

# THE CHRISTIAN MAN'S CALLING



GEORGE SWINNOCK

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# **The Christian Man's Calling**

**by George Swinnock**

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# THE CHRISTIAN MAN'S CALLING

## THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY

To the Worshipful, and his honoured Patron, RICHARD HAMPDEN, of Hampden, in Buckinghamshire, Esq.; and to the Honourable Lady, LÆTITIA HAMPDEN, his virtuous consort.

THOUGH philosophers difference man especially from brutes, by his chief natural quality, Reason, yet some divines like rather to do it by his supernatural excellency, Religion: probably upon this twofold ground, partly because religion is the highest and truest reason, and therefore causeth the greatest essential distinction. What can be more rational than the supreme truth to be believed, the chiefest good to be embraced, the first cause to be acknowledged, and those who were made by God, and live wholly upon him, to improve all for him, and to live wholly to him? The giving up our souls and bodies unto God is called our 'reasonable sacrifice,' Rom. 12:2; those that are irreligious are termed 'unreasonable,' 2 Thes. 3:2. Indeed, atheists are but beasts, shaped in the proportion and dressed in the habits of men. It is impossible for man to manifest more want of reason, than in wandering from God, the fountain of his being, and the wellspring of all his blessedness. Who ever, unless bereft of his wits and distracted, would murder his body, much less his precious soul, for ever? As soon as ever the prodigal 'came to himself,' he came to his father. It was a clear sign he had lost his reason, when he left bread in his father's house for husks amongst swine. Men's hearts naturally are, like Nebuchadnezzar's, the hearts of beasts, grazing only in fleshly pastures, and savouring only sensual pleasures, till their reason returneth to them; then they bless and

honour the most high God, who liveth for ever, Dan. 4:34; then they mind spiritual dainties, and relish celestial delights. The irreligious are fellow-commoners with beasts; the religious, with angels.

Partly because religion is the end and excellency of the rational creature, of which brutes are wholly incapable. Brutes were made to serve God, men only to worship him. The Jewish Talmud propoundeth the question, Why God made man just on the evening before the Sabbath? and giveth this answer, That he might immediately enter upon the sanctification of the Sabbath, in the worship of the blessed God, the end for which he was made. Purity of religion was our primitive, and therefore must needs be our principal perfection. All who have any knowledge of the great God, will easily grant that man was a curious piece, rare workmanship indeed, when he came immediately out of his Maker's hands; it is impossible but that the child must be amiable and beautiful in a high degree, which was begotten by, and is the picture of, such a Father.

A religious life (which consisteth in exalting God in our affections, as our chiefest good, and in our actions, as our utmost end) is the life of God himself. How high, how noble, how excellent a life doth the blessed God live! Eph. 4:18. Others live like beasts, like devils; true Christians only, like angels, like God; above these carnal comforts and drossy delights: 'The way of life is above to the wise,' Prov. 15:24. Atheists, like hedge-sparrows, settling here below, are easily taken in Satan's snares and destroyed. When saints, like eagles, soaring aloft, are free both from his shot and lime-twigs, they are not terrified with the world's affrightments, having armour of proof. Those that are at the top of some high tower, regard not the croaking of frogs, nor hissing of serpents below: like the moon at the full, being fixed in heaven, they can keep their course, though dogs bark at them here on earth; they are not entangled in the world's allurements. The world

indeed, like a serpent some write of, when she cannot overtake the fleeing passengers, doth with her beautiful colours so amaze many, that they have no power to pass away till she hath stung them; but they see her emptiness and vanity under all her painting and daubery. Besides, their eyes behold the glorious God in some measure, in his brightness and beauty, and are so dazzled therewith, that as those that look on the great luminary of the world, in its meridian splendour, they can see no glory in anything besides. These poor candles are slighted into disappearance, because the sun himself hath arisen upon them. How quickly, how quietly did Abraham leave his kindred and country, when once the God of glory appeared to him, Acts 7:2. Ah, what pitiful fare is the world's most luscious food to them that ever feasted with the holy Jesus!

The old Grecians, who had altogether fed on acorns before, when bread came in among them, made no reckoning of their mast, but reserved it only for their swine. The Lacedemonians despised their iron and leathern money when gold and silver was brought into their cities.<sup>2</sup> When a soul once cometh to 'know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent,' what toys and trifles, what babies and butterflies, are the honours and riches and pleasures of this beggarly world to him! nay, how doth he befool and bebest himself for doating so much upon specious dreams, and gilded nothings! Ps. 73:20. Now he is elevated to the top of the celestial orbs, even to heaven, and therefore the whole earth is but a small spot of ground, a little point in his eyes.

The driving of this high and heavenly trade is the sum and substance of this treasure, which I present to you both, as a testimony of my gratitude for the great engagements you have laid upon me. The stork amongst fowls, is said to leave one of her young in the place where she hatcheth them. The Egyptians amongst men, are famous

in history for a thankful people, and are recorded to have made eunuchs of ungrateful persons, that the world might not be plagued with their posterity. The master of moral philosophy upbraideth them sharply that steal favours by private acknowledgments. The truth is, a public confession of your kindness, as it is the least, since providence hath given me the opportunity, so it is, next my prayers, the greatest requital I am able to make you. If my pains have yielded any fruit in these parts, those that received it owe the acknowledgment, under God, to you.

Though neither of you love to hear your own praise, nor did I ever love flattery, knowing by too much experience that pride will burn and continue, like the elementary fire, of itself, without any fuel, yet I esteem it my duty to publish some things to the world, for example to others. The place to which I am presented hath not half a maintenance, nor so much as a house belonging to the minister; but the Lord hath given you such compassion to souls, that you have given me both a convenient dwelling and a considerable maintenance, besides the tithes, above seventy pounds per annum out of your own inheritance, that I enjoy, through the good hand of my God upon me, a competent encouragement and comfortable employment. When others refuse to draw out their purses to hungry bodies, the gracious God hath enabled you both to draw out your purse and hearts unto starving souls. Soul-charity is the highest and noblest charity, and such fruit as will much abound to your account at the day of Christ, Phil. 4:17. Hereby, like wise merchants, you return your riches into the other world by bills of exchange. How much are you both indebted to free grace! Usually the richest mines are covered with the most barren earth; and men who receive much from God very quietly, like narrow-mouthed glasses, will part with nothing without much stir and reluctancy. God hath bestowed on you large hearts, as well as large inheritance. Many a vessel hath been

sunk with the weight of its burden. Some mariners, out of love to their lading, have lost their lives; but God hath made you masters of, —not, as many other, servants to,—a fair estate.

It is also your honour that the ark, the worship of the blessed God, findeth entertainment in your house; your whole family, though large, have set meals daily for their inward man, as well as for their outward: your children and servants are commanded by you to keep the way of the Lord, Gen. 18:19, and, as if your house were built of Irish oak, which will suffer no spider near it, no iniquity is allowed to dwell in your tabernacle. I have with much delight observed your care and conscience to have all your family present at morning and evening duties. Oh it is a blessed and beautiful sight to behold a little church in a great house! Many great persons think the company of the glorious God too mean for them in their houses; religion waiteth at their doors like a beggar, and cannot obtain the favour to be called in, when the vermin, as in the Egyptian palaces, of pride and drunkenness and swearing reside amongst them, and crawl in every room of their dwellings. The service of the living God, which is the greatest freedom, they count their bondage and fetters; the society of the Lord Jesus is to them, as to the devils, a torment, Mat. 8. Alas! alas! whither is man fallen, that the company of his Maker should be esteemed his dishonour! that the worship of God, which is the preferment of glorious angels, should be judged a disparagement! Ah, how will their judgments be altered when they come to die, to throw their last casts for eternity! then, as that Popish prelate said of justification by faith, That it was good supperdoctrine, though not so good to breakfast on, they will confess that it is good to die in the Lord; they will cry out, 'Oh let us die the death of the righteous, and let our latter end be like theirs!' how lightly soever now they think of living their lives. The Persian messenger, though a heathen, could not but observe the worth of piety in such an hour of extremity: when

the Grecian forces hotly pursued us, saith he, and we must needs venture over the great water Strymon, frozen then, but beginning to thaw, when a hundred to one we had all died for it, with mine eyes I saw many of those gallants, whom I had heard before so boldly maintain there was no God, every one upon their knees, with eyes and hands lifted up, begging hard for help and mercy, and entreating that the ice might hold till they got over. Those gallants who now proscribe godliness their hearts and houses, as if it were only a humour taken up by some precise persons, who will needs be wiser than their neighbours, and, Galba-like, scorn at them who fear or think of death, when they themselves come to enter the list with the king of terrors, and perceive in earnest that this surly sergeant Death will not be denied, but away they must into the other world, and be saved or tormented in flames for ever, as they have walked after the spirit or after the flesh here; without question they will change their note, sing another tune, and say, as dying Theophilus did of devout Arsenius,<sup>2</sup> Thou art blessed, O Arsenius, who hadst always this hour before thine eyes.

Blessed be God, ye walk not in the vicious ways of such voluptuous wretches; but to the joy of all that know and love you, sit like wise pilots in the hindermost part of the ship, dwell in the meditation of your deaths, and thence endeavour to steer the vessel of your conversations aright. Give me leave, honoured friends, out of the unfeigned respect which I bear to you both, which, if I know my own heart, is not so much for the favours received from you, though I shall ever acknowledge them, but for what of God and godliness I have seen in you, to beseech you, that 'as ye have received how ye ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more,' 1 Thes. 4:1. God hath done great things for you, and God expecteth great things from you: 'To whom much is given, of them much is required.' Where the husbandman bestoweth the greatest

cost, there he looketh for the greatest crop. The rents which your tenants pay are somewhat answerable to the farms which they enjoy. Ye have more obligations to serve God than others, and more opportunities for his service; and therefore, having fairer gales, should sail more swiftly than others towards the haven of happiness. Your trading must be suitable to the talents with which ye are entrusted. Perfection will be your reward, and proficiency is your work. Heavenly-mindedness and humility, which are the greatest glory of our English gentry, are excellent helps to growth in grace. Children that feed on ashes cannot thrive. Silly pismires, that continually busy themselves about their hoards and heaps of earth, never grow bigger. Indeed, great persons are liable to great temptations: flies will strive to fasten upon the sweetest conserves. The longest robes are aptest to contract most dirt. Satan, as some write of the Irish to take their enemies, diggeth trenches in the earth, as it were, and covereth the surface of it with the green turfs of carnal comforts and contentments; which men treading upon, and taking to be firm ground, fall into their ruin. But your sight of the glory to be revealed, by the prospective glass of faith, will help you to wink more on these withering vanities. Ah, what a muck-heap to that is all the wealth of this lower world! Naturalists tell us that the loadstone will not draw in the presence of the diamond. Sure I am, the world, notwithstanding all its pomp and pride, glory and gallantry, hath but little influence upon Christians, when they behold their undefiled inheritance. Humility is also helpful to proficiency in holiness; the lofty mountains are barren, when the low valleys abound in corn. As the spleen swelleth, the whole body consumeth; as pride groweth, the new man decayeth. This high wind raiseth strange tempests in the soul: 'He giveth grace to the humble,' 1 Pet. 5:6. God layeth these richest mines in the lowest parts of the earth. Trees, even in time of drought, whose roots are deep in the ground, bear fruit, when corn and grass wither; Christians, like the sun in the zenith, must shew

least when at the highest; and as branches fully laden, bend the more downward. Why should the mud-wall swell because the sun shineth on it? We may say of every mercy and excellency we enjoy, as the prophet of his hatchet, 'Alas, master, for it is borrowed,' 2 Kings 6:5.

