

The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment

Jeremiah Burroughs



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ABOUT THIS BOOK



A masterwork of Puritan pastoral theology, this series of sermons expounds **Philippians 4:11** to unfold contentment as a profound **spiritual mystery** — not mere resignation, but an inward sufficiency rooted in Christ. Burroughs systematically defines true contentment, reveals how it is **learned through grace**, and demonstrates its excellence as the highest form of soul-worship. He then confronts the **pleas of a discontented heart** with penetrating honesty, offering practical directions for cultivating peace amid suffering and change. Warm, searching, and deeply practical — a timeless guide to finding rest in God's providence.



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TITLE PAGE



THE RARE JEWEL OF CHRISTIAN Contentment: Wherein is showed, 1. **What CONTENTMENT is.** 2. **The holy Art or Mystery of it.** 3. **Several Lessons that Christ teaches, to work the Heart to Contentment.** 4. **The excellencies of it.** 5. **The evils of Murmuring.** 6. **The aggravations of the sin of Murmuring.**

By Jeremiah Burroughs.

The first of the three Volumes that are published by **Thomas Goodwyn, William Greenhill, Sydrach Simpson, Philip Nye, William Bridge, John Yates, William Adderley.**

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TO THE READER



This worthy Man, especially in his latter times, was surrounded (through God's blessing on him) with a very great confluence of what might give forth **Contentment** to a vast spirit of his rank and calling. He was enriched with a large measure of abilities and opportunities in serving his Lord (to glorify whom, and do much good to others, is the divine part of a man gracious (which he was) the highest and most solid satisfaction, and in many respects exceeds what personal communion with God, singly considered, brings in). Besides, he lived and died in a fullness of honor and esteem with the best of men, of Saints; yea, the worst of enemies: Likewise of estate, and outward comforts within his sphere and rank; all which might and did afford **Contentment** to what was outward in him. In the midst of these his study was to find out a more sublime way, and hidden art of self-sufficiency, than was in the power of all things to contribute or teach: Such a skill as did not only poise and compose his spirit in the present enjoyment of all; but might fortify and furnish him with provision for the future against the loss of all, in times wherein **no man knows what evil will be in the earth**. This mark his first lines show he shot at: This Art some Philosophers of old pretended themselves Masters of, and to instruct others in,

through the assistance of Natural and Moral elements, elevated to the utmost height their Principles could carry them; but in vain: Their Chemistry in this kind being able to produce no more but a sullen obstinacy and obdurateness of mind. The natural **Spirit of a man** feeling itself greater than all creatures, gathering up and consolidating itself into itself, is able (as **Solomon** says) **to sustain its own, and all other infirmities.** But that **Autarchy** this Author here presents, is a Mystery, which **none of these Princes of the world knew, or the wisdom of man teaches, but the Holy Ghost teaches;** and which few, but those that are **perfect,** do attain: Teaching the soul to deny itself into weakness, emptiness, in and to itself and all things else; and thus dissolved to unite itself to him who only has blessedness and all-sufficiency, with whom associated and made intimate, it melts itself into all his interests, making them its own, and thereby comes to have all that All-sufficiency of the High God to be its self-sufficiency. And then, what state can that soul be in, wherein it may not be content? seeing it has God to be the chiefest comfort in its best times, and only comfort in its worst. This, though it be the inheritance of every Saint, in the right and title to it, yet the possession and enjoyment of it, depends upon an improvement of this inheritance, and that upon a skill which is to be **learned** by experience and much exercise (as **Paul** speaks) **I have learned in whatever estate I am, therewith to be content.** This piece of learning this serious spirited man inured himself unto, and **digging for it as Rubies,** as **Solomon's** scholar for wisdom, has found it, and has hewn forth this **Jewel** (a Title given neither by himself, nor us the Publishers, to the subject itself, yet the materials themselves deserving it) out of the Rock, and has artificially cut

it, that the innate rays of this so glorious a Grace might shine forth to others. And here it comes to be presented, though set forth as the richest Jewels are, often for awhile, in ruder metal, until bargained for, but then are placed in Tablets worthy of them. The only seat this is ordained for; is the precious Tablets of men's Hearts, in and from which alone the native lustre of it will be made conspicuous. Reader, buy it, set and wear it there, and it **shall** (as **Solomon** speaks) **be life unto your soul, and grace unto your neck: You shall not be afraid when you lie down; yea your sleep shall be sweet to you: for the Lord will be your confidence.**

Thomas Goodwin, Sidrach Simpson, William Greenhill, Philip Nye, William Bridge, John Yates. William Adderley.

SERMON 1



Philippians 4:11._ For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

— Here is a very **seasonable Cordial** to revive the drooping spirits of the Saints in these sad and sinking times: For the **hour of temptation** is already come upon all the world to try the Inhabitants of the earth; and in special, this is the day of **Jacob's** troubles in our own bowels.

Our **great Apostle** experimentally holds forth in this Gospel-Text, the very life and soul of all practical Divinity; wherein we may plainly read his own proficiency in Christ's School; and what lesson every Christian that would evidence the power and growth of godliness in his own soul, must necessarily learn from him.

These words are brought in by **Paul**, as a plain argument to persuade the Philippians that he did not seek after great things in the world, and that he sought not **theirs**, but **them**: He did not pass for a great estate; he had better things to take up his heart withal. I do not speak (saith he) in respect of want, [**For**] whether I have or have not, my heart is fully satisfied, I have enough; **I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.**

I have learned.] Contentment in every condition is a great art, a spiritual mystery: It is to be learned, and so to be learned as a mystery; And therefore verse 12 he affirms, **I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound, every where and in all things I am instructed:** The word which is translated [**Instructed**] is derived from that word which signifies **Mystery**; and it is as much as if he had said, I have learned the mystery of this business. Contentment is to be learned as a great mystery; and those that are thoroughly trained up in that art, have learned a deep **Mystery**; The which is, as **Samson's** riddle to a natural man. [**I have learned it.**] It is not now to learn; neither had I it at first; I have attained it though with much ado, and now by the grace of God I am become master of this art.

In whatsoever state I am.] The word [**State**] is not in the Original, but, **In what I am**, that is, in whatsoever concerns or befalls me, whether I have little or nothing at all.

Therewith to be content] The word which we render **Content** here, has in the Original much elegancy and fullness of signification in it. In strictness of phrase it is only attributed unto God, who has stiled himself **God all-sufficient**, as resting wholly satisfied in and with himself alone; but he is pleased freely to communicate of his fullness to the creature so that from God in Christ the Saints **receive grace for grace, John** 1:16. Insomuch that there is in them an answerableness of the same grace in their proportion that is in Christ. And in this sense **Paul** saith, I have a **Self-sufficiency**, as the word notes.

But has **Paul** a self-sufficiency you will say? How are we sufficient of ourselves? Our Apostle affirms in another case, **That we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of**

ourselves? 2 Corinthians 3:5. His meaning therefore must be, I find a sufficiency of satisfaction in my own heart, through the grace of Christ that is in me; though I have not outward comforts and worldly accommodations to supply my necessities, yet I enjoy portion enough betwixt Christ and my own soul abundantly to satisfy me in every condition. And this interpretation is suitable to that place, **Proverbs 14:14. A good man is satisfied from himself;** and agreeable to what he verifies of himself in another place; that **though he had nothing yet he possessed all things;** because he had right to the covenant and promise, which virtually contains all, and an interest in Christ the fountain and good of all, and having that, no marvel he saith that in whatsoever state he was in, he was content. Thus you have the genuine interpretation of the text. I shall not make any division of the words, because I take them only to prosecute that **one duty** most necessary, **namely** The quieting and comforting the hearts of God's people under the troubles and changes they meet withal, in these heart-shaking times, And the doctrinal conclusion is in brief this.

Doctrine. **That to be well skilled in the mystery of Christian Contentment is the Duty, Glory, and Excellency of a Christian.**

This Evangelical truth is held forth sufficiently in Scripture; yet take one or two parallel places more for the confirmation of it. 1 **Timothy 6:6,** and 8 you have both the duty expressed, and the glory thereof: **Having food and raiment** (saith he verse 8) **let us be therewith content,** there is the duty; **But godliness with Contentment is great gain,** verse 6 there is the glory and excellency of it: as if godliness were not gain except there were Contentment withal. The like exhortation you have in **Hebrews**

13:5. **Let your conversation be without Covetousness, and be content with such things as you have.** I do not find any Apostle or Writer of Scripture treat so much of this spiritual mystery of Contentment as this our Apostle has done throughout his Epistles.

For the clear opening and proving of this practical conclusion, I shall endeavor to demonstrate these four things;

First, The nature of this Christian Contentment, what it is.

Secondly, The art and mystery of it.

Thirdly, What those lessons are that must be learned to work the heart to contentment.

Fourthly, Wherein the glorious excellencies of this grace doth principally consist.

Concerning the first, take this description; **Christian Contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, freely submitting to, and taking complacency in God's wise, and fatherly disposal in every condition.**

I shall break open this description, for it is a box of precious ointment, very comfortable and useful for troubled hearts, in troubled time and conditions.

First, **Contentment** (I say) **is a sweet [inward] heart thing, it is a work of the spirit within doors:** It is not only a not-seeking help to ourselves by outward violence, or a forbearance of discontented murmuring expressions, in froward words and carriages against God or others; but it is the inward submission of the heart. **Psalm 62:1. Truly, my soul waiteth upon God; and verse 5. My soul wait only upon God,** so it is in

your Books; but the words may be translated as rightly, **My soul be silent unto God; Hold your peace O my soul:** Not only the tongue must hold its peace, but the soul must be silent: Many may sit down silently, forbearing discontented expressions, yet are inwardly swollen with discontentment; now this manifesteth a perplexed distemper and a great frowardness in their hearts: And God notwithstanding their outward silence hears the peevish fretting language of their souls. The shoe may be smooth and neat without, whilst the flesh is pinched within: There may be much calmness and stillness outwardly, and yet wonderful confusion, bitterness, disturbance and vexation within. Some are so weak that they are not able to contain the disquietness of their own spirits, but in words and behaviour discover what woful perturbations there are within, their spirits being like the raging Sea casting forth nothing but mire and dirt, being not only troublesome to themselves but to all those they live with: Others there are who are able to keep in such distempers of heart, (as **Judas** did when he betrayed Christ with a kiss,) but still they boil inwardly and eat like a Canker: As **David** speaks concerning some whose words are smoother than honey, and butter, and yet have war in their hearts; and as he saith in another place, whilst **I kept silence my bones waxed old;** so these, whilst there is a serene calm upon their tongues, have yet blustering storms in their spirits, and whilst they keep silence their hearts are troubled, and even worn away with anguish and vexation; they have peace and quiet outwardly, but war from the unruly and turbulent workings of their hearts, that is within. If the attainment to true Contentment were as easy as keeping quiet outwardly, there need be no great learning of it; it might be had with less skill and strength than an Apostle had; yea than an ordinary

Christian has or may have. Therefore certainly there is a great deal more in it than can be attained by common gifts, and ordinary power of reason, which often bridles in nature. It is a heart-business.

Secondly, **It is the [quiet] of the heart;** All is sedate and still there, and to understand this the better; This quiet gracious frame of spirit, It is not opposed.

1 To a due sense of affliction. God does give leave to his people to be sensible of what they suffer: Christ does not say, Do not count that a cross which is a cross, but take up your cross daily. As it is in the body natural, if the body takes physic and is not able to bear it but presently vomits it up, or if it be not at all sensible, if it stir not the body; either of these ways the physic does no good, but argues the body much distempered and will hardly be cured. So it is with the spirits of men under afflictions; if either they cannot bear God's potions but cast them up again, or are not sensible of them, and their souls are no more stirred by them than the body is by a draught of small beer, it is a sad symptom that their souls are in a dangerous and almost incurable condition. So that this inward quietness is not in opposition to the sense of affliction: for indeed there were no true Contentment if you were not apprehensive and sensible of your afflictions when God is angry. It is not opposed.

2 To an orderly making our moan and complaint to God, and to our friends. Though a Christian ought to be quiet under God's correcting hand, yet he may without any breach of Christian contentment complain to God; (as one of the Ancients saith) though not with a tumultuous clamor and shrieking out in a perplexed passion, yet in a quiet still submissive way he may unbo-

som his heart unto God. And likewise communicate his sad condition to his gracious friends, showing them how God has dealt with him and how heavy the affliction is upon him, that they may speak a word in due season to his wearied soul. It is not opposed.

3 To all lawful seeking out for help into another condition, or simply endeavoring to be delivered out of the present affliction by the use of lawful means. No, I may lay in provision for my deliverance, and use God's means, waiting on him, because I know not but that it may be his will to alter my condition, and so far as he leads me I may follow his providence, it is but my duty. God is thus far mercifully indulgent to our weakness, and he will not take it ill at our hands if by earnest and importunate prayer we seek unto him for deliverance, till we know his good pleasure therein. And certainly thus seeking for help with such a submission and holy resignation of spirit, to be delivered when God will, and as God will, and how God will, so that our wills are melted into the will of God, this is no opposition to the quietness which God requires in a contented spirit.

Question. But then, what is this quietness of spirit opposed unto?

Answer. **To murmuring and repining at the hand of God; as the discontented Israelites often did,** which if we ourselves cannot endure either in our children or servants, much less can God bear it in us.

2 To vexing and fretting; which is a degree beyond murmuring. It is a speech I remember of an Heathen, A wise man may grieve under, but not be vexed with his afflictions. There is a vast difference betwixt a kindly grieving and a distempered vexation.

3 To tumultuousness of spirit: When the thoughts run distractingly and work in a confused manner, so that the affections are like the unruly multitude in the **Acts**, who knew not for what end they were come together. The Lord expects that you should be silent under his rod, and as he said in **Acts 19:36**. **You ought to be quiet and to do nothing rashly.**

4 To unsettledness and unfixedness of spirit, whereby the heart is taken off from the present duty that God requires in our several relations, both towards God, ourselves, and others. We should prize duty at a higher rate than to be taken off by every trivial occasion; a Christian indeed values every service of God so much, that though some may be in the eye of the world and of natural reason, a slight empty business, beggarly rudiments, foolishness, yet seeing God calls for it, the authority of the command doth so overawe his heart, that he is willing to spend himself and to be spent in the discharge of it. It is an expression of **Luther's**, ordinary works that are done in faith, and from faith, are more precious than heaven and earth. And if this be so, and a Christian know it, it is not a little matter that should divert him: but he should answer every avocation, and resist every temptation, as **Nehemiah** did chapter 6 verse 3. **Sanballat, Geshem, and Tobiah** (when they would have hindered the building of the wall) with this, **I am doing a great work** (saith he) **so that I cannot come down, why should the work of the Lord cease?**

5 To distracting, heart-eating cares and fears. A gracious heart so estimates its union with Christ and the work that God sets it about, as it will not willingly suffer anything to come in to choke it, or deaden it. A Christian is desirous that the word of God should take such full possession as to divide between soul and

spirit, but he would not suffer the fear and noise of evil tidings to take such impression in his soul, as to make a division and struggling there, like the twins in **Rebekah's** womb. A great man will permit common people to stand without his doors, but he will not let them come in and make a noise in his closet or bedchamber when he purposely retires himself from all worldly employments. So a well-tempered spirit though it may inquire after things abroad without doors in the world, and suffer some ordinary cares and fears to break in to the suburbs of the soul, so as to have a light touch upon the thoughts: Yet it will not upon any terms admit of an intrusion into the privy chamber, which should be wholly reserved for Jesus Christ as his inward Temple.

6 To sinking discouragements. When things fall not out according to expectation, when the tide of second causes runs so low that we see little left in the outward means to bear up our hopes and hearts. That then the heart begins to reason as he in the **Kings, If the Lord should open the windows of heaven how should this be?** Never considering that God can open the eyes of the blind with clay and spittle, he can work above, beyond, nay contrary to means; he often makes the fairest flowers of man's endeavors to wither, and brings improbable things to pass, that the glory of enterprises may be given to himself. Nay if his people stand in need of miracles to work their deliverance, miracles fall as easily out of God's hands, as to give his people daily bread. God's blessing is many times secret upon his servants that they know not which way it comes; as 2 **Kings** chapter 3 verse 17. **Ye shall not see wind, neither shall you see rain, yet the valley shall be filled with water,** God would have us depend on him though we do not see means how the thing should be brought to pass, else we

do not show a quiet spirit; though an affliction be upon you, let not your heart sink under it. So far as your heart sinks and you are discouraged under your affliction, so much you lack of this lesson of Contentment.

7 **To sinful shiftings and shirkings out for ease and help.** As we see in **Saul** running to the witch of Endor, and in his offering sacrifice before **Samuel** came: Nay the good King **Jehoshaphat** joins himself with **Ahaziah** **2 Chronicles** 20 last verse. **And Asa goes to Ben-Hadad King of Assyria for help, not relying upon the Lord,** (**2 Chronicles** 16:7, 8.) Though the Lord had delivered the Ethiopian Army into his hands, consisting of a thousand thousand, **2 Chronicles** 14:11. And good **Jacob** joined in a lie with his mother to **Isaac**, he was not content to stay God's time, and use God's means, but made too great haste and stepped out of his way, to procure the blessing which God intended for him: as many do through the corruption of their hearts and weakness of their faith, because they are not able to trust God, and follow him fully in all things and always; and for this cause the Lord often follows the Saints with many sore temporal crosses, (as we see in **Jacob**) though they obtain the mercy. It may be your wretched carnal heart thinks, I care not how I be delivered, so I may but get free from it: Is it not so many times in some of your hearts when any cross or affliction befalls you? Have not you such kind of workings of spirit as this; Oh that I could but be delivered out of this affliction any way, I would not care; your hearts are far from being quiet. And this sinful shifting is the next thing in opposition to this quietness, which God requires in a contented spirit.

The Eighth and last thing that this quietness of Spirit is opposite to, is **desperate risings of heart against God in a way of rebellion**: That is most abominable. I hope many of you have learned so far to be content, as to keep down your hearts from such distempers; and yet the truth is, not only wicked men, but sometimes the very Saints of God find the beginnings of this, when an affliction lies long, and is very sore and heavy upon them indeed, and strikes them as it were in the master vein; they find somewhat of this in their hearts, arising against God, their thoughts begin to bubble, and their affections begin to stir in rising against God himself; especially such as together with their corruptions have much melancholy, and the Devil working both upon the corruptions of their hearts, and the melancholy distemper of their bodies; though there may lie much grace at the bottom, yet there may be some risings against God himself under affliction. Now Christian quietness is opposite to all these things: that is, When afflictions come, be it what affliction it will be, yet you do not murmur, though you be sensible, though you make your moan, though you desire to be delivered, and seek it by all good means, yet you do not murmur nor repine, you do not fret, nor vex, there is not that tumultuousness of spirit in you, there is not unsettledness in your spirits, there are not distracting fears in your hearts, no sinking discouragements, no base shiftings, no rising in rebellion any way against God: This is the quietness of Spirit under an affliction, and that is the second thing when the soul is so far able to bear an affliction as to keep quiet under it.

Now the Third thing I would open in the description is this, **It is an inward, quiet, gracious [frame] of Spirit**. It is a frame of Spirit, and then a gracious frame of Spirit. Contentment it is a

Soul business, First it is inward; Secondly quiet; Thirdly it is a quiet **Frame** of Spirit. [**Frame**] by that I mean these Three things: There are Three things considerable when I say, Contentment consists in the quiet **frame** of the Spirit of a man.

First, **That it is a grace that spreads itself through the whole Soul:** as thus, It is in the judgment, that is, The judgment of the soul of a man or woman tends to quiet the heart: In my judgment I am satisfied, that is one thing to be satisfied in one's understanding and judgment, as thus, This is the hand of God; and this is that that is suitable to my condition, or best for me; although I do not see the reason of the thing, yet I am satisfied in my judgment about it.

And then **it is in the thoughts of a man or woman:** As my judgment is satisfied, so my thoughts are kept in order.

And then it comes to the **will, My will yields and submits to it, my affections are all likewise kept in order, so that it goes through the whole soul.** There is in some a partial contentment, and so 'tis not the frame of the soul, but some part of the soul hath some Contentment, as thus, Many a man may be satisfied in his judgment about a thing, and yet cannot for his life rule his affections, nor his thoughts, cannot rule his thoughts, nor the will, nor the affections though the judgments be satisfied: I make no question but many of you may know this by your own experience, if you do but observe the workings of your own hearts. Cannot you say when such an affliction befalls you, I can bless God I am satisfied in my judgment about it, I have nothing in the world to say in respect of my judgment against it, I see the hand of God and I should be content: yea I am satisfied in my judgment, that my condition is a good condition in which I am; but I cannot for

my life rule my thoughts, and will, and my affections, methinks I feel my heart heavy, and sad, and troubled more than it should be, and yet my judgment is satisfied. This seemed to be the case of **David, Psalm 43. O my Soul why art thou disquieted?** **David** as far as his judgment went, there was a contentedness, that is, His judgment was satisfied in the work of God upon him; and he was troubled, but he knew not wherefore, **O my soul why art thou cast down within me?** That Psalm is a very good Psalm for those that feel a fretting, discontented distemper in their hearts at any time, for them to be reading or singing: he hath it once or twice in that **Psalm, Why art thou cast down O my soul?** In verse 5. **And why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God for I shall yet praise him, for the help of his countenance.** **David** had enough to quiet him, and that that he had had prevailed with his judgment, but after it had prevailed with his judgment he could not get it further. He could not get this grace of Contentment to go through the whole frame of the Soul. There is a great deal of stir sometimes to get Contentment into their judgments, that is, To satisfy their judgment about their condition: Come to many, that the hand of God is upon perhaps in a grievous manner, and seek to satisfy them, and tell them that there is no such cause to be disquieted, O not such cause saith the troubled spirit! O then there is no cause that any should be disquieted; there was never any such affliction as I have! and a hundred things they have to put off what is said to them, so as you cannot so much as get into their judgments to satisfy them; but there is a great deal of hope of Contentment if once your judgments come to be satisfied, that you can sit down and say in your judgments, I see cause to be contented; but though you have gotten thus far, yet you may

have much to do with your hearts afterward: for there is such unruliness in our thoughts and affections, that our judgments are not able always to rule our thoughts and affections, and that makes me to say, That Contentment is an inward, quiet, gracious frame of Spirit, that is, the whole Soul, Judgment, Thoughts, Will, Affections and all are satisfied and quiet. I suppose in the very opening this, you begin to see it is a lesson that you had need learn, and it is not a thing soon got, if Contentment be such a thing as this is.

The Second thing is this, which is very observable, **That spiritual contentment comes from the frame of the Soul.** A man or woman that is contented in a right way, their Contentment does not so much come from outward arguments, or any outward thing that helps them to be content, as it does from the disposition of their own hearts. It is the disposition of their own hearts that causes this Contentment; that brings forth this gracious Contentment rather than any external thing that does it. As thus I would open myself: one that is disquieted, suppose a child, or man, or woman, if you come and bring them some great matter to please them, that perhaps will quiet them, and they will be contented. It is the thing you bring them that quiets them, but it is not the disposition of their own spirits, not from any good temper that there is in their own hearts: but from some external thing that is brought them. But when a Christian is contented in a right way, the quiet does come more from the inward temper and disposition of their own hearts than from any external arguments, or possession of anything in the world. I would yet open this further to you in this Similitude. The being content upon some external thing, it is like the warming of a man's clothes by the fire; but being content by

the inward disposition of the soul, it is like the warmth that a man's clothes has from the natural heat of his body. A man that is of a healthful body, he puts on his clothes, and perhaps when he puts them on at the first in a cold morning he feels his clothes cold; but after he has them on a little while, they are warm. Why, how come they warm? They came not near the fire. No, but it came from the natural heat of his body. Now a sickly man that has his natural heat decayed, if he put on his clothes cold, they will not be hot in a long time, but he must have them warmed by the fire, and then they will quickly be cold again. So this will distinguish the Contentments of men. There are some men now that are very gracious, and when an affliction comes upon them, indeed at first it seems to be a little cold, but after it has been on a while, the very temper of their hearts being gracious it makes their afflictions easy, and makes them to be quiet under it, and not to complain of any discontentment. But now you shall have others that have an affliction upon them, that have not this good temper in their hearts, their afflictions are very cold upon them and grievous. And it may be if you bring them some external arguments, somewhat from without, as the fire that warms the clothes, perhaps they will be quiet for a while: but alas, wanting a gracious disposition within in their own hearts that warmth will not hold long. The warmth of the fire, that is, a Contentment that comes merely from external arguments will not hold long, but that holds that does come from the gracious temper of the Spirit. It is from the frame and the disposition of the spirit of a man or woman, there is the true Contentment. But this we shall speak to further in the opening of the **Mystery of Contentment.**

The Third thing is this, **It is the frame of Spirit, that shows the habitualness of this grace of Contentment.** Contentment is not merely one act, a flash in a good mood. You shall have many men and women, that take them in some good mood and they will be very quiet; but this will not hold, this is not in a constant way, there is not a constant tenor of their spirits to be holy and gracious under affliction. But I say, It is the quiet frame of spirit, by that I mean, The habitual disposition of their Souls, that it is not only at this time, and the other time when you take men and women in a good mood, but it is the constant tenor and temper of the heart. That is a Christian that has learned this lesson of Contentment, that in the constant tenor and temper of heart is contented, and can carry itself quietly in a constant way, or else it is worth nothing. For there is nobody that is so furious in their discontent, but will be quiet in some good mood or other. Now First it is a heart-business; Secondly, it is the heart-quiet; and then Thirdly, it is the frame of the heart.

But Fourthly, **It is the [gracious] frame of the heart.** Indeed in Contentment there is a composition of all graces if the Contentment be Spiritual, if it be truly Christian, there is I say a composition of all Spiritual graces. As it is in some Oils, there is a composition of a great many very precious ingredients: so in this grace of Contentment, which we shall yet further speak of in the opening of the Excellency of it. But now the gracious frame of Spirit is in opposition to three things;

1 First, **In opposition to the natural stillness that there is in many men and women.** There are some of such a natural constitution that makes them to be more still and more quiet than

others: others are of a violent and hot constitution, and they are more impatient than others.

2 Secondly. **In opposition to a sturdy resolution.** As some men through the strength of some sturdy resolution, they have not seemed to be troubled let come what will come; and so it may be that through a sturdy resolution at some times they are not so much disquieted as others are.

Thirdly, **In way of distinction, from the very strength of reason** (though not sanctified) **the strength of natural reason may quiet the heart in some measure.** But now I say, a gracious frame of spirit is not a mere stillness of body through a natural constitution and temper, nor sturdiness of resolution, nor merely through the strength of reason.

You will say, wherein is this graciousness of Contentment distinguished from all these? More of this will be spoken to when we show the mystery of it, and the lessons that are learned, but now we may speak a little by way of distinction here. As now, from the natural stillness of men's spirits, many men and women have such a natural stillness of spirit, and constitution of body, that you shall find them seldom disquieted. But now mark these kind of people that are so, they likewise are very dull, of a dull spirit in any good thing, they have no quickness, nor liveliness of spirit in that which is good. But now mark where contentment of heart is gracious, the heart is very quick and lively in the service of God. Yea the more any gracious heart can bring itself to be in a contented disposition, oh the more fit it is for any service of God, and is very active and lively in God's service, not dull in the service of God. And as a contented heart is very active and stirring in the work of God, so he is very active and stirring in sanctifying God's Name in the affliction

that does befall him. The difference will appear very clear thus: One that is of a still disposition, he is not disquieted indeed as others, neither has he any activeness of spirit in sanctifying the Name of God in the affliction. But now one that is content in a gracious way as he is not disquieted, but keeps his heart quiet in respect of vexing and trouble, so on the other side he is not dull nor heavy but is very active to sanctify God's Name in the affliction that is upon him. For it is not enough merely not to murmur, not to be discontented and troubled, but you must be active in the sanctifying God's Name in the affliction. And indeed this will distinguish it from the other, from a sturdy resolution, I will not be troubled. But though you have a sturdy resolution that you will not be troubled, is there a conscionableness in you to sanctify God's Name in your affliction, and does it come from thence? That is the main thing that brings the quiet of heart, and helps against discontentedness in a gracious heart. I say the desire and care that your soul has to sanctify God's Name in an affliction, it is that that quiets the soul, which does not in the other. Neither when it is merely from reason: As **Socrates** it is said of him (though he were but an heathen) that whatever befell him he would never so much as change his countenance, and he got this power over his spirit merely by strength of reason and morality: but now this gracious contentment comes from principles beyond the strength of reason. I cannot open that, (from whence it comes) till we come to open the mystery of spiritual Contentment. I will only give you this one note of difference between a man and a woman that is contented in a natural way, and another that is contented in a spiritual way. Those that are contented in a natural way, they overcome themselves when outward afflictions do befall them, they are contented.

Yea and they are contented as well when they commit sin against God, either when they have outward crosses or when God is dishonoured it is all one, either when themselves are crossed or when God is crossed. But now a gracious heart that is contented with its own affliction, yet mightily rises when God is dishonoured.

The Fifth is [**Freely**] **freely submitting to, and taking complacency in God's disposal**, it is a free work of the spirit: now there are four things to be opened in this freedom of spirit.

First, that the heart is readily brought over, that that one does freely there is no great stir to bring them to it. There are many men and women when their afflictions are grievous upon them, with much ado they are brought to be contented, a great deal of stir there is to quiet their hearts when they are under affliction, yet at last perhaps they are brought to it. Aye, but now this does not come off freely: if I desire a thing of another and I get it perhaps with much ado, and a great deal of stir there is, but here is no freedom of spirit. But when a man is free in a thing do but mention it and presently he comes off to it. So if you have learned this art of Contentment, you will not only be contented after a great deal of ado to quiet your hearts, but readily as soon as ever you do come to think that it is the hand of God, your heart presently closes.

Secondly, **freely, That is not by constraint**, not patience by force (as we use to say). As many will say that you must be content, this is the hand of God and there is no help for it; O this is too low an expression for Christians, yet when Christians come to visit one another, they say friend or neighbour you must be content, this is too low an expression for a Christian, **Must be content**, no, readily, and freely I will be content. It is suitable to my heart to yield to God, and to be content, I find it is a thing that comes off of itself,

that my soul will be content. Oh you should answer your friends so that come and tell you you must be content, nay I am willing to yield to God, and I am freely content, that's the Second. And then a free act it comes after a rational way, that's freedom, that is, it does not come through ignorance, because I know no better condition, or that I know not what my affliction is, but it comes through a sanctified judgment, for that is the reason that no creature can do an act of freedom, but the rational creature, the liberty of action is only in rational creatures, and it comes from hence, for that's only freedom and out of liberty that's wrought in a rational way, as a natural freedom is when I by my judgment see what is to be done, understand the thing, and then there is a closing with what I do understand in my judgment, that is freely done; but now if a man does a thing, and understands not what he does, he cannot be said to do it freely. So if men are contented, but it is because they understand not what their affliction is, or because they understand no better, this is not freely: as for instance, Suppose a Child born in a prison and never in all his life went out, the Child is contented, why? Because he never knew better, but this is no free act of Contentment. But now for men and women that do know better, that know that the condition in which they are in it is an afflicted condition, and a sad condition, and yet they can bring their hearts to a Contentment out of a sanctified judgment, this is freedom.

Thirdly, **This freedom it is in opposition to stupidity**, for a man and woman may be contented merely out of want of sense, this is not free, as a man in a dead palsy that does not feel you nip his flesh, he is not freely patient; but if one should have their flesh nipped, and feel it, and yet for all that can be able to bridle themselves, and do it freely, that is another matter. So it is

here, many are contented merely out of stupidity, they have a dead palsy upon them; but now a gracious heart has sense enough, and yet is contented, and therefore is free.

Sixthly, **Freely [submitting] to, and taking complacency in God's dispose.** Submitting to God's dispose, What is that? The word **Submit**, it signifies nothing else, but to send under; as thus, One that is discontented, the heart will be unruly, and would even get above God so far as discontentment prevails; but now comes the grace of Contentment and sends it under; to submit, it is to send under a thing. Now when the soul comes to see the unruliness that there is in it, here's the hand of God that brings an affliction, and my heart is troubled and discontented; what says the Soul? Will you be above God? Is it not God's hand, and must your will be regarded more than God's? O under, under, O you soul get under, keep under, keep low, keep under God's feet; you are under God's feet, and keep under His feet, keep under the Authority of God, the Majesty of God, the Sovereignty of God, the Power that God has over you. Keep under, that is to submit; then the Soul can submit to God when it can send itself under the Power and Authority, and Sovereignty, and Dominion that God has over it; that is the Sixth Particular. Yea but that is not enough, yet you have not got to this Grace of Contentment, except in the next place you take.

Seventhly, **Taking a [complacency] in God's dispose.** That is thus, I am well pleased in what God does, so far as I can see God in it, though as I said, I may be sensible of the affliction, and may desire that God in His due time would take it off, and use means to take it off; yet I may be well pleased so far as God's hand is in it. To be well pleased with God's hand, that is a higher degree

than the other: and this comes from hence, not only because I see that I should be content in this affliction, but because I see that there is good in this affliction. I find there is honey in this rock, and so I do not only say, I **must**, or I **will** submit to God's hand: no, but the hand of God is **good**; it is **good that I am afflicted**. That it is just that I am afflicted, that may be in one that is not truly contented; I may be convinced that God deals justly in this, God is righteous and just, and 'tis fit I should submit to what He has done, O the Lord has done righteously in all His ways: but that is not enough, but you must say Good is the hand of the Lord, the expression of old **Eli**, **Good is the word of the Lord**, when it was a sore and hard word, that word that did threaten very grievous things to **Eli** and his house, and yet, Good is the word of the Lord, says **Eli**. Perhaps some of you may say as **David**, It is good that I was afflicted; nay, you must come to say thus, **It is good that I am afflicted**. Not good when you see the good fruit that it has wrought, but when you are afflicted to say, It is good that I am afflicted: Whatever the affliction be, yet through the mercy of God my condition is a good condition; it is the top indeed, and the height of this art of Contentment to come to this pitch, to be able to say, Well, my condition and afflictions are thus and thus, and is very grievous and sore, yet I am through God's mercy in a good condition, and the hand of God is good upon me notwithstanding. Now I should have given you divers Scriptures about this, I shall but give you one or two that are very remarkable; you will think this is a hard lesson to come thus far, not only to be quiet, but to have a complacency in affliction. **Proverbs 16:6. In the house of the righteous is much treasure, but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble.** Here's a Scripture now that will show

that a gracious heart has cause to say, it is in a good condition whatever it be. In the house of the Righteous is much Treasure, his house, what house? It may be a poor Cottage, perhaps he has scarce a stool to sit on; perhaps he is fain to sit upon a stump of wood, a piece of a block, instead of a stool; or perhaps he has scarce a bed to lie upon, or a dish to eat in; yet says the Holy Ghost, In the house of the righteous is much treasure. Let the righteous man be the poorest man in the world. It may be there are some that have come and taken all the goods out of his house for debt; perhaps his house is plundered and all is gone, yet still, **In the house of the righteous is much treasure**; the righteous man can never be brought to be so poor, to have his house rifled and spoiled, but there will remain much treasure within, if he has but a dish or a spoon or anything in the world in his house, there will be much treasure. So long as he is there, there is the presence of God and the blessing of God upon him, and therein is much treasure; but in the revenues of the wicked there is trouble. There is more treasure in the poorest body's house, if he be godly, than in the house of the greatest man in the world, that has his brave hangings, and brave wrought beds, and chairs, and couches, and cupboards of plate, and the like; whatever he has, he has not so much treasure in it, as in the house of the poorest righteous soul; therefore in a verse, or two after my text, no marvel though **Paul** (says he) was Content, you shall see in **Philippians 4:18. But I have all, and abound, I am full.** I have all: Alas poor man what had **Paul** that could make him say he had all; where was there ever man more afflicted than **Paul** was? Many times he had not tatters to hang about his body, to cover his nakedness, he had not bread to eat, he was often in nakedness, and put in the stocks, and

whipped and cruelly used, **yet I have all** (says **Paul**) for all that. Yea you shall have it in 2 **Corinthians** 6:10 he professes there, **That he did possess all things, as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, as poor, yet making many rich, as having nothing, and yet possessing all things**, but mark what he says, it is, **As having nothing**, but it is **Possessing all things**. He does not say as possessing all things, but possessing all things; it is very little I have in the world, but yet possessing all things: So that you see a Christian has cause to take complacency in God's hand, whatsoever his hand be.

The Eighth thing in Contentment it is [In God's dispose] Submitting to and taking complacency in God's dispose. That is, the soul that has learned this lesson of Contentment, looks up to God in all things; looks not down to the instruments or the means, as such a man did it, and it was unreasonableness of such and such instruments, and the like barbarous usage of such and such; but looks up to God; a contented heart looks to God's dispose, and submits to God's dispose, that is, sees the wisdom of God in all, in his submission sees his sovereignty, but that that makes him take complacency, it is God's wisdom; the Lord knows how to order things better than I, the Lord sees further than I do, I see things but at present, but the Lord sees a great while hence, and how do I know but had it not been for this affliction, I had been undone? I know that the love of God **may as well stand with an afflicted estate, as with a prosperous estate**; and such kind of reasonings there are in a contented spirit, submitting unto the dispose of God.

The last thing is, **This is in [every condition,]** It may be in some things you could be content: You shall have many will say, if my affliction were but as the affliction of such a one I could be content, yea but it must be in the present affliction that is upon you. We use to say, There is a great deal of deceit in Universals; In the general, come to any man or woman and say Will not you be content with God's dispose? Yes say they God forbid but we should submit to God's hand whatever it be; You say thus in the general, it is an easy matter to learn this lesson, but when it comes to the particular, when the cross comes sore indeed, when it strikes you in the heaviest cross that you think could befall you, what says your heart now? Can you in every condition be content not only for the matter, but for the time, that is to be in such a condition so long as God would have you, to be content to be at God's time in that condition, to have such an affliction so long as God would have the affliction abide upon you, to be willing to stay and not to come out of the affliction no sooner than the Lord would have you come out of it? You are not content in your condition else; To be content merely that I have such a hand of God upon me, and not to stay under the hand of God, that is not to be content under every condition, but when I can find my heart submitting to God's dispose in such particular afflictions that are very hard, and very grievous, and yet my heart is quiet, here is one that has learned the lesson of Contentment: Contentment, it is the inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, freely submitting to and taking complacency in God's dispose in every condition: That is the description. Now in this there has been nine several things opened.

1 First, That Contentment is a heart-work within the soul. 2 Secondly, It is the quieting of the heart. 3 Thirdly, It is the frame of the spirit. 4 Fourthly, It is a gracious frame. 5 Fifthly, It is the free working of this gracious frame. 6 Sixthly, There is in it a submission to God, sending the soul under God. 7 Seventhly, There is a taking complacency in the hand of God. 8 Eighthly, All to God's dispose. 9 Ninthly, In every condition, every condition though never so hard, though continue never so long: Now those of you that have learned to be Content, have learned to attain unto these several things; The very opening of these things I hope may so far work upon your hearts as, First, That you may lay your hands upon your hearts upon this that has been said. The very telling of you what the lesson is, I say may cause you to lay your hands upon your hearts, and say, Lord, I see there is more in Christian Contentment than I thought there was, and I have been far from learning this lesson. I indeed have learned but my A B C in this lesson of Contentment. I am but in the lower form in Christ's school if I am in it at all; But these we shall speak to more afterward; But the special thing I aimed at in the opening of this point, is to show how great a Mystery there is in Christian Contentment; and how many several lessons are to be learned, that we may come to attain to this Heavenly disposition, that Saint **Paul** did attain to.

Finis.

SERMON 2



PHILIPPIANS. 4.11. For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

— We have made entrance (you may remember) into the Argument of **Christian Contentment**. And have opened the words, and showed you what this Christian Contentment is; that it is, The inward, quiet, gracious frame of Spirit, freely submitting to, and taking Complacency in God's dispose in every condition. And therein came to this last thing, [**In every condition**] Now we shall a little enlarge that, and so proceed:

1 Submitting to God in whatever Affliction befalls us: for the kind.

2 For the time and continuance of the Affliction.

3 For the variety and changes of Affliction: Let them be what they will, yet there must be a submitting to God's dispose in every condition.

First for the kind, Many men and women will in the general say, that they must submit to God in affliction; I suppose now if you should come from one end of this Congregation to another, and speak to every soul thus; Would not you submit to God's dispose, in whatever condition he should dispose of you to; you would

say, God forbid it should be otherwise, but we used to say, **There is a great deal of deceit in generals.** In general you would submit to anything: but what if it be in this and that particular, that is most cross to you? Then anything but that: we are usually apt to think that any condition is better than the condition that God doth dispose us to, now here is not Contentment; it should not be only to any condition in general, but for the kind of the affliction, if it be that which is most cross to you. God (it may be) strikes you in your Child, Oh if it had been in my Estate saith one, I should be content; perhaps he strikes you in your Match, Oh saith he I had rather have been struck in my health; and if he had struck you in your health, Oh then if it had been in my trading I would not have cared; but we must not be our own carvers, what particular afflictions God shall dispose us to, there must be Contentment in them.

Secondly, **There must be a submission to God in every affliction, for the time and continuance of the affliction.** It may be saith one I could submit and be content, but this affliction hath been upon me a long time, a quarter of a year, a year, several years, and I know not how to yield and submit to it, my patience is even worn and broke; yea it may be it is a spiritual affliction, you could submit to God you say in any outward affliction, but not in a soul-affliction, or if it were an affliction upon the soul, trouble upon the heart, if it were the withdrawing of God's face, yet if this had been but for a little time I could submit; but seeking of God so long a time and yet God doth not appear, Oh how shall I bear this! We must not be our own disposers for the **time** of deliverance no more than the **kind** and **way** of deliverance, and I will give you a Scripture or two about this; That we are to submit unto

God for the time as well as the kind, in the latter end of the first Chapter of **Ezekiel**. **When I saw it I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spoke,** (the Prophet was cast down upon his face, but how long must he lie upon his face) **And he said unto me, Son of man stand upon thy feet and I will speak unto thee, and the Spirit entered into me, when he spoke unto me and set me upon my feet.** **Ezekiel** was cast down upon his face, and there he must lie till God bid him stand up, yea and not only so, but till God's Spirit came into him to enable him to stand up: So when God casts us down, we must be content to lie till God bid us stand up, and God's Spirit enter into us to enable us to stand up. So you know **Noah** he was put into the Ark, certainly he knew there was much affliction in the Ark, having all kind of creatures shut up with him for twelve months together, it was a mighty thing, yet God shutting him up (though the waters were assuaged) **Noah** was not to come out of the Ark till God bid him: So though we be shut up in great afflictions, and we may think there may be this and that and the other means to come out of that affliction, yet till God doth open the door we should be willing to stay; God hath put us in, and God is to bring us out: As we read in the **Acts**, of **Paul**, when they had shut him in Prison and would have sent for him out; Nay, saith **Paul** they shut us in, let them come and fetch us out: So in a holy gracious way should a soul say, Well, this affliction that I am brought into, it is by the hand of God, and I am content to be here till God brings me out himself. God doth require it at our hands, that we should not be willing to come out till he comes and fetches us out. In **Joshua** 4:10 you have a notable history there that may very well serve our purpose; we read of the Priests, that the Priests bear the Ark and

stood in the midst of Jordan; you know when the children of Israel went into the Land of Canaan they went through the River of Jordan: Now the going through the river Jordan was a very dangerous thing, only God bade them to go, they might have been afraid that the water might have come in upon them: but mark, it is said, **The Priest that bear the Ark stood in the midst of Jordan till every thing was finished that the Lord commanded Joshua to speak unto the people, according to all that Moses commanded Joshua, and the people hastened and passed over: and it came to pass when all the people were clean passed over, that the Ark of the Lord passed over, and the Priests in the presence of the people.** Now it was God's dispose that all the people should pass over first, that they should be safe upon the land; but the Priests they must stand still till all the people be passed over, and then they must have leave to go, but they must stay till God would have them go, stay in all that danger; for certainly in reason and sense there was a great deal of danger in staying: for the text saith, the people hastened over, but the Priests they must stay till the people be gone, stay till God calls them out from that place of danger; And so many times it doth prove that God is pleased to dispose of things so that the Ministers must stay longer in danger than the people, and Magistrates and those in public place, which should make people to be satisfied and contented with a lower condition that God hath put them into: Though your condition be low, yet you are not in that danger that those are in that are in a higher condition; God calls them in public place to stand longer in the gap and place of danger than other people, but we must be content to stay even in Jordan till the Lord shall be pleased to call us out.

And then for the variety of our condition, we must be content with the particular affliction, and the time and all the circumstances about the affliction; for sometimes the circumstances are greater afflictions than the afflictions themselves: And for the variety, if God will exercise us with various afflictions one after another: As that hath been very observable even of late, that many that have been plundered and come away, afterwards have fallen sick and died: They have fled for their lives and afterwards the plague hath come among them, and if not that affliction it may be some other affliction, it is very rare that one affliction comes alone, commonly afflictions are not single things but they come one upon the neck of another; it may be God strikes one in his estate, then in his body, then in his name, wife or child or dear friend, and so it comes in a various way it is the way of God ordinarily (you may find it by experience) that seldom one affliction comes alone, now this is hard when one affliction follows after another, when there is a variety of afflictions, when there is a mighty change in a condition, up and down, this way, and that way; there indeed is the trial of a Christian; there must be submission to God's dispose in them. I remember it is said even of **Cato** that was a Heathen, that no man saw him to be changed, though he lived in a time when the Commonwealth was so often changed, yet it is said of him, he was the same still though his condition was changed, and he ran through variety of conditions. Oh that it could be said so of many Christians, that though their conditions be changed yet that nobody could see **them** changed, they are the same. Look what gracious sweet and holy temper they were in before, that they are in still: thus we are to submit to the dispose of God in every condition.

Obj. But you will say, This that you speak of is good indeed if we could attain to it, but is it possible for one to attain to this?

Answer. It is if you get skill in the Art of it, you may attain to it, and it will prove to be no such difficult thing to you neither, if you understand but the mystery of it; as there's many things that men do in their callings, that if a country man comes and sees, he thinks it a mighty hard thing, and that he should never be able to do it, but that's because he understands not the art of it, there is a turning of the hand so as you may do it with ease. Now that's the business of this exercise, to open unto you the art and mystery of Contentment: What way a Christian comes to Contentment, there is a great Mystery and art in it, by that hath been opened to you there will appear some mystery and art, as that a man should be content with his affliction and yet thoroughly sensible of his affliction too, to be thoroughly sensible of an affliction, and to endeavor the removing of it by all lawful means, and yet to be content, there's a mystery in that, how to join these two together to be sensible of an affliction as much as that man or woman that is not content, I am sensible of it as fully as they, and I seek ways to be delivered from it as well as they, and yet still my heart abides content, this is I say a mystery that is very hard to be understood by a carnal heart; But grace doth teach such a mixture, doth teach us how to make a mixture of sorrow and a mixture of joy together; and that makes Contentment, the mingling of joy and sorrow, of gracious joy and gracious sorrow together, grace teaches us how to moderate and to order an affliction so as there shall be a sense of it, and yet for all that Contentment under it.

There are divers things further for the opening of the Mystery of Contentment

The First Thing therefore is this, **To show that there is a great mystery in it.** One that is contented in a Christian way it may be said of him that he is the most **contented** man in the world, and yet the most **unsatisfied** man in the world, these two together must needs be mysterious, I say a contented man as he is the most contented so he is the most unsatisfied of any man in the world. You never learned the mystery of contentment except it may be said of you that as you are the most contented man so you are the most unsatisfied man in the world.

You will say how is that? A man that has learned the art of Contentment is the most contented with any low condition that he has in the world, and yet he cannot be satisfied with the enjoyment of all the world, and yet he is contented if he has but a crust, but bread and water. That is, if God disposes of him for the things of the world to have but bread and water for his present condition, he can be satisfied with God's disposal in that. Yet if God should give unto him Kingdoms and Empires, all the world to rule, if He should give it him for his portion he would not be satisfied with that. Here is the mystery of it: though his heart be so enlarged as the enjoyment of all the world and ten thousand worlds cannot satisfy him for his portion; yet he has a heart quieted under God's disposal, if He gives him but bread and water. To join these two together, this must needs be a great art and mystery. Though he be contented with God in a little, yet those things that would content other men will not content him. The men of the world seek after estates, and think if they had thus much, and thus much, they would be content, they aim at no great matters; but if I had (perhaps some man thinks) but two or three hundred a year, then I should be well enough. If I had but a hundred a year, or a thou-

sand a year (says another) then I should be satisfied. But says a gracious heart, If he had ten hundred thousand times so much a year, it would not satisfy him, if he had the quintessence of all the excellencies of all the creatures in the world, it could not satisfy him, and yet this man can sing, and be merry, and joyful when he has but a crust of bread and a little water in the world. Surely Religion is a great mystery, great is the mystery of godliness, not only in the Doctrinal part of it, but in the Practical part of it also. Godliness teaches us this mystery: Not to be satisfied with all the world for our portion, and yet to be content with the meanest condition in which we are. As **Luther**, when he had great gifts sent him from Dukes and Princes, he refused it, and said he, I did vehemently protest God should not put me off so; it is not that which will content me: A little in the world will content a Christian for his passage. Mark, here lies the Mystery of it, A little in the world will Content a Christian for his passage, but all the world and ten thousand times more will not Content a Christian for his **portion**. Now a carnal heart will be Content with these things of the world for his portion; and there is the difference between a Carnal heart and a Gracious heart. But says a gracious heart, Lord do with me what Thou wilt for my passage through this world, I will be content with that, but I cannot be content with all the world for my portion: so there is the mystery of true Contentment. A contented man though he be most contented with the least things in the world; yet he is the most unsatisfied man that lives in the world. That Soul that is capable of God, can be filled with nothing else but God; nothing but God can fill a soul that is capable of God. Though a gracious heart knows that it is capable of God, and was made for God; Carnal hearts think of no reference to God, but a gracious heart be-

ing enlarged to be capable of God, and enjoying somewhat of Him, nothing in the world can fill a gracious heart, it must be only God Himself. And therefore you shall observe, That let God give what He will to a gracious heart, a heart that is godly, except He gives Himself, it will not do; a godly heart will not only have the mercy, but the God of that mercy as well as itself, and then a little matter is enough in the world, so be it he has the God of that mercy he does enjoy. In **Philippians** 4:7, 9, I shall need go no further to show a notable Scripture for this. Compare verse 7 with verse 9. **And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.** The peace of God shall keep your hearts. Then in verse 9: **Those things which you have both learned and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you, The peace of God shall keep you, and the God of peace shall be with you.** This is that that I would observe from this Text, That the peace of God is not enough to a gracious heart except it may have the God of that peace. A carnal heart could be satisfied if he might but have outward peace, though it be not the peace of God; peace in the State and his trading would satisfy him. But mark how a Godly heart goes beyond a Carnal, all outward peace is not enough, but I must have the peace of God. But suppose you have the peace of God, Will not that quiet you? No, I must have the God of peace, as the peace of God so the God of peace, that is, I must enjoy that God that gives me the peace, I must have the cause as well as the effect; I must see from whence my peace comes, and enjoy the fountain of my peace, as well as the stream of my peace. And so in other mercies, have I health from God, I must have the God of my health to be my portion, or else I

am not satisfied. It is not life, but the God of my life; it is not riches, but the God of those riches that I must have, the God of my preservation, as well as my preservation; a gracious heart is not satisfied without this, To have the God of the mercy, as well as the mercy. In **Psalm 73:25: Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon the earth that I desire besides Thee.** It is nothing in heaven or earth, can satisfy me, but Thyself; if God give you not only earth but heaven, that you should rule over Sun, Moon, and stars, and have the rule over the highest of the sons of men, it would not be enough to satisfy you, except you had God Himself. There lies the first mystery of Contentment; and truly a contented man, though he be the most contented man in the world, yet he is the most unsatisfied man in the world, that is, Those things that will satisfy the world, will not satisfy him.

