their souls, yet he would not violate a law or deny an article of his creed. If the heart is so treacherous — always more ready to excuse sin than examine it — what care and circumspection should we use!

The heart will deceive us about things lawful in two cases.

It is lawful to endeavor to preserve our credit; a good name is a precious ointment. But under a pretense of preserving the name, the heart is ready to tempt a man to self-seeking (John 12:43): they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

It is lawful to take comfort in estate and relations (Deuteronomy 26:11). But the heart will be ready here to overshoot; how often is the wife and child laid in God's room, with the full stream of affection running to the creature and scarce a drop of love to Christ. This is the deceit of the heart — it makes us offend most in lawful things; more are killed with wine than poison; when we overdo, we undo.

The heart will deceive us about things religious.

1. Our duties. 2. Our graces.

Our duties. The heart will tell us it is enough to come to Word and Sacrament, though the affections are not at all wrought upon; this is like the salamander, which lives in the fire but (as naturalists say) is never the hotter. Will this be any plea at God's bar — to tell the Lord how many sermons you have heard? Surely it will be the bringing of Uriah's letter; it will be an evidence against you. How subtle is the heart to plot its own death, and bring a man to hell in the way of duty!

Our graces. The heart is like a flattering glass that would make the hypocrite look fair; the foolish virgins thought they had oil. Many strongly conceive they have grace, but have none. The hypocrite's knowledge is no better than ignorance (1 John 2:4); he has illumination but not assimilation — he is not made like Christ. The hypocrite's faith is fancy; he believes, but his heart is not puri-

fied; he pretends to trust God in greater matters but dares not trust him in lesser; he will trust God with his soul, but not with his estate.

Well, if the heart be thus deceitful, what need have we with all keeping to keep the heart! Do with the heart as with a cheater; we will trust a cheater no further than we can see him; the heart is a grand cheater — it will supplant and cozen. Try it, but do not trust it (Proverbs 28:26): he that trusts in his own heart is a fool.

We must keep the heart with watch and ward, because it is not only false but fickle. God complains of Israel that their goodness was as the early dew (Hosea 6:4); the sun arises and the dew vanishes. The heart sometimes seems to be in a good frame, but it soon alters; set the water on the fire, it boils; set it in the open air, it freezes. Those good affections which boil in the church often freeze in the shop. One day a Christian is quick and lively in prayer, another day like the disciples — heavy and sleeping (Luke 22:45). At one time a Christian is like David when he danced before the ark with all his might (2 Samuel 6:14); at another time like Samson when his hair was shaved and his strength went from him (Judges 16:19). When gold has been made pure in the fire it remains pure; but it is not so with the heart — when it has been purified in an ordinance, it does not remain pure; it gathers new soil and dross. The heart is one day humble, next day proud; one day meek, next day passionate; it is with the heart as with a sick man's pulse, which alters almost every quarter of an hour. The heart being so full of variation and inconstancy, it is needful to keep the heart with all keeping; the heart, like a viol, will soon be out of tune — therefore we must often screw up the strings, that we may make melody in our heart to the Lord (Ephesians 5:19).

The heart must especially be looked to and watched because it is the fountain of all our actions and purposes; the heart does either sweeten or poison all we do. The heart is the spring which makes the current of our life run either pure or muddy; the heart is the throne either of sin or grace. If the root be sour, no sweet fruit can grow upon it; so if there be a root of bitterness springing in the heart, our services cannot give a sweet relish. As in the natural body the heart is the fountain of life — if the heart lives, the whole body lives; if the heart be tainted and poisoned, the body dies. So it is in a spiritual sense; if the inner man of the heart be holy, then the thoughts and actions are holy. In religion the heart is all; we judge of men's hearts by their actions, but God judges of men's actions by their hearts. Amaziah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart (2 Chronicles 25:2); but of Asa it is said, his heart was perfect all his days (2 Chronicles 15:17). It is the heart that gives the denomination to a thing; now if the heart is the spring which makes our actions good or bad, then the heart is chiefly to be watched; preserve the spring pure — keep your heart with all diligence.

Use 1. This shows a difference between the godly and the wicked; the hypocrite looks most to externals — he keeps his actions from blotting, he sets a watch before his lips. The godly man sets a watch before his heart; his main work lies within doors; he sees the first ebullitions and risings of sin and grieves for them; he labors to set his heart right. The heart is the altar which sanctifies the gift.

Use 2. Reproof. If we are to keep our hearts with all keeping, then it reproofs four sorts of persons.

Such as have no care at all about their hearts; they will have a care to keep their land that it be not mortgaged, but no care to keep their hearts. Salvation and blessedness depend upon the keeping of the heart, yet how few mind their hearts — they let the devil get into their hearts. The shepherd keeps his flock, the physician keeps his receipts, the lawyer keeps his evidences, the merchant keeps his wares, the covetous man keeps his gold; but few keep their hearts.

Why do not men keep their hearts?

Because they study not the preciousness of them; what a treasure is the heart? It is divinely ennobled, it is capable of glory; but few know the worth of this jewel.

Men keep not their hearts because they are taken up in keeping other things (Song of Solomon 1:6): my own vineyard have I not kept. Many a man may say: I have been cumbered about the world, I have been keeping my estate, tending my lusts, but my own heart has been neglected — my own vineyard have I not kept. Judas was keeping the bag when he should have kept his heart.

Men keep not their hearts because they keep themselves in sloth; to keep the heart requires diligence, and few are willing to put themselves to the trouble. But should not a merchant keep his books of account because he finds some trouble in it?

Some think their hearts are so good that they need not spend time about them to keep them. Many a bold sinner is presumptuously confident of heaven; he thinks he wants nothing but taking possession. Hence it is he never looks into his heart or searches his evidences till it be too late.

It reproves those who, when they should be keeping their hearts, fall asleep (Matthew 13:25): while men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares. When men are asleep and neglect their spiritual watch, the devil comes and sows poisonous seeds in their hearts — seeds of malice, pride, lust. They say when the dragon is asleep, a jewel is taken out of his head; so the devil takes away this jewel of the heart while men sleep in security. It is death for a soldier to fall asleep upon his guard.

It reproves those who, instead of keeping their hearts, have suffered them to be stolen away. The love of the world has stolen away men's hearts; we may make a hue and cry after hearts. Satan catches men's hearts with a golden bait. This is the reason why preaching the Word does so little good; ministers preach to men's ears, but the world has stolen away their hearts.

It reproves those who keep half of their heart but not all; they have affections to good things, but let out some rooms of their heart to sin. Herod did many things, but he let out one room of his heart to the devil — he lived in incest. The true mother would not have the child divided; God will not endure to have the heart divided — he will have the whole heart kept for him.

Use 3. It exhorts Christians to keep their hearts: merchants complain of losses at sea; but whatever we lose, if we can keep our hearts we shall do well enough. Keep your heart with all diligence. This is, I confess, a hard work; Elijah found it easier to shut heaven by prayer than to shut his heart from evil thoughts. But this is the work every good Christian must set upon — the keeping of his heart.

But if my heart be evil, must I keep it?

No — cast away the evil of it, and keep that which is good. As when we candy fruit, we pare off the skin, cut out the core and rotten parts, and preserve that which is best; so do with your heart. What is evil in it cast away; what is good preserve. If your heart be hard, cast away the stone — keep it soft; if hypocritical, cut out the rotten and keep that which is sound. Separate between the precious and the vile; the sin in your heart throw away, the grace keep and cherish. In a word, do with your heart as they in the parable did with the fish (Matthew 13:48): they gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.

This is the great exhortation — heart-custody; sinners, look to your hearts; let not your hearts be bewitched and stolen away with the pleasures of the world (Hosea 4:11): whoredom and wine take away the heart; many have drowned their hearts in wine. Clement of Alexandria reports of a certain fish that has not a heart distinguished from the belly as other fishes, but has the heart in the belly — an emblem of epicures, whose heart is in their belly.

What is the holy frame and posture in which I should keep my heart?

Keep your heart awake (Song of Solomon 5:2): my heart wakes (Psalm 108:2): I myself will awake early. Though we have been sluggish, yet now it is high time to awake out of sleep (Romans 13:11). Take heed of sleeping in ignorance, impenitency, and security; the heart is naturally asleep; sin may be compared to sleep.

A man that is asleep has his senses tied up; so a sinner whose heart is asleep in sin has his spiritual senses taken away — he is not sensible of sin or wrath (Ephesians 4:19). He is going to hell, but knows it not; he laughs in his sleep.

Though in sleep the senses are bound, yet the fancy is let loose; the man dreams he is at a banquet (Isaiah 29:8). So when the heart of a sinner is asleep in sin, yet his fancy is quick; he fancies that he is an heir of the promise, that God loves him — his fancy is let loose.

Sleep hinders from action; he that is asleep cannot work; so a sinner fallen asleep in sin cannot work out his salvation.

A man asleep is in danger to be robbed — his money or jewels may be taken away; so while the sinner is asleep he may be robbed of his soul. Oh therefore keep your heart awake; let the judgments of God on sinners be as an alarm to awaken you. Make that prayer of David (Psalm 13:3): lighten my eyes, that I sleep not the sleep of death.

Keep your heart jealous; towards others exercise charity, towards yourself jealousy. The better the heart is, the more suspicious; Satan has a party within us — the heart is not true to itself, therefore it needs excubation and caution. Little did Hazeal think what was in his heart (2 Kings 8:13). Had one come to Noah and said: Noah, you will be drunk shortly, he would have been ready to have defied him. There is all sin seminally in the heart; where will not the heart run if we do not guard it? It will run to idolatry, atheism, incest. Be ever jealous; jealousy breeds vigilance, and vigilance safety. Let your heart be ever in your eye; keep it in with the curb-bit of mortification.

Keep your heart serious; take heed of a light heart (Zephaniah 3:11): his prophets are light. The heart of the wicked is vain, and in this sense is said to be little worth (Proverbs 10:20). If you put a feather in the scale, it weighs nothing; so feathery is the heart of a

sinner — vanity swims on the top and deceit lies at the bottom. A light heart is like a ship without ballast — it soon overturns; a vain heart will be unstable; light things are blown every way. A flashy Christian is not broken for sin; sin seldom lies heavy on a light heart. Keep the heart serious; fix it upon God (Psalm 57:7): O God, my heart is fixed. Grace consolidates the heart and keeps it from floating in levity; poise your heart with the thoughts of hell and judgment.

Keep your heart humble (1 Peter 5:5). That is the best frame of heart which fits a man for God's presence; the humble heart is the valley where God delights to walk, the house where he will take up his residence (Isaiah 57). The humble heart has a low esteem of itself and a high esteem of others (Philippians 4:3). The more humble the heart is, the more fertile in grace; those meadows which lie low are the richest grounds. Keep your heart humble; view your own wants and others' perfections. The impostume of pride kills; the eagle lifts up the tortoise into the air and then throws it down upon a rock and breaks it — so the devil lifts the heart up in pride and so destroys it.

Keep your heart sublime (Colossians 3:1-2): seek those things which are above. Keep down your heart with the weight of humility, yet mount it up with the wing of heavenly-mindedness. When the heart is touched with the loadstone of the Spirit, it ascends. Thus you have seen the holy frame and posture the heart is to be kept in.

What means is to be used for the keeping of the heart?

If you would keep your heart, keep the Word in your heart (Psalm 119:11): your Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against you. The Word is a preservative and antidote to keep the heart from spiritual infection. What are all the golden precepts in the Word of God but several receipts for the keeping of the heart? If a mariner would keep his ship, he must have his eye to the star and the compass; the best way to keep our hearts is to sail by a scripture-compass.

If you would keep your heart, have a care what company you keep; incorporate yourselves into the society of the saints. When the people of God are together, they heat and quicken one another; their counsels are seasonable, their prayers helpful. That ship is most likely to be preserved from pirates which goes with a convoy. Christian, would you keep your heart safe in your voyage to heaven? Let the communion of saints be your convoy. Take heed of coming near such as are irreligious — they are infectious and will poison your heart. Let your delight be in those who excel in virtue (Psalm 16:3); the saints carry the lantern of the Word along with them — it is good to walk with those that carry the light.

If you would keep your heart, watch over your passions; the heart is ready to be destroyed by its own passion, as a vessel is overturned by the sail. The heart does sometimes sink in sorrow, swell with anger, and abound excessively with carnal joy; Diagoras, seeing his three sons in one day crowned conquerors, died for joy. Passion transports beyond the bounds of reason; it is a kind of phrensy that possesses. Lay the curb-bit of restraint upon your passions, or your hearts will run wild in sin; take heed of inflaming your spirits, as a man would avoid those wines and strong waters that heat his blood. Cut off all occasions that may awaken this fury;

take away the fuel that feeds this fire. When this viper of passion begins to gather heat, pray it down; prayer, says Luther, takes down the swelling of the soul and abates the heat of inordinate affections. Moses in a passion spoke unadvisedly with his lips (Psalm 106:33). A man in a rage is like a ship in a tempest that has neither pilot, sails, nor oars to help it but is exposed to the waves and rocks; how many have lost their hearts in a storm!

If you would keep your heart, keep all the passages to your heart; he that would keep a city keeps the forts and outworks. Keep especially the two portals of the heart fast — the eye and the ear.

Keep the eye; the eye often sets the heart on fire. Job did make a covenant with his eyes (Job 31:1). The old serpent the devil creeps through the casement of the eye into the heart; the eye is taster to the appetite. First Eve saw the tree was good for food, then she took of the fruit (Genesis 3:6). Look to the eye; some of the heathens have pulled out their eyes because they would not be enticed by impure objects. I say not pull out the eye — only keep the portal shut; the Romans never let their prisoners go abroad but their keepers went with them; never send your eyes abroad without sending their keepers with them.

Keep the ear; much sin is conveyed to the heart through the ear. The apostle calls it corrupt communication (Ephesians 4:29), because impure discourse corrupts and poisons the heart. Keep your ear open to God, and shut to sin; deafen your ears to the lies of the slanderer and heretic. Let not him have your ear who comes to rob you of your heart.

If you would keep your heart, get Christ into your heart (Ephesians 3:17): that Christ may dwell in your heart. Nothing can hurt but sin; if Christ be in the heart, he will purify it — his Spirit is the refiner's fire (Malachi 3:2). If Christ be in the heart, he will adorn it; he will bring in the rich furniture of his graces and so beautify the hidden man of the heart (1 Peter 3:4). If Christ be in the heart, he will defend it; the castle of the heart can never be taken if Christ be in it! Let Satan dig his mines, lay his train of powder, shoot his balls of wildfire — if the Lord of Hosts pitch his tent in the heart, it can never be taken by storm.

If you would keep your hearts, have a care to keep your thoughts (Jeremiah 4:14): how long shall vain thoughts lodge within you? What though you set a watch before the door of the lips, if you let your heart run out in vain and impure thoughts? The heart is the presence-chamber which is to be kept for God; vain thoughts defile the room and make it unfit for God to come into. The thoughts make way for sin; while the mind is musing, the heart burns. David let his heart rove into wanton thoughts, and that made way for the act of adultery (2 Samuel 11:4). Thoughts are purveyors for sin; they do first start sin, and then the heart hunts it.

If you would keep your heart, keep your accounts well; bring your heart often to trial; put queries to your heart. O my heart, what do you? Where are you going? See what work lies undone, what sin you have to bewail, what grace to strengthen. Search your evidences; examine your title to Christ (2 Corinthians 13:5). Traverse things narrowly in your soul; see if there be no sin countenanced; search as Israel did for leaven. Keep a diary in your heart; see how things go in your soul; be not a stranger at home.

For want of this plying with the heart, many are kept in the dark and understand not the true state of their souls; they live known to others, but die unknown to themselves.

O what wisdom it is for a Christian to be much with his own heart; he that would keep his estate must keep his account-books well. Christian, redeem time every day to turn over the book of conscience; trade with your own heart — it will be stealing out to sin; call it often to account. Seneca would every night when his candle was out ask himself what he had done that day. Often reckonings keep God and the conscience friends.

If you would keep your heart, set fences about your heart; those who would keep fruit or flowers fence them in. There are four fences we should set about our hearts to keep them.

The fear of God (Proverbs 23:17): be in the fear of the Lord all the day long. As in natural fear the spirits recoil to the heart to keep it, so the fear of God preserves the heart; fear puts a holy awe upon the soul and keeps it from sinful excursions; fear bolts the door of the heart against vanity. By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil (Proverbs 16:6). As a nobleman's porter stands at the gate to keep out everything unseemly from being brought into the house, so the fear of God stands as an armed man at the gate of the heart to keep out temptations from entering. Fear lies sentinel; it stands as a watchman on the tower and looks every way to see what danger is approaching; fear will not admit anything into the soul which is dishonourable to God.

Love without fear makes us presume; and fear without love makes us despair. The love of God is the most forcible argument to prevail with an ingenious spirit. Thus love argues: has God given

me Christ? Has he joined me in the promises? Has he settled a reversion of heaven upon me? And shall I walk unworthy of this love? Shall I voluntarily sin against this God? No — I will rather die than sin; this made Anselm say: let me rather fall into hell than sin. Would you keep your heart? Environ it with love; death cannot break this fence.

Faith; this is called a shield (Ephesians 6:16); the shield fences the head and guards the vitals. This blessed shield of faith preserves the heart from danger. The shield defends all the armor — the helmet and breastplate; the shield of faith defends the other graces: the breastplate of love, the helmet of hope, the girdle of truth. When Satan strikes at a Christian's heart, faith beats back the blow and wounds the head of the old serpent (1 Peter 5:9): whom resist, steadfast in faith. Faith is the best safeguard; faith brings in peace (Romans 15:13): peace in believing. And peace fortifies the heart (Philippians 4:7): the peace of God shall keep your heart.

A good conscience. The heart is placed in the midst of the body, and as it is strongly secured with ribs about it, so it has a film over it in which it is kept. To the ribs about the heart which fence it, I may compare the graces; to the film in which the heart is kept, I may compare a good conscience — this keeps the soul so that nothing can annoy it. Good conscience is a brazen wall about the castle of the heart. These are the fences that keep the heart.

If you would have your hearts kept, beg of God that he would keep them for you; set not about this work in your own strength, but look higher — go to God, he is the great Lord-Keeper. The Lord is your keeper (Psalm 121:5); it is good to go always with such a keeper. This is the reason none of the saints are lost — because the

Lord is their keeper (1 Peter 1:5): who are kept by the power of God. Every ward has a guardian to keep him; choose God for your guardian; they are safe whom God keeps. Lock up your heart with God, and give him the key.

The motives that may persuade us to look after the keeping of our hearts are these.