If ye please also to peruse the ensuing tractate, possibly it may be some small furtherance to you in your course of Christianity. The intent of it is to discover and direct how religion, the great end for which we are born, and the great errand upon which we are sent into the world, may be made our principal business; and how our natural and civil actions, and all our seeming diversions, may be so managed, that they may, like an elegant parenthesis, not at all spoil, but rather adorn the sense of religion. I hope the worth of the matter handled, notwithstanding my weakness in the manner of handling it, will make it acceptable to you. I could wish the face of the discourse were clean. I may safely say, it is far from being painted; and pardon me if I suffer the stream now to run in two channels, such as it is I humbly tender,—

Sir, to your favourable eye, whose happiness it is to inherit your ancestors' graces, as well as their riches. It was counted a great honour to the family of the Curios that there were three excellent orators in it one after another; and to the family of the Fabii, that there were in it three presidents of the senate successively. It is your glory to descend not only of a father who walked with God, and of a grandfather who, it is hoped, died in the faith, but also of a great-grandfather, who was famous for serving the will of God in his generation. The holy apostle speaketh to the glory of Timothy, concerning his 'unfeigned faith, which dwelt first in his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice,' 2 Tim. 1:15. To the glory of free grace I mention it, holiness in your house did not run only in the masculine race;



your tender mother was like Dorcas, full of good works, and a dutiful daughter to the Father of mercies; and your honoured grandmother, yet alive, is an old disciple of the holy Jesus. Oh how much are you bound to the Lord, that grace should thus run in a blood! Boleslaus, king of Poland, when he was to speak or do anything of concernment, would take out a little picture of his father that he carried about him, and kissing it, would say, I wish I may speak or do nothing at this time unworthy thy name.

Sir, it is your privilege to reap the benefit of their precious prayers, and your piety, more and more to imitate their gracious patterns. How exactly should you walk, having such lights so near to direct you! And how accurately should you write in every line of your life, having such fair copies before your eyes! It is no small advantage likewise,

Madam, to your fair hands, who are a branch of a noble and honourable stock; but your birth from above is your present greatest credit, and will be your future chiefest comfort. Alexander must derive his pedigree from the gods, or else he thinketh himself ignobly born. To be born of God, to have heavenly blood running in your veins, to be the spouse of the dearest Saviour, to have your name written in the Book of Life, will stand you in stead, and, as many figures, amount to millions in an hour of death, and dreadful day of judgment, when civil and natural privileges, though now favours, will stand for ciphers, and signify nothing. The Jews indeed tell us that women are of an inferior creation, and therefore suffer them not to enter their synagogues, but appoint them galleries without; but they speak more truly and wisely who call women the second edition of the epitome of the world. Souls have no sexes; in Christ there is neither male nor female. Persevere, honoured lady, in your

pious course, to confute those painted carcases, who spend all their time in priding and pleasing their brittle flesh, and neglect their immortal spirits, to publish to the world that greatness and goodness are not inconsistent. Oh it is a rare and lovely sight to behold honour and holiness matched and married, lodging and living together! As a diamond well set in a gold ring is most sparkling, and as light in stars of the greatest magnitude is most glorious and shining; so grace is often most amiable in persons that are most honourable. The exceeding advantage your ladyship hath this way of doing God much service, is an awakening argument to endeavours after much sanctity. It is a farther encouragement

that you are joined to a loving yoke-fellow, who will draw equally with you in the road to Canaan. That you may both walk in the day of your lives, like Zachariah and Elizabeth, that peerless pair, as one calleth them, in all the commandments of the Lord, blameless; that when the night of death shall overtake you, you may expire like the Arabian phoenix, in a bed of sweet spices, the graces and comforts of the Spirit leaving a sweet savour behind you, that your children may be heirs to your spiritual riches, and see the eternal felicity of God's chosen; and that your house may throughout all generations be known by this name, Jehovah Shammah, The Lord is there, is the desire, and shall be the prayer of,

Your servant, for Jesus' sake,

GEORGE SWINNOCK.

# **TO THE READER**

## **ESPECIALLY OF THE PARISH OF GREAT-KIMBAL IN THE COUNTY OF BUCKS**

HE who doth but exercise his reason in considering the infinite cost which the glorious God hath bestowed in erecting the stately fabric of heaven and earth, and the curious workmanship which he hath discovered in the several creatures which are the inhabitants of the higher and lower house, (causing his almighty power, embroidered wisdom, and unsearchable goodness to glisten and sparkle far more gloriously in them than the stars in the clearest night, or the sun in his noonday brightness,) will easily grant me this assertion, That this great landlord of the world must needs deserve and expect a considerable rent of honour and service, somewhat suitable to the vast charge he hath been at. Who can be so brutish as to conceive that 'the only wise God' should take so much pains, as with infinite counsel to contrive the goodly frame and comely structure of his visible creation from all eternity, and by his omnipotent arm to give it a being, and not intend that his boundless excellencies and vast perfections, written in such a fair print, and large characters, should be admired and adored? That man is the person designed to give him his due and deserved praise, is the next unquestionable concession, no other of God's visible works being capable of his worship. Indeed, man's sight is so bad that he can see little of that beauty which appeareth in the glass of the world; but beasts are stark blind—they can see nothing at all.

Why should God create man with a rational, spiritual soul, and thereby capacitate him for so noble a service as the pleasing and

praising himself, if he had not intended him for this purpose? Brutish principles would have been sufficient to have fitted him for brutish practices. If God had made him to eat, and drink, and sleep, and wallow in the mire of carnal contentments, the soul of a beast might have served his turn. It is impossible that such an intelligent workman should infuse into our flesh angelical spirits in vain, and not appoint us to some honourable work, answerable to the excellency of our natures and beings. Some of the wiser heathen have gathered from the tendency of man's countenance towards heaven, that he is more noble, and born to higher things, than, like a moving carcase, to be buried alive in the earth. Those who, to help the weak eyes of nature, have the spectacles of Scripture, cannot but see more into man's excellency and his end. It is written in such broad letters in the word, that God formed man for this purpose, namely, to shew forth his praise, that he who runs may read it. But alas! alas! what is become of man? Well may God call to him, 'Adam, where art thou?' Man, where art thou? He who, erewhile, like a star, keeping aloft in the firmament of heaven, did glitter and shine most brightly, to the amazement of all his beholders, now declining from that pitch, and falling to the earth, as a comet, doth vanish and disappear. He who was the world's lord, is now its slave and vassal; he who was the master of wisdom, is now sent to school to the very beasts, to learn of them understanding; he who was unspeakably blessed in his love to delight in, and communion with the fountain of his being, is now miserably cursed in his contrariety to, and deviation from, the ocean of his happiness. Ah, this image of heaven is become the vizard of hell! though this princely creature was made to be company for his Maker, to stand as an angel always in his presence, and attend his noble pleasure, yet look how, like a pitiful lackey, he runs sneaking after the drossy world and dreggy flesh as his lords. Though religion were first in God's intention, yet it is last in man's execution. Things without reason honour God in their stations, they obey his will;

creatures without sense do him service, they keep within the bounds which he hath set them, and fulfil those ends for which he made them. 'Mine hand hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens; when I call to them, they stand up together,' Isa. 48:13. Nay, these inanimate creatures are so compliant with his pleasure, that they will thwart their own nature to serve his honour. Fire will descend, (as on Sodom,) and water, though a fluid body, stand up like a solid wall, (as in the Red Sea,) if he do but speak the word. But man, who is most indebted to his Creator, degenerateth most of all; when his inferiors, (beasts,) and his superiors, (angels,) are loyal servants, he proves a rebellious subject.

They who ever had any real sense of the worth of immortal souls, and any serious consideration of the weight of their unchangeable estates in the other world, cannot but be affected with the madness of multitudes, who turn their backs upon the blessed God, their greatest and only friend, as if he were their greatest and only foe. They who have tasted God to be gracious, and know what fellowship with Jesus Christ meaneth, who have rejoiced in their present gracious privileges, and hope of their future glorious possession, cannot but wonder and pity at that folly which many are guilty of, in disesteeming the noble concernments of their precious souls, and distasting that honourable preferment, and comfortable employment, of walking with the blessed God. How greedily do men grasp the smoke of earthly vanities, which will wring tears from their eyes, and then vanish into nothing!

Who can sufficiently bemoan it, that man, who is capable of and created for so high an honour, and so heavenly an exercise, as to serve his Maker here, and to enjoy him hereafter, should all his time, like a hog, be digging and rooting in the earth, and not once look up

to heaven in earnest, till the knife is put to his throat, that he cometh to die and enter into the other world?

What a deal of pains doth the spider take in weaving her web to catch flies! she runneth much, and often up and down, hither and thither; she spendeth herself, wearing out and wasting her own bowels to make a curious cabinet, which, when she hath finished and hung aloft, in the twinkling of an eye, with the sweep of a besom, is thrown to the ground, and herself destroyed in it. Thus silly are many men; how do they cark and care, toil and moil for this world, which they must leave for ever! they waste their time and strength to increase their heaps, when on a sudden all perisheth, and themselves often with it.

Reader, if thou art one of these moles, who live in the earth as their element, carking and caring chiefly how to exalt self and please the flesh, answer God these four questions, which from him I shall propound to thee. I shall allow thee to be thy own judge; only I request thee, for the sake of thy precious soul, to ponder them with all seriousness; possibly through the blessing of God they may make thee wise to salvation.

Quest. 1. Art thou convinced that the true and living God made thee a rational creature, and hath served thee in all thy days with innumerable mercies, upon a nobler design, and for a higher end, than the gratifying thy flesh and sensitive appetite, and following thy particular calling, and minding sublunary vanities? Friend, what sayest thou? Do not muzzle the mouth of conscience, but give it leave to speak its mind freely. Art not thou satisfied fully in this weighty truth, that the mighty possessor of heaven and earth created thee, and preserveth thee, to worship, honour, and enjoy himself? If thou art convinced, as it is impossible but thou shouldst, unless thou art a

beast in the shape of a man, why then doth thy life every day give thy conscience the lie? Dost thou not live without God? Is not religion thy burden and thy bondage? Hath not the world the top and cream of thy heart, and time, and strength? How often dost thou put God off with the world's scraps and leavings? How little is God in all thy thoughts! Is he not forbidden thy heart? Nay, dost thou not daily proclaim open war against him by thy profaneness and atheism, as if he had not the least right to thee, nor thou the least dependence on him, and all this against the convictions of thine own conscience? Friend, dost thou know what thou dost? Why, thou puttest thy finger into the very eye of nature. The eye of the body is a tender part, but how tender is the eye of thy soul! yet thou art all this while endeavouring to put out the eye of thy very soul. Believe it, sins against nature are of a crimson colour; for thy conversation to contradict continually thy very conscience, will bring upon thee dreadful vengeance.