Secondly, There is this Mystery in Christian Contentment. **A Christian comes to Contentment, not so much by way of addition, as by way of Subtraction,** that is his way of Contentment, and that is a way that the world has no skill in. I open it thus, Not so much by the adding to what he would have, or to what he has, not by adding more to his condition, but rather by subtracting of his desires, and so to make his desires and condition to be even and equal. A carnal heart knows no way to be Contented but this, I have such and such an estate, and if I had this added to it, and the other comfort added that now I have not, then I should be Contented. It may be I have lost my estate, if I could have but that given to me so as to make up my loss, then I should be a contented man. But now Contentment does not come in that way, it comes not in I say by the adding to what you want, but by the subtracting of your desires. It is all one to a Christian, either that I

may get up unto what I would have, or get my desires down to what I have. Either that I may attain to what I do desire, or bring down my desires to what I have already attained; my estate is the same, for it is as suitable to me to bring my desire down to my condition, as it is to raise up my condition to my desire. Now I say a heart that has no grace, and is not instructed in this Mystery of Contentment, knows no way to get Contentment, but to have his estate raised up to his desires; but the other has another way to Contentment, that is, He can bring his desires down to his estate, and so he does attain to his Contentment. So the Lord fashions the hearts of the Children of men. Now if the heart of a man be fashioned to his condition, he may have as much contentment as if his condition be fashioned to his heart. Some men have a mighty large heart, but they have a strait condition, and they can never have Contentment when their hearts are big and their condition is little. But now though a man cannot bring his condition to be as big as his heart, yet if he can bring his heart to be as little as his condition, to bring them even, from thence is Contentment. The world is infinitely deceived in this, To think that Contentment lies in having more than they have. Here lies the bottom and root of all Contentment, when there is an evenness and proportion between our hearts and our conditions; and that is the reason that many that are godly men that are in a low condition live more sweet and comfortable lives than those that are richer. Contentment is not always clothed with silk, and purple, and velvets, but Contentment is sometimes in a russet sure, in a mean condition as well as in a higher. And many men that sometimes have had great estates, and God has brought them into a lower condition, they have had more Contentment in that condition than the other. Now how can that

possibly be? Thus easily, For if you did but understand the root of Contentment, it consists in the suitableness and proportion of the spirit of a man to his estate, and the evenness, when one end is not longer and bigger than another. The heart is contented, there is comfort in that condition. Now let God give a man never so great riches, yet if the Lord gives him up to the pride of his heart, he will never be contented. But now, let God bring any one into a mean condition, and then let God but fashion and suit his heart to that condition and he will be content. As now in a man's going, Suppose a man had a mighty long leg, and his other leg were short, why though one of his legs be longer than ordinary yet he could not go so well as a man that has both his legs shorter than he. I compare a long leg, when one is longer than another, to a man that has a high condition, and is very rich, and a great man in the world, but he has a great proud heart too, and that is longer and larger than his condition. Now this man cannot but be troubled in his condition. Now another man that is in a mean condition, his condition is low, and his heart is low too; so that his heart and his condition is both even together, and this man goes on with more ease abundantly than the other does. So that now a gracious heart works after this manner, The Lord has been pleased to bring down my condition, now if the Lord bring down my heart and make it even with my condition, then I am well enough. And so when God brings down his condition, he does not so much labor to raise up his condition again as to bring down his heart to his condition. The Heathens themselves they had a little glimpse of this; they could say, That the best riches that is, it is the poverty of desires. That is a speech of a Heathen, that is, If a man or woman have their desires cut short, and have no large desires, that man and woman

they are rich when they can bring their desires to be but low. So this is the Art of Contentment. Not to seek to add to our conditions, but to subtract from our desires. Another has this, The way to be rich, says he, it is not by increasing of wealth, but by diminishing of our desires. For certainly that man or woman is a rich man or woman that has their desires satisfied. Now a contented man has his desires satisfied, God satisfies his desires, that is, all considered, he is satisfied in his condition for the present to be the best condition, and so he comes to this Contentment by way of Subtraction, and not Addition.

The Third thing in the Art of Contentment is this, **A Christian comes to Contentment, not so much by getting off his burden that is upon him, as by the adding another burden to him.** This is a way that flesh and blood has little skill in. You will say how is this? In this manner, are you afflicted, and is there a great load and burden upon you by reason of your affliction? You think there is no way in the world to get Contentment, but, O that this burden were but off, O it is a heavy load, and few know what a burden I have! What do you think there is no way for the Contentment of your spirit but this getting off your burden? O you are deceived, the way of Contentment is to add another burden, that is, labor to load and burden your heart with your sin, and the heavier the burden of your sin is to your heart, the lighter will the burden of your affliction be to your soul, and so shall you come to be Content. If your burden were lightened that would content you, you think there is no way to lighten it but to get it off. But you are deceived, for if you can get your heart to be more burdened with your sin, you will be less burdened with your afflictions. You will say this is a strange way, for a man or woman to get ease to

their condition, when they are burdened, to lay a greater burden upon them? You think there is no other way when you are afflicted, but to be jolly and merry, and get into company. Oh no, you are deceived, your burden will come again. Alas this is a poor way to get his spirit quieted, poor man, the burden will be upon him again. But if you would have your burden light, if you can get alone and examine your heart for your sin, and charge your soul with your sin. If your burden be in your estate, for the abuse of it, or if it be a burden upon your body, for the abuse of your health, and strength, and the abuse of any mercies that now the Lord has taken away from you, you have not honored God with those mercies that you have had, but you have walked wantonly and carelessly. And so fall a bemoaning your sin before the Lord, and you shall quickly find the burden of your affliction to be lighter than it was before. Do but try this piece of skill and art, to get your souls contented with any low condition that God puts you into. Many times in a family, when any affliction befalls them, Oh what a deal of discontentment is there between man and wife, if crossed in their estates at Land, or ill news from Sea, or those that they trusted are broke and the like, and perhaps somewhat in the family falls cross between man and wife, or in reference to the children or servants, and there is nothing but brabbling and discontent among them. Now they many times are burdened with their own discontent, and perhaps will say one to another, this life is very uncomfortable for us to live thus discontented so as we do. But have you ever tried this way, the husband and the wife? Have you ever got alone and said, Come, Oh let us go and humble our souls before God together, let us go into our chamber and humble our souls before God for our sin, whereby we have abused those mercies that God has taken

away from us, and we have provoked God against us. Oh let us charge ourselves with our sin, and be humbled before the Lord together. Have you tried such a way as this is? Oh you would find the cloud would be taken away, and the Sun would shine in upon you, and you would have a great deal more Contentment than ever yet you had. If a man's estate be broken, either by plunderers, or any other way; now how shall this man have Contentment? How? By the breaking of his heart. God has broken your estate, Oh seek to him for the breaking of your heart likewise. Indeed a broken estate, and a whole heart, a hard heart, will not join together, there will be no Contentment. But a broken estate, and a broken heart, will so suit together, as there will be more Contentment than there was before. Add therefore to the breaking of your estate, the breaking of your heart what you can, and that is the way to be Contented in a Christian manner, which is the Third Mystery in Christian Contentment.

The fourth thing is this, **It is not so much the removing of the affliction that is upon us, as the changing of the affliction, the Metamorphosing of the affliction, when it is quite turned and changed into another thing:** I mean in regard of the use of it, though for the matter the affliction abide still. The way of Contentment to a carnal heart it is only the removing of the affliction, Oh that it may be gone. No but says a gracious heart, God hath taught me a way for Contentment though the affliction shall continue still for the matter of it. But there is a virtue of grace to turn this affliction into good; it takes away but only the sting and poison of it. As now, Suppose poverty, A man's estate is lost; well, is there no way to be contented till your estate be made up again? Till your poverty be removed? Yes, certainly Christianity

would teach Contentment, though poverty continues yet it will teach you how to turn your poverty to spiritual riches; that you shall be poor still for your outward estate; but this shall be altered, whereas before it was once a natural evil to you, it comes now to be turned into a spiritual benefit to you; and so you come to be content. It is a speech of **Ambrose**, Even **poverty it's self it is riches unto holy men**: Godly men do make their poverty turn to be riches, they get more riches out of their poverty than ever they get out of their revenues, out of all their trading in this world they never had such incomes as they have had out of their poverty; this a carnal heart will think strange that a man shall make poverty to be the most gainful trade that ever he had in the world. I am persuaded that many Christians have found it so, that they have got more good by their poverty than ever they got by all their riches. You find it in Scripture, therefore think not this strange that I am speaking of. You do not find any one Godly man that came out of an affliction worse than when he came into it, though for a while he was shaken, yet at last he was better for an affliction. But a great many Godly men you find have been worse for their prosperity, scarce one Godly man that you read in Scripture of but was worse for prosperity (except **Daniel** and **Nehemiah**, I do not read of any hurt they got by their prosperity that they had) scarce (I think) is any one example of any Godly man, but was rather worse for his prosperity than better. So that you see it is no such strange thing, neither to one that is gracious that they shall get good by their affliction. **Luther** has such an expression in his Comment upon the fifth Chapter of the **Galatians**; in the 17th verse in his Comment upon that place says, **A Christian becomes a mighty worker and a wonderful creator**, that is

(says he) to create out of heaviness joy, out of terror comfort, out of sin righteousness, out of death life, and brings light out of darkness. It was God's prerogative and great power, his creating power to command the light to shine out of darkness. Now a Christian is partaker of the divine nature, so the scripture says, Grace it is part of the Divine Nature, and being part of the Divine Nature it has an impression of God's Omnipotent power that is, to create light out of darkness, to bring good out of evil, now by this way a Christian comes to be content. God hath given a Christian such a virtue, as can turn affliction into mercies, can turn darkness into light; if a man had the power that Christ had when the water pots were filled, he could by a word turn the water into wine; if you that have nothing but water to drink, yet if you had a power to turn it into wine then you may be contented. Certainly a Christian has received this power from God, to work thus miraculously; it is the nature of grace to turn water into wine, that is, to turn the water of your affliction, into the wine of heavenly consolation. If you understand this in a carnal way, I know it will be ridiculous for a Minister to speak thus before you, and many carnal people are ready to make such expressions as these to be ridiculous, understanding them in a carnal way: Just as **Nicodemus** in the third of **John**, **What can a man be born when he is old, can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?** So when we speak of grace that it can turn water into wine, and turn poverty into riches, and make poverty a gainful trade, says a carnal heart, Let them have that trade if they will, and let them have water to drink, and see if they can turn it into wine. Oh take heed you speak not in a scornful way of the ways of God; grace has the power to turn afflictions into mercies. Two men shall have one

affliction, and to one man it shall be as gall and wormwood, and it shall be wine, and honey, and delightfulness, and joy, and advantage, and riches, to another. This is the mystery of Contentment, not so much by removing the evil, as by Metamorphosing the evil by changing the evil into good.

The Fifth thing is this, **A Christian comes to this Contentment by making up the wants of his condition, by the performance of the work of his condition.** This is the way of Contentment. There is such a condition that I am in, many wants, I want this and the other comfort, well, how shall I come to be satisfied and content? A carnal heart thinks this, I must have my wants made up or else it is impossible that I should be content. No, but says a gracious heart, What is the duty of the condition God hath put me into? Indeed my condition is changed, I was not long since in a prosperous condition, but God hath changed my condition: the Lord hath called me no more **Naomi**, but **Marah**; Now what am I to do? What can I think now, are those duties that God requires of me in the condition that he hath now put me into? And let me put forth my strength, in the performance of the duties of my present condition. Others they spend their thoughts in those things that shall disturb and disquiet them, and so they grow more and more discontented; yea, but let me spend my thoughts in thinking what my duty is, what is the duty of my present condition which I am in. O says a man whose condition is changed and he has lost his estate, Had I but my estate as I had heretofore, how would I use it to his glory! But God hath made me to see that I did not honor him with my estate as I ought to have done: Oh had I it again, I would do better than ever I did! But this may be but a temptation, therefore you should rather think, What doth God re-

quire of me in the condition I am now brought into? And you should labor to bring your heart to quiet and Contentment, by setting your soul on work about the duties of your present condition. And the truth is, I know nothing more available for the quieting of a Christian Soul, and getting Contentment than this, The setting your heart on work about the duties of the very present condition that now you are in, and take heed of your thoughts about other conditions as a mere temptation. I cannot compare the folly of men and women that think to get Contentment with their musing about other conditions better than to the way of Children; perhaps they are gotten upon a hill, and they look a good way off and see another hill, and they think if they were on the top of that, then they were able to touch the clouds with their fingers; but when they are on the top of that hill; alas then they are as far from the clouds, as they were before. So it is with many that think, If they were in such a condition, then I should have Contentment; and perhaps they get into that condition, then they are as far from Contentment as before. But then they think if they were in another condition, they would be contented, and then when they have got into that condition, they are still as far from Contentment as before. No, no, let me consider what is the duty of my present condition, and content my heart with this, and say, Well, though I am in a low condition, yet I am serving the counsels of God in that condition wherein I am; it is the counsel of God that hath brought me into this condition that I am in, and I desire to serve the counsel of God in that condition. There is a notable Scripture concerning **David**, it is said of him, That he served his Generation, after **David** had served his Generation according to the will of God, then he slept. It is a Speech of **Paul** concerning him, in **Acts**

13:36. So it is in your books, **After he had served his generation according to the will of God:** But now the word that is translated **will**, it is the **counsel of God**, and so it may be translated as well, **That after David in his generation had served God's counsel, then he fell asleep.** We ordinarily take the words thus, That **David served his generation**; that is, He did the work of his generation, that is to serve a man's generation. But it is more plain, if you read it thus, After **David** in his generation had served the Counsel of God, then **David** fell asleep. O that should be the care of a Christian to serve out God's Counsels. What is the Counsel of God? The condition that I am in, God doth put me into it by his own Counsel, the Counsel of his own will; Now I must serve God's Counsel in my generation, look what is the Counsel of God in my condition, I must look to serve that; and so I shall have my heart quieted for the present, and shall live and die peaceably, and comfortably, if I be careful to serve God's Counsel.

A sixth thing in the mystery of Contentment is this, **A gracious heart is contented by the melting of his will and desires into God's will and desires**, by this means he gets Contentment; and this is a mystery to a carnal heart. It is not by having his own desires satisfied as before, but by melting his will and desires into God's will. So that he comes to have (in one sense) his desires satisfied though he has not the thing that before he did desire, yet he comes to be satisfied in this, because he makes his will to be all one with God's will. This is a little higher degree than submitting to the will of God. You all say, you should submit to God's will; but a Christian has gotten beyond this; that is, he can make God's will and his to be the same. So it is said of believers, that they are joined to the Lord, and are one spirit, that is, look

what God's will is, I do not only see reason to submit to it, but God's will is my will. When the soul can make over (as it were) its will to God, it must needs then have Contentment. Others would fain get the thing they do desire, O but says a gracious heart, that that God would have, I would have too, I will not only yield to it, but I would have it too. A gracious heart has learned this art, not only to make the commanding will of God to be its own will, that is, what God commands me to do I will do it, but to make the providential will of God, and the operative will of God to be his will too. God commands this thing, which perhaps you that are Christians may have some skill in, but whatsoever God works, you must will as well as what God commands, you must make God's providential will, and his operative will, as well your will, as God's will, and so you must come to Contentment. Here a Christian makes over his will to God, and in making over his will to God, he has no other will but only God's. As suppose a man makes over his debt to another man, if that man that I owe the debt to, be satisfied and contented, I am satisfied because I have made it over to him, and I need not be discontented and say, my debt is not paid, and I am not satisfied, yes, you are satisfied, for he that you made over your debt to, he is satisfied. Just thus it is for all the world between God and a Christian, a Christian heart makes over his will to God, now then if God's will be satisfied, then I am satisfied, for I have then no will of mine own, it is melted into the will of God, for so that is the excellency of grace, grace does not only subject the will to God, but it does melt the will into God's will, so that they are now but one will. What a sweet satisfaction must the soul have then in this condition, when all is made over to God. You will say this is hard? I will express it a little more. A gracious heart must needs have satis-

faction this way, because godliness does teach him this, to see that his good is more in God than in himself, the good of my life, and comforts, and my happiness, and my glory, and my riches is more in God than it is in myself; (that perhaps we may speak too further, when we come to the lessons that are to be learned.) But upon this it is, that a gracious heart has Contentment, he does melt his will into God's, for says he, if God have glory, I have glory, God's glory is my glory, and therefore God's will is mine, if God have riches, then I have riches, if God be magnified, then I am magnified, if God be satisfied, then I am satisfied, God's wisdom and holiness is mine, and therefore his will must needs be mine, and my will must needs be his. Here is the art of a Christian's Contentment, he melts his will into the will of God, and makes over his will to God, **Oh Lord thou shalt choose our inheritance for us. Psalm 73.**

The Seventh thing in the Art of Contentment is this, **The Mystery consists not so much by bringing any thing without, to make my condition more comfortable, as to purge out something that is within.** The men of the world now, when they would have Contentment, and want anything, Oh they must have somewhat from without to content them; but says a godly man, let me get something out that is in already, and then I shall come to Contentment. As suppose a man has an aguish humor that makes his drink taste bitter, now says he, You must put some sugar into my drink, and his wife puts in some, and yet the drink tastes bitter, Why? Because the bitterness comes from a bitter choleric humor within; but let the Physician come and give him a bitter potion to purge out the bitterness that is within, and then he can taste his drink well enough. Just thus it is with the men of the world, Oh such a condition is bitter, and if I could have such and

such a mercy added, to this mercy, then it would be sweet; now if God should put a spoonful or two of sugar in, it would be bitter still. But the way to Contentment is to purge out your lusts and bitter humors. **James 4:1. From whence are wars, and strifes, are they not from your lusts that are within you?** They are not so much from things without, but from within; as sometimes I have said, it is not all the storms that are abroad that can make an earthquake, but the vapors that are got within: and so if those lusts that are within, in your heart, if they were got out, your condition would be a contented condition. These are the mysterious ways of godliness, that the men of the world never think of; when did you ever think of such a way as this is, for to go and purge out the distempers of your heart that are within? Here are Seven particulars now named, there were a great many more that I had thought of, and now without the understanding of these things, and the practice of them, you will never come to a true Contentation in your way, Oh you will be bunglers in this trade of Christianity; but the right perceiving of these things, will help you to be instructed in it as in a Mystery.

SERMON 3



Philippians 4.11._ For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

The Mystery of Contentment will appear yet further. A gracious heart gets Contentment in a mysterious way, a way that the world is not acquainted with.

Eighthly, **He lives upon the dew of God's blessing.** It is the similitude of one **Adrian Junius** setting out a Contented man by a **Grasshopper**, leaping and skipping up and down, that lives upon the dew, and he has this motto, **I am content with what I have, and hope for better.** A grasshopper does not live upon the grass as other things do, you cannot know what it feeds upon, other things though as little as grasshoppers, yet feed upon seeds or little flies, and such things, but the grasshopper, you know not what it feeds upon. So a Christian can get food that the world knows not of, in a secret way is a Christian fed by the dew of the blessing of God, a poor man or woman that has but a little which has grace, lives a more contented life than his rich neighbor that has a great deal coming in, we find it so ordinarily, so that though they have but a little, yet they have a secret blessing of God going in it, that they are not able to express to any other man; if you

would come to them and say; How comes it that you live so comfortably as you do? they are not able to tell you what they have, but they find there is a sweetness in what they do enjoy, and they know this by experience that they never had such sweetness in former times, that though they had more plenty in former times than now they have, yet they know they had not such sweetness; but how this comes they cannot tell; and we may show some particulars, even in that godly men do enjoy, that make their condition to be sweet.

As now, take these four or five particulars that godly men find Contentment in what they have, though it be never so little.

1. Because in what he has, he has the love of God, he has God's love to him in what he has: If a King should send a piece of meat from his own table, it is a great deal more comfortable to a Courtier than if he had twenty dishes at ordinary allowance, if the King send but any little thing and say, Go and carry this to such a man as a token of my love, Oh how delightful is that unto him? Are your husbands at Sea and send you a token of their love, it is more than forty times so much that you have in your houses already: Every good thing the people of God do enjoy, they enjoy it in God's love, as a token of God's love, and coming from God's eternal love unto them, and this must needs be very sweet unto them.

2. What they have it is sanctified to them for good; Other men have what they enjoy in a way of common providence, but the Saints in a special way; Others have what they have and there is all, they have meat, and drink, and houses, and clothes, and money and that's all. But a gracious heart finds contentment in this, I have it, and I have a sanctified use of it too; I find God going along with what I have to draw my heart nearer to him, and

sanctify my heart to him: If I find my heart drawn nearer to God by what I enjoy; it is more a great deal than if I have it without any sanctifying my heart by it; there is a secret dew that goes along with it, there is the dew of God's love in it, and the dew of sanctification.

3. **A gracious heart what he has he has it upon free-cost, he is not like to be called to pay for what he has:** The difference between what a godly man has; and a wicked man is in this: A godly man is as a child in an Inn; an Innkeeper has his child in his house, and the Father provides his diet, and lodging, and what is fit for him; Now there comes a stranger, and the stranger has dinner and supper provided, and lodging, but the stranger must pay for all; it may be the child's fare is meaner than the fare of the stranger, the stranger has boiled, and roast and baked; but he must pay for it, there must come a reckoning for it. Just thus it is, many of God's people have but mean fare; but God as a father provides it, and it is on free-cost, and they must not pay for what they have, it is paid for before; but the wicked in all their pomp, and pride, and bravery, they have what they call for, but there must come a reckoning for all, they must pay for all in the conclusion, and is it not better to have a little upon free cost, than to come to have all to pay for? Grace does show a man that what he has, he has it on free cost, from God as from a Father, and therefore must needs be very sweet.

Fourthly, A godly man may very well be content, though he has but little, **For what he has he has it by right of Jesus Christ, by the purchase of Jesus Christ,** he has a right to it, another manner of right to what he has, than any wicked man can have to what he has; a wicked man has these outward things; I do not say

they are usurpers of what they have, but they have a right to it, and that before God, but how? it is a right by mere donation, that is, God by his free bounty does give it to them; but the right that the Saints have, it is a right of purchase, it is paid for, and it is their own, and they may in a holy manner, and holy way, challenge whatsoever they have need of. We cannot express the right of a holy man, the difference between his right, and the right of the wicked more fully than by this similitude; a Malefactor that is condemned to die, yet he has by favor granted to him his supper provided over night, and you cannot say though the Malefactor has forfeited all his right to all things, to every bit of bread, yet if he shall have a supper granted to him he does not steal it, though all his right is forfeited by his fault, after he is once condemned he has no right to any thing; so it is with the wicked, they have forfeited all their right to all comforts in this world, they are condemned by God as Malefactors and are going to execution; but if God will in his bounty give them something to preserve them here in the world, they cannot be said to be thieves or robbers: Now a man has granted to him a supper over night before his execution, but is that like the supper that he was wont to have in his own house, when he ate his own bread, and had his wife and children about him? Oh a dish of green herbs at home would be a great deal better than any dainties in such a supper as that is; but now a child of God has not a right merely by donation, but what he has it is his own through the purchase of Christ; every bit of bread that you eat, if you are a godly man or woman, Jesus Christ has bought it for you, you go to market and buy your meat and drink with your money, but know that before you have bought it, or paid money, Christ has bought it at the hand of God the Father with his blood, you have it at the

hands of men for money, but Christ has bought it at the hand of his Father by his blood: And certainly it is a great deal better and sweeter now though it be but a little.

Fifthly, There is another thing that shows the sweetness that there is in that little that the Saints have, by which they come to have contentment, whereas others cannot; that is, **Every little that they have, it is but as an earnest penny of all the glory that is reserved for them, it is given them by God, but as the Fore-runner of those eternal mercies that the Lord intends for them;** now if a man has but twelve pence given to him as an earnest penny for some great possession that he must have; is not that better than if he had forty pounds given unto him otherwise? So every comfort that the Saints have in this world, it is an earnest penny to them of those eternal mercies that the Lord has provided for them; as every affliction that the wicked have here it is but the beginning of sorrows, and fore-runner of those eternal sorrows that they are like to have hereafter in Hell; so every comfort you have is a fore-runner of those eternal mercies you shall have with God in Heaven; not only the consolations of God's Spirit are the fore-runners of those eternal comforts you shall have in Heaven; but when you sit at your Table, and rejoice with your wife and children and friends, you may look upon every one of those but as a fore-runner, yea the very earnest-penny of eternal life unto you. Now then if this be so, no marvel though a Christian be contented; (this is a mystery to the wicked:) I have what I have out of the love of God, and I have it sanctified to me by God, and I have it of free-cost from God by the purchase of the blood of Jesus Christ, and I have it as a fore-runner of those eternal mercies that are reserved for me; and in this my soul rejoices,

There is a secret dew of God's goodness, and blessing upon him in his estate that others have not; and by all this you may see the meaning of that Scripture, **Proverbs 16.8. Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right.** A man that has but a little, yet if he has it with righteousness, it is better than a great deal without right; yea, better than the great revenues of the wicked: so you have it in another Scripture; That is the next Particular in Christian Contentment; the mystery is in this, That he lives upon the dew of God's blessing, in all the good things that he does enjoy.

The Ninth thing wherein the mystery of Christian Contentment consists, is this, **Not only the good things that he has, he has the dew of God's blessing in them, and they are very sweet to him; but all the afflictions, all the evils that do befall him he can see love in them all: And can enjoy the sweetness of love in his afflictions, as well as in his mercies;** yea the truth is, the afflictions of God's people comes from the same Eternal love that Jesus Christ did come from. And that speech of **Jerome, He is a happy man that is beaten when the stroke is a stroke of love.** All God's strokes are strokes of love and mercy, all God's ways are mercy and truth, to those that fear him and love him, **Psalm 25.10. The ways of God,** the ways of affliction, as well as the ways of prosperity, are mercy and love to him. Grace gives a man an eye, a piercing eye to pierce into the Counsels of God, those Eternal Counsels of God for good unto him, even in his afflictions, to see the love of God in every affliction as well as in prosperity. Now this is a mystery to a carnal heart, they can see no such thing, perhaps they think God loves them when he prospers them, and makes them rich; but they think God loves

them not when he does afflict them, that is a mystery; but grace instructs men in that mystery, grace enables men to see love in the very frowns of God's face, and so comes to receive contentment.

In the tenth place, a godly man has contentment in the way of a mystery, **because as he sees all his afflictions come from the same love that Jesus Christ did; so he sees them all sanctified in Jesus Christ, sanctified as a Mediator.** He sees (I say) all the sting and venom, and poison of them all to be taken out by the virtue of Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and Man. As now for instance, thus, a Christian when he would have contentment falls a-working, what is my affliction? Is it poverty that God strikes me withal? Jesus Christ had not a house to hide his head in; the fowls of the air had nests, and the foxes had holes, but the Son of Man not a hole to hide his head in. Now my poverty is sanctified by Christ's poverty; I can see by faith the curse and sting and venom of my poverty, taken out by the poverty of Jesus Christ. Christ Jesus he was poor in this world to deliver me from the curse of my poverty, that it should not be cursed unto me; then my poverty is not afflictive, if I can be contented in such a condition. That is the way, not to stand and repine, because I have not what others have, no, but I am poor, and Christ was therefore poor that he might bless my poverty to me.

And so again, am I disgraced, dishonoured, is my good name taken away? Why Jesus Christ he had dishonour put upon him; he was called **Beelzebub**, and a Samaritan, and they said he had a devil in him. All the foul aspersions that could be were cast upon Jesus Christ, and this was for me, that I might have the disgrace that is cast upon me to be sanctified unto me, whereas another man his heart is overwhelmed with dishonour, and disgrace, and

he goes this way to work to get contentment. Perhaps if you be spoken ill of, you have no other way to ease and right yourselves, but if they do rail upon you, you will rail upon them again; and thus you think to ease yourselves. Oh but a Christian has another manner of way to ease himself. Others rail and speak ill of me, but did they not rail upon Jesus Christ, and speak ill of him? And what am I in comparison of Christ? And the subjection of Christ to such an evil, it was for me, that though such a thing should come upon me, I might know that the curse of it is taken from me through Christ's subjection to that evil; thus a Christian can be contented when anybody speaks ill of him. Now this is a mystery to you to get contentment after such a manner as this is. So if men jeer and scoff at you, did they not do so to Jesus Christ? They jeered and scoffed at him, and that when he was in his greatest extremity upon the Cross. Say they, Here is the King of the Jews, and they bowed the knee, and said hail King of the Jews, and put a reed into his hand, and mocked him. Now I get contentment in the midst of scorns and jeers, by considering that Christ was scorned, and by acting faith upon that which Christ did suffer for me. So, am I in great pain of my body? Jesus Christ had as great pain upon his body as I have, though it is true he had not such kind of sicknesses as we have, but yet he had as great pain and tortures in his body, and that that was deadly to him, as well as any sickness is to us. The exercising of faith upon what Christ did endure, that is the way to get contentment in the midst of our pains. One lies vexing and fretting, and cannot bear his pain; are you a Christian? Have you ever tried this way of getting contentment, to act your faith upon all the pains and sufferings that Jesus Christ did suffer? This would be the way of contentment, and a Christian gets contentment under

pains after this manner. Sometimes one that is very godly and gracious, you shall have them lie under grievous pains and extremities very cheerfully, and you wonder at it; this is the way that he gets it, he gets it by acting his faith upon what pains Jesus Christ did suffer. You are afraid of death; the way to get contentment, it is by exercising your faith upon the death of Jesus Christ. Yea, it may be you have inward troubles in your soul, and God withdraws himself from you, but still your faith is to be exercised upon the sufferings that Jesus Christ endured in his soul. He poured forth his soul before God, then when he sweat drops of water and blood, he was in an agony in his very spirit, and he found even God himself in a way to forsake him. Now the acting your faith upon Jesus Christ thus, brings contentment, and is not this a mystery to carnal hearts? A gracious heart finds contentment in a way of a mystery. No marvel though Saint **Paul** says, **I am instructed in a Mystery, to be contented in whatsoever condition I am in.**

In the eleventh place, there is yet a further mystery (for this I hope you will find a very useful point unto you) and you will see what a plain way there is, (before we have done) for one that is skilled in religion to get contentment, though it is hard for one that is carnal. I say the eleventh mystery in contentment is this, **A gracious heart has contentment by fetching strength from Jesus Christ, he is able to bear his burden by fetching strength from another.** Now this is a riddle indeed, and it would be a ridiculous thing to be spoken of in the schools of philosophers, to say, if there be a burden upon you, you must fetch strength from another. Indeed to have another to come and stand under the burden, that way they would know, but that you shall be strengthened by another's strength, that is not near you to your

outward view, that they would think ridiculous. But now a Christian finds satisfaction in every condition by getting strength from another, by going out of itself to Jesus Christ, and by faith acting upon Christ, and bringing the strength of Jesus Christ into its own soul, and thereby is enabled to bear whatsoever God lays upon him, by the strength that he finds from Jesus Christ. Of his fullness do we receive grace for grace; there is strength in Christ not only to sanctify and save us, but strength to support us under all our burdens and afflictions. And Christ expects that when we are under any burden that we should act our faith upon him to draw virtue and strength from him. The acting of faith that is the great grace that is to be acted under afflictions; it is true, other graces should be acted, but the grace of faith it draws strength from Christ, in looking upon him that has the fullness of all strength to be conveyed into the hearts of all believers. Now if a man has a burden upon him, yet if he can have strength added to him, if the burden be doubled, yet if he can have his strength to be tripled, the burden will not be heavier but lighter than it was before to our natural strength. Indeed our afflictions may be heavy, and we cry out, oh we cannot bear them, we cannot bear such an affliction. Though you cannot tell how to bear it with your own strength, yet what can you tell what you shall do with the strength of Jesus Christ? You say you cannot bear it, why do you think that Christ could not bear it? If Christ could bear it, why may not you come to bear it? You will say, Can I have the strength of Christ? Yea, that is made over to you by faith, so the Scripture says **That the Lord is our strength**, God himself is our strength, and Christ is our strength, divers Scriptures we have that way; that Christ's strength is yours, made over to you, that so you may be

able to bear whatsoever lies upon you. And therefore we find such a strange kind of expression in the Epistle of Saint **Paul** to the Colossians, praying for the Saints, **that they might be strengthened with all might according unto his glorious power,** unto what? **Unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness. Strengthened with all might, according to the power of God, the glorious power of God, unto all patience, and long-suffering with joyfulness.** You may not therefore be content with a little strength, so that you are able to bear what a man might bear by the strength of reason and nature. But to be strengthened with all might, according to the glorious power of God, unto all patience, and to all long suffering. Oh you that are now under very heavy and sad afflictions more than ordinary, look upon this Scripture, and consider how this Scripture is made good in you, why may you not have this Scripture made good in you, if you be godly? You should not be quiet in your own spirits, except that you in some measure do get this Scripture to be made good in you; so that you may with some comfort say, through God's mercy I find that strength coming into me that is here spoken of in this Scripture. You should labour when you are under any great affliction (you that are Godly) to walk so, that others may see such a Scripture made good in you. Here is the glorious power of God that does strengthen his servants to all long suffering; and that with joyfulness. Alas it may be you do not exercise so much patience, as a wise man or a wise woman that has but natural reason. But where is the power of God, the glorious power of God? Where is the strengthening with all might, unto all long-suffering and patience and that with joyfulness? It is true, the spirit of a man may be able to sustain his infirmities, may be able to sustain

and keep up his spirits, the natural spirit of a man, but much more then when this spirit is acted with grace and holiness, and when it is filled with the strength of Jesus Christ; this is the way of a godly man's getting contentment, the mystery of it, it is by fetching in strength from Jesus Christ.

Twelfthly, another mystery, that there is in it, it is, **That a godly heart, enjoys much of God in every thing it has, and does know how to make up all wants in God himself.** That is another mystery, he has God in what he has; that I spoke to somewhat before, in showing the dew of God's blessing in what he has, for God is able to let out a great deal of his power in little things, and therefore the miracles that God has wrought, have been as much in little things as in great. Now as God lets out a great deal of his power in working miracles in smaller things, so he lets out a great deal of godness and mercy, in comforting and rejoicing the hearts of his people in little things, as well as in great. There may be as much riches in a pearl as in a great deal of lumber; but now this is a distinct thing.

Further, a gracious heart as he lives upon God's dew in a little that he has, so when that little that he has shall be taken from him, what shall he do then? Then you will say, If a man have nothing, there can be nothing fetched out of nothing: But if the children of God have their little taken from them, they can make up all their wants in God himself: Such a man is a poor man, the plunderers came and took away all that he had, what shall he do then when all is gone? But when all is gone, there is an art and skill that godliness teaches to make up all those losses in God. Many men that have their houses burnt, go about gathering, and so get up by many hands a little; but a godly man knows whither to go to get up

all, even in God himself, so as he shall enjoy the quintessence of the same good and comfort as he had before, for a Godly man does not live so much in himself as he lives in God. This is now a Mystery to a Carnal heart, I say a gracious man does not live so much in himself as he does in God, he lives in God continually; if there be anything cut off from the stream he knows how to go to the fountain, and makes up all there; God is his all in all while he lives, I say it is God that is his all in all. Am I not to you (said **Elkanah** to **Hannah**) instead of ten Children? So says God to a gracious heart, you want this, your estate is plundered: Why? Am I not to you instead of ten houses, and ten shops, I am to you instead of All, yet not only instead of All, but come to me, and you shall have all again in me. This indeed is an excellent Art, to be able to draw from God what it had before in the creature. Christian, how did you enjoy Comfort before? Was the creature any other to you but a Conduit, a pipe that did convey God's goodness to you? The pipe is cut off says God, come to me the Fountain and drink immediately: though the beams be taken away, yet the Sun remains the same in the firmament as ever it was. What is that that satisfies God himself, but because he does enjoy all fullness in himself, so he comes to have satisfaction in himself; now if you enjoy God to be your portion, if your soul can say with the Church in **Lamentations 3:24: The Lord is my portion, says my soul**, why should you not be satisfied and contented as God? God is contented, he is in eternal Contentment in himself; now if you have that God to be your portion, why should you not be contented with him alone? God is contented with himself alone, if you have him you may be Contented with him alone, and it may be, that is the reason that your outward comforts are taken from you, that God

may be All in All to you. It may be whilst you had these things here they did share with God in your affection, a great part of the stream of your affection ran that way, now God would have the full stream run to him. As you know it is with a man that has water come to his house, and if there be several pipes, upon which he finds the water comes but scantily into his wash-house, he will rather stop the other pipes that he may have all the water come in where he would have it. So here it may be God had some stream of your affection that ran to him then when you did enjoy these things; yea, but a great deal was let out to the Creature, a great deal of your affections did run waste; now the Lord would not have the affections of his Children to run waste, he does not care for other men's affections, but for yours they are precious, and God would not have them to run waste, therefore does he cut off your other pipes that your heart might run wholly upon him. As if you have Children, because you have servants perhaps do feed them and give them things, you perceive that your servants do steal away the hearts of your Children, you would hardly be able to bear it, you would be ready to turn away such a servant, and when the servant is gone, the Child is at a great loss, it has not the nurse; but the father or mother intends by her putting away, that the affections of the Child might run the more strongly towards himself, or herself. And what loss has the Child that the affections that ran in a rough channel before towards the servant, it runs now towards the mother? So those affections that run towards the creature, God would have them run towards himself, that so he may be All in All to you here in this world. And a gracious heart can indeed tell how to enjoy God to be All in All to him: that is the happiness of Heaven, to have God to be All in All. The Saints in Heaven have

not houses, and lands, and money, and meat and drink, and clothes, you will say, they do not need them; why do they not? It is because God is All in All to them immediately: now while you live in this world, you may come to enjoy much of God, you may have much of heaven; while we live in this life we may come to enjoy much of the very life that there is in Heaven, and what is that but the enjoyment of God to be All in All to us? There is one text in the **Revelation** that speaks of the glorious condition of the Church that is like to be even here in this world, **Revelation 21:21. And I saw no Temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb are the Temple of it; and the City had no need of the Sun, neither of the Moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.** They had no need of the Sun or Moon. It speaks of such a glorious condition that the Church is like to be in here in this world; this does not speak of Heaven: and that appears plainly that this is not spoken of Heaven, but of a glorious estate that the Church shall be in here, in this world, for it follows presently in the 24th and 26th verse, **And they** (speaking of the Kings of the earth): **And the Kings of the Earth do bring their glory and honour unto it.** Why, the Kings of the Earth shall not bring their glory and honour into Heaven; but this is such a time, when the Kings of the Earth shall bring their glory and honour to the Church. And in the 26th verse: **And they shall bring the glory and honour of the Nations into it;** therefore it must needs be meant here in this world and not in Heaven. Now if there be such a time here in this world, that God shall be All in All, that in comparison there shall be no such need of creatures as now there is, then the Saints shall labor to live as near that life as possibly they can,

that is, To make up All in God. Oh that you would but mind this Mystery, that it may be a reality to the hearts of the Saints in such times as these are, they would find this privilege, that they get by Grace, to be worth thousands of worlds. Hence is that of **Jacob** that I mentioned in another case, it is remarkable, and comes in fully here, in **Genesis** 33. That notable speech of **Jacob** when his brother **Esau** did meet him, you find in one place, that **Esau** he refused **Jacob's** present, in the 8th verse, when **Jacob** gave his present to him, he refused it, and told **Jacob** that he had enough. **What do you mean by all this drove which I meet? And he said, These are to find grace in your sight: And Esau said, I have enough.** Now in the 11th verse, there **Jacob** urges it still, (and said **Jacob**) **I beseech you take it for I have enough.** Now in your books it is the same in English, **I have enough** (said **Esau**) and **I have enough** (said **Jacob**); but in the Hebrew, **Jacob's** word is different from **Esau's**, **Jacob's** word signifies, **I have all things**, and yet **Jacob** was poorer than **Esau**. Oh this should be a shame to us, that an **Esau** should say, I have enough; but now a Christian should say, I have not only enough, but **I have all**: how has he all? Because he has God that is All. And it was a notable speech of one, **He has all things, that has him that has all things.** Surely you have all things, because you have him **for your portion** who has all things: God has all things in himself, and you have God to be yours for your portion, and in that you have all, and this is the Mystery of Contentment; It makes up all wants in God, this is that that the men of the world have little skill in.

Now I have diverse other things yet to open in the Mystery of Contentment. I should show likewise that a godly man not only makes up all in God, but finds enough in himself to make up all, to make up all in himself, not from himself, but in himself, and that may seem to be stranger than the other: to make up all in God is somewhat, nay to make up all in himself, not from himself, but in himself, that is, a gracious heart has so much of God within himself, that he has enough there to make up all his wants that are without. In **Proverbs 14:14: A good man shall be satisfied from himself**, from that that is within himself, that is the meaning, a gracious man he has a bird within his own bosom that makes him melody enough, though he wants music. **The Kingdom of heaven is within you**: In **Luke 17:21: He has a Kingdom within him, and a Kingdom of God**: you see him spoken ill of abroad, he has a conscience within him that makes up the want of a name and credit, that is instead of a thousand witnesses.

Thirteenth, **A gracious heart fetches Contentment from the Covenant that God has made with him**. Now this is a way of fetching Contentment that the men of the world know not of; they can fetch contentment, if they have the creature to satisfy them: But to fetch contentment from the Covenant of grace that they have little skill in. I should here have opened two things, First, how to fetch Contentment from the Covenant of grace in general. (But I shall speak to that in the next Sermon and now only a word to the Second) Secondly, how he fetches Contentment from the particular branches of the Covenant, that is, from the particular promises that he has for the supplying of every particular want: there is no condition that a Godly man or woman can be in, but there is some promise or other in the Scripture to help him in that

condition. And that's the way of his Contentment, to go out to the promises, and fetch from the promise, that that may supply. But this is but a dry business to a carnal heart; but it's the most real thing in the world to a gracious heart; when he finds want of Contentment he repairs to the Promise, and the Covenant; and falls a pleading the promises that God has made. As I should have shown several promises that God has made let the affliction be what it will, I will but only mention one that is the saddest affliction of all; in case of the Visitation, and the Plague. In **Psalm 91**, now those that cannot have their friends come to them by reason of the plague, and that cannot have other comforts, in other afflictions they might have their friends and other things to comfort them, but in that they cannot, **Psalm 21:10. There shall no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come nigh your dwelling;** then here is a promise for the pestilence in the 5th and 6th verses, this is a Scripture to those that are in danger of it, you will say, this is a promise that the Plague shall not come nigh them, but mark these two are joined **There shall no evil befall you, neither shall the plague come nigh you;** the **evil of it** shall not come nigh you.

Objection. You will say, It does come to many godly men, and how can they make use of this Scripture, it is rather a Scripture that may trouble them, because here is a promise that it shall not come near them, and yet it does come near them as well as others.

Answer. First, this is the Answer I would give, the promises of outward deliverances that were made to the people of God in the time of the law, were to be understood then a great deal more literally, and fulfilled more literally than in the times of the Gospel. God makes it up otherwise with as much mercy. Though God made

a covenant of grace and eternal life in Christ with them, yet I think there was another Covenant too, that God speaks of as a distinct covenant for outward things, to deal with his people by according to their ways, either in outward prosperity, or in outward afflictions, more than now, in a more punctual, set way, than in the times of the Gospel. And therefore when the Children of Israel did but sin against God, they were sure to have public judgments to come upon them, and if they did well, always public mercies. The general constant way of God was to deal with the people of the Jews according as they did well or ill, (in an ordinary way,) with outward judgments, and outward mercies. But it is not so now in these times of the Gospel. We cannot bring such a certain conclusion, that God did deal so severely with men by such and such afflictions, that he will deal so with them now: and so, that they shall have outward prosperity as they had then. Therefore that is the first thing, for the understanding of this, and all other texts of that kind.

The Second Answer I would give is this, It may be their faith does not reach to this promise. And God brings many times many outward afflictions, because the faith of his people does not reach the promise, and that not only in the Old Testament, but in the times of the New Testament. **Zachariah's** time may be said to be in the time of the New Testament, when he was struck with dumbness because he did not believe, and that is given to be the cause why he was struck with dumbness. But you will say now, has faith warrant to believe deliverance, that it shall be fully delivered? I dare not say so, but it may act upon it, to believe that God will make it good his own way. Perhaps you have not done so much, and so upon that, this promise is not fulfilled to you.

Thirdly, When God does make such promises to his people, yet still it must be with this reservation, that God must have liberty to these three things.

1. That notwithstanding his promise, he will have liberty to make use of anything for your chastisement.

2. That he must have liberty, to make use of your estates, or liberties, or lives, for the furtherance of his own ends. If it be to be a stumbling block to wicked and ungodly men: God must have liberty, though he has made a promise to you he will not lose the property that he has in your estates and lives.

3. God must have so much liberty to make use of what you have, for to show that his ways are unsearchable, and his judgments past finding out, God reserves these three things in his hand still.

Objection. But you will say, What good then is there in such a promise that God makes to his people?

First; That you are under the protection of God more than others. But what comfort is this if it does befall me?

Answer. You have this comfort, that the evil of it shall be taken from you, that if God will make use of this affliction for other ends, yet he will do it so as he will make it up to you some other way. Perhaps you have given your children such a thing, but yet afterwards if you have use of that thing, you will come and say, I must have it. Why father, may the child say, you gave it me? But says the father I must have it, and I will make it up to you some other way. Now the child does not think that the father's love is ever a whit the less to him. So when there is any such promise as this is, that God by his promise gives you his protection, and yet

for all that such a thing befalls you, it is but as if the father should say, I gave you that indeed, but let me have it and I will make it up to you some other way that shall be as good. Says God, let me have your health and liberty, and life, and it shall be made up to you some other way.

Secondly, Whenever the Plague or Pestilence comes to those that are under such a promise, it is for some special and notable work, and God requires of them to search and examine in a special manner to find out his meaning. There is so much to be learned in the promise that God has made concerning this particular evil, that the people of God they may come to quiet and content their hearts in this affliction. I read in this Psalm that God has made a promise to his people, to deliver them from the Plague and Pestilence, and yet do I find it to come. It may be I have not made use of my faith in this promise heretofore. And if God does bring afflictions upon me, yet God will make it up some other way. God made a promise to deliver me, or at least to deliver me from all the evil of it. Now if this thing does befall me and yet I have a promise of God, certainly the evil of it is taken away. This promise tells me that if it does befall me yet it is for some notable end, and because God has use of my life, and intends to fetch about his glory some way that I know not of. And if he will come in a fatherly way of chastisement, yet I will be satisfied in the thing. So a Christian heart by reasoning out of the word, comes to satisfy his soul in the midst of such a heavy hand of God, and in such a distressed condition as that is. Now Carnal hearts they find not that power in the Word, that healing virtue that there is in the Word, to heal their distracted cares, and the troubles of their spirits. But now, those that are godly when they come to hear the Word they find out, that in the Word there is

as a plaster to all their wounds, and so they come to have ease and Contentment, in such conditions as are very grievous and miserable unto others. But now, for other particular promises, and more generally for the Covenant of grace, how, and in what mysterious way the Saints do work to fetch out Contentment and satisfaction to their souls, we shall refer to the next time.

SERMON 4



Philippians 4:11._ For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

— In the last Exercise we spoke of diverse things in the Mystery of Contentment, and in the close we spoke of two more, but we could not have time to open either of them. I shall open them a little more largely, and then proceed to some few more, and so to other things in the point.