If we do not keep our hearts, the devil will keep them; shall we let Satan have them? When a rude army gets into a town, what work do they make? What rapines, plunders, massacres? When Satan possesses hearts, he carries them at last violently (as he did the swine) into the sea. Satan is first crafty, then cruel.

He is crafty; his work is to fish for hearts, and he is very subtle; he has his policies and stratagems (2 Corinthians 2:11).

He observes the humors of the body and lays suitable baits; the devil cannot know the heart, but he may observe the temper and constitution. He tempts a sanguine man with beauty, a covetous man with gold. As the husbandman knows what ground is fit for barley, what for wheat; Satan has not been a tempter so long without gaining experience, having commenced master of his black art.

Satan baits his hook with religion; he tempts to sin under a pretext of piety, thus transforming himself into an angel of light. He tempts some to make away with themselves, that they may not live any longer to sin against God. Who would suspect Satan when he comes as a divine and quotes scripture? Thus cunningly does the devil angle for hearts.

Having once gotten his prey, Satan is cruel; his cruelty exceeds the rage of all tyrants. We read of Hannibal, Antiochus, Nero, who caused the Christians to be put in coats laid over with pitch and

brimstone, burning all night, that they might be a living torch to those who passed by. This is nothing to the unparalleled barbarism and cruelty of Satan; his name is Apollyon, the Devourer. He rent and tore the man in whom he was, and threw him into the fire (Matthew 17:15). If he was so fierce when he was chained, what will he do when he has full power? When he had taken away all Job's estate, smitten his body full of sores, and thrown the house upon his children, yet all this was in the devil's account but a touch of the finger (Job 1:11). If the touch of his finger be so heavy, what will the weight of his loins be? Oh then, if Satan be so subtle in fishing for hearts, and so savage when he gets men's hearts, let us have a care to keep our hearts; if we do not keep them, Satan will keep them for us — and then see what havoc he will make.

He that keeps his heart keeps his peace; whence are our perturbations and disquiets but from the neglect of our spiritual watch? He that keeps his heart all day may lie down in peace at night (Psalm 4:8). What a comfort will this be to a Christian in every condition! In a low condition, when he thinks thus with himself: though I have lost my friends and estate, yet I have kept my heart. In a sick condition — we shall shortly be chained to a sick-bed; but when a Christian shall keep his bed, it will be no small comfort to him that he has kept his heart. In a dying condition: death may take away the life, but not the heart; that jewel God lays claim to, and it is kept for him.

THE HEAVENLY RACE



1 Corinthians 9:24. Know you not that they who run in a race run all, but one receives the prize? So run, that you may obtain.

Religion is a business of the greatest importance; the soul, which is the more noble and divine part, is concerned in it; and as we act our part here, so we shall be forever happy or miserable. The advice of Solomon in this case is most seasonable: whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor wisdom in the grave where you go (Ecclesiastes 9:10). The business of religion requires our utmost zeal and intention (Matthew 11:12).

Sometimes the work we are to do for heaven is set out by striving (Luke 13:24): strive to enter in at the strait gate — strive as in an agony, strive as for a matter of life and death; so Cornelius a Lapide. Though we must be men of peace, yet in matters of religion we must be men of strife; it is a holy strife, a blessed contention. Indeed the apostle says, let nothing be done through strife; but though strife does not do well among Christians, yet it does well in a Christian — he must strive with his own heart, or he will never get to heaven.

Sometimes our work for heaven is compared to wrestling (Ephesians 6:12): we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers. Our life is a continual wrestling; as Jacob wrestled with the angel, so we must wrestle with our corruptions; we must not lay our sins in our bosom, but set our feet upon their necks. If we foil our sins and get them down, it is not baseness or cowardice to strike them when they are down. And we must wrestle with Satan; wrestlers get one within another; Satan labors to get within us and give us a fall, as he did our first parents. What the devil would have done to Christ — thrown him from the pinnacle of the temple (Matthew 4) — that he did to our first parents; he threw them down from the pinnacle of happiness. Therefore we must wrestle with him; resist the devil, and he will flee from you (James 4:7).

Sometimes the life of a Christian is compared to fighting (1 Timothy 6:12): fight the good fight of faith. Christ is the Captain of the saints' forces; he is called the Captain of their salvation (Hebrews 2:10). We must all be military persons; faith is our shield, hope is our helmet, the word of God our sword. We come into the world as into a field-battle; lusts war against us (1 Peter 2:11), and good reason therefore that we should war against them. It is a day of battle, and it is dangerous going abroad without our armor.

Sometimes a Christian's work for heaven is compared to the running of a race; so in the text: know you not that they who run in a race run all, but one receives the prize? So run, that you may obtain. In which words the apostle seems to allude (as learned writers observe) either to the Olympian games, which were kept every fifth year in honor of Jupiter, or to the Isthmian games celebrated

near Corinth in honor of Neptune, in which games they put forth all their strength to win the prize. So says the apostle, run the race of Christianity which is set before you with a winged swiftness, that you may obtain the prize of salvation.

The words fall into two general parts.

The race to be run: so run.

The end of running: that you may obtain.

The observations out of the text are these two.

Christianity is a race.

Wise Christians should labor so to run as to win the prize: so run, that you may obtain.

Doctrine: the first doctrine is that Christianity is a race; or the life of a Christian is a race (Hebrews 12:1): let us run with patience the race that is set before us. We must be wayfarers before we are those who have arrived; heaven is a place of rest (Hebrews 4:9): there remains a rest for the people of God. No more wrestling there, for then we have overcome the enemy; the saints in glory are set forth with palms in their hands (Revelation 7:9) in token of victory. No more running there; for the prize being obtained, the saints have thrones to sit and rest themselves upon (Revelation 3:21). But this life is a race, and it must be run, and so run.

For the illustration of the doctrine there are three things to be opened.

1. Wherein a Christian's life is compared to a race.
2. Wherein the Christian race differs from other races.
3. Why this race must be run.

Wherein a Christian's life is compared to a race: that appears in four particulars.

In a race there is the way or path to run in; so in Christianity there is the pathway in which we must run (Psalm 119:32): I will run the way of your commandments. This is a good old way (Jeremiah 6:16); it is as good as it is old. The way of sanctification and obedience is the way the saints have gone in, and the way in which God has been found; this way we are to run in.

This pathway is a pleasant way; it is sweetened with comfort (Proverbs 3:17): all her ways are pleasantness (Romans 15:13): joy in believing. The way of religion is strewn with roses; oh the bunches of grapes that God cuts down, the flagons of wine that he gives to those that turn their feet into this way!

The way of God's commandments is a clean way; it is a way paved with holiness (Isaiah 35:6). Christians may run in this way and never wet the sole of their feet; the way of sin is defiling. Such as use themselves to this way, the filth of hell sticks upon them; in the ways of sin there are such deep sloughs that men sink into perdition. But the way of the Christian race is clean; such as run this race cleanse themselves from all pollution of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness (2 Corinthians 7:1).

A race is laborious; the running of a race is a violent exercise — men put forth all the strength of their bodies in running. Thus Christianity is a race for labor; we must put forth all our strength in this race. My soul follows hard after God (Psalm 63:8); I reach forward (Philippians 2:13-14) — the word signifies I stretch my neck forward. The apostle says: I press toward the mark; as runners in a race gather up their feet with all swiftness and stretch

themselves forward to lay hold on the prize. It is not an idle wish or a dead prayer that will win the garland; but a Christian must put forward with all speed and vigor of affection, that he may obtain what he runs for.

A race is short — *breve curriculum*, as Horace calls it; the Greek word for a race signifies a short stage of ground; the Olympian race contained six hundred feet, one hundred twenty paces long as authors report. A race is but a short space of ground, it is soon run; thus our time being short, our race cannot be long. And this may encourage us in the race of religion and keep us from being out of breath; remember it is but a short race. After you have suffered awhile (1 Peter 5:10) — so I may say: after you have run awhile, you will be at the end of the stage. It is but awhile, Christians, and you shall have done wrestling, weeping, praying, and you shall reap the fruit of all your prayers; it is but awhile, and you shall have done suffering, and be among the spirits of just men made perfect. It is but awhile, and you shall be at the end of your race — receiving the end of your faith (1 Peter 1:9). How should a child of God rejoice to think he has got over a good part of his race and is almost at the end — as Doctor Taylor the martyr once said: I have but two stiles to go over, and then I shall be at my Father's house. You that have set out early for heaven and are now in your old age, comfort yourselves with this: you have but a few steps more to take, and then you are at the end of your race.

In a race there is a crown or garland given to him that gets the better; so in religion, those that win the race shall wear the crown (2 Timothy 4:8). Such as do not run through sloth, or will not run through pride, miss of the reward; but such as run the heavenly race faithfully shall have a crown. And this reward is fitly resem-

bled to a crown for the splendor of it; a crown hung full of jewels is bright and splendid, it gives an orient luster. Neither can pen describe, nor pencil delineate, nor tongue of angel express the glory and magnificence of this crown; nor can it be shadowed out by all the beauties of heaven, though every star were a sun.

The second thing to be illustrated is wherein the Christian race differs from other races.

In other races one only is crowned; so in the text: but one receives the prize. But in the spiritual race many win the prize; the saints shall come to heaven from all the quarters of the world, east and west (Matthew 8:11): many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. In Revelation 7:4, there were sealed a hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel; and after this a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, stood before the throne clothed with white robes and palms in their hands. By this multitude not numerable are to be understood those that belong to the election and are saved; these as victors are crowned and stand with palms in their hands. Should but one receive the prize, there might be room left for despair.

In other races some stand still and look on, and usually there are but two who run; but here in the heavenly race all must run. Those who are unfit to run other races must run this one — as the lame and the blind; none are excused from this race. All have run from God by sin, and all must run to him by repentance; either run or be damned — either fly to heaven or fall to hell.

In other races the feet run; but in the Christian race the heart runs (Psalm 119:32): I will run when you shall enlarge my heart. In religion the heart is all; that which the heart does not do is not done. It is not the lifting up of the eye or hand toward heaven that forwards the race — it is the outgoing of the heart. Many a man's tongue runs in religion, but not his heart. Do you believe with your heart (Romans 10:9)? Do you love God with your heart (Matthew 22:37)? This is to run the race of religion; this clears the ground and brings a Christian apace to the goal. When David's heart was enlarged, then he would run.

In other races he only gets the prize who runs fastest; but it is not so in this heavenly race. Though others may outrun us, yet if we hold on to the end of the race we shall receive the reward. Some saints are like Asahel, light of foot as a roe (2 Samuel 2:18); they run swifter in the race of obedience, as Ahimaaz outran Cushai (2 Samuel 18:23). But this is the comfort of weak believers: though they cannot run so fast as others, yet if they hold on to the end of the race without tiring, they are crowned. He that came in at the eleventh hour had his pay as well as he that came in at the first hour (Matthew 20:9), to show that those who set out later and may be outrun by other Christians, yet persevering, are saved.

In other races men run for a temporal reward; in the Christian race we run for an eternal one. Others run for a corruptible crown (1 Corinthians 9:25); sometimes the crown bestowed upon the victor was made of olive, sometimes of myrtle; the Egyptians had a crown of cinnamon enclosed in gold, but still it was corruptible. But the crown the saints run for is incorruptible — it is a never-fading crown (1 Peter 5:4). Other crowns are like a garland of flow-

ers that soon withers (Proverbs 27:4); but this crown given to the conquering Christian is unfading — the jewels of this crown are never lost, the flowers of it never fade.

In other races the garland is bestowed in a way of merit; but in the Christian race it is bestowed as a legacy of free grace. Though we shall not obtain the prize unless we run, yet it is not because we run; how can we merit the recompense of reward? Before we merit we must satisfy, but we have nothing to satisfy. Besides, what proportion is there between the race and the recompense? Therefore the crown bestowed is called a gratuitous gift (Romans 6:23): the gift of God is eternal life. God will so bestow his rewards that he himself may be no loser; though the saints have the comfort of their crown, God will have the glory.

In other races many times one hinders another; but in the race to heaven one Christian helps another (1 Thessalonians 5:11): edify one another, even as also you do. One Christian helps by his prayer, advice, and example to confirm another. What is the communion of saints but one Christian putting forward another in the heavenly race?

One may lose other races and not be miserable; but he cannot lose this race in religion but he must be so. In other races a man does but lose his wager; but if he falls short of this spiritual race, he loses his soul. How seasonable therefore is that apostolic caution (Hebrews 4:1): let us fear, lest we should come short.

The third thing to be insisted on is why we must run this race of Christianity.

There are three reasons. First, because God has set us this race (Hebrews 12:1): let us run the race that is set before us. It is not arbitrary — it is not left to our choice whether we will run or no; God has set us the race. God's commands carry power and sovereignty in them; if a general bids his army march, they must march. There is no disputing duty at the word of God; the heavens drop down their dew, the stars set themselves in battle array, the earth brings forth a crop, the sea is bridled in and dare not go a step farther. If inanimate creatures obey the word of command, much more those who are endued with reason; when God says, run the race, we must run.

There is no other way to get to heaven but by running the race; by nature we are far distant from the goal, and if we would have heaven we must run for it. A man can no more get to heaven who does not run this race than one can get to his journey's end who never sets a step in the way. Give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom (2 Peter 1:10).

Our time allotted to us is short; Job compares our life to a swift post (Job 9:25): my days are swifter than a post. The poets painted Time with wings; if time flies, we had need run. The night of death hastens, and there is no running a race in the night.

Use 1. This shows us that the business of religion is no idle thing; we must put forth all our strength and vigor. Religion is a race; we must run, and so run; it is a hard thing to be a Christian. Alas then, what shall we say to them that stand all the day idle? Come to many, and one would think they had no race to run; they put their hand in their bosom (Proverbs 19:24). Is that a fit posture for him that is to run a race? They stretch themselves upon their

couches (Amos 6:4) — they had rather lie soft than run hard. Many would have heaven come to them, but they are loath to run to it; if salvation would drop as a ripe fig into the mouth of the eater (Nahum 3:12), men could like it well, but they are loath to set upon running a race. But never think to be saved upon such easy terms; the life of a Christian is not like a nobleman's life. The nobleman has his rents brought in by his steward whether he wakes or sleeps; but think not that salvation will be brought to you when you are stretching yourself on your beds of ivory. If you would have the prize, run the race. The passenger in the ship, whether he sits in the cabin or lies on the couch, is brought safe to shore; but there is no getting to the heavenly port without rowing hard. Zacchaeus ran before to see Jesus (Luke 19:4); if we would have a sight of God in glory, we must run this race — we cannot have the world without labor, and would we have heaven?

If the life of Christianity be a race, this may justify the godly in the haste which they make to heaven (Psalm 119:60): I made haste and delayed not to keep your commandments. Carnal spirits say: what need you make such haste? Why are you so strict and precise? Why do you run so fast? Oh, but may a Christian reply: religion is a race; I cannot run too fast, nor hardly fast enough. If any had asked Saint Paul why he ran so fast and pressed forward to the mark, he would have answered that he was in a race. Here is that which may justify the saints of God in their zeal and activity for heaven; they are racers, and a race cannot be run too fast. The blind world is ready to judge all zeal madness; but have we not cause to put on with all speed when it is a matter of life and death? If we do not run, and so run, we shall never obtain the prize; if a man were to run for a wager of three or four millions, would he not

run with all celerity and swiftness? The king's business requires haste (1 Samuel 21:8); if any should say to us, where are you going so fast? why so much praying and weeping? we may say as David: the king's business requires haste. God has set me a race to run, and I must not linger or loiter. The haste Abigail made to the king (1 Samuel 25:34) prevented her death and the massacre of Nabal's family; our haste in the heavenly race will prevent damnation. This may plead for a Christian in his eager pursuit after holiness, against all the calumnies and censures of the wicked.

Use 2. It reproves those who run a contrary race — not the race God has set them, but the race the devil has set them, the race of iniquity. They sacrifice their lives to Bacchus; they make haste, but not to heaven. They make haste to fulfill their lusts (Proverbs 6:18); they make haste to swear, to be drunk; they are swift to shed blood (Isaiah 59:7): their feet run to evil. The sinner, in regard of the haste he makes in sin, is compared to a swift dromedary (Jeremiah 2:23). A wicked man's swiftness in sin is like Absalom's riding on his mule (2 Samuel 18:9): the mule went under the thick boughs of an oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between heaven and earth. Sinners make haste to sin as a bird hastens to the snare; they run as the swine possessed with the demons ran into the sea and were drowned (Mark 5:13). Oh what haste men make to hell, as if they feared the gates would be shut before they could get there! What need is there for this speed? Why do they run so fast to prison? The sins men commit in haste, they will repent of at leisure; Achan made haste to the wedge of gold, but now he has time enough to repent of it. Sin is an unhappy

race, a damnable race; will it not be bitterness in the end (2 Samuel 2:26)? When men come to the end of that race, instead of a crown, behold chains of darkness (Jude 6).

It reproves those who, instead of running the race of God's commandments, spend all their time in jollity and mirth, as if their life were more a dance than a race. Job 21:12-13: They take the timbrel and harp and rejoice at the sound of the organ; they spend their days in mirth. They are at their music when they should be at their race. Amos 6:4: They chant to the sound of the viol, they drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments. It is hard to have two heavens. Some are all for pleasure; they are like those hunting dogs that, while running among the sweet flowers, stop to smell the flowers and lose the scent of the hare and give up the chase. So while many are among the sweet flowers — the delights and pleasures of the world — they fall to smelling these flowers and leave off their race. Under the sweet honey lurk poisons. These go merrily to hell; I may say as Solomon (Proverbs 14:13): the end of that mirth is heaviness.

If religion is a race, it reproves those who are slow-paced in religion — who creep but do not run. Their motion is like the motion of the eighth sphere — slow and dull. They should be like the sun in the firmament, which is swift, when they are like the shadow on the sundial, which moves very slowly. Many Christians move so heavily in the ways of God that it is hard for onlookers to tell whether they are making any progress at all. They are hasty in their passions but slow of heart to believe (Luke 24:25). What haste did Israel make in their march when Pharaoh was pursuing them! What need have Christians to expedite their race when the devil is behind pursuing, ready to overtake them and make them

lose the prize! We read in the law that God would not have the donkey offered in sacrifice; he hates a dull temper of soul. The snail was accounted unclean (Leviticus 11:30); the slow-paced Christian will be caught in default at last and miss the prize.

It reproves those who begin the race of Christianity but do not persevere to the end of the race — they faint by the way. Galatians 5:7: You did run well; who hindered you that you should not obey the truth? The crown is set upon the head of perseverance; he who runs half the way and then faints loses the garland. It is sad for a man to come near to heaven and then tire in the race — as sad as to see a ship cast away in sight of the shore.