Quest. 2. Answer me again, Is not the blessed God worthy of all thy service and honour? Doth he not deserve all thy love, and fear, and trust—all thy time, and strength, and wealth, and infinitely more? From whom came they but from him; and to whom should they be given but to him? Art thou not bound to him by millions of engagements? Art thou not the work of his hands? Dost thou not lie at his mercy every moment? Canst thou live, or move, or breathe without him? Can he not as easily sink thee with fury, as support thee with mercy, turn thee into hell, as warn thee of hell? Oh think of that place, 'The God in whose hands is thy breath, thou hast not glorified,' Dan. 5:23. Alas! alas! man, though thou makest no reckoning of pleasing God, but banishest him thy heart and house, as if his company were a burden, yet know that thy breath is in his hands continually; if he do but shut his hand, thine eyes will be no longer open, but thy mouth quickly stopped with earth. Ah, how soon

can he take away that airy difference between sleep and death! He can wink thee into the other world, and look thee into the unquenchable lake: 'By the breath of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils they are consumed,' Job 4:8. If thou dependedst altogether upon another man for thy livelihood, thou wouldst think he deserved thy service, and that it concerned thee to please him. Oh how highly doth it concern thee to worship and honour the almighty God, in whose hand is thy livelihood, life, and everlasting weal or woe! Ah, didst thou but know what perfections are in him, and how indispensably thy dependence is every minute upon him, thou wouldst wonder at thy folly and madness in slighting him, and make it thy principal business to glorify and enjoy him.

Quest. 3. In the next place, tell me, Is not thy conscience convinced that God is in all respects the best master, his worship the best work, and his pay the best reward? Hast thou not knocked many time at the creature's door, entered in, sat down, and fed on such fare as it had to set before thee, and, after all, gone away as empty and unsatisfied as thou camest? Hast thou not found by experience that the creature keepeth a poor, pitiful house? that they who run to it with heads full of hopes, return back with hearts full of heaviness? and shall no learning teach thee? Man, man, where is thy reason? Hast thou no eyes to behold the rottenness of the world's ware, because it is glazed over with gaudy dyeings? Shall the sweet breath of this alluring panther still bewitch thee, notwithstanding all his deformity and ugliness, vanity and emptiness, so as to get thee within his power and destroy thee? Dost thou not see hundreds before thine eyes, of the world's chief favourites, whom she dandled on her knees, and was very fond of, hurried in haste into the other world, leaving all her gifts behind them, and not a button the better for all her fondness and fooleries? Didst thou never observe how she leaveth her lovers in the lurch, and, like a false, deceitful friend,



forsakes them wholly in the time of their greatest extremity? 'Man walketh in a vain show; he disquieteth himself in vain.' 'He returneth to his earth, and in that day his thoughts perish,' Ps. 39:8, and 146. As he that goeth to a fair, with a purse full of money, is devising and debating with himself how to lay it out—possibly thinking that such and such commodities will be most profitable, and bring him in the greatest gain—when on a sudden a cut-purse comes and easeth him both of his money and care how to dispose of it. Surely thou mightst have taken notice how some of thy neighbours or countrymen, when they have been busy in their contrivances, and big with many plots and projects how to raise their estate and names and families, were arrested by death in a moment, returned to their earth, and in that day all their gay, their great thoughts perished and came to nothing. The heathen historian could not but observe how Alexander the Great, when he had to carry on his great designs, summoned a parliament before him of the whole world, he was himself summoned by death to appear in the other world. The Dutch, therefore, very wittily to express the world's vanity, picture at Amsterdam a man with a full-blown bladder on his shoulders, and another standing by pricking the bladder with a pin, with this motto, QUAM SUBITO, How soon is all blown down!

Reader, it is impossible, if thou usest thy rational faculty, but thou shouldst be convinced of the truth of these things: 'Why then dost thou spend thy strength for that which is not bread, and thy labour for that which will not satisfy?' Oh that I could invite and persuade thee to the most gainful trade! 'Hearken unto me, and eat that which is good, and let thy soul delight itself in fatness.' If religion were thy business, God would not serve thee as the world doth its servants: God is such a master, that ten thousand worlds to him are as nothing, yea, 'less than nothing and vanity.' He is a master without exceptions, because he is an ocean of all (and nothing but) infinite

perfections. His worship must needs be the best work, because it is itself a reward. Thou canst not deny but the work of saints and angels in heaven is the best work by a thousand degrees that creatures are capable of, or can possibly be exercised in; truly their work and reward is the same, to worship and enjoy the blessed God. They who make religion their business have a taste beforehand of their future blessedness. Religion also bringeth in the greatest profit. The world payeth her servants in ciphers and counters, airy honours, a brutish pleasure, and fading riches, which are worth nothing; but religion here in figures and pearls, which are worth thousands, the precious blood of Christ, the inestimable covenant of grace, and eternal immediate communion with the infinite God. Reader, if profit be the bait at which thou wilt bite, I will tell thee in a few words how much religion will be worth to thee: Truly, two worlds—not a farthing less. 'Exercise thyself unto godliness:' godliness 'hath the promise of this life, and that which is to come,' 1 Tim. 4:7, 8. Ah, who would not work for thee, O King of nations, when in doing of thy commands there is such great reward! Friend, who would not cast his net into the waters of the sanctuary, when he may be confident of such an excellent draught?

Quest. 4. Once more: If none of these things move thee, I shall ask thee one question more, and then leave thee to thy choice—What wilt thou do in a dying hour? I say again, reader, if religion be not thy business now, what wilt thou do when thou comest to die? Now possibly thou bearest thyself up with the streams of carnal comforts; but what will become of thee when all these waters shall be dried up, and nothing of them seen but the mud of those sins which thou hast been guilty of in the use, or rather abuse, of them? Now thou canst do well enough, thou thinkest, without God and his worship; but ah! what wilt thou do when thou comest to look into the other world? Alas! then thy brightest sun of bodily delights will be clouded, thy

freshest flowers will be withered, and thy greatest candles extinguished, and leave only a stink behind them. Believe it, death will search thee to the quick, and try to purpose what metal thou art made of. When thou comest to lie upon thy sick-bed, and thy wealth, and honours, and relations, and flesh, and heart shall fail thee, what will become of thee, if God be not the strength of thy heart and thy portion for ever? What will he do to look death in the face, upon whom the jealous God shall frown? We read in Epiphanius of a bird called Charadrius, that being brought into the room where one lieth sick, if he look on the sick person with a fixed eye he recovereth; but if he turn away his eyes from him he dieth. Friend, what a miserable condition will thy poor soul be in when all thy friends and riches shall leave thee, and the blessed God himself shall not vouchsafe thee a good look, but turn away his face from thee? Surely thy disease will be unto death eternal. Thy friends may carry thy body to its grave for a time, but frightful devils will carry thy soul to hell, to remain there for ever and ever. Religion, indeed, is like the stone Chrysolapis, which will shine brightest in the dark of death. The truly religions may launch into the ocean of eternity, and sail to their everlasting harbour, as the Alexandrian ship came into the Roman haven, with top and top-gallant, with true comfort and undaunted courage: let death come when it will, he can bid it welcome. Death is never sudden to a saint; no guest comes unawares to him who keepeth a constant table; but as when the day dawns to us in Europe the shadows of the evening are stretched on Asia, so the day of their redemption will be a long night of destruction to thee. That jailer who knocketh off their fetters, and setteth them at that perfect liberty, will bind thee in chains of darkness, and haul thee to the dungeon of horror, whence thou shalt never come forth.

O reader, these are no jesting matters. I am confident, as lightly now as thou thinkest of a religious man—as if he were only some singular

and affected person—it may be thou canst hardly look on him but with a squint eye, or speak of him but with a jeer; yet when thou comest to die, thou wouldst give a thousand worlds, if thou hadst them to give, for the least drop of his holiness or the least crumb of his happiness. Ponder these four forementioned particulars, and thou canst not but think them weighty questions. Do not, oh do not dally or jest with them; for be confident thou wilt find them one day to be edged tools.

Possibly, reader, thou art one of them that hast heard these sermons preached, and belongest to that parish where providence hath cast me; and then as I have a special relation to thee, I must beg of thee, as upon my bended knees, for the Lord's sake, and as thou wouldst not have them brought in against thee at the dreadful day of judgment, that thou put the will of the Lord, discovered therein, immediately into practice. 'My heart's desire and prayer to God for thee is, that thou mightst be saved.' Oh that I knew what to do for thee which might be effectual for that end! If thou wilt believe the blessed God, the way to the happiness in heaven is to exercise thyself to godliness on earth; there is no going into life but through the strait gate. The devil putteth old men's spectacles on young and old men's eyes, which cause them to think that the way to heaven is broad and large; when God himself hath told us that it is narrow, and few go in it. I have acquainted thee in this treatise what is the price—not natural, but pactional—of salvation; there must be striving, labouring, fighting, using violence, a working it out with fear and trembling, and God is resolved he will not abate the least mite. Oh that I could therefore prevail with thee to set upon it in good earnest! I do not plead with thee for myself, but for thine own profit, that thou mayest be happy for ever; and shall I lose my labour? Neighbour, surely thou believest that these things are not toys and trifles, but matters of infinite concernment; and wilt thou slight

them? Alas! to be frying in hell, or living in heaven for ever, are of greater consequence than thy understanding can possibly conceive. The weight of these things hath so overburdened several persons' minds that it hath made them distracted and mad; and canst thou trample them as dirt under thy feet, without any regard at all?

Because I would willingly be both faithful and helpful to thee, I shall earnestly, in the name of the blessed God, beseech thee, as thou wouldst leave these dying comforts with a lively courage, to mind and practise these two particulars, without which thou canst never make religion thy business.

Make sure that thy heart be thoroughly changed. That building which reacheth up to heaven must have a strong and sure foundation. If the watch be not of the right make, it will never go true. He must 'live in the Spirit' who would 'walk in the Spirit.' Natural bodies follow the tendency of that body which is predominant in them. Stones move downward, fire upward; each would be at its centre; that which stoppeth either, offereth violence to it. So it will be with thee; thy life will be according to the tendency of thy heart. If that be carnal, and the flesh predominant, such will thy life be; if that be changed, and the Spirit be predominant in it, thy life will be spiritual also; if the law of God be written in thy affections, then, and not till then, it will be legible in thy conversation. Oh, do not rest in civility, morality, performances, privileges, or anything short of renewing grace. It is the heart by generation chiefly polluted, and it is the heart by regeneration which must be purified, or thou perishest eternally. When an error is in the foundation of a house, it will not be mended by daubing or rough-cast, but must be pulled down and built up anew: 'If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, and all things are become new,' 2 Cor. 5:17.