That is the next then; a Christian heart has not only Contentment in God (and certainly, he who has God must have all; he who has Him who hath all, he has all), **but he is able to make up all his outward wants of creature-comforts from what he finds in himself:** That may seem to be more strange. It is true, perhaps we may convince men though they do not feel by experience what it is to make up all in God, yet we may convince them that if they have Him that hath all things, then they have all; for there is such a fullness in God, He being the infinite first-being of all things that may make up all their wants. But here is another thing that is further. I say a godly man can make up whatsoever he wants without the creature; he can make it up in himself, in the 14th of **Proverbs**, verse 14: **A good man is satisfied in him-**

self. As now, if he wants outward comforts, good cheer, feasting, a good conscience is a continual feast; he can make up the want of a feast by that peace he has in his own conscience. If he wants melody abroad, he has a bird within him that sings the most melodious songs that are in the world, and the most delightful. And then does he want honor? He has his own conscience witnessing for him, that is as a thousand witnesses; the Scripture says in the 17th of **Luke**, verse 21: **Neither shall they say, Lo here, or lo there, for behold the Kingdom of God is within you.** A Christian then, whatsoever he wants, he can make it up, for he has a Kingdom in himself; the Kingdom of God is within him. If one that is a King should meet with a great deal of trouble when he is abroad, yet he contents himself with this: I have a Kingdom of mine own. Now here it is said the Kingdom of God is within a man. Truly, upon this Scripture of the Kingdom of God being within, those that are learned, if they would but look into that comment upon the Gospel that we have of a learned man, they shall find a very strange conceit that he has about this very text. He confesses indeed it is unutterable, and so indeed it is. The Kingdom of God is within you; he makes it that there is such a presence of God and Christ within the soul of a man, that when the body dies, he says that the soul goes into God and Christ that is within him. The soul's going into God and Christ, and enjoying of that Communion with God and Christ that is within itself, that is Heaven to it (says he); he confesses he is not able to express himself, nor others cannot understand fully what he intends. But certainly for the present before death, there is a Kingdom of God within the soul, such a manifestation of God in the soul that is enough to content the heart of any godly man in the world. The Kingdom that he has now

within him, he shall not stay till afterwards, till he goes to Heaven, but certainly there is a Heaven in the soul of a godly man; he has Heaven already. Many times when you go to comfort your friends in their afflictions, you will say Heaven will pay for all; nay, you may certainly find Heaven pays for all already. There is a Heaven within the souls of the Saints, that is a certain truth; no soul shall ever come to Heaven, but that soul that has Heaven come to it first. When you die you hope you shall go to Heaven. But if you shall go to Heaven when you die, Heaven will come to you before you die. Now this is a great Mystery to have the Kingdom of Heaven in the soul; no man can know this but that soul that has it. That Heaven which is within the soul for the present (I say) it is like the white stone and the new name, that none but those that have it can understand it. It is a miserable condition my brethren to depend upon creatures altogether for our Contentment. You know that rich men account it a great happiness, if they need not go to buy things by the penny as others do; they have all things for pleasure or profit upon their own ground, and all their inheritance lies entire together; they have nobody comes within them, but they have all within themselves; there lies their happiness. Whereas other poorer people are fain to go from one market to another to provide them necessities, but yet great rich men they have sheep and cattle, corn and clothing, and all things else of their own within themselves, and herein they place their happiness. But this is the happiness of a Christian, that he has that within himself that may satisfy him more than all these. That place that we have in the first of **James** seems to allude to that condition of men that have all their estates within themselves, **James 1:4: But let patience have her perfect work that we may be perfect, and entire,**

wanting nothing. The word there used signifies to have the whole inheritance to ourselves, not a broken inheritance, but that where all lies within themselves; as a man that has not a piece of his estate here, and a piece there, but he has it all lie together. And the heart being patient under afflictions finds itself to be in such an estate as this is, finds his whole inheritance to be together, and all entire within itself. And now still to show this by further similitudes, it is with him being filled with good things, just like as it is with many a man that enjoys abundance of comforts at home, at his own house. God grants to him a convenient habitation, a comfortable yokefellow, and fine walks and gardens, and has all things at home that he could desire. Now this man cares not much for going abroad; other men are fain to go abroad to take the air, but he has a sweet air at home, and they are fain to go abroad to see friends, because they have railings and contendings at home. Many ill husbands will give this reason (if his wife make any moan, and complaint of his ill husbandry) of their bad husbandry, and will make that their excuse to go abroad, because they can never be quiet at home. Now we account those men most happy that have all at home. Those that have close houses that are unsavory, and smell ill, they delight to go into the fresh air. Ay, but it is not so with many others that have these at home; those that have no good cheer at home, they are fain to go abroad to friends, but those that have their tables furnished, they had as lief stay at home. So a carnal man he has but little Contentment in his own spirit. It is **Austin's** similitude (says he): an ill conscience is like a scolding wife; a man (says he) that has an ill conscience he cares not to look into his own soul, but loves to be abroad, and look into other things, but never looks to himself. But one that has a good con-

science he delights in looking into his own heart; he has a good conscience within him. And so a carnal heart, because there is nothing but filthiness, a filthy stink in himself, nothing but vile-ness and baseness within him; upon this it is that he seeks his Contentment elsewhere. And as it is with a vessel that is full of liquor, if you strike upon it it will make no great noise, but if it be empty then it makes a great noise. So it is with the heart; a heart that is full of grace and goodness within, such a one will bear a great many strokes, and never make any noise. But an empty heart if that be struck that will make a noise; those men and women that are so much complaining, and always whining, it is a sign that there is an emptiness in their hearts. But if their hearts were filled with grace they would not make such a noise as now they do. As a man that has his bones filled with marrow, and veins filled with good blood, he complains not of cold as others do. So a gracious heart having the Spirit of God within him, and his heart filled with Grace, he has that within him that makes him find Contentment. It is a speech of **Seneca**: Indeed those things that I suffer will be incredibly heavy when I cannot bear myself; but now if I be no burden to myself, if I have all quiet within mine own heart, then I can bear anything. Many men through their wickedness they have burdens without, but the greatest burden is the wickedness of their own hearts; they are not burdened with their sins in a godly way, that would ease their burden, but they have still their wickedness in the power of it, and so they are burdens to themselves. The distempers of men's hearts are mighty burdens to them. Many times a godly man has enough within to content him; virtue it is content with itself, for to live well (it is a speech of **Cicero**, and it is in one of his Paradoxes); it finds enough within its own sphere for the liv-

ing happily. But how few are acquainted with this Mystery? Many think, O if I had that that another man has, how happily and comfortably should I live. Oh but if you be a Christian, whatsoever your condition be, yet you have enough within yourself. You will say such and such men that have all things they need not be beholden to anybody; you shall have many that will labor and take pains when they are young, that they might not be beholden to others: I love to live of myself. Now a Christian may do so; not that he does not live upon God (I mean not so) but upon that that he has of God within himself, that he can live upon, although he does not enjoy the comforts that are without himself, that is it which I mean. And those that are godly and keep close to God in their Communion with Him, they understand what I mean by this, that a Christian has supply of all his wants within himself. And here you may see that the spirit of a Christian is a precious spirit, a godly spirit is precious; why? Because it has enough to make him happy within himself.

The next thing that the Mystery of Contentment consists in is this: **That a gracious heart fetches supply of all from the Covenant and so comes to have Contentment;** which is a dry thing to a carnal spirit. Now there are two things here.

First, he fetches Contentment from the Covenant in general, that is from the great Covenant that God hath made with him in Christ.

Secondly, from the particular promises that God hath made with him in the Covenant.

First, from the Covenant in general. I'll give you one Scripture for that, it is very remarkable, in the second of **Sam.** 23 verse 5. **Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.** It is a most admirable Scripture of **David**, that yet had not the Covenant of Grace opened so fully as we have. But yet mark what **David** says, Although I find not my house so, that is, so comfortably every way as I would, although it be not so, what has he to content his spirit? Says he, He hath made with me an everlasting Covenant; this is that that helps all: I am not (may some men say) thus and thus with God, I do not find God come in so fully, or it is not with my house and family as I hoped it might be, perhaps there is this or that affliction upon my house; suppose you should have the plague come into your house, and your house is not safe, and you have not that outward comfort in your house as formerly you had, but can you read this Scripture, and say, Although my house be not so blessed with health as other men's houses are; although my house be not so, yet He hath made with me an everlasting Covenant, I am one yet in Covenant with God, the Lord hath made with me an everlasting Covenant: as for these things in this world, I see they are but momentary, they are not everlasting, I see in a family when all was well but a week ago, now all is down, and the plague has swept away a great many of them, and the rest are left in sadness and mourning: we see there is no resting in the things of this world, yet the Lord hath made with me an everlasting Covenant ordered in all things: I find disorder in my heart, in my family; but the everlasting Covenant, that is ordered in all things; yea, and that is sure: alack, there is no sure-

ness here in these things, I can be sure of nothing here, especially in these times, we know that a man can be sure of little that he has, who can be sure of his estate? Perhaps some of you here that have lived well and comfortably before, and all was well about you, and you thought your mountain was strong, but you see within a day or two all taken away from you, so that there is no sureness in the things of this world: But says he the Covenant is sure, what I venture to Sea that is not sure, but here is an assurance Office indeed, here is a great assurance Office for the Saints, and they are not at charge, but only the exercising of Grace, for they may go to this Assurance Office to assure every thing that they venture, either to have the thing itself, or be paid for it: In an assurance Office you cannot be assured to have the very goods come in that you insured, but if they be lost the Insurers do engage themselves to make it good to you. And this Covenant of grace that God hath made with His people, it is God's Assurance Office, and the Saints in all their fears may and ought to go to the Covenant to assure all things to them, to assure their estates and assure their lives. You will say, how are they sure, their lives and estates go as well as others? But God engages Himself to make up all: And then mark what follows, **This is all my Salvation**, Why **David** will you not have salvation from your enemies and outward dangers, from pestilence and plague? The frame of his spirit is quieted, as if he should say, if that Salvation comes, well and good, I shall praise God for it, but that that I have in the Covenant, that is my salvation, I look upon that as enough: Yea and then further, **This is all my salvation, and all my desire**, Why **David** is there not something else that you would have besides this Covenant? No says he, it is all involved in this. Now surely those men or women must needs live

contented lives that have all their desires; now says the holy man here, this is all my desire, **And though he make it not to grow.** But for all this Covenant perhaps you will not prosper in the world as other men do, true, but I am at a point for that: Though God does not make my house to grow, I have all my desires.

Thus you see how a godly heart finds contentment in the Covenant, many of you speak of the Covenant of God, and of the Covenant of grace, but have you found it so effectual to your souls? Have you sucked this sweetness from the Covenant and content to your hearts in your sad conditions? It is a special sign of the truth of grace in any soul, that when any affliction does befall him, in a kind of natural way he does presently repair to the Covenant; just as a Child as soon as ever it is in danger, you shall not need to tell him and say, when you are in danger you must go to your father or mother, nature tells him so: so it is with a gracious heart, as soon as it is in any trouble or affliction there is a new nature that does carry him to the Covenant presently, and there it finds ease and rest: and if you find that your hearts do thus work, presently to be running to the Covenant, it is an excellent sign of the truth of grace: that is for the general.

But now for particular promises in the Covenant of grace. A gracious heart looks upon every promise as coming from the Root of the great Covenant of grace in Christ. Other men look upon some particular promises, that God will help them in straits, and keep them and the like; but they look not upon the connection of such particular promises, to the root, the Covenant of grace: Now Christians do miss of a great deal of comfort they might have, from the particular promises in the Gospel, if they would look upon their connection to the root, the great Covenant that God hath

made with them in Christ. Now I remember I spoke a little about that, that in outward promises in the time of the Law, they might rest more upon them than we can in the time of the Gospel. I gave you the reason why we that live in the time of the Gospel cannot rest so fully, for a literal performance of outward promises that we meet withal in the Old Testament, as they might in the time of the Law: for there was a special Covenant, that God pleased to call a New Covenant by way of distinction from the other Covenant that is made with us in Christ for eternal life: And so even the Law was given to them in a more peculiar way for an external Covenant of outward blessings in the land of Canaan; and so God did deal with them in a more external covenant than He does now with His people. Yet godliness, has the promise of this life, and that which is to come. We may make use of the promises for this life, but yet not so much to rest upon the literal performance of them as they might; but that God will make them good some way or other, in a spiritual way, if not in an outward way. We must lay no more upon outward promises than this, and therefore if we will lay more, we make the promise to bear more than it will bear out. For to give some instance; to believe fully and confidently, that the Plague shall not come nigh such a house (I say) it is to lay more upon such a promise than it will bear. I opened that promise in **Psalm** 91. now if I had lived in the time of the Law, perhaps I might have been somewhat more confident of the literal performance of the promise, than I can now in the time of the Gospel; the promise now bears no more than this, that God has a special protection over His people, and that He will deliver them from the evil of such an affliction; and if He does bring such an affliction it is more than an ordinary providence, it is some special providence that God has in it. I had

thought to have given you diverse promises for the contentment of the heart in the time of affliction. **Isaiah 43.2. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not over-flow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.** Certainly though this promise was made in the time of the law, yet it will be made good to all the Saints now, one way or other, either in the letter or some other ways. For so we find it plainly, that promise that was made to **Joshua, I will not fail thee nor forsake thee, Joshua 1.5.** It is applied to the Christians in the time of the Gospel. So that here is the way of faith in bringing Contentment by the promises, that all the promises that ever were made to our forefathers, from the beginning of the world, the Saints of God have an interest in them, they are their inheritances, and so goes on from one generation to another, and by that they come to have Contentment, because they do inherit all the promises made in all the book of God, So **Hebrews 13.5.** shows plainly, that it is our inheritance, and we do not inherit less now than they did in **Joshua's** time, but we inherit more; for you shall find in that place of the **Hebrews** there is more said than is to **Joshua**; to **Joshua** God says, He will not leave him nor forsake him; now in that place in the **Hebrews** in the **Greek** there are five negatives, **I will not, not, not, not, not** again, there is the elegancy of it very much, in the **Greek** (I say) there are five negatives in that little sentence; as if God should say, I will not leave you, no I will not, I will not, I will not, with such earnestness five times together: So that we have not only the same promises that they had, but we have them more enlarged and more full, though still not so much in the literal sense, for that indeed is

the least part of the promise, In **Isaiah** 54.17. there God made a promise, **That no weapon formed against his people should prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against them in judgment thou shalt condemn,** (and mark what follows) **This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me saith the Lord:** this is a good promise for a soldier, though still not to lay too much upon the literal sense: True, it holds forth thus much, that God's protection is in a special manner over soldiers that are godly, **And every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn:** and this is against false witness too: Oh you, that your friends never left you any thing, you will say, my friends died and left not me a groat, but I thank God, God hath provided for me; But though your father or mother died and left you no heritage, yet you have a heritage in the promise, **This is their heritage.** So that there is no godly man or woman, but is a great heir. Therefore when you look into the Book of God and find any promise there, you may make that your own. Just as an heir that rides over diverse fields and meadows, says he, this meadow is my heritage, and this corn-field is my heritage; and then he sees a fair house, and says he, this fair house is my heritage; and he looks upon them with another manner of eye than a stranger that shall ride over those fields. So a carnal heart reads the promises, and reads them but merely as stories, not that they have any great interest in them: But a godly man every time he reads the Scriptures (remember this note when you are reading the Scripture) and there meets with a promise, he ought to lay his hand upon it and say, this is a part of my heritage, it is mine, and I am to live upon it, and this will make you to be Contented. Here is a mysterious way of Contentment, So

in **Psalm** 34.10. and 37.6. there are diverse other promises that brings Contentment. In **Isaiah** 58.10. And thus much for the Mystery of Contentment by way of the Covenant.

There are two or three things more that show how a godly man has Contentment after another kind of way than any Carnal heart in the world has; it is a mysterious way, as thus.

He has Contentment by realizing the glorious things of heaven to him, he has the Kingdom of heaven as present, and the glory that is to come, by faith he makes it as present. So the Martyrs they had Contentment in their sufferings, for said some of them, though we have but a hard breakfast, yet we shall have a good dinner, we shall presently be in heaven; do but shut your eyes (says one) and you shall be in heaven presently. 2 **Corinthians** 4:16. **We faint not** (says the Apostle) **Why? Because these light afflictions that are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.** They see heaven before them and that contents them. You Mariners when you can see the haven before you, though you were mightily troubled before you could see any land, yet when you come near the shore and can see such a landmark, that contents you exceedingly: a godly man in the midst of the waves and storms that he meets withal, he can see the glory of heaven before him and so contents himself; one drop of the sweetness of heaven is enough to take away all the sour and bitter of all the afflictions in the world. Indeed here we know that one drop of sour, or one drop of gall will make bitter a great deal of honey, put a spoonful of sugar into a cup of gall or wormwood, that will not sweeten it, but if you put a spoonful of gall into a cup of sugar it will embitter that. Now it is otherwise in heaven, one drop of sweet will sweeten a great deal of

sour affliction, but a great deal of sour and gall will not embitter a soul that sees the glory of heaven that is to come. Now a Carnal heart has no Contentment but from what he sees before him in this world but a godly heart has Contentment from that that he sees laid up for him in the highest heavens.

The last thing that I would name is this, **A godly man has Contentment by opening and letting out of his heart to God**, other men or women they are discontented, but how do they help themselves? By railing, by ill language, such a one crosses them, and they have no way to help themselves but by railing and by bitter words, and so they ease themselves that way when they are angry, but a godly man when he is crossed, how does he ease himself? He is sensible of his cross as well as you, and he goes to God in prayer, and there opens his heart to God, and lets out his sorrows and fears, and then can come away with a joyful countenance; now do you find that you can come away from prayer and not look sad? As it is said (in 1 **Samuel** 1:18) of **Hannah**, that when she had been at prayer her countenance was no more sad, there she was comforted; and this is the right way of Contentment. Thus we have done with the Mystery of Contentment. Now if you can but put these things together that we have spoken of, you may see fully what an Art Christian Contentment is; **Paul** had need learn it; you see Contentment is not such a poor business as many make it, to say, you must be content etc. But it is a great art and mystery of godliness to be contented in the way of a Christian, and it will appear yet further to be a mystery, when we come to the Third Head; and that is to show what those lessons are that a gracious heart does learn when it learns to be contented. I have learned to be Contented; **Learned**, what lessons have you

learned? As now a Scholar that has great learning and understanding in Arts and Sciences, how did he begin it? He began (as we use to say) his A B C, and then afterwards he came to his Testament, and Bible, and Accidence, and so to his Grammar, and afterwards to his other books; so he learned one thing after another: So a Christian coming to Contentment is as a Scholar in Christ's School, and there are diverse lessons to teach the soul to bring it to this learning: every godly man or woman is a scholar, it cannot be said of any Christian that he is illiterate, but he is literate, a learned man, a learned woman: now the lessons that Christ teaches, to bring us to Contentment, are these:

The First great Lesson is, The lesson of **Self-denial**: and though it be a great lesson and hard; as you know a child at first cries, It is hard. It is that that I remember **Bradford** the Martyr says, **Whosoever has not learned the lesson of the Cross, has not learned his A B C in Christianity.** Here Christ begins with his Scholars, yea those in the lowest form must begin with this; if you mean to be Christian at all, you must buckle to this or you can never be Christians: There is none can be a Scholar except he does learn his A B C: so you must learn the lesson of self-denial or you can never come to be a Scholar in Christ's School, to be learned in this mystery of Contentment. That is the first lesson that Christ teaches any soul: Oh self-denial that brings Contentment, that brings down and softens a man's heart; a thing (you know) that is soft if you strike upon it it makes no noise, but if you strike upon a hard thing it makes a noise; so the hearts of men that are full of themselves, and hardened with self-love, if they have any stroke they make a noise, but a self-denying Christian yields to God's hand, and makes no noise; as when you strike upon

a woolsack it makes no noise because it yields to the stroke; So a self-denying heart yields to the stroke and thereby comes to this Contentment. Now in this lesson of self-denial there are diverse things, I will not enter into the Doctrine of self-denial, but only show you how Christ teaches self-denial, and how that brings Contentment.

First, **Such a one learns to know that he is nothing**, he comes to this, to be able to say, Well, I see I am nothing in myself, now that man or woman which indeed knows that he or she is nothing, and has learned it thoroughly will be able to bear anything: The way to be able to bear anything, it is to know ourselves to be nothing in ourselves. Says God to us, **Will you set your heart upon that which is nothing? Proverbs 23:5.** speaking of riches; Why blessed God dost thou not do so? Thou hast set thy heart upon us and yet we are nothing. God would not have us set our hearts upon riches because they are nothing, and yet God is pleased to set his heart upon us, and yet we are nothing, that is God's grace, free grace, and therefore it is no great matter what I suffer for I am as nothing.

Secondly, **I deserve nothing.** I am nothing, and I deserve nothing: suppose I have not this and that that others have, I am sure I deserve nothing except it be Hell: you will answer any of your servants so that is not content, I marvel what you deserve? Or your children, Do you deserve it that you are so eager upon it? You think to stop their mouths thus; so we may easily stop our own mouths, we deserve nothing, and therefore why should we be impatient if we have not what we desire, if we had deserved anything, we might have some trouble of spirit, as a man that has deserved

well of the State, or of his friends and he finds not an answerable encouragement, it troubles him mightily, but if he be conscious to himself that he has deserved nothing he is content with a repulse.

Thirdly, **I can do nothing. Without me you can do nothing**, says Christ **John 15:5**. Why should I stand much upon it to be troubled and discontented if I have not this and that, when the truth is I can do nothing? If you should come to one that is angry because he has not such diet as he desires, and is discontented with it, you will answer him, I marvel what you do, what use you are of? Shall one that will sit still and be of no use, yet for all that he must have all the supply that possibly he can desire? Do but consider of what use you are in the world; if you consider what little need God has of you, and what little use you are of, you will not be much discontented: If you have learned this lesson of self-denial though God does cut you short of such and such comforts, yet since that I do but little why should I have much, this very thought will bring down a man's spirit as much as anything, That is the Third.

Fourthly, **So vile I am that I can receive no good neither of myself**, I am not only an empty vessel, but a corrupt and unclean vessel that would spoil anything that comes into it: so are all our hearts, every one of our hearts is not only empty of good, but are like a musty vessel that if any good liquor be poured into it it spoils it, And that is the Fourth thing.

Fifthly, If God does cleanse us in some measure, and does put into us some good liquor some grace of his Spirit: yet in the **fifth place, We can make use of nothing neither when we have it, if God does but withdraw himself**; If God does but leave us one moment after he has bestowed upon us the greatest gifts, and

whatsoever abilities we can desire, if God should say, I will give you them, now go and trade now I have given you these and these abilities, we cannot stir one foot further neither if God does but leave us. Does God give us gifts and parts? Then let us fear and tremble lest God should leave us to ourselves, for then how foully should we abuse those gifts and parts, you think other men and women have memory and gifts and parts and you would fain have them, But suppose God should give you these and there leave you, you would utterly spoil them.

Sixthly, **We are worse than nothing.** For by sin we come to be a great deal worse than nothing; sin makes us more vile than nothing, sin makes us contrary to all good: now it is a great deal worse to have a contrariety to all that is good, than merely to have an emptiness of all that is good, we are not empty pitchers in respect of good, but we are like pitchers filled with poison, and is it much for such as we are to be cut short of outward comforts?

In the Seventh place, **If we perish there will be no loss of us.** If God should annihilate me what loss would there be of me? God can raise up another in my place, to do him other manner of service than I have done. Now put but these Seven things together and then hath Christ taught you Self-denial: I may call these the several words in our lesson of Self-denial; Christ teaches the soul this, so that as in the presence of God upon a real sight of itself it can say, Lord I am nothing, Lord I deserve nothing, Lord I can do nothing, I can receive nothing, I can make use of nothing, I am worse than nothing, and if I come to nothing and perish, there will be no loss at all of me, and therefore what great matter is it for me to be cut short here? A man that is little in his own eyes, such a man or woman will account every affliction to be little, and every

mercy to be great: **Saul**, There was a time (the Scripture saith) that he was little in his own eyes, and then his afflictions were but little to him, when some would not have had him to be King but spoke contemptuously of him he held his peace, but when **Saul** began to be big in his own eyes, then the affliction began to be great upon him. **There was never any such contented man or woman as this self-denying man or woman:** There was never any denied himself so much as Jesus Christ did, he gave his cheeks to the smiters, he opened not his mouth, he was as a lamb when he was led to the slaughter, he made no noise in the street, Oh he denied himself above all, and was willing to empty himself, and so he was the most contented that ever any was in the world, and the nearer we come to learn to deny ourselves as Christ did, the more contented shall we be, and by knowing much of our own vileness, we come to learn to justify God, whatever the Lord shall lay upon us, yet, righteous is the Lord, for he hath to deal with a most wretched creature. A discontented heart he is troubled because he hath no more comfort; but one that is a self-denying man he rather wonders that he hath so much as he hath: Oh saith one, I have but a little; Ay but saith he that hath learned this lesson of Self-denial, I rather wonder that God bestows upon me the liberty of breathing in the air, knowing how vile I am, and knowing how much sin the Lord doth see in me: And that's the way of Contentment, by learning Self-denial.

Eighthly, There is a further thing in self-denial which brings Contentment, **Because thereby the Soul comes to rejoice and take satisfaction in all Gods ways,** (I beseech you observe this) If a man be selfish and have Self-love prevail in his heart, those things that suits with his own ends he will be glad of

them, but a godly man that hath denied himself he will suit with and be glad of all things that shall suit with Gods ends: Saith a gracious heart, Gods ends are my ends, and I have denied mine own ends, and so he comes to find Contentment in all Gods ends and ways, and his comforts are multiplied, whereas the comforts of other men are single, it's but very rare that Gods ways shall suit with a mans particular end, but always Gods ways suit with his own ends; Now if you will only have contentment when Gods ways suits with your own ends, you can have it but now and then, but a Self-denying man denies his own ends and only looks at the ends of God and therein is contented: When a man is selfish he cannot but have a great deal of trouble and vexation, for if I regard myself, my ends are so narrow that I shall have a hundred things will come and jostle me, and I cannot have room in those narrow ends of mine own; As you know in the City what a deal of stir there is in narrow streets, as Thames street being so narrow they jostle and wrangle and fight one with another because the place is so narrow, but now in the broad streets there they can go quietly; So men that are selfish they meet and so jostle one with another, one man is for self in one thing, and another man is for self in another thing, and so they make a great deal of stir, but those whose hearts are enlarged, and make public things their ends, and can deny themselves, they can walk at breadth and never jostle one with another so as the other do. The lesson of Self-denial is the first lesson that Jesus Christ doth learn men in the seeking of Contentment.

The Second lesson is, **The vanity of the Creature.** That's the Second lesson in Christs School that he teaches those that he would make Scholars in this Art: The vanity of the Creature, That whatsoever there is in the Creature hath an emptiness in it,

Vanity of vanities all is vanity, that's the lesson that the Wiseman learned, that the Creature in itself can do us neither good nor hurt, but it is all but as wind, there is nothing in the Creature that is suitable to a gracious heart to feed upon for the good and happiness of it. My brethren the reason why you have not Contentment in the things of the world, it is not because you have not enough of them, that's not the reason, but the reason is because they are not things proportionable to that immortal soul of yours that are capable of God himself; Many men think when they are troubled and have not Contentment that it is because they have but a little in the world, and if they had more then they should be content. That were just thus, suppose a man is hungry, and so satisfy his craving stomach he should gape and hold open his mouth to take in the wind, and then should think the reason why he is not satisfied is, because he hath not enough of the wind; no, the reason is because the thing is not suitable to a craving stomach, truly there is the same madness in the world; The wind that a man takes in by gaping will as soon satisfy a craving stomach which is ready to famish, as all the comforts in the world can satisfy a soul that knows what true happiness means. You would be happy, and you seek after such and such comforts in the Creature; well, have you got them, do you find your hearts satisfied as having that happiness that is suitable to you? No, no it is not here, but you think it is because you want such and such things: O poor deluded man, it is not because you have not enough of it, but because it is not the thing that is proportionable to that immortal soul that God hath given you. **Why do you lay out your money for that which is not bread, (Isaiah 55:2.) And your labor for that which satisfies not?** You are mad people, you seek to satisfy your stomachs

with that that is not bread, you follow the wind, you will never have Contentment, all creatures in the world say, Contentment is not in us, riches saith Contentment is not in me, pleasure saith Contentment is not in me, if you look for Contentment in the creature you will fail; No, Contentment is higher: When you come into the School of Christ, Christ teaches you that there is a vanity in all things in the world, and the soul that by coming into the School of Christ, by understanding the glorious mysteries of the Gospel comes to see the vanity of all things in the world, that's the soul that comes to true Contentment. I could tell you of abundance of sentences from Heathens that shows the vanity all things in the world, and yet they did not learn the vanity of the Creature in the right School. But now when a Soul comes into the School of Jesus Christ, and there comes to see a vanity in all things in the world, then such a soul comes to have Contentment. If you seek Contentment elsewhere, you do like the unclean spirit, seek for rest but find none.

A Third lesson that Christ teaches a Christian when he comes into his School is this, **He teaches him to understand what that one thing is that is necessary which he never came to understand before:** You know what he said to **Martha, O Martha you cumber yourself about many things, but there is one thing necessary.** The Soul before sought after this and the other thing, but now saith the Soul I see really that it is not necessary that I should be rich, but it is necessary that I should make up my peace with God, it is not necessary that I should live a pleasurable life in this world, but it is absolutely necessary that I should have pardon of my sin, it is not necessary that I should have honor and preferment, but it is necessary that I should have

God to be my portion, and have my part in Jesus Christ, it is necessary that my soul should be saved in the day of Jesus Christ; The other things are pretty fine things indeed, and I should be glad if God would give them me, a fine habitation, and incomings, and clothes, and promotion for my wife and children, these are comfortable things, but these are not the necessary things, I may have these and yet perish for ever, but the other is absolutely necessary; No matter though I be poor so be it I may have that that is absolutely necessary; thus Christ instructs the Soul. There's many of you have had some thoughts about this that it is indeed necessary for you to provide for your Souls, but when you come into Christs School, there Christ causes the fear of eternity to fall upon you, and there he causes such a real sight of the great things of eternity and the absolute necessity of those things, that possesses your hearts with fear, and that takes you off from all other things in the world. Now I should have shown you how that will bring Contentment to the Soul when it comes to be instructed in the thing that is absolutely necessary; but thus much for this time.

SERMON 5



Philippians 4:11._ For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

I mentioned three lessons the last time, that Christ teaches those scholars that come into his school whereby they might come to get contentment.

First, the lesson of self-denial.

Secondly, the lesson of the vanity of the creature.

Thirdly, the right understanding of that one thing that is necessary. A little to enlarge this one, and so to proceed to others.

It is said of **Pompey**, that when he was to carry corn to **Rome** in time of dearth, he was in a great deal of danger by storms at sea, but said he, We must go on, it is necessary that **Rome** should be relieved, but it is not necessary that we should live. So it would be certainly when the soul is once taken up with the things that are of absolute necessity, it will not be much troubled about other things. What are the things that do disquiet us here but some by-matters in this world? And it is because our hearts are not taken up with that one absolute necessary thing; who are the men that are most discontented, but idle persons, persons that have nothing to take up their minds, every little thing disquiets and discontents them?

But now a man that has business of great weight and consequence, if all things go well with his great business that is in his head, he is not sensible of meaner things in the family; But now a man that lies at home and has nothing to do, he finds fault with everything; So it is with the heart, when the heart of a man has nothing to do but to be busy about creature comforts, every little thing troubles him; But now, when the heart is taken up with the weighty things of eternity, with the great things of eternal life, the heart being taken up with them, these things that are here below that did disquiet it before, are things now of no consideration with him in comparison to the other, so as how things fall out here is not much regarded with him, if the one thing that is necessary be provided for.

The fourth lesson that the soul is instructed in to come to this knowledge in the art of contentment, is this: **The soul comes to understand in what relation it stands in here to the world.** By that I mean thus, **God comes to instruct the soul effectually through Christ by his Spirit, upon what terms it lives here in the world, in what relation it is that it does stand:** as thus, While I live in the world my condition is to be but a pilgrim, a stranger, a traveler, and a soldier: Now the right understanding of this, and being taught this not only by rote, that I can speak the words over, but when I come indeed to have my soul possessed with the consideration of this truth, that God has set me in this world, not as in my home, but as a mere stranger and a pilgrim, that I am traveling here to another home, and that I am here a soldier in my warfare; it is a mighty help to contentment in whatsoever befalls one: As now to instance in all these conditions, When a man is at home, if he has not things according to his desire

he will be finding fault, and is not contented, but if a man travels abroad, perhaps he meets not with conveniences as he desires, the servants in the house are not at his beck, or are not so diligent as his own servants were, and his diet is not as at home, and his bed not as at home, yet this very thought may moderate a man's spirit, I am a traveler, and I must not be finding fault, I am but in another man's house, and it were not manners for one to find fault when he is abroad in another body's family though things be not so as in my own family; If a man meets with ill weather he must be content, it is traveler's fare (we use to say) both fair weather and foul weather, this is the common traveler's fare, and we must be content with it; But if a man were at home and it should drop down in his house, he would account it an ill thing, an affliction to him, and he cannot bear it: But when he is traveling abroad though he meet with rain and storms he is not so much troubled: When you are abroad at sea, though you have not those many things that you have at home, you are not troubled at it, you are contented; Why? You are abroad at sea, you are not troubled at storms that do arise, and though you have many things otherwise than you would have them at home, but still you are quieted with that you are at sea. Mariners when they are at sea they care not what clothes they have then, though they be pitched and tarred, and but a cloth about their necks, and any mean clothes, but they think when they come home, then they shall have their fine silk stockings, and brave suits, and laced bands and such things, and shall be very fine; And so they are contented abroad upon that thought that it shall be otherwise with them when they come home, and though they have nothing but salt meat, and a little hard fare, yet when they come to their houses then they shall have anything: Thus it should be with us in this

world, the truth is, we are all in this world but as seafaring men, tossed up and down on the waves of the sea of this world, and our haven is Heaven, and we are here traveling, but our home it is another world, that long home. Indeed some men have better accommodations than others have in traveling; It's true, it's a great mercy of God to us in **England**, in that we can travel with such delight and accommodations more than they can in other countries; and through God's mercy we have as great accommodations in our traveling to Heaven in England as any place under Heaven has, but yet though we do meet with traveler's fare sometimes, yet it should not be grievous to us: The Scripture tells us plainly that we must behave ourselves here but as pilgrims and strangers, in **1 Peter, 2:11. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul:** Consider what your condition is, you are pilgrims and strangers, do not think to satisfy yourselves here. A man when he comes into an inn, if there be a fair cupboard of plate he is not troubled that it is not his own, Why? Because he is going away; So let us not be troubled when we see other men have great estates, but we have not, Why? We are going away into another country, you are lodging here but as it were for a night, if you should live an hundred years in comparison of eternity it is not so much as a night, it is but as you were traveling, and were come into an inn: And were not this a madness for a man to be discontent because he has not what he sees there, seeing it may be he is to go away again within half a quarter of an hour? So you find it in **David**, this was the argument that brought off **David's** heart from the things of this world, and set him upon other manner of things, **Psalm 119:19. I am a stranger in the earth, hide not thy com-**

mandments from me: I am a stranger in the earth (what then) then Lord let me have the knowledge of thy commandments and it's sufficient, as for the things of the earth I stand not upon them whether I have much or little, but hide not thy commandments from me, Lord let me know the rule that I should guide my life by.

Again, we are not only travelers but soldiers, this is the condition of the life in which we are here in this world: and therefore we are to behave ourselves accordingly. So the Apostle makes use of this argument in writing unto **Timothy**, 2 **Timothy 2:3. Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.** The very thought of the condition of a man that is a soldier, does still his disquiet of heart: when he is abroad, he has not that accommodations in his quarters as he has in his own family; Perhaps a man that had his bed and curtains drawn about him, and all accommodations in his chamber; now perhaps sometimes he must be put to lie upon straw, and he thinks with himself, I am a soldier and it is suitable to my condition: He must have his bed warmed at home, but he must lie abroad in the fields when he is a soldier; and the very thought of this condition in which he stands quiets him in all things; Yea and he goes rejoicing, to think this is but suitable to my condition in which God has put me: so it should be with us in respect of this world. Now would it not be an unseemly thing to see a soldier go whining up and down with the finger in the eye and complaining, that he has not hot meat every meal, and his bed warmed as he had at home? Now Christians they know that they are in their warfare, they are here in this world fighting and combating with the enemies of their souls and eternal condition, and they must be willing to endure hardness here. The right understanding of this, that God has put them into such a con-

dition, it is that that will content them, especially when they consider that they are certain of the victory, and that ere long they shall triumph with Jesus Christ, and then all their sorrows shall be done away, and their tears wiped from their eyes. A soldier is content to endure hardness though he knows not that he shall have the victory, but a Christian knows himself to be a soldier, and knows that he shall conquer and triumph with Jesus Christ to all eternity. And that's the fourth lesson that Christ does teach the soul when he brings it into his school, to learn the art of contentment, he makes him understand thoroughly the relation in which he has placed him in, in this world.

The Fifth lesson that Christ teaches, it is this, **He teaches us wherein consists any good that is to be enjoyed in any creature in the world.** It is true, before it has been taught that there is a vanity in the Creature, that is, take the Creature considered in itself, but yet though there be a vanity in the Creature in itself, in respect of satisfying the soul for its portion, yet there is some goodness in the Creature, though there be a vanity there is some desirableness: But wherein does that consist? It consists not in the nature of the Creature itself, for that is nothing but vanity, but it consists in the reference it has to the first being of all things. This is a Lesson that Christ teaches, if there be any good in an estate, or in any comforts in this world, it is not so much that it pleases my sense, that it is suitable to my body, but the reference it has to God the first being, that by these creatures there should be somewhat of God's goodness conveyed to me, and I may have a sanctified use of the creature to draw me nearer to God, and that I enjoy more of God, and be made more serviceable for the glory of God in the place where God has set me, here is the good of the

Creature; Oh were we but instructed in this lesson, did we but understand, and thoroughly believe this to be a truth, that there is no creature in all the world has any goodness in it any further than it has reference to the first infinite supreme good of all, that so far as I can enjoy God in it, so far it is good to me, and so far as I do not enjoy God in it, so far there is no goodness in anything that I have in the Creature, how easy were it then for one to be contented; as thus, Suppose a man had a great estate but a few years ago, and now it is all gone, I would but appeal to this man, when you had your estate, wherein did you account the good of that estate to consist? a carnal heart would say, anybody might know that; that it brought me in so much a year, and that I could fare of the best, and be a man of repute in the place where I live, and men would regard what I said, I might be clothed as I would, and lay up portions for my children, in this consisted the good of my estate; this man now never came into the School of Christ to know wherein the good of an estate did consist, no marvel if he be disquieted when he has lost his estate: But now a Christian that has been in the School of Christ, and has been instructed in the art of Contentment, when such a one has an estate, he thinks, in that I have an estate above my brethren, in this consists the good of it to me, in that I have an opportunity to serve God the better, and I enjoy a great deal of God's mercy to my Soul conveyed to me through the Creature, and hereby I am enabled to do a great deal of good, and therein I account the good of my estate. Now God has taken this away from me, now if God will be pleased to make up the enjoyment of Himself another way; that is, will call me to honor Him by suffering, and if I may do God as much service now in my way of suffering, that is to show forth the Grace of His Spirit in the way of my

suffering as I did in the way of prosperity, I have as much of God as I had before; if I may be led to God in my low condition, as much as I was in my prosperous condition, I have as much comfort and contentment as I had before.

Objection. But you will say, it is true, If I could honor God in my low estate as much as in my prosperous estate then it were somewhat, but how can that be?

Answer. You must know the special honor that God has from His creatures in this world, it is the manifestation of the Graces of His Spirit; It is true, God has a great deal of honor when a man is in a public place, and so he is able to do a great deal of good, to countenance Godliness, and discountenance Sin, but the main thing is in our **showing forth the virtues of Him that has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.** Now if I can say that through God's mercy in my affliction I find the Graces of God's Spirit working as strongly in me as ever they did when I had my estate, I am where I was, yea I am fully in as good a condition, for I have that good now that I had in my prosperous estate, for I accounted the good of it but in my enjoyment of God, and honoring of God, and now God has blessed the want of it to stir up the Graces of His Spirit in my soul, and this is the work that now God calls me to, and I must account God is most honored when I do the work that He calls me to, He set me a work in my prosperous estate at that time, to honor Him in that condition, and now He sets me a work at this time to honor Him in this condition: Now God is most honored when I can turn from one condition to another according as He calls me to it: would you account yourselves to be honored by your servants, when you set them about a work that has some excellency, and they will go on and on, and you

cannot get them off from it? Now let the work be never so good, yet if you will call them off to another work you do expect that they should manifest so much respect to you as to be content to come off from that, though they be set about a meaner work, if it be more suitable to your ends. So you were in a prosperous estate, and there God called you to some service that you took some pleasure in; but suppose God says, I will use you in a suffering condition, and I will have you honor Me in that way, now here is the honoring of God that you can turn this way or that way, as God calls you to it; thus now you having learned this, That the good of the Creature consists in the enjoyment of God in it, and the honoring of God by it, you can be content, because you have the same good that you had before. And that is the Fifth lesson.

The Sixth Lesson that Christ does teach the soul that He brings into this School, is this, **He does instruct such a man or woman in the knowledge of their own hearts:** you must learn this or you will never learn Contentment; you must learn to know your own hearts well, to be good students of your own hearts, you cannot all be scholars in the arts and sciences in the world, but you may all be students in your own hearts, you cannot read in the book (many of you,) but God expects that every day you should turn over a leaf in your own hearts; you will never come to get any skill in this Mystery, except you study the book of your own hearts: Mariners, they have their books that they study, those that will be good Navigators, and Scholars they have their books; those that study Logic, they have their books according to that; and those that would study Rhetoric and Philosophy have their books according to that; and those that study Divinity, they have their books whereby they come to be helped in the study of Divinity: but

a Christian next to the book of God is to look into the book of his own heart, and to read over that, and this will help you to Contentment these three ways:

1. By the studying of your **heart**, you will come presently **to discover wherein your discontent lies**; when you are discontented, you will find out the root of any discontentment if you do study your heart well: many men and women they are discontented, and the truth is they know not wherefore, they think this and the other thing is the cause, but a man or woman that knows their own heart, they will find out presently where the root of their discontent lies, that it lies in such a corruption, and distemper of my heart, that now through God's mercy I have found out; It is in this case as it is with a little child that is very froward in the house, if a stranger comes in he does not know what the matter is, perhaps the stranger will give the child a rattle, or a nut, or such a thing to quiet it, but when the Nurse comes she knows the temper and disposition of the Child, and therefore knows best how to quiet it; so it is here just thus for all the world, when we are strangers with our own hearts we are mightily discontented, and know not how to quiet ourselves, because we know not wherein the disquiet lies: and indeed when we are strangers to our own hearts we cannot tell how to quiet ourselves, but if we be very well versed in our own hearts, when anything falls out so as to disquiet us, we find out the cause of it presently, and so quickly come to be quiet. So a man that has a Watch, and he understands the use of every wheel and pin, if it goes amiss he will presently find out the cause of it: but one that has no skill in a Watch, when it goes amiss he knows not what the matter is, and therefore cannot mend it. So indeed our hearts are as a Watch, and there are many wheels, and wind-

ings and turnings there, and we should labor to know our hearts well, that when they are out of tune we may know what the matter is.

2. This knowledge of our hearts will help us to Contentment because by this **we shall come to know what is most suitable to our condition.** As thus, a man that knows not his own heart he thinks not what need he has of affliction, and upon that he is disquieted; but that man or woman that has studied their own hearts, when God comes with afflictions upon them, they can say, I would not for anything in the world have been without this affliction, God has so suited this affliction to my condition, and has come in such a way, that if this affliction had not come I am afraid I should have fallen into sin; a poor country man that takes Physic, the Physic works, and he thinks it will kill him, because he knows not the ill humors that are in his body, and therefore he understands not how suitable the Physic is to him; but a Physician takes a purge, and it makes him extremely sick, says the Physician I like this the better, it does but work upon the humor that I know is the matter of my disease, and upon that such a man that has knowledge and understanding in his body, and the cause of his distemper, he is not troubled or disquieted: So would we be if we did but know the distempers of our own hearts, carnal men and women they know not their own spirits, and therefore they fling and vex upon every affliction that does befall them, they know not what distempers are in their hearts that may be healed by their afflictions, if it please God to give them a sanctified use of them.

3. By knowing their own hearts, **they know what they are able to manage,** and by this means they come to be Content. The Lord perhaps takes away many comforts from them that they had

before, or denies them some things that they hoped to have got. Now they by knowing their hearts know this, that they were not able to manage such an estate, and they were not able to manage such prosperity, God saw it, and (says a poor soul) I am in some measure convinced by looking into mine own heart, that I was not able to manage such a condition. A man desires greedily to grip more perhaps than he is able to manage, and so undoes himself. As country men do observe, that if they do over-stock their Land it will quickly spoil them, and so a wise Husbandman that knows how much his ground will bear he is not troubled that he has not so much stock as others, why? Because he knows he has not ground enough for so great a stock, and that quiets him. So many men and women that know not their own hearts, they would gladly have a prosperous estate as others have, but if they knew their own hearts they would know that they were not able to manage it. If one of your little children of three or four years old should be crying for the coat of her that is twelve or twenty years old, and say, why may not I have a coat as long as my sisters? If she had, it would soon trip up her heels, and break her face, but when the Child comes to understanding she is not discontented, because her coat is not so long as her sisters, but says, my coat is fit for me, and therein takes Content. So if we come to understanding in the School of Christ we will not cry, why have not I such an estate as others have? The Lord seeth that I am not able to manage it, and I see it myself by the knowing of mine own heart. You shall have children if they see but a knife, they will cry for it because they know not their strength and that they are not able to manage it, but you know they are not able to manage it, and therefore you will not give it them, and when they come to so much understanding as

to know that they are not able to manage it, they will not cry for it. So we would not cry for such and such things if we knew that we were not able to manage them. When you vex and fret for what you have not, I may say to you as Christ saith, you know not of what spirits you are. It was a speech of **Oecolampadius** to **Parillus**, says he (when they were speaking about his extreme poverty,) **Not so poor, though I have been very poor, yet I would be poorer, I could be willing to be poorer than I am**, for the truth is (as if he should say) the Lord knew that that was more suitable to me, and I knew that my own heart was such, that a poor condition was more suitable to me than a rich. So certainly would we say if we knew our own hearts, that such and such a condition is better for me than if it had been otherwise.

The Seventh lesson, **Is the burden of a prosperous estate.** Such a one that comes into Christ's School to be instructed in this Art, never comes to attain to any great skill in this Art until he comes to understand the burden that is in a prosperous estate.

Objection. You will say, What burden is there in a prosperous estate?

Answer. Yes certainly a great burden, and there needs a great strength to bear it. As men had need of strong brains that can bear strong wine, so they had need of strong spirits that are able to bear prosperous conditions, and not to do themselves hurt; there's a fourfold burden in a prosperous estate. Many men and women look at the shine and glittering of prosperity, but they little think of the burden, but there's a fourfold burden.

1. There's **A burden of trouble**. A rose has its prickles, and so the Scripture says that he that will be rich pierces himself through with many sorrows, 1 **Timothy** 6:10. If a man's heart be set upon it that he must be rich, and he will be rich, such a man will pierce himself through with many sorrows. He looks upon the delight and glory of riches that appears outwardly, but he considers not what piercing sorrows he may meet withal in them. The consideration of the trouble in a prosperous condition I have divers times thought of, and I cannot tell by what similitude to express it better than by travelling in some champaign country, where round about is very fair and sandy ground, and you see there a Town a great way off in a bottom, and you think, Oh how bravely is that Town seated, but when you come and ride into the Town, you shall ride through a dirty lane and through a company of fearful dirty holes, and you could not see the dirty lane and holes when you were two or three miles off. So sometimes we look upon the prosperity of men and think such a man lives bravely and comfortably, but if we did but know what troubles he meets withal in his family, in his estate, in his dealings with men, we would not think his condition so happy. One may have a very fine new shoe, but nobody knows where it pinches him but he that has it on. So you think such and such men are happy, but they may have many troubles that you little think of.

2. **There is a burden of danger in it**. Men that are in a prosperous condition they are in a great deal of danger, you see sometimes in the evening when you light up your candles, the moths and the gnats will be flying up and down in the candle, but they scorch their wings, and there they fall down dead. So there is a great deal of danger in a prosperous estate, those men that are

set upon a Pinnacle on high, these men they are in greater danger than other men are. Honey we know does invite Bees and Wasps unto it, and so the sweet of prosperity does invite the Devil and temptation. Men that are in a prosperous estate are subject to many temptations that other men are not subject to. The Scripture calls the Devil Beelzebub, that is the god of flies, and so **Beelzebub** comes where the honey of prosperity is, they are in very great danger of temptations that are in a prosperous condition. The dangers of men that are in a prosperous estate that have more than others, should be considered of by those that are lower, think with yourself, though they be above me, yet they are in more danger than I am, the tall trees are more shattered a great deal than low shrubs. So you know the ship that has all the sails up, the topsail and all in a storm, this is in more danger than that that has all the sails drawn in. And so men that have their topgallant, and all up and brave, they are more like to be drowned, drowned in perdition than other men are. And therefore you know what the Scripture says, how hard it is for rich men to go into the kingdom of Heaven: such a text should make poor people to be contented with their estates. We have a notable example for that in the Children of **Kohath**, you shall find that they were in a more excellent estate than the other of the Levites, but they were in more danger than the other, and more trouble.

First, That the Children of **Kohath** were in a higher condition than other of the **Levites**, that I'll show you out of the fourth of **Numbers** verse 4 there you shall find what their condition was. **This shall be the service of the sons of Kohath in the Tabernacle of the Congregation about the most holy things.** Mark, the Levites were exercised about **holy things**; but

the sons of **Kohath**, their service was about the **most holy things** of all: and you shall find in the 21st of **Joshua**, verse 10. That God did honour the sons of **Kohath** in a more special manner than he did honor the other Levites, which honour the Children of **Aaron** (being of the families of the **Kohathites**, who were of the Children of **Levi**) had, for theirs was the first lot, and they were preferred before the other families of **Levi**, those that were employed in the most honourable employment, they had the most honourable Lot, the first Lot fell to them: thus you see God honoured the Children of the **Kohathites**. But (might other Levites say) how hath God preferred this family before us? They were honoured more than the other were: But now, mark their burden that comes in with their honour, and that I'll show you out of two Scriptures, the first is, **Numbers 7:6, 7, 8, 9. And Moses took the Wagons and the Oxen, and gave them unto the Levites. Two wagons and four oxen he gave unto the sons of Gershom, according to their service: and four wagons and eight oxen he gave unto the sons of Merari, according unto their service, under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the Priest.** But says he in the 9th verse. **Unto the sons of Kohath he gave none; because the service of the Sanctuary that belonged unto them, was, that they should bear upon their shoulders.** Mark, the other Levites had oxen, and wagons given to them, to ease them of their service: but (says he) to the sons of **Kohath** he gave none, but they should bear their service upon their shoulders; and that's the reason why God was so displeased, because that they would have more ease in God's service than God would have them, for whereas they should carry it upon their shoulders, they would carry it upon a cart: Mark here, you see

the first burden that they had, beyond what the other Levites had. And those indeed that are in more honourable places than others, those that are under them think not of their burden that they are to carry upon their shoulders, when as others have means to ease them; and many times those that are employed in the Ministry, or Magistracy, that sit at the stern to order the great Affairs of the Commonwealth and State, you think they live bravely: they lie awake when you are asleep; if you knew the burden that lies upon their spirits, you would think that your labour and burden were very little in comparison of theirs.