What shall we say to those who do worse than tire in the race — they run backward into the way of profaneness, as Julian, Gardner, and others? There is no going to heaven backward. Such do cast reproaches upon the ways of God. Better never to begin the race than to run back. 2 Peter 2:21: For 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. A soldier that deserts his colors and enlists in the enemy's regiment, if taken, must expect martial law. Hebrews 10:38: If any man draws back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. God will bear with infirmity, but he will punish treachery; wrath shall smoke against the apostate. Indeed in war there is a retreating sometimes which, if done skillfully, to the enemy's disadvantage, is called an honorable retreat. But in the race to heaven there must be no retreats — these are not honorable retreats, but damnable retreats. Whoever draws back, it is to perdition (Hebrews 10, last verse).

Let all Christians be exhorted to run this heavenly and blessed race of religion. What arguments shall I use to persuade? Look upon other creatures winged with activity, and then, Christian, shame yourself. Look into the firmament and see the sun as a giant running his race (Psalm 19:5) — and do you stand still? Look into the air; see the birds soaring aloft and mounting toward heaven. Look into the earth; see the bees working in the hive. Look upon the angels — they are swift in obedience. Look upon other Christians near you; you shall find them in their race, reading, praying, weeping — and have you nothing to do? Look upon your precious time: time runs, and do you stand still? Look upon the wicked: how quick are they in sin? And shall they run faster to hell than you run to heaven? Look upon yourself: how industrious you are for the world — rising early, compassing sea and land! And yet how stupid and heartless in the matters of salvation? Will you run for a feather, a bubble, and not run for a kingdom?

To quicken your pace in godliness, consider what the prize is we run for — it is a crown of glory. This encircles all blessedness within it; there will soon be an end of our race, but there will be no end of our crown. This blessed reward should quicken us in the race; but how shall we run the race so as to obtain? It is sad to run in vain (Philippians 2:16); this brings us to the next use.

Use 4. I shall prescribe some directions about this heavenly race.

Take heed of those things which will hinder you in your race. First, shake off sloth — idleness is the devil's pillow; the sluggish Christian will never win the race; he is sleeping when he should be running. Sloth is the rust of the soul; it is the disease of the soul — a sick man cannot run a race. The slothful man roasts not that

which he took in hunting (Proverbs 12:27); he will rather fast than hunt for venison. Shake off sloth; abandon this idle devil if you intend to run a race.

Throw off all weights; there are two sorts of weights we must throw off.

The weight of sin (Hebrews 12:1): let us lay aside every weight and the sin that does so easily beset us, and let us run the race. The prophet David felt this weight (Psalm 38:4): my iniquities are gone over my head as a heavy burden; they are too heavy for me. If we do not throw off this weight by repentance, it will sink us into hell; a man cannot run a race with a burden upon his back. An unclean person cannot run the race of holiness; a proud man cannot run the race of humility; a self-willed man cannot run the race of obedience. O Christian, unburden your soul of sin — throw off this weight if you intend to lay hold on the crown.

The second weight the spiritual racer must throw off is the world; this is a golden weight which has hindered many and made them lose their race. So far as the world is a weight, throw it off; I say not lay aside the use of the world, but the love of it (1 John 2:15). When the golden dust of the world is blown in men's eyes, it blinds them so that they cannot see their race.

Discard false opinions about this race.

That the race is easy; many a man thinks he can run the race from earth to heaven on his deathbed. O sinner, you who say the race is easy are a stranger to the Christian race. You are dead in sin until a supernatural principle of grace is infused (Ephesians 2:1); is it easy for a dead man to run a race? To run the way of God's commandments is against nature; and is it easy for a man to act con-

trary to himself? Is it easy for the water to run backward in its own channel? Is it easy for a man to deny himself, to crucify the flesh, to behead his beloved sin? Oh take heed of this mistake, that the Christian race is easy. Do you know what religion must cost you, and what religion may cost you?

The second false opinion we must beware of is that the race to heaven is impossible — that there is so much work to do that surely we shall never win the race. Cyprian confesses of himself that before his conversion he had many thoughts tending to despair; he imagined that he should never get the mastery of some of his corruptions. The thoughts of impossibility cut the sinews of all endeavor. God has encouraged us to run not only by promising rewards when we win, but by promising strength to enable us to run; has he not said he will put his Spirit within us (Ezekiel 36)? And then, inspired by the Spirit, we can run and not be weary. How many has Satan disheartened through despair? Surely, says the diffident soul, I may run, but I shall never so run as to obtain. Jeremiah 2:25: there is no hope. So says the despairer: I had as good go on in my sins, keep the old road; there is no hope, all succors of mercy are cut off. This is a dangerous precipice; despair takes a man off his legs, and then how can he run? Despair is the great devourer of souls; he that is under the power of this sin disputes himself into hell.

Take heed that company does not stay you by the way; if a man should be running a race and have a friend come and take him by the hand as he is running and desire to speak with him, this might make him lose the race. So stands the case here — many will be ready to meet with us and stop us in our race to heaven. They will say: what need you set out so soon? What need you run so fast?

Stay and bathe yourselves a while in the luscious delights of the world. Thus have many been stopped in the middle of their race and lost the prize. To him that would hinder us in our race we must say with a holy indignation, as Christ: get behind me, Satan (Matthew 4:10).

You must use all means to help you in the heavenly race.

Run the right race; the apostle calls it the race set before us (Hebrews 12:1) — that is, the race chalked out in the word of God, the race of self-denial and sanctity. It is not any race, but the race set before us, that we must run; which confutes the opinion that a man must be saved in any religion.

Fit yourselves for the heavenly race.

Diet yourselves; the racers in ancient times, says Irenaeus, did diet themselves — they would not eat of any gross meat nor yet a full meal, that they might be the more prepared for the race. Thus must Christians diet themselves by sobriety and mortification, that they may by a well-ordering of themselves be the fitter to run the race which is set before them. Saint Paul did beat down his body (1 Corinthians 9:27) that he might be the fitter for his race.

Strip yourselves for the race; the runner in a race uses to strip himself of all about him and wear only a white garment, that he might be light and nimble. So should Christians do — strip themselves of all conceits of merit, and only wear the white garment of Christ's righteousness.

Begin the race betimes (Ecclesiastes 12:1): remember your Creator in the days of your youth. Young ones think they may set upon the race too soon; can a man be good too soon? Can he run the race of repentance too soon? But suppose he might — yet it is

better to repent a year too soon than an hour too late. Esau's tears as well as his venison came too late (Genesis 27:33-34). David would seek after God early (Psalm 36:1); Augustine in his confessions complains of himself that he knew God no sooner. They will hardly be able to run the heavenly race who have old age and old sins upon them.

Run the pathway, not the road-way; hell-road is full of travellers; most go wrong (Exodus 23:2): you shall not follow a multitude to do evil. The multitude does not consider what is best, but what is safest. Our Savior has told us: narrow is the way which leads to life (Matthew 7:14). Run in the narrow way of self-denial and mortification.

Resolve to hold on in the race notwithstanding dangers and difficulties; a good Christian must be steeled with courage and fired with zeal. It is probable there will be thorns in the way of our race, and flint-stones — therefore we had need be well shod.

We must be shod with the gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:15); he whose heart is filled with that peace the gospel brings will be able to run over the hardest piece of religion with ease.

We must be shod with patience (Hebrews 12:1): let us run with patience the race. Patience bears up the heart of a Christian and keeps him from tiring in the race; if this shoe be off, we shall soon halt and give over running.

Christians in their race must keep their eye still upon the mark; the Greeks had their white line drawn at the end of their race, and the racer's eye was still upon it. The looking upon the prize quickens Christians in their race. Saint Paul looked toward the mark (Philippians 3:14) as archers look at the white, racers at the prize.

And Moses (Hebrews 11:26) looked to the recompense of reward; he looked with one eye at God's glory and with the other eye at the garland or prize.

Run with delight (Psalm 119:47): I will delight myself in your commandments. Oil supple the joints and makes them agile and nimble; the oil of gladness makes Christians lively and fit to run the heavenly race. The joy of the Lord is your strength (Nehemiah 8:10).

Run in the strength of Christ; do not think you can of yourselves win the race. The Arminians talk of free-will, but it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs (Romans 9:16). By nature we are blind and lame, therefore unfit to run a race; we run fastest when Christ takes us by the hand.

If you would run so as to obtain, be often in the exercise of grace; it is not enough to have grace in the habit — you must have it in the exercise. Such as run the heavenly race must not only be living but lively; they must have a flourishing faith and a flaming love. What is the meaning of loins girt and lamps burning (Luke 12:35) but grace in its activity? Without this there can be no speed in the heavenly race.

If you would run hard, pray hard; prayer helps us on in the race. Luther was a man of prayer. Pray over that prayer (Song of Solomon 1:4): draw me, we will run after you.

Pray that you may not mistake your way through error, nor stumble in it through offences. In a word, let us pray for the Holy Spirit, which does animate us in the race and carry us above our own strength. God's Spirit breathed in keeps us in breath.

THE SACRED ANCHOR



Titus 2:13. Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

A Christian's happiness is in reversion — it is yet behind; a saint in this life is a candidate and expectant of heaven. He has little in hand, but much in hope; so says the text: looking for that blessed hope.

There is enough to make us breathe after that hope, if we look either inward or outward.

If we turn our eyes inward and behold our sins, this made Paul himself cry out: O wretched man that I am (Romans 7:24). A Christian has two men within him — flesh and spirit; this may make him look for that blessed hope, when he shall be disentangled of his sins and shall be as the angels of God.

If we look outward, if we cast our eyes abroad, the world is but our sojourning-house — it is a stage whereon vanity and vexation act their part, and the scene seldom alters. Depart, this is not your rest (Micah 2:10). All which considered may make us look for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior.

In the words there is: 1. The act — looking. 2. The object, which is set down.

Emphatically: that blessed hope.

Specifically: the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

I begin with the first — the act, looking. There is a threefold looking.

A looking with desire, as the servant looked for the year of jubilee and release (Leviticus 25:40), or as the bride looks for the marriage day. Now it is a time of absence from our husband Christ; therefore we are dressed in mourning and hang our harps upon the willows. But how does the spouse desire the marriage day when the nuptials shall be solemnized! At that wedding the water shall be turned into wine. How does the pious soul cry out in a holy pang of desire: how long, Lord? Why is your chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of your chariot? It is the vote of the whole church (Revelation 22:17): come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

There is a looking with joy (Romans 5:2): we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. There is terror in a sinner's looking — it is called a fearful looking for of judgment (Hebrews 10:27), as a man in debt looks every hour for the sergeant to arrest him. But the saint's is a joyful looking, as a man looks for a friend or for one that is to pay him a great sum of money. So Moses looked with joy to the recompense of reward (Hebrews 11:26).

There is a looking with patience; as a man casts his seed into the earth and looks with patience till the crop springs up (James 5:7): behold the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the

earth and has long patience for it; be you also patient, for the coming of the Lord draws near. So much for the act, looking.

The object: that blessed hope. Here we are to consider: 1. What hope is. 2. What a Christian hopes for.

What hope is. Hope is a theological grace planted in the heart by the Spirit of God, whereby a Christian is quickened to the expectation of those things which are held forth in the promise (Romans 8:25): if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Aquinas describes hope thus: hope is concerning a good that is difficult, future, and possible.

Hope is concerning a good; so it differs from fear — fear looks at evil, hope at good.

Hope is concerning a future good; so it differs from joy; joy is exercised about something present, hope about something future. So Clement of Alexandria defines hope.

Hope is concerning a difficult good; it looks at some good which is difficult to attain. So hope differs from desire; desire is weak and transient, it is soon over; hope is resolute and fixed — it wrestles with difficulties and will not give over till it has the thing hoped for.

Hope is concerning a possible good; it looks at some good which is feasible and which there is possibility of obtaining. So hope differs from despair; despair looks on things with black spectacles and gives all for lost. Hope is like cork to the net, which keeps the heart from sinking in despair. Thus you have seen what hope is.

Here a question may be moved: how does hope differ from faith?

These two graces, faith and hope, are so like that they have been taken one for the other; there is such a near affinity between them that, says Luther, it is hard to find a difference. But though they are placed near together as the two wings of the cherubim on the mercy-seat, yet they are not the same. Indeed, in some things faith and hope agree; both feed upon the promise; both help to support the soul in trouble. Faith and hope are like two bladders put under a Christian, which keep him from sinking in the waters of affliction. Both of these graces, like cordial-water, comfort the fainting soul — there is joy in believing (Romans 15:13), rejoicing in hope (Romans 5:2). Faith and hope, like those two golden pipes (Zechariah 4:12), empty their golden oil of joy into a Christian. But though in some things these two graces agree and are alike, yet in some things they differ.

Faith and hope differ in order and priority; faith precedes and goes before hope — it is the mother grace. Faith is the ground of things hoped for (Hebrews 11:1). The promises are precious; they are like the ark which had manna laid up in it; but we must first believe the things contained in the promise, before we hope for them. Therefore Jerome says well: faith lights the lamp of hope, as the fire of the altar lighted the lamps of the sanctuary. Thus these graces differ in priority; hope is the daughter of faith.

They differ in nature, and that in two ways.

Hope only looks forward at things to come; faith looks backward as well as forward — it looks at things past as well as future. Faith believes Christ's passion and resurrection, as well as his coming to glory.

Hope looks at the excellency of the promise; faith looks at the certainty. Hope reads over the writing of the promise; faith looks at the seal of the promise. In hope of eternal life, which God who cannot lie has promised (Titus 1:2): that which hope looks at is eternal life; that which faith looks at is the infallibility of the promise — God who cannot lie has promised. In a word, faith believes, hope waits; faith shows a Christian the land of promise, hope sails there with patience. Faith strengthens hope and hope comforts faith; as elm supports the vine and the vine loads the elm with its fruit. Faith is the cable and hope is the anchor, and both keep the soul steady, that it does not dash upon shelves or sink in the quicksands. Thus much for the first — what hope is.

What a Christian hopes for: this is set down.

Emphatically: that blessed hope. Hope here is put by a metonymy for the things hoped for — the hope of blessedness. A Christian's hope is not in this life, for then he were in the forlorn hope; here is nothing to be hoped for but vicissitudes — all the world rings changes. But he is looking for that blessed hope. This is the difference between the seaman's anchor and the believer's anchor: the seaman casts his anchor downward, the believer casts his anchor upward in heaven. The believer is a rich heir (Hebrews 6:17) and waits till the crown-royal shall be set upon his head. According to common law there are two sorts of freeholds: a freehold in deed is when a man has made an entrance upon lands and is actually seized of them; a freehold in law is when a man has right to lands but has not yet made actual entrance. Heaven is a believer's freehold in law; he has a right to it — it is promised by the Father, purchased by the Son, assured by the Holy Ghost. But

he has not the freehold in deed; he waits God's leisure and looks for that blessed hope, till the time comes that he shall actually enter upon possession of the inheritance.

The object of a Christian's hope is set down specifically: the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ. By the way, the deity and godhead of Christ is strongly proved from hence against the Arians, as Jerome and Chrysostom well observe; the apostle shows who this great God is — it is our Savior Jesus Christ.

To speak then of the object of a Christian's hope, set down here specifically: the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior. There is a threefold epiphany or appearing of Christ.

There is an appearing of Christ to us, as when he was incarnate (Isaiah 9:6): to us a child is born. This was a happy appearing; when this morning star appeared, then salvation appeared to mankind. When Christ took flesh, he married our human nature to the divine nature; the virgin's womb was the place consecrated for tying that knot. Great is this mystery — God manifest in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16); it is such an enigma as the angels adore (1 Peter 1:12). God said the man is become as one of us (Genesis 3:22); but now we may say, God himself is become as one of us — made in the likeness of men (Philippians 2:7). This was Christ's first appearing.

There is an appearing of Christ in us — when he appears in our hearts, which is called a forming of Christ in us (Galatians 4:19). Christ is said to appear in us when by the operation of his grace he transforms us into his own image. In the incarnation Christ made himself like to us; by sanctification he makes us like to him — holy

as he is holy. What are we better for Christ's appearing in our flesh, unless he appear in our hearts? What are we the better for a Christ without us, unless we have a Christ within us (Colossians 1:27)? Christ in you the hope of glory.

There is an appearing of Christ for us, and that in two ways.

Christ appears for us as an advocate (Hebrews 9:24): he is entered into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us. It is a metaphor borrowed from our law-courts, where the attorney pleads for the client; so Christ pleads as an advocate for the saints. Satan is the accuser, but Christ is the advocate — he answers all bills of indictment brought in. He appears in the presence of God for us; the high priests under the law appeared before the ark and the mercy-seat, which was but a type of God's presence; but Christ appears in the very presence of God for us, in the face of God. He spreads his merits before his Father and in the virtue of his bloody sufferings pleads for mercy. And if Christ appears for us in heaven, shall not we appear for him upon earth?

Christ appears for the saints as a judge, and this appearing is meant in the text: looking for the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior.

Christ's first appearing in the flesh was dark and obscure; his beauty was veiled over (Isaiah 53:2) — all who saw the man did not see the Messiah. But his second appearing as our judge will be a glorious appearing, like the sun breaking out of a cloud; it will be a glorious appearing both in respect of Christ and the saints.

In respect of Christ himself, and that in three ways.

His person will be glorious; that light which shone upon Saint Paul surpassing the glory of the sun (Acts 26:13) was but a part of Christ's beauty, as a sparkle of the Sun of Righteousness. What will it be when he shall appear in all his spiritual embroidery?

His throne will be glorious; he shall sit upon the throne of his glory (Matthew 25), and shall have his chair of state set more rich than ivory or pearl — a throne most sublime and magnificent.

His attendants shall be glorious (Matthew 25:31): when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him. The angels are the courtiers of heaven; they are compared to lightning (Matthew 28:3) in regard of their sparkling luster. These glorious sublimated spirits shall be part of Christ's train and retinue, accompanying him to his throne. Thus it will be a glorious appearing in regard of Christ.

It will be a glorious appearing in regard of the saints; Christ will appear to do three things.

Christ as a judge will appear to acquit his people, and that by pronouncing the sentence: come, you blessed of my Father. The debt-book shall be crossed in the blood of the Lamb.

Christ as a judge will appear to vindicate his people; the names of the godly many times lie buried in reproach. But at that day they shall, as Bernard says, be fragrant with the best ointments — Christ will give them a new name. He will call them his friends, his spouse, the apple of his eye; their names shall flourish with honor and give forth their perfume as the wine of Lebanon.