Oh friend, consider that by the irrevocable decree and sentence of the living God, none shall be saved but those that are converted and renewed; and for the sake of thy precious soul, give thyself no rest till this change be wrought. I assure thee it concerneth thee, for thine everlasting life or death dependeth upon it, John 3:3; Mat. 18:3; Heb. 12:14.

Be much with God in religious duties. Secret praying, reading, and meditating, are great helps to piety. The bottom of a Christian's building is underground, and out of the world's sight. The greatest part of that trade which a saint drives with God is unseen, and his returns are unknown to the world. Christ giveth his sweetest kisses and dearest embraces to his spouse when she is alone. Jacob met with the blessing when he had parted with his company, and wrestled singly with the angel of the covenant. Bread eaten in secret, how sweet is it! When God meeteth thy soul in a morning or evening prayer, communion with his Majesty will be sweet to thee indeed.

Take heed of omission of duties in the closet. The Amalekite had not eaten in three days, who was nigh death. It is observed that the places under the line are not so hot as some places at a further distance, because, though they have the beams of the sun falling perpendicularly to cause a more intense heat, yet the nights there being longer than in some other parts, the days are not so hot. When the nights are long, the days are very cold; when there are long omissions of duties, godliness will cool. Ah, didst thou but know what many a saint hath gained by that hidden calling, I am confident thou wouldst mind it, whatever thou didst omit. Remember how often and earnestly I have urged thee to this duty. It is thy privilege, that though thou canst not every day have the showers of public ordinances, yet mayest thou have the watering-pots of secret duties to make thy soul fruitful. Let no day pass without thy morning and

evening sacrifices. Fasting is bad for some bodies; I am sure to fast from spiritual food is exceeding injurious to thy soul.

He that runneth into enormities (as a drunkard, or swearer, or adulterer, &c.) he stabbeth his soul; he that omitteth daily duties, he starveth his soul. Now, what great difference is there between the death of the soul by stabbing and by starving? If thy soul die eternally, it will be little comfort to thee to plead that thou didst not drink, or swear, as others. Oh friend, let no day pass without secret duties; if thou risest in a morning, and followest thy calling all day, and liest down at night, and never desirest God's company, or askest his blessing, I would know wherein thou dost God more service than the ox or ass? For shame, friend, do not thus play the beast any longer.

I have in this treatise endeavoured to assist thee by discovering the nature and necessity of making religion thy business. I cannot but think that the reasons which I have laid down for this duty will move any man who is not resolved to make himself eternally miserable. It is no mean mercy that thou mayest adopt all thy natural and civil actions into the family of religion; that though, like ciphers, they signify nothing of themselves, yet having the figure of godliness put before them, they may signify much, and stand for thousands.

I shall, reader, only acquaint thee with some particulars which I treat of in the book, and then leave thee and it to the blessing of God. I am very large in directing thee about the immediate worship of the Lord, as knowing that is of greatest weight and worth. No preparation can be too great for, no devotion can be too gracious in, religious actions. Amongst many other rites and ceremonies of the Jews, it is related that before the doors of their synagogues they have an iron plate, against which they wipe and make clean their shoes before they

enter, and that being entered, they sit solemnly for a season, not once opening their mouths, but considering with whom they have to do. Truly, friend, it concerneth thee to be full of reverence when thou appearest solemnly in God's presence. Think of it; he is a jealous God, and will not be mocked; they that dally with him undo themselves. Serious piety will abundantly profit thee, but careless service will highly provoke God. Spiders' cobwebs may better be suffered in a cottage than in a king's palace.

In the next place, I proceed to natural actions, and then to recreations, about both which thy care must be that they exceed not their bounds, and that they taste and savour of religion. Mandrakes, if duly taken, is good physic; but if immoderately, it casts into a deep sleep and congeals the spirits. It requireth much piety and prudence, not to abuse those things whilst thou art using them. Satan catcheth many a soul with these baits, and then throweth them into the fire. But if religion be thy business, that which is poison to others will be nourishing food to thee.

After these I speak to particular callings, that they might be managed so as not to be hurtful, but helpful, to our general callings. I conclude the book with government of families, wherein thou must learn that thy house must be dedicated to God. Religion in thy house must of necessity be minded, or the whole family is cursed. The naturalists observe of the eagle, that building her nest on high, she is much maligned by a venomous serpent called parias, which, because it cannot reach to the nest, maketh to the windward, and breathes out its poison, that so the air being infected, the eagle's young may be destroyed; but by way of prevention, the eagle, by a natural instinct, keepeth a kind of agate stone in her nest, which, being placed against the wind, preserveth her young. Satan, the crooked serpent, is ever busy to poison the air in thine house, and thereby to destroy thyself,



servants, and whole household. The only stone for prevention is to set up religion. Neighbour, I have many a time pressed this duty upon thee, and I do again in the name of the blessed God charge thee, as thou wilt answer it at the bar of Christ, that thou immediately set up the worship of God in thy family. Thou knowest how many sermons I preached from Joshua 24:15 on this subject, all which ere long thou shalt give an account of; how inexcusable wilt thou be if, after all those warnings, thy family be found in the number of them that call not on God! Good Lord, how dreadful will it be for thee to sink into hell, with thy whole house on thy back!

And now, reader, whoever thou art, out of affection to thy precious soul and eternal salvation, let me prevail with thee not to use religion as men do perfumes, refresh themselves with them whilst they have them, but they can well enough be without them, but to make it thy chief, and main, and principal business. What shall I say to thee? Assure thyself religion will be thy best friend at last. Oh, if thou hadst but the same apprehensions of it now which thou wilt have on a dying bed and day of judgment, thou wouldst make it thine own business; then religion will be religion indeed, and of infinitely more worth to thee than millions of worlds. All other things will then, like leaves in autumn, fall from thee; but though all thy most loving friends will part with thee, religion will walk with thee in the valley of the shadow of death; it will direct and refresh thee in the pleasant waters of life, and it will protect and comfort thee in those salt waters of sickness, and when thou passest the mare mortuum, the sea of death; when the world in thy extremity will serve thee as the herd do a deer that is shot, push thee out of their company. When thy wife and children will, like Orpah to Naomi, kiss thee, and take their leave of thee, religion will, like Ruth, stick close to thee; where thou goest, it will go; where thou lodgest, it will lodge; death itself shall not part thee and it.

As the noble Grecian answered Philip, when he asked him whether he was not afraid to die? No, saith he, for the Athenians will give me a life that is immortal. Thou shouldst not need to fear death, for religion will give thee a life that is immortal. As the old grave counsellors told Rehoboam, 'Be thou a servant to this people this day, and they will be thy servant for ever;' so say I to thee, Be thou but a faithful servant to religion in this short day of thy life, and religion will be thy servant to all eternity.

If thou art resolved to give thyself up to the service of this noble mistress, possibly this treatise may do thee some little service, by acquainting thee with her will, and directing thee in her work.

If, in the perusal of it, thou receive any profit, let God alone have the praise, and remember him in thy prayers who is

Thine in the Lord,

GEORGE SWINNOCK.

But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself unto godliness. Exercise thyself unto godliness.—1 TIM. 4:7.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **The preface and coherence of the text**

THE unclean spring of ungodliness divideth itself, like the third African gulf, into two main cursed channels, atheism and

superstition; in one of which all the children of men swim by nature, and very many, as the silly fish, down the streams of Jordan, till they descend into the lake of Sodom, the dead sea of hell, and perish. Which of these two passages are most fatal and perilous, seems worth our inquiry. The waters in the former stream are deepest; atheism denieth the very being of God, but to prevent sinking in these waters, nature herself hath provided some skin-deep bladders; for though there be many atheists in practice, yet there be no atheists in principles. The being of a deity was so fairly written on the tables of man's heart at first, that though it be exceedingly blotted and blurred by the fall, yet it is still legible. Those heathen, as Caligula and others, who endeavoured to extinguish that candle of the Lord, which shewed them a first cause, or being of beings, could never accomplish it. It is a part of that law which is written in all men's hearts, Rom. 2:15. The orator could say, That no nation was so barbarous as to deny the being of God. Tullus Hostilius,<sup>3</sup> third king of the Romans, who derided his predecessor Numa's sacrifices, saying, that religion did but effeminate men's minds, did himself, as Lactantius in Instit. observes, worship the god Fear. Idolatry is a clear proof that all men believe a deity, otherwise they would never worship, not only the sun, as the Masagetes; but dead men, as the Grecians; whom their governors would appoint, as the Romans; cats, dogs, and horses, as the Egyptians; and anything rather than nothing. Though there be, saith a learned author, nations without kings, without laws, without clothes, yet there are none without a god. When man fell, this truth stood.

The waters in the latter stream are not so deep, but they seem more dangerous; for nature is in some respect a friend to superstition, though an enemy to atheism; it would give God some worship, but it must be in its own way. Atheism denieth the being of a deity; superstition undermineth the authority of God. The atheist would

have no God, the superstitious would be his own God; his will, not God's word, is the rule of his worship. In this gulf hath many a soul been swallowed up. The atheist turneth to the left hand, the superstitious to the right hand, but he must turn to neither that will keep his feet from evil, Prov. 4 ult.

The text presenteth us with a caution against the poison of superstition, and propoundeth to us the golden medium between the two extremes: 'Avoid or refuse old wives' fables, and exercise thyself unto godliness.'

The scope of the apostle in this epistle is to furnish Timothy with necessary directions for, and to fortify him against the opposition he should meet with in the work of the ministry.

In this chapter Paul doth prophetically forewarn Timothy of, and practically forearm him against, the apostasy of the latter times.

In it, first, The malady is described; and, second, The remedy is prescribed.

First, The apostasy is described. 1. By the sure detection of it. 'The Spirit speaketh expressly.' Had it been doubtful, it need not have been so dreadful; but it is certain, and therefore calls for the more caution.

2. By the season of it, 'In the latter times.' When the world groweth old, it will doat and decline; when it comes to the bottom, it will run dregs. Its last days, which should be best, will be its worst days.

3. By the causes procuring it, 'Seducing spirits, and doctrine of devils;' Satan and his emissaries will, like Samson's foxes, carry firebrands abroad to set the world in a hellish flame.

Secondly, The remedy is prescribed, in reference to himself.

Something he must forbear, 'Refuse profane and old wives' fables.' If thou wouldst not swim down with the tide of those apostatising times, take heed of steering thy course by profane, though ancient customs. Refuse them with scorn, reject them with anger; let thy spirit rise, and thy stomach turn at the very sight of such sins. One way to prevent apostasy is to refuse ungrounded antiquity. The will of the Father of spirits, not the ways of the fathers of our flesh, is to be the rule of our walking. It is well observed that God in no command but the second, which forbids his worship in any way not appointed by his word, threateneth to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, because superstitious worshippers are of all men most strengthened by the traditions of their fathers. They will tell us, Shall we be wiser than our fathers? Now, because they are resolved to sin with their fathers, God is resolved they shall suffer for their fathers. They that will follow their forefathers in sin, for aught I know must follow their forefathers to hell. If Timothy would not share in others' declensions, he must forbear others' traditions, 'Refuse profane and old wives' fables.'