2. There is another burden of danger more than the rest, and that you shall find in **Numbers 4.17. And the Lord spoke unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, Cut you not off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites, but thus do unto them that they may live and not die: When they approach unto the most holy things, Aaron and his sons shall go in and appoint them every one to his service and to his burden; but they shall not go in to see when the holy things are covered, lest they die.** Mark this text: says the Lord to **Moses and Aaron**, Cut you not off the tribe of the family of the **Kohathites** from among the **Levites**. Cut them not off, why? What had they done? Had they done anything amiss? No, they had not done anything that provoked God: but the meaning is this; Take a great care of the family of the **Kohathites**, to instruct them in their duty that they were to do; for (says God) they are in a great deal of danger, being to serve in the most holy things. If they should go in to see the holy things more than God would have them, it is as much as their lives are worth, and therefore if you should but neglect them, and not inform them thoroughly in their

duty they would be undone. (Says God) they are to administer in the most holy things, and if they should but dare to presume to do anything otherwise than God would have them about those services, it would cost them their lives; and therefore be not you careless of them, for if you neglect them you will be a means of cutting them off. Thus you see the danger that the family of the **Kohathites** were in; they were preferred before others, but they were in more danger. So you think there are such men in a parish that bear the sway, and are employed in public service, and they carry all before them; but you consider not their danger. And so the Ministers, they stand in the forefront of all the spite and malice of ungodly men: indeed God employs them in honourable service, and that service that the Angels would take delight in; but though the service be honourable, above the employment of other works, yet the burden of danger, that likewise is greater than the danger of men that are in an inferior condition. Now when the Soul comes to get wisdom from Christ to think of the danger that it is in, then it will be content with that low estate in which it is. A poor man that is in a low condition, thinks, I am low, and others are raised, but I know not what their burden is: and so, if he be rightly instructed in the school of Christ he comes to be contented.

3. In a prosperous estate there is the burden of duty. You look only at the sweet and comfort that they have, and the honour and respect that they have that are in a prosperous condition; but you must consider of the duty that they owe to God: God requires more duty at their hands than at yours, you are ready to be discontented that you have not such parts and abilities as such have, but God requires more duty of them that have more parts,

God requires more duty of them that have greater estates than of you that have not such estates: Oh you would fain have the honour, but can you carry the burden of the duty?

4. The last is, **The burden of account in a prosperous estate.** There is a great account that they are to give to God that enjoy great estates and a prosperous condition. Now we are all stewards, and one is a steward to a meaner man, perhaps but an ordinary Knight; another is a steward to a Nobleman, an Earl: now the steward of the meaner man, he has not so much as the other has under his hand: now shall he be discontented because there comes not so much under his hand as under the others? No, thinks he, I have less, and I am to give the less account. So your account in comparison of the Ministers and Magistrates will be nothing; you are to give an account of your own souls, and so are they, you are to give an account for your own family, and so are they, but you are not to give account for Congregations, and for Towns, and Cities, and Countries. You think of Princes and Kings, Oh! What a glorious condition they are in. But what do you think of a King to give account for all the disorder and wickedness in a Kingdom that he possibly might have prevented? What abundance of glory might a Prince bring to God if so be that he bent his soul and all his thoughts to lift up the Name of God in a Kingdom; now what God loses for want of this, that King, Prince, or Governor he must give an account for. It is a speech of **Chrysostom** in that place of the **Hebrews**, where it is said that men must give an account for their souls, he wonders that any men in public place can be saved, because their account is so great that they are to give. And I remember I have read a speech of **Philip** that was King of **Spain**, (though the story says of him, that he had such a natural con-

science, that he professed he would not do anything against his conscience, no not in secret for the gaining of the world, yet when this man was to die) Oh says he, that I had never been a King; Oh that I had lived a solitary and private life all my days; then should I have died a great deal more securely, I should with more confidence have gone before the Throne of God to give my account: but here is the fruit of my kingdom, that I had all the glory of it, it has made my account to be harder to give to God: and thus he cries out when he was to die. And therefore you that live in private conditions remember this, If you come into Christ's School, and be taught this lesson, you will be quiet in your afflictions, or private estate, in regard your account is not so great as others. It is a speech I remember I have met withal in **Latimer's** Sermons that he was wont to use, **The half is more than the whole.** That is, when a man is in a mean condition, he is but half way towards the height of prosperity that others are in: yet says he, this is more safe though it be a meaner condition than others. Those that are in a high and prosperous condition there is annexed to it the burden of trouble, and of danger and of duty, and of account. And thus you see how Christ trains up his Scholars in his School, and though they be weak otherwise, yet by his Spirit he gives them wisdom to understand these aright.

The Eighth lesson is this, **Christ teaches them what a great and dreadful evil it is to be given up to one's heart's desires.** The understanding this lesson that it is a most dreadful evil, one of the most hideous and fearful evils that can befall any man upon the face of the earth, for God to give him up to his heart's desires: when the soul understands this once, and together with it, (for it goes along together) that spiritual judgments are

more fearful than any outward judgments in the world, the understanding of this will teach anyone to be content in God's crossing of them in their desires. You are crossed in your desires, now you are discontented and vexed and fretted at it, is that your only misery that you are crossed in your desires? No no, you are infinitely mistaken, the greatest misery of all is for God to give you up to your heart's lusts and desires, to give you up to your own counsels: so you have it in **Psalm 81.11, 12. But my people would not listen to my voice, and Israel would have none of me** [what then?] **So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts, and they walked in their own counsels.** Oh says **Bernard** let me not have such a misery as that is, for to give me what I would have, to give me my heart's desires, it is one of the most hideous judgments in the world for a man to be given up to his heart's desires. We have not indeed in Scripture any certain evident sign of a reprobate, we cannot say except we knew a man had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, that he is a reprobate, for we know not what God may work upon him, but the nearest of all and the blackest sign of a reprobate is this, for God to give up a man to his heart's desires, all the pain of diseases, all the calamities that can be thought of in the world, are no judgments in comparison of this, for a man to be given up to his heart's desires; now when the Soul comes to understand this, the Soul then cries out, why am I so troubled that I have not my desires? There is nothing that God conveys his wrath more through than a prosperous estate. I remember I have read of a Jewish Tradition that they say of **Uzziah**, when God struck **Uzziah** with a Leprosy, they say that the beams of the Sun were darted upon the forehead of **Uzziah**, and he was struck with a Leprosy by the darting of the beams of the Sun upon

his forehead; the Scripture says, Indeed the Priests looked upon him; but they say there was a special light and beam of the Sun upon the forehead that did discover the Leprosy to the Priests, and they say it was the way of conveying of it. Whether that were true or no, I am sure this is true, that the strong beams of the Sun of prosperity upon many men makes them to be leprous; would any poor man in the country have been discontented that he was not in **Uzziah's** condition? He was a great King, ay, but there was the Leprosy in his forehead, the poor man may say, though I live meanly in the country yet I thank God my body is whole and sound, would not any man rather have russet and skins of beasts to clothe him with, than to have satin and velvet that should have the Plague in it? The Lord conveys the plague of his curse through prosperity, as much as through anything in the world, and therefore the soul coming to understand this, this makes it to be quiet and content.

And then spiritual judgments are the greatest judgments of all. The Lord lays such an affliction upon my outward estate, but what if he had taken away my life? A man's health is a greater mercy than his estate, and you that are poor people you should consider of that. But is the health of a man's body better than his estate? What is the health of a man's soul? That's a great deal better. The Lord has inflicted external judgments, but he has not inflicted spiritual judgments upon you, he has not given you up to hardness of heart, and taken away the spirit of prayer from you in your afflicted estate. Oh then be of good comfort though there be outward afflictions upon you, yet your soul, your more excellent part is not afflicted. Now when the soul comes to understand this, that here lies the sore wrath of God to be given up to a man's desires, and for

spiritual judgments to be upon a man, this quiets him, and contents him, though outward afflictions be upon him. Perhaps one of a man's children has the fit of an ague, or the toothache, but perhaps his next neighbor has the plague, or all his children are dead of the plague. Now shall he be so discontented, because his children have the toothache when his neighbor's children are dead? Now think thus, Lord thou hast laid an afflicted condition upon me, but Lord thou hast not given me the plague of a hard heart. Now take these eight things before mentioned, and lay them together, and you may well apply that Scripture in the 29th of **Isaiah** the last verse, says the text there, **They also that erred in spirit, shall come to understanding; and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.** Has there been any of you (as I fear many may be found) that have erred in spirit, even in regard of this truth that now we are preaching of, and many that have murmured? Oh that this day you might come to understand, that Christ would bring you into his school, and teach you understanding, **And they that murmured shall learn doctrine:** what doctrine shall they learn? These eight doctrines that I have opened to you. And if you will but thoroughly study these lessons that I have set before your eyes: it will be a special help and means to cure your murmurings against, and repinings at the hand of God: and so you will come to learn Christian contentment. The Lord teach you thoroughly by his Spirit these lessons of contentment.

SERMON 6



PHILIPPIANS. 4.11. _ For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

— I shall only add one lesson more in the learning of Contentment, and then I shall come to the Fourth Head, The excellency of Contentment.

The Ninth and last lesson that Christ teaches those that he doth instruct in this Art of Contentment, **It is the right knowledge of God's providence**, and therein are these four things.

1 **The universality of providence**, that the Soul must be thoroughly instructed in to come to this Art, to understand the universality of providence, that is; how the providence of God goes through the whole world, extends itself to everything: Not only that God by his providence doth rule the world, and govern all things in general, but that it reaches to every particular, not only to Kingdoms, to order the great affairs of Kingdoms, but it reaches to every man's family, it reaches to every person in the family, it reaches to every condition, yea to every passage, to everything that falls out concerning you in every particular, not one hair falls from your head, not a Sparrow to the ground without the providence of God. There is nothing befalls you good or evil, but there is a provi-

dence of the infinite eternal First-Being in that thing, and therein indeed is God's infiniteness, that it reaches to the least things, to the least worm that is under your feet: Then much more it reaches unto you that are a rational creature, the providence of God is more special towards rational creatures than any others: The understanding in a spiritual way the universality of providence in every particular passage from morning to night every day; that there is not anything that does befall you but there is a hand of God in it, it is from God, it is a mighty furtherance to Contentment. Every man will grant the truth of the thing that it is so, but as the Apostle says in **Hebrews 11:3. By faith we understand that the worlds were made**, by faith we understand it: why by faith? We can understand by reason that no finite thing can be from itself, And therefore that the world could not be of itself, but we can understand it by faith in another manner than by reason. So whatsoever we understand of God in way of providence, yet when Christ doth take us into his School we come to understand it by faith in a better manner than we do by reason.

2 The efficacy that there is in providence; that is, That the providence of God goes on in all things with strength and power, and it is not to be altered by our power; let us be discontented and vexed and troubled, and fret, and rage, yet we must not think to alter the course of providence by our discontent. Some of **Job's** friends said to him, **Shall the earth be forsaken for you, and shall the rock be removed out of his place? Job 18:4.** when they saw him to be impatient. So I may say to every discontented impatient heart, what shall the providence of God change its course for you? Do you think it such a weak thing that because it does not please you it must alter its course? Be content

or not content, the providence of God will go on, it has an efficacy of power, of virtue, to carry all things before it: Can you make one hair black or white with all the stir that you keep? When you are in a ship at Sea that has all her sails spread with a full gale of wind, and swiftly sailing; can you make it stand still with running up and down in the ship? No more can you make the providence of God to alter and change its course with your vexing and fretting, but it will go on with power do what you can. Do but understand the power and efficacy of providence and it will be a mighty means for the helping to learn this lesson of Contentment.

3 The infinite variety of the works of providence, and yet the order of things, one working towards another; there is infinite variety of the works of God in an ordinary providence, and yet all work in an ordinary way; we put these two together; for God in the way of his providence causes a thousand thousand things one to depend upon another, there are infinite several wheels (as I may so say) in the works of providence, all the works that ever God did from all eternity or ever will do, put them all together, and all make up but one work, and they have been as several wheels that have had their orderly motion to attain the end that God from all eternity hath appointed: We indeed look at things by pieces, we look at one particular and do not consider the reference that one thing has to another, but God he looks at all things at once, and sees the reference that one thing has to another: As a child that looks upon a clock, looks first upon one wheel, and then upon another wheel, he looks not at all together or the dependence that one has upon another, but the workman has his eyes upon all together and sees the dependence of all one upon another, and the art that there is in the dependence of one upon

another; so it is in God's providence. Now observe how this works to Contentment; where there is such a passage of providence befalls me, that is one wheel, and it may be if this wheel should be stopped, there might a thousand other wheels come to be stopped by this: as in a clock, stop but one wheel and you stop every wheel, because they have dependence one upon another: so when God hath ordered a thing for the present to be thus and thus, how do you know how many things do depend upon this thing? God may have some work that he hath to do twenty years hence that may depend upon this passage of providence, that falls out this day, or this week. And here (by the way) we may see a great deal of evil that there is in discontent, for you would have God's providence altered in such and such a particular, indeed if it were only in that particular, and that had reference to nothing else it were not so much, but by your desire to have your will in such a particular, it may be you would cross God in a thousand things that he hath to bring about, because it is possible there may be a thousand things depend upon that one thing that you would gladly have to be otherwise than it is, just as if a child should cry out and say, let but that one wheel stop, though he says but one wheel, yet if that stop, it is as much as if he should say they must all stop; so in providence, let but this one passage of providence stop, it is as much as if a thousand stopped: Let me therefore be quiet and content, for though I be crossed in some one particular God attains his end, at least his end may be furthered in a thousand things by this one thing that I am crossed in; therefore let a man consider this is an act of providence, and how do I know what God is about to do, and how many things depend upon this providence? Now we are willing to suffer our friend's will to be crossed in one thing, so that our

friend may attain to what he desires in a thousand things; if you have a love and friendship to God, be willing to be crossed in some few things, that the Lord may have his work go on in the universal, in a thousand of other things. Now that is the third thing to be understood in God's providence, that Christ doth learn those that he teacheth in the Art of Contentment.

4 Christ teaches them the knowledge of providence, that is, **The knowledge of God's usual way in his dealings with his people more particularly.** The other is, the knowledge of God in his providence in general: But the right understanding of the way of God in his providence towards his people and Saints, is a notable lesson to help us in the Art of Contentment. If we come once to know a man's way and course we may better suit and be contented to live with him, than before we come to know his way and course: as when a man comes to live in a society with men and women, it may be the men and women may be good, but till a man comes to know their way and course and disposition, many things may fall very cross, and we think they are very hard, but when we come to be acquainted with their way and spirit, then we can suit and cotton with them very well; and the reason of our trouble is, because we do not understand their way. So it is with you, those that are but as strangers to God, and do not understand the way of God, they are troubled with the providences of God, and they think them very strange and cannot tell what to make of them, because they understand not the ordinary course and way of God towards his people. If a stranger sometimes comes into a family and sees such and such things done, he wonders what the matter is, but those that are acquainted with it, it troubles them not at all. So servants, when they come first together and know not one another, it

may be they are froward and discontented, but when they come to be acquainted with one another's ways, then they are more contented: just so it is when we come first to understand God's ways.

Objection. But you will say, What do you understand by God's ways?

Answer: By that I mean these three things. And when we come to know them we shall not wonder so much at the providence of God, but be quiet and contented with them.

1. The First thing is this, **God's ordinary course is, that his people in this world should be in an afflicted condition:** God hath revealed in his Word, and we may there find he hath set down to be his ordinary way even from the beginning of the world to this day, (but more especially in the times of the Gospel,) that his people here should be in an afflicted condition. Now men that do not understand this, they stand and wonder to hear of the people of God that they are afflicted, and the enemies prosper in their way; for those that seek God in his way, and seek for Reformation, for them to be afflicted and routed and spoiled, and the enemies to prevail, they wonder at it: but now, one that is in the School of Christ, he is taught by Jesus Christ that God by his eternal Counsels hath set this to be his course and way, to bring up his people in this world in an afflicted condition, and therefore says the Apostle, **Account it not strange concerning the fiery trial.** **1 Peter 4:12.** We are not therefore to be discontented with it seeing God hath set such a course and way, and we know such is the will of God that it should be so.

The second thing that is in God's way is this: **Usually when God intends the greatest mercy to any of his people, he does bring them into the lowest condition.** God does seem to go quite cross and work in a contrary way. When he intends the greatest mercies to his people, he does first usually bring them into very low conditions. If it be a bodily mercy, an outward mercy that he intends to bestow, he uses to bring them bodily low and outwardly low. If it be a mercy in their estates that he intends to bestow, he brings them low in that and then raises them; and in their names he brings them low there, and then raises them; and in their spirits God does ordinarily bring their spirits low and then raises their spirits. Usually the people of God before the greatest comforts have the greatest afflictions and sorrows. Now those that understand not God's ways, they think that when God brings his people into sad conditions, that God leaves and forsakes them, and that God does intend no great matter of good to them. But now a child of God that is instructed in this way of God, he is not troubled. "My condition is very low," but (says he) "this is God's way when he intends the greatest mercy, to bring men under the greatest afflictions." When he intended to raise **Joseph** to be the second in the kingdom, God cast him into a dungeon a little before. So when God intended to raise **David** and set him upon the throne, he made him to be hunted as a partridge in the mountain, 2 **Samuel** 26:20. God went this way with his Son; Christ himself went into glory by suffering, **Hebrews** 2:20. And if God deal so with his own Son, much more with his people. As a little before break of day you shall observe it is darker than it was any time before, so God does use to make our conditions darker a little before the mercy comes. When God bestowed the last great mercy at

Naseby, we were in a very low condition. God knew what he had to do beforehand; he knew that his time was coming for great mercies. It is the way of God to do so. Be but instructed rightly in this course and track that God uses to walk in, and that will help us to contentment exceedingly.

The third thing that there is in God's way and course is this: **It is the way of God to work by contraries, to turn the greatest evil into the greatest good.** To grant great good after great evil is one thing, and to turn great evils into the greatest good, that is another. And yet that is God's way; the greatest good that God intends for his people, many times he works it out of the greatest evil. The greatest light is brought out of the greatest darkness. And **Luther** (I remember) has a notable expression for this. Says he: "It is the way of God: he does humble that he might exalt; he does kill that he might make alive; he does confound that he might glorify." This is the way of God (says he). But says he: "Everyone does not understand this." "This is the Art of Arts, and the Science of Sciences, the knowledge of knowledges to understand this: that God does use when he will bring life, he does bring it out of death; he brings joy out of sorrow, and he brings prosperity out of adversity." Yea, and many times he brings grace out of sin; that is, makes use of sin to work furtherance of grace. It is the way of God to bring good out of evil; not only to overcome the evil, but to make the evil to work towards the good. Here is the way of God. Now when the soul comes to understand this, it will take away our murmuring and bring contentment into our spirits. But I fear there are but few that understand it rightly. Perhaps they read of

such things, and hear such things in a sermon, but they are not by Jesus Christ instructed in this: that this is the way of God, to bring the greatest good out of the greatest evil.

THE EXCELLENCY OF THIS GRACE OF CONTENTMENT



Says the Apostle, **I have learned.** As if he should say, Blessed be God for this: Oh! It is a mercy of God to me that I have learned this lesson, I find so much good in this Contentment, that I would not for a world but have it: (I have learned it says he.)

Now the very Heathens had a sight of a great excellency that there is in Contentment: I remember I have read of **Antistenes** a Philosopher, that desired of his gods, (speaking after the heathenish way) nothing in this world to make his life happy, but Contentment; and if he might have any thing that he would desire to make his life happy, he would ask of them, that he might have the spirit of **Socrates**, that he might have such a spirit as **Socrates** had, to be able to bear any wrong, any injuries that he met with, and to continue in a quiet temper of spirit whatsoever befell him; for that was the temper of **Socrates**, whatever befell him he continued the same man, whatever cross befell him nobody could perceive any alteration of his spirit though never so great crosses did befall him. This a Heathen did attain to by the strength of Nature, and a common work of the spirit: Now this

Antisthenes saw such an excellency in this spirit: As when God said to **Solomon**, What shall I give you? He asked of God wisdom: so says he, If the gods should put it to me to know what I would have, I would desire this thing, that I might have the spirit of **Socrates**: he saw a great excellency that there was in this. And certainly a Christian may see abundance of excellency in it: I shall labor to set it out to you in this Sermon that you may be in love with this Grace of Contentment.

In the First place, **By Contentment we come to give God that worship that is due to him**: It is a special part of Divine worship that we owe to God, if we be content in a Christian way, according as has been opened to you; I say it is a special part of the Divine worship that the creature owes to the infinite Creator, in that I do tender that respect that is due from me to the Creator. The word that the Greeks have that signifies to worship, it is as much as to come and crouch before another, as a dog should come crouching unto you, and be willing to lie down at your feet; so the creature in the apprehension of its own baseness, and the infinite Excellency that there is in God above it; when it comes to worship God, it comes and crouches to this God, and it lies down at the feet of God, then does the creature worship God. When you see a dog come crouching to you, and you can make him with holding your hand over him to lie down at your feet; then consider, thus should you do before the Lord, you should come crouching to him, and lie down at his feet even upon your backs or bellies, to lie down in the dust before him, so as to be willing that he should do with you what he will; as sometimes you may turn a dog this way or that way up and down with the hand, and there he lies before you, according to your showing him with your hand: So when the creature

shall come and lie down thus before the Lord, then a Creature worships God, does tender you that worship that is due to God. Now in what disposition of heart do we thus crouch to God more, than when we have this Contentment in all conditions that God disposed us unto? This is a crouching unto God's dispose, to be like the poor woman of **Canaan**, when Christ said, it is not fit to give Children's meat to dogs, but (says she) the dogs have crumbs. I am a dog I confess, Ay, but let me have but a crumb. And so when the soul shall be in such a disposition as to lie down and say, Lord I am but as a dog, yet let me have a crumb, then does it highly honor God. It may be some of you have not your table spread as others have, but God gives you crumbs; now says the poor woman, dogs have crumbs, and when you can find your hearts thus subjecting unto God, to be but as a dog, and can be Contented and bless God for any crumb: I say this is a great worship of God, you worship God by this more than when you come to hear a Sermon, or spend half an hour, or an hour in prayer, or when you come to receive a Sacrament; These are the acts of God's worship, Ay, but these are but external acts of worship, to hear, and pray, and receive Sacraments: But now this is the Soul-worship, to subject itself thus to God. You that often will worship God by Hearing, and Praying, and receiving Sacraments, and yet afterwards will be froward and discontented, know, that God regards not that worship, he will have the soul-worship in this subjecting of the soul to God. Observe it I beseech you, in active obedience, there we worship God by doing that that pleases God, but by passive obedience we do as well worship God by being pleased with that that God does. Now when I perform a duty, I worship God, I do what pleases God: why should I not as well worship God when I am pleased with

what God does? As it was said of Christ's obedience, Christ was active in his passive obedience, and passive in his active obedience: So the Saints they are passive in their active obedience; they are first passive in their reception of grace, and then active: And when they come to passive obedience they are active, they put forth grace in active obedience, when they perform actions to God, then says the Soul, Oh! that I could do that that pleases God, when they come to suffer any cross, Oh that what God does might please me. I labor to do what pleases God, and I labor that what God does shall please me, here's a Christian indeed that shall endeavor both these; now this is but one side of a Christian, to endeavor to do what pleases God, but you must as well endeavor to be pleased with what God does, and so you shall come to be a complete Christian when you can do both. And that's the first thing in the excellency of this Grace of Contentment.

The Second thing in the opening of this excellency of Contentment is, **That in Contentment there is much exercise of Grace**, There is much strength of Grace, yea there is much beauty of Grace in Contentment, there is much exercise of Grace, strength of Grace, and beauty of Grace, I put all these together.

1 Much exercise of Grace, There is a composition of Grace in Contentment, there is faith, and there is humility, and love, and there is patience, and there is wisdom, and there is hope, all graces almost are compounded, it's an oil that has the ingredients of all kind of graces, and therefore though you cannot see the particular grace, yet in this oil you have it all; God sees the Graces of his Spirit exercised in a special manner, and this pleases God at the

heart to see the Graces of his Spirit exercised. In some one action that you do you may exercise some one grace especially, but now in Contentment you exercise a great many graces at once.

2 There is a great deal of strength of Grace in Contentment, It argues a great deal of strength in the body, the body to be able to endure hard weather and whatsoever falls out, and yet not to be much altered by it; so it argues strength of Grace to be content: You that complain of weakness of memory, and weakness of parts, you cannot do what others do in other things, but have you this gracious heart-contentment that has been opened to you; I know that you have attained to strength of Grace in this, when it is so spiritual as has been opened to you in the explication of this point. As it is with a man's brain, if a man be distempered in his body and has many obstructions in his body, has an ill stomach, and his spleen and liver obstructed, and yet for all this his brain is not distempered, it is an argument of a great strength of brain, and though there be many ill fumes that rise from his corrupt stomach, yet still his brain is not distempered but he continues in the free exercise of the use of his reason and understanding; every one may understand that this man has a very strong brain, that such things shall not distemper him, whereas other people that have a weak brain, if they do not digest but one meal's meat, the fumes that do arise from their stomachs, do distemper their brain and makes them unfit for every thing, whereas you shall have others that have strong heads, and strong brains, though their stomachs be ill that they do not digest meat, yet still they have the free use of their brain, this argues strength: So it is in a man's spirit, you shall have many that have weak spirits, and if they have any ill fumes, if accidents befall them, you shall pres-

ently have them out of temper, but you shall have other men that though things do fume up yet still they keep in a steady-way, and have the use of reason and of other graces, and possess their Souls with patience. As I remember it's reported of the Eagle, it's not like other fowls, other fowls when they are hungry make a noise, but the Eagle is never heard to make a noise though it wants food, and it is from the magnitude of his spirit that it will not make such complaints as other fowls will do when they want food, it is because it is above hunger, and above thirst: So it is argument of a gracious magnitude of spirit that whatsoever befalls it, yet it is not always whining and complaining so as others are, but goes on still in its way and course, and blesses God and keeps in a constant tenor whatsoever thing befalls it, such things as causes others to be dejected and fretted and vexed, and takes away all the comfort of their lives, it makes no alteration at all in the spirits of these men and women, I say this is a sign of a great deal of strength of Grace.

3 It's also an argument of a great deal of beauty of Grace. It's a speech that **Seneca** a Heathen once had, saith he, When you go abroad into groves and woods; and there you see the tallness of the trees and their shadows, it strikes a kind of awful fear of a Deity in you, and when you see the vast rivers and fountains, and deep waters that strikes a kind of fear of a God in you but (saith he) do you see a man that is quiet in tempests, and that lives happily in the midst of adversities, why do not you worship that man? He doth think him a man even to be honoured that shall be quiet and live a happy life though in the midst of adversities. The glory of God appears here more than in any of his works; there is no works that God hath made, the Sun Moon and Stars and all the world wherein so much of the glory of God doth appear, as in a

man that lives quietly in the midst of adversity. That was that that convinced the King, when he saw the three Children could walk in the midst of the fiery furnace and not be touched, the King was mightily convinced by this, that surely their God was a great God indeed, and that they were highly beloved of their God that could walk in the midst of the furnace and not be touched, whereas the others that came but to the mouth of the furnace were devoured, so when a Christian can walk in the midst of fiery trials, and not his garments singed, but have comfort and joy in the midst of all (as **Paul** in the stocks) can sing, (that wrought upon the jailor:) so it will convince men when they see the power of grace in the midst of afflictions, such afflictions as would make others to roar under them, yet they can behave themselves in a gracious and holy manner; Oh it's the glory of a Christian. It is that that is said to be the glory of Christ, (for so by Interpreters it is thought to be meant of Christ) In **Micah**, 5:5. **And this man** (the text saith) **shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land, and when he shall tread in our palaces.** This man shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land; for one to be in peace when there is no enemies it's no great matter, but saith the text when the Assyrian shall come into our land, then this man shall be the peace; that is, when all shall be in an hubbub and uproar yet then this man shall be peace. That's the trial of grace when you find Jesus Christ in your hearts to be peace when the Assyrian shall come into the land. You may think you find peace in Christ when you have no outward troubles, but is Christ your peace when the Assyrian comes into the land, when the enemy comes? Suppose you should hear the enemy come marching to the City and had taken the works, and were plundering, what would be

your peace? Jesus Christ would be peace to the soul when the enemy comes into the City, and into your houses; If there be any of you that have been where the enemy hath come, what hath been the peace of your souls? That that's said of Christ may be applied to this grace of Contentment, when the Assyrian, the plunderers, the enemies, when any affliction, trouble, distress doth befall such a heart, then this grace of Contentment brings peace to the soul; at that time brings peace to their soul when the Assyrian comes into the land: The grace of Contentment it's an excellent grace, there's much beauty, much strength in it, there is a great deal of worth in this grace, and therefore be in love with it.

The Third thing in the excellency of Contentment is this, **By Contentment the soul is fitted to receive mercy, and to do service**, I'll put those two together, Contentment makes the soul fit to receive mercy, and to do service; no man or woman in the world is so fit for to receive the Grace of God, and to do the work of God as those that have contented spirits.

1 Those are fitted to receive mercy from the Lord that are contented: As now, if you would have a vessel to take in any liquor, you must hold the vessel still, if the vessel stir and shake up and down you cannot pour in any thing, but you will bid hold still that you may pour it in and not lose any; so if we would be the vessels to receive God's mercy, and would have the Lord pour in his mercy to us, we must have quiet still hearts, we must not have hearts hurrying up and down in trouble discontent and vexing, but we must have still and quiet hearts if we would receive mercy from the Lord: If a child throws and flings up and down for a thing, you will not give it him then when he cries so, but first you will have the child quiet, though perhaps you do intend the child shall have

the thing he cries for, but you will not give it him till he is quiet and comes and stands still before you and is contented without it and then you will give it him: and truly so doth the Lord deal with us, (for our dealing, with him are just as your froward children are with you) as soon as you would have a thing from God if you have it not you are disquieted presently and all in an uproar (as it were) in your spirits: God intends mercy to you, but saith God you shall not have it yet, I will see you quiet first, and then in the quietness of your hearts come to me and see what I will do with you. I appeal to you, you that are any way acquainted with the ways of God, have you not found this to be the way of God towards you, when you have been troubled for want perhaps of some spiritual comfort, and your hearts were vexed at it, you get nothing from God all that while; but now if you have got your heart into a quiet frame, and can say, well, it's fit the Lord should do with his poor creatures what he will, I am under his feet, and am resolved to do what I can to honour him; and let him do with me what he will I will seek him as long as I live, I will be content with what God gives; and whether he gives or no I will be content; yea, are you in this frame (saith God) now you shall have comfort, now I will give you the mercy. A prisoner must not think to get off his fetters by pulling and tearing, he may gall his flesh and rend it to the very bone, certainly he will be unfettered never the sooner, but if he would have his fetters taken off he must quietly give up himself to some man to take them off; If a beggar after he hath knocked once or twice at the door and you come not, and thereupon he is vexed and troubled and thinks much that you let him stand a little while without any thing, you think that this beggar is not fit to receive an alms, but if you hear two or three beggars at your door, and if you hear

them out of your window say, let us be content to stay, perhaps they are busy, it's fit that we should stay, it's well if we have any thing at last, we deserve nothing at all, and therefore we may well wait a while; you would then quickly send them an alms; so God deals with the heart, when it is in a disquiet way then God doth not give; but when the heart lies down quietly under God's hand, then is the heart in a fit frame to receive mercy: Your strength shall be to sit still (saith God,) you shall not be delivered from **Babylon** but by your sitting still.

2 As fit to receive mercy, **So fit to do service**, Oh the quiet fruits of righteousness, the peaceable fruits of righteousness; they indeed do prosper and multiply most when they come to be peaceable fruits of righteousness. As the Philosophers say of every thing that moves, nothing that moves but it moves upon something that is immovable; as a thing that moves upon the earth, if the earth were not still it could not move.

Objection. The ships move upon the Sea, and that is not still.

Answer. But the Seas they move upon that which is still and immovable, there is nothing moves but it hath something immovable that doth uphold it: The wheels in a Coach they move up and down, but the axletree that moves not up and down; so it is with the heart of a man. As they say of the Heaven, it moves up and down upon a pole that is immovable: so it is in the heart of a man, if he will move to do service to God he must have a steady heart within him, that must help him to move in the service of God, those that have unsteady disquiet spirits that have no steadfastness at all in them, they are not fit to do service for God, but such as have steadfastness in their spirits they are men and women fit to do any service, and that's the reason that when the Lord hath

any great work for any servants of his to do, usually he doth first quiet their spirits, he doth bring their spirits into a quiet sweet frame to be contented with any thing, and then he sets them about employment.

The Fifth excellency is this, **Contentment it does deliver us from abundance of temptations.** Oh the temptations that men of discontented spirits are subject to, the Devil loves to fish in troubled waters. That is our proverb of men and women, their disposition is to fish in troubled waters, they say it is good fishing in troubled waters. This is the maxim of the Devil, he loves to fish in troubled waters. Where he sees the spirits of men and women troubled and vexed, there the Devil comes. Says he, there is good fishing for me. When he sees men and women go discontented up and down and he can get them alone, then he comes with his temptations. Says he, Will you suffer such a thing? Take such a shifting indirect way? Do not you see how poor you are, others are brave? You know not what you shall do against winter, to provide fuel and get bread for you and your children. And so he tempts them to unlawful courses. This is the special distemper that the Devil fastens upon. When he brings men and women to give up their souls to him, it is upon discontent. That is the ground of all those that have been witches, and so have given up themselves to the Devil, the rise of it has been their discontent. And therefore it is observable that those the Devil works upon to make them witches, usually they are old and melancholy people, and women especially, and those that are of the poorer sort, that are discontent at home, their neighbors trouble them and vex them, and their spirits are weak and they cannot bear it, so upon that the Devil fastens his temptations and draws them to anything. If they be poor,

then he promises them money. If they have revengeful spirits, then he tells them that he will revenge them upon such and such persons. Now this quiets and contents them. Oh! there is matter of temptation for the Devil where he meets with a discontented spirit. As **Luther** says of God, God does not dwell in **Babylon**, but in **Salem**; **Babylon** signifies confusion, and **Salem** signifies peace. Now God does not dwell in spirits that are in a confusion, but He dwells in peaceable and quiet spirits. Oh if you would free yourselves from temptations, labor for Contentment. It is the peace of God that guards the heart from temptation. I remember I have read of one **Marius Curio** that when he had bribes sent him, to tempt him to be unfaithful to his country, he was sitting at home at dinner with a dish of turnips, and they came and promised him rewards. Says he, That man that can be contented with this fare that I have, will not be tempted with your rewards. I thank God I am content with this fare, and as for rewards let them be offered to those that cannot be content to dine with a dish of turnips. So the truth is we see it apparently, that the reason why many do betray their trust, as in the Parliament service and Kingdom, because they cannot be contented to be in a low condition. Let a man be contented to be in a low condition, and to go meanly clothed if God sees it fit, such a man is shot-free (as I may so say) from thousands of temptations of the Devil, that do prevail against others to the damning of their souls. Oh in such times as these are when men are in danger of the loss of their estates, I say these men that have not got this grace are in a most lamentable condition, they are in more danger for their souls than they are for their outward estates. You think it is a sad thing to be in danger of your outward estates that you may lose all in a night, but if you have not this contented

spirit within you, you are in more danger of the temptations of the Devil to be plundered that way of any good, and to be led into sin. Oh when men think thus, they must live as brave as they were wont to do, these men make themselves a prey to the Devil. But for such as can say let God do with me what He pleases, I am content to submit to His hand in it, the Devil will scarce meddle with such men. It is a notable speech of a Philosopher that lived upon mean fare, and as he was eating herbs and roots, says one to him, If you would but please **Dionysius** you need not eat herbs and roots: but he answered him thus, If you would but be content with such mean fare you need not flatter **Dionysius**. So temptations will no more prevail upon a contented man, than a dart that is thrown against a brazen wall. That is the Fifth particular.

The Sixth excellency is, **The abundant comforts in a man's life that Contentment will bring:** Contentment will make a man's life exceeding sweet and comfortable, nothing more than the grace of Contentment. Many ways I will show how it brings in Comfort.

1. As first, What a man has **he has it in a kind of Independent way**, not depending upon any Creature for his Comfort.

2. **A Contented man whose estate is low, if God raises his estate he has the love of God in it**, and then it is abundantly more sweet than if he had it and his heart not contented. For if he had not the love of God in it, for it may be God grants to a discontented man his desire, but he cannot say it is from love. If a man has quieted his spirit first, and then God grants him his desire, he may have more comfort in it, and more assurance that he has the love of God in it.

3. This Contentment is a comfort to a man's spirit in this, **that it does keep in his comforts, and keep out whatsoever may damp his comforts, or put out the light of them:** I may compare this Grace of Contentment to a Mariner's Lantern. A Mariner when he is at Sea let him have never so much provision in his ship, yet if he be thousands of leagues from land, or in a road that he shall not meet with a ship in three or four months, if he has never a Lantern in his ship, nor nothing whereby he can keep a Candle light in a storm, he will be in a sad condition. He would give a great deal to have a Lantern, or something that may serve in stead of it. When a storm comes in the night, and he cannot have any light come above-board, but is puffed out presently, his condition is very sad. So many men can have the light of comfort when there is no storm, but let there come but any affliction, any storm upon them their light is puffed out presently, and what shall they do now? When the heart is furnished with this Grace of Contentment; this Grace is (as it were) the Lantern, and it keeps comfort in the spirit of a man, light in the midst of a storm and tempest. When you have a Lantern in the midst of a storm you can carry a light everywhere up and down the ship to the top of the Mast if you will, and yet keep it light. So the comfort of a Christian when it is enlivened with the grace of Contentment, it may be kept light whatever storms or tempests come, yet he can keep light in his soul. Oh! this helps your comforts exceeding much.

Seventhly. **There is this Excellency in Contentment, that it fetches in the comfort of those things we have not really in possession;** and perhaps many that have not outward things, have more comfort than those have that do enjoy them themselves. As now, a man by distilling herbs, though he has not

the herbs themselves, yet having the water that is distilled out of them, he may enjoy the benefit of the herbs. So though a man has not the real possession of such an outward estate, an outward comfort, yet he by the grace of Contentment may fetch it in to himself. By the art of Navigation we can fetch in the riches of the East and West-Indies to ourselves; so by the art of Contentment we may fetch in the comfort of any condition to ourselves, that is, we may have that comfort by Contentment, that we should have if we had the thing itself. There is a notable story you have for this in **Plutarch**, in the life of **Pyrrhus**; one **Cineas** comes to him, and would very fain have had him desist from the wars, and not war with the Romans. Says he to him, May it please your Majesty, it is reported that the Romans are very good men of war, and if it please the gods we do overcome them, what benefit shall we have of that Victory? **Pyrrhus** answered him, We shall then straight conquer all the rest of **Italy** with ease. Says **Cineas**, Indeed it is likely which your Grace speaks: But when we have won **Italy**, will then our wars end? If the Gods were pleased said **Pyrrhus**, that the victory were achieved, the way were then broad open for us to attain great conquests, for who would not afterwards go into **Africa**, and so to **Carthage**? But (says **Cineas**) when we have all in our hands, what shall we do in the end? Then **Pyrrhus** laughing, told him again, we will then be quiet, and take our ease, and make feasts every day, and be as merry one with another as we can possibly. Says **Cineas**, What hinders us now to be as quiet, and merry together, since we enjoy that presently without further travel and trouble which we should go seek for abroad, with such shedding of blood, and so manifest danger: Cannot you sit down and be merry now? So a man may think, if I had such a thing, then

I would have another, and if I had that, then I should have more: and what if you had got all your desire? Then you would be content, why? You may be content now without them. Certainly our Contentment does not consist in the getting of the thing we desire, but in God's fashioning our spirits to our conditions. There are some men that have not a foot of ground of their own, yet will live better than other men that are heirs to a great deal of land. I have known it in the country sometimes, that a man lives upon his own land, and yet lives very poorly, but you shall have another man that shall farm his land, and yet by his good husbandry, and by his care shall live better sometimes than he that has the land of his own. So a man by this art of Contentment may live better without an estate than another man can of an estate. Oh! it adds exceeding much to the comfort of a Christian: and that I may show it farther, there is more comfort even in grace of Contentment than there is in any possessions whatsoever. A man has more comfort in being content without a thing, than he can have in the thing that he in a discontented way does desire.

You think, if I had such a thing, then I should be content. I say, There is more good in Contentment, than there is in the thing that you would fain have to cure your discontent, and that I shall open in diverse particulars, As thus,

1. I would fain have such a thing, and then I could be content; but if I had it then it were but the creature that did help to my Contentment; but now it is the Grace of God in my soul that makes me content. And surely it is better to be Content with the Grace of God in my soul, than with the enjoying of an outward comfort.

2. If I had such a thing, indeed my estate might be better, but my soul would not be better, but by Contentment my soul is better, that would not be bettered by an estate, or lands, or friends; but Contentment makes myself to be better. And therefore Contentment is a better portion than the thing is that I would fain have to be my portion.

3. If I get Content by having my desire satisfied, that is but self-love; but when I am Contented with the hand of God, and am willing to be at His disposal, that comes from my love to God in having my desire satisfied, there I am contented through self-love, but through the Grace of Contentment I come to be contented out of love to God. And is it not better to be contented from a principle of love to God, than from a principle of self-love?

4. If I am contented because I have that that I have a desire to, perhaps I am contented in that one particular, but that one particular does not furnish me with Contentment in another thing; perhaps I may grow more dainty and nice, and froward in other things. If you give children what they would have in some things, they grow so much the more coy and dainty, and discontented if they have not other things that they would have; but if I have once overcome my heart, and am contented through the grace of God in my heart, then this does not content me only in a particular, but in general, whatsoever befalls me. I am discontented, and would fain have such a thing, and afterwards I have it: now does this prepare me to be contented in other things? No, but when I have gotten this Grace of Contentment, I am prepared to be contented in all conditions: and thus you see that Contentment does bring comfort to a man's life, fills a man's life full of comfort in this world. Yea, the truth is, it is even a Heaven upon Earth, why? What is Heaven,

but the rest and quiet of a man's spirit? What is the special thing that is in Heaven, but rest, and joy, that makes the life of Heaven, there is rest and joy, and satisfaction in God: so it is here in a contented spirit, there is rest, and joy, and satisfaction in God. In Heaven, there is singing praises to God; a contented heart is always praising and blessing God; you have Heaven while you are upon earth when you have a contented spirit, yea, in some regards it is better than Heaven. How is that you will say? There is some kind of honor that God has in it, and some excellency that He has not in Heaven, and that is this,

In Heaven there is no overcoming of temptations, they are not put to any trials by afflictions: there in Heaven they have exercise of grace, but they have nothing but encouragement to it, and indeed those that are there their grace is perfect, and in that they do excel us. But there is nothing to cross their grace, they have no trials at all to tempt them to do contrary. But now for a man or woman to be in the midst of afflictions, temptations and troubles, and yet to have grace exercised, and yet to be satisfied in God and Christ, and in the Word and Promises in the midst of all they suffer, this may seem to be an honor that God has from us, that He has not from the Angels and Saints in Heaven. Is it so much for one that is in Heaven that has nothing else but good from God, has nothing to try them, no temptations, is that so much for them to be praising and blessing God, as for the poor soul that is in the midst of trials and temptations, and afflictions, and troubles? For this soul to go on praising and blessing, and serving God; I (say) it is an excellency that you shall not have in Heaven, and God shall not have this kind of glory from you in Heaven, and therefore be contented, and prize this Contentment, and be willing to live in this

world as long as God shall please, and do not think, Oh that I were delivered from all these afflictions and troubles herein this world! If you were, then you should have more ease to yourself: but here is a way of honoring God, and manifesting the excellency of Grace here when you are in this Conflict of temptation that God shall not have from you in Heaven, and therefore be satisfied and quiet, be contented with your Contentment. I want such and such things that others have, but blessed be God I have a contented heart that others have not, then I say be content with your Contentment, for that is a rich portion that the Lord has granted unto them, if the Lord should give unto you thousands here in this world, it would not be such a rich portion as this, that He has given you a contented spirit. Oh go away and praise the Name of God, and say, Lord, it is true these and these comforts that others have I should be glad if I had them, but Thou hast cut me short, but though I want these, yet Thou hast given me that that is as good and better, Thou hast given me a quiet contented heart, to be willing to be at Thy dispose.

SERMON 7



PHILIPPIANS. 4.11. For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

— We proceed now. There are some two or three things more of the excellency of Contentment and then we are to proceed to Application of the point.

The Eighth excellency is, **Contentment is a great blessing of God upon the Soul.** There is God's blessing upon those that are content, the blessing of God is upon them, and their estates, and upon all that they have. We read in **Deuteronomy** of the blessing of **Judah** the principal Tribe; this is the blessing of **Judah, And he said hear Lord the voice of Judah and bring him unto his people, let his hands be sufficient for him, and be thou an help to him from his enemies.** Let his hand be sufficient for him, that is, bring in a sufficiency of all good unto him that he may have of his own, that's the blessing of **Judah.** So when God gives you a sufficiency of your own, (as every contented man has) there is the blessing of God upon you, the blessing of the principal Tribe of **Judah** is upon you. It is the Lord that gives us all things to enjoy, we may have the thing and yet not enjoy it except God comes in with his blessing now whatsoever you have you

do enjoy it: Many men have estates and do not enjoy them, it's the blessing of God that gives us all things to enjoy, it is God that through his blessing, has fashioned your heart and made it suitable to your condition.

The Ninth excellency, **Those that are content they may expect reward from God, that God shall give unto them the good of all those things that they are contented to be without**, and this brings in abundance of good to a contented spirit: There is such and such a mercy that you think would be very comfortable unto you if you had it, but can you bring your heart to submit to God in it? You shall have the blessing of the mercy one way or other; if you have not the thing itself in **re**; you shall have it made up one way or other, you shall have a bill of exchange to receive somewhat in lieu of it, there is no comfort that any soul is content to be without, but the Lord will give either the comfort or somewhat instead of it: You shall have a reward to your soul for whatever good thing you are content to be without. You know what the Scripture says of active obedience, and the Lord does accept (of his servants) their will for the deed, though we do not do a good thing, yet if our hearts be upright, to will to do it, we shall have the blessing though we do not do the thing: You that complain of weakness, you cannot do as others do, you cannot do as much service as others do, if your hearts be as upright with God, and would fain do the same service that you see others do, you would account it a great blessing of God upon you, the greatest blessing in the world if you were able to do as others do; now you may comfort yourselves with this, having to deal with God in the way of the Covenant of Grace you shall have from God the reward of all you will do, as a wicked man shall have punishment for all the sin he

would commit, so you shall have the reward for all the good you would do. Now may not we draw an argument from active obedience to passive; there is as good reason why you should expect that God will reward you for all that you are willing to suffer, as well as for all that you are willing to do, now if you are willing to be without such a comfort and mercy when God sees it fit, you shall be no loser, certainly God will reward you either with the comfort or with that that shall be as good to you as the comfort, therefore consider how many things have I that others want, and can I bring my heart into a quiet contented frame to want what others have? I have the blessing of all that they have, and I shall either possess such things as others have, or else God will make it up one way or other, either here, or hereafter in eternity to me; Oh what riches are here! With Contentment you have all kind of riches.

Tenthly and lastly, By contentation **the soul comes to an excellency near to God himself, yea the nearest that may be**, for this word that is translated **Content**, it is a word that signifies **a Self-sufficiency**, as I told you in the opening of the words. A contented man is a self-sufficient man, what is the great glory of God but to be happy and self-sufficient in himself? Indeed he is said to be All-sufficient, but that's but a further addition of the word All, rather than of any matter, for to be sufficient, is All-sufficient, now is this the glory of God to be Sufficient, to have sufficiency in himself, **El-shaddai**, to be God having sufficiency in himself? Now you come near to this, you partake of the Divine Nature, as by grace in general, so in a more peculiar manner by this grace of Christian Contentment, what's the excellency and glory of God but this? Suppose there were no creatures in the world, and that all the creatures in the world were annihilated,

God would remain the same blessed God that he is now, he would not be in a worse condition if all creatures were gone, neither would a contented heart if God should take away all creatures from him, a contented heart has enough in the want of all creatures and would not be more miserable than now he is. Suppose that God should continue you here, and all creatures that are here in this world were taken away, yet you still (having God to be your portion) would be as happy as now you are, and therefore contentation has a great deal of excellency in it.

Thus we have showed in many particulars the excellency of this grace, laboring to present the beauty of it before your souls that you may be in love with it.

Now my brethren what remains but the practice of this, for this Art of Contentment it's not a Speculative thing, only for contemplation, but it is an art of Divinity, and therefore practical, ye are now to labor to work upon your hearts, that there may be this grace in you, that you may honor God and honor your profession with this grace of Contentment, for there is none does more honor God, and honor their profession than those that have this grace of Contentment. Now that we may fall upon the practice, there is required,

First, **That we should be humbled in our hearts for the want of this, that we have had so little of this grace in us.** For there is no way to set upon any duty with profit, till the heart be humbled for the want of the performance of the duty before; many men when they hear of a duty that they should perform, they will labor to perform it, but first you must be humbled for the want of it, therefore that's the thing that I shall endeavor in the Application, to get your hearts to be humbled for the want of this

grace; Oh had I had this grace of Contentment, what a happy life I might have lived? What abundance of honor I might have brought to the Name of God? And how might I have honored my profession? And what a deal of comfort might I have enjoyed? But the Lord knows it has been far otherwise, Oh how far have I been from this grace of Contentment that has been opened to me? I have had a murmuring, a vexing and a fretting heart within me, every little cross has put me out of temper and out of frame, Oh the boisterousness of my spirit, what a deal of evil does God see in my heart, in the vexing and fretting of my heart, and murmuring and repining of my spirit? Oh that God would make you to see it: Now to the end that you might be humbled for the want of this, I shall endeavor in these particulars to speak unto it.