Christ as a judge will appear to crown his people, when body and soul shall be reunited and perfected in glory. Christ will take his people into his sweet and everlasting embraces; he will lay

them in his bosom, he will set them upon his throne, he will fill them with the inebriating wine of his love to all eternity. And thus you see what is the saints' hope — namely, the glorious appearing of Christ, when he shall appear as a judge to acquit, vindicate, and crown them.

Use 1. See here the misery of a wicked man who has all his hope in this life; he makes the wedge of gold his hope, he casts his anchor downward. He can have no hope of Christ's appearing; he fears Christ's appearing, he does not hope for it — he is like a prisoner that fears the judge's coming to the bench. Christ's appearing will be a dismal appearing to him; when Christ shall appear, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear (1 Peter 4:18)? A wicked man is like a mariner at sea that has no anchor; like a man in a storm that has no shelter. It is with a sinner as it was with the old world when the flood came; the waters rose higher and higher — first to the valleys, then to the hills, then to the mountains, then to the top of the trees, and now they had nothing to trust to; all hope of being saved was gone. So it is with a sinner: if one comfort be taken away, he has another left; if a relation be gone, he has an estate; if one crutch be broken, he has another to lean upon. But sickness comes, and he sees he must die and appear before his judge — now he has no hope; he dies despairing and must lie forever in the boiling furnace of God's wrath.

He carries barren water in leaky vessels — in the hollow vessels of Lethe's waters.

Put yourselves upon the trial; have you this blessed hope of Christ's appearing and of your appearing with him in glory? Come to almost any man and you shall hear him say he hopes to be

saved. Well then, let every soul put itself upon the trial; I shall show you four differences between a sound hope and a sandy hope.

True hope is quickening; it sets a man working for heaven; it is called a lively hope (1 Peter 1:3); it puts life into a man. Hope is a spur to duty, a whetstone to industry; hope of victory makes the soldier fight, hope of gain makes the merchant run through the several zones. Divine hope is as wind to the sails, as wheels to the chariot — it makes a Christian active in religion; he runs the ways of God's commandments. Hope wrestles with difficulties, despises dangers, and marches in the face of death. True hope never gives over till it has the thing hoped for. He who has divine hope will have Christ though it be in a furnace; he will profess the truth, though the next word is: Christians to the lions. The Romans, as Tertullian observes, would endure all hardship — fight with cold and hunger and run any hazard — for hope at last to be consul, which was (says Tertullian) honor but for a year. Oh then, what pains will he take who has hopes of heaven, where he shall be crowned with a garland of glory forever! Does that man say his hope is in God who stands all the day idle (Proverbs 19:24)? There is a faint velleity in hypocrites — they would be saved but sit still and do nothing; their hope is not a lively hope but a dead hope. True hope is in the soul like fire, which is an active element — it is ever sparkling or flaming.

True hope is purifying (1 John 3:3): he that has this hope in him purifying himself. Hope is in the soul as lightning is in the air — it clears the air. He who has hope in Christ sets himself against all sin, both in purpose and practice; he is a consecrated person, with holiness to the Lord engraved upon his heart. Bernard com-

pares holiness to the root and hope to the branch; true hope flourishes upon the root of holiness. Try your hope by this scripture touchstone: the hypocrite says he has hope, but is he a purified person? What — an unclean person and hopes to go to heaven? Nothing enters there which defiles (Revelation 21:27). What — a drunkard and hopes to be saved? Do you think to go reeling to heaven? The wicked man is not sure of happiness, but only secure.

A true hope is a good hope (2 Thessalonians 2:16): who has given us good hope through grace. A wicked man's hope is as far from being good as his heart; the Hebrew word for hope signifies both confidence and folly — it is fitly applied to a wicked man's hope, for his confidence is folly. The hope of a godly man is compared to an anchor (Hebrews 6:19); the hope of a wicked man is compared to a spider's web (Job 8:14). The sinner's hope is fitly resembled to a spider's web in three ways.

The spider's web has no foundation; such is the hope of the wicked — it is a pleasing thing, but it has nothing to rest upon. A godly man's hope is built upon a double basis.

The Word of God (Psalm 130:5): in his Word do I hope. The Word says: let the sinner forsake his way, and the Lord will abundantly pardon; the Word says: hereby we know that Christ abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us (1 John 3:8). Now a child of God, finding these qualifications wrought in him, builds his hope for heaven upon them.

The hope of a godly man is built upon experiences (Romans 5:4): experience works hope. A believer can bring in a catalogue of experiences (Psalm 119:65): you have dealt well with your servant. When his sins and temptations have been strong, God has come in

with auxiliary forces and his grace has been sufficient. When his heart has been sinking under fears, God has buoyed him up out of the quicksands and lifted up his head out of deep waters (Psalm 3:3): you, O Lord, are my glory and the lifter up of my head. When his heart has been dead in duty, the Spirit has sweetly tuned his soul and now he makes melody in his heart to the Lord (Ephesians 5:19). Experience breeds hope; that hope must stand strong which stands with one foot upon a promise and with the other foot upon an experience. But a wicked man's hope is a spider's web — he has nothing to ground his hope upon; his hope is an imposture, a golden dream (Isaiah 29:8): it is as when a hungry man dreams he eats, but he awakens and his soul is empty. The hope of a sinner is like a dying man's will that has neither seal nor witnesses — null and void in law; just such is the hope of a wicked man. His hope promises him great matters, that Christ is his and all the privileges of heaven are his, but alas it is mere delusion; when things come to be examined, he wants both seal and witnesses — he wants the seal of the Word to confirm his title and the witness of the Spirit. It is a sad thing for a man to go to hell with the hope of heaven.

The spider spins the web out of her own bowels — she fetches all from herself. The bee fetches all from without; the matter of her comb and honey she sucks from the flower. A true Christian, like the bee, fetches all from without — he sucks from the sweet flower of Christ's righteousness (Isaiah 45:24): in the Lord have I righteousness and strength. But a wicked man, like the spider, fetches all his hope from within; he spins the thread of his hope out of himself, his duties and moralities. Thus his hope is like the spider's web.

The spider's web is but weak; the least blast shakes it, the least touch breaks it. Such is the sinner's hope; the least terror of conscience shakes it (Job 8:14): whose hope shall be cut off. Commonly before a wicked man's life is cut off, his hope is cut off. The godly man's hope is a good hope — it is solid and scriptural; the other is a spider's web.

A true hope is a persevering hope (Hebrews 3:6): whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence of hope firm to the end. True hope does not faint; it is not broken with affliction; it is an adamantine grace. Hope makes us endure; therefore it is compared to an anchor which holds the ship in a storm, and to a helmet (1 Thessalonians 5:8); the helmet keeps off the blow of the sword or arrow from entering. So hope as a helmet keeps off the stroke from a Christian, that it shall not hurt or dismay him. In time of public calamities, hope keeps the soul from sinking (Joel 3:16): the Lord shall roar out of Zion; the heavens and earth shall shake, but the Lord will be the hope of his people. Though heaven and earth be ready to come together, yet a believer's hope abides. A believer never casts away his anchor. The Jews were prisoners in Babylon, yet prisoners of hope (Zechariah 9:10): turn to your stronghold, you prisoners of hope. When a Christian is on his deathbed and all hope of life is taken away, yet his hope in God is not taken away.

What unspeakable comfort is this to a child of God, who upon a serious trial finds he has a well-built hope! When Christ shall appear, it will be a glorious appearing to a believer. A Christian is like a rich heir who has great lands in reversion; he has much in hope. Alexander, having given away almost all he had in Greece and being asked what he had left for himself, answered: hope — meaning

he had hope to conquer more kingdoms, as afterwards he did. So if a Christian's outward comforts were taken away and one should ask what he had left, he might say: the anchor of hope. He has a confident hope of those eternal mansions which Jesus Christ is gone to prepare for him (John 14:2). When Christ who is his life shall appear, then shall he also appear with him in glory (Colossians 3:4). Oh what comfort is this! How may this lighten and sweeten the cross; after the waters of Marah comes the wine of paradise; after a wet spring, a joyful harvest.

Use 4. Be exhorted to cheerfulness (Romans 5:2): we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Fear begets sorrow, hope begets joy; divine hope, says Augustine, cannot be without some mixture of joy. Has a Christian hopes of heaven, and not rejoice (Proverbs 10:28)? The hope of the righteous shall be gladness.

But may some say: it is long before we shall enter upon possession of heaven, and hope deferred makes the heart sick (Proverbs 13:12).

It is not long (Revelation 22:12): behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me. This glorious reward we hope for is quickly in faith's account; faith makes things future present — what hope says shall be, faith says it is already. Christ's coming is at hand; the bright morning star begins to appear. As a perspective glass makes those things which are a good way off seem near to the eye, so faith makes Christ and heaven and the day of recompense seem to be near — it gives a kind of possession of them in this life. Oh then, Christians, rejoice! Turn your lamentations into hallelujahs; it is but a while, and you shall be made partakers of those blessed things you hope for. Think of the certainty of Christ's appearing: behold, I come; and think of the celerity: I come quickly.

Maintain your hopes against all discouragements either of fear or temptation; Christians, let not the devil dispute you out of your hopes. A soldier who has gotten upon a hill will not let the enemy beat him off his ground but will keep it to the last breath. Has God set you on the higher ground? Has he raised your hopes as high as heaven? Be not beaten off your ground; maintain your hopes to the last. Pray to God that he would further clear your title to heaven, that you may be as Mount Zion which cannot be moved.

How should this make us abound in the work of the Lord. He who has a well-grounded hope of heaven — how fervent should he be in duty, how zealous in the cause of God! The hope of glory should spirit and animate a Christian. If there could be grief in heaven, surely it would be that we have done God no more service; what an infinite disproportion is there between our work and reward! Let divine hope be as oil to the lamp, as wind to the sails, to excite and blow us forward in holy activity for God. We sow in hope (Galatians 6:9): let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

Let us live suitable to our hopes in a holy, angelic walking. They who have heaven in their hopes should have heaven in their lives; let us walk after that golden pattern which Christ has left us (1 John 2:6). As we hope to have Christ's death for our justification, we must have his life for our imitation. I will conclude with that (Philippians 1:27): only let your conversation be as it becomes the gospel of Christ.

THE TREES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS BLOSSOMING AND BRINGING FORTH FRUIT



Philippians 1:11. Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

The blessed apostle in this chapter makes a solemn prayer to God for the Philippians; and among the rest, he puts up two rare petitions for them.

That they might be sincere (verse 10).

That they might be fruitful, in the words of the text: being filled with the fruits of righteousness. Where is observable:

The matter: being filled with fruits.

The manner of production: by Jesus Christ.

The end: which are to the glory and praise of God.

Doctrine: that Christians should above all things endeavor after fruitfulness. The saints are called trees of righteousness (Isaiah 61:3); these rational trees must not only bring forth leaves, but fruit — being filled with the fruits of righteousness. There are two things to be inquired into.

1. How a Christian brings forth fruit. 2. What is the fruit he brings forth.

How a Christian brings forth fruit. He brings forth fruit in the vine; by nature we are barren — there is not one good blossom growing on us. But when by faith we are engrafted into Christ, then we grow and fructify (John 15:4): as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can you except you abide in me. Jesus Christ is that blessed root which shoots up the sap of grace into his branches. The Pelagians tell us we have sufficiency of ourselves to bring forth good fruit; but how improper is this? Does not the root contribute to the branches? Is it not of Christ's precious fullness that we receive (John 1:16)? Therefore it is observable Christ calls the spouse's grace his grace (Song of Solomon 5:1): I have gathered my myrrh with my spice — Christ says not your myrrh, but my myrrh. If the saints bear any spiritual fruit, they are beholden to Christ for it; it is his wine, it is his myrrh (Hosea 14:8): from me is your fruit found.

What that fruit is which a good Christian brings forth. It is: 1. Inward fruit. 2. Outward fruit. 3. Kindly fruit. 4. Seasonable fruit.

A Christian brings forth inward fruit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith (Galatians 5:22). This fruit is sweet and mellow, growing under the Sun of Righteousness; this is that ripe fruit God delights to taste of (Micah 7:1).

The fruit of good discourse (Proverbs 15:4): a wholesome tongue is a tree of life. Gracious speeches fall from the lips of a godly man as fruit from a tree.

The fruit of good works (Colossians 1:10); God will say at the last day: show me your faith by your works (James 2:18). A true saint does all the good he can, honoring the Lord with his substance; he knows he is to be in the world but a while, therefore lives much in a little time and crowds up a great deal of work in a little room. It was Christ's speech not long before his suffering (John 17:4): I have finished the work which you gave me to do. How can they be said to finish their work who never yet began a good work?

A Christian brings forth kindly fruit; the godly man brings forth his fruit (Psalm 1:3) — that is, he brings forth fruit proper for him to bear. What is this kindly and proper fruit? When we are good in our callings and relations. In a magistrate, justice is kindly fruit (Deuteronomy 16:19); in a minister, zeal (Acts 17:16); in a parent, instruction (Deuteronomy 4:10); in a child, reverence (Ephesians 6:1); in a master, good example (Genesis 18:19; Ephesians 6:9); in a servant, obedience (1 Peter 2:18); in a husband, love (Ephesians 5:25); in a wife, submission (Ephesians 5:22); in a tradesman, diligence (Exodus 20:9); in a soldier, innocence (Luke 3:14). I shall never believe him to be good who does not bear kindly fruit. A good Christian but a bad master, a good Christian but a bad parent, does not sound well. That minister can no more be good who wants zeal than that wine is good which wants spirits; that magistrate can no more be good who wants justice than that pillar is good which is not upright. That child can no more be good who does not honor his parent than a traitor can be said to be loyal. When Absalom rose in rebellion against his father, the mule which he rode (as if she were weary of carrying such a

burden) resigned up her load to the great thick oak, and there left him hanging by the head between heaven and earth, as neither fit to ascend the one nor worthy to tread upon the other.

Let Christians be persuaded to bring forth proper and genuine fruit and shine forth in their relations; consider:

He who is not good in his relations goes under the just suspicion of a hypocrite; let a man seem to be a penitent or zealot, yet if he bears not fruit proper to his station, he is no tree of righteousness but some wild degenerate plant. There are some who will pray, hear sermons, discourse well — this is good; but what means the bleating of the sheep? They are not good in their relations; this discovers they are unsound. A good Christian labors to fill his relations and to go through all the parts of religion, as the sun through all the signs of the zodiac. I like not those Christians who, though they seem to be traveling to heaven, yet leave the duties of their relations as *terra incognita*, which they never come near.

The excellency of a Christian is to bring forth proper fruit; wherein lies the goodness of a member in the body but to discharge its proper office? The eye is to see, the ear to hear; so the excellency of a Christian is to bring forth that fruit which God has assigned him. What is a thing good for which does not do its proper work? What is a clock good for that will not strike? What is a ship good for that will not sail? What is a rose good for that does not smell? What is that professor good for who does not send forth a sweet perfume in his relation? The commendation of a thing is when it puts forth its proper virtue.

Not to bring forth suitable fruit spoils all the other fruit which we bring forth. If a man were to make a medicine and should leave out the chief ingredient, the medicine would lose its virtue; if one were to draw a picture and should leave out an eye, it would spoil the picture. There are many to whom Christ will say at the day of judgment, as to the young man (Luke 18:22): yet you lack one thing. You have prayed, fasted, and heard sermons, yet you lack one thing — you have not been good in your relations.

Relative graces do much beautify and set off a Christian; it is the beauty of a star to shine in its proper orb. Relative grace does bespangle a Christian.

A good Christian brings forth seasonable fruit (Psalm 1:3): he that brings forth fruit in his season. Everything is beautiful in its time (Ecclesiastes 3:11); that may be good at one time which at another may be out of season. There is a great deal of skill in the right timing of a thing; duties of religion must be performed in the fit juncture of time.

Christian duties that relate to our neighbor must be observed in their season.

Our reproving others must be seasonable; reproof is a duty — when we see others walk irregularly, like soldiers that march out of rank and file, we ought mildly yet gravely to tell them of their sin (Leviticus 19:17). But let this fruit be brought forth in its season.

Do it privately (Matthew 18:15): go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.

Do it when you see him in the best temper, not when his passions are up; that were pouring oil on the flame. But when his spirit is meekened and calmed — you put the seal on the wax when

it is soft and pliable; there is a time when men's spirits are more flexible and yielding. Now is the fittest season to stamp a reproof upon them, and it is likeliest to take impression. When Abigail reproved Nabal, it was in the right season — not when he was in wine, but when he was in his wits and was fit to hear a reproof (1 Samuel 25:37).

Another season for reproof is in the time of affliction; affliction tames men's spirits, and now a word of reproof spoken prudentially may work with the affliction. A bitter potion is not refused in case of extremity of pain; affliction opens the ear to discipline (Job 36:10).

Our comforting others must be seasonable (Proverbs 15:23): a word spoken in due season, how good is it? When we see one fallen into sin and with Peter weeping bitterly, oh now a word of comfort will do well. The Corinthian, being deeply humbled, the apostle calls for oil and wine to be poured into his wounds (2 Corinthians 2:7): you ought rather to comfort him, lest perhaps such an one should be swallowed up of sorrow. When the soul is wounded for sin, now bring the mollifying ointment of a promise; display the glory of God's attributes — his mercy and truth to the sinner when the spirit is broken. A word of comfort spoken in season is the putting of a dislocated joint back in; this is to bring forth seasonable fruit, when we give wine to those that are of a heavy heart. Pleasant words are as a honeycomb, sweet to the soul (Proverbs 16:24). Job's friends pretended to comfort him, but instead of pouring oil into the wound, they poured in vinegar.

Duties of religion that relate to God must be performed in their season.

Mourning for sin is a duty; God loves a contrite heart (Psalm 51:17); how powerful with God is the weeping rhetoric that a poor sinner uses! But yet there is a time when mourning may not be so seasonable; when God has given us some eminent signal deliverance and this mercy calls aloud to us to rejoice, but we hang our harps upon the willows and sit weeping — this sadness is fruit out of season. There was a special time at the feast of tabernacles when God called his people to rejoicing (Deuteronomy 16:15): seven days shall you keep a solemn feast to the Lord your God, and you shall surely rejoice.

Now if the Israelites had sat heavy and disconsolate at that time when God called them to rejoicing, it had been very unseasonable — like mourning at a wedding. When we are called to thanksgiving and we mingle our drink with tears, is not this to be highly unthankful for mercy? God would have his people humble, but not ungrateful. It is the devil's policy either to keep us from duty, or else to put us upon it when it is least in season.