Something he must also follow after; 'Exercise thyself unto godliness.' This is the special help which the skilful physician appointeth his beloved patient in those infectious times to preserve his soul in health. As a pestiferous air is very dangerous to the body, yet for a man to get, and make it his work to keep a sound constitution will be an excellent means to prevent infection. So an apostatising place or people is very dangerous to the soul; spiritual diseases are more catching and killing than corporal; but a spiritual habit of a real sanctity, with a constant care to continue and increase it, will be a sovereign means to preserve it in safety. Bodies without life quickly corrupt and become unsavoury, not so living creatures;

running waters are sweet and clean, when standing ponds putrify and abound in vermin. He that is ever trading and thriving in godliness, need not fear that he shall prove a bankrupt. Carts overthrow not going up hill.

Timothy is considerable in his twofold capacity.

1. As a minister of Christ, or in his particular calling; in this respect he must exercise himself to godliness. A pastor must not only some days give precepts, but every day give a pattern to his people, he must not only ὀρθοποδεῖν, but also ὀρθοπογεῖν, not only divide the word rightly, but also order his conversation aright. He must, as Nazianzen said of Basil, thunder in his doctrine, and lighten in his life. Singular holiness is required of those that minister about holy things; as painters, they must teach by their hands, by their lives, as well as by their lips.

Ministers must exercise themselves to godliness—that is, do their duties with the greatest diligence. They are sometimes called 'the salt of the earth,' Mat. 5:13, 14, because they must waste themselves to prevent corruption in others. Sometimes 'the light of the world;' they must consume themselves, to direct others in the way to heaven. Gregory observeth, that the Spirit of God appeared in two shapes—in the shape of a dove, signifying innocency; in the shape of fire, signifying activity. The zeal of God's house, not the rust of idleness, must eat the minister up; he must be a burning shining light, if ever he would thaw the frozen hearts of his hearers.<sup>3</sup> Our churches must not be turned into chapels of ease. Christ neglected his food, spent his strength, wrought so hard that he was thought to be beside himself. We are called fishers, labourers, soldiers, watchmen, all which are laborious callings. We are compared to clouds; the clods of

the earth lie still, but the clouds of heaven are ever in motion, and dissolve themselves to refresh others.

But, alas! how many fleece their flocks, but never feed them, as if their benefices were sinecures. The green sickness is the maid's, and laziness many ministers' disease. Who is instant in season and out of season? It was a notable speech of Boniface the martyr, to one that asked him whether it was lawful to give the sacramental wine in a wooden cup: Time was when we had wooden cups and golden priests, but now we have golden cups and wooden priests.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **The opening of the text and the doctrine**

2. Timothy is to be considered as a member of Christ, or in his general calling; and so this exhortation belongs to every Christian.

In it we may observe these three parts:

1. The act, exercise.
2. The subject of that act, thyself.
3. The object about which it was to be conversant, unto godliness; 'Exercise thyself unto godliness.'

I shall briefly open the terms in the text, and then lay down the doctrinal truth.

Exercise, γυμναζε.] The word signifieth, strip thyself naked; it is a metaphor from runners or wrestlers, who being to contend for the prize, and resolved to put forth all their strength and power, lay aside

their clothes which may hinder them, and then bestir themselves to purpose; as if Paul had said, O Timothy, let godliness be the object of all thy care and cost. Follow thy general calling with the greatest industry; pursue it diligently, do not loiter but labour about it; lay aside what may hinder, lay hold of what may further, and mind it as the main and principal work which thou hast to do in this world.

Thyself, σεαυτόν.] A Christian's first care must be about his own spiritual welfare. Religion commands us to be mindful of and helpful to our neighbours and relations; the sun rayeth out his refreshing beams, and the spring bubbleth up her purling streams for the good of others. Fire in the chimney warmeth the whole room, but it is burning hot on the hearth. Grace in a saint will make him useful to sinners, but chiefly, though not solely, to his own soul. Timothy, be not like a burning-glass, to put others into a flame, whilst thou thyself remainest unfired, but work hard to exalt holiness in thine own heart; exercise thyself.

Unto godliness, πρὸς εὐσέβειαν.] Godliness is taken in Scripture either strictly or largely.

(1.) Strictly, and then it includeth only the immediate worship of God, or obedience to the first table, and it is distinguished from righteousness, Tit. 2:11, 12; so ungodliness is distinct from unrighteousness, Rom. 1:18.

(2.) Largely, and then it comprehendeth our duty to our neighbour, as well as to God, and obedience to the second as well as the first table; so righteousness is religion, and in our dealings with men we may do our duty to God; it is taken thus 1 Tim. 6:6, and in the text. The good husbandman makes no balks in the field of God's precepts. Timothy must make it his trade to pay God and men their due. He must not, like the pharisees, seem as tender of the first table as of the



apple of his eye, and trample the second as dirt under his feet; they prayed in God's house all day, to prey upon the widow's house at night; nor as some (whom the world call honest men) who will not wrong their neighbours of the least mite, and yet wickedly rob God of many millions; they steal from him both time and love, and trust and bestow them on earthly trifles. The bird that would fly well must use both wings; the waterman, if he would have his boat move rightly, must ply both oars; the Christian, if he would make anything of his heavenly trade, must mind both tables.

The truth that I shall draw from the text is this:

That godliness ought to be minded as every one's main and principal business. 'Exercise thyself unto godliness.'

Religion must be our chief occupation. The great trade that we follow in this world must be the trade of truth.

It is observable that the more noble and singular a being is, the more it is employed in a suitable working. God, who is the highest in perfections, is not only the holiest, but the most constant and diligent in his operations. 'Hitherto my Father worketh, and I work,' John 5:17. His work indeed is without weariness, his labour without the least lassitude, (as they say of heaven, *Cœli motus quies*,) all God's working days are Sabbaths, days of rest; but he is a pure act, and he is every moment infinitely active from and for himself. Angels are next to God in being, and so are next to him in working. They do God the most service, and they do him the best service; they serve God without sin, and they serve him without ceasing; 'He makes his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire,' Heb. 1:7. Spirits are the most active creatures with life, fire is the most active creature without life, a flame is the most operative part of the fire: thus active are angels in working for God. Some by fire understand lightnings,

by spirits winds. As winds and lightnings presently pass through the earth, so angels presently fulfil God's holy will.

Now as he hath given man a more excellent being than the rest of the visible world, so hath he called him to follow after and abound in the most excellent work. God hath appointed contemplation or vision to be man's reward in heaven, to see God as he is, and to know him as he is known of him; but service and action to be his work on earth, to exercise himself to godliness.

Some read that, Job 5:7, thus, 'Man is born to work, as the sparks fly upward.' Indeed it is the decreed lot of all mankind to labour. Adam was called to industry in his state of innocency, Gen. 2:15, and since man's fall his work, which was before his pleasure, is now his punishment; if he eat not his bread in the sweat of his brow or his brains, he steals it. He that, like a bodylouse, lives upon others' sweat, is like Jeremiah's girdle, good for nothing. But the main work which God commandeth and commendeth to the children of men, is to glorify him upon earth, by exercising themselves to godliness. This is God's precept, and this hath been the saints' practice. This is God's precept, 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling,' Phil. 2:12. In which words we have the Christian's end—eternal life, salvation; and the means to attain it—diligent labour, work out your salvation; he had need to labour hard that would attain heaven. Godliness must not be παράργον, his by-business, but τὸ ἔργον, his main business. The Jews have a proverb, (alluding to manna, which was to be gathered the sixth day for the seventh, because on the seventh none fell from heaven,) He that gathereth not food on the Sabbath eve, shall fast on the Sabbath day. Intimating thereby, that none shall reign in heaven but such as have wrought on earth.

This hath been the saints' practice, 'Our conversation is in heaven,' Phil. 3:18. Though our habitations be on earth, yet our πολίτευμα, our negotiation, is in heaven. As a merchant that lives in London drives a great trade in Turkey, or the remotest part of the Indies; so Paul and the saints traded and trafficked afar off in the other world above, even when their abodes were here below. Godliness was their business, Christianity was minded and followed as their principal trade and calling. It is the calling of some to plough, and sow, and reap: the Christian makes and follows it as his calling, to 'plough up the fallow-ground of his heart; to sow in righteousness, that he may reap in mercy,' Hosea 10:12. The trade of others is to buy and sell; the godly man is the wise merchant, trading for goodly pearls, that sells all to buy the field where the pearl of great price is, Mat. 13:43.

For the explication of this truth, that religion or godliness ought to be every one's principal business, I shall speak to these three things:

First, What religion or godliness is.

Secondly, What it is for a man to make religion his business, or to exercise himself to godliness.

Thirdly, Why every Christian must mind godliness as his main business.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **What godliness is**

For the first, What religion is. The derivation of the word will somewhat help to the explication of the thing; the Latin word religio, from which our English word comes, some derive à relegendo,

because men, by serious reading, come to be religious; grace sometimes findeth a passage through the sight into the soul. The eye (as in Austin and Junius) hath affected the heart. Zanchy derives it à religendo, or rather à re-eligendo, from choosing again, or a second time, because a religious person chooseth God for his chiefest good and portion. His first choice was carnal, of the flesh and the creature; but his second choice is spiritual, of God and Christ, and this choice is religion. Austin and Lactantius (to whom I rather incline) derive it à religando, from binding or knitting, because it is the great bond to join and tie God and man together. As the parts of the body are knit to the head by the nerves and sinews, so man is knit to God by religion. Sin and irreligion separate God and man asunder; 'Your iniquities have separated between you and your God' Isa. 59:2. Godliness and religion unite God and man together; 'I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people,' 2 Cor. 6:16. Atheism is a departing or going away from God, Eph. 4:18; Heb. 3:12. Religion is a coming or returning unto God, Heb. 10:22; Jer. 3:1. The great misery of man by his fall is this, he is far from God; and the great felicity of man by favour is this, he draweth nigh to God, Ps. 73:2 ult.; James 4:8. Irreligion is a turning the back upon God, but religion is a seeking the face of God, and a following hard after him, Ps. 2:3, 27:8, and 63:8. By ungodliness, men wander and deviate from God; by godliness, men worship, and are devoted to God, Ps. 119:150 and 38 verses.

The Grecians call it θρησκεία, Beza thinks, from Orpheus, a Thracian, who first taught the mysteries of religion among his countrymen. The word in the text is εὐσέβεια, which in a word signifieth right or straight worship, according to which I shall describe it thus:

Godliness is a worshipping the true God in heart and life, according to his revealed will.