First, I shall set before you, **The evil of a murmuring spirit, there is more evil than you are aware of.**

In the Second place, **I will show you some aggravations of this evil,** It's evil in all, but in some more than in others.

Thirdly, **I shall labor to take away the pleas that any murmuring discontented heart has for this distemper of his.**

There's these Three things in this use of humiliation of the Soul for the want of this grace of Contentment.

For the first, now at this time. The great evil that there is in a murmuring discontented heart.

In the first place, **This your murmuring and discontentedness it argues much corruption that is in the Soul,** as Contentment argues much grace, and strong grace, and beautiful grace; so this argues much corruption, and strong corruption, and

very vile corruptions in your heart. As it is in a man's body, if a man's body be of that temper that every scratch of a pin makes his flesh to rankle and to be a sore, you will say, surely this man's body is very corrupt, his blood and his flesh is corrupt, that every scratch of a pin shall make it rankle, so it is in your spirit; if every little trouble and affliction shall make you discontented, and make you murmur, and even cause your spirit within you to rankle, or as it is in a wound in a man's body, the evil of a wound, it is not so much in the largeness of the wound, and the abundance of blood that comes out of the wound, but in the inflammation that there is in it, or in a fretting and corroding humor that is in the wound; an unskillful man when he comes and sees a large wound in the flesh, looks upon it as a dangerous wound, and when he sees a great deal of blood gush out, he thinks these are the evils of it, but when a Surgeon comes and sees a great gash, says he, this will be healed within a few days, but there's a less wound and there's an inflammation or a fretting humor that is in it, and this will cost time (says he) to cure, so that he does not lay balsam and healing salves upon it, but his great care is to get out the fretting humor, or inflammation, so that the thing that must heal this wound it is some drink to purge; But (says the patient) what good will this do to my wound? You give me somewhat to drink, and my wound is in my arm, or in my leg, what good will this do that I put in my stomach? Yes it purges out the fretting humor, or takes away the inflammation, and till that be taken away the salves can do no good. So it is just for all the world in the souls of men, it may be there is some affliction upon them that I compare to the wound; now they think that the greatness of the affliction is that that makes their condition most miserable: Oh no, there is a fretting humor, an inflammation in the

heart, a murmuring spirit that is within you and that is the misery of your condition, and that must be purged out of you before you can be healed, and let God do with you what he will, till he purges out that fretting humor your wound will not be healed; a murmuring heart is a very sinful heart, so that when you are troubled for such an affliction, you had need turn your thoughts, rather to be troubled for the murmuring of your heart, for that's the greatest trouble, there is an affliction upon you and that is grievous, but there is a murmuring heart within and that's more grievous. Oh that we could but convince men and women that a murmuring spirit is a greater evil than any affliction, let the affliction be what it will be. We shall show more afterward that a murmuring spirit is the evil of the evil, and the misery of the misery.

Secondly, **The evil of murmuring is such, that God when he would speak of wicked men, and describe them, and show the brand of a wicked and ungodly man or woman, he instances in this sin in a more special manner:** I might name many Scriptures, but that Scripture in **Jude** is a most remarkable one, in the 14th verse, and so forward, there it is said, **That the Lord comes with ten thousands of his Saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.** Mark here in this 15th verse, there is four times mentioned ungodly ones; All that are **ungodly** among them, all their **ungodly** deeds which they have **ungodly** committed, and of all their hard speeches, which **ungodly** sinners have spoken against him: This is in the general. But now he comes in the particular to show

who these are, these are (saith he) Murmurers: that is the very first. Would you know who are ungodly men, that God when he comes with ten thousand of Angels shall come to punish for all their ungodly deeds that they do, and those that speak ungodly things against them; These ungodly ones are murmurers, murmurers in the Scripture are put in the forefront of ungodly ones, it is a most dreadful Scripture, that the Lord when he speaks of ungodly ones puts murmurers in the very forefront of all, you had need look to your spirits, you may see that this murmuring, which is the vice contrary to this Contentment is not so small a matter as you think. You think you are not so ungodly as others, because you do not swear and drink as others do, but you may be ungodly in murmuring, it is true there is no sin but some seeds and remainders of it are in those that are godly, but when they are under the power of this sin of murmuring, it doth convince them to be ungodly, as well as if they were under the power of drunkenness, or whoredom, or any other sin, God will look upon you as ungodly for this sin as well as for any sin whatsoever. This one Scripture should make the heart shake at the thought of the sin of murmuring.

Thirdly, As it is made a brand of ungodly men, so you shall find in Scripture **that God accounts it rebellion**, that is contrary to the worship that there was in contentedness: that is worshipping of God, crouching to God and falling down before him, even as a dog that would crouch when you hold a staff over him, but a murmuring heart it is a rebellious heart, and that you shall find if you compare two Scriptures together, they are both in the book of **Numbers 16:41. But on the morrow** (saith the text) **all the congregation of the Children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people**

of the Lord. They all murmured, now compare this with the Chapter 17 and verse 10. **And the Lord said unto Moses, Bring Aarons rod again, before the testimony to be kept for a token against the Rebels.** In the 16th Chapter they murmured against **Moses** and **Aaron**, and in the 17th Chapter bring the rod of **Aaron** again, before the testimony, for a token against the **Rebels**. So that to be a murmurer, and to be a Rebel you see in Scripture phrase is all one, It is a rebellion against God: as it is the beginning of rebellion and sedition in a kingdom when the people are discontent, and when discontentment comes it grows to murmuring, and you can go into no house almost but there is murmuring when men are discontent, so that within a little while it breaks forth into sedition or rebellion. Murmuring it is but as the smoke of the fire, there is first a smoke and smother before the flame breaks forth, and so before open rebellion in a kingdom there is first a smoke of murmuring, and then it breaks forth into open rebellion; but because it hath rebellion in the seeds of it therefore it is accounted before the Lord to be rebellion. Wilt thou be a Rebel against God? When thou feelest thy heart discontented and murmuring against the dispensations of God towards thee, thou shouldest check thy heart thus, Oh thou wretched heart, what wilt thou be a Rebel against God? Wilt thou rise in a way of Rebellion against the infinite God? Yet thus thou hast done, charge thy heart with this sin of rebellion, you that are guilty of this sin of murmuring you are this day by the Lord charged as being guilty of Rebellion against him, and God expects that when you go home you should humble your souls before him for this sin, that you should charge your souls for being guilty of rebellion against God, many of you may say, I never thought that I had been a Rebel

against God before, I thought that I had many infirmities, but now I see the Scripture speaks of sin in another manner than men do, the Scripture makes men (though but murmurers) to be Rebels against God, Oh this rebellious heart that I have against the Lord that hath manifested itself in this way of murmuring against the Lord? That is a Third particular in the evil of discontentment.

A Fourth particular in the evil of Discontentment, **it is a wickedness that is exceeding contrary to Grace, and especially contrary to the work of God, in bringing of the soul home to himself**; I know no distemper more opposite and contrary to the work of God in conversion of a sinner, than this is.

Question. What is the work of God when he brings a sinner home to himself?

Answer. The usual way is for God to make the soul to see and be sensible of the dreadful evil that there is in sin, and the great breach that sin hath made between God and it, for certainly Jesus Christ can never be known in his beauty and excellency till the soul know that. I do not speak what secret work of the Holy Ghost there may be in the soul, but before the soul can actually apply Jesus Christ to itself, it is impossible but it must come to know the evil of sin, and the excellency of Jesus Christ: there may be a seed of faith put into the soul, but the soul must first know Christ, and know sin, and be made sensible of it. Now how contrary is this sin of murmuring to any such work of God; hath God made me see the dreadful evil of sin, and made my soul to be sensible of the evil of sin as the greatest burden? How can I then be so much troubled for every little affliction? Certainly if I saw what the evil of sin were, that sight would swallow up all other evils, and if I were burdened with the evil of sin, it would swallow up all other burdens;

what am I now murmuring against Gods hand (saith such a soul) when as a while ago the Lord made me see myself to be a damned wretch, and apprehend it as a wonder that I am not in Hell?

2. Yea, it is mighty contrary to the sight of the infinite excellency and glory of Jesus Christ, and of the things of the Gospel. What am I that soul that the Lord hath discovered such infinite excellency of Jesus Christ to? And yet shall I think such a little affliction to be so grievous to me, when I have had the sight of such glory in Christ that is more worth than ten thousand worlds? (For so will a true convert say) Oh! the Lord at such a time hath given me that sight of Christ that I would not be without for ten thousand thousand worlds; but hath God given thee that, and wilt thou be discontent for a trifle in comparison to that?

3. A Third work when God brings the soul home to himself it is, **By taking the heart off from the Creature, the disengaging the heart from all Creature-comforts:** that is the Third work ordinarily that the soul may perceive of itself. It is true, Gods work may be altogether in the seeds in him, but in the several actings of the soul in turning to God it may perceive these things in it; the disengagement of the heart from the creature, that is the calling off the soul from the world, **Whom the Lord hath called he hath justified:** what is the calling of the soul but this, the soul that was before seeking for Contentment in the world, and cleaving to the creature, now the Lord calls the soul out of the world, and saith, Oh soul, thy happiness is not here, thy rest is not here, thy happiness is elsewhere, and thy heart must be loosened from all these things that are here below in the world; and this is the work of God in the soul to disengage the heart from the creature, and how contrary is a murmuring heart to such a thing; a thing that is

glued to another you cannot take off, but you must rend it, so it is a sign thy heart is glued to the world, that when God would take thee off, thy heart rends, if God by an affliction should come to take any thing in the world from thee, if thou canst part from it with ease without rending, it is a sign then that thy heart is not glued to the world.

4. A Fourth work of God in the converting of a sinner, is this, **The casting of the soul upon Jesus Christ for all its good:** I see Jesus Christ in the Gospel the Fountain of all good, and God out of free Grace tendering him to me for life, and for salvation, and now my soul casts itself, rolls itself upon the infinite Grace of God in Christ for all good; now hast thou done so? Hath God converted thee, and drawn thee to his Son to cast thy soul upon him for all thy good, and yet thou discontented for the want of some little matter in a creature-comfort? Art thou he that hath cast thy soul upon Jesus Christ for all good? As he saith in another case, Is this thy faith?

5. **The Soul is subdued to God;** and then it comes to receive Jesus Christ as a King, to rule, to order and dispose of him how he pleases, and so the heart is subdued unto God. Now how opposite is a murmuring discontented heart to a heart subdued to Jesus Christ as a King, and receiving him as a Lord to rule and dispose of him as he pleases.

6. There is in the work of your turning to God the giving up of yourself to God in an everlasting Covenant. As you take Christ the Head of the Covenant to be yours, so you give up yourself to Christ. In the work of Conversion there is the resignation of the Soul wholly to God in an everlasting Covenant to be his. Have you ever surrendered up yourself to God in an everlasting Covenant? Then

certainly this your fretting, murmuring heart is mighty opposite to it, certainly you forget this Covenant of yours, and the Resignation of yourself up to God. It would be of marvelous help to you to humble your Souls when you are in a murmuring condition. If you could but obtain so much liberty of your own spirits as to look back to see what the work of God was in converting you, there is nothing would prevail more than to think of that. I am now in a murmuring discontented way, but how did I feel my soul working when God did turn my Soul to himself? Oh how opposite is this to that work, and how unseemly? Oh what shame and confusion would come upon the spirits of men and women, if they could but compare the work of corruption in their murmuring and discontent, with the work of God that was upon their Souls in conversion. Now we should labor to keep the work of God upon our Souls that was at our Conversion. For Conversion must not be only at one instant at first: men are deceived in this, if they think their Conversion is finished merely at first. You must be in a way of conversion to God all the days of your life, and therefore Christ says to his Disciples, except you be converted and become as little children: **You be Converted**, why, were they not converted before? Yes they were converted, but they were still to continue the work of Conversion all the days of their lives, and what work of God there is at the first Conversion it is to abide afterwards. As thus, always there must abide some sight and sense of sin, it may be not in the way which you had, which was rather a preparation than anything else, but the sight and sense of sin it is to continue still. That is, you are still to be sensible of the burden of sin as it is against the Holiness, and Goodness, and Mercy of God unto you, and the sight of the excellency of Jesus Christ is to continue, and your calling out

of the Creature: and your casting of your Soul upon Christ, and your receiving Christ as a King, still receive him day by day, and the subduing of your heart, and the surrendering of yourself up to God in a way of Covenant. Now if this were but daily continued there would be no space nor time for murmuring to work upon your heart: that is the Fourth Particular.

The Fifth thing in the evil of discontentment, **Murmuring and discontentment is exceedingly below a Christian.** Oh! it is too mean and base a distemper for a Christian to give place to it. Now it is below a Christian in many respects.

1. How below the relation of a Christian? The relation in which you stand. With what relation (you will say)?

First, The relation you stand in to God: Do you not call God your father? And do you not stand in relation to him as a child? What? you murmur? In 2 **Samuel** 13:4 it is a speech of **Jonadab to Amnon, Why are you, being the King's Son, lean from day to day, will you not tell me?** and so he told him; (but that was for a wicked cause). He perceived that his spirit was troubled, for otherwise he was of a fat and plump temper of body, but because of trouble of spirit he was even pined away. Why? what is the matter? You that stand in this relation to the King and yet anything should trouble your heart, (that is his meaning) is there anything that should disquiet your heart, and yet stand in such a relation to the King, the King's Son? So I may say to a Christian, Are you the King's Son, the Son, the Daughter of the King of Heaven, and yet so disquieted and troubled, and vexed at every little thing that falls out? As if a King's Son should cry out, he is undone for losing a bauble, what an unworthy thing were this. So do you, you cry out as if you were undone, and yet a King's Son. You that stand

in such relation to God, as unto a father, you do dishonor your father in this; as if either he had not wisdom, or not power, or not mercy enough to provide for you.

2. The relation that you stand in to Jesus Christ, you are the spouse of Christ: what! one married to Jesus Christ and yet troubled and discontented? Have you not enough in him? Does not Christ say to his spouse, as **Elkanah** said to **Hannah**, (1 **Samuel** 1:8) **Am not I better to thee than ten sons?** So does not Christ your husband say to you, Am not I better to you than thousands of riches and comforts? Such comforts as you murmur for want of. Has not God given you his Son? And will he not with him give you all things? Has the love of God been to you to give you his Son in way of marriage? Why are you discontented and murmuring? Consider your relation to Jesus Christ, as you are a spouse and married to him, his person is yours, and so all the riches of Jesus Christ is yours, as the riches of a husband are the wife's. And though there are some husbands so vile as the wives may be forced to sue for maintenance; certainly Jesus Christ will never deny maintenance to his spouse. It is a dishonor for a husband to have the wife go whining up and down. What, you are matched with Christ and are his spouse, and will you murmur now and be discontented in your spirit? You shall observe among those that are newly matched, when there is discontent between the wife and the husband, their friends will shake their heads and say, they do not meet with that that they did expect. You see ever since they were married together how the man looks, and the woman looks, they are not so cheerful as they were wont to be, surely (say they) it is like to prove an ill match. But it is not so here, it shall not be so between you and Christ. Oh Jesus Christ does not love to see his

spouse to have a lowering countenance: no man loves to see discontentment in the face of his wife, surely Christ does not love to see discontentment in the face of his spouse.

3. **You stand in relation to Christ** not only as a spouse, but as **a member, You are bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh.** And to have a member of Jesus Christ to be in such a condition, it is exceeding unworthy.

4. **He is your Elder brother likewise, and so you are a Co-heir with him.**

5. **The relation that you stand in to the Spirit of God,** you are the Temple of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost is your Comforter, it is he that is appointed to convey all comfort from the Father and the Son, to the Souls of his people. And are you the Temple of the Holy Ghost, and does he dwell in you, and yet for all that you murmur for every little matter.

6. **The relation that you stand in to the Angels, you are made one body with them:** for so Christ has joined principalities and powers with his Church, they are Ministering Spirits for good to his people, to supply what they need, and you, and they are joined together, and Christ is the head of you and Angels.

7. **The relation that you stand in to the Saints, you are of the same body with them,** they and you make up but one mystical body with Jesus Christ, and if they be happy you must needs be happy. Oh how beneath a Christian is a murmuring Spirit if he considers his relations in which he stands.

Secondly, A Christian should consider, **That murmuring and discontentedness is below the high dignities that God has put upon him:** Do but consider the high dignity that God

has put upon you. The meanest Christian in the world is a lord of heaven and earth; he has made us Kings unto himself, Kings unto God, not Kings unto men to rule over them, and yet I say every Christian is lord of heaven and earth, yea of life and death. That is, as Christ he is Lord of all, so he has made those that are his members to be lords of all, all are yours says the Apostle, even life and death, everything is yours. It is a very strange expression that death should be theirs, death is yours, that is, you are as it were lords over it, you have that that shall make death to be your servant, your slave, even death itself, your greatest enemies are turned to be your slaves. Faith makes a Christian to be as lord over all, to be lifted up in excellency above all creatures that ever God made except the Angels, yea and in some respect above them. I say the poorest Christian that lives is raised to an estate above all the creatures in the world except Angels, yea and above them in diverse respects too, and yet discontented, that you who were as a firebrand of hell, and might have been scorching and yelling and roaring there to all eternity, yet that God should raise you to have a higher excellency in you than there is in all the works of creation that ever he made except Angels, and other Christians that are in your condition. Yea and you are nearer the Divine Nature than the Angels, because your nature is joined in a hypostatic union to the Divine Nature, and in that respect your nature is more honored than the nature of the Angels. And the death of Christ is yours, he died for you and not for the Angels, and therefore you are like to be raised above the Angels in diverse respects. Yea you that are in such an estate as this is, you that are set apart to the end that God might manifest to all eternity what the infinite power of a Deity is able to raise a creature to; for that is the condition of a Saint, a

Believer, his condition is such as he is set apart to the end that God might manifest to all eternity what his infinite power is able to do to make the creature happy. Are you in such a condition? Oh! how low and beneath this condition is a murmuring and discontented heart for want of some outward comforts here in this world. How unseemly is it that you should be a slave to every cross, that every affliction shall be able to say to your soul, bow down to us. We accounted that a great slavery, when men would say to our souls, bow down. As the cruel Prelates were wont to do in imposing things upon men's consciences, they did in effect say, let your consciences, your souls bow down to us, that we may tread upon them. That is the greatest slavery in the world, that one man should say to another, let your consciences, your souls bow down that we may tread upon them. But will you suffer every affliction to say, bow down that we may tread upon you? Truly it is so, when your heart is overcome with murmuring and discontent: Know that those afflictions which have caused you to murmur, have said to you, bow down that we may tread upon you. Nay, not afflictions, but the very Devil does prevail against you in this. Oh! how beneath is this to the happy estate that God has raised a Christian unto! What! the son of a King, shall he have every base fellow to come and bid him bow down that he may tread upon his neck? Thus do you in every affliction: the affliction, the cross, and trouble that does befall you, says bow down that we come and tread upon you.

Thirdly, **Murmuring it is below the Spirit of a Christian.** Below his Spirit, the Spirit of every Christian should be like the Spirit of his Father. Every father loves to see his spirit in his child, loves to see his image, not the image of his body only, to say, Here is a child for all the world like the father, but he has the spirit of his

father too. A father that is a man of spirit loves to see his spirit in his child, rather than the feature of his body. Oh, the Lord that is our Father loves to see His Spirit in us. Great men love to see great spirits in their children, and the great God loves to see a great Spirit in His Children. We are one Spirit with God, and with Christ, and one Spirit with the Holy Ghost; therefore we should have a Spirit that might manifest the glory of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in our Spirits; that is the spirit of a Christian indeed. The spirit of a Christian should be a lion-like Spirit, as Jesus Christ is the Lion of the Tribe of **Judah**, (so He is called) so we should manifest somewhat of the Lion-like Spirit of Jesus Christ. He manifested His Lion-like Spirit in passing through all afflictions and troubles whatsoever without any murmuring against God. When He came to drink that bitter cup, and even the dregs of it, He prayed to God (indeed) that if it were possible it might pass from Him, but presently, Not my will, but Thy will be done. As soon as ever He did mention the passing of the cup from Him, (though it were the most dreadful cup that ever was drunk since the world began, yet at the mentioning of it) Not my will, but Thy will be done. Here Christ showed a Lion-like Spirit in going through all kind of afflictions whatsoever without any murmuring against God in them. Now a murmuring spirit is a base dejected spirit, cross and contrary to the Spirit of a Christian, and it is very base. I remember that the Heathens accounted it very base. **Plutarch** does report of a certain people that did use to manifest their disdain to men that were overmuch dejected by any affliction, they did condemn them to this punishment: to wear women's clothes all their days, or such a space of time at least they should go in women's clothes in token of shame and disgrace to them because they had

such effeminate spirits; they thought it against a manlike spirit, and therefore seeing they did unman themselves they should go as women. Now shall they account it an unmanlike spirit, to be overmuch dejected in afflictions; and shall not a Christian account it an unchristian-like spirit to be overmuch dejected by any affliction whatsoever? I remember another compares murmuring spirits to children when they are weaning. What a deal of stir have you with your children when you wean them, how froward and vexing are they? So when God would wean you from some outward comforts in this world, Oh how fretting and discontented are you! Children will not sleep themselves, nor let their mothers sleep when they are weaning; and so when God would wean us from the world, and we fret, vex, and murmur, this is a childish spirit.

Fourthly, **It is below the profession of a Christian.** The profession of a Christian, what is that? A Christian's profession is to be dead to the world, and to be alive to God; that is his profession, to have his life to be hid with Christ in God, to satisfy himself in God. What is this your profession? And yet if you have not everything that you would have, to murmur and be discontent, you do in that even deny your profession.

Fifthly, **It is below that special Grace of faith.** Faith is that which does overcome the world; it is that which makes all the promises of God to be ours. Now when you took upon you the profession of Religion, did God ever promise you that you should live at ease, and quiet, and have no trouble? I remember **Austin** has such an expression: What is this your faith? What did I ever promise you, (says he) that you should ever flourish in the world? Are you a Christian to that end? And is this your faith? I never made any such promise to you when you took upon you to be a Christian.

Oh, it is mighty contrary to your profession; you have never a promise for this, that you should not have such an affliction upon you. And a Christian should live by his faith; it is said, that the just do live by faith. Now you should not look after any other life but the life that you have by faith. Now you have no ground for your faith, to believe that you should be delivered out of such an affliction; and then, why should you account it such a great evil to be under such an affliction? Certainly that good that we have in the ground for our faith, it is enough to content our hearts here, and to all eternity. A Christian should be satisfied with that which God has made to be the object of his faith; the object of his faith is high enough to satisfy his soul, were it capable of a thousand times more than it is. Now if you may have the object of your faith full, you have enough to content your soul. And know that when you are discontented for want of such and such comforts, if you would but think thus: God did never promise me that I should have these Comforts, and at this time, and in such a way as I would have, but I am discontented because I have not these which God did never yet promise me, and therefore I sin much against the Gospel, and against the grace of faith.

There is yet another thing, It is below the hopes of Christians: Oh! The most glorious things that the Saints hope for.

And against the helps that Christians have; Christians have great helps that may help them against murmuring.

And it is against that which God expects from Christians. God He expects other manner of things from them than this.

Yea, and it is below that which God has from other Christians. These things I shall open at another time.

SERMON 8



Philippians 4:1. _ For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

— I mentioned various things the last day to set out the evil of discontent. I shall name two or three more.

Sixthly, it is below a Christian in this, **because it is below those helps that a Christian has more than others have.** They have the promises to help them that others have not. It is not so much to have a **Nabal** have his heart sink, because he has nothing but the creature to uphold him, but it is much for a Christian that has promises and ordinances to uphold his spirit which others have not.

Seventhly, **it is below the expectation that God has of Christians,** for God expects not only that they should be patient in afflictions, but that they should rejoice and triumph in them. Now Christians, when God expects this from you, for you not so much as to have attained to contentedness under afflictions, oh this is beneath the expectation of God from you.

Eighthly, **it is below that that God has had from other Christians.** Others have not only been contented with little crosses, but they have triumphed under great afflictions; they have

suffered the spoiling of their goods with joy. Read but the latter part of the eleventh of **Hebrews**, and you shall find what great things God has had from His people, and therefore not to be content with smaller crosses, this must needs be a great evil.

The sixth evil that there is in a murmuring spirit, is this: **By murmuring you undo your prayers, for it is exceeding contrary to the prayers that you make unto God.** When you come to prayer to God, you acknowledge His sovereignty over you; you come there to profess yourselves to be at God's disposal. What do you pray for except you acknowledge that you are at His disposal? Except you will stand (as it were) at His disposal, never come to petition to Him. If you will come to petition Him, and yet will be your own carver, you go cross to your prayers, to come as if you would beg your bread at your Father's gates every day, and yet you must do what you wish; this is the undoing of the prayers of a Christian. I remember I have read of **Latimer** that speaking concerning **Peter** that denied his Master, (said he) **Peter** forgot his Pater Noster, for that was, **hallowed be Thy name, and Thy kingdom come.** So we may say, when you have murmuring and discontented hearts you forget your prayers, you forget what you have prayed for. For you must make the Lord's Prayer to be as a pattern for your prayers though you say not always the same words. What do you pray, **but give us this day our daily bread?** For that is Christ's intention that we should have that as a pattern, and is a directory (as it were) how to make our prayers. Now God does not teach any of you to pray, Lord give me so much a year, or let me have such kind of cloth, and so many dishes at my table, Christ does not teach you to pray so; but He teaches us to

pray, **Lord give us our bread**, showing that you should be content with a little. What, have you not bread to eat? I hope there is none of you here but have that.

Objection. But I do not know if I should die what should become of my children. Or if I have bread now I know not where I shall have it the next week, or where I shall have provision for the winter.

Answer. Where did Christ teach us to pray, Lord give us provision for so long a time? No, but if we have bread for this day Christ would have us content. Therefore when we murmur because we have not so much variety as others have, we do (as it were) forget our **Pater Noster**; it is against our prayers. We do not in our lives hold forth the acknowledgement of the sovereignty of God over us as we seem to acknowledge in our prayers. Therefore when at any time you find your hearts murmuring then do but reflect upon yourselves and think thus: is this according to my prayers, wherein I held forth the sovereign power and authority that God had over me?

The seventh thing that I add for the evil of discontentment, is, the woeful effects that come to a discontented heart from murmuring. I will name you five; there are five evil effects that come from a murmuring spirit.

1. **By murmuring and discontent in your hearts, you come to lose a great deal of time.** How many times do men and women when they are discontented let their thoughts run, and are musing and contriving through their present discontentedness; then let their discontented thoughts be working in them, for some hours together, and they spend their time in vain. When you are

alone you should spend your time in holy meditation, but you are spending your time in discontented thoughts. You who complain that you cannot meditate, you cannot think on good things, but if you begin to think of them a little, presently your thoughts are off from them, but if you be discontented with any thing, then you can go alone, and muse, and roll things up and down in your thoughts to feed a discontented humor. Oh labor to see this evil effect of murmuring, the losing of your time.

2. It does make you unfit for duty. A man or woman that is in a contented frame, you may turn such a one to any thing at any time, he is fit to go to God at any time; but when one is in a discontented condition, then a man or woman is exceedingly unfit for the service of God. And it causes many distractions in duty, it makes you unfit for duty, and when you come to perform duties, oh the distractions that are in your duties, when your spirits are discontented. When you hear of any ill news from sea and cannot bear it, or of any ill from a friend, or any loss or cross, oh what distractions do they cause in the performance of holy duties! When you should be in enjoying communion with God, you are distracted in your thoughts about the cross that has befallen you, whereas had you but a quiet spirit, though there should great crosses befall you, yet they would never hinder you in the performance of any duty.

3. Consider what wicked risings of heart, and resolutions of spirit there are many times in a discontented fit. In some discontented fits the heart rises against God, and against others, and sometimes has even desperate resolutions what to do to help themselves. If the Lord should have suffered you to have done (sometimes in a discontented fit) what you had thought to

do, what wonderful misery had you brought upon yourselves! Oh it was a mercy of God that did stop you. Had not God stopped you, but let you go on when you thought to help yourselves this way and the other way, oh it had been ill with you. Do you but remember those risings of heart and wicked resolutions that sometimes you have had in a discontented mood, and learn to be humbled upon that.

4 Unthankfulness, that is an evil and a wicked effect that comes from discontent. Unthankfulness the Scripture does rank among very great sins. For men and women that are discontent though they enjoy many mercies from God, yet they are thankful for none of them, for this is the vile nature of discontentment, to lessen every mercy of God, to make those mercies they have from God to be as nothing to them, because they have not what they would have. Sometimes it is so even in spiritual things, if they have not all they would have, the comforts that they would have, then what they have is nothing to them, do you think that God will take this well? If you should give a friend, a kinsman, a purse of money to go and trade withal, and he should come and say, what do you give me? They are but a few counters, they will do me no good: you cannot bear this at his hand if he should do so, because he has not as much money as he would: So for you to be ready to say, All that God has given me is nothing worth, will do me no good, they are but counters; though they are the precious Graces of God's Spirit that are more worth than thousands of worlds, yet for you to say, they are nothing, they are but common gifts, and all is but in hypocrisy, all counterfeit, Oh! What an unthankful thing is this! The graces of God's Spirit are nothing to a discontented heart that has not all that it would have; and so for

outward blessings, though God has given you health of body, and strength, and has given you some competency for your family, some way of livelihood, yet because you are disappointed in somewhat that you would have therefore all is nothing unto you; Oh! What unthankfulness is here? God expects that every day you should spend some time in blessing His Name for what mercy He has granted unto you, there is not any one of you who are in the lowest condition but you have abundance of mercies to bless God for, but discontentedness makes them nothing. It is an excellent speech that I remember **Luther** has, (says he) This is the Rhetoric of the Spirit of God, (it is a very fine speech of his) to extenuate evil things, and to amplify good things; if there falls out a cross, to make the cross to be but little, but if there be a mercy to make the mercy to be great; as thus, If there be a cross, if the Spirit of God prevails in the heart, such a man or woman will wonder that it is no greater, and will bless God that though there be such a cross, yet that it is no more; that is the work of the Spirit of God; and if there be a mercy, wonders at God's goodness that God granted so great a mercy: The Spirit of God extenuates evils and crosses, and does magnify and amplify all mercies, and makes all mercies seem to be great, and all afflictions seem to be little. But (says he) the Devil goes quite contrary, the Rhetoric of the Devil is quite otherwise, he does lessen God's mercies, and amplify evil things, as thus, A godly man wonders at his cross that it is no more, a wicked man wonders his cross is so much, Oh (says he) none was ever so afflicted as I am! If there be a cross, the Devil puts the soul upon musing on it, and making it greater than it is, and so it brings discontent: And then on the other side, if there be a mercy, then it is the Rhetoric of the Devil to lessen the mercy, I indeed (says he) the

thing is a good thing, but what is it, it is no great matter, and for all this I may be miserable. Thus the Rhetoric of Satan does lessen God's mercies, and does increase afflictions: And for this I will give you a notable example that we have in Scripture, it is the example of **Korah, Dathan & Abiram**, In **Numbers** 16:12, 13. **And Moses sent to call Dathan, & Abiram the sons of Eliab: which said, we will not come up: Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a Land that flows with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except you make yourself altogether a Prince over us?** Mark, they slighted the land that they were going unto, the Land of **Canaan**, that was the Land that God promised them that should flow with milk and honey: But mark here their discontentedness, because they met with some troubles in the wilderness, Oh it was to slay them, they made their affliction in the wilderness to be greater than it was, Oh it was to kill them, though it were indeed to carry them to the Land of **Canaan**. But now their deliverance from Egypt though it was a great mercy, they made that mercy to be nothing, for say they, you have brought us out of a land that flows with milk and honey, what land was that? It was the Land of Egypt, the Land of their bondage, but they call it a Land that flowed with milk and honey, though it were the land of their most cruel and insupportable bondage; whereas they should have blessed God as long as they had lived for God's delivering them out of the land of Egypt, yet meeting with some cross they make their deliverance from Egypt no mercy, no, it was rather a misery to them, Oh (say they) Egypt was a land that flowed with milk and honey. Oh what baseness is there in a discontented spirit! A discontented spirit out of envy to God's grace will make mercies that are great to be little, yea to be none at all.

Would one ever have thought that such a word should have come from the mouth of an Israelite that had been under bondage and cried under it, and yet when they meet with a little cross in their way to say, you have brought us out of the Land that flows with milk and honey, to say they were better before than now, and yet before they could not be contented neither; this is the usual unthankful expression of a discontented heart: And it is so with us now when we meet with any cross in our estates, any taxations and trouble, especially if any among you have been where the enemy has prevailed, you are ready to say, we had plenty before and we are now brought to a condition of hardship, we were better before when we had the Prelates and others to domineer: and so we endanger ourselves to be brought into that bondage again; Oh let us take heed of this, of a discontented heart, there is this woeful cursed fruit of discontent to make men and women unthankful for all the mercies God has granted to them, and this is a sore and grievous evil.

And lastly, **There is this evil effect in murmuring, It causes shiftings of spirit:** they that murmur and are discontent, are liable to temptations, to shift for themselves in sinful and ungodly ways, discontent is the ground of shifting courses and unlawful ways. How many of you may have your consciences condemn you of this, that you in the time of your afflictions have sought to shift for yourselves by ways that have been sinful against God, and your discontent was the bottom and ground of it? If you would avoid shiftings for yourselves by wicked ways, labor to mortify this sin of discontent, to mortify it at the root.

The Eighth evil that there is in murmuring and discontent is this, **There is a great deal of folly, extreme folly in a discontented heart, it is a foolish sin.** I shall open the folly of it in many particulars.

1 It takes away the present comfort of what you have, because you have not somewhat that you would have. What a foolish thing is this, that because I have not what I would have, I will not enjoy the comfort of what I have? Do not you account this folly in your children, you give them some victuals and they are not contented, perhaps (they say) it is not enough, they cry for more, and if you do not presently give them more they will throw away that they have, and though you account that folly in your children, yet you deal thus with God; God gives you many mercies, but you see others have more mercies than you and therefore you cry for more; Aye but God gives you not what you would have and upon that you throw away what you have, is not this folly in your hearts? It is unthankfulness.

2 There is a great deal of folly in discontentment, for by all your discontent you cannot help yourselves, you cannot get anything by it. Who can by taking any carking care **add one cubit to his stature, or make one hair that is white to be black?** You may vex and trouble yourselves, but you can get nothing by it. Do you think that the Lord will come in a way of mercy ever a whit the sooner because of the murmuring of your spirits, Oh no, but mercy will be rather deferred the longer for it, though the Lord were before in a way of mercy, yet this distemper of your hearts were enough to put Him out of His course of mercy, and though He had thoughts that you should have the thing before, yet now you shall not have it. If you had a mind to give such a thing to your

child, yet if you see him in a discontented fretting way you will not give it him; and this is the very reason why there are so many mercies denied to you, because of your discontentment, you are discontented for want of them, and therefore you have them not, you do deprive yourselves of the enjoyment of your own desires because of the discontentment of your hearts, because you have not your desires, and is not this a foolish thing?

3 There is a great deal of folly in this, **there are many foolish carriages commonly that a discontented heart is guilty of: They carry themselves foolishly towards God and towards men**, there are such expressions, and such kind of behavior comes from them, as makes their friends to be ashamed of them many times, their carriages are so unseemly, they are a shame to themselves & their friends.

4 **There is a great deal of folly in discontent and murmuring; for it does eat out the good and sweetness of a mercy before it comes.** If God should give a mercy that we are discontented for the want of, yet the blessing of the mercy is as it were eaten out before we come to have it. Discontent is like a worm that eats the meat out of the nut, and then when the meat is eaten out of it, then you shall have the shell. If a child should cry for a nut that has the meat eaten out, or all worm-eaten, what good would the child have by having the nut? So such an outward comfort you would fain have and you are troubled for the want of it, but the very trouble of your spirits is the worm that eats out the blessing of the mercy, and then perhaps God gives it you, but gives you it with a curse mixed with it that you were better not have it than have it. That man or woman that is discontented for want of some good thing, if God does give that good thing to them before

they are humbled for their discontent that did proceed from them, such a man or woman can have no comfort of the mercy, but it will be rather an evil than a good to them. And therefore for my part if I should have a friend or brother or one that were as dear to me as my own soul, that I should see discontented for the want of such a comfort, I should rather pray, Lord keep this thing from them, till thou wilt be pleased to humble their hearts for their discontent. Let not them have the mercy till they come to be humbled for their discontent for the want of it, for if they have it before that time they will have it without any blessing. And therefore it should be your care when you find your hearts discontented for want of anything, to be humbled for it, thinking thus with yourselves: Lord if that that I do so immoderately desire should come to me before I am humbled for my discontent for want of it, I am certain I can have no comfort of it, but I shall rather have it as an affliction to me. Many things which you desire as your lives, and think that you should be happy if you had them, yet when they do come you find not such happiness in them, but they prove to be the greatest crosses and afflictions to you that ever you had, and upon this ground, because your hearts were immoderately set upon them before you had them. As it was with **Rachel**, she must have children or else she died, well says God seeing you **must**, you shall have them, but though she had a child she died according to what she said, **Give me children or else I die**. So in regard of any other outward comforts, people may have the thing, but oftentimes they have it so as it proves the heaviest cross to them that ever they had in all their lives. Such a child as you were discontent for the want of it, it may be it was sick, and your hearts were out of temper for fear that you should lose it, and God restores it, but he restores it

so as he makes it a cross to your heart all the days of your lives. One observes concerning **Manna**, when the people were contented with their allowance that God allowed them, then it was very good, but when they would not be content with God's allowance, but would gather more than God would have them; then (says the text) there was worms in it. So when we are content with our conditions, and that that God disposes of us to be in, there's a blessing in it, then it's sweet to us, but if we must needs have more, and keep it longer than God would have us to have it, then there will be worms in it and no good at all.

5. There's a great deal of folly in discontentedness, for it makes our afflictions a great deal worse than otherwise it would be. It no way removes our affliction, nay, while they do continue they are a great deal the worse and heavier, for a discontented heart is a proud heart, and a proud heart will not pull down his sails when there comes a tempest and storm. If a mariner when a tempest and storm comes should be froward and would not pull down his sails, but is discontented with the storm, is his condition the better because he is discontented and will not pull down his sails? Will this help him? Just so is it for all the world with a discontented heart, a discontented heart is a proud heart, and he out of his pride is troubled with his affliction, and is not contented with God's disposal, and so he will not pull down his spirit at all, and make it bow to God in this condition in which God has brought him. Now is his condition the better because he will not pull down his spirit? No certainly abundantly worse, a thousand to one but the tempest and storm overwhelms his soul. And thus you see what a great deal of folly there is in the sin of discontentment.

The Ninth Evil of murmuring and discontentment is this, **There is a mighty deal of danger in the sin of discontentment, for it exceedingly provokes the wrath of God.** It's a sin that does much provoke God against his creature; we find most sad expressions in Scripture (and examples too) how God has been provoked against many for their discontent. In **Numbers 14** you have a notable text, and one would think that that were enough forever to make you fear murmuring, in the 26th verse, it is said, **The Lord spoke unto Moses and unto Aaron saying,** what did he say? **How long shall I bear with this evil congregation which murmur against me?** How long shall I bear with them says God, **This evil congregation.** Oh it's an evil congregation that murmur against me! And how long shall I bear with them? They do murmur, and they have murmured: as those that have murmuring spirits, and murmuring dispositions, they will murmur again, and again, **How long shall I bear with this evil congregation that murmur against me?** How justly may God speak this of many of you that are this morning before the Lord, How long shall I bear with this wicked man or woman that does murmur against me, and has usually in the course of their lives murmured against me when anything falls out otherwise than they would have it? And mark what follows after, **I have heard the murmurings of the Children of Israel.** You murmur, it may be others hear you not, nay it may be you speak not at all, or but half-words, yet God hears the language of your murmuring hearts, and those muttering speeches, and those half-words that come from you. And observe further in this verse, how the Lord repeats this sin of murmuring, **How long shall I bear with this evil congregation which murmur against me?** Secondly, **I have**

heard their murmuring, Thirdly, **which they murmur against me: Murmur, murmur, murmur,** Three times in one verse he repeats it; and this is to show his indignation against the thing. When you express indignation against a thing, you will repeat it over again, and again: now the Lord because he would express his indignation against this sin, he repeats it over again, and again, and it follows in the 28th verse. **Say unto them, as truly as I live says the Lord, as you have spoken in my ears, so will I do to you.** Mark, God swears against a murmurer; sometimes in your discontent you will be ready to swear (it may be,) do you swear in your discontent? So does God swear against you for your discontent. And what was it that God would do unto them? Verses 29, 30. **Doubtless your carcasses shall fall in the wilderness, and you shall not come into the land concerning which I swore, to make you dwell therein:** as if God should say, if I have any life in me, your lives shall go for it, as I live it shall cost you your lives. A discontented murmuring fit of yours may cost you your lives. You see how it provokes God, there is more evil in it than you are aware of, it may cost you your lives, and therefore look to yourselves, and learn to be humbled at the very beginnings of such distempers in the heart. So in **Psalm 106:24, 25. Yea they despised the pleasant Land, they believed not his word; But murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord; therefore he lifted up his hand against them to overthrow them in the wilderness.** Here are diverse things observable in this Scripture.

First, That which we spoke to before, How a murmuring heart does slight God's mercies, so it is here, **They despised the pleasant land:** and that a murmuring heart is contrary to faith,

they believed not his word, but (says the text) **they murmured in their tents, and hearkened not to the voice of the Lord.** Many men and women will hearken to the voice of their own base murmuring hearts, that will not hearken to the voice of the Lord; if you would hearken to the voice of the Lord there would not be such murmuring as there is: But mark what follows upon it, you may not think to please yourselves in your murmuring discontentedness, and think that no evil shall come of it; **Therefore he lifted up his hand against them to overthrow them:** you that are discontented, you lift up your hearts against God, and you cause God to lift up his hand against you; perhaps God lays his finger upon you softly in some afflictions that are upon you, in your families or elsewhere, and you cannot bear the hand of God that lies upon you as tenderly as a tender-hearted nurse that lays her hand upon the child, you cannot bear the tender hand of God that is upon you in a lesser affliction; it were just with God to lift up his hand against you in another manner of affliction; Oh a murmuring spirit provokes God exceedingly. There is another place in the 16th of **Numbers** compare the 41st verse, and the 46th verse together, **But on the morrow all the Congregation of the Children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, You have killed the people of the Lord:** and mark in the 46th verse, **And Moses said to Aaron, Take a Censer and put fire therein, from off the Altar, and put on incense, and go quickly to the Congregation and make an atonement for them, for there is wrath gone out from the Lord, the plague is begun;** mark how God's wrath is kindled; in the 41st verse, the Congregation had murmured; and they murmured but against **Moses** and **Aaron**, (perhaps you murmur more directly

against God) and that was against God in murmuring against God's Ministers, it was against God but not so directly; but it may be the murmuring of your hearts is more directly against God's dealings with you, if you murmur against those that God makes instruments, (because you have not everything that you would have) as against the Parliament, or such and such that are public instruments, it's against God; it was but against **Moses** and **Aaron** that the Israelites murmured, and they said that **Moses** and **Aaron** had killed the people of the Lord, though it was the hand of God that was upon them for their former wickedness, in murmuring. It is usual for wicked vile hearts to deal thus with God, that when God's hand is a little upon them for to murmur again and again, and so to bring upon themselves even infinite kind of evils; but now the anger of God was quickly kindled, Oh says **Moses**, Go, take the Censer quickly for wrath is gone out from Jehovah, the plague is begun: so while you are murmuring in your families, the wrath of God may quickly go out against you, quickly, in a morning or evening, when you are murmuring, the wrath of God may come quickly out upon your families or persons, you are never so prepared for present wrath as when you are in a murmuring discontented fit, those that stand by and see you in a murmuring discontented fit, have cause to say, Oh let us go and take the censer, let us go to prayer, for we are afraid that wrath is gone out against this family, against this person: And it were a very good thing for you that are a godly wife when you see your husband come home and fall to murmuring because things go not according to his desire, to go to prayer, and say, Lord pardon the sin of my husband; and so for the husband to go to God in prayer falling down and beseeching him that wrath may not come out against his family for the

murmuring of his wife. And the truth is, at this day there has been (at least lately) as much murmuring in England as ever was, and even in this very particular the plague is begun, and this very judgment it does come many times upon murmuring upon those that are so discontented in their families and are always grumbling and murmuring at anything that falls out amiss, (I say) this text of Scripture in **Numbers** does clearly hold forth this, that the Lord brings the plague upon men for this sin of murmuring, he does it in kingdoms and families, and upon particular persons. Though we cannot always point out the particular sin that God brings this for, yet this should be examined how far we are guilty of the sin of murmuring; because the Scripture holds forth this so clearly, that **Moses** when he did but hear that they murmured, Do they murmur? (says he) Go forth quickly, and seek to pacify the anger of God, for wrath is gone out, and the plague is begun. And in 1 **Corinthians** 10.10. there you have an notable example of God's heavy displeasure against murmuring, **Neither murmur as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.** Take heed of murmuring as some of them did, (he speaks of the people of Israel in the wilderness,) but says he, what came of it? **They were destroyed of the destroyer.** Now the destroyer is thought to be the fiery serpents that were sent among them: They murmured, and God sent fiery serpents to sting them. What do you think that such a cross and affliction does sting you? perhaps such an affliction is upon you, and it seems to be grievous for the present, what? do you murmur and repine? God has greater crosses to bring upon you: Those people that murmur for the want of outward comforts, for want of water, (sometimes) and for the want of bread, they murmur, but the Lord sends fiery serpents

among them. I may say to a murmuring heart, **Woe to you who strive with your Maker**: woe to that man, that woman that strives against their Maker; what do you else, but strive against your Maker? Your Maker has the absolute disposal of you, and will you strive against your Maker? What does this murmuring discontented heart of yours do otherwise but wrangle and contend and strive even with God himself? Oh woe to him that strives against his Maker! I may further say to you, as God speaks to **Job: Job, 38.1, 2.** when **Job** was impatient, **Now God spoke** (says the text) **out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?** So, do you speak against God's ways, and his providences that have fallen out concerning your estate and outward comforts? who is this? **Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?** Where's that man or woman whose hearts are so bold and impudent, as dares speak against the administration of God's providence?

The Tenth Evil of murmuring and discontent is this, **There's a great curse of God upon it, so far as it does prevail in one that is wicked it has the curse of God upon it.** In **Psalms 59.15.** see there what the curse of God is upon wicked and ungodly men, **Let them wander up and down for meat, and grudge if they be not satisfied.** That is the imprecation and curse upon wicked and ungodly men, that if they be not satisfied they shall grudge; when you are not satisfied in your desires and find your heart grudging against God, apply this Scripture, What, is the curse of the wicked upon me? This is the curse that is threatened upon wicked and ungodly ones, That they shall grudge if they be not satisfied. And in **Deuteronomy 28.27.** There it's threatened

as a curse of God upon men, that they cannot be content with their present condition, **But they shall say in the morning, would God it were even; and at even, would God it were morning;** and so they lie tossing up and down and cannot be content with any condition that they are in, because of the sore afflictions that be upon them; and therefore it is further threatened as a curse upon them, in the 34th verse, **That they should be mad for the sight of their eyes which they should see:** This is but the extremity of their discontentedness; that is, they shall be so discontented, as they shall be even mad: Many men and women in discontented moods are mad kind of people, and though you may please yourselves in such a mad kind of behavior, yet know, that it is a curse of God upon men to be given up to a kind of madness for evils that they suppose are upon them, and that they fear. In the 47th verse, there is a notable expression for to show the curse of God upon murmuring hearts; the Lord threatening the curses that shall be upon them, (says he) verse 45, 46, & 47. **The Curse shall pursue you, and they shall be upon you for a sign, and for a wonder, and upon your seed for ever: Because you served not the Lord your God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things.** God here threatens to bring his curse so upon them, as to make them a wonder and a sign to others, why? **Because they served not the Lord with joyfulness of heart,** (that may be added to that of the wrath of God upon men) therefore God would bring such a curse upon them as would make them a wonder to all that were about them; Oh how far are you then that have a murmuring heart, from serving the Lord with joyfulness?

The Eleventh evil of discontent and murmuring is this. **There is much of the spirit of Satan in a murmuring spirit.** The Devil is the most discontented creature that is in the world: He is the proudest creature that is, and the most discontented creature; and the most dejected creature. Now therefore so much discontentment as you have, so much of the spirit of Satan you have. It was the unclean spirit that went up and down and found no rest; so when a man or woman's spirit has no rest, it is a sign that it has much of the unclean spirit, of the spirit of Satan, and you should think thus with yourself, Oh Lord what have I the spirit of Satan upon me? It is Satan that is the most discontented spirit that is, and Oh! how much of his spirit have I upon me that can find no rest at all?

Twelfthly, Murmuring and discontent has this evil in it, **There is an absolute necessity that you should have disquiet all the days of your life.** As if a man that is in a great crowd should complain that other folks touch him; While we are in this world God has so ordered things that afflictions must befall us, and if we will complain and be discontented upon every cross and affliction, why we must complain and be discontent all the days of our lives, yea God in just judgment will let things fall out on purpose to vex those that have vexing spirits, and discontented hearts, and therefore there is a necessity that they should live disquiet all their days: and men will not much care to disquiet those that are continually murmuring, Oh they will have disquiet all their days.