Rejoicing is a duty (Psalm 33:1); but when God by some special providence calls us to weeping, now joy is unseasonable. This is that which God complains of (Isaiah 22:12): in that day did the Lord of Hosts call to weeping, and behold joy and gladness. Oecolampadius and others think it was in the time of King Ahaz, when the signs of God's anger like a blazing star did appear; now to be given to mirth was very unseasonable. The Lord says (verse 14): surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die. In the Hebrew it is a concise form of an oath — as if God had said: I swear it shall not by any prayer or sacrifice be expiated. The fruit of joy must be brought forth in its season.

Reading the Word is a duty (John 5:39), but this fruit must be brought forth in its season. To read at home when the Word is preaching, or the sacrament celebrating, is unseasonable — nay sinful. As Hushai said (2 Samuel 17:7): the counsel is not good at this time. One duty is to prepare for another, but not to jostle out another; fruit must put forth seasonably. The great God who has appointed the duties of his worship has appointed also the time. God enjoined a set time for the Passover (Numbers 9:2-3): let the children of Israel keep the Passover at his appointed season. Had the people of Israel been reading the law at home or praying in the time of the Passover, it had not been in season, and God would have punished it for a contempt (verse 13): the man that forbears to keep the Passover, even the same soul shall be cut off. If when public ordinances are administered any person, whether out of pride or sloth, shall stay at home, though he may have his private devotions, yet he brings forth fruit out of season; and let that man know he shall bear his sin.

Let all the trees of righteousness bring forth seasonable fruit; in prosperity be thankful, in adversity be patient. To everything there is a season (Ecclesiastes 3:1); the Psalmist says God appointed the moon for her seasons (Psalm 104:19). If the moon should shine at noon-day or the sun at midnight, this were not in season; so it is in spiritual things.

To excite to seasonable fruit, consider:

The seasonableness of a thing puts a value and preciousness upon it; there are certain meats which we eat when they are in season, and if they be out of season we care not for them. We value a seasonable kindness — else it is worth nothing; duties of religion performed in their season are glorious.

Creatures by the instinct of nature observe their season (Jeremiah 8:7): the stork in the heaven knows her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane. Pliny says they observe the season of changing their climate. And shall not Christians observe their seasons — when to mourn, when to rejoice? Let not the stork and turtle outwit them.

Duties of religion not well timed are dangerous; a strong purgation may sometimes be good, but to give it out of season when nature is spent and between fainting fits may kill the patient. Snow and hail are good for the ground when they come in their season; but when the corn is ripe, a storm of hail would do hurt and be like a flail to thrash the corn out of the ear. Mourning in a time of joy, private duties in time of public ordinances, is as unseasonable as snow and hail in harvest, and will prove no less prejudicial.

Use 1. This shows us who is a Christian in God's calendar — namely the fruit-bearing Christian. As soon as the sap of grace is infused, it puts forth itself in evangelical fruit. No sooner was Paul converted but he became a plant of renown — he brought forth rare fruit: humility, faith, heavenly-mindedness; he was one of the most fruitful trees that ever God planted in his vineyard. The jailer, when God had changed him from a wild tree to a tree of righteousness, brought forth sweet and generous fruit; how kindly did he use the apostles — he set meat before them and washed their wounds (Acts 16:33-34); he who was before their jailer became their nurse and physician. It is impossible for a man to be engrafted into Christ, who is so full of juice and succulency, but he must be fruitful. He who is a branch of this tree, though before he were like Aaron's dry rod, yet now he blossoms and brings forth almonds.

Use 2. Here is an indictment against three sorts.

Such as bring forth no fruit (Hosea 10:1): Israel is an empty vine. O how many unfruitful hearers are there — who evaporate into nothing but froth and fume, being like those ears which run out all into straw! They give God neither the early fruit nor the latter. There are many Christians like arbors covered only with the leaves of profession; they may be compared to the wood of the vine which is good for nothing (Ezekiel 15:2). He who has not the fruits of the Spirit has not the Spirit; and he who has not the Spirit of Christ is none of Christ's (Romans 8:9); and if he be not Christ's, whose is he then? I fear the sin of this age is unfruitfulness; never more laboring in God's vineyard, and yet never less fruit. Instead of the fig-tree and pomegranate, we have abundance of barren willows; ministers say they fear they spend their labor in vain. Many are perverted, few converted; Satan never had such a harvest in England as of late years; but how few are savingly wrought upon? They are as the gleanings after vintage. This is a lamentation and shall be for a lamentation. To the unfruitful Christian let me say four things.

Unfruitfulness is a shame; barrenness of old was counted a great shame. For a tree in winter to be fruitless is no great wonder; but in the spring and summer to be without fruit is a reproach to the tree. So in the winter of ignorance and popery to have less fruit was less culpable; but in the spring-time of the gospel, when the Sun of Righteousness has shone so gloriously in our horizon, now to be without fruit is a reproach not to be wiped away. Men think it a shame to want an eye or a limb; but it is a greater shame to want fruit.

What account can the unfruitful Christian give to God? God will come with this question: where is your fruit? A godly man dies full of fruit (Job 5:26): you shall come to your grave in a full age, like a shock of corn. The unfruitful Christian comes to his grave not as a shock of corn, but as a bundle of straw, fit only for the fire. It is good to bethink ourselves what answer we shall give to God for our barrenness. The Lord has planted us in rich soil; he may say to us as to his vineyard (Isaiah 5:1): my beloved has a vineyard in a very fruitful hill — he fenced it and planted it with the choicest vine, and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. Hilly places are judged the fittest for vines to grow in (Psalm 80:10); there the sun comes best and is of more force for ripening the grapes.

In a fruitful hill — in the Hebrew it is the horn of the son of oil, or the son of fatness, that is, a very fat rich soil. So may God say to us: I have planted you in a hilly place; you have been higher than the nations round about you; you have been even lifted up to heaven with ordinances. The sunbeams of mercies and Zion's silver drops have fallen upon you; but where is your fruit? Your enjoyments are great, but what are your improvements? Whom God finds without fruit, he leaves without excuse.

They that do not bring forth good fruit shall never taste of the fruits that grow in heaven. Heaven is the garden of God, the paradise of pleasure where the most rare and delicious fruits grow; there are fruits that the angels themselves delight to feed on. It may be said of those celestial fruits as in Song of Solomon 4:13: your plants are an orchard of pomegranates with pleasant fruits — camphire, spikenard, saffron, calamus, and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh, and aloes. How aromatic and fra-

grant are those fruits which grow in the heavenly Jerusalem! Now, if you do not bring God your fruit, you shall never taste his fruit; you who do not bring forth the fruits of righteousness shall never taste the fruits of paradise. Oh, present Christ with your sweet spices — give him your myrrh (Song of Solomon 5:2), your spiced wine with the juice of the pomegranate (Song of Solomon 8:2). Your myrrh, that is, repentance — this, though bitter to you, is sweet to Christ. Those who have no myrrh or wine to give God shall never feed upon the tree of life which bears several sorts of fruit (Revelation 22:2).

Think of the heavy doom which will be passed upon the unfruitful person (Matthew 25:30): cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness. This man had not embezzled his talent, but because he did not trade with it and bring forth fruit, therefore he is sentenced. God will condemn men as well for hiding their talents as for spending them; as well for not bearing figs as for bearing thorns. Let unfruitful Christians look to it; if God should not cut down unprofitable branches, he should be untrue in his word, for he has said (Matthew 3:10): every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down.

It reproveth those who bring forth evil fruit; they are not trees of the garden but of the wilderness. Their hearts are a fruitful soil for sin — they bring forth pride, malice, superstition. Some of their hellish and bitter fruits are mentioned (Galatians 5:20-21): adultery, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, seditions, heresies. These are wild grapes (Isaiah 5:2), grapes of gall (Deuteronomy 32:32), fruit unto death (Romans 7:5); these are trees of the devil's planting. Let not that man say his heart is good

who bears such fruit; one may as well say, though the crab bears sour fruit, it has a sweet root. Bad fruit shows a rotten heart; the fruit indicates the tree (Luke 6:44).

It reproves those who bring forth good fruit but to a bad end (Hosea 10:1): Israel is an empty vine; he brings forth fruit to himself. A man had as good bring forth no fruit as bring forth fruit to himself.

What is it for one to bring forth fruit to himself?

When all the good he does is for the magnifying of himself, the worm of pride gets into his fruit and spoils it. Prayer is good; but when a man prays only to show his parts, this is to bring forth fruit to himself. Some pride themselves in their humbling confessions — which is as if Benhadad's servants had been proud when they came before the king with ropes upon their heads (1 Kings 20:31). Works of mercy are good, but when a man gives alms not so much to feed the poor as to feed his pride, now he brings forth fruit to himself, and this fruit is worm-eaten. God will say to all such self-seekers as he once said to the people of the Jews (Zechariah 7:5): when you fasted and mourned, did you at all fast to me, even to me? Sinners, did you not bring forth fruit to yourselves?

Use 3. Let this exhort us all to fruitfulness; how happy were it if it might be said of us as of Joseph (Genesis 49:22): Joseph is a fruitful bough. We love to see everything fruitful; if there be a tree in our orchard, though with never such fair leaves, we value it not unless there be fruit. Oh let the precious grapes and figs we bear evidence that we are trees of God's planting. God cares for no trees that are only for shade — he loves fruit. Arabia is called Felix because of the sweet fruits that grow there — frankincense, and other

perfumes and spices. That Christian may be entitled Felix, happy, who has the sweet fruits of the Spirit growing in his heart. The heathens had a custom of dedicating their trees — the oak to Jupiter, the laurel to Apollo, the olive to Minerva; but certainly, if we would dedicate a tree to the God of heaven which he should accept, let it be a tree filled with the fruit of righteousness. Christians should be like the pomecitron which, as naturalists say, bears fruit at all times of the year; when some of its fruit falls off, other fruit begins to mellow, and when that mellows, other fruit does but begin to blossom — it is never without fruit. This is the emblem of a good Christian; he is never without fruit, either blooming in his affections or fructifying in his conversation.

That I may persuade Christians to fruitfulness, I desire them to weigh these five things.

Fruit is that which God expects from us; we are his plantation. Who plants a vineyard and eats not of the fruit thereof (1 Corinthians 9:7)? Let us not be as Pharaoh's kine, which devoured the fat and yet still were lean; let us not be still devouring sermons and yet never the fatter.

Fruitfulness is one of the best distinctive characters of a Christian (Proverbs 12:12): the root of the righteous yields fruit. Fruitfulness distinguishes a saint from a hypocrite; the hypocrite is all for show and pretense — he has fair leaves, but the root of the righteous yields fruit. Fruit can no more be separated from faith than moisture from the air; it is the very definition of a branch in Christ — it bears fruit (John 15:2). As a man differs from a beast by reason, and a beast from a plant by sense, and a plant from a stone

by vegetation; so a good Christian differs from a hypocrite by fruit. Fruitfulness puts a difference between the sound tree and the hollow tree.

But may not hypocrites bring forth fruit?

They do not bring forth fruit in the vine; they bring forth in the strength of parts, not in the strength of Christ.

Hypocrites bring forth something like fruit, but it is not the right fruit.

The fruit they bear is not so sweet; the crab may bear fruit as well as the pearmain, but this excels in sweetness. The hypocrite may pray and give alms as well as a child of God, but there is a difference in the fruit. The fruit of the regenerate is mellow — it is sweetened with faith, it is ripened with love. The hypocrite's fruit is sour and harsh — he brings forth not pomegranates but crabs, not figs but wild grapes.

The seeming fruit of hypocrites dies and comes to nothing (John 15:6): he is cast forth as a branch and is withered. The hypocrite's fruit is like the grass upon the housetops, which withers before it grows up (Psalm 129:6; Matthew 13:6).

Fruitfulness adorns a Christian; the fruit adorns the tree; a fruit-bearing Christian is an ornament to religion. The more fruitful the branch, the more fair to look on (Jeremiah 11:16): the Lord called your name a green olive tree, fair and of goodly fruit. A dead tree, as it is unserviceable, so it is uncomely. A Christian decked with the fruits of righteousness is beautiful and glorious. The fertile Christian is compared to the lily for beauty and fairness (Hosea 14:5). O, would you be fair in God's eye? Then spread your branches; send forth your spices as aromatic trees in Lebanon.

Fruitfulness is a good evidence to show for heaven; the fruits of love, humility, and good works are (as Bernard says) seeds of hope, signs of predestination, the happy presages of future glory. The righteousness of faith is always accompanied with the fruits of righteousness. He that can show good fruit goes, like a ship laden with jewels and spices, full sail to heaven.

God delights in his fruitful trees; when his garden flourishes he will walk there. He who curses the barren tree will taste of the fruitful tree (Song of Solomon 5:1): I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice.

It exhorts those who do bear fruit to bring forth more fruit; do not think you have fruit enough, but bring forth further degrees of sanctity (John 15:2): every branch that bears fruit, he purges it that it may bring forth more fruit. Grace is like the morning light which increases more and more to the full meridian of glory. Christians should be like that ground in the parable which brought forth some sixty, some a hundredfold (Matthew 13:8). He who has a little gold labors to increase it — and is not grace more precious than gold? Some Christians have a little fruit and think that is well; like trees that have an apple or two growing on them to show that they are of the right kind (Isaiah 17:6): two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough. They are like the church of Philadelphia which had a little strength (Revelation 3:8) — so they have a little faith, a spark of love. Christ chides a little faith (Matthew 14:31); Christians should increase with the increase of God (Colossians 2:19). The apostle prays for the Philippians that their love might abound yet more and more (Philippians 1:9).

Now that I may press Christians who have fruit to bring forth more fruits of patience, humility, love, etc., consider:

This is the end why we have new cost laid out upon us — that we should bring forth more fruit. The Lord is still manuring us; not a week, not a day, but he is at new cost with us, he rains down golden showers. And why is God at all this charge with us, but that we may bring forth more fruit?

The more fruit we bring forth, the more glory we bring to God (John 15:8): herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit. Though it is a blessed sight to see any fruit, I would not discourage such as bear but two or three olive berries — it is a sign they are not dead trees. The ground in the parable which brought forth more sparingly, Christ calls it good ground (Matthew 13:8). If the husbandman sees a thin ear with but a little corn in it, yet he is glad to see some and carries it into the barn. So though you are a thin ear — you have not so much grace as others — God will not reject you; if there be any fruit, God will accept it. He that gained but two talents had his 'Well done, good and faithful servant' (Matthew 25:22). Though you have less fruit growing on you, you are too good a tree to be made fuel — you shall be transplanted into paradise. But I say you should not rest in small beginnings; labor to put more oil in the lamp and increase your stock of grace. The more fruit you bring forth, the more glory God has; though the lowest degree of grace may bring salvation to you, yet it does not bring so much glory to God. It is observable in the text: when the apostle had said, filled with the fruits of righteousness, he adds, which are to the glory and praise of God. It is a praise to the husbandman and commends his skill when the plants in his orchard thrive; so when the plants of righteousness flourish, this is to the praise of God's glory. It is the highest end of the creature to bring glory to God; better lose our lives than lose the end of our living.

The fuller we are of fruit, the more we are like Christ, who was full of grace and truth (John 1:14); he received Spirit without measure (John 3:34). This tree of life was ever bearing, and he brought forth several sorts of fruit — wisdom, righteousness, sanctification. The more we are filled with the fruits of righteousness, the more we resemble the Sun of Righteousness. We were elected to this end — to be made like Christ (Romans 8:30); and then are we most like this blessed vine when we bear full clusters.

The more fruit a Christian brings forth, the more will Christ love him. Now, says Leah, will my husband be joined to me, because I have borne him three sons (Genesis 29:34). When we bear much fruit, now will Christ's heart be joined to us. If Christ builds a nest of comfort, it is in those trees which fructify most. Though the Lord Jesus does accept of the truth of grace, yet he commends only the degrees of grace (Matthew 8:10): I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel; he sets a trophy of renown upon that faith. Christ will pardon a weak faith — he will honor a great faith. It was not a sparkle of love Christ commended in Mary Magdalen, but love flaming (Luke 7:47): she loved much. Christians, would you be as that beloved disciple who leaned on the bosom of Jesus? Would you have much love from Christ? Let him have much fruit from you.

Bearing much fruit will usher in abundance of comfort into the soul in these two exigencies.

In the hour of temptation; Satan will be sure to besiege the weakest Christian; all his darts fly that way. A strong temptation may overcome a weak faith; but a flourishing faith stands like a cedar and is not blown down by the wind of temptation. A strong faith can stop the mouth of the devil that roaring lion (1 Peter 5:9).

Store of fruit will give comfort in the hour of death; a little grace may keep us above the danger of death, but degrees of grace will keep us above the fear of death. O what joy will it be on the deathbed when a Christian can bring his sheaves full of corn! When he can show his five talents that he has gained by trading! When there is not only a drop or two of oil, but his lamp full of oil! What though the devil shows God our debts, if we can show him our fruit — O how sweet will death be! It will not be destruction but deliverance; death, like a whirlwind, may blow down the tree of the body, but it cannot blast the fruit of our graces. The trees of righteousness carry their fruit with them (Revelation 14:13): their works follow them. The Christian who abounds in holiness may say as Simeon (Luke 2:29): Lord, now let your servant depart in peace. He who bears but a little fruit departs in safety; but he who bears much fruit departs in peace.

Consider what need we have to be still putting forth more fruit; our graces are yet in their non-age. Indeed in heaven this doctrine will be out of season; we shall not need to hear it — then we shall have done growing, having arrived at our full stature; then our light shall be clear and our love perfect. But while we live here, there is something lacking in our faith (1 Thessalonians 3:10); therefore we need to increase the stock of grace and bring forth more fruit. Our grace is eclipsed with sin; our faith is full of unbelief. Now as when the sun is eclipsed, it is by degrees getting out of the eclipse and shines brighter and brighter till it recovers its perfect luster; so it must be with us — we must be getting out of the eclipse till we arrive at our perfect luster in glory.

He who does not increase to more fruitfulness will soon be on the losing hand; he who has not more faith will quickly have less. Not to progress is to regress (Revelation 2:4): you have left your first love. It is with grace as it is with fire; if it be not blown up and increased, it will soon decay. Though a Christian cannot lose the seed of grace (1 John 3:9), yet he may lose the actings of grace and the comfort; therefore bring forth more fruit. No sooner does a Christian begin to stand still, but you may perceive him going backward.

The more your fruit is increased, the more your glory will be increased; he whose pound gained ten was made ruler over ten cities (Luke 19:16-17). If you would have your crown hung full of jewels, let your boughs be hung full of fruit.