In this description of godliness, I shall observe four parts. First, The act, it is a worship. Secondly, The object of this act, the true God. Thirdly, The extent of this worship, in heart and life. Fourthly, The rule, according to his revealed will.

First, For the act, godliness is a worship. Worship comprehends all that respect which man oweth and giveth to his Maker. It is that service and honour, that fealty and homage, which the creature oweth and tendereth to the fountain of his being and happiness. It is the tribute which we pay to the King of kings, whereby we acknowledge his sovereignty over us, and our dependence on him. 'Give unto the Lord the honour due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,' Ps. 29:2. To worship God is to give him the glory which is due to him. It is a setting the crown of glory on God's head. To render him due honour is true holiness; to deny this, is atheism and irreligion. All that inward reverence and respect, and all that outward obedience and service to God, which the word enjoineth, is included in this one word worship.

This worshipping God is either external or internal. God is to be worshipped with the body. Joshua fell on his face and worshipped, Josh. 5:14. Moses bowed his head and worshipped, Exod. 4:31. Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven and prayed, John 17:1. David lifted up his hands to God, Ps. 63:4. The bodies of saints shall be glorified with God hereafter, and the bodies of saints must glorify God here, Phil. 3:21; Rom. 12:1.

Inward worship is sometimes set forth by loving God, James 2:5; sometimes by trusting him, Ps. 16:1; sometimes by delighting in him, Ps. 37:3; sometimes by sorrow for offending him, Ps. 51:3, because

this worship of God (as one piece of gold containeth many pieces of silver) comprehendeth all of them. All the graces are but so many links of this golden chain. As all the members of the natural body are knit together, and walk always in company, so all the parts of the new man are joined together, and never go but as the Israelites out of Egypt, with their whole train. If there be one wheel missing in a watch, the end of the whole is spoiled. If once grace should be wanting in a saint, he would be unsainted. There is a concatenation of graces, as well as of moral virtues. Those that worship God give him their hottest love, their highest joy, their deepest sorrow, their strongest faith, and their greatest fear; as Abraham gave Isaac, he gives God all.

What Moses calls fearing God, Deut. 6:13, our Saviour quoting, calls worshipping God, (Mat. 4:9, 10,) by a synecdoche, because the former is both a part and a sign of the latter. As when the guard are watching at the court-gate, or on the stairs, and examining those that go in, it is a sign the king is within; so when the fear of God stands at the door of the heart, to examine all that go in, lest the traitor sin should steal in sily, it is a sign that God is within, that he sits upon the throne of the soul, and is worshipped there.

Secondly, The object, the true God. All religion without the knowledge of the true God is a mere notion, an airy, empty nothing. Divine worship is one of the chiefest jewels of God's crown, which he will by no means part with. God alone is the object of the godly man's worship, Exod. 20:2. His hope is in God, Ps. 39:7; his dependence is on God, Ps. 62:8; his dread is of God, Ps. 119:122; his love is to God, Ps. 10:1; God is the only object of his prayers, Ps. 5:3, and 44:20; and of God alone are all his praises, Ps. 103:1; God alone is to be worshipped, because he alone is worthy of worship, 'Thou art worthy,

O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for thou hast created all things,' Rev. 4:11.

To hold anything in opinion, or to have anything in affection for God, which is not God, is idolatry. To worship either men, as the Samaritans did Antiochus Epiphanes, (styling him the mighty god;) or the host of heaven, as the Ammonites; or the devil, as the Indians; or the belly, as the glutton; or riches, as the covetous; or the cross, as the papist; is unholiness.

There is a civil worship due to men, Gen. 48:11, but sacred worship is due only to God; and he is a jealous God, who will not give his glory to strangers, nor his praise to images.

The heathen worshipped several gods—the Assyrians worshipped Belus; the Tyrians, Baal; the Athenians, Diana; the Samians, Juno; the Lemnians, Vulcan; the Moabites, Chemosh; the Syrians, Rimmon; the Ekronites, Baalzebub; the Babylonians, Bel; those infidels, as one observeth well, had their Deos mortuos, idols; mortales, men; mortiferos, lusts: therefore it is considerable that when the apostle speaketh of the Gentiles, during the time of their unregeneracy, whilst they served false gods, he saith, they lived 'without God,' Eph. 2:12. False gods are no gods; 'An idol is nothing,' 1 Cor. 4:8.

Thirdly, The extent, in heart and life. Godliness is the worshipping God in the inward motions of the heart, and the outward actions of the life; where the spring of the affections is clear, and the stream of the conversation runs clear, there is true godliness. The Egyptians, of all fruits, would make choice of the peach to consecrate to their goddess, and they gave this reason for it, because the fruit thereof resembleth a heart, and the leaf a tongue. As they gave heart and tongue to the false god, we must to the true God. Heart-godliness

pleaseth God best, but life-godliness honours him most; the conjunction of both make a complete Christian. In a godly man's heart, though some sin be left, yet no sin is liked; in his life, though sin may remain, yet no sin reigns. His heart is suitable to God's nature, and his life is answerable to God's law, and thence he is fitly denominated a godly man.

In heart, hypocrisy is a practical blasphemy; 'I know the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews and are not.' God's eye taketh most notice of the jewel of spiritual devotion; the eyes of men, of the cabinet of outward adoration. 'My son, give me thy heart,' saith God, Prov. 23:26. The heart is the king in the little world, man; which giveth laws both to the inward powers and outward parts, and reigneth and ruleth over them at pleasure.

The life of godliness lieth much more in the heart than in the life; and the saints' character is from their inward carriage towards God; 'They worship God in the spirit,' Phil. 3:3. A great French pear is called le bon Chretien, the good Christian, because they say it is never rotten at the core; 'God is a spirit, and he will be worshipped in spirit and in truth,' John 4:24. In truth, that is, scripturally; opposite to the inventions of men's heads: in spirit, that is, sincerely; opposite to the dissimulation of men's hearts. The deeper the belly of the lute is, the pleasanter the sound; the deeper our worship comes from the heart, the more delightful it is in God's ears.

And life-godliness, as it sets God on the throne of the conscience, so it walks with God in the conversation. Though the spiritual (as the natural) life begins at the heart, yet it doth not end there, but proceeds to the hands; the same water appeareth in the bucket which is in the well. As when the heart is like a dunghill, full of filth, it sends forth a noisome and unsavoury stench in the life; so when the



heart is like a box of musk, it perfumes and scents the tongue, and eyes, and ears, and hands, and whatsoever is near it, with holiness. Worship is called the name of God, Ps. 29, and worshipping, a praising him, 2 Chron. 7:3. Because as a man by his name, so God by his worship is known in the world; and those that worship him in their practices, do before the eyes of the world give him praise.

Fourthly, The rule, according to his revealed will. Every part of divine worship must have a divine precept. As the first command teacheth us what God is to be worshipped, so the second command teacheth in what way he will be worshipped. The tabernacle and all the instruments thereof, yea, the very snuffers and ash-pans, were to be made exactly according to the pattern in the mount, Exod. 25:40; Heb. 8:5. Typifying that all the exercise of worship used by the church, whether in doctrine or discipline, must be conformed to the written word, Gal. 1:8. Our religion must be not only rational but regular; our worship must be both universal and canonical, καὶ ὅσοι τῷ κανόνι τοῦτω στοιχήσουσιν, Gal. 6:16; 'As many as walk according to this canon, or rule, peace be unto them.' The saints' service must be word-service, λογικὴ λατρεία, Rom. 12:1; so the word is rendered by our translators, 1 Pet. 2:2, λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα, 'the sincere milk of the word,' The institutions of Christ, not the inventions of men, are the rule of worship. Our work is not to make laws for ourselves or others, but to keep the laws which the great prophet of his church hath taught us; that coin of worship which is current amongst us must be stamped by God himself. We are to be governed as the point in the compass, not by the various winds, (the practices of former ages, or the fashions of the present generation, which are mutable and uncertain,) but by the constant heavens. Our devotion must be regulated exactly according to the standard of the word. It is idolatry to worship a false god, or the true God in a false manner.

Men indeed are no sooner plucked out of the pit of atheism, but they presently climb the high places of superstition, delighting to go from one extreme to another. As a gay suit of apparel, so the service of God in a gaudy dress, is most taking with carnal eyes. I have read of a popish lady in Paris, that when she saw a glorious procession to one of their saints, cried out, Oh how fine is our religion beyond that of the Huguenots! they have a mean and beggarly religion, but ours is full of bravery and solemnity.<sup>3</sup> But as heralds say of a coat of arms, if it be full of gays and devices, it speaks a mean descent; so truly that manner of worship which is mingled with men's inventions speaks its descent to be mean—namely, from man. 'To the law and to the testimonies: if they speak not according to this, it is because there is no light in them,' Isa. 8:20.

Such may serve God with more pomp than others, but I am confident they serve him to less profit than others. 'In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men,' Mat. 15:9; their worship is in God's account no worship. They who made temples, altars, and ceremonies of their own heads, thought that they had remembered God, but he tells them plainly that they had forgotten him, Hosea 8:11–14. Men manifest abundance of arrogancy in undertaking to prescribe newer and neater ways of worship than God himself, as if they excelled his Majesty in wisdom; but little do they think how exceedingly by such practices they provoke him to fury. Ezek. 8:3–5 per tot; Ezek. 43:8, 'In their setting of their thresholds by my thresholds, and their posts by my posts, they have even defiled my holy name by the abominations which they have committed; wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger;' so Ezek. 6:9; 2 Chron. 7:20.

## CHAPTER IV

## **What it is for a man to make religion his business, or to exercise himself to godliness**

I proceed to the second particular promised, that is, To shew what it is for a man to exercise himself to godliness. It implieth these three things:

First, To give it the precedency in all our actions. That which a man maketh his business, he will be sure to mind, whatsoever he omits. A good husband will serve his shop before his sports, and will sometimes offer a handsome and warrantable kind of disrespect to his friends, that his calling may have his company; he will have some excuse or other to avoid diversions, and force his way to his trade through all opposition, and all because he makes it his business: he that makes religion his business, carrieth himself towards his general, as this man doth towards his particular, calling. In his whole life he walks with God, and is so mannerly and dutiful, as to give God the upper hand all the way. He knoweth that his God must be worshipped, that his family must be served, and that his calling must be followed, (for religion doth not nullify, only rectify his carriage towards his earthly vocation;) but each in their order,—that which is first in regard of excellency is first in regard of his industry. He is not so unnatural as to serve his cattle before his children, nor so atheistical as to serve his body and the world before his soul and his Saviour. He is so sensible of his infinite engagements to the blessed God, that he allotteth some time every day for his religious duties; and he will be sure to pay God home to the utmost of his ability, whosoever he compounds with, or pays short.

As he sails along through the tempestuous sea of this world towards his eternal haven of rest, he hath many temporal affairs in his company, but he is specially careful that they keep their distance, and strike sail through the whole voyage. If his worldly businesses offer, like Hagar, to jostle or quarrel for pre-eminence with their superior, religion, he will, if possible, chide them into subjection, and cause them to submit; but rather cast them out than suffer them to usurp authority over their mistress.