Lastly, there's this dreadful evil in discontent and murmuring, **God may justly withdraw his care off you, and his protection over you, seeing God cannot please you in his administrations.** We use to say so to discontented servants; nay, if you

be not pleased mend yourselves when you will. If you have a servant not content with his diet and wages, and work, you say, mend yourselves; so may God justly say to us, we that profess ourselves servants to him, to be in his work, and yet are discontented with this thing or that in God's family, God might justly say, mend yourselves. What if God should say to any of you, If my care over you do not please you, then take care of yourselves, if my protection over you will not please you, then protect yourselves: Now all things that do befall you, befall you through a providence of God, and if you be those that belong to God there is a protection of God over you, and a care of God. Now if God should say, Well, you shall not have the benefit of my protection any longer, and I will take no further care of you: would not this be a most dreadful judgment of God from Heaven upon you? Take heed what you do then in being discontent with God's will towards you, and indeed upon discontent this may befall you. And this is the reason why many people though God's protection hath been very gracious over them for a time, and they have thriven abundantly, yet afterwards almost all that behold them may say that they live as if God had cast off his care over them, and as if God did not care what befell them. Now then my brethren, put all these together, all that we were speaking of the last day, and these particulars that have been added now this morning for the setting out of a murmuring and discontented spirit, Oh what an ugly face hath this sin of murmuring, and discontentedness, Oh what cause is there that we should lay our hands upon our hearts, and go away and be humbled before the Lord because of this! Whereas your thoughts were wont to be exercised about providing for yourselves, and getting more comforts to yourselves, let the stream of your thoughts now be turned to hum-

ble yourselves for your discontentedness, Oh that you may have your hearts break before God, for otherwise you will fall to it again, Oh the wretchedness of man's heart! You shall find in Scripture concerning the people of **Israel**, how strangely they fell to their murmuring again and again. Do but observe three texts of Scripture, for that, the first in the 15th of **Exodus** at the beginning, there you shall have **Moses** and the Congregation singing to God and blessing God for his mercy, **Then sang Moses and the Children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously, the Horse and his Rider hath he thrown into the Sea. And then, The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation, he is my God and I will prepare him an habitation, my Father's God and I will exalt him;** and so he goes on, **and who is like unto thee O Lord amongst the gods, who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?** Thus their hearts triumphed in God, but mark before the Chapter is ended in the 23rd verse, **When they came to Marah** (in the same Chapter) **they could not drink of the waters of Marah for they were bitter, therefore the name of it was called Marah, and the people murmured against** Moses. After so great a mercy as this was, what unthankfulness was there here in their murmuring! Then God gave them water, but in the very next Chapter they fell to their murmuring, (you read not that they were humbled for their former murmuring, and therefore they murmur again) **Exodus 16:1 etc. All the Congregation of the Children of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, etc. And the whole Congregation** (in the second verse) **of the Children of Israel**

murmured against Moses, and against Aaron in the wilderness, and the Children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the Land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, and when we did eat bread to the full. Now they want flesh, they wanted water before, but now they want meat, they fell to murmuring again, they were not humbled for this murmuring against God, neither when God gave them flesh according to their desires, but they fell to murmuring again, they wanted somewhat else. In the very next Chapter, (they went not far) in the 17th of **Exodus** beginning. **And all the Congregation of the Children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin and pitched in Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink:** then in the second verse, **Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink, and Moses said unto them, Why chide you with me? wherefore do you tempt the Lord?** And in the third verse, **And the people thirsted there for water, and the people murmured against Moses and said, Wherefore is this, that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us, and our Children, and our Cattle with thirst?** So one time after another, still as soon as ever they had received the mercy then they were a little quieted, but they were not humbled. I bring these Scriptures for this to show, that if we have not been humbled for murmuring, the next cross that we meet withal we will fall to murmuring again.

And now there are divers aggravations of this sin of murmuring, I'll mention but one now, and I shall but begin that. The first Aggravation is this.

To murmur when we enjoy abundance of mercy, the greater and the more abundant the mercy is that we enjoy, the greater, and the viler is the sin of murmuring. As here now when God had newly delivered them out of the house of bondage, for them, now to murmur, because they want some few particulars that they desire, Oh to sin against God after a great mercy this is a great aggravation, and a most abominable thing. Now my brethren, the Lord hath granted us very great mercies, I'll but speak a word of what God hath done of late, what mercies hath the Lord granted to us this summer, heaped mercies upon us, one mercy upon another, what a condition were we in at the beginning of this summer? And what a different condition are we in now! Oh what a mercy is it that the Lord hath not taken advantages against us, that he hath not made those Scriptures (before mentioned) good upon us for all our murmuring, the Lord hath gone on with one mercy after another. We hear of mercy in **Bristol**, and mercy to our brethren in **Scotland**: But still if after this we should have anything befall us that is but cross to us, that we should be ready to murmur again presently; Oh let us not so requite God for those mercies of his; Oh let's take heed of giving God any ill requital for his mercies; Oh give God praise according to his excellent greatness, to his excellent goodness and grace.

And now hath God given to you the Contentment of your hearts? Take you heed of being the cause of any grief to your brethren, think not that because God hath been gracious unto you, that therefore he hath given you liberty for to bring them into bondage, Oh let not there be such an ill effect of God's mercy to you, as for you to exclude by petitioning, or any other way your Brethren that the Lord hath been pleased to make Instruments of

your peace, let not that be the fruit of it, nor to desire anything that yourselves do not yet understand. God is very jealous of the glory of his mercy, and if there should be an ill use made of the mercy of God after we enjoy it, Oh it would go to the heart of God! Nothing is more grievous to the heart of God than the abuse of mercy: As now, if any way that is hard and rigid should be taken towards our Brethren, and those especially that God hath made such special Instruments of good to us, that have been so willing to venture their lives, and all for us; now when we have our turns served, let God and his People, and Servants that have been a means to save us shift for themselves as well as they can: Oh! this is a great aggravation of your sin, to sin against the mercies of God: But for this Aggravation, and specially in this particular, we shall speak to (God willing) the next day.

SERMON 9



PHILIPPIANS. 4.11. _ For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

— Now because it is very hard to work upon a murmuring spirit, there are various aggravations (I told you) we are to consider of for the further setting out of the greatness of this sin; I mentioned but only one the last day, now we shall proceed in that.

The first Aggravation of the sin of discontent and murmuring is this, **For men and women to be discontent in the midst of mercies, in enjoyment of abundance of mercies.** To be discontent in any afflicted condition, is sinful and evil, but to be discontent when we are in the midst of Gods mercies, when we are not able to count the mercies of God, yet after to be discontent because we have not all we would have, this is a greater evil. I only mentioned this the last day, that I might show to you what a great sin it is at such a time as this. The Lord this summer has multiplied mercies one upon another, the Lord has made this summer to be a continued miracle of mercy; never did a Kingdom enjoy (in so little space of time) such mercies one upon another. Now the public mercies of God should quiet our hearts and keep us from discontent; and the sin of discontent for private afflictions is ex-

ceedingly aggravated by the consideration of public mercies to the Land. When the Lord has been so merciful to the Land, will you be fretting and murmuring, because you have not in your family all the comforts that you would have? As it is a great aggravation of a mans evil for him to rejoice immoderately in his own private comforts when the Church is in affliction, when the public suffers grievous and hard troubles, if any man shall then rejoice and give liberty to himself, at that time to satisfy his flesh to the uttermost in all outward comforts, this is a great aggravation of his sin. So on the contrary for any man to be immoderately troubled for any private afflictions when it goes well with the public, with the Churches, this is a great aggravation of his sin. It may be when the Church of God was lowest, and it went worst in other parts, yet you did abate nothing of the comfort of your flesh, but gave full liberty to satisfy your flesh as formerly, know this was your great sin. So on the other side when we have received such mercies in public, we should have all our private afflictions swallowed up in the public mercies. And we should think with ourselves, though we be afflicted for our particular, yet (blessed be God) it goes well with the Church, and with the public. The consideration of that should mightily quiet our hearts in all our private discontents, and if it does not so, know that our sin is much increased by the mercies of God that are abroad. Now shall Gods mercies aggravate our sins? This is a sad thing, this is to turn the mercies of God to be our misery. Did you not pray to God for these mercies that God has sent of late to the public, these great victories that God has given, did you not pray for them? Now you have them, Is not there enough in them to quiet your heart for some private trouble you meet with in your family? Is not there goodness enough there to cure your dis-

content? Certainly they were not such mercies worthy to be prayed for, except they have so much excellency in them as to countervail some private afflictions. Public mercies are the aggravation of private discontent, as so of public discontent too. If we receive so many public mercies, yet if every thing goes not in the public according as we desire, if we be discontent at that it will exceedingly aggravate our sin. God may say, what shall I bestow such mercies upon a people, and yet if they have not every thing they would have they will be discontent? Oh! it is exceeding evil. So in particular, the mercies that concerns yourself, your family, if you would consider you have a great many more mercies than you had afflictions. I dare boldly aver it concerning any one in this Congregation, (suppose your afflictions be what they will) there is never a one of you but that have more mercies than afflictions.

Objection. You will say, Ay, but you do not know what our afflictions are, our afflictions are so as you do not conceive of them because you feel them not?

Answer. Though I cannot know what your afflictions are, yet I know what your mercies are, and I know they are so great as I am sure there can be no afflictions in this world so great as the mercies you have. If it were but this mercy, that you have this day of grace and salvation continued to you, it is a greater mercy than any affliction, set any affliction by this mercy and see which would weigh heaviest, this is certainly greater than any affliction. That you have the day of grace and salvation, that you are not now in Hell, this is a greater mercy. That you have the sound of the Gospel yet in your ears; that you have the use of your reason; this is a greater mercy than your afflictions. That you have the use of your limbs, your senses, that you have the health of your bodies, health

of body is a greater mercy than poverty is an affliction. There is no man that is rich but if he be wise, if he has a sickly body, he would part with all his riches that he might have his health, therefore your mercies are more than your afflictions. We find in Scripture how the Holy Ghost does aggravate the sin of discontent from the consideration of mercies, you have a notable Scripture for it in the 16, of **Numbers** 8 verse etc. It is a speech of **Moses** to **Korah** and his company when they murmured, **And Moses said unto Korah, hear I pray you you sons of Levi, (there is somewhat that you are sons of Levi,) Does it seem but a small thing unto you that the God of Israel has separated you from the Congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the Tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the Congregation to minister unto them? Korah** and his company were murmuring, but mark how **Moses** aggravates this; Does it seem a small thing unto you that the God of Israel has separated you from the Congregation of Israel to bring you near to himself to do the service of the Tabernacle of the Lord? etc. You see it is a great honour that God puts upon a man a great mercy that he does bestow upon any man to separate him from others for himself, to come near to him, to employ him in the service of the Tabernacle, to minister to the Congregation in holy things, this is a great mercy, and indeed it is such a mercy as one would think there should be none that God bestows such a mercy upon that should have a murmuring heart for any affliction. It is true, many Ministers of God they meet with hard things that might discourage them, and trouble and grieve their spirits, but now this consideration that God is pleased to employ them in such a service near to himself, that though they cannot do good to themselves, yet they

may do good to others, this should quiet them. And yet in the 10 verse, **And he has brought you near to him, and all your Brethren the Sons of Levi with you, and seek you the Priesthood also?** Have not you enough already? But still you are discontented with what you have and must have more, seek you yet more? **Seek you the Priesthood also? For which cause both you and all your company are gathered together against the Lord: And what is Aaron that you murmur against him?** What has God given you such things, and yet will you be murmuring, because you cannot have more? Methinks that this place should keep Ministers from murmuring, though they should meet with never such afflictions and crosses, and unkind dealings from men, yet still they should go on with hearts quieted and comforted in the work that God has set them about, and labour to countervail all their Afflictions by being more abundant in the work of the Lord. That is the first text of Scripture that shows how the mercies we enjoy are Aggravations to the sin of murmuring.

And then a second Scripture is in the 2 of **Job**, 10 verse. A speech of **Job** to his wife, what says **Job** when his wife would have had him curse God and die? (That was a degree beyond murmuring) says he, **You speak as one of the foolish women, shall we receive good at the hand of God and not evil?** You see **Job** did help himself against all murmuring thoughts against the ways of God with this consideration, that he had received so much good from the Lord. What though we receive evil, yet do not we receive good as well as evil? Let us set one against the other, that is the way we should go. In the 17 of **Ecclesiastes** the 14 verse you have a notable Scripture there whereby you may see what course is

to be taken when the heart rises in murmuring, In the day of prosperity be joyful, **but in the day of Adversity consider**; what should they consider? (Mark what follows) **God also has set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.** God also has set the one over against the other, that is thus, When you are in prosperity, then indeed every man can be joyful, but what if Afflictions befalls him, what then? Then consider, consider what? That God has set one over against the other, you have a great deal of Affliction, and you have had a great deal of prosperity, you have many troubles, and you have had many mercies, make one column of mercies, and one column of afflictions, and write one against the other, and see if God has not filled one column as full as the other, you look altogether upon your afflictions, but look upon your mercies also. For instance, It may be God has afflicted you in one child, but he has been merciful to you in another child, set one against the other. God afflicted **David** in **Absalom**, but he was merciful to **David** in **Solomon**, and therefore when **David** cried out, Oh **Absalom my Son my Son!** If **David** had thought upon **Solomon**, and cried, Oh **Solomon** my son my son, it would have quieted him. And it may be God has been merciful to you in a wife, or in your husband, set that against your affliction, it may be God crosses you in your estate, but it may be he does employ you in his service, it may be you are afflicted in some of your friends, but you have other friends that are great mercies to you, and therefore you should set one against the other, and it does concern you so to do, for those mercies will be aggravations of your sins, and you had better make Gods mercies a means to lessen your sins, than to be the aggravation of your sins. If you make not the mercies of God to

help you against your murmuring, you will make them to be aggravations of the sin of murmuring. I beseech you for this take but this one consideration further, and if you will but work it upon your hearts I hope you may find a great deal of power in it. You find afflictions, and your hearts are troubled and murmur, consider how Gods mercies does aggravate this sin, thus: In the midst of our sins we do make account God should accept of our services, do but consider thus, if in the midst of our many sins we hope that God will accept of our poor services, why then should not we in the midst of our afflictions bless God for his many mercies? Shall God be thus gracious to us that notwithstanding our many sins, yet he will not cast away our poor duties and services that we perform, then why should not we in the midst of our sufferings accept of what mercies we have, and not slight them and disregard them? If you in the midst of Gods mercies shall not be willing to bear afflictions that God lays upon you, then it were just with God that in the midst of your sins he should not regard any of your duties, now is there not as much power in your manifold sins to cause God to reject your duties and services, as there is power in afflictions (in the midst of many mercies) to take off your heart from being affected with Gods mercies? And that is the first aggravation of the sin of murmuring, to murmur in the midst of mercies.

A Second Aggravation of the sin of murmuring is, **When we murmur for small things.** Saith **Naaman's** servant to him, Father (for so he called him) if the Prophet had required you to do some great thing, would not you have done it? How much more this little thing. So I say, if the Lord had required you to suffer some great matter, would not you have been willing to suffer? How much more this little thing. I remember I have read in **Seneca** a

Heathen, he hath this similitude which is a very fine one to set out the great evil of murmuring upon smaller afflictions, (saith he) Suppose a man hath a very fair house to dwell in, and he hath fair orchards and gardens, and set about with brave tall trees for ornament, if this man now should murmur because the wind blows off a few leaves off his trees, what a most unreasonable thing were it for him to be weeping and wringing his hands because he loses a few leaves off his trees, when he hath abundance of all kind of fruit? Thus it is with many (saith he) though they have a great many comforts about them, yet some little matter, the blowing off of a few leaves from them is enough to disquiet them. It was a great evil when **Ahab** having a kingdom, yet the want of his neighbor's vineyard had such power to disquiet him: So for us to murmur, not because we have not such a thing as we have need of, but because we have not what possibly we might have, this is a very great sin. Suppose God gives a child that hath all the limbs and parts complete, a child that is very comely, and hath excellent parts, wit, and memory, but it may be there is a wart that grows upon the finger of the child, and she murmurs at it, and Oh what an affliction is this to her! She is so taken up with that as she forgets to give any thanks to God for her child, and all the goodness of God to her in the child is swallowed up in that; would not you say, this were a folly and a very great evil in a woman so to do? Truly our afflictions if we weighed them aright they are but such kind of things in comparison of our mercies. **Rebekah** she had a mighty desire to have children, but because she found some trouble in her body when she was with child, saith she, **Why am I thus?** As if she should say, I had as good have none, only because she found a little pain and trouble in her body. To be discontent when the af-

fliction is small and little, that increases very much the sin of murmuring, it is too much for any one to murmur upon the heaviest cross that can befall one in this world, but upon some small things to be discontent and murmur, that's worse. I have read of one when he lay upon a heap of damask-roses, he complained that there was one of the rose leaves lay double under him: So we are ready thus for very small things to make complaints and to be discontented with our condition. And that's a Second aggravation.

A Third aggravation is this, **For men that are of parts and abilities, that God hath given wisdom to, for them to be discontent and murmur, that is more than if others do it.** Murmuring and discontentedness is too much in the weakest, yet we can bear with it sometimes in children and women that are weak, but for those that are men, men of understanding, that have wisdom, that God employs in public service, that they should be discontent with every thing, this is an exceeding great evil; for men in their families (to whom God hath given parts and wisdom) when things fall out amiss there, to be always murmuring and repining, their sin is greater than for women or children to do it.

A fourth aggravation, **Is the consideration of the freeness of all God's mercies to us.** What ever we have it is of free cost, what though we have not all we would have, seeing what we have is free? If what we have were earned then it were somewhat, but when we consider that all is from God, for us to murmur at his dispensations is very evil. Suppose a man were in a family entertained by a friend, and he did not pay for his board, but he hath it given him for nothing, it's expected such a one should not be ready to find fault with every thing in the house, with servants or with meat at table or the like, if such a one that hath plentiful provision and

all given him **Gratis**, and pays nothing for his board, should be discontented if a cup should not be filled for him as he would have it, or if he should stay a minute of an hour longer for a thing than he would, this we would account a great evil: So it is with us, we are at God's table every day, and it is upon free-cost whatever we have: It is accounted very unmannerly for a man at his friend's table to find fault with things, though at home he may be bold: Now when we are at the table of God (for so all God's administrations to us are his table) and are at free-cost, now for us to be finding fault and be discontented this is a great Aggravation of our sin.

A fifth Aggravation of the sin of murmuring is this, **When men and women murmur and are discontented and impatient when they have the things that they were discontented for the want of before they had them.** So it is sometimes with children, they will cry for such a thing, and when you give it them then throw it away, they are as much discontented as they were before. So it was with the people of **Israel**, nothing would quiet them but they must have a King, **Samuel** persuaded them to be contrary, and told them what kind of King they should have; and when they had a King, **Hosea 10:3. What shall a King do to us?** they were not contented when they had one. So **Rachel**, she must have children or else she died, and when she had a little trouble she was discontented too; so that we are neither well full nor fasting (as we use to say.)

The sixth Aggravation of the sin of murmuring is this, **For those men and women to be discontent and murmur that God hath raised from mean and low estates and conditions;** This is a very great aggravation if you be discontent now: There was a time when you were low enough, and perhaps when

you were so low then you did say, oh if God would deliver me from such an affliction, or give me but a little more in my estate I should think myself in a good condition: but if God by his providence doth raise you, you are as greedy of more still as you were before, and as much discontented as you were before: this is an evil thing for people that had mean breeding, and poor beginnings for them to be so nice, and dainty that nothing can please them, whereas there was a time not long since that they were low and mean enough; but it is very ordinary for those that are raised from a low and mean condition to be the more nice and dainty, and more proud when they are raised than others that are of better breeding: It's too much for a child to be discontented in his father's house, but if a man hath taken a poor beggar boy, if you had taken such a one into your house that lay begging at your door, and set him at your own table, could you bear that such a one should complain that such a thing is not well dressed, or the like, you could not bear it if your children should do it, but you could bear it a great deal better with them than to hear such a one do it: But you are a poor beggar, and God hath (as it were) taken you into his great family, and if the Lord hath been pleased to raise you higher, that now you have a competency, that you may live as a man, to be of use and service in the place where God hath set you, now will you be discontent because you have not every thing that you desire? We know the Prodigal, when he came to himself, Oh! saith he, **In my father's house is bread enough.** He did not say, there's good cheer enough, and a great deal of dainties; no, he thought of nothing but bread, **there's bread enough:** So it's ordinary for men and women when they are in a low condition, they think that if they may have bread, any competency, they will be contented and bless

God, but when they have their bread and things convenient, they must have more or else they are not contented; know that this is an exceeding great aggravation to your discontentment, when you are raised from a very low condition and yet you cannot be contented with what you have.

A Seventh Aggravation of this sin is this, **For them to be discontent that have been very great sinners and ungodly in their former time.** For men and women that have much guiltiness upon them, the guilt of very many sins upon them, that have provoked God exceedingly against them, and have brought themselves in a most dreadful manner under the sentence of God's justice, and yet God being pleased to relieve them, for them to murmur and to be discontent with God's administrations towards them, this is exceeding evil, Oh it were consideration enough to quiet any murmuring in our hearts, to think thus, We are but sinners, why should not we be sufferers that are sinners? But then consider, we that are such great sinners, guilty of such notorious sins, that it is a wonder that we are out of Hell at this present, yet for us to be discontent and murmur, how exceedingly doth this increase our sin! Consider how we have crossed God in our sins, then if God should cross us in the way of our sufferings, should not we sit down quiet without murmuring? Certainly you never knew what it was to be humbled for your manifold sins, that are discontented at any administration of God towards you.

The Eighth Aggravation of the sin of murmuring is, **For those men that are of little use in the world, for them to be discontented.** If you have but a beast that you make much use of, you will feed it well, but if you have but little use of him then you turn him into the commons, little provision serves his turn because

you make not use of him: If we lived so as to be exceeding useful to God and his Church, we might expect that God would be pleased to come in in some encouraging way to us, but when our consciences tell us, we live and do but little service for God, what if God should turn us upon the commons, yet we are fed according to our work? According to our employment? Why should any creature be serviceable to you, who are so little serviceable to God? This one meditation would much help us, to think, I am discontent because such and such creatures are not serviceable to me, but why should I expect that they should be serviceable to me when I am not serviceable to God? And that's the Eighth Aggravation.

A Ninth Aggravation of the sin of murmuring is this, **For us to be discontent at that time when God is about to humble us.** It should be the care of a Christian, to observe what are Gods ways towards him, what is God about to do with me at this time? Is God about to raise me, to comfort me? Let me close with Gods goodness, and bless his Name, let me join with the work of God, when he offers mercy to me to take the mercy he offers. But again, Is God about to humble me? Is God about to break my heart, and to bring my heart down to him? Let me join with God in this work of his, this is for a Christian to walk with God. It is said that **Enoch**, and **Noah** walked with God; walked with God, what's that? That is, To observe what is the work of God that God is now about, and to join with God in that work of his; so that according as God turns this way or that way the heart should turn with God, and have suitable workings unto the workings of God towards him. Now then, I am discontented and murmuring because I am afflicted; Therefore you are afflicted because God would humble you, and the great design that God has in afflicting of you, is to break

and humble your heart; and will you now maintain a spirit quite opposite to the work of God? For you to murmur and be discontented is to resist the work of God, God is doing you good if you could see it, now if he be pleased to sanctify your affliction to break that hard heart of yours, and humble that proud spirit of yours, it would be the greatest mercy that ever you had in all your life, now will you yet stand out against God? It's even as if you should say, well, the Lord is about to break me, and humble me, but he shall not; this is the language of your murmuring and your discontentedness, though you dare not say so, but though you say not so in words, yet it is certainly the language of the temper of your spirit, Oh consider what an aggravation this is: I am discontented when God is about to work such a work upon me as is exceedingly for my good, but yet I stand out against him and resist him, and that's another aggravation.

A tenth Aggravation of the sin of murmuring and discontent is this, **The more palpable and remarkable the hand of God appears to bring about an affliction, the greater is the sin of murmuring and discontent under an affliction.** It's a great evil any time to murmur and be discontent, but though it be a sin, when I see but an ordinary providence working for me not to submit to that, but when I see an extraordinary providence working that's a greater sin, that is, when I see the Lord in some remarkable way working about such an affliction beyond what any could have thought of, shall I resist such a remarkable hand of God, shall I stand out against God when I see God does express his will in such a remarkable manner that he would have me to be in such a condition? Indeed before we see the will of God apparent we may desire to avoid an affliction, and may use means for it, but

now when we see God expressing his will from heaven in a manner beyond ordinary and more remarkably, then certainly it is fit for us to fall down and submit to him, and not to oppose when God comes with a mighty stream against us, it's our best way to fall down before him and not to resist; For as it is an argument of a man's disobedience, when there is not only a command against a sin but when God reveals his command in a terrible way, the more solemn the command of God is, the greater is the sin in breaking that command; so the more remarkable the hand of God is in bringing an affliction upon us, the greater is the sin for us to murmur and be discontented. Then God expects that we should fall down when he (as it were) speaks from Heaven to you by name and says, well, I will have this spirit of yours down, do not you see that my hand is stretched out, my eyes are upon you, my thoughts are upon you, and I must have that proud spirit of yours down? Oh then it's fit for the creature to yield and submit unto him. When you speak in an ordinary manner to your servants, or children, you expect they should regard what you say, but when you make them stand still by you and you speak to them in a more solemn way, then if they should disregard what you say, you are very impatient: So certainly God cannot take it well whenever he does appear from Heaven in such a remarkable way to bring an affliction, if then we do not submit to him.

The eleventh aggravation of the sin of murmuring is this, **To be discontented though God has been exercising of us long under afflictions, yet still to remain discontented.** For a man or woman at first when an affliction befalls them to have a murmuring heart then it's an evil, but to have a murmuring heart when God has been a long time exercising them with afflic-

tion it's more evil. Though an heifer at first when the yoke is put upon him he wriggles up and down and will not be quiet, but if after many months or years it shall not draw quietly, the husbandman would rather feed it fat and prepare it for the butcher than be troubled any longer with it: So though the Lord was content to pass by that discontented spirit of yours at first, yet God having a long time kept the yoke upon you, you have been under his afflicting hand (it may be) diverse years; and yet you remain discontent still; it were just with God that he should bear your murmuring no longer, and that your discontent under the affliction should be but a preparation to your destruction. So you see when a man or woman has been long exercised with afflictions and yet are discontent, that's an aggravation of the sin: Mark that text in **Hebrews 12.11. Now** (says the Scripture) **No chastening for the present is joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.** It's true, our afflictions are not joyous but grievous, though at first when our affliction comes it is very grievous, but yet (says the text) afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those that are exercised thereby; When you have been a long time in the School of afflictions, you are a very dullard in Christ's School if you have not learned this Contentment, **I have learned** (says Saint **Paul**) **in every state therewith to be content: Paul** had learned this lesson quickly, you have been a learning many years, perhaps you may say as **Heman** did, **That you are afflicted from your youth up**, in the 88th **Psalms**. Oh it's a very evil thing if being exercised long with afflictions you are not yet contented: The eye in the body of a man is as tender a part as any part that a man's body has, but yet

the eye is able to continue in and bear a great deal of cold, because it is more used to it; so those that are used to afflictions, those that God exercises much with afflictions, (though they have tender spirits otherwise) yet they should have learned contentedness by this time. A new cart may creak and make a noise, but after the use of it a while it will not do so: So when you were first a Christian and newly come into the work of Christ, perhaps you make a noise and cannot bear affliction: but are you an old Christian and yet will you be a murmuring Christian? Oh that's a shame for any that are ancient professors, that have been a long time in the School of Jesus Christ to have murmuring and discontented spirits. And thus you have had Eleven Aggravations of this sin of murmuring and discontent.

But now my brethren because this discontented humor is a very tough humor, and it is very hard to work upon, there's none that are discontented but will have something to say for their discontent, I shall therefore desire to take away what every discontented heart has to say for himself.

THE PLEAS OF A DISCONTENTED HEART



In the first place, **Says one that is discontented, It is not discontentment, it is the sense of my condition, I hope you would have me sensible of my condition: perhaps when God takes away a friend or some other comfort they are inordinately sorrowful, and wringing their hands as if they were undone, and let anyone but speak to them, (say they) Would you not have me sensible of my affliction? And thus many would hide their sinful murmuring under God's hand with this pretense, that it is but sensibleness of their affliction.**

To that I answer, First, there is no sense of any affliction that will hinder the sense of God's mercies, nay the more we are sensible of our afflictions if it be in a gracious manner, the more sensible we will be of God's mercy, but you are so sensible of your affliction as it takes away the sense of all your mercies. Oh this is sinful discontent, this is not to be sensible of your condition as God would have you, but it is to be sensible in a wicked way, you go beyond your bounds. By this rule you may come to know when your sorrows and troubles for your afflictions go beyond the bounds.

We may be sorrowful when God afflicts, but Oh! that I might know when my sorrow goes beyond the bounds of it. Truly you may know it by this, does the sense of your afflictions take away the sense of your mercies? If it does then it goes beyond the bounds.

Secondly, If it were but a bare sense of an affliction it would not hinder you in the duties of your condition, the right sense of our afflictions will never hinder us in the performance of the duties of our condition. But you are so sensible of your affliction as you are made unfit for the performance of the duties of the condition that God has put you in, surely it is more than mere sense of your affliction.

Thirdly, If it were but mere sense of your affliction, yet then you could in this your condition bless God for the mercies that others have, but your discontentedness usually breeds envy at it. When anyone is discontented with their condition, they have an envious spirit at the conditions of those that are delivered from what afflictions they bear, certainly then it is turned to be sour and naught, when you are so sensible of your afflictions, and insensible of mercies as you are unfit for the duties of your condition, and envious at others that are not afflicted as you are.

THE SECOND PLEA



But will a discontented heart say, **I am not so much troubled with my afflictions, but it is for my sin rather than my affliction, and I hope you will give leave that we should be troubled and discontented with our sin, and were it not for sin that I see in myself I should not be so discontented as I am. Oh! it is sin that is heavy upon me, and it is that that troubles me more than my afflictions.**

Do not deceive your own heart, there is a very great deceit in this. There are many people that when God's hand is out against them they will say, they are troubled for their sin, but the truth is, it is the affliction that does trouble them rather than their sin, their heart does exceedingly deceive them in this very thing: For,

First, they were never troubled for their sin before this affliction came. But you will say, It is true, I was not before, for my prosperity blinded me, but now God has opened my eyes by afflictions: Has He so?

Secondly, then your great care will be rather for the removing of your sin, than your affliction. Are you more solicitous about the taking away of your sin, than the taking away of your affliction?

Thirdly, if it be your sin that troubles you, if God should take away your afflictions, yet except your sin be taken away, and your heart be better, this would not content you, you could not be satisfied. But we see it ordinarily, that if God removes their afflictions there is no more trouble for their sin. Oh! many do belie themselves in this, in saying, that they are so troubled for their sin, and especially those that are so troubled that they are in danger to miscarry, and to make away with themselves. There is not one in ten thousand that are in such a condition as this is, but it is afflictions rather than sin that puts them to it; indeed you lay all upon this, as if it were the work of the word or the spirit of bondage. I remember I heard not long since of a Divine that being judicious, and used to such kind of things, there came a man to him mightily troubled for his sin, and he could not tell what to do, he was ready to despair. The Divine looks upon him, says he, are you not in debt? He confessed that he was; and at length the Minister began to find it out, that that was his trouble rather than his sin, and so was a means to help him that way, that his creditors should not come upon him, and then the man was pretty quiet, and would not make away with himself any longer. For it is a usual thing, that if anything befalls a man that does cross him, Oh then it is their sin that does trouble them. Sometimes it is thus with servants, if their governors cross them, then they are vexed and fret, and come to deal with them, Oh then they will say they are sorrowful for their sin. But we must take heed of dallying with God that is the Seer and Searcher of the secrets of all hearts. Many of you go sullen and dumpish up and down your families, and then you say it is your sin that lies upon you, when God knows it is otherwise, it is because you cannot have your wills as you would have.

Fourthly, if you are troubled for your sin, then it will be your great care not to sin in your trouble; not by your trouble to increase your sin. But you are troubled in such a way as the truth is you do increase your sin in your trouble, and since you say you were troubled for your sin you have committed more sin than you did before.

And then lastly, if it be your sin that troubles you, then you have the more need to submit to God's hand; **and accept of the punishment of your iniquity**, as it is in **Leviticus 26:41**. There is no such consideration to take away murmuring, as to look upon my sin as the cause of my affliction.

THE THIRD PLEA



Oh says another, I find my affliction is such that God withdraws Himself from me in my affliction, that is that that troubles me, and can anybody be quiet then, can anybody be satisfied with such a condition when the Lord shall withdraw Himself? Were my affliction never so great, yet if I find not God withdrawing Himself from me I hope I could be content with any affliction, but I cannot find the presence of God with me in this affliction, as sometimes I have found; and it is that that troubles me, and makes me to be in such a condition as I am.

Now to that I answer thus, First, it is a very evil thing for men and women upon every affliction to conclude that God is departed from them. It may be when it comes to be examined there is no other reason why you think that God is withdrawn and departed, but because He afflicts you. Now for you to make such a conclusion, that every time God lays an affliction upon you He is departed; this is a sinful distemper of your heart, and is very dishonourable to God, and grievous to His Spirit. In the 17th of **Exodus**, 7th verse, you may see how God was displeased there with such a kind of distemper as this is, **And He called the name of the**

place Massah and Meribah because of the chiding of the Children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord amongst us or not? Mark, they did murmur because they were brought into afflictions, but see what the text says, therefore the place was called **Massah** and **Meribah**, because they tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord amongst us or not? This was to tempt God, sometimes we are afraid God is departed from us, and it was merely because we are afflicted. I beseech you observe that Scripture, God calls it a tempting of Him when He afflicts any, for them to conclude and say that God is departed from them. If a child should cry out of his father, and say that his father is turned to be an enemy to him, because he does correct him, this would be taken ill. I beseech you consider of this one place, it may be of very great use to you, that you may not be ready to think that God is departed because you are afflicted.

Secondly, if God be departed, the greatest sign of God's departing is because you are so disquieted. You make your disquiet be the fruit of God's departing, and if it comes to be examined your disquiet is the cause of God's departing from you. If you could but cure your disquiet, if you could but quiet your own hearts and get them into a better frame of contentedness under God's hand in afflicting of you, then you would find God's presence with you. Will you be thus disquieted till God comes again to you? Your disquiet drives Him from you, and you can never expect God's coming to manifest Himself comfortably to your souls, till you have gotten your hearts quiet under your afflictions. And therefore here you see how crossly you reason. You reason, I am disquieted because God is gone, when the truth is God is gone because you are disqui-

eted. Reason but the other way, Oh my disquiet has driven God from me, and therefore as ever I would have the presence of God to come again to me, let my heart be quiet under the hand of God.

Thirdly, do you find God departing from you in your affliction? Will you therefore depart from God too? Is this your help? Can you help yourself that way? Because God is gone will you go too? Do I indeed feel God departing from me? It may be it is so, it may be God for your trial is departed a little from you, and is it so indeed? What unwise course do I take? I commit further sin and so I go further off from God. What a case am I in? God goes from me, and I from God. If the child sees the mother going from it, it's not for the child to say, my mother is gone yonder and I will go the other way, no, but the child goes crying after the mother. And so should the soul say, I see the Lord is withdrawing His presence from me, and now it is best for me to make after the Lord with all my might, and I am sure this murmuring humor is not a making after God, but by this I go further and further off from God, and what a distance is there like to be between God and me within a little while? These are some of the reasonings and pleas of a murmuring and discontented heart. There are many others that we shall meet withal, and endeavor to speak to your hearts in them, that so this tough humor of discontent may (as it were) be cut with the Word and softened with the Word, that so it may pass away. For that's the way of Physicians when they meet with a body that has any tough humor then they give that that has a piercing quality. When there is a tough humor that stops the water that it cannot pass, they give that that has a piercing quality that may make passage for it. And so you have need of such things that are piercing to

make way through this tough humor that is in the spirits of men and women whereby they come to live very uncomfortably to themselves and others, and very dishonorable unto God.

SERMON 10



Philippians 4:11._ For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

— Now there are many pleas and reasonings that yet remain, for there is a great deal of ado with a discontented murmuring heart. And I remember finding that the same **Hebrew** word that signifies [**to lodge, to abide**] signifies to **murmur**; they use one word for both. For murmuring is a distemper that does lodge in men, where it gets in, once it lodges, abides, and continues. And therefore, that we may unlodge it and get it out, we will labor to show what are the further reasonings of a discontented heart.

THE FOURTH PLEA



Methinks I could be content with God's hand (says one) so far as I see the hand of God in a thing I can be content: But when men deal so unreasonably and unjustly with me I know not how to bear it; I can bear it that I should be in God's hands, but not in the hands of men: My friends or acquaintance when they deal so unrighteously with me, Oh, this goes very hard unto me, that I know not how to bear it from men.

For the taking away of this reasoning, first, though they be men that bring this cross upon you, yet they are God's instruments, God has a hand in it, and they can go no further than God would have them go. This was that that quieted **David** when **Shimei** cursed him, (said he) God has a hand in it, though **Shimei** be a base wicked man yet I look beyond him to God. So, is there any of your friends that deal injuriously with you, and cross with you, look up to God and see that man but as an instrument in God's hands.

Secondly, if this be your trouble that men do so wrong you, you are rather to turn your hearts to pity them than to murmur or be discontented. For the truth is, if you be wronged by other men, you have the better of it, for it is better to bear wrong than to do wrong

a great deal; if they wrong you your heart cannot submit, you are in a better condition than they, because it is better to bear than do wrong. I remember it is said of **Socrates** that being very patient when wrong was done to him, they asked him how he came to be so; said he, If I meet with a man in the street that is a diseased man, shall I be vexed and fretted with him because he is diseased? Those that wrong me I look upon them as diseased men and therefore pity them.

Thirdly, though you meet with hard dealings from men, yet you meet with nothing but kind, good, and righteous dealings from God. When you meet with unrighteous dealings from them, set one against the other. And that is for the answer to the fourth plea.

A FIFTH PLEA



Oh, but that affliction that comes upon me is an affliction that I never looked for; I never thought to have met with such an affliction, and that is what I know not how to bear; that is that which makes my heart so disquieted because it was altogether unlooked for and unexpected.

For the answer to this, first, it is your weakness and folly that you did not look for it and expect it. In **Acts**, 20:22, 23, see what Saint **Paul** says concerning himself: **And now behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesses in every City saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me.** It is true, says he, I know not the particular affliction that may befall me, but this I know: that the Spirit of God witnesses that bonds and afflictions shall abide me everywhere. I look for nothing else but bonds and afflictions wheresoever I go. So a Christian should do; he should look for afflictions wheresoever he is; in all conditions he should look to meet with afflictions. And therefore, if any affliction should befall him, though indeed he

could not foresee the particular evil, yet he should think, "This is no more than I looked for in the general." Therefore, no affliction should come unexpectedly to a Christian.

A second answer I would give is this: Is it unexpected? Then the less provision you made for it before it came, the more careful you should be to sanctify God's Name in it now it is come. It is in this case of afflictions as in mercies; many times mercy comes unexpected (and that might be a third answer) to you. Set one against the other: I have many mercies that I never looked for as well as afflictions that I never looked for; why should not one rejoice me as well as the other disturbs me? As it is in mercies, when they come unexpected, the less preparation there was in me for receiving mercy, the more need I have to be careful, now to give God the glory of the mercy, and to sanctify God's Name in the enjoyment of the mercy. Oh, so it should be with us now; we have had mercies this summer that we never expected and therefore we were not prepared for them, now we should be so much the more careful to give God the glory of them. So when afflictions come that we did not expect, then it seems we laid not in for them beforehand; we had need be the more careful to sanctify God's Name in them. We should have spent some pains before to prepare for afflictions and we did not, then take so much the more pains to sanctify God in this affliction now. And that is a fifth reasoning.

THE SIXTH PLEA



Oh! but it is very great, my affliction it is exceedingly great, says one, and however you say, we must be contented, it is true, you may say so that feel not such great afflictions, but if you felt my affliction that I feel you would think it hard to bear and be content.

To that I answer, Let it be as great an affliction as it will, it is not so great as your sin, **He has punished you less than your sins.**

Secondly, It might have been a great deal more, you might have been in Hell. And it is (as I remember) **Bernard's** speech, (says he) **It is an easier matter to be oppressed than perish.** You might have been in Hell, and therefore the greatness of the thing should not make you murmur, grant it be great.

Thirdly, It may be it's the greater because your heart does so murmur: for shackles upon a man's legs, if his legs be sore it will pain him the more, if the shoulder be sore the burden is the greater; it is because your heart is so unsound that your affliction is great unto you. And that's the sixth reasoning.

A SEVENTH PLEA



But howsoever you may lessen my affliction, yet I am sure it is far greater than the afflictions of others.

First, It may be it is your discontent that makes it greater, when (indeed) it is not so in itself.

Secondly, If it were greater than others: why is your eye evil because the eye of God is good? Why should you be discontented the more because God is gracious to others?

Thirdly, Is your affliction greater than others? Then in this you have an opportunity to honor God more than others; so you should consider, Does God afflict me more than other men? God gives me an opportunity in this to honor Him in this affliction more than other men? To exercise more grace than other men, let me labor to do it then.

Fourthly, If all afflictions were laid upon a heap together: It is a notable expression of **Solon** that wise Heathen (says he,) Suppose all the afflictions that are in the world were laid upon a heap, and every man should come and take a proportion of those afflictions, every one equally, there is scarce any man but would rather say, let me have the afflictions that I had before. Or else he were like to come to a greater share, a greater affliction if he should equally

share with all the world. Now for you that are poor, (that are not in extremity of poverty) if all the riches in the world were laid together, and you should have an equal share, you would be poorer. But take all afflictions and sorrows whatsoever, if all the sorrows in the world were laid together in a heap, and you had but an equal share of them, your portion would be rather more than it is now for the present. And therefore do not complain, that it is more than others, so as to murmur because of that.

AN EIGHTH PLEA



Another reasoning that murmuring hearts have is this, **They think that if the affliction were any other than it is, then they would be more contented.**

First, you must know that we are not to choose our own rod that God shall beat us with.

Secondly, it may be if it were any other than it is, it were not so fit for you as this is; it may be therefore God chooses it because it is the most cross to you, as seeing it most suitable for the purging out of that humor that is in you. If a patient comes to take medicine and finds himself sick by it, shall he say, "Oh! if it were any other potion I could bear it"? It may be if it were any other than it is it would not fit your disease; yes, if it did not work as it does it would not fit your disease. So when you say of an affliction, "If it were any other than it is you could bear it," do but answer yourself with this: it may be if it were any other than it is it would not be fit for me, it would not hit right to that sinful humor that there is in my soul, and therefore God sees this to be the fittest and the most suitable for me.

Thirdly, know that this is the excellency of grace in a Christian to be fitted for any condition, not only to say, if it were this or that, but if it be any. As now, a mariner if he has skill he would not say, if it were any other wind but this, if the wind did blow in any point but this, I could tell how to manage my ship, I could show skill in other points but not in this. Would not mariners laugh at such a one? It would be a shame for him to say that he has skill in any other points but this. So it should be a shame for a Christian to say that he has skill in any other affliction but this: a Christian should be able to manage his ship if the wind blows any way; to guide his soul any way.

The fourth and last answer is this: Know that the Lord has rewards and crowns for all graces, and for the honoring them in all conditions. It may be in such a way as you think you could honor God, God has a crown for that, and God has another crown to set upon the heads of those that honor Him in such a way as this is. Yes, He has several sorts of crowns (as I may so say) in Heaven, and those crowns He must put upon somebody's head, and therefore He exercises you in variety of conditions, that so you might have the several rewards and crowns that God has to reward and crown those that are faithful in several conditions.

A NINTH PLEA



Oh but the condition that God has put me in makes me to be unserviceable, and this troubles me; it is true, if it were only an affliction and trouble to myself it were not so much, but I am put into such a condition by this affliction as I am unserviceable, and am likely to do God no further service, God puts me into a mean estate, and what good can I do? And how burdensome is my life to me because I can do no service for God! And this is grievous to me.

Indeed if it be true that this is your great grief, it is a good sign, if you can say as in the presence of God, above all afflictions here in this world to be laid aside and not to be employed in the service of God, I account that the greatest Affliction: I had rather bear any trouble in the world so I might do more service, than to be freed from trouble and to be laid aside and do little service: Can you say so? It is a good sign of grace for a man to account afflictions to be great because he can do the Lord but little service. Few men account that no affliction at all.

But yet there may be a temptation in this. To murmur at God's disposal when your calling is low and mean and you can do little service, this is many times a temptation to those that are poor, those that are servants and those that are of weak parts and are obliged to work hard to provide bread for their families, it is many times a grievous burden to them to think, such men the Lord uses in public service, and I live in an obscure way, and to what purpose is my life?

First, To help against this temptation that you may not murmur against this condition, Do but consider though your condition be low and mean, yet you are in the Body, you are a member of the Body though you are but a mean member, the toe and the finger has its use in the body, though it be not the eye, though it be not the head, or the heart yet it has its use in the body. And it is an excellent expression that I remember **Austin** has about this, (says he) It is better to be the meanest member in the Body, than to be the highest member and more excellent and cut off from the Body, it is better to be a little sprig in the tree joined to the Root, than to be an arm cut off from the Root. Now other men that have but common gifts in the world, that are not members of Jesus Christ, (indeed) they seem to have more excellency than those that are godly, that are in a mean condition, mean parts, mean callings, but they are not of the Body, they are not joined to the Root, and therefore their condition is worse. As a great arm of a tree when it is cut off it has a great many leaves upon it, and it seems a great deal more glorious than those little sprigs that are upon the tree, but that little sprig is in a better condition, why? Because joined to the tree and has sap from the Root and flourishes, but the other will wither and die within a while: So it is with the men of the

world, they be but like great boughs cut off from the tree, though they have excellent parts, and have great estates and pomp and glory in the world, they have no union with Jesus Christ the Root: But now others that live in a poor condition, a poor tradesman, a poor servant, a poor laboring man that labors for his family everyday, yet he being godly, (says he) though I have but little for the present, little glory, little credit, little comfort yet I am joined to the Body, and there I have supply and that that will feed me with comfort, blessing, and mercy to all eternity: So all that are in a poor condition in this world if they be godly, do but think of that; though you are mean yet you are in the Body, and joined to the Root, you are joined to the principle of comfort, good, blessing, and mercy that will hold out to eternity, when thousand thousands of glorious pompous men in the world shall wither and perish everlastingly, and therefore be not troubled at your mean condition.

Secondly, Though you have but a mean calling in this world, and so are not regarded as a man of use in the world, yet if you are a Christian God has called you to a higher calling, your general calling it is a high calling, though your particular calling be but low and mean: And for that you have a place in the Chapter before my text, **Philippians 3.14. I press towards the mark** (says the Apostle) **for the price of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus**: So that every Christian has a high calling of God in Christ Jesus, God has called him to the highest thing that he has called any creature to that he has made, the Angels in Heaven have not a higher calling than you have. You that perhaps spend your time in a poor business, in the meanest calling, if you are a dung-raker, to rake channels, or cleanse places of filth or any other thing in the world that is the meanest that can be conceived of, your general

calling as a Christian does advance you higher than any particular calling can advance any man in the world; others indeed that are called to manage the Affairs of the State, they are in a high calling, or Ministers they are in a high calling, but yours in some respect is higher. A poor servant that must be scraping all day about poor mean things, many times may have such a temptation as this is, Oh what a poor condition has God disposed me to! Will God have regard to such a one that is in such a poor low place as I am? Oh yes, Christ has regard to the meanest member, as a man has as true regard to the toe if it be in pain, and will tender that as truly and verily as any other member; so Christ has regard to his lowest and meanest ones.

Thirdly, you are in a high calling though your outward calling be low in respect of men, yet in respect of God you are in the same calling with the Angels in Heaven, and in some degree called to that that is higher, for the Scripture says, that the Angels come to understand the mystery of the Gospel by the Church; you that are a Christian in that general calling of yours, you are joined with Principalities and Powers, and with Angels, in the greatest work that God has called any creature to, and therefore let that comfort you in this.

Fourthly, Your calling is low and mean, yet be not discontented with that, for you have a principle within you (if you are a godly man or woman) of Grace that does raise your lowest actions to be higher in God's esteem, than all the brave glorious actions that are done in the world; the principle of faith does it, for any man or woman to go on in obedience to God in a way of faith in the calling that God has set them, (I say doing this through a principle of faith) it does raise this action, and makes it a more glorious action

than all the glorious victories of **Alexander** and **Caesar**, than all their Triumphs and glorious pomp that they had in all their conquests; it was not so glorious as for you to do the lowest action out of faith. For, as **Luther** speaks of a poor Milk-maid, and yet being a Believer, and does it in faith, he compares that action to all the glorious actions of **Caesar**, and makes that a great deal more eminent and glorious in the eyes of God, therefore faith raises your works that are but mean, raises them to be very glorious.

Yea, and the truth is, there is more obedience to submit to God in a low calling, than to submit to him in a higher calling, for it is clear obedience, mere obedience that makes you go on in a low calling, but there may be much self-love that makes men go on in a higher calling, for there is riches, credit and account in the world, and rewards come in by that, which does not in the other, to go on quietly in a low calling is more obedience to God.

Fifthly, Know further in the last place, there is likely to be more reward: For the Lord when he comes to reward, he does not come to examine what the work has been that men and women have been exercised in, but what their faithfulness has been, **Well done good and faithful servant** says the Lord, he does not say, well done good servant for you have been faithful to me in public works, ruling Cities and States, and Affairs in Kingdoms, and therefore you shall be rewarded, no, but **Well done good and faithful servant**; now you may be **faithful** in little as well as others are in more, by going on and working your days labor, when you get but a couple of shillings to maintain your family, you may be as faithful in this as those are that rule a Kingdom; now God looks to a man's faithfulness, and you may have as great a reward for your faithfulness that are a poor servant in the Kitchen all the

day, as another that sits upon the Throne all day, and as great a Crown of glory you may have at the day of judgment, as a King that sits upon the Throne, that has ruled for God upon his Throne; yea, your faithfulness may be rewarded by God with as great glory, as a King that has swayed his Scepter for God; because I say the Lord does not so much look at the work that is done, as at the faithfulness of our hearts in doing it, then why should not every one of us go on comfortably and cheerfully in our low condition, for why may not I be faithful as well as another? It is true, I cannot come to be as rich a man and as honourable as others; but I may be as faithful as any other man, that every one of you may conclude with yourselves: what does hinder but that you that are the poorest and meanest may be as faithful as the greatest, yea you may have as glorious a crown in Heaven, and therefore go on comfortably and cheerfully in your way.