Use 4. The last use is of direction; I shall lay down some means to fruitfulness.

Be sensible of unfruitfulness; many might have been fruitful in grace if they had not thought themselves so already. He who thinks himself fruitful enough is barren enough; be sensible of your wants. It is better to complain than to presume.

If you would be fruitful, remove those things which will hinder fruitfulness.

Cherishing any secret lust in the heart; sin lived in is like vermin to the tree, which destroys the fruit. Grace cannot thrive in a sinful heart; in some soils plants will not grow. The cherishing of sin is the withering of the fruit.

The love of riches; the cares of the world choked the seed (Matthew 13); the love of sin poisons the fruit, the love of riches chokes it. This is like a blast upon trees — it destroys the precious

fruits of godliness. Love not the world (1 John 2:15).

The third means to fruitfulness is weeping for sin; moisture helps germination in trees; holy tears do water the trees of God and make them more fruitful. Mary Magdalen — a weeping plant — how fruitful was she in love to Christ? Moist grounds, as your marshes, are more fertile; the soul that is moistened and steeped in tears is most fruitful. Never did David's graces flourish more than when he watered his couch with tears. When a plant has been pricked whereby it lets forth gum or tears, it is fuller of fruit and the fruit is sweeter. That Christian who has been pricked at heart for sin, whereby he lets forth plenty of tears, bears the sweetest fruits of grace.

If you would be fruitful, often apply the blood of Christ and the promises.

Apply the blood of Christ; naturalists say that blood applied to the root of some trees makes them bear better. Sure I am, the blood of Christ applied to the heart makes it flourish more in holiness. None are so fruitful as a believer (2 Timothy 1:12): I know whom I have believed — there was the applying of blood to the root of the tree; and how fruitful was Paul in zeal, love to Christ, and heroical courage (2 Corinthians 12:15)! He who believes Christ died for him never thinks he can do or suffer enough for Christ. When we read and pray, we do but water the branches; when we believe, we water the root of the tree and make it fruitful.

Apply the promises; husbandmen have an art to comfort the spirits of the root to make the tree bear better. Apply the promises — these are for comforting the spirits of a Christian, and then he puts forth fruit more vigorously. It is an experiment in nature that

the root of the pine tree watered with wine causes it to flourish; the promises are as wine to water the trees of righteousness, whereby they spread and augment more in grace. Ever preserve the spirits of the tree if you would have it bear; a pensive dejected soul is less fruitful. But when through the promises a Christian's heart is cheered and comforted, now he is enriched with pleasant fruits — camphire and spikenard and frankincense; he is like a tree laden with fruit.

Another means to fruitfulness is humility; the low grounds are most fruitful (Psalm 65:13): the valleys are covered with corn. The humble heart is the fruitful heart. It is observed in some countries, as in France, that the best and largest grapes are made from the lower sort of vines; the largest and fairest fruits of the Spirit grow in a lowly Christian (1 Peter 5:5): God gives grace to the humble. Paul calls himself the least of saints, yet he was the chief of the apostles. The Virgin Mary was low in her own eyes (Luke 1:48), but this lowly plant bore that blessed vine which brought the fruit of salvation to the world.

If you would be fruitful in grace, be much in good conference (Malachi 3:16): then they who feared the Lord spoke often one to another. There is an observation concerning the sympathy of plants; some plants will bear better near other trees than when they grow alone, as is seen in the myrtle and olive. This holds true in divinity; the trees of righteousness, when they associate and grow near together, thrive best in godliness. The communion of saints is an excellent means for fruitfulness; Christians increase one another's knowledge, strengthen one another's faith, clear one

another's evidences. When the trees planted in God's orchard stand at a distance and grow strange one to another, they are less fruitful.

If you would be fruit-bearing trees, be near the waters of the sanctuary (Jeremiah 17:8): he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, that spreads out her roots by the river; her leaf shall be green, nor shall she cease from yielding fruit. The Word preached will not only make us knowing Christians but growing Christians. Ministers are compared to clouds (Isaiah 5:6); their doctrine drops as the rain and makes the trees of God fruitful. Those who sit under these silver drops are like that flock of sheep (Song of Solomon 4:2) whereof every one bears twins and none is barren among them. A Christian can no more be fruitful without ordinances than a tree without showers.

Lastly, if you would fructify apace, go to God and desire him to make you fruitful; God is called the husbandman (John 15:1), and he has an art above all other husbandmen. They can plant and prune trees, but if they be dead they cannot make them bear; God can make the barren tree bear — he can put life into a dead tree (Ephesians 2:5). It is not Paul's planting, but the Spirit's watering that must give the increase.

Pray to God to make you fruitful though it be by affliction; oftentimes God makes us grow in grace this way (Hebrews 12:11): no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness. The bleeding vine bears best; it is an observation that the pulling off some of the blossoms of a tree makes the fruit fairer, the reason being that the sap has the less to nourish. Some writers say they have known a tree, by having too many blossoms, blossom itself

dead. The notion holds true in a scriptural sense; God by pulling off some of the blossoms of our outward comforts makes us bring forth fairer fruit. Some have so blossomed in prosperity that they have blossomed themselves into hell. It is an ancient experiment that the planting of some tender trees near the west sun does them hurt and parches the fruit, the sun being so extremely hot; too much prosperity, like the west sun, does Christians much hurt and parches all good affection (Jeremiah 22:21). Oh, pray to God that he would make you fruitful though it be by bleeding. Say as Luther: Lord, wound where you will, prune and cut me till I bleed, so that I may have my fruit unto holiness and my end everlasting life (Romans 6:22).

THE PERFUME OF LOVE



1 Peter 1:22. See that you love one another with a pure heart fervently.

The holy scripture makes the love of the brethren the surest note of a man that shall go to heaven (1 John 3:14); and I find Christ and his apostles beating much upon this string of love, as if this made the sweetest music and harmony in religion. The consideration whereof has put me upon this subject.

All the graces have their beauty; but there are some that do more adorn and set off a Christian in the eye of the world — like some of the stars that shine brighter — as humility and charity. These two graces, like precious diamonds, cast a sparkling luster upon religion. I have designed to speak of the last of these at this time: see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently. Love is a grace always needful, therefore never out of season, though too much out of use.

My text, like the river of Eden, parts itself into four heads.

Here is a commission or charge: see that you love.

The extent of this love: one another.

The manner of this love: with a pure heart.

The degree of this love: fervently.

Love purely — that is opposed to hypocrisy; love must be with the heart; it must not be a compliment, which is like a painted fire. Dissembled love is worse than hatred.

Love fervently — that is opposed to neutrality; love must flame forth; it must not be as the smoking flax but as a burning lamp. So much the Hebrew word for love imports — an ardent and zealous affection; no waters must quench it.

Doctrine: Christians must love one another cordially and fervently (Colossians 3:14): above all these things put on charity (1 Peter 4:8): above all things have fervent charity among yourselves. As if the apostle had said: whatever you neglect, do not neglect this grace. Jerome reports that when Saint John was old, he was carried up into the pulpit, and there he repeated these words: little children, love one another; and then came down from the pulpit. Oh that this grace of love were engraved in letters of gold upon our hearts by the finger of the Holy Ghost!

Here the question will be asked: what is love?

Love is a sweet and gracious affection whereby we wish the good of another and promote his welfare as our own. Love is a sacred fire kindled in the heart by the Spirit, like that fire which came from heaven (2 Chronicles 7:1). I shall endeavor to preserve this fire in Christians' hearts, as the fire the Vestal Virgins kept in Rome, that it may not go out.

There are several arguments to enforce love upon us.

We must love by virtue of command (John 13:34): a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. Love is both a new commandment and an old. It is an old commandment, be-

cause it is a law written in the heart of man by the pen of nature, as with the point of a diamond; and it is old because it is written in the ancient statutes and records (Leviticus 19:18): you shall love your neighbor as yourself, I am the Lord. And yet it is a new commandment.

Because newly purged from Pharisaical glosses; before it was love your neighbor, but now it is love your enemy (Matthew 5:44); here is a new comment upon an old law.

Love is said to be a new commandment because of a new edition; it came out of the new mint of the gospel and was pressed by a new example (John 13:34): as I have loved you. So it is not arbitrary but a duty — it is a new commandment and an old.

The second argument enforcing love is the excellency of this grace; it is a lovely grace. All the other graces seem to be eclipsed unless love shines and sparkles forth in them; faith itself has no beauty unless it works by love. The tears of repentance are not pure unless they flow from the spring of love. Love is the jewel Christ's bride wears; it is the diamond in the ring of the graces. This is the grace that seasons all our actions and makes them savory; love is like musk among linen which perfumes it. So love makes all our religious services a sweet odor to God (Ephesians 5:2). Prayer is compared to incense (Psalm 141:2); now incense if it be laid on the altar and have no fire put to it does not smell so sweet; the incense of prayer does not cast such a fragrant smell unless kindled with this fire of love. Love is the badge and cognizance of a true saint (John 13:35): by this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. Bernard calls love the sweet dew that distills from a Christian and refreshes all whom it drops upon. Love is the golden clasp that knits hearts; it is the cement

that solders Christians together. It is the bond of perfectness (Colossians 3:14); if this bond be broken, all falls to pieces. Love is the fulfilling of the law (Romans 13:10); all the duties of the first and second table — piety toward God and equity toward our neighbor — are comprehended in this: you shall love.

O how sweetly does the apostle Paul descant and paraphrase upon this grace! How does he extoll it! He plays as well the orator as the divine; how does he delineate this grace of love, how does he pencil and draw it out to the life in all its beauty and spiritual embroidery!

That he may extoll this grace:

First, he does it exclusively — he shows that the most glorious things are nothing without it. If charity is absent, the rest avails nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1): though I speak with the tongues of men — if a man could speak in so many languages as Mithridates, of whom it is said he understood 22 sundry tongues; if he had the golden mouth of Chrysostom; if he could do with his oratory as the poets feign Orpheus did with his harp, move the very rocks and stones — yet without love it were nothing.

Nay, says the apostle, though I speak with the tongues of angels and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. Were it not a brave thing to have the eloquence of angels? Yet this without love were but the tinkering of the cymbal. To love as Christians is better than to speak as angels.

And though I understand all mysteries and all knowledge (verse 2): if a man's head were a library of all learning, if he could know all that is knowable, if he could, with Solomon, discourse

from the cedar in Lebanon even to the hyssop — and have not charity, all is nothing. Knowledge without love makes a man no better than a devil.

And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains — were it not admirable to have the faith of miracles? To unhinge mountains, to cast out devils, to take up serpents and drink poison and it should not hurt us (Matthew 16:16)? Yet if I have no charity I am nothing; I am of no account with God. The miracles of faith without the mystery of love profit nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor (verse 3): suppose I give away all my estate in alms, yet without love it avails me nothing. It is like a lamp without oil.

And though I give my body to be burned and have not love, it is nothing — the fire of martyrdom avails not without the fire of charity.

Let a man come to church, pray, receive sacraments, yet if his heart burns in malice, it is but going to hell in a more saint-like manner. O how precious a jewel, says Augustine, is love — how rare a grace — that if this be wanting, all other things, though never so glorious, are in vain.

The apostle sets forth this grace of love positively, by deciphering its nature and excellency.

Charity is kind (verse 4): love is a munificent, bountiful grace — it is full of good works; it drops as the honeycomb.

Charity is not puffed up; though it be bountiful, it is not proud; love is a humble grace — like the violet, which though it perfumes the air, yet hangs down its head. Love lays aside the trumpet and

covers itself with a veil; love conceals its own worth and says as Paul (2 Corinthians 12:11): though I be nothing.

Charity seeks not her own (verse 5); the apostle complains (Philippians 2:21): all men seek their own, but love seeks not her own. This is a diffusive grace and wholly spends itself for the good of others. It is reported of Pompey that when there was a great dearth in Rome, Pompey having provided great store of corn abroad and shipped it, the mariners being backward in hoisting sail by reason of a tempest, Pompey himself sets forward in the storm, using these words: better a few of us perish than that Rome should not be relieved — here was public spirit! Love seeks not her own; it makes a private Christian a common good. Love is a grace that dwells not at home — it goes abroad, it makes frequent visits, it looks into the condition of others and relieves them. Love has one eye blind, to wink at the infirmities of others, and another eye open to spy their wants.

Charity is not easily provoked; it is not in a paroxysm; it burns not in anger. It is meek and calm, never taking fire unless to warm others with its benign beams of mercy; it gives honey but does not easily sting.

The apostle sets forth the excellency of this grace of love comparatively, by laying it in the balance with other graces (verse 13): and now abide faith, hope, charity — these three; but the greatest of these is charity. He compares love with faith and hope, and then sets the crown upon love. Indeed, in some sense faith is greater than charity.

In the order of causality, faith is the cause of charity; therefore it is more noble. For as Augustine says, though the root of the tree be not seen, yet all the beauty of the branches proceeds from the root; so all the beauty that sparkles in love proceeds from the root of faith.

Faith is more excellent than charity in the matter of benefit; faith is a more beneficial grace to us — by faith we are engrafted into Christ and partake of the fatness of the olive. Faith fetches in all the strength and riches of Christ into the soul; faith puts upon the soul the embroidered robe of Christ's righteousness in which it shines brighter than the angels. But in another sense love is greater than faith.

In respect of visibility, because love is a more visible grace than faith; faith lies hid in the heart (Romans 10:9). Love is more conspicuous and shines forth more in the life. Love discovers the soundness of faith, as the even beating of the pulse shows the healthful temper of the body. Faith bows the knee to Christ and worships him; love opens its treasures and presents unto Christ gifts — gold and frankincense.

Love is greater than faith in respect of duration (1 Corinthians 13:8): charity never fails. We shall lay down our body of flesh and see God face to face; faith and hope shall be no more, but love shall remain. While we live here we have need of faith — this is our Jacob's staff to walk with (2 Corinthians 5): we walk by faith. But we shall set this staff shortly at heaven's door, and love only shall enter within the veil. So you have seen the sparkling of this diamond; thus does the apostle, no less elegantly than divinely, set forth the beauty and orient luster of this grace.

The third argument pressing Christians to love is that this is the ornament of the gospel — it sets a crown of honor upon religion and renders it lovely in the eyes of the world. It was an honor to religion in Tertullian's time when the heathens could say: see how the Christians love one another! Psalm 133:1: behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity — it is like the precious ointment upon the head that runs down to the skirts of the garments. O what a blessed sight it is to see Christians linked together with the silver link of charity! The church is Christ's temple; the saints are living stones (1 Peter 2:5); how beautiful is this temple when the stones of it are cemented together with love! It was said of the first temple there was no noise of hammer in it; oh that there might be no noise of strife and division in God's church. What is religion but religation — a binding and knitting together of hearts? We are knit to God by faith, and to one another by love.

The fourth argument is the necessity of love; love is a debt, and debts must be paid (Romans 13:8): owe nothing to any man but love. The debt of love differs from other debts.

When a debt is paid, we receive an acquittance and are to pay it no more; but this debt of love must be always in the paying. In heaven we must be paying this debt — love to God and to the saints; there is no discharge from this debt.

Other debts may be dispensed with; we forgive a debt sometimes, as that creditor did in the parable (Matthew 18:27): the lord of that servant was moved with compassion and forgave him the debt. But this debt of love is by no means to be dispensed with — it must be paid. If we do not pay this debt, God will come upon us with an arrest and throw us into hell prison.

In civil debts between man and man, the more they pay, the less they have; but in this debt of love it is quite contrary — the more we pay, the more we have. The more grace from God, the more love from others; love, like the widow's oil, increases by pouring out. By paying other debts we grow poor; by paying this debt we grow richer.

Love makes us like God; God is love (1 John 4:16) — a golden sentence. Augustine says the apostle does more commend love in this one word — God is love — than Paul does in his whole chapter. As the nature of the sun is light, so God's nature is love; the three persons in the Trinity are all love.

God the Father is love (John 3:16): God so loved the world — that God should part with Christ out of his bosom, the Son of his love, and lay this jewel as it were to pawn for our salvation — oh unparalleled love! Never was such love shown to the angels.

God the Son is love; how did Christ love his spouse when he died for her! His sides dropped blood; his heart dropped love; such a vein of love was opened in him that our sins could not stanch it. Love was the wing on which Christ flew into the virgin's womb; Christ incarnate — here was love covered over with flesh; and Christ on the cross — here was a book of love laid open before us to read in.

God the Holy Ghost is love; his appearing in the likeness of a dove showed his nature. The dove, says Pliny, is an amicable creature — it is without gall. What are all the motions of the Spirit but tenders of love? What is the zeal of the Spirit but the print of love? Why does this blessed Spirit, as a suitor, come wooing to sinners,

but that they may know he is in love? Thus all the persons in the Trinity are love; and the more we shine in the grace of love, the more we resemble the God of love.

The sixth argument enforcing love is from the sweet relations we stand in one to another; we are fellow-citizens (Ephesians 2:19); we all expect one heaven; we shall shortly live together, and shall we not love together? We are soldiers of the same band (2 Timothy 2:3); ours must be the fight of faith, not the fight of contention; our strife must be who shall love most. We are branches of the same vine — shall we not be united? We are stones of the same building — shall we not be cemented with love? Nay, we are brethren (Acts 7:26): sirs, you are brethren; why do you wrong one to another?

Use 1. I might here take up a lamentation and steep my words in tears to consider the decay — I had almost said the funerals — of this grace among Christians. The fire of brotherly love is almost ready to go out; instead of the fire of love, the wildfire of passion. I have read of one Vitalis who hazarded his life to succor his distressed friend; but such men are dead in this age. The text says: see that you love one another; but our times have made a bad comment upon this text — how do Christians reproach, censure, and malign one another! The text says love fervently, but they hate fervently. Instead of the bond of love, behold the apple of strife; we live in the frigid zone — the love of many waxes cold. Many live as if they had been born upon the mountains of Bether, the mountains of division, and baptized in the waters of Meribah, the waters of strife. Do the wicked unite? Nay, do the devils unite? There was in one man a legion — shall there be more harmony among devils

than among Christians? Oh Christians, turn your hot words into salt tears! how do the enemies of religion insult to see not only Christ's coat but his body rent.

Consider the ill consequence where love is wanting; the absence of this grace brings forth divisions, and they are dangerous.