He that minds religion by the by, will, if other things intervene, put it back, and be glad of an excuse to waive that company, to which he hath no love; nay, he doth in the whole course of his life prefer his swine, as the Gadarenes, before his soul; set the servant on horseback and suffer the master to go on foot. His voice to religion is like the Jews' to the poor man in vile raiment, 'Stand thou there, or sit thou here under my footstool;' and his words to the world are like theirs to the man in goodly apparel, 'Come up hither, or sit thou here in a good place,' James 2:2, 3. He doth, like Jacob, lay the right hand of his care and diligence upon the youngest son, the body, and the left hand upon the first-born, the soul. That which was Esau's curse is esteemed by him as a blessing, that the elder serves the younger: he is so unwise as to esteem lying vanities before real mercies; often so unworthy as to forget God, whosoever he remembereth; and so uncivil at best as to give God the world's leavings, and to let the almighty Creator dance attendance till he pleaseth to be at leisure. If he be in the midst of his devotion, he makes an end upon the smallest occasion; and is like the patriarch, who ran from the altar, when he was about his office, to see a foal new fallen from his beloved mare.

But every saint, like Solomon, first builds a house for God, and then for himself. Whoever be displeased, or whatever be neglected, he will

take care that God be worshipped. Abraham's steward, when sent to provide a wife for Isaac, though meat were set before him, refused to eat till he had done his errand, Gen. 24:33. Godliness is the errand about which man is sent into the world; now, as faithful servants, we must prefer our message before our meat, and serve our master before ourselves.

He that makes godliness his business gives it the first of the day, and the first place all the day. He gives it the first of the day: Jesus Christ was at prayer 'a great while before day,' Mark 1:35. Abraham 'rose up early in the morning to offer sacrifice,' Gen. 22:1; so did Job, chap. 1:5. David crieth out, 'O God, my God, early will I seek thee,' Ps. 63:1. 'In the morning will I direct my prayer to thee, and look up,' Ps. 5:3. The Philistines in the morning early offered to their god Dagon. The Persian magi worshipped the rising sun with their early hymns. The saint in the morning waits upon heaven's Majesty. As soon as he awakes he is with God; one of his first works, when he riseth, is to ask his heavenly Father's blessing. Like the lark, he is up early, singing sweetly the praise of his Maker; and often, with the nightingale, late up, at the same pleasant tune.

He finds the morning a greater friend to the Graces than it can be to the Muses. Naturalists tell us that the most orient pearls are generated of the morning dew. Sure I am, he hath sweet communion with God in morning duties.

Reader, let me tell thee, if religion be thine occupation, thy business, God will hear from thee in the morning; one of the first things after thou art up will be to fall down and worship him. Thy mind will be most free in the morning, and thine affections most lively, (as those strong waters are fullest of spirits which are first drawn;) and surely

thou canst not think but that God, who is the best and chiefest good, hath most right to them, and is most worthy of them.

As a godly man gives religion the precedency of the day, so he gives it the precedency in the day. The Jews, some say, divide their day into prayer, labour, and repast, and they will not omit prayer either for their meat or labour. Grace (as well as nature) teacheth a godly man not to neglect either his family or body; but it teacheth him also to prefer his soul and his God before them both. Seneca, though a heathen, could say, I am greater, and born to greater things, than to be a drudge to, and the slave of, my body. A Christian's character is, that he is not carnal, or for his body, but spiritual, or for his soul, Rom. 8. It was a great praise which Ambrose speaks of Valentinian, Never man was a better servant to his master, than Valentinian's body was to his soul.

This is the godly man's duty, to make heaven his throne, and the earth his footstool. It is the exposition which one gives upon those words, 'Subdue the earth,' Gen. 1:28, that is, thy body, and all earthly things, to thy soul. Our earthly callings must give way to our heavenly; we must say to them, as Christ to his disciples, 'Tarry you here, while I go and pray yonder.' And truly godliness must be first in our prayers—'Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,' before 'Give us this day our daily bread;' and first in all our practices—'Seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, and all other things shall be added to you,' Mat. 6:33.

Secondly, To make religion one's business, containeth to pursue it with industry in our conversations. A man that makes his calling his business is not lazy, but laborious about it; what pains will he take! what strength will he spend! how will he toil and moil at it early and late! The tradesman, the husbandman, eat not the bread of idleness,

when they make their callings their business; if they be good husbands, they are both provident to observe their seasons, and diligent to improve them for their advantage; they do often even dip their food in their sweat, and make it thereby the more sweet. Their industry appears in working hard in their callings, and in improving all opportunities for the furtherance of their callings.

1. Thus he that makes religion his business is industrious and laborious in the work of the Lord. The heart of his ground, the strength of his inward man, is spent about the good corn of religion, not about the weeds of earthly occasions. He makes haste to keep God's commandments, knowing that the lingering, lazy snail is reckoned among unclean creatures, Lev. 11:30; and he is hot and lively in his devotion, knowing that a dull, drowsy ass (though fit enough to carry the image of Isis, yet) was no fit sacrifice for the pure and active God, Exod. 13:13. He giveth God the top, the chief, the cream of all his affections, as seeing him infinitely worthy of all acceptance; he is 'not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit,' when he is 'serving the Lord,' Rom. 12:11. He believeth that to fear God with a secondary fear is atheism; that to trust God with a secondary trust is treason; that to honour God with a secondary honour is idolatry; and to love God with a secondary love is adultery; therefore he loveth (and he feareth and trusteth and honoureth) 'the Lord his God, with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his strength,' Mat. 22:36, 37. His love to God 'is a labour of love, as strong as death; the coals thereof are coals of juniper,' which do not only burn long, (some say twelve months together,) but burn with the greatest heat. His measure of loving God is without measure.

The Samseans in Epiphanius were neither Jews, Gentiles, nor Christians, yet preserved a fair correspondency with all: a hypocrite is indifferent to any, never fervent in the true religion.

It is reported of Redwald, king of the east Saxons, the first prince of this nation that was baptized, that in the same church he had one altar for the Christian religion, another for the heathenish sacrifices. The true believer doth otherwise; he that makes religion his work, gives God the whole of his heart, without halting and. without halving.

Set him about any duty, and he is diligent in it. In prayer, he laboureth in prayer, Col. 4:12; he crieth to God, 1 Sam. 7:9; he crieth mightily, Jonah 3:8; he poureth forth his soul, Lam. 2:19; he strives in supplication with God, Rom. 15:30; stirs up himself to lay hold on God, Isa. 27:5; and even wrestleth with omnipotency, Gen. 32:14. When the mill of his prayer is going, his fervent affections are the waters that drive it. There is fire taken from God's own altar, (not the ordinary hearth of nature,) and put to his incense, whereby it becomes fragrant and grateful to God himself. His fervent prayer is his key to God's treasury, and his endeavour is, that it rust not for want of use. When he goeth to the sacrament, he is all in a flame of affection to the author of that feast; with desire he desires to eat of the passover. He longs exceedingly for the time, he loves the table; but when he seeth the bread and wine, the waggons which the Lord Jesus hath sent for him, oh how his heart revives! When he seeth the sacraments, the body and blood of Christ in the elements, who can tell how soon he scents! how fast this true eagle flieth to the heavenly carcase.

At hearing he is heedful; he flieth to the salt-stone of the word with swiftness and care, as doves to their columbaries, Isa. 60:8. As the new-born babe, he desires the sincere milk of the word; and when he is attending on it, he doth not dally nor trifle, but as the bee the flower, and the child the breast, suck with all his might for some spiritual milk, Isa. 66:11; Deut. 28:1; he hearkeneth diligently to the



voice of the Lord his God; let him be in company, taking notice of some abominable carriage, he will rebuke cuttingly, Tit. 1:13. If he gives his bitter pill in sweet syrup, you may see his exceeding anger against sin, whilst you behold his love to the sinner; he is, though a meek lamb when himself, yet a lion when God, is dishonoured; his anger waxeth hot when men affront the Most High, Exod. 32:19. If he be counselling his child or friend to mind God and godliness, how hard doth he woo to win the soul to Christ! how many baits doth he lay to catch the poor creature! you may perceive his bowels working by his very words: how fervent, how instant, how urgent, how earnest is he to persuade his relation or acquaintance to be happy! He 'provokes them to love, and to good works.'

Set him about what religious exercise you will, and he is, according to the apostle's words, 'zealous' (or fiery fervent) 'of good works;' like spring water, he hath a living principle, and thence is warm in winter, or, like Debris in Cyrene, is seething hot. As Augustus said of the young Roman, Quicquid vult, valde vult; whatsoever he goeth about that concerns the glory of his Saviour, and the good of his soul, he doth it to purpose. As Paul saith of himself, 'I follow after, if that I may apprehend,' Phil. 3:10. The word in the original is emphatical, διώκω, I prosecute it with all my strength and power, that I may attain if it be possible. The word is either an allusion to persecutors, Mat. 5:10–12, for it is used of them frequently; so Piscator takes it. Or to hunters, according to Aretius; take either, and the sense is the same, and very full. As persecutors are industrious and incessant in searching up and down for poor Christians, and hauling them to prison; and as huntsmen are up betimes at their sport, follow it all day, and spare for no pains, even sweating and tiring themselves at this their pleasure; so eager and earnest, so indefatigable and industrious was Paul, and so ought every one of us to be (the

command is delivered to us, in the same word, Heb. 12:14) about godliness.

A man that minds godliness only by the by, looks sometimes to the matter, seldom to the manner, of his performances. Opus operatum, the work done is a full discharge for him, how slightly or slovenly however it be done. If he stumble sometimes upon a good word, yet it is not his walk; and when he is in that way, he cares not how many steps he treads awry. It may be said of him as of Jehu, 'He takes no heed to walk in the way of the Lord God of Israel with his heart,' 2 Kings 10:31. He makes an idol of the blessed God, (he prays to him, and hears from him, as if he had eyes and saw not, as if he had ears and heard not, as if he had hands and wrought not,) and anything will serve an idol. How aptly and justly may God say to him after his duties, as Cæsar to the citizen after dinner, (who, having invited the emperor to his table, made but slight preparation and slender provision for him,) I had thought that you and I had not been so familiar.

But he that exerciseth himself to godliness hath a more awful and serious carriage towards God. The twelve tribes served God 'instantly day and night,' Acts 26:7, fervently, vehemently, to the utmost of their power; the word implieth both extension and intension; the very heathen could say that the gods must be worshipped, ἢ ὅλως ἢ μὴ ὅλως, either to our utmost withal, or not at all.