A TENTH PLEA



There's another reasoning that some may have and that is this. **Oh I could bear much affliction in some other way but this is very grievous to me, the unsettledness of my condition, though my condition were but low yet if it were in a settled way I could be content, but it is so inconstant, and so unsettled, that I can never know what to trust to, but am tossed up and down in the world in an unsettled condition, and this is hard to be content with.**

Now to that I answer, First, that the Psalmist says, **That every man in his settled estate is vanity**, in **Psalm**, 36:5. Your books have it, Every man at his **best estate** is vanity, the word is his **settled estate**; you think if you were but settled, Oh then you could be content, but the truth is, man in his settled estate is vanity.

Secondly, I answer thus, that perhaps God sees it is better for you to live in a continual dependence upon Him, and not to know what your condition shall be on the morrow, than for you to have a more settled condition in respect of the comforts of the creature; do but remember that we spoke of before, that Christ does not

teach you to pray, Lord, give me enough that will serve me for two or three years, but, **this day our daily bread**; to teach us we must live upon God in a dependent condition every day for daily bread. Here was the difference that is observable between the Land of **Canaan** and **Egypt**, the land of **Canaan** that depended upon God for the watering of it with showers from Heaven, but **Egypt** had a constant way of watering the country, that did not so much depend upon Heaven for water, but upon the river **Nile**, which did at some certain time overflow the country. And they knowing that the watering of their country did depend upon that river and not upon Heaven they grew more proud. And therefore the Scripture, to express **Pharaoh's** pride, brings him in saying, **The River is mine**: he could order the river as he pleased, for it was his. **Canaan**, which was a country which was to depend upon God, though they had rain at one time, yet they knew not whether they should have it at another time, and lived always in a dependence upon God not knowing what should become of them. Now God thought this to be a better land for His people than **Egypt**, and this is given as one reason among others for it, because the Lord looked upon this, as more suitable to the state of His people that were to live by faith, to be continually depending upon Heaven, upon Himself, and not to have a constant settled way in the creature for their outward dependence. And we find it by experience, that when those that are godly live in the greatest dependence upon God, and have no settled comings-in from the creature, they do exercise faith more, and are in a better condition for their souls than before. Oh! many times it falls out that the worse your outward estate is the better your soul is, and the better your outward estate is the worse your soul is. We read in **Ezra**, 4:13 the objec-

tion that the enemies had against the people of **Israel's** building of the wall of the City: their writing to **Artaxerxes** against them, says, **Be it known unto the King, that if the City be built, and the walls set up again, then they will not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so you shall damage the revenue of the Kings.** If the wall be built (say they) then they will refuse to pay toll, tribute and custom to the King: that is thus, so long as they live in such a condition, where they have dependence wholly upon the King, and lie at the King's mercy, that is, they are in no City that has walls built, but the King may come upon them when he will, so long they will pay custom to the King, but if once they come to build a wall, and can defend themselves, and have not their dependence upon the King as before, then they will deny paying toll, tribute, and custom. So it is thus for all the world between God and men's souls, when a soul lives in way of mere dependence upon God, that sensibly he sees God has him at advantage every moment, Oh then such a soul will pay toll and custom, that soul exercises faith, and begs every day his daily bread; but if God hedges that man about with an estate, with prosperity, perhaps he has an inheritance befallen him, perhaps he has a constant office that brings in so much yearly to him duly paid, this man is not so sensible now of his dependence upon God, he begins now to pay less toll and custom to God than before, God has less service from this man now than before. God sees it better for His people to live in a depending condition: we are very loath in respect of God to be dependent, we would be all independents this way, we would be of ourselves, and have no dependence upon the Lord, but God sees it better for us to live in a depending condition.

Further, This may be your comfort, though for outward things you are mightily unsettled, yet for the great things of your soul and eternal estate, there you are settled, there you have a settled way, a constant way of fetching supply, **Of His fullness we receive grace for grace**, you have there abundance of treasure to go to, and fetch all that you stand in need of. And observe it, that now your condition is more settled in the Covenant of Grace than it was in the Covenant of Works; in the Covenant of Works there God gave man a stock to trade with, but He put it in his own hand, so that he might trade, and get or lose; but now in the Covenant of Grace God makes sure, the stock is kept in the hand of Christ, and we must go to Him for supply continually, for Christ keeps the stock. Perhaps we may trifle away somewhat in our trading, but God takes that care still we shall never spend the stock: As a man when his son breaks, having squandered away his stock that he gave him before, afterwards he puts his stock into a friend's hand, and says he, you shall keep the stock and it shall not be at his disposal; so we are in a more settled condition in respect of our eternal estate than **Adam** was in innocence; therefore let that comfort us in all our unsettled conditions in the matters of the world.

AN ELEVENTH PLEA



But yet there is another reasoning that many murmuring hearts think to feed their humour withal, (say they) **If I never had been in a better condition than I could bear this affliction, if God had always kept me in so low a condition I could be content, Oh but there was a time that I prospered more, and I had things at more full hand, and therefore now it is harder to me to be brought low; as in these times, perhaps a man that had five or six hundred a year, but now has had nothing for a great while, if that man had not been born to so much, or never had prospered in any higher degree than now he is in, this affliction had been less, perhaps he has some money and friends to live upon, but if he had never been in a better condition he would not have accounted it so great a matter to have been without it now. This many times is our greatest wound, that once we were in a better condition; and this is the most unreasonable thing for us to murmur upon this ground of any.**

For first, Is your eye evil because God has been good to you heretofore? It is an ill thing for us to have our eye evil because God is good to others, but to look upon our condition with an evil eye

now, because God was once good to us; has God done you any wrong because he was formerly more good to you than he was to others?

Secondly, Did you heretofore more prosper, did God heretofore give you more prosperity? It was to prepare you for afflictions, we should look at all our outward prosperity as a preparation to afflictions, if you had done so then it would not have been so difficult for you to have endured affliction now; when you had a great estate, yet if you had made use of this mercy of God to prepare you for your afflicted estate, then the change of your estate would not be so grievous. That every Christian should do: have I an estate now? I should prepare for poverty, have I health now? I should prepare for sickness, have I liberty? Let me prepare myself for imprisonment. What know I what God may call me to? Have I comfort and peace now in my conscience, does God shine upon me? While I have this let me prepare for God's withdrawing from me: am I delivered from temptations? Let me prepare now for the time of temptations; If you would do so, the change of your condition would not be so grievous to you: Mariners that are in a calm will prepare for storms, would they say, if we never had calms we would bear storms? But now we have had calms so many years or weeks together, this is grievous: In your calm you are to prepare for storms, and the storm would be less, you should reason quite contrary and say, Now I am in an afflicted condition, Oh but blessed be God **I was in a comfortable condition**, and blessed be God that he was beforehand with me in the ways of his mercy, this one consideration may help murmuring hearts. Do you murmur because once you were better? Know God was beforehand with you in the ways of mercy, you should rather think thus, I have

lived for these many years (forty years perhaps or more) in a comfortable condition, I have lived in health, and peace, and plenty, what though the remaining part of my time have some sorrow and affliction? The Lord has granted to me a comfortable sunshine all the day long till towards evening, and what if at seven or eight o'clock at night it begins to rain? Let me thank God I have had so fair weather all day. You that are going a voyage, if you have a comfortable wind, and very fair for many months together, what if you have a little storm when you are within sight of land, will you murmur and repine? Oh no, but rather bless God that you have had such a comfortable voyage so long: Oh this consideration would help us all; If it were so that now God should say, well, you shall never see comfortable day more for outward things in this world, Oh then you have cause to fall down and bless God's Name that you have had so many comfortable days: Now you reason quite contrary, whereas you should bless God that you have had so much comfort, you make what you have had before to be an aggravation of your afflictions now, and so murmur and are discontented. That which God gave you before, upon what terms did you hold it? Did you hold it so as you have in your writings, **To have and to hold for ever**? God gives no such thing, God gives to no man (I say) anything but grace to run upon that tenor, there is no such thing in all God's writings for any outward comforts, **To have and to hold for you and your heirs**. Indeed for grace he does give it to yourselves, **to have and to hold for ever**, though not for every one that comes out of your loins to have and to hold for ever. God does not give any outward thing so upon no such tenor as that is. If God gives me an understanding of himself, and faith, and humility, and love, and patience, and such graces of his

Spirit he gives them me for ever. If he gives me Himself and his Christ, and his promise, and his Covenant, he gives me them for ever, what am I therefore that the Sun should always shine upon me, that I must have fair weather all my days? That which God gives to me he gave it to me as a pledge of his love, let me return it to him as a pledge of my obedience, there is all the reason in the world for it, all that a godly man receives from God he receives it as a pledge of God's love to him, therefore when he comes into an afflicted condition, says God, Return to me as a pledge for your obedience that that you had from me as a pledge of my love. We should cheerfully come in to God and bless God that we have anything to render unto him as a pledge of our obedience, and say, Oh it is thy love O Lord that has given us anything, that does enable us to render a pledge of our obedience to thee. When God calls for your estate or any comforts that you have, God calls for it as a pledge of your obedience to him.

A TWELFTH PLEA



Another reasoning of a murmuring heart is this. **Oh but after I have taken a great deal of pains for such a comfort, yet then I am crossed in it, after a great deal of labor and pains that I have taken now to be crossed, Oh this goes very hard.**

First I answer, The greater cross, the more obedience and submission.

Secondly, When you did take a great deal of pains, was it not with submission to God? Did you take pains with resolution, that you must have such a thing when you labor for it? Then know that you labor not as a Christian, but if you did labor and take pains, was it not with resignation to God, Lord I am taking pains in the way of my calling, but with submission, I depend wholly upon Thee for success and a blessing; And what was it that you did aim at in your labor? Was it not that you might walk with God in the place that God had set you? A Christian should do so in his outward calling, I am diligent in my outward calling, but it is, that I might obey God in it; it's true, I do it that I might provide for my family, but the chief thing that I aim at is, That I might yield obedi-

ence to God in the way that God hath set me: Now if God calls you to another condition to obey Him in though it be by suffering, you will do it if your heart be right.

Thirdly, There will be the more testimony of your love to God, if so be you shall now yield up yourself to God in that that cost you dear. Shall I offer that to God (says **David**) that cost me nothing? Your outward comforts have cost you much, and you have taken much pains to obtain them, and now if you can submit to God in the want of them, (I say) in this your love is more shown that you can offer that to God that cost you dear. Now these are the principal reasonings of a discontented heart.

A THIRTEENTH PLEA



There's one Plea more that may be named, and that is this, say some, **Though I confess my affliction is somewhat hard, and I feel some trouble within me, yet I thank God I break not out in discontented ways to the dishonour of God, I keep in although I have much ado with my own heart.**

Oh! do not satisfy yourselves with that, for the distempers of your hearts, and their sinful workings are as words before God. **My soul be silent to God:** That we spoke of in the beginning of the opening of this Scripture, it is not enough for your tongue to be silent; but your soul must be silent, there may be a sullen discontentedness of heart as well as a discontentedness manifested in words. And if you do not mortify that inward sullenness, if you are afflicted a little more it will break forth at last.

And thus the Lord I hope has met with the chief reasonings and Pleas for our discontent in our conditions. I beseech you in the Name of God consider these things, and because they do concern your own hearts, you may so much the better remember them. I had thought to have made a little entrance into the next head, and

that is some way of helping you to this grace of Contentment. It is a most excellent grace, of admirable use as you have heard, and the contrary is very sinful and vile.

SERMON 11



Philippians 4:11._ For I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content.

Now we are coming to the close of this point of **Contentment** that Jesus Christ does teach those that are in his school. We have opened the point to you, and showed you wherein the art, and skill, and mystery of Christian contentment lies. And diverse things in the way of application rebuking the want of this. And the last day I finished that point of showing the several reasonings of a murmuring and discontented heart. I shall now (as being desirous to make an end) leave what was said, and proceed to what remains. There are only these two things for the working of your hearts to this grace of Christian contentment.

First, the propounding of several considerations for the contenting of the heart in any afflicted condition.

Secondly, the propounding of directions what should be done for the working of our hearts to this.

THE FIRST CONSIDERATION



We should consider (in all our wants and inclinations to discontent) **The greatness of the mercies that we have, and the meanness of the things that we want.** The things we want, (if we are godly) they are things of very small moment in comparison to the things we have, and the things we have are things of very great moment; for the most part that which people are discontent and murmur for the want of, it is because they have not such things as reprobates have, or may have. Why should you be troubled so much for the want of that which a man or woman may have and yet be a reprobate, as that your estate is not so great, your health not so perfect, your credit not so much? You may have all those things and yet be a reprobate. Now will you be discontent for that which a reprobate may have? I shall give you the example of a couple of godly men meeting together, **Anthony** and **Diddimus**. **Diddimus** was blind, and yet a man of very excellent parts and graces. **Anthony** asked him if he was not troubled at this his want of sight. He confessed he was, but (said he) shall you be troubled at the want of what flies and dogs have, and not rather rejoice and be thankful that you have what Angels have? God hath given you those good things that make Angels glorious; is not that enough to you, though you want what thing a fly

has? And so a Christian should reason the case with himself: What am I discontented for? I am discontented for want of that which a dog may have, that a Devil may have, that a reprobate may have. Shall I be discontent for not having that, when God hath given me that which makes Angels glorious? **Blessed be God** (said the Apostle in **Ephesians 1:3**) **that hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.** It may be you have not so great blessings in earthly places as some others have, but if the Lord hath blessed you in heavenly places that should content you. There are blessings in heaven, and He hath set you here for the present as it were in heaven, in a heavenly place. The consideration of the greatness of the mercies that we have, and the littleness of the things that God hath denied us, is a very powerful consideration to work this grace of contentment.

THE SECOND CONSIDERATION



The consideration that God is beforehand with us with his mercies should content us (I spoke to this as an aggravation of our discontent, but now I shall use it as a consideration to help us to contentment). You want many comforts now, but has not God been beforehand with you heretofore? Oh you have had mercy enough already to make you spend all the strength you have and time you shall live, to bless God for what you have had already. I remember I have read of a good man that had lived to fifty years of age and enjoyed his health for forty-eight years exceedingly well, and lived in prosperity, and the last two years his body was exceedingly diseased, he had the strangury, and was in great pain; but he reasoned the case with himself thus. Oh Lord thou mightest have made all my life to have been a life of torment and pain, but thou hast let me have forty-eight years in health, I will praise thy mercies for what I have had, and will praise thy justice for what now I feel. Oh it is a good consideration for us to think that God is beforehand with us in the way of mercy. Suppose God should now take away your estates from some of you that have lived comfortably a great while, you will say, That aggravates our misery that we have had estates; but it is through your unthankfulness that it does so. We should bless God for what we

have had, and not think that we are worse because we have had thus and thus. We might have been always miserable, and certainly that man's condition is not very miserable that has no other great aggravation of his misery but because once he was happy. If there be nothing else to make you miserable, that is no such aggravation but that you may bear it, for there is much mercy in that that you had once, and therefore let that content you.

A THIRD CONSIDERATION



The consideration of the abundance of mercies that God bestows and we enjoy. It is a speech of Luther (says he) the Sea of God's mercies should swallow up all our particular afflictions. Name any affliction that is upon you, there is a Sea of mercy to swallow it up. If you pour a pail full of water on the floor of your house it makes a great show, but if you throw it into the Sea there is no appearance of it. So afflictions considered in themselves we think they are very great, but let them be considered with the Sea of God's mercies we do enjoy, then they are not so much, they are nothing in comparison.

A FOURTH CONSIDERATION



Consider the way of God towards all creatures. God carries on all creatures in a vicissitude of several conditions.

As thus, we have not always summer, but winter succeeds summer. We have not always day, but day and night. We have not always fair weather, but fair and foul. The vegetative creatures do not always flourish, but the sap is in the root and they seem as if they were dead. There is a vicissitude of all things in the world. The Sun does not shine always to us here, but there is darkness comes after light. Now seeing God has so ordered things with all creatures that there is a mixture of conditions, why should we think it much that there should be a vicissitude of conditions with us, sometimes in a way of prosperity, and sometimes in a way of affliction?

A FIFTH CONSIDERATION



A further consideration is this, **The creatures do suffer for us, why should not we be willing to suffer, to be serviceable to God?** God subjects other creatures; they are willing to lose their lives for us, to lose whatever beauty and excellency they have to be serviceable to us. Why should not we be willing to part with anything in way of service for God? Certainly there is not so great a distance between other creatures and Mankind, as there is between Mankind and God. It is an expression of that Martyr Master **Hooper**, that we read of in the Book of Martyrs, in laboring to work his own heart, and the hearts of others to contentedness in the midst of his sufferings. He has this similitude, and you may be put in mind of that every day, (says he) I look upon the creature, and see what it suffers to be useful to me; as thus, The brute beasts must die, must be roasted in the fire, and boiled, must come upon the trencher, be hacked all in pieces, must be chewed in the mouth, and in the stomach turned to that which is loathsome if one should behold it, and all to nourish me, to be useful to my body. And shall not I be willing to be made anything for God, for His service? What abundance of alterations the creature comes under to be made useful for me, to preserve me! Then if God will do so with me for His use, as He does subject the crea-

tures to me for my use, why should not I rest contented? If God will take away my estate, and make me poor, if God will take away my life, hack me in pieces, put me in prison, whatsoever He does, yet I shall not suffer more for God than the creature does for me, and surely I am infinitely more bound to God than the creature is to me, and there is not so much difference between me and the creature as between me and God. Such considerations as these wrought the heart of that Martyr to contentedness in his sufferings. And every time the creature is upon your trenchers you may think: What! Does God make the creature suffer for my use? Not only for my nourishment, but for my delight; what am I then in respect of the infinite God?

A SIXTH CONSIDERATION



Another consideration for the working of contentment, it is, **to consider that we have but a little time in this world.** If you are godly you shall never suffer but only in this world; why, do but shut your eyes and presently another life has come. As that martyr said to his fellow martyr, "Do but shut your eyes," (said he) "and the next time they are opened you shall be in another world." **Athanasius** said, it is but a little cloud (when he was banished) and it will be over presently. These afflictions, they are but for a moment. A mariner when he is abroad does not think it much if a storm arises, especially if he can see the heavens clear beyond it; says he, "It will be over presently." Consider we have not long to live; it may be it may be over before our days are at an end, but suppose it should not, death will put an end to all; all afflictions and troubles will soon be at an end by death.

A SEVENTH CONSIDERATION IS THIS



Consider the condition that others have been in that have been our betters. We made some use of that before to show the evil of discontentment. But further for to work this upon our hearts, it is a mighty Argument to work upon our hearts a contentedness in any condition.

You many times do consider who are above you, but consider who are under you.

Jacob that was the heir both of **Abraham** and **Isaac**, (for the blessing was upon him) and the Promise ran along in him, yet was in a poor mean condition. **Abraham** that was his Grandfather was able to make a kind of Army of his own household, 300 to fight with a King, yet **Jacob** his Grand-child he goes over Jordan with a staff, and lives in a very poor and mean condition for a long time. And **Moses** that might have had all the treasures in **Egypt**, and as some Historians say of him **Pharaoh's** Daughter adopted him for her son, because **Pharaoh** had no heir for the Crown, and so he was like to have come to the Crown, yet what a low condition did he live in when he went to live with **Jethro** his Father in law 400 years together. Afterward when he returned to **Egypt**, he and his

wife and children, and all that he had, and yet he had but one beast to carry him to **Egypt**, he went in a mean condition when he went from his Father in law to **Egypt** back again.

And **Elijah** we know how he was fed with Ravens, and how he was forced to shift for his life from time to time, and run into the wilderness up and down. And so did **Elisha**, he was various times in a very low condition. The Prophets of God they were to be hid in a Cave by **Obadiah**, and there to be fed with bread and water. And the Prophet **Jeremiah** put into a Dungeon, and oh how was he used! And it would be an endless thing to name the particulars of the great sufferings of the people of God. In former time we have sometimes made use of this Argument other ways. The great Instruments of God in the first Reformation they lived in great straits, in a very low condition. Even **Luther** himself when he was to die (said he) Lord (though he were a man of such public use, and was a great man in the Courts of Princes) Lord I have neither house nor lands, nor estate to leave any thing to wife or children, but I commit them to thee. And so **Musculus** that was a very choice Instrument of God in his time, though he were a man that was worth even a Kingdom for the excellency of his spirit, and learning, for he was one of the most learned men of his time, yet sometimes he was put to dig in the common ditch to get bread for his family. What would we do if we were in such a condition as these men were? But above all set Christ before us, that professes that the birds of the air had nests, and the Foxes had holes, yet the Son of man had no place to hide his head in, that low condition he was in. The consideration of such things as these is very useful. It is likewise useful for men and women of estates to go to poor peoples houses and see how they live, to go to Hospitals, and to see the

wounds of soldiers and others, and to see the lamentable condition that people live in that live in some Alms-houses, and what poor fare they have, and what straits they are put to. You hear sometimes of them, but if you went to see them it would not only stir up charity in yourselves towards them, but stir up thankfulness in your hearts towards God. It would be a special means to help you against any discontent. You would go away and see cause to bless God and say, if I were in such a condition as they are in what should I do? How could I bear it? And yet what reason is there that God does so order and dispose of things that they should be so low in their estates and I so high? I know no reason but free grace, God will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy. These are some good considerations for the furtherance of Contentment.

THE EIGHTH CONSIDERATION



A further consideration may be this, **That before your conversion, before God wrought upon your souls, you were contented then with the world without grace, though you had no interest in God nor Christ, why cannot you now be contented with grace and spiritual things without the world?** If you yourselves were content with the world without grace, there is reason you should be content with grace without the world? Certainly there is infinitely more reason. Yes, you see that many men of the world have a kind of contentment, do not murmur nor repine when the world comes though they have no interest in God and Christ. Then can you not have as much contentment with God and Christ without the world, as they can with the world without God and Christ? This is an infinite shame it should be so.

THE NINTH CONSIDERATION



Yes, consider when God has given you such contentment, you have not given him the glory. When God has let you have your heart's desire, what have you done with your heart's desire? You have not been the better for it; it may be you have been the worse many times, and therefore let that satisfy you: I meet with crosses, but when I had contentment and all things coming in, God had but little or no glory from me, and therefore let that be a means now to quiet me in my discontented thoughts.

THE TENTH CONSIDERATION



Yea lastly, consider all the experience that you have had of God's doing good unto you in the want of many comforts. When God crosses you, have you never had experience of abundance of good in afflictions? It is true, when a minister only tells men that God will work good out of their afflictions, they hear them speak, and think they speak like good men, but they feel little or no good, they feel nothing but pain. But when we cannot only say to you that God has said He will work good out of your afflictions, but we can say to you, that you yourselves have found it so by experience, that God has made former afflictions to be great benefits to you, and that you would not have been without them, or without the good that came by them for a world; such experiences will exceedingly quiet the heart and work it to contentment. Therefore think thus with yourself: Lord, why may not this affliction work as great a good upon me as afflictions have done heretofore? Perhaps you may find many other considerations besides in your own meditations; these are the principal ones that I have thought upon. I'll only add one word more to this, of one that once was a great merchant and tradesman, and it happened on a time that he suffered shipwreck. And said he: I never made a better voyage and sailed better than at that time that I suffered shipwreck.

This was a strange speech (his name was **Zeno**) that he should never make a better voyage. It would be a strange paradox to you that are mariners, to say, that that's a good voyage when you suffer shipwreck. But he meant because he got so much good by it, God was pleased to bless it so far to him that he gained so much unto his soul by it, so much soul-riches that he made account it was the best voyage that ever he had. And truly, sometimes it is so; yea, to you that are godly I make no question but you find it so, that your worst voyages have proved your best. When you have met with the greatest crosses in a voyage, God has been pleased to turn them to a greater good to you in some other way. It is true, we may not desire crosses that they may be turned to other advantages; but when God in His providence does so order things, that you meet with ill voyages, you may expect that God will turn them to a greater good. And those that have been exercised in the ways of godliness any long time, I make no question but they have abundance of experiences that they have gained by them. You know sometimes it is better to be in a little ship, for they have advantage of greater ones in storms many times. In a storm a little ship can thrust into a shallow place and so be safe, but your great ships cannot; they must be abroad and tossed up and down in the storm and tempest, and so many times split against the rocks. And so it may be God sees there is a storm coming, and if you are in your great ship you may be split upon rocks and sands; God therefore does put you into a lesser vessel that you may be more safe. We will lay aside the speaking of those considerations now, but I would not have you lay them aside and put them out of your thoughts, but labor (those especially that most concern you) to make use of them in the needful time, when you find any discontentedness of spirit to arise in you.

But the main thing that I intended for this exercise, it is propounding directions what to do for the helping of our hearts to contentment. For as for any further considerations we have prevented the speaking largely of them, because we have opened the most things in showing what the lessons are that Christ teaches men, when He brings them into His school, to teach them this art. I say there we have spoken of the special things that are most considerable for the helping of us to this grace of contentment. Therefore now all that I shall further do about this point, shall be the giving of some directions what course to take that we may come to attain this grace of contentment.

THE FIRST DIRECTION



The first is this: All the rules and helps in the world will do us little good except we get a good temper within our hearts. You can never make a ship go steady with propping of it without; you know there must be ballast within the ship, that must make it go steady. And so there is nothing without us that can keep our hearts in a steady constant way but that that is within us; grace is within the soul, and that will do it.

THE SECOND DIRECTION



Secondly, if you would get a contented life, do not gripe too much of the world, do not take in more of the business of the world than God calls you to, and be not greedy of taking in a great deal of the world. For if a man will go among thorns when he may go in a plainer way, there is no reason that this man should complain that he is pricked with them. You go among thorns; is it your way? Must you of necessity go among them? Then it is another matter; but if you will electively choose that way when you may go another, then you have no cause to complain. So for men and women that will put themselves upon things of the world that they need not, then no marvel though they be pricked, and meet with that which does disquiet them. For such is the nature of all things here in the world, that everything has some prick or other in it. We are likely to meet with disappointments and discontentments in everything we meddle with. And therefore those that have least to do in the world (that is, except God calls them to it, we must put in that), they are likely to meet with many things that will discontent them.

THE THIRD DIRECTION



Thirdly, be sure of your call to every business you go about; though it be in the least business, be sure of your call to it. Then whatever you meet withal, you may quiet your heart with this: I know I am where God would have me. There is nothing in the world will quiet the heart so much as this. When I meet with any cross, I know I am where God would have me in my place and calling; I am about the work that God has set me. Oh, this will quiet and content you when you meet with trouble. That that God calls a man to, with that he may have comfort in whatsoever befalls him. God is to look to you, and to see you blessed if you are in the work God calls you to.

THE FOURTH DIRECTION



And especially if I add a fourth rule, and that is. **That I walk by rule in that work I am called to.** I am called to such a business, but I must manage this work that I am called to by rule, I must walk by the word, order myself in this business according to God's mind so far as I am able, then add this to the other, and then the quiet and peace of that soul may be made even perfect in a kind, when I know it is not the work I put myself upon but God has called me to it, and I walk by the rule of the word in it, then let come what will come God he is to take care of me there. It was a speech of a Heathen (says he) if you will subject all things to yourself, do you subject yourself to reason, and by that you will make all things to be under you. I may add a little more to it, if you will subject all things under you, subject yourself to God, and then the truth is all things are under you. It has been that that many times we have hinted, the reason why many of our Gentry have been so malignant among us is, because they are willing to be slaves themselves under some above them at Court, so they may keep their neighbors under to be slaves to them: for you know any man heretofore that was great at the Court, he could crush any country man that he was angry withal. If there were an Arbitrary government, then all those that would be willing to be vassals and

slaves to the Prince, they can make all others vassals and slaves to them. Now be willing to be a vassal to God, to be absolutely under God's command, and then I say all things in the world are under you, **All are yours** (says the Apostle) **Life and death**, everything is yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's: All things in the world are serviceable to that man or woman that is serviceable to God. It is a mighty commendation of God's service, be willing to be serviceable to God and God makes all things in the world to be your servants, for so they are. You will say, how are they my servants, I cannot command them? They are servants in this, that God does order them all to work for your good, there's nothing in the world but (says God) it shall work for your good, and be serviceable to you, if you will be serviceable to me; who would not be now God's servant? Subject yourself to God, and all things shall be subjected to you. Now so long as we keep within our bounds we are under protection, but if once we break our bounds we must expect it should be with us as it is with the deer in the Park. While the deer keeps within the pale, there are no dogs come upon them, but they can feed quietly, but let the deer be got without the pale, and then every dog in the country will be hunting after them. So it is with men, let men and women keep within the bounds of the command of God, of the rule that God has set them in his word, and then they are protected by God, and they may go about their business with peace and never be troubled for anything, but cast all their care upon God, God provides for them. But if they will go beyond the pale, if they will pass their bounds then they may expect to meet with troubles, and afflictions, and discontent; and therefore that is a fourth direction. Walk by rule.

THE FIFTH DIRECTION



A fifth rule is this, **Exercise much faith, that is the way for contentedness.** After you have done with all considerations that reason may suggest to you, if you find that these do not do it, Oh then call for grace of faith. A man may go very far with the use of reason alone to help him to contentment, but when reason is at a nonplus then set faith to work. It was a speech of the Reverend Divine Master **Perkins** that God made so instrumental in his time, the life of faith (says he) it is a true life indeed, the only life. Exercise faith not only in that promise that all shall work together for good to them that fear God, but likewise exercise faith in God himself, as well as in his word, in the Attributes of God. It was a speech of **Socrates** a Heathen, (says he) since God is so careful for you, what need you be careful for anything yourselves? It was a strange speech of a Heathen.

Oh Christian! if you have any faith, in the time of extremity think thus: this is the time that God calls for the exercise of faith. What can you do with your faith if you cannot quiet your heart in discontent? It was the speech of one **Theodosius** that had been a King, and afterwards was brought to such a low condition to get his living by being a schoolmaster, one comes and asks him, What have you got by your Philosophy from **Plato** and others? What

have I got (says he) I have got this, that though my condition be changed from so high a condition to so low, yet I have got this, I can be content. So what do you get by being a Believer, a Christian? What can you do by your faith? I can do this, I can in all estates cast my care upon God, cast my burden upon God, I can commit my way to God in peace, faith can do this. Therefore when reason can go no higher, let faith get upon the shoulders of reason and say, I see land though reason cannot see it, I see good that will come out of all this evil.

Exercise faith in your often resignation of yourself to God, in giving of yourself up to God and his ways. The more you do in a believing way surrender up yourself to God, the more quiet and peace will you have; that is the fifth thing.

THE SIXTH DIRECTION



The sixth direction for contentment is, **To labor to be spiritually minded**; that is, be often in meditation of the things that are above, **If we are risen with Christ** (says the Scriptures) **let us seek the things that are above, where Christ is that sits at the right hand of God.** Be much in spiritual thoughts, in conversing with things above; many Christians that have an interest in the things of Heaven yet converse but very little with them, their meditations are not much upon heavenly things. It is that which some give as the reason why **Adam** did not see his nakedness, some think that he had so much conversation with God and with things above sense, that he did not so much mind or think of nakedness what it was, but whether that was so or not I will not say, but this I say and am certain of, the reason why we are so troubled with our nakedness with any wants that we have, it is because we converse so little with God, so little with spiritual things, the conversing with spiritual things would lift us above the things of the world. Those that are bitten or stung with a snake, it is because they tread upon the ground, if they could be lifted up above the earth they need never fear to be stung with the snakes that are crawling underneath. So I may compare the sinful distemper of murmuring, and the temptations and evils that come

from there to be like snakes that crawl up and down below, but if we could get higher we should not be stung by them. A heavenly conversation is the way for contentment.

THE SEVENTH DIRECTION



A seventh rule is, **Do not promise to yourselves too much beforehand, do not make account of too great things.** It is good for us to take hold very low and not think to pitch too high, do not soar too high in your thoughts beforehand, to think, oh if I had this and this, and imagine great matters to yourselves, but be as good **Jacob**,. You know he was a man that lived a very contented life in a mean condition, (said he) **Lord if I may but have clothes to put on, and meat to eat.** He looked no higher, he was content with that. So if we would not pitch our thoughts high and think that we might have what others have, so much, and so much, when we meet with disappointments we would not be so much troubled. And so **Paul, If we have but meat and drink and clothing, let us be therewith content.** He did not soar too high aloft, those that look at high things in the world they meet with disappointments and so they come to be discontent. Be as high as you will in Spiritual meditations, God gives liberty there to any one of you to be as high as you will, above Angels, but for your outward estate God would not have you aim at high things. **Do you seek great things** (said the Lord to **Baruch**) **seek them not, you shall have your life for a prey.** In these times especially, it were a very great evil for any to aim at

great things. **Seek them not**, be willing to take hold low, and to creep low, and if God does raise you, you shall have cause to bless him; but if you should not be raised, there would not be much trouble. One that creeps low cannot fall far, but it is those that are on high whose fall does bruise them most. That is a good rule, Promise not yourselves great matters, neither aim at any great things in the world.

THE EIGHTH DIRECTION



Labour to get your hearts mortified to the world, **dead to the world:** we must not content ourselves that we have gotten some reasoning about the vanity of the Creature, and such kind of things as these are, but we must exercise mortification, and be crucified to the world. Says **Paul, I die daily**, we should die daily to the world. **We are baptized into the death of Christ**, that is to signify that we have taken such a profession as to profess to be even as dead men to the world. Now there are no crosses that fall out in the world that do trouble those that are dead; if our hearts were dead to the world we should not be much troubled with the changes of the world, nor the tossings about of worldly things. As it is very observable in those soldiers that came to break the bones of Christ, they broke the legs of one that was crucified with him, and of the other; but when they came to Christ they found he was dead, and so they did not break his legs. There was a providence in it, to fulfill a Prophecy, but because they found he was dead they did not break his bones. Let Afflictions and trouble find you with a mortified heart to the world and they will not break your bones. The bones of those that are broken by crosses and afflictions are those that are alive to the world, that are not dead to the world. But one that has a mortified heart and dead to

the world, no afflictions or troubles will break the bones of such a one, that is, they will not be very grievous or painful to such a one as is mortified to the world: This I fear is a mystery and riddle to many, for one to be dead to the world, to be mortified to the world. Now it is not my work to open to you what Mortification is, or death to the world is, but only thus: to have our hearts so taken off from the things of the world, as to use them as if one used them not; not to make account that our lives, our comforts, our happiness does consist in these things. They are things that are of another nature that our happiness does consist in, and we may be happy without these; this is a kind of deadness to the world.

THE NINTH DIRECTION



Let not men and women pore too much upon their **Afflictions**, that is, busy their thoughts too much to look down into their Afflictions. You shall have many people that all their thoughts are taken up about what their crosses and afflictions are, they are altogether thinking and speaking of them. It is just with them as with a child that has a sore about him, his finger is always upon the sore. And so men and women their thoughts are always upon their afflictions; when they awake in the night their thoughts are upon their afflictions, and when they converse with others (nay it may be when they are praying to God) they are thinking of their afflictions. Oh! No marvel though you live a discontented life, if your thoughts be always poring upon such things, you should rather labor to have your thoughts upon those things that may comfort you. You shall have many that if you propound any rule to them to do them good, they take it well while they are with you, and thank you for it, but when they are gone they soon forget it. It is very observable of **Jacob**, that when his wife died in childbirth, his wife called the child **Ben-oni**, that is, a son of sorrows. Now **Jacob**, he thought with himself, if I should call this child **Ben-oni**, every time that I name him it will put me in mind of the death of my dear wife, and of that affliction, and that will be

a continued affliction to me, therefore I will not have my child have that name. And so the text says, that **Jacob** called his name **Benjamin**, and that was, the son of my right hand. Now this is to show us thus much, that when afflictions befalls us we should not give way to have our thoughts continually upon them, but rather upon those things that may stir up our thankfulness to God for mercies. It is the similitude of **Basil**, a learned man; says he: It is in this case as it is with men and women that have sore eyes; now it is not fit for those to be always looking upon the fire, or upon the beams of the Sun. No (says he) one that has sore eyes must get things that are suitable to him, and such objects as are fit for one that has such weak eyes; therefore they will get green colors, as that being a more easy color and better for weak eyes, and they will hang green sarcenet before their eyes because it is more suitable to them. So weak spirits it is the very same; a man or woman that has a weak spirit, they must not be looking upon the fire of their afflictions, upon those things that deject, that cast them down, but they are to be looking rather upon that which may be suitable for the healing and helping of them; they should be considering of those things rather than the other. It will be of very great use and benefit to you if you do lay it to heart, not to be poring always upon afflictions, but upon mercies.

THE TENTH DIRECTION



I beseech you observe this though you should forget many others. **Make a good interpretation of God's ways towards you**, if there can be any good interpretation made of God's ways towards you, make it. You think it much if you have a friend that should always make bad interpretations of your ways towards him, you would take that ill. If you should converse with people that you cannot speak a word in their hearing but they are ready to make an ill interpretation of it, and take it in an ill sense, you would think their company to be very tedious to you. It is very tedious to the Spirit of God when we **make** such ill interpretations of His ways towards us. If God deals with us otherwise than we would have Him, if there can be any sense worse than other made of it, we will be sure to make it. As thus, when an affliction does befall you, there may be many good senses made of God's works towards you, you should think thus. It may be God intends only to try me by this. It may be God saw my heart too much set upon the creature, and so intends to show me what there is in my heart. It may be that God saw that if my estate did continue I should fall into sin, that the better my estate were the worse my soul would

be. It may be God intended only to exercise some grace. It may be God intends to prepare me for some great work which He has for me. Thus you should reason.

But we on the contrary make bad interpretations of God's thus dealing with us, and say, God does not mean this, surely the Lord means by this to manifest His wrath and displeasure against me, and this is but a furtherance of further evils that He intends towards me. Just as they did in the wilderness; **God has brought us hither to slay us.** This is the worst interpretation that possibly you can make of God's ways. Oh why will you make these worst interpretations when there may be better? In 1 **Corinthians** 13:5, when the Scripture speaks of love (says the text) **Love thinks no evil.** Love is of that nature that if there may be ten interpretations made of a thing, if nine of them be naught and one good, Love will take that which is good and leave the other nine. And so though there might be ten interpretations presented to you concerning God's ways towards you, and if but one be good and nine naught, you should take that one that is good and leave the other nine. I beseech you consider, God does not deal by you as you deal with Him. Should God make the worst interpretation of all your ways towards Him, as you do of His towards you, it would be very ill with you. God is pleased to manifest His love thus to us, to make the best interpretations of what we do, and therefore it is, that God does put a sense upon the actions of His people that one would think could hardly be. As thus, God is pleased to call those perfect that have but any uprightness of heart in them, He accounts them perfect. **Be you perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect;** uprightness in God's sense is perfection. Now alas when we look into our own hearts we can scarce see any good at all there, and yet

God is pleased to make such an interpretation as to say, it is perfect. When we look into our own hearts we can see nothing but uncleanness. God, He calls you His Saints, He calls the meanest Christian that has the least grace under the greatest corruption, His Saint. You say, we cannot be Saints here, but yet in God's esteem we are Saints. You know the usual title the Holy Ghost gives (in several of the Epistles) to those that had any grace, any uprightness, is, **To the Saints** in such a place. You see what an interpretation God puts upon them, they are Saints to Him, and so I might name in diverse other particulars. God makes the best interpretation of things, if there be abundance of evil and a little good, God rather passes by the evil and takes notice of the good. That sometimes I have made use of, which is a very observable place in **Peter**, concerning **Sarah**. **Sarah** had a speech to her husband in **Genesis** 18:12. She called her husband lord, but there was but that one good word in an ill speech, it was an unbelieving speech. But yet when the Apostle mentions that speech in 1 **Peter** 3:6 the Holy Ghost leaves all the ill, and commends her for calling her husband lord, for putting a reverend title upon her husband. Thus how graciously does God deal with us? If there be but one good word among a great many ill, what an interpretation God makes! So should we do, if there be but any one good interpretation that we can make of a thing we should rather make use of the good one than of the ill. Oh my brethren, (I would I could now speak only to such as are godly) retain good thoughts of God, take heed of judging God to be a hard Master, make good interpretations of His ways, and that's a special means to help you to contentment in all your courses.

THE ELEVENTH DIRECTION



Do not so much regard the fancies of other men, as what indeed you feel yourselves; for the reason of our discontentment many times, is rather from the fancies of other men than from what we find we want ourselves, we think poverty to be such a great evil, why? Because it is so esteemed by others, more than what people feel in it themselves except they are in extremity of poverty. I'll give you an evident demonstration that almost all the discontent in the world is rather from the fancies of others than from the evil that is upon themselves. You that think your estates to be low and you are thereupon discontent, and it is a grievous affliction to you, but if all men in the world were poorer than you, then you would not be discontent, then you would rejoice in your estates though you had not a penny more than you have. As take a man that can get but his twelve pence a day, and you will say, this were but a poor thing to maintain a family? But suppose there were no man in the world that had more than this, yea that all other men but yourselves had somewhat less wages than you, then you would think your condition pretty good, you should have no more then than you have now. Therefore it appears by this that it's rather from the fancies of other men than what you feel that makes you think your condition to be so grievous, for if all

the men in the world looked upon you as happy, more happy than themselves then you would be contented. Oh let not your happiness depend upon the fancies of other men. It is a speech of **Chrysostom** I remember in this very case. Let us not make the people in this case to be our lords, as we must not make men to be the lords of our faith, so not the lords of our comforts; that is, that our comfort should depend more upon their imaginations, than upon what we feel in ourselves. It may be others think you to be in an afflicted condition, yea but I thank God, for myself I do not so apprehend it. Were it not for the disgrace, disesteem and slightings of other men, my condition would not be so bad to me as now it is. This is that that makes my condition afflictive.

THE TWELFTH DIRECTION



Be not inordinately taken up with the comforts of this world when you have them. When you have them do not take too much content in them. That is a certain rule that, look how inordinate any man or woman is in sorrow when a comfort is taken from them, so much immoderate were they in their rejoicing in the comfort when they had it. As now for instance, God takes away a child and you are inordinately sorrowful, beyond what God allows in a natural or Christian way, now though I never knew before how your heart was towards the child, yet when I see this, (though you be a mere stranger to me) I may without breach of charity conclude that your heart was immoderately set upon your child or husband, or upon any other comfort that I see you grieving for when God hath taken it away. If you hear ill tidings about your estates, and your hearts are dejected immoderately, and you are in a discontented way because of such and such a cross, certainly your hearts were immoderately set upon the world. And so likewise for your credit, if you hear others report this or that ill of you, and your hearts are dejected because you think you suffer in your name, your hearts were inordinately set upon your name and credit. Now therefore the way for you not to be immoderate in your sorrows for afflictions, it is not to be im-

moderate in your love and delights when you have prosperity. And these are the principal Directions for our help that we may live quiet and contented lives.

My brethren, to conclude all for this point, if I could tell you that I knew how to show you a way never to be in want of anything, I make no question but then we should have much flocking to such a sermon, when a man should undertake to manifest to people that they should never be in want any more, but I have been now preaching unto you that that comes to as much, that that counter-vails this, that which is in effect all one. Is it not almost all one, never to be in want, or never to be without Contentment? That man or woman that is never without a contented spirit, truly, can never be said to want much. Oh! The Word holds forth a way full of comfort and peace to the people of God even in this world, you may live happy lives in the midst of all the storms and tempests in the world, there is an Ark that you may come into, and no men in the world may live such comfortable, cheerful, and contented lives as the Saints of God. Oh that we had learned this lesson. I have been many Sermons about this lesson of Contentment, but I am afraid that you will be longer in learning of it than I have been preaching of it; it is a harder thing to learn it than it is to speak or preach of it. (I remember) I have read of one man reading of that place in the thirty-ninth **Psalm, I will take heed that I offend not with my tongue:** said he, I have been these thirty-eight years a learning this lesson and have not learned it thoroughly. The truth is, there are many (I am afraid) that have been professors near eight and thirty years have hardly learned this lesson, it were a good lesson for young professors to begin to learn this betimes. But now, this lesson of Christian Contentment it is as hard,

and perhaps you may be many years in learning it. I am afraid there be some Christians that have not yet learned, **Not to offend grossly with their tongues:** The Scripture saith, **All a man's Religion is vain, if he cannot bridle his tongue;** therefore, those that make any profession of godliness, one would think they should quickly learn this lesson, such a lesson that except learned, it makes all their Religion vain. But for this lesson of Christian Contentment it may take up more time to learn, and there are many that are learning it all the days of their lives and yet are not proficient; but God forbid that it should be said of any of us concerning this lesson, as the Apostle saith of Widows in **Timothy, That they were ever learning, and never came to the knowledge of the truth.** Oh let us not be ever learning this lesson of Contentment and yet never come to have skill in it. You would think it much if you had used the Sea twenty years, and yet to have attained to no skill in your art of navigation, you will say, I have used the Sea twenty or thirty years and I hope I may know by this time what belongs to Sea; Oh that you would but say so in respect of the Art of Christianity! When there is anything that is spoken concerning the duty of a Christian, Oh that Christians could but say I have been a Christian thus long, and I hope I am not to seek in such a thing that is so necessary for a Christian, here is a necessary lesson for a Christian that **Paul** said, **He had learned in all estates therewith to be content.** Oh be not content with yourselves till you have learned this lesson of Christian Contentment, gotten some better skill in it than heretofore.

Now there is in the text another lesson, which is a hard lesson, **I have learned to Abound,** that does not so nearly concern us at this time, because the times are afflictive times, and there is now

(more than ordinary) an uncertainty in all things in the world, in such times as these are, there are few that have such an abundance that they need to be much taught in that lesson.

THE SAINTS' DUTY IN TIMES OF EXTREMITY



What the certainty of the cause of those fears that are upon the hearts of people is not yet apparent, but that there are many distracted fears in their hearts, that is apparent to the full; and therefore though I prepared for that ordinary course as formerly, yet for this time I desire that you would turn to that Scripture (that I might speak a word in season) in

—Exodus, 14 part of the 13 verse.— Stand still, and see the Salvation of the Lord.