Divisions bring an opprobrium and scandal upon religion; they make the ways of God evil spoken of, as if religion were the fomenter of envy and sedition. Julian in his invectives against the Christians said that they lived together as tigers, rending and tearing one another; and shall we by our animosities and contentions make good Julian's words? This will make others afraid to embrace the Christian faith. There is a story in Epiphanius of Meletius and Peter Bishop of Alexandria — both confessors of the orthodox religion, both condemned to suffer. Being together in prison, upon a small difference they fell into so great a schism that they drew a partition between each other and would not hold communion in the same worship of Christ, for which notwithstanding they both suffered. This division grew scandalous and did more hurt than their persecution did good.

Divisions advance Satan's kingdom; the devil has no hope but in our discords. Chrysostom observes of the city of Corinth that when many zealous converts were brought in, Satan knew no better way to dam up the current of religion than by throwing in a bone of contention and dividing them into parties — one was for Paul and another for Apollos, but few for Christ.

Use 2. Be exhorted to cordial and fervent love; see that you love one another. Oh that this sweet spice might send forth its fragrant smell among Christians! Oh that the Lord would rain down

some of these silver showers of love upon the hearts of Christians, which are for the most part like the mountains of Gilboa which have none of this heavenly dew upon them. They say of the stones of the temple they were so closely cemented as if there had been but one stone; it were to be wished that the hearts of Christians were so sweetly cemented in love as if there were but one heart.

Let me commend this grace of amity and love to Christians under a double notion.

As you are members of a body politic; the whole nation is a political body, and it should be with the body politic as it is with the natural body. All the members of the body have a sweet sympathy and work for the good of the whole, that there be no schism in the body (1 Corinthians 12:25). So it should be in the body politic.

You are members of the church of God; you bear Christ's name, you wear his livery; therefore you must be soldered together in affection. It is a sad omen and presage when the joints of the same body shall be loosed and the knees smite one against another.

If yet men will live at variance, nourishing a viper in their bosoms, I shall offer two things to their serious consideration.

An uncharitable person is an unregenerate person (Titus 3:3): we were sometimes disobedient, serving divers lusts, living in malice and envy — as if he had said: before grace came, we were filled and ready to burst with this poison of malice. The apostle describing a natural condition calls it the gall of bitterness (Acts 8). He that lives in bitter strife is in the gall of bitterness; a malicious person is of no kin to God, for God is love. He knows nothing of the gospel savingly, for it is a gospel of peace; we read of the bond of

peace (Ephesians 4:3) and the bond of iniquity (Acts 8:23). Him whom the gospel has not bound in the bond of peace, Satan has bound in the bond of iniquity.

Uncharitableness is a leaven that sours the whole lump (1 Corinthians 5:8).

It sours your good qualities; Naaman was an honorable man, a mighty man in valor — but he was a leper (2 Kings 5:1); that 'but' was like a dead fly in the ointment — it spoiled all the rest. So it may be said: such a man is a man of parts, of great moral endowments — he is just, affable, temperate; but he is a leper, he will not be in charity. He pays every one their own, but there is one debt he will not pay though he rot in hell for it — the debt of love; this is a brand of infamy upon him.

Uncharitableness sours your good duties; you pray and come to church, but refuse to be tied in a knot of amity. What profit is there of all your seeming devotion? We are bid to lift up pure hands without wrath (1 Timothy 2:8); the uncharitable person does not lift up pure hands in prayer but leprous hands, bloody hands (1 John 3:16): whosoever hates his brother is a murderer. Prayer, says Chrysostom, may be compared to a fine garland; the hands that make a garland need to be clean; so the heart that makes a prayer needs to be clean. Wrath and anger do sully a Christian's prayers — and will the holy God touch them? The uncharitable man poisons his own prayers; will the Lord accept a poisoned sacrifice?

Oh that all this might at last persuade to cordial and fervent love; let us turn all our censuring into praying. Let us pray to God that he would quench the fire of contention and increase the fire of

fraternal love among us. Let us pray that the Lord would heal our schisms, repair our breaches, that he would make us like the cherubim with our faces looking one upon another. Let us pray that God will make good that promise that we shall serve him with one consent — or as in the Hebrew, with one shoulder. And that this may be the golden motto written upon England: one heart and one way.

It exhorts us that as we would be amicable to all, so especially that we would love those who are of the household of Faith, viz. the Saints and people of God. We must love as God loves; he loves them most who are like him; he loves piety, though it be espoused to poverty: so must our love run out especially to those who have the image and superscription of God upon them. Joseph loved all his brethren, but Benjamin most; the people of God must have a Benjamin's portion in our love. The Saints are called Jewels (Malachi 3:17) which we must love and prize; they are called the apple of God's eye (Zechariah) to show how tender they should be in our eye. The Saints are partakers of the Divine Nature (2 Peter 1:4), not by an incorporation into the Divine Essence, but by a conformity to the Divine likeness: these we must love *amore complacentiae*, with a love of complacency and delight. These are near allied to Christ by faith, they are of the blood Royal of heaven; these must be higher in our thoughts, and deeper in our affections than others; Jerome loved Christ dwelling in Augustine.

When I say the Saints must have the largest share in our love, I mean not all that call themselves Saints (such as under a mask of holiness commit sin — hypocritical Saints), but such as the Scripture calls Saints, such as excel in virtue (Psalm 16), such as walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8), such as have *aliquid Christi*

(as Bucer saith) something of Christ in them; these Saints must we place our entire love upon. Indeed there is that in them which may excite and draw forth love; they have the beauty of inherent holiness, and they have an interest in the unspotted holiness of Christ, which may be a sufficient loadstone to draw love to them.

But what shall we say to those who, instead of loving the people of God because they are Saints, hate them *ea ratione*, because they are Saints? As Tertullian says, *confessio nominis* — the very confession of the Name of a Christian was enough to bring them into an odium, and was laid against them as a matter of crime. It was said of Aristides that he was banished out of Athens, *quia justus*, because he was just. Sanctity is the thing that is reproached and hated in the world; wicked men Panther-like would tear the picture of God drawn in the New man. Let one have all kind of accomplishments — Learning, Morality, Piety; though men will love him for his Learning and Morality, they will hate him for his Piety. Holiness is become the crime; the Serpent is known by his hissing, they are the seed of the Old Serpent that hiss at Religion. Let me speak my mind freely: there is generally among men a secret antipathy against the power of godliness; they are for some shows of devotion, they keep up a form; but such as have a spirit of zeal and sanctity shining in them, their hearts rise against. Let me tell you, there is not a greater sign of a rotten and devilish heart, than to hate a man for that very thing for which God loves him — namely his holiness. It is an high affront to abuse the King's Statue: what vengeance (think we) shall they be counted worthy of, who malign and do what in them lies to tear in pieces the image of the living God. Oh take heed of this; the hating the grace of the Spirit comes near to the despiting of the Spirit of grace. To conclude, let us beg

the spirit of amity and unity, that we may love one another, especially that we may be endeared in our affections to them who are of the family of God, and whose names are enrolled in the book of life.

THE GOOD PRACTITIONER



John 13:17. If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.

In this chapter our blessed Savior, the great doctor of the church, falls upon teaching his disciples; he taught them three ways.

By doctrine (verse 34): a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. Christ was now going out of the world; and as a father when he is dying leaves a charge with his children that they love, so our Savior leaves this solemn charge with his disciples, that they did love one another.

He taught them by emblem (verse 4): he took a towel and girded himself. Thus teaching them by a sacred emblem, how he did begirt himself with our flesh: the blessed angels stood wondering at this, how the divine nature could be girdled with the human.

He taught them by example (verse 5): he poured water into a basin, and began to wash his disciples' feet; he teaches them humility by his own example; he stoops to the meanest office. He washes his disciples' feet, and this he did for their imitation (verse 14): you ought also to wash one another's feet. Now our Lord

Christ having thus taught his disciples by doctrine, emblem, and example, he makes as it were the use of all in the words of the text: if you know these things, happy are you if you do them.

A text that deserves to be engraved in letters of gold upon our hearts; a text that if well observed will help us to reap benefit by all other texts. A sermon is never heard aright till it be practiced; I shall therefore make this sermon to be by the blessing of God as a selvaqe to keep the rest from raveling out. That were a happy sermon which would help you to put all the other sermons you have heard into practice.

By the word these things, our Savior by a synecdoche comprehends all the matters of religion, though more particularly those two things he had been immediately before speaking of — love and humility.

In the text there is: 1. a supposition — if you know and do.

2. A benediction — happy are you. From which this doctrine arises: that it is not the knowledge of the points of religion, but the practice of them that makes a man happy. Had Christ said: if you know these things happy are you, and there had made a stop and gone no further, we should have thought knowledge had been enough to make one happy; but Christ stays not here, but goes further — happy are you if you do them. Christ does not put happiness upon knowing but doing. So that the doctrine clearly results: that it is not knowledge but practice that renders a man blessed.

This proposition consists of two branches, and I shall handle them distinctly.

1. That knowledge alone in the mysteries of religion will not make a man happy.

2. That it is the practical part of religion that makes a man happy.

That knowledge alone in the mysteries of religion will not make a man happy (Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:46): why call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? It is not the speculation of the most glorious truths that can bring a man to heaven; if a man could discourse *de omni scibili*, if his head were a treasury of wisdom, an ocean of learning, as it is said hyperbolically of Albinus, Beringarius, Hermolaus Barbarus, and others, yet this could not entitle him to happiness: his knowledge might make him admired, but not blessed. If a man knew all the policies of state, the mysteries of trade, the subtlety of arts, the system of divinity — all this could not crown him with happiness.

Indeed, knowledge in the theory of religion has a beauty in it next to the pearl of grace; this gold is most precious. Knowledge is the enriching of the mind; it is a fair garland to look upon; but as Rachel, though beautiful, yet being barren said: give me children or I die — so if knowledge does not bring forth the child of obedience, it will die and come to nothing. I would by no means disparage knowledge: knowledge is the pilot to guide us in our obedience; if zeal be not according to knowledge, it is will-worship, it is the setting up an altar to an unknown God. Knowledge must usher in obedience; it is as abominable to God to offer up the blind as the lame. Final ignorance damns (Hosea 4:6): my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. The Hebrew word signifies they are cut down or felled like trees — so that there is a necessity of knowledge: knowledge is the elder sister, but obedience is better than knowledge; here the elder must serve the younger. Knowledge may

put us into the way of happiness, but it is only practice that brings us there. That knowledge alone cannot make a man happy, I shall prove by three demonstrations.

Knowledge alone does not make a man better, therefore it cannot make him happy; bare knowledge has no influence — it does not leave a spiritual tincture of holiness behind. It does inform, not transform; knowledge of itself has no power upon the heart to make it more divine. It is like weak physic that does not work; it does not warm the affections or purge the conscience; it does not fetch virtue from Christ to dry up the bloody issue of sin. A man may receive the truth in the light of it, not in the love of it (2 Thessalonians 2:10); the apostle calls it a form of knowledge (Romans 2:20). Knowledge alone is but a dead form, having nothing to animate it; he that has knowledge only is a spiritual stillborn — he looks like a Christian, but has neither appetite nor motion. Knowledge alone makes men monsters in religion; they are all head but no feet, they do not walk in Christ (Colossians 2:6). A man may have knowledge and be neglective of his duty — as Plutarch said of the Grecians, they knew what was just, but did it not. A man may have knowledge and be profane; he may have a clear head and a foul heart. The sun may shine when the way is dirty: the understanding may be irradiated when the foot of a sinner treads in unholy paths. Now then, if knowledge abstracted from practice does not make a man better, then it cannot make him happy.

Knowledge alone will not save, therefore it will not make a man happy; if knowledge alone will save, then all that have knowledge shall be saved; but that is not true, for then Judas should be saved — he had knowledge enough; then the devil should be saved — he

can transform himself into an angel of light; he is called from the great knowledge he has. A man may have knowledge and be no better than a devil; hell is full of learned heads. Now if knowledge alone will not save, then it will not put a man into a state of blessedness.

Knowledge alone makes a man's case worse, therefore it cannot make him happy.

Knowledge takes away all excuse and apology (John 15:22): now you have no cloak for your sin.

Knowledge adds to a man's torment: woe to you, Chorazin; it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. It will be better with Indians than with Christians living in a contradiction to their knowledge. Luke 12:47: that servant which knew his Lord's will, and did not according to his Lord's will, shall be beaten with many stripes. Knowledge without practice serves only as a torch to light men to hell; the brighter the light, the hotter the fire. If a king cause his proclamation to be published and the subject knows it but obeys not, this does the more incense the king against him — he will punish it for a contempt. Better be ignorant than knowingly disobedient. Now then, if knowledge alone makes a man's case worse, then it is far from making him happy.

Get knowledge, but do not rest in it; will you rest in that which will not make you happy? What is it to cry the temple of the Lord? what is it to lay knowledge up and not lay it out? In this sense, he who increases knowledge increases sorrow (Ecclesiastes 1:18); his knowledge will but serve to condemn him. If knowledge separated from practice would make men happy, the people of England were

a happy people — they want not for knowledge; never since the time of the apostles did the light shine clearer. But here is the mischief: most people know only to know. It may be said of the generality of people as Seneca speaks — *malint disputare quam vivere* — they had rather dispute well than live well; they would have knowledge to spangle them rather than sanctify them. Alas, knowledge alone will never make them happy; men may build their nests among the stars, yet make their bed in hell; they may have knowledge to crown them, and God to damn them. O Christian, who glories in your knowledge and has no more — wherein do you excel a hypocrite? wherein do you excel the devil? He knows all the articles of the creed; he could say to Christ, it is written — is it not sad that a man should have no better evidences to show for heaven than the devil!

How unprofitable is the luxuriancy of knowledge! he who is only filled with knowledge is like a glass filled with froth — what a vain, foolish thing it is to have knowledge and make no spiritual use of it! It is as if a man had several fountains in his garden but never waters his flowers with them; or as if an ass should be laden with provender but eats not of it. So many a man carries a great deal of knowledge about him, but does not feed upon the sweetness of it, nor digest his knowledge into practice. To know only to know is like one that knows certain countries by the map and can discourse of them, but never traveled into them nor tasted the sweet spices of those countries. So the Gnostic in religion has heard and read much of the beauty of holiness, but never traveled into religion, nor tasted how good the Lord is. What is it better to have the bible in our heads if not in our hearts? can notions be cordials when we come to die? To conclude this: men cannot properly

be denominated Christians from their knowledge. You do not call him a handicraftsman who does not work in his trade; let a man be never so skillful, yet you do not call him a goldsmith who did never refine a vessel or try gold. Though a man has skill in surgery, yet you do not call him a surgeon who did never lance a wound or dress a sore. So it is improper to call him a Christian who has knowledge but no practice; he knows he should mortify sin but he does not; he knows he should show works of mercy but he does not; he never yet wrought in the trade of godliness.

I proceed to the second branch of the doctrine: that it is the practical part of religion that makes a man happy. Knowledge without practice is like a fair arbor without fruit; the art of practice is the most noble art; the lifeblood of religion runs through the veins of obedience. Here I shall show: 1. why there must be practice; 2. that it is only the practical part of religion that makes a man happy.

Why must there be practice? The reason is, because it is only practice that answers God's end in giving us his Word both written and preached. Leviticus 18:4: you shall do my judgments and keep my ordinances to walk therein. Deuteronomy 26:16: this day the Lord your God has commanded you to do these statutes and judgments; you shall therefore keep and do them — not only you shall know them, but obey them. The Word of God is not only a rule of knowledge, but a rule of duty. If you speak to your children and tell them what is your mind, it is not only that they may know your mind, but do it. God gives us his Word not only as a picture to look upon, but as a copy to write after. The master gives his servant a candle, not to gaze on, but to work by; the light of scripture is to guide our feet into the way of obedience. So David calls the Word

of God not a lamp to his eyes but a lantern to his feet (Psalm 119), implying that the light of the Word is rather to walk by than to see by. God gives us his Word as his will and testament which he leaves in charge with us to see it performed. If God would only have had his laws to be known or talked of, he might have delivered them to parrots; if he would only have had them kept safe, he might have graven them with an iron pen and laid them in the rock forever (Job 19:24). But therefore he delivers the records of heaven to men, that they should be obeyed. The Lord gives us his precepts as a physician gives the patient his receipts to take and apply; for this end are all God's institutes, that we may by practice apply them for the purging out of sin and bringing the soul into a more healthful temper. God gives us his Word as the mother gives the child the breast — not only to look upon, but to draw it; many have gone to hell with the breast in their mouths because they have not drawn it and turned the milk of the Word into sacred nourishment.

That it is only the practical part of religion that makes a man happy: this is clear if we consult either with scripture or reason.

It appears by scripture; the scripture knows no other way to happiness but practice. Psalm 15, final verse: he that does these things shall never be moved. It is Calvin's gloss upon the words: the Psalmist does not say he that knows these things shall never perish, but he that does them. To be a doer of the Word entitles a man to blessedness. James 1:25: this man shall be blessed in the deed — not for his deed (as the Papists wrongly gloss) but in his deed; obedience is rather an evidence of blessedness than a cause.

Search from one end of the bible to the other, and you shall find the crown still set upon the head of obedience. The saints renowned of old have ever received their commendations and titles of honor from their obedience: Moses a man mighty in words and deeds (Acts 7:22); Cornelius a man fearing God, giving much alms. When Christ pronounces the sentence of absolution, see how it runs: come you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom; for I was hungry and you gave me food; thirsty, and you gave me drink (Matthew 25:34-35). Christ is not said at the last day to reward men according to their knowledge, but their deeds. Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me to give every man according as his works shall be (Revelation 22:12). So then, if the scripture, that Mercurial rod, points out no other way to happiness but practice, then it is in vain to expect it any other way.

It appears by reason; happiness is not attainable but in the use of means, and the use of means implies practice. Salvation must not only be sought out by knowledge, but wrought out by practice (Philippians 2:12). There can be no crown without running, no recompense without diligence. If happiness comes only in the use of means, then it is neither imaginable nor feasible without practice.

Use 1. If it be only the doing part of religion that makes men happy, then it sharply reproves those who know much yet do nothing; they talk of God but do not walk with God. Men are all for knowledge because it is counted an ornament; they would be stuck with this gay flower, but one leaf of the tree of life is worth all the tree of knowledge. It is better to practice one truth than to know all. Herein most Christians are defective; they have with Rachel good eyes, but they are barren. Mephibosheth caught a fall and became lame (2 Samuel 4:4); since Adam's fall men are lame on their

feet — they walk not in the ways of obedience. Men know covetousness is a sin; the Greek word for covetousness signifies an immoderate desire of getting, like Midas who desired everything he touched might be turned to gold; the several species of sin grow upon this root of covetousness (2 Timothy 3:2) — yet men live in this sin, and nothing can cure them of this dry dropsy (Amos 2:7): that pant after the dust of the earth. Men know swearing is a sin; for this the land mourns (Jeremiah 23:10); sinners let their oaths fly, and God sends a flying roll against them (Zechariah 5:2-3) — yet they will not leave this sin. They know drunkenness to be a sin: there is death in the cup, yet the drunkard will drink it off. Men know uncleanness to be a sin (Exodus 20:14); it wastes their strength, blots their name, wounds their conscience, wrongs their posterity, damns their souls (Revelation 22:15) — yet they will follow this sin and burn in lust though they burn in hell.