2. The industry of a man about his calling, or whatsoever he makes his business, appeareth in his taking all advantages for the furtherance thereof. A tradesman that minds his employment, doth not only in his shop, but also abroad, and when he is from home, drive forward his trade. Indeed, when he is in his shop, his eyes are most about him to see what is wanting, that it may be supplied, to

take care that all his customers may be satisfied, and to order things so, that by his buying and selling his stock may be increased; but if he walk from home, he doth not wholly leave his trade behind him. If he visit his friends or acquaintance, and there be any likelihood of doing any good, you may observe him questioning the price of such and such commodities, inquiring at what rates they are afforded in those parts; and if they be cheap, possibly furnishing himself from thence; if dear, it may be, put off a considerable quantity of his own. Because he makes it his business, his mind runs much upon it, that wherever he is, he will be speaking somewhat of it, if occasion be offered, whereby he comes now and then to meet with such bargains as tend much to his benefit; so the Christian that makes religion his business, is industrious to improve all opportunities for the furtherance of his general calling. As his time (for he is God's servant) so his trade goeth forward every hour; he is, David-like, as a sparrow upon the house-top, looking on this side and that side, to see where he may pick up some spiritual food. He doth not only in the church and in his closet, but also in all his converses with men, walk with his God. If God prosper him, as the ship mounts higher according to the increase of the tide, so his heart is lifted up the nearer to God, as God's hand is enlarged towards him. If God afflict him, as the nipping north wind purifies the air, so the besom of affliction doth sweep the dust of sin out of his heart. As his pulse is ever beating, so his heavenly trade is ever going forward. His visits to his friends are out of conscience as well as out of courtesy; and his endeavour is, either by some savoury Scripture expression, or some sober action, to advantage his company. He will watch for a fit season to do his own and others' souls service, and catch at it as greedily, and improve it as diligently, as Benhadad's servants did Ahab's words.

If he be eating or drinking, the salt of grace is ever one dish upon the table to season all his diet. He will raise his heart from the daily bread to the bread that came down from heaven. He eateth, is full, and blesseth the Lord. Before he begins he asketh God's leave, while he feeds he tasteth God's love, and when he hath done he giveth God thanks.

If he be buying or selling, he is very willing that God should be a witness to all his bargains; for he prayeth to God as if men heard him, and he tradeth with men as if God saw him. His shop, as well as his chapel, is holy ground.

If he be amongst his relations, he is both desirous and diligent to further religion. His endeavour is that those that are nigh him in the flesh may be nigh God in the spirit. He is careful that both by his precepts and pattern he may do somewhat for their profit. His house, as well as his heart, is consecrated to God.

As Cæsar's image was stamped on a penny, as well as on a greater piece, Mat. 22:20, so godliness, which is the image of the King of kings, is imprinted not only on his greater and weightier, but also upon his lesser and meaner practices.

Godliness is not his physic, which he only now and then (as at spring and fall) makes use of, but his food, which he daily dealeth about; besides his set times for his set meals of morning and evening devotion, he hath many a good bait by the by in the day-time. 'Evening, morning, and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud,' Ps. 55:17. 'Oh, how love I thy law; it is my meditation,' not some part, but 'all the day.' Whether the actions he be about be natural or civil, he makes them sacred; whether the company he be in be good or bad, he will mind his holy calling; whether he be riding or walking, whether it be at home or abroad; whether he be buying or selling,

eating or drinking, whatsoever he be doing, or wheresoever he be going, still he hath an eye to further godliness, because he makes that his business. What the philosopher said of the soul in relation to the body—The soul is whole in the whole body, and whole in every part of it—is true of godliness, in reference to the life of a Christian; godliness is whole in his whole conversation, and whole in every part of it. As the constitution of man's body is known by his pulse; if it beat not at all, he is dead; if it beat and keep a constant stroke, it is a sign the body is sound. Godliness is the pulse of the soul; if it beat not at all, the soul is void of spiritual life; if it beat equally and constantly, it speaks the soul to be in an excellent plight.

It was the practice of our Saviour, who left us a blessed pattern therein, to be always furthering godliness. When bread was mentioned to him, upon it he dissuaded his disciples from the leaven of the pharisees, Mat. 16:5, 6. When water was denied him by the Samaritan woman, he forgets his thirst, and seeks to draw her to the well-spring of happiness, John 4:10. When people came to him for bodily cures, how constantly doth he mind the safety of their souls: 'Thou art made whole, go sin no more,' or, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.' He went about doing good; in the day-time working miracles and preaching, in the night-time he often gave himself to meditation and prayer.

He that minds religion by the by doth otherwise; he can, Proteus-like, turn himself into any shape which is in fashion. As the carbuncle, a beast among the blackamores, which is seen only by night, having a stone in his forehead, which shineth incredibly and giveth him light whereby to feed; but when he heareth the least noise, he presently lets fall over it a skin, which he hath as a natural covering, lest its splendour should betray him; so the half Christian shines with the light of holiness by fits and starts; every fright makes

him hold in and hide it. The mark of Antichrist was in his followers' hands, which they can cover or discover at their pleasure; but the mark of Christ's disciples was in their foreheads, visible at all times.

Thirdly, To exercise ourselves to godliness, implieth to persevere in it with constancy to our dissolution. Men follow their trades, and open their shops, till death shut their eyes, and gives them a writ of ease; men pursue their earthly works, till death sound a retreat, and command their appearance in the other world. Many a one hath breathed out his last in the midst of his labour: his life and his labour have ended together. 'Let every man abide in the calling whereto he is called,' saith the apostle, 1 Cor. 7:24.

They who make religion their business, are constant, immoveable, and do 'always abound in the work of the Lord.' Their day of life is their day of labour; 'the sun ariseth, and man goeth to his labour until the evening,' Ps. 104:23. Death only is their night of resting, when they die in the Lord; then, and not till then, they 'rest from their labours.' Saints are compared to palm-trees, because they flourish soon; to cedars, because they continue long; they often set out with the first, but always hold on to the last. The philosopher being asked in his old age why he did not give over his studies, answered, When a man is to run a race of forty furlongs, he will not sit down at the thirty-ninth, and lose the prize. The pious soul is faithful unto death, and enjoyeth a crown of life. As Cæsar, he is always marching forward, and thinks nothing done whilst anything remains undone.

*Nil actum credens, si quid superesset agendum.*—Lucan.

As they are fervent in their work, so they are constant at their work. The church of Ephesus had letters testimonial from heaven; 'For my name's sake thou hast laboured, and hast not fainted,' Rev. 2:3.

Water in the baths is always warm; as long as there is water, there is heat. Not so our ordinary water; though this may be warmed by the fire at present, yet if taken off it returns to its former coldness, nay, it is colder than before, because the spirits which kept it from the extremity of cold, are by the fire boiled out of it. The reason is plain; the heat of the baths is from an inward principle, and therefore is permanent; the heat of the latter is from an external cause, and therefore is inconstant.

That warmth of piety which proceeds from an inward principle of a purified conscience, is accompanied with perseverance; but that profession which floweth from an outward motive, where men, as chameleons, take their colour from that which stands next them, their religion from those they have their dependence upon, is of short duration.

A man that minds religion by the by is like Nebuchadnezzar's image, he hath a head of gold, but feet of clay. His beginning may be like Nero's first five years, full of hope and encouragement, but afterwards, as a carcase, he is more filthy and unsavoury every day than other. His insincerity causeth his inconstancy. Trees unsound at the root, will quickly cease their putting forth of fruit. Such men, if godliness enjoy a summer of prosperity, may like a serpent creep on the ground, and stretch themselves at length, to receive the warmth of the sun, but if winter come he will creep into some ditch or dunghill, lest he should take cold.

Travellers that go to sea merely to be sea-sick, or in sport, if there arise a black cloud or storm, their voyage is at an end, they hasten to the harbour; they came not to be weather-beaten, or to hazard themselves amongst the boisterous billows, but only for pleasure: but the merchant that is bound for a voyage, whose calling and business

it is, is not daunted at every wave and wind, but drives through all with resolution. He that only pretends towards religion, if a storm meet him in the way to heaven, he leaves it, and takes shelter in the earth; as a snail, he puts out his head to see what weather is abroad, (what countenance religion hath at court, whether great men do smile or frown upon the ways of God,) and if the heavens be lowering, he shrinks into his shell, esteeming that his only safety. But they that make godliness their business, do not steer their course by such cards—they follow their trade, though they meet with many trials; as resolved travellers, whether the ways be fair or foul, whether the weather be clear or cloudy, they will go on towards their heavenly Canaan; 'They go from strength to strength, till they appear before God in Sion,' Ps. 84:8.

When men follow godliness by the by and in jest, they take it to farm, and accept leases of it for a time; but if the times come to be such, that in their blind judgments it prove a hard pennyworth, they throw it up into their landlords' hands—Vadat Christus, as he said, cum suo evangelio; but men that make religion their business, take it as their freehold, as their fee-simple, which they enjoy, and esteem it their privilege so to do, for the whole term of their lives; 'I have chosen thy statutes as my heritage for ever: I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always unto the end,' Ps. 119:11, 12.

The godliness of an unsound professor is like the light of a candle, fed with gross and greasy matter, as profit and honour and pleasure, which continueth burning till that tallowy substance be wasted, but then goeth out and leaves a stench behind it; the holiness of a true Christian is like the light of the sun, which hath its original in heaven, and is fed from above, and thereby 'shines brighter and brighter to perfect day,' Prov. 4:18.



## CHAPTER V

### **Religion is the great end of man's creation**

I come in the third place to the reasons, Why godliness should be every man's main and principal business.

First, Because it is God's chief end in sending man into, and continuing him in, this world. It is without question, that the work should be for that end to which it is appointed, and for which it is maintained by a sovereign and intelligent workman. Where the master hath authority to command, there his end and errand must be chiefly in the servant's eye. Zeno well defines liberty to be ἐξουσία αὐτοπραγίας, a power to act and practise at a man's own pleasure; opposite to which, servitude must be a determination to act at, and according to, the will of another. A servant is, as the orator saith well, nomen officii, a word that speaks one under command; he is not one that moveth of himself, but the master's living instrument, according to the philosopher, to be used at his pleasure. According to the title or power which one hath over another, such must the service be. Where the right is absolute, the obedience must not be conditional; God having therefore a perfect sovereignty over his creatures, and complete right to all their services, his end and aim, his will and word, must be principally minded by them. Paul gathers this fruit from that root: 'The God whose I am, and whom I serve,' Acts 27:23. His subjection is founded on God's dominion over him.

Now the great end to which man is designed by God, is the exercising himself to godliness. God erected the stately fabric of the great world for man, but he wrought the curious piece of the little world [man]

for himself. Of all his visible works he did set man apart for his own worship. Man, saith one, is the end of all in a semicircle, intimating that all things in the world were made for man, and man was made for God. It is but rational to suppose that if this world was made for us, we must be made for more than this world. It is an ingenious observation of Picus Mirandula, God created the earth for beasts to inhabit, the sea for fish, the air for fowls, the heavens for angels and stars, man therefore hath no place to dwell and abide in, but the Lord alone.

The great God, according to his infinite wisdom, hath designed all his creatures to some particular ends, and hath imprinted in their natures an appetite and propensity towards that end, as the