The beginning of the verse is thus, **And Moses said unto the people, Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.** In the former **Chapter** we have **Pharaoh** dismissing **Israel** out of **Egypt**: In this **Chapter** we have him pursuing **Israel** with a new-heated fury, against all common sense and reason, his malice and rage besotted him, because God intended to destroy him: though God's hand appeared gloriously for his **People** before, yet **Pharaoh** will not see the Majesty of the Lord, but he shall see it; he gathers all the strength that possibly he can, and seems too rash in his way, he overtakes, and overtakes them in a place of the greatest advantage that possibly could be; for the

Text says, that they were before **Pi-hahiroth**, in the first verse, between **Migdol** and the Sea, over against **Baal-zephon**, and that by God's appointment too; they were there when **Pharaoh** comes to find them, there the Sea is before them, all the strength of **Egypt** is behind them, and they were at **Pi-hahiroth: Caverna rupibus inclusa**, so turned by some, not the proper signification, for **Pi** is the mouth, and **hahiroth** that signifies **foramen**; they were got into a hole, (as it were) into the mouth of a hole, that was compassed about with rocks on each side, that had high rocks about it, so the word imports: and not only so, but between **Migdol** over against **Baal-zephon**, **Migdol** signifies a tower; so that in that place the **Egyptians** had a tower built likewise: besides the advantage of the rocks and of the hills, there was a tower built for their further strengthening, and there the people of **Israel** were, an unarmed people; yea, not only by the tower, but they were over against **Baal-zephon**. I remember in the last Exercise, I showed you what **Baal** was, and what several **Baals** there were that the Heathens worshiped for their gods, a general name it is, sometimes for any other Idol: This **Baal-zephon** it was a god that they worshiped upon this ground, they had an Idol set in that place, at the going out of **Egypt**, that was to watch those that were to go out, for so **zephon** comes of **zuri speculatus est**, the god was to watch, was to stand and watch any run-away-servant, or any people that did go out of **Egypt** without any leave, they trusting in this **Baal**, that he would stop them, and stay them, and he was set in that place for that very purpose; and thereupon his name was **Baal-zephon**: As Conjurers by their magic arts will have their spells, spirits that shall stop men in such a place, they shall not go out of such an orchard, or such a yard where they

come in: So the **Egyptians** had there by their magical arts, they got (as it were) a Spell, a **Baal-zephon**, a god to stop people in that place where they would have them stopped: that is the meaning of this name of the Idol **Baal-zephon**. So that you see what a strait **Israel** was in upon their going out of **Egypt**, they were got before the Sea, the **Egyptians** had all their strength behind, in a hole of rocks, and a tower, and their god to stop them altogether, so that they themselves made sure of them, and said that they were entangled in the land of the wilderness; Being in those great straits their hearts began to fail them, they began to be extremely troubled, and in a most grievous distemper of spirit they were coming, and chiding with **Moses**, and said to **Moses** in the 11 verse. **Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us to die in the wilderness, wherefore have you dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?** We had rather we had continued in **Egypt** still, What! Brought to these straits! these extremities! such a perplexity as we are now in? would to God we had been in **Egypt**: this was the baseness of their spirits, they would rather be under vile bondage, than endure any hazard, then be put to any straits and difficulties: It is the baseness of the spirits of many at this day amongst us, because they see that those ways that have been taken by the Parliament brings some troublesome difficulties, some straits, they cry out of the times, I would to God we were, as we were before, we were well enough before, we were quiet enough before, we never knew what such stirs as these meant before, now we are brought into these perplexities, I, this they have brought us into; and thus they are ready to murmur and repine. Oh unthankful unworthy generation! men, women of vile spirits that shall do so. It was a speech of **Cyrus**, speaking unto his sol-

diers, The Historian hath this expression of him. It is the part of a true valiant man, either to live honourably, or die honourably, one of them; but that is the part of a base coward, rather to live basely than to die honourably, rather to be under any base servitude, than to be in any hazard of their lives, though perhaps their lives may be saved too. I remember **Philo** tells us, even of women, (for in these times, the public cause of the Kingdom, suffers exceedingly much by the timorousness of the spirits of women) that being in danger of their enemies, of being brought into bondage by them, they took their children and threw them into the rivers, with these words, You shall not serve, we had rather see you die than be slaves. I commend not that fact that it was well done, but to show what a spirit the heathen women had to see their children die rather than have them bond-slaves: Indeed, what were our lives worth? were they worth having if we return to our bondage again? The utmost of the danger is, **our lives**, the killing of our bodies, yet we hope God will preserve them too, but suppose the worst, it is but **death**; but if our lives should not be hazarded now, and if through base cowardice, we should decline the Cause of God, surely our lives would not be worth taking up, the living after that manner we are like to live, in that bondage unto these Cavaliers, notorious wretches, blasphemers of God himself, that would make our lives worth very little, nay your children perhaps to be brought up in Popery, and to hold a candle to a Mass-Priest at the Altar; that may be the employment of your children, if so be that they should live: But these people being now in this extremity, and manifesting so much passion, being in a distemper; **Moses** as the Captain of the Lord comes to the people, and speaks bravely to them, encouraging of them, says **Moses, Fear not, but stand still, and see**

the salvation of the Lord: stand still, the word is **state**, it signifies to settle and compose, to be in a settled condition; it is a reflect word upon ourselves, so the **Learned know**, that it is to work upon ourselves, to form, signifies so, it is as much as if he should say, Do you work upon your own hearts, to get your hearts to **stand still**, work upon your hearts to do that, work arguments upon your spirits, and never leave working until you have wrought your hearts into such a frame, as that you may **stand still**, and be quiet: At first even the dearest servants of God will find their hearts to shake in time of hazards and extremities, but when they come to work upon their spirits, to bring arguments to lay to their hearts, there they get some advantage, that their hearts grow quiet quickly: For that we have a notable text in the example of **David**, in the 62 **Psalms**, (says **David** there, in the 1, and 2 verses) **Truly my Soul wait upon God, from him comes my salvation, he only is my Rock and my Salvation, he is my defence, I shall not greatly be moved**; Mark, he begins to exercise Faith, and he says, he shall not **greatly** be moved, as if he should have said, I confess, I cannot say, but that my heart is somewhat stirred, I am somewhat afraid, and I feel some working in my spirit, but I hope I shall not greatly be moved; he falls a working upon his heart more, and considers of his innocence; and of the mischievous device of the ungodly; **how long will you imagine mischief against a man, you shall be slain all of you**; then again in the 5 verse; **My soul wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him, he only is my Rock**: And then he repeats the words again, after he had been rubbing upon his heart the same meditation, then he fetches in the words again, that he had in the 2 verse; **He only is my Rock and my salvation**;

but mark now, what advantage he gets of himself, in the 6 verse, **He only is my Rock and my salvation, and my defence, I shall not be moved**; before, he is my Rock, my salvation, my defence, I shall not **greatly be moved**, but after he had been working further upon his own heart, then he gains and says, now he is my Rock, and my salvation, and my defence, I shall **not be moved**; I have overcome these distracting fears, I have got the advantage and the victory, blessed be God I have overcome them, God is my salvation, and my glory; now he begins to glory and triumph after he had wrought upon himself; So that he in this did indeed stand still in this phrase, by working upon his own heart, though he was stirred a little at first, yet he got the victory: So indeed not to be moved, the Seventy turn this word, stand still **stete** only, but yet the notes upon it, they say it is read likewise **stetite**, that is, a standing fast, **stand fast**, it is a word, taken from soldiers in their ranks; soldiers that are in their ranks when they apprehend a danger, they must not go out of their way, because of the danger, it is as much as their lives are worth, to go out of the way, but they must stand, they must **stand still**, though there be never such danger, yet they must **stand still in their ranks**: that is the meaning of the word: I shall open more what the meaning of the Holy Ghost is by and by, what kind of **stand still**, this should be; but thus for the word, it is such a **stand still**, as the soldiers have in their ranks, not to go out of their ranks for fear. The word is used in Scripture divers times for, **standing fast**, as in the 1 of **Philippians**, 27. That you **stand fast** in one spirit; now the word **fast**, is not in the Greek Text, but only the other word in the Greek Text; and so you have the same word in the other Scriptures; in the 1 of the **Corinthians**, 16.13. **Watch you, stand fast in the**

faith, Stetite, it is only two words in the Greek, as it is in the English, **stand fast**; so that this **stand**, it is not only a standing, but a standing fast, stand still in your ranks, fast, be not in a hurry up and down, and be not in a confusion: If upon danger soldiers should presently be in a confusion in the Army, what would become of them? and so the truth is, in a City, in any place, where there is any danger, if people grow to a confusion, they are gone, they are lost, you must stand still in your ranks, **stand still**; There are several **stand-stills**, some very vile and naught, and others very good: there is first,

1 **A stand-still out of amazement**, When a man through fear is at a stand, and dares not stir any further; now this cannot be meant in the text; for **Moses** says, **Fear not**, but **stand still**, therefore it is not a standing still out of fear, because I am astonished.

2 **There is a stand-still, out of ignorance**; because I do not know which way to take; and this is not in the text neither. Thus many in our time, they stand still, they plead ignorance; they stand still, they will be of no side, and they plead ignorance, they know not what to do; they say, they know not what to do, one says one thing, and another says another thing, the King commands one thing, and the Parliament another, they know not what to do. To go against the King, is it not Rebellion? And so they stand still because they plead ignorance, and their consciences are not informed. It has been the work of divers Ministers, that have hazarded themselves in this, to open to you the Counsel of God, and to set your consciences at liberty; divers things I have spoken in this place, but certainly men do blind their own eyes, and are willing to stand still, to plead ignorance, after so much light revealed. It is

strange that any rational man should speak of rebellion now, when as we know, that the King himself sent aid to the **Rochellers**, and that (we know) in the case of their liberties, and Religion; they took up arms to defend themselves against their own King, and he sent help to them, surely he did not himself take them to be rebels, and **King James** in his answer to **Byron** that inveighs against the Protestants in **France**; he does stand to justify what the Protestants in **France** did, even **King James** himself in that book of his, in his answer to **Byron**; and besides we must acknowledge all the Protestant Churches in the world to be Rebels, if it be Rebellion, merely to take up arms. Know we not that our own King has matched his Daughter to the young Prince of **Orange**, now we know the Prince of **Orange** is the General of the States in their fields, as the Earl of **Essex** is the General of our forces here; and their business against the King of Spain (it was their praise) to defend their Liberties, and Religion, and still they maintain the same quarrel, and the Prince of **Orange** he is their General, and undertakes it. We desire nothing but the maintenance of our Liberty and of our Religion, though things be not gone so far yet, as to take **our estates**, yet the Cause that they began withal, it is our Cause, and what the General was there, the same in a kind (there is no great difference) here; and certainly if it were Rebellion, our King would never have matched his Daughter unto the Son of such a Rebel; if it should be Rebellion merely to take up Arms to defend Religion, and to defend the Liberties of the Country that are according unto Laws. Yea, we know further, that the King himself has acknowledged our Brethren the Scots, to be loving subjects, to be his loyal subjects, do we more than they? Do we more in our cause? Nay, have we done so much in our cause, as they have

done? How generally was it there in their Kingdom, and shall it be acknowledged they are loving subjects doing so much, and we be accounted Rebels? Surely no man can plead, to stand still through ignorance upon that ground.

3. There is a third **stand-still**, and the truth is, though it be not through Ignorance, it is through a worse principle, and that is of **Neutralizing**; that is, when men though they are informed well enough, yet they stand still to see which will be the strongest side, and are loath to appear yet, they know not which side will most prevail, but they have such a principle in their spirits, to go to the strongest side, which way soever it be, only they will stand still till it appear. My brethren, certainly we can admit of no Neuters in these times. The times are grown to a greater height, than that any should be admitted as a Neuter, either for us or against us; whatsoever is not for us at this time, now coming to this strait, may well be concluded to be against us.

4. There is a fourth wicked **stand-still**, and that is out of **sullenness of spirit**; and that is more particular, and that is of many men and women, especially that are in some troubles of conscience, and when they are seeking of God, and performing duties that God requires of them, and do not find that encouragement that their hearts desire, they leave off all, and have no mind to do any thing, but even stand still and die, and will even sink in a sullen discouragement, and go no further, leave off their work, leave off duty, what should I go on in doing duty, for I get no good by it, I am never a whit the better? And so they stand still out of a sullen discouragement. The Devil himself is the most discouraged Spirit in the world, and yet he is the proudest Spirit in the world;

and this standing still out of discouragement, may come out of pride, and stoutness of heart, though you think it is out of Humility.

5. There is a sluggish **standing still**, and that is sinful and wicked, when people stand still **because they are idle, and are loath to venture themselves, or to put themselves to trouble, to go forward in any work, this work is tedious**; and thus the sluggard he stands still, and is ready to catch at any Argument, that may plead for his standing still. My brethren this is not that stand still here, that we should stand still and do nothing, and be sluggards; no, but the **stand still** here is, after we have gone on, and done to the utmost that we are able, that then we should **stand still**, and commit the work to God, as if we had done nothing at all; there is the **stand still**: I shall speak of more presently. As that worthy Divine said, he would labor to preach, as if he expected no assistance, and then he would expect assistance, as if he had not labored at all. So Warriors and people in danger, they should prepare in the use of all means, as if they expected no further help, and then they should expect help from God, as if they had used no means at all; so we must use means. As that brave speech of **Joab, Come let us play the men**, let us fight for our Cities, and the people of our God, and then let God do what seemeth him good; then he would stand still, and look for his salvation of God; a speech even of **Joab** himself, not then a sluggish stand still, it is no hindrance at all to any preparations that may be used: therefore all these are naught.

6. There is **an obediencial stand-still**; that is, for the hearts of men and women to stand still, to wait, to know further of God's mind, what God reveals, our hearts are willing to yield unto, and

we will listen to hear what the mind of God further is, what God would have us to do; to stand still, to hearken to what the Lord would have us to do, with hearts resigned up to him, and resolved to walk accordingly to it; this is good, and that is somewhat of it, but that is not all.

7. There is a **stand-still** out of **faith; a believing standstill**; and that is when (though in the greatest extremity) I having used what means I can for helping me, yet I see myself wrapped up in extremity, I will now exercise Faith. First,

1. **To quiet my heart**; to get out of my spirit those distracting thoughts of that hurry and tumult that there is in the heart, and to get all silenced, all murmurings, all distractions, all giddiness of spirit; and uproar that many times is in the hearts of men and women in time of danger; so by faith I come to quiet these, and to get my heart to be still, to be still within me. Be still O my soul. And therefore the Scripture expresses the waiting upon God out of Faith by a word of silence, in the 62nd **Psalm**, at the beginning, and verse 5. **My soul waits upon God, it is silenced**, so the Hebrew word signifies, it signifies a **silence** in God: there is many times in the hearts of men and women (when they apprehend any danger) a great deal of hurrying and noise in their hearts, all is in a combustion in their hearts; it is a grievous thing to see a City all in a combustion, and in a tumult; there are many men and women's hearts, in as great a tumult upon apprehension of danger, as many times a whole City is, there is a rising in their hearts, and a mighty noise there. Sometimes they keep (it may be in private and public exigencies) their tongues silent, but their hearts boil within them: but your hearts must be silent, you must cry to your heart, be silent there; my heart is now in a mutiny, and a great deal of stir, cry si-

lence to your hearts, that your hearts and thoughts may be composed; that is the meaning of the word, that there should be a settled composed frame of spirit in the hearts of men and women, in the times of extremity: that is the first. Secondly,

2. When it is out of Faith, there **should be a keeping our stations till God calls us out**; not to run up and down this way and that way, and to think of nothing but of shifting courses, to shift for ourselves. As in time of danger (I verily believe) if we could look into the thoughts of many men and women, they scarce have any thought but merely of shifting their place or house; they think to shift for themselves. Now we should not busy our thoughts so much about shifting, as about quieting our hearts in believing: For (my brethren) in times of extremity of danger, God calls for Courage more than discretion; though it is true, Discretion is not excluded, yet that is not that explicit and special work that is called for in times of danger; I mean discretion to shift for yourselves; but discretion so far as may improve courage: the main work that God now calls for at this time, it is Courage and Discretion, and Prudence only so far as to manage Courage, and to drive it on further, and to improve it, not to abate it, that is not the Discretion certainly that now is called for, but to keep our station.

Question. But you will say, In time of danger may we not fly? Must men keep their stations? Is it not lawful to avoid danger and to fly? Then we shall accuse many of our brethren, that heretofore have fled in time of danger.

Response. (My Brethren) you are to know, that the case now is far different from the case that was heretofore. The case heretofore was especially (for the present) directed against particulars, not against the general, though there were plots against the gen-

eral, but the hazard and the danger was against such, and such particular men, as especially your Ministers that were most faithful and conscionable, they were the forefront, they did bear the brunt, and it was aimed especially against them. Now the case is far different when the aim of the Adversary is against particulars, and not against the godly in general; when it is against particulars there may be all lawful means, by an avoiding and flying. When it is against the godly in general then every one should stand still, and keep in their ways and stations, to come in, and add what strength they can to the public cause. And certainly those that shall shift then, and think to fly then, God may justly meet with them. As we read of **Jeremiah**, and **Urijah**, **Urijah** the Priest he flies in public time of danger, and he was sent for, and caught, and put to death; **Jeremiah** stays, and is saved. But when the case is the danger of particular persons, then it is nothing against this text, to fly in any lawful way. Many people will cry out against flying by a lawful way in times of danger, because they think they may shift from flying themselves; and if others that are in danger should not do so, they would be far enough from helping and assisting them in extremities, and yet they will be crying out against it. **Peter Martyr** I remember hath this answer to it. It is just for all the world in this case, as a man that hath a dangerous sickness upon him, and the Physicians tell him, there is no way but by taking such strong Physic, or by cutting off a leg, or a limb, now he comes and pleads, I will not so distrust God, and be so impatient of my present pain, as to take such a course to help me, I will rather continue patient and quiet, and endure my present pain, and trust in God, rather than put myself to any such hazard. Now is this man more patient, than another man that will take such strong Physic

or have a member cut off? Is it through the strength of his patience? No, it is rather through the weakness of his spirit, because the other is a certain great pain and hazard, and while he goes on in the use of ordinary means, he hath a lesser pain, with hope that he may be delivered from a greater, and preserved himself. So this is the Objection against flying in particular danger, because the flying is a certain great suffering, they that have fled, have found it so. Now others will rather satisfy themselves to endure a little uncertain suffering, than to go upon a certain great suffering; and that is the very ground. But that this is not against Faith at all, to fly in danger, when it is particularly aimed at particulars, I will give you but a Scripture or two for that to clear it, that it is not against Faith. It is remarkable (we might spend a great deal of our time in this case here, but I have done with it) in the tenth of **Matthew**, **When they persecute you (saith Christ) in this City, fly into another:** he speaks of particular persecution of this or that body, and not of a whole Kingdom. Now flee (say they!) we will be more believing, and trust in God, and not be afraid, have we not a good cause, and is not God with us? This would argue too much fear. Mark, in the next words Christ speaks after he had given them liberty, and commanded them to fly; (saith he) fear them not therefore (though it is the next thing he speaks of in the twenty-eighth verse) **and fear not them that can kill the body:** you see these two can well stand together, that there is not fear of them that can kill the body, and yet there is a flying. And so Christ himself flies in the twelfth of **Matthew**, when he did but hear what **Herod** did to **John**, when Jesus knew it (that was when the **Pharisees** sought him, when he knew it) he did withdraw himself, in the twelfth, and thirteenth verses, **And when Jesus heard of it, he departed**

thence, etc. When he heard but what was done to **John**, Christ withdrew himself and went away. Therefore it may stand with faith, so to avoid danger in particular Cases. But now when persecution is general, we are to **stand still** and not avoid our station.

The third thing in this **stand still** of faith is, **The looking up for the Salvation of God**, the expecting a good issue one way or other. I know not how Salvation will come, but that there will be Salvation one way or other, that my soul rests upon. I **stand not still** out of stoutness of spirit, or because I think I have means enough to resist, whether I have means or no, when I am put into the greatest extremity, yet I can **stand still**, and look for Salvation. What? **Stand still**, and look for the Salvation of the Lord? What talk you of Salvation (might they say to **Moses**) when there is nothing but destruction before us? True, if you look before you, behind you, and without you, and within yourselves there is nothing but destruction, yet look up to Heaven and there is salvation, **stand still and see the Salvation of the Lord**. I have done no more than the mere opening of the text, and what is contained in it. There are these four **Doctrinal Conclusions** in the Text.

First Doctrine. **That when God is in a way of mercy and salvation to his people, he doth many times bring them into great straits**, even then when he is in a way of Salvation. Second Doctrine. **That in time of these great straits**, even **the people of God are subject to have their hearts to be overwhelmed with trouble, distracting fears, and to be disquieted**. Third Doctrine. **That it is our duty to stand still, keep quiet, and look for God's Salvation in the time of the greatest straits**. Fourth Doctrine. **That the sight of God's**

Salvation coming after straits, is a glorious sight to behold: Stand still, see the salvation of God. These are the four. For the first then.

First, **When God is in a way of salvation, yet he may and does divers times bring his people into very great straits.** Truly, this strait in the text is exceeding remarkable: but I'll show you further, how when God was about to save this people of **Israel** out of the Egyptian bondage, (which is the work God has now to do with us to save us out of the Egyptian bondage that we were in, and that we were going further into,) after they were delivered from this strait, from **Pharaoh** and all his host. Yet in the 15th Chapter you shall find, (the very next Chapter;) after they were come out of the Sea, they presently wanted water to drink, yea, the waters were bitter that they could not drink them (says the text 15th verse.) **The waters were bitter, they could not drink them,** they were ready to perish for want of water: As soon as ever they were delivered out of that strait, mark the 16th Chapter they were in another as bad as that, there you shall find they want bread, and were ready to starve for hunger; in Chapter 16 verses 2 and 3. **And all the Assembly were ready to be killed for hunger** (the text says:) well, **Moses** cries to God, and God delivered them out of that strait too: In the next Chapter they were in as great a strait too: **They pitched at Rephidim, and there they had no water to drink again:** I might go through the story, and show you in the wilderness, what great straits God put them in, and yet God was working salvation for them. When they came to possess the land, (because I will not go through the story the time will not permit) they have Jordan to pass over without any bridge, whether the bridges were cut down, or whether

there were none, I cannot tell. But it was more danger to pass over the bridges (if there were any) because at that time (the text says) it was **that Jordan flowed over all his banks**: So then it was at the worst time that could be, when the banks of Jordan were all overflowed, yet God delivered them out of that strait; When they were got over, there I might show you many other straits, but I shall mention only one, that was this: The first enemy the people of God fought with all in **Canaan**, they were discomfited, they were beaten back at the first battle that ever they fought, when they came to set upon the land of **Canaan**, and to fight with the adversary, there the adversary comes out, and gets the day and makes them fly before them, that was at the fight at **Ai**, **They fled before the men of Ai**, upon this **Joshua** fell down upon the ground; Why Lord! What are we come to this? After all these straits that we come now to fight with the people of **Canaan**, and they at the very first blow have the day, and make us fly before them? Now all the people will come out against us. If so be people have such distracting fears now, suppose there should be a meeting of both Armies, and you should hear that one Army flies before another, that our men fly before those that come out against them, before the Cavaliers, what a fear and distraction would there be then? Yet so it was with the people of **Israel**, though God was coming in with such a mighty hand to deliver them, and to possess them of **Canaan**, yet at the very first blow, they had the worst, and the people overcame them: It would take a mighty deal of time to show you the straits that **David**, and **Josiah**, and **Jehoshaphat**, and **Hezekiah** were in, I'll only give you a word or two about **David**, because it may be a very great help to poor troubled spirits in time of straits; **David** he was in such straits

sometimes, that he professes himself **even overwhelmed**, **Psalm 61** and the beginning: You shall find **Psalm 77** verse 4. **He could not speak**. Many poor souls are in grievous afflictions, and when we put them to go and open their hearts to God and men, Oh I cannot speak (say they) **David** was in such straits that he could not speak, yea **he could not so much as look up**, **Psalm 40** verse 12. Not so much as look up to God, grievous straits that he was in. And the people of **Israel** in their other Captivity, there were mountains before them; what straits did God put them into? When they were come forth of **Babylon**, In **Zechariah 4**. **What art thou O great mountain, that art before them?** But examples will be needless to illustrate the thing, it is so clear, that thus was God's dealing with his people. As with wicked men, when God is in a way of wrath against the ungodly, he many times suffers them to prosper in the highest way, with the most flourishing prosperity that ever they had in their lives: So when he is in a way of salvation of his Saints, he lets them be in the lowest ebb that ever they were in in all their lives: As in **Job**, 20 says the text there at the 5th verse, **In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits**. In the fulness of his sufficiency; what a phrase is here! A wicked man shall be in straits when he is full, when he has sufficient (as he thinks,) in the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits: and on the other side, a godly man in his greatest straits, he has a fulness of sufficiency; I will show you that clear, in 2 **Corinthians 1** verse 5. **As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ**: We have a fulness of Consolation, when we have a fulness of Suffering; yea, not only abound, but do **super abound**, for so the word is; in 2 **Corinthians 7** verse 4. **I am** (says he) **filled with comfort, I**

am exceeding joyful in all our tribulations: We are brought into tribulation, into great straits, and I have a fulness filled with comfort, and exceeding joyful, more than abundantly-joyful; so the word signifies: there is abounding in the other text, but here is a **super** added to it, a **super**-abounding, more than joyful, not in times of prosperity only: Carnal hearts never know how to rejoice but in times of prosperity, when they can eat, and drink, and play, then they can be merry; but the Saints know how to joy, how to be filled with joy, how to abound in joy, and how to be exceedingly abounding in joy when they are in tribulation: Thus, as wicked men are in straits in their sufficiencies; so godly men when God is in a way of comfort, they may be in a way of great affliction, and the reason of it may be:

First Reason. **Because God will humble his people, when he is in a way of salvation:** when God intends the greatest good to his people, and to raise them the highest, he is very careful to keep them very low; that has always been the manner of God's administrations: You see the reason of the peoples having straits in the wilderness, it was from hence, in the 8th of **Deuteronomy**, there God gives the reason, in the second verse, **Thou shalt remember all the way, which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness**, to what end? Why were they so long in the wilderness? It was (says the text) **to humble them**; I brought thee into the wilderness, and it was to humble thee: Does God (my brethren) bring us into straits, now in these times? Certainly he is in a way of salvation for **England**, he is in a way of salvation to do us good in the latter end, but yet he is bringing us into straits, Oh! We may thank the pride of our spirits, we have not been brought low enough to this very day: There has been

(indeed) some humiliation of some of the people of God, in fasting and praying, they have humbled their souls. But yet though there has been humble expressions, yet not humble hearts; for after those times they have had (many of them) exceeding froward spirits, and that argues apparently, their hearts are not humbled and broken, when their spirits after days of humiliation, still should be froward and pettish as before: But especially for the generality of the Kingdom, how far are we from being an humbled people! We are not yet capable of what mercy God intends for us, in this regard, because we are not humbled; Oh the exceeding pettishness, envy, and pride (and worse a great deal) not only in many people of the Land, but even in those that are godly and gracious! How are the spirits of men, of one brother opposite to another! That because there is some difference in judgment in such and such a thing; O they could be content (many of them) to have them rid out of the Land, and if God did not prevent (whereas the persecution by Bishops is now at an end) who knows (except God humble their hearts more) whether many of God's dear servants, that do but differ in some point of judgment, might not meet with a great deal of sufferings, even from those that are godly, and that is the worst suffering, better a thousand times suffer from wicked men, it is not so hard to the spirits of godly men to suffer from never so many Bishops, and wicked men, as to suffer from one godly man: Oh! There wants that charity and tenderness of spirit one towards another that should be; we are not yet humbled and brought upon our knees, and therefore it is just with God to lay us upon our backs a while, or that we should even be with our faces upon the ground, and confounded in our own thoughts before that great Salvation comes that God intends for us. That is the first reason.

Second **Reason**. God brings to straits, **because he takes much delight in the Exercise of faith**. (My beloved) Faith, it is a most glorious grace, it is one of the most glorious things that ever God enabled any creature to do, and especially now, when there is so much guilt upon them; it is a more glorious work than **Adam** performed in Innocency, For a poor creature to believe upon God, for his good here; and in the midst of all extremities to rely upon him, it is a most glorious work, and God is exceedingly delighted in it, and therefore the Scripture calls Faith, **Precious Faith**, in the beginning of the 2nd Epistle of **Peter**: now God loves the acting of precious things; God loves to see the actings of all his creatures, every creature active in his way; but when God has put such a precious grace as faith into the heart; Oh! How God does delight to see the acting of that precious Faith: and therefore it has been the way of God to go quite cross, after the Lord has made a promise of mercy and salvation, he goes seemingly cross, only to exercise Faith; I think I have told you sometimes of that to **Abraham**, that there were but two promises made to him, first, That the Country that God would give him, should flow with milk and honey: and secondly, His seed should be as the stars of Heaven: and mark what way God goes to bring this about, as soon as ever he gets into **Canaan**, he was ready to starve there; is this the country that flows with milk and honey? And then for the other, His seed should be as the stars of Heaven; he stayed twenty years before he had a child, and **Isaac** stayed forty years before he had a child; and yet his seed should be great; and **Isaac** must be killed too: and then there was another thing exercised his faith, he would give him the Land, and yet notwithstanding, during his life, he must not possess one foot of the Land, but only a burying-place,

and what was the reason of all this? It was to exercise his faith; and the promise God makes to his Son Christ, **I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession;** yet Christ must not have a hole to hide his head in, he has not so much as the foxes and the birds have to hide his head in. Thus the way of God is, to seem to go quite contrary, that he might draw forth that glorious work of faith he so much delights in, and because this is the only time of exercising this precious grace, and there shall be no such faith in Heaven exercised as this is, and therefore God (because he will have as much as may be of the excellency of this faith) though he be in a way of salvation, he brings his people into straits.

3. Reason. **Because the Lord delights so much in the prayers of his people, that he might draw out their prayers:** Oh! the voice is sweet, the voice of prayer it is very melodious in the ears of God: It is true, God delights in a praising voice too, but here in this world, rather in prayer, why? Because God shall have a praising voice to all eternity, God's Saints shall be praising him to all eternity, but they shall not be praying to him to all eternity; now God delighting so much in the praying voice of his Saints, and he knowing he shall have a great deal of praise from his people when they are delivered from great troubles, no marvel he does exercise his people: that which pleases God more than Heaven and Earth is, the exercise of the faith and the prayers of his people, they are the most pleasing things to God in all the world, and therefore he brings into straits.

4. Reason. **Because God would discover wicked men:** Before he brings his great salvation, he would discover those that are vile and wicked, that they should not partake of that great sal-

vation. As in our times, we know how God in every strait we have been in has made some useful discovery to us, it has been a discovering time, of many that we have known to be vile and naughty, that we did not know before. **Luke**, 2.35. (you know the place) **A sword shall pierce through thy soul**, why? **that the thoughts of many may be discovered**: there shall be great afflictions and troubles, and the end I aim at is, to discover the thoughts of many. How have men's thoughts been discovered by plots? When God was bringing his people into **Canaan** he would not have a rebellious generation come in among them; and all the trouble they had in the wilderness, it was by a mixture of a base and vile generation, that you have plain in **Numbers** 11. When they were in such a distressed condition, and in a murmuring and a vexing way, mark the 4th verse, **The mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting**: They disturbed all the host of God. And certainly if men should not be discovered, more than they are, if God should come to set up a full reformation amongst us here in England, to bring us to that Canaan we desire, we should be so troubled with a mixed multitude, the mixed multitude would so vex and trouble the Church of God, that they should scarce ever have peace among themselves; and therefore God in mercy will discover them beforehand, before Canaan comes he will discover this mixed multitude.

5. **Reason**. God will bring them into straits, because he might give occasion to the Adversary to vent his malice to the utmost, and to ripen his sin that it may be ripe to the full, before God comes to deliver us; that they may be gathered together to be a great sacrifice to the Lord, therefore God's people are brought to such straits; that if they will blaspheme, they shall blaspheme to

the full. In our times now, the more straits we are brought into, the greater are the blasphemies of the wicked, and if God should bring us into more straits, and give them the better over us, I believe there will be that horrible blasphemy in England, that never was in any place in the world, the heavens never did hear, nor the earth never did bear such blasphemies, and blasphemers, as there would be, if God should but deliver up his people in any degree to the hands of their enemies. We know not, but for the ripening of their sins, and that so they may come to be remarkable for God's vengeance on them here in this world, God may give them power over his people, and bring his people yet into greater straits. And then the last reason is,

(6. Reason) **Because the work of Jesus Christ will more appear at the last, the greater the strait is;** And therefore in **Daniel 9.25. He will build up the City even in troublesome times.** Every one can build in quiet times, but in troubled times Christ will build up the City: **And he rules in the midst of his enemies:** Christ loves to rule in the midst of his enemies, that so his rule may be the more conspicuous.

1. **Use,** Is it so with us? **Take heed then that we have not our hearts sink, because of straits:** Let us not say, why is it thus with us? If God be in a way of mercy, why deals he thus with us? and presently be ready to conclude against the ways of God; certainly all is gone, God is gone, surely whatsoever the hopes and confidences of such and such were, we see all is undone, all their hopes are undone. God forbid there should be such an unbelieving heart in any of you, or such murmuring and repining speeches among any of you, whatsoever strait you are brought into!

2 Doctrine. **In these straits, God's people are mightily troubled.** It was so here, in every strait they repined, and were in a distraction, and especially at this time; **Stand still** (says **Moses**,) what mean you to do? They were all in a confusion; and as it was there, so it is many times in many of God's Saints. As the blessed man **Heman**, that made that 88th **Psalms**, you shall find in that **Psalms**, he was distracted; and yet though **Heman** was one of the wisest men upon the earth, for so you shall find it in the 1st of **Kings**, (where the Holy Ghost speaks of wise men) in 4.31. Solomon **did exceed the wisdom of all in Egypt, for** (says the text) **he was wiser than all men, than Heman**, and yet **Heman** was in woeful perplexity, when he was brought into straits. And in the 8th of **Isaiah**, It was the same case there, that seems to be ours now; Oh there was **a Confederacy, a Confederacy**, and many people did join together against God's servants, and upon that (the text says) in the 11th verse, **The Lord spoke to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people saying, say you not, A Confederacy to all them to whom this people shall say, A Confederacy, neither fear you their fear.** Mark, God was fain to speak to the Prophet with a strong hand, that he should not be so troubled, as other people were in the time of their fears. Yea we shall find, that many of God's Saints, that he has delivered in a most glorious way, yet at some other times they have been too secure, their hearts have been all in a confusion, and were not able to stand before the difficulties that they met withal: And for that you have a famous example, 1 **Kings**, 19. of **Elijah**; if you read the 18th Chapter you may see what a Spirit **Elijah** had, he would appear before **Ahab, As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I**

stand, I will surely show myself to him, today, (to **Ahab**;) and he did show himself to **Ahab**, and tells him, it was he and his people, that troubled **Israel**, when **Ahab** said to him, **Are you he that troubles Israel, No** (says he) **It is you, and your father's house that troubles Israel:** And then he comes and gets the Priests of **Baal** together, and gets fire from heaven, to consume the Sacrifice, and destroys all the Priests of **Baal**: and gets rain from heaven to rain upon the earth: What an excellent Spirit had **Elijah** in the 18th Chapter? Yet in the 19th Chapter, **Jezebel** did but threaten **Elijah**, and he takes himself to his heels, and runs away at the threatening of wicked **Jezebel**; though he had such a brave Spirit in the former Chapter: So it is truly with many men, at some time their courage makes their adversaries afraid, and at other times, their cowardice makes their friends ashamed; many have been so, they have been a terror to their adversaries one day, and a shame to their friends another day.

Reason 1. **Because we have much flesh still in the best of us all, and we are much led by sense;** and because we are not thoroughly skillful in the ways of God, because the fear of God is so weak in us, therefore it is that the fear of man is so strong, and therefore we know so little of God's secrets; the secrets of God are with them that fear him, did we fear God more we should know his secret ways, and not be so much troubled.

Reason 2. **Because there is a great deal of guilt rests in the best,** and that will make any one afraid; where there is much guiltiness in their hearts, it is exceeding troublesome to the soul.

Reason 3. **Because they are too confident in the flesh, they are too confident in themselves,** Thence it is that God withdraws himself from them; and at what time they are afraid,

they cannot trust in God, as **David** (it is an admirable sweet text) professes of himself, **That at what time he was afraid, he would trust in God:** There is many a man that for the present thinks he can trust in God, but he cannot do it at that time when he is afraid: **Psalm 56.3. What time I am afraid, I will trust in the Lord.** When your passion comes, then you make no use of your faith, to trust in God: As now, many a man or woman can be meek and quiet, till they have a temptation, but when your passion is up, can you be meek then? and rise then, and beat it down with the contrary grace? So when the passion of your fears and troubles come up, can you then trust in God? Aye, that is somewhat like; but because we trust so much in ourselves, therefore when the time comes we should trust in God, God withdraws himself from us, and we are most afraid.

Use. This is that we should lay our hands upon our hearts, and charge our souls for, and be ashamed for before the Lord: Never a one here but has cause to lay his hand upon his heart and say, Oh that I, that have had so much experience of God, of his ways of helping and delivering me, out of six troubles and seven, and yet the Lord knows upon any new trouble I am to seek as much as ever, and in any hurly-burly in as great distemper of fear as ever; be ashamed of this before the Lord. It is true, God's people may be so, and you are so, therefore be ashamed of it, and labor to prepare for such times; those that are troubled with fainting fits, use to carry their bottle of **Aqua-vitae** about with them; so you that have been disquieted in times of trouble, lay up somewhat that may help in those times. Though a candle light will serve to carry in a

yard in calm weather, yet it must be a torch, a great light that must serve when the wind blows; so a little may serve now, but a great deal must be laid up for times of extremity.

First, Lay up encouraging Promises.

Secondly, Lay up encouraging experiences, that may help you against such times of fainting and trouble.

Use 2. But then, if it be so with the Saints and God's own people, that when they are in straits, they are so ready to be troubled with distracting fears and cares, what shall become of the wicked and ungodly then? when they come in straits, how must their hearts sink in horror, because all their straits are no other, but the beginning of eternal straits? present sorrows making away to eternal sorrows, the way of their deliverance from present straits is, by being brought into greater straits: many women with child have strong pains in their child birth, yet when they think they shall be delivered, they have joy in stead of sorrow; but a woman that is with child, and is only reprieved because she is with child, till she be delivered, though she have a great deal of trouble and pain before she be delivered, she desires not to be rid of it, because then she knows she shall come to greater, to be hanged, and if she could live seven years together and never be delivered, she could be content with the trouble, because when that is gone, greater comes: So wicked and ungodly men that are in great straits for the present, may well be content with them, because when they are gone, greater will come.

3. Doctrine. In the time of these straits, it is our duty, to stand still and look for God's salvation, to quiet our spirits, and look up to God.

First, **For the quieting of our spirits.**

As they were to be delivered out of this bondage in that way; so they were to be delivered out of the Babylonish bondage in the same way: So you shall find it **Isaiah 30**. See what God saith for that deliverance, he tells them plainly at the 15th verse: **In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength, and you would not.** In quietness and confidence, it is true, they were in a passionate way, and God tells them, that in quietness and in confidence is their strength, and they would not. So, come to many people that are in great extremities, to some women and others, (when they are wringing their hands, and hanging about their husbands' necks) and tell them, your confidence must be in quietness, they will be ready to row you off. But they would not (saith God) So in **Isaiah 30:7. I cried concerning this, Their strength is, to sit still:** My Brethren, this day in the Name of God, do I cry concerning all our straights, after we have used all the means we can, we are to sit still, **and see the salvation of our God,** to quiet our hearts with this **believing stand still,** and look up to God for our salvation. It was their great fault, they did not so in their deliverance out of their captivity, there is one remarkable place for that **Jeremiah 31:22. How long wilt thou go about? Oh thou backsliding daughter! for the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth:** How long wilt thou go about, Oh thou backsliding daughter? What is the meaning of this text? It is thus, In the time of their deliverance from Captivity, they met with a great deal of difficulty, many straights, and they went about to this and that sharking course, and did backslide, when they were in a good way, they went back again, and the Prophet could not get them to stand still in any way; as if he should have said, go on right in the

way, be not discouraged; by difficulties, by extremities, seek not any shifting way, be not backsliding, but stand to your tackling and work God hath set you about, for the Lord hath created a new thing; Perhaps you will say, there was never the like straight we are in; well, God hath such mercy as he never showed the like before; God hath created a new thing. Many cry out in their straights, O my affliction, and my straight is such as never was in the world! Well, gratify them so; (as many times, we must needs gratify dis-tempered spirits, when they cry out of the greatness of their straights) yet is there no comfort for them to stay them? Yes, **Isaiah 64:4. It was never known since the beginning of the world, what God hath laid up for them that wait for him:** Do but wait for him, and there was never such mercy shown in the world, as God hath laid up for thee; so that come let us grant it, that there was never the like of that affliction that thou art under, yet there is reason enough for thee to wait, and look for the salvation of God, in such a way, in such a condition.

I shall give some reasons of that part of the doctrine, that we are to stand still, and be quiet: for by our standing still, and our quieting our hearts in our straights,

1st Reason, **We are fit to look to the Wisdom, Faithfulness, and Power of God;** we are not able to see God's Wisdom, Faithfulness, and Power, nor to make use of it, **except we get our spirits to be quiet:** first get them quiet, and then we can look up to God, **Psalms 46:10. Be still** (saith the text) **and know that I am God,** there is a God in Heaven that can help and succor, in time of great straights and extremities, but for all this, people are in a hurly-burly, and their spirits are distempered, and they are wringing their hands, and crying, they cannot know that

God is God, they can have no use of all the power and goodness, and faithfulness, and mercy of God. First get your hearts still and quiet in your Families, and in your own spirits, and then you shall know that God is God: God will not appear till first you be still.

2nd Reason. **We are not able to make use of our own Graces, till we be quiet and still;** If God have bestowed Graces when we are in a hurly-burly, we have no use of them at all; therefore saith the text, **Psalm 4. Stand in awe, sin not, commune with your own hearts upon your beds, and be still:** Commune with your own hearts: you have something (perhaps) in your own hearts that may quiet you; commune with your own hearts, and be still; you are not fit to commune with your own hearts till you get them quiet; first be quiet, and then commune. (Oh! my brethren) A man or woman of a staid, sound, quiet, and still spirit, hath a mighty advantage of all passionate spirits. There are many of you, that are passionate at all other times, and that is the reason that in such great extremities, you are so overruled with passion; you are so overruled with your passion of anger at other times, and out of God's just judgment, you are overruled with the passion of Fear now. But if at other times you would labor to keep in your spirits, God would help you now.

3rd Reason. Because without this stillness, and quietness, we cannot manifest that subjection to God we owe him; for then there is a great deal of sin, and pride, and stoutness committed against God. And therefore in that fourth **Psalm**, the old Latin hath it **My soul be silent;** my soul is subject to God. The subjection of our souls to God, depends much upon this Quieting of our hearts.

4th **Reason.** Our reverence of God depends much upon it: and therefore in this 4th **Psalm, Stand in awe and sin not, commune with your own heart, and be still:** for us to behave ourselves in such a manner as many people do, throwing out their hands, and wringing, and keeping such a stir as they do; this shows there is not in their hearts that reverence they owe to God. **Stand in awe;** If your hearts were possessed with God's fear, you would not keep such a stir as you do in times of great danger.

5th **Reason.** This makes people unfit to listen to anything that is spoken to them; let anything be spoken to them, that is of any use, they cannot hear it, nor make use of it; as we read of the people of **Israel, Exodus 6:9.** When **Moses** came to tell them of their deliverance, the text saith, **He spoke to the Children of Israel, but they hearkened not to him: why? for anguish of spirit:** How many in trouble of conscience, and in other times of extremity, have their spirits in such anguish, that they never hearken to anything that is delivered to them; and therefore they come with the same objection over and over again, a hundred times in cases of conscience.

6. Without this Quietness of spirit, you are mighty hinderers of others, and you daunt and discourage the hearts of others, and many times the cause miscarries merely upon the unquietness of the hearts of men and women in time of danger; therefore you must be quiet, and look up to God for salvation. For Faith hath this excellency, that it is able to bring life out of death, light out of darkness; it hath a kind of creating virtue; as God himself brings one contrary out of another, so faith hath such a kind of working, if faith be of the right stamp, a genuine faith, it hath a mighty power in times of extremity to behold God's salvation, and make use of it.

I will give you one example of the use of faith in times of extremity; and that is of **David**, when he fled from **Saul**, and when he was in the Cave; mark, **Be merciful to me O God, be merciful to me, for my soul trusteth in thee, yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge.** What was the shadow of God's wings? Poor **David** was got into the shadow of the Cave, and the Sun did not shine upon him, but he looked upon himself in the Cave, as under the shadow of God's wings. You poor people that live it may be in Cellars, and in poor dark holes and Lanes, the Sun scarce shines upon you in a year, yet if you be godly, you are under God's wings by faith.

I shall now speak to the Second part of the Doctrine that we are to expect Salvation from God.

David did fly from **Absalom**, and yet what confidence had **David** (in that case) in God? Read but that third **Psalm**, and you will see confidence enough in **David**, and yet flying too. Diverse grounds and reasons I shall give for this, why we must look up to God, as well as be still:

Reason. Hereby we sanctify God's Name; **Fear ye not their fear, but sanctify God in your hearts** (saith the text). You sanctify not God else: I suppose many of you would be loath to be guilty of swearing, and taking God's Name in vain in that kind, but by your distracting thoughts, and unbecoming carriage in times of danger, you take God's Name in vain, you break the third Commandment.

2nd **Reason.** This shows the beauty and excellency of Faith, as **David** said, **Thou shalt see what thy servant can do:** So now, there is a great deal of talk of faith in the world, let us see now

what it can do. The truth of love is, when I can love God for himself without his gifts; so when I can believe in God without experience, I show the excellency of my faith, when I can trust in God merely upon his word; as I love God merely for himself, when my faith takes God's single bond without any security, that is the excellency of Faith; when I would have outward helps and assurances, there I call for sureties. So Christians when they must needs have outward helps, and former experiences, they call to God for sureties, as if they would not trust God upon his simple bond; that is the excellency of faith to trust God upon his single bond.

3. **Reason.** When we look up to God for salvation, we engage God in our cause; God owns not the cause till then, and then he owns it: Now how happy were we, if thus we could do in all our particular and private straights, **stand still and look up to God for help and for salvation.** It is true, you cry out and complain, I have lost a dear husband, and a dear friend, never man lost such a friend, and these great straights I am brought into; but lose not the quiet of your heart too, take heed of that, that is a greater loss than any loss you can have in this world. I remember I have read of a Philosopher that had this expression, (said he) If the gods would grant to me my desire, and bid me ask what I would have, I would ask of them this thing, that I might have the composed spirit of **Socrates**, that I might have such a spirit as **Socrates** had; for it is observed of him, that he did scarce change his countenance upon anything that befell him, he was always in a quiet composed frame, (and yet a Heathen). How much more should a Christian say; If God would give me my asking, I would ask nothing but that; for indeed there is a great deal of glory and excellency in a composed spirit: this is worthy of the Gospel; therefore mark what the

Apostle says, **Philippians 1.27. Only let your conversation be as it becomes the Gospel of Christ, that whether I come to see you, or be absent from you, I may hear of your affairs and that you stand fast in one spirit:** This is to walk worthy of the Gospel, to stand fast in one spirit: and observe this, that except we do stand fast, and quiet our hearts, we lose everything that should help us: when we are in a hurly-burly in our spirits to get some help, alas, we lose all our help. Therefore in **Philippians 4. Let the peace of God keep your hearts,** the word in the Original is, **Guard your hearts.** The peace of God in your hearts, must be the best guard of your hearts in the time of danger, now because you would avoid trouble, you put away your guard, what a madness is this? The casting away the peace of God, is the casting away of your guard, therefore keep that in your hearts, whatsoever you lose; yea, it is our Arms, mark, **Ephesians 6.** what is the Arms of a Christian? First, **The girdle of truth,** fear dissolves the heart, and makes a man he cannot gird himself: When he is in fear, his heart is melted, and he has little use of his truth, the girdle is loosed then. In the text, there is the helmet of salvation, but in fear hope is gone; there is the breastplate of righteousness, but in fear, a man has no use of his righteous conversation, nor no use of the sword of the Spirit, he can use nothing in times of such distracting fears, therefore lose not your Arms. It is very observable, in the 6th of the **Ephesians** how the holy Ghost still calls upon us to stand, verse 10. **My brethren be strong in the Lord,** and not only strong, **But strong in the Lord,** and strong in the **might of the Lord, and in the power of his might; put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand.** Then again, in the 13th verse, **Wherefore take you all the whole armor of**

God, that you may be able to withstand the evil one, and having done all, to stand. Though perhaps, you have overcome at one time, yet still look to your own hearts, when you have done all, **stand**, four times we are called upon **to stand**, nothing, what a great advantage we have by standing. It is true, our afflictions are great, and the soul says, **The Lord is my portion**: perhaps temptations and afflictions say otherwise, but the soul says, **The Lord is my portion**; and it is good for a man to say, what shall I that am so full of sin, yet not be willing to have some trouble, but be so full of fears upon every trouble that befalls me? Why should not I yield to God's providential will as well as to his commanding will? How know I, but that God may have glorious ends, to work out of these extremities and troubles I am in? Why should I not give up myself to God, to have his will upon me? And has not God heretofore delivered me from great straights and extremities, even from the wrath of God himself, and from his justice? Greater and other manner of straights than those I am now in; and if I believe not in God now, but be disquieted, perhaps these straights may be to bring me to greater straights; what if these straights of affliction should bring me to greater straights? And it is just with God to leave me to fall into the straights of sin, that cannot bear the straights of afflictions, therefore let me stand still and look up to God's salvation. Let us be so affected with our straights as to carry us up to God in prayer: pray as much as you can, but still keep your hearts in a quiet frame; and if your prayers be right, they will be to you, as **Luther** says, they were the leeches of his cares. **Luther** had a great many corrupt cares, (as in a corrupt body, there is much corrupt blood) but now his prayers were the leeches to suck out his cares: when you are distempered, go to prayer, and

then examine what a deal of corrupt blood has my prayers sucked out of my heart? As **Hannah**, when she had been at prayer, she looked no more sad. There are many things I thought to have given you, to stay your hearts in time of extremities: **Peace shall be to that man, that has his heart stayed on God, and blessed is that man that stays his heart upon God:** and if ever people had cause to stay their hearts upon God, certainly we have at this day, for we have God with us; Therefore it is unworthy of a Christian to have a distempered spirit. I remember I have read of the Romans, that when **Hannibal** was just before them, yet they bought and sold their ground as they did at other times; they were so quiet in their hearts. It was a speech that **Antigonus** had, when some were afraid of the multitude that came against him, (say they) So many are coming against us, said he, How many do you reckon me for? So may we say, we hear of so many thousands coming against us; But how many do you reckon Jesus Christ for? How many reckon you him for, that is the Captain of all our Hosts: Have not prayers been sent up to God? Why despise you the prayers of the Saints of God, as if there were nothing in their prayers? Is not God's Name engaged in all this business? Oh therefore **stand still** and be not afraid. And especially let me speak a word to you, that are of timorous and fearful spirits, **Isaiah 35.4. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Fear not:** Do not excuse yourselves in this, that you are of a timorous nature; (says God) **Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Fear not.** And especially mark what the holy Ghost speaks to women, In 1 **Peter 3. Women they must clothe themselves with a meek and quiet spirit,** (that is in the 4th verse) **which is in the sight of God of great price,** and in the 6th verse, **And as Sarah obeyed Abraham, and**

called him Lord, whose daughters you are, as long as you do well, and are not afraid of any amazement. What should be the meaning of that, that woman must be the daughters of **Sarah** upon these terms? Thus, **Abraham** was brought into straits many times, and carried from his own Country; now **Sarah** if she had been of such a spirit as many women are, Oh how would **Sarah** have hindered her husband **Abraham** in every straight he was brought into? And have said, Husband, why go we from our own Country, and our friends, and so are brought into such straits? Pray husband go back again, and venture not yourself thus and thus: but it seems she was of a gracious spirit, and quieted herself in God, and was not afraid with amazement. If you would approve yourselves the daughters of **Sarah**, do you so, when God calls your husbands to any service, though it be with some hazard, do not you hang about their necks, and wring your hands, and say, I beseech you husband consider what will become of me and my children, will you leave me now? Take heed, you are not the daughters of **Sarah** at such a time, if you hinder your husbands at such a time as this is.

4. Doctrine. **That the sight of salvation after straits, will be a glorious thing.** If we be brought into straits, that that is coming will pay for all, there is enough to satisfy; let us not be troubled at greater straits, than yet we have. Suppose blood should be shed (beloved) God has such mercy for England, that shall pay for all the blood of his Saints that shall be shed; and the blood of his people, is a precious thing: Every drop of the blood of his people is very precious; and the Adversary shall be accountable for every drop; God will value it, and there shall be a valuable consideration given for every drop of blood; and the more difficulties

we have in obtaining that mercy God is about to give us, the mercy shall be the greater: **Isaiah 54.11. O you afflicted and tossed with tempests, your foundations shall be laid with Sapphires, and with precious stones.** If we be afflicted and tossed with tempests, and the blood of God's people go for it; comfort yourselves with this; The more precious blood that is shed in this business, the greater mercy is to come, for God will have a valuable consideration for all the blood of his Saints.

FINIS.

THANKS FOR READING



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