Men know they should be winged with activity in the duties of religion, but they can be content to let these duties alone. They know they should mortify the flesh, pray in their families, be just in their dealing, give alms to the poor; but if there were no other bible to teach us these things than the lives of most, we should not know there were any such duties commanded. For the most part men are no changelings; what they were twenty, thirty years ago, they are the same still — as proud and unreformed as ever. The best tools have been either broken or worn out upon their rocky hearts, yet they are as unhewn and unpolished as ever. The bellows are burnt, the lungs of God's ministers are wasted, yet how much reprobate silver remains still in many of our congregations! If none are happy but doers of the Word, how few will be saved?

But why do so few come up to the practical part of religion? Surely it is for want of deep humiliation; he that has the spirit of bondage let loose upon him apprehends himself as it were in the forlorn hope — he sees the sea of his sins before him ready to swallow him up, and the justice of God behind pursuing and ready to overtake him. He cries out as Saint Paul (Acts 9:6): Lord, what will you have me do? Will you have me repent, believe? I stand ready pressed to whatever service you command. The humbled sinner does not dispute, but obey. The seed that had not depth of earth withered and came to nothing (Matthew 13:5-6); the reason men do not bring forth the fruits of obedience is because they have not depth of earth — they were never yet deeply humbled for sin. A proud man will never obey; instead of trampling his sins under his feet, he tramples God's laws under his feet (Jeremiah 43:3-4). He who stoops in humility is the likeliest to put his neck under Christ's yoke; he that sees himself within an inch of hell asks the jailer's question: what must I do to be saved (Acts 16:30)? What will not a condemned man do for a pardon?

Want of practice is for want of faith (Isaiah 53:1): who has believed our report? This makes sermons to be like showers of rain falling upon a rock — they neither mollify nor fructify — because men are in part infidels; they had rather dispute than believe; such as live skeptics die atheists. Did men believe sin were so bitter, that wrath and hell followed it, would they take this serpent into their bosom? Did they believe there were a beauty in holiness; did they believe godliness were gain; that there were joy in the way and heaven at the end, would they not turn their feet into the way? Men have some slight transient thoughts of these things, but their judgments are not fully convinced nor their consciences fully capti-

vated into the belief of them. This is Satan's masterpiece, his draw-net by which he drags millions to hell by keeping them in infidelity; he knows if he can but keep them from the belief of the truth, he is sure to keep them from the practice of it.

Men's backwardness to practice is from the difficulty of the practical part of religion; it is easy to hear a truth, to give some assent, to commend it, to make a profession of it; but to digest a truth into practice, this is hard, and men are overgrown with sloth — they are loath to put themselves to too much trouble (Proverbs 19:15). Can men dig for gold and not for the pearl of price? Can they take pains in the pursuing of their sins, and will they be at no pains for the saving of their souls? I dare be bold to say: it costs many a sinner more sweat and labor in toiling about his lusts than it costs a saint in serving his God.

The world comes between and hinders; the thorns choke the seed of the Word. Men practice so much in the world that they have no time to practice better things; the world is like a mill — it makes such a noise in carnal hearts that it drowns the sound of God's silver trumpet. Men's affections are sometimes kindled by the preaching of the Word, and we begin to hope that the flame of godliness will break forth in their lives, but then comes the earth and puts out this fire. How many sermons lie buried in earthly hearts? More die than are put in the bill of mortality.

Oh that the want of practice in this age were more laid to heart! This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation. Many professors are all ear; if we should see a creature made up of nothing but ear, it were a monster in nature; how many such monsters are

there in Christianity? They hear and hear and are never the better, like the salamander which lies in the fire but, as naturalists say, is never the hotter.

Some satisfy themselves with the having of ordinances (Judges 17:13): then said Micah, now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to be my priest. But what is physic if it be not applied? what is it to have the sound of the Word in our ears unless we have the savor of it in our hearts? It will be little comfort to men on their deathbeds to think that Christ has been preached in their streets and they have been lifted up to heaven in gospel administrations, when their consciences shall tell them they have been unholy and unreformed. They have come into God's house as the beasts did into the ark; they came in unclean and went out of the ark unclean.

Use 2. It exhorts all to become practitioners in religion. There are three steps leading to heaven: knowledge, assent, practice; it is not the taking the two first steps, but the third step which will make you happy. Obedience is the grand precept both of the law and gospel; in this stands a Christian's duty, in this consists his felicity. 1 Samuel 15:22: to obey is better than sacrifice. It is grateful to God, it is graceful to a Christian. What is the excellency of a thing but its practicalness and usefulness? what are the fine feathers of a bird if it cannot sing? what is a plant though decked with leaves if it brings not forth fruit? what is it we commend in a horse — his eyes or his good mettle? Song of Songs 5:5: my hands dropped with myrrh. I may allude: not only a Christian's lips must drop knowledge, but his hands and his fingers must drop myrrh — that is, by working the works of obedience.

Let me use some divine motives to tempt Christians to the practical part of godliness.

Gospel-obedience is an evidence of sincerity; as our Savior Christ said in another sense (John 10:25): the works which I do bear witness of me. Though never man spoke like Christ, yet when he comes to put himself upon a trial, he will not be judged by his words, but by his works — they bear witness of me. So it is not a Christian's golden words but his works which testify of him. Psalm 119:59: I have turned my feet unto your statutes. David did not only turn his ears to God's testimonies, but he turned his feet to them — he walked in them. We judge not of the health of a man's body by his high color, but by the pulse of the arm where the blood chiefly operates; so we judge not of a Christian's soundness by his knowledge or high expressions — what is this high color? Saul may be among the prophets. But the estimate of a Christian is to be taken by his obediential actings toward God.

To be practitioners in religion will not only do yourselves good but others; this will both honor religion and propagate it.

It will honor religion; the gospel may be compared to a beautiful queen; the fruitful lives of professors are so many jewels that adorn this queen and make her shine forth in greater glory and magnificence. What an honor was it to godliness when the apostle could say the faith of the Romans was trumpeted abroad in every place (Romans 1:8): I thank my God that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world — that is, faith flourishing into obedience. 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3: we give thanks to God for you, remembering your work of faith, and labor of love. Christians should be ambitious to keep up the credit of religion.

The practice of those truths we know will much propagate religion; practice is the best syllogism and argument we can use to prevail with others — this will confirm them in the truth of religion. The Emperor Jovinian said to the orthodox and Arian bishops: I cannot judge of your doctrine, but I can judge of your lives; their practice would preach loudest. If others see us make a profession and yet live in a contradiction to what we profess; if they hear Jacob's voice but see Esau's hands, they will think religion is but a devout complement, a severe policy. Why does the father forbid his children to swear, when he himself swears? Would you gain many proselytes to religion? be doers of the Word. Say as Abimelech to his fellows (Judges 9:48): what you have seen me do, make haste and do as I have done. Would you be as loadstones to draw your children and servants to heaven? set upon the practice of holiness. Basil observes that Julian in one of his epistles writing to Arsacius said that the Christian religion did much flourish by the sanctity and liberality of those who professed it.

Thus we show our love to Christ (John 14:21): he that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me. We use to say: if you love me, do such a thing. This methinks should be a great argument to obedience; by the love you bear to Jesus Christ, obey his Word. Every man would be thought to love Christ; but try your love by this touchstone — are you cast into a gospel mold? do you obey? It is a vain thing for a man to say he loves Christ's person when he slights his commands.

Without practice you will come short of those who have come short of heaven; Herod did many things (Mark 6:20) — he was in many things a practiser of John's ministry. Those who rest in the speculative part of religion are not so good as Herod.

What unspeakable comfort will obedience yield both in life and death!

In life: is it not a comfort to a man when he has been casting up his accounts and finds that he has gained in his trade? You come here in the use of ordinances, Word, and prayer, to trade for heaven; now if you find upon a true account that you have gained in the trade of godliness and are filled with the fruits of the Spirit, will not this be a great comfort to you? He who is full of good works, God will gather the fruit and bless the tree.

Obedience gives comfort at death; what a joy was it to Saint Paul when he came to die, that he could make that sweet appeal (2 Timothy 4:7): I have kept the faith — that is, Paul had kept the doctrine of faith and had lived the life of faith. Oh with what comfort may a Christian lay his life down, when he has laid his life out in the service of God! This was a deathbed cordial to King Hezekiah (Isaiah 38:3): remember, O Lord, I beseech you how I have walked before you in truth. A man may repent of his fruitless knowledge, but never did any man repent of his obedience when he came to die; never did any Christian who is going to rest with God repent that he had walked with God.

What is the end of all God's administrations but obedience? what are all God's promises but persuasions to obedience? what is the end of all God's threatenings which stand as the angel with a flaming sword in their hand, but to drive us to obedience? Deuteronomy 11:28: a curse if you will not obey. What is the voice of mercy but to call us to duty? the father gives his child money to bribe him to ingenuity. The fire under the still makes the roses drop; the fire of God's mercies is to make the sweet water of obedience distill from us. Mercy (as Ambrose says) is a medicine which

God applies to us to cure our barrenness. What are all the examples of God's justice upon non-proficients, but alarms to awaken us out of the bed of sloth and put us into a posture of service? God's rod upon others is a fescue to point us to obedience; if God has not his end in respect of duty, we cannot have our end in respect of glory.

Consider what a sin disobedience is; that is a sad scripture (Jeremiah 44:16): as for the word you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not do.

Disobedience is

A sin against reason; are we able to stand it out in defiance against God (1 Corinthians 10:22)? Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? It is as if the thorns should set themselves in battle array against the fire; will the sinner go to measure arms with the great God? What Solomon says of laughter (Ecclesiastes 2:2), the same may be said of rebellion — it is mad.

Disobedience is a sin against equity; we have our subsistence from God — in him we live and move; and is it not equal that as we live upon him we should live to him? *Justitia jus suum cuique tribuit*; is it not just and fitting that as God gives us our allowance, we should give him our allegiance? If the general give his soldier pay, the soldier is to march at his command — not only by the law of arms, but the law of equity.

Disobedience is a sin against conscience; God by creation is our Father, so that conscience binds to duty (Malachi 1:6): if then I be a Father, where is my honor?

Disobedience is a sin against our vows; we have taken the oath of allegiance. Your vows are upon me, O God (Psalm 65:12). We have many vows upon us: our baptismal vow, our sacramental, our national, our sick-bed vows. Here are four cords to draw us to obedience; and if we slip these sacred knots and cast these cords from us, will not God come upon us for perjury? If oaths will not bind us, God has chains that will.

Disobedience is a sin against our prayers; we pray: your will be done. So that by non-obedience we confute ourselves, and live in a contradiction to our own prayers. That man who is self-confuted is self-condemned.

Disobedience is a sin against kindness; it is a disingenuous sin — it is a kicking against God's bowels, a despising the riches of his goodness (Romans 2:4). Therefore the apostle links these two sins together (2 Timothy 3:2): disobedient, unthankful. This dyes a sin of a crimson color; one calls ingratitude the seminary of sin — it is an epitomizing sin. Brutus's unkindness went deeper to Caesar's heart than the stab.

Disobedience is a sin against nature; every creature in its kind obeys God. Animate creatures obey him; God spoke to the fish to set Jonah ashore, and it did it presently (Jonah 2:10). What are the birds' thankful hymns (as Ambrose calls them) but tributes of obedience?

Inanimate creatures obey God; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera (Judges 5); the wind and the sea obey him (Mark 4:41). The very stones, if God give them a commission, will cry out against the sins of men (Habakkuk 2:11): the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it. If men

should be silent, the stones would in some manner have testified of Christ (Luke 19:40). At Christ's passion the rocks did rend (Matthew 27:51), which tearing rhetoric was a voice to tell the world that the Messiah was now crucified. Shall every creature obey God but man? O Christian, think thus with yourself: if God had made me a stone, I should have obeyed him; and now that he has made me rational, shall I refuse to obey? This is against nature. There are none that disobey God but man and the devil — and can we find none to join with but the devil?

Disobedience is a sin against self-preservation; disloyalty is treason, and by treason the sinner is bound over to the wrath of God. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8: the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them who obey not the gospel. He that refuses to obey God's will in commanding shall be sure to obey his will in punishing. The sinner, while he thinks to slip the knot of obedience, twists the cord of his own damnation. Thus you have seen the sin of disobedience set out in its bloody colors. Be wise now therefore, O you kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth; serve the Lord with fear; kiss the Son lest he be angry. Kiss Christ with a kiss of love; kiss him with a kiss of loyalty. When his wrath is kindled but a little, blessed are all they that put their trust in him (Psalm 2, final verse).

The benefit of obedience (Psalm 19:11): in keeping his precepts there is great reward. Obedience is crowned with happiness; so says the text, happy are you, etc. If this argument will not prevail, what will?

But what happiness?

All kind of blessings are poured upon the head of obedience, as the precious oil was poured on Aaron's head.

Temporal blessings (Deuteronomy 28:3-4, 9): blessed shall be the fruit of your body, and the fruit of your ground; blessed shall be your basket and your store, etc. — if you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God. He that has a fruitful heart shall have a fruitful crop; God will make him to thrive in his estate. His basket shall not only be full, but blessed; God will bless what he has. Here is not only the sack full of corn, but money in the mouth of the sack.

Spiritual blessings (Exodus 19:5): if you will obey my voice indeed, then you shall be a peculiar treasure to me above all people. You shall be my portion, my jewels, the apple of my eye; I will give kingdoms for your ransom. Jeremiah 7:23: obey, and I will be your God; I will make over myself to you by a deed of gift. What a superlative distinguishing mercy is this! Psalm 144:15: happy is that people whose God is the Lord.

Eternal blessings (Hebrews 5:9): Christ became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him; it is a salvation that bears date to eternity. Oh then, who would not be in love with obedience! while we please God, we pleasure ourselves. We are ready to say as Amaziah (2 Chronicles 25:9): but what shall we do for the hundred talents? You see, brethren, you are no losers by obedience; who did ever kindle a fire on God's altar for nothing (Malachi 1:10)?

I shall lay down some rules to help Christians in their obedience, that it may be the sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savor to God.

Obedience must have these four ingredients in it.

It must be cordial (Deuteronomy 26:16): the Lord your God has commanded you to do these statutes; you shall therefore keep and do them with all your heart. Romans 6:17: you have obeyed from the heart. Obedience without the heart is like fire on the altar without incense. The heart is the seat of love, and it is love that perfumes every duty. The heart makes service a freewill offering, else it is but a tax; Cain brought his sacrifice, not his heart — it was rather a mulct than an offering. Without the heart our religion is like the angels assuming dead bodies; those bodies did eat and drink and walk, but they had no soul to animate them — they did move, not live. How many do but assume the duties of religion! Obedience without the heart is hypocrisy. How can you say I love you, when your heart is not with me (Judges 16:15)?

Obedience must be extensive — it must reach to all God's commandments (1 Kings 9:4; Luke 1:6).

But who can arrive at this?

Though we cannot keep all God's commandments legally, yet we may evangelically; a good Christian

Consents to the equity of the whole law (Romans 7:12): the law is holy and just and good; he sets his seal to every law.

He makes conscience of every law; David had respect to all God's commandments (Psalm 119:6); his eye was upon all. Every command has such authority upon a Christian that he knows not how to dispense with it; though he fails in every duty, yet he dares not neglect any duty.

A child of God desires to keep every command (Psalm 119:5): O that my ways were directed to keep your statutes! What a child of God wants in strength, he makes up in will (Romans 7:18): to will

is present. The regenerate will stand bent to all God's precepts.

The gracious soul mourns that he can do no better; when he fails, he weeps (Romans 7:24): O wretched man that I am! O this unbelieving heart! how am I clogged with corruption! The good I would, I do not. Thus does a child of God lament his failings and judge himself for them; and this is in a gospel sense to keep every law.

Unsound hearts, as they are slight in their obedience, so they are partial; some duty they will dispense with, some sin they will indulge. In this thing the Lord pardon your servant (1 Kings 5:18). The hypocrite will walk in some of God's statutes, not in all — like a foundered jade that will not set all his feet upon the ground but favors one foot. Such foundered Christians there are who halt and limp and favor themselves in some things, though it be to the hazard of their souls; Herod could as well die as leave his incest. True obedience is universal; as the Papists say we owe to our mother the church an unlimited subjection, it is true here — we owe to our God unlimited obedience.

The third ingredient into obedience is faith (Hebrews 11:6): without faith it is impossible to please God. Therefore it is called the obedience of faith (Romans 16:26). Abel is said by faith to offer up a better sacrifice than Cain. Faith is a vital principle; without it all our services are dead — therefore the scripture speaks of dead works (Hebrews 6:1).

But why must this silver thread of faith run through the whole work of obedience?

Because faith looks at Christ in every duty, and so both the person and the offering are accepted (Ephesians 1:6): accepted in the Beloved. We are not accepted through our duties, but through the Beloved; faith looks at the merit of Christ to take away the guilt, and the Spirit of Christ to take away the filth which cleaves to the most angelical services, thus it procures acceptance.

The high priest under the law looked at Christ in all; when he offered up the sacrifice, he laid his hand upon the head of the beast slain, which did point at the Messiah (Exodus 29:10). So faith lays its hand in every gospel sacrifice upon the head of Christ; his blood does cleanse, and the sweet odors of his intercession do perfume our holy things. Now faith looking up to Christ in every duty finds acceptance.

Faith does not only look at Christ, but it unites to Christ, as the scion is grafted into the stock. Believers are part of Christ; Christ and the saints make one mystical body. No wonder then if God casts a favorable aspect upon those services which believers present to him.

Obedience must be constant (Revelation 2:26): he that keeps my works to the end, to him will I give the morning star.

Faith must lead the van, and perseverance must bring up the rear; there is something still remaining for a Christian to do, and he must not leave work till the night of death comes on.

Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple (Acts 21:16) — what an honor it is for one to be gray-headed in religion! what a credit when it shall be said of him: his last works are better than his first (Revelation 2:19)! A good Christian is like wine full of spirits,

which is good to the last drawing. A limner makes his last work more complete and curious; blessed is that man who, the nearer he is to death, moves swifter to the heavenly center.

THANKS FOR READING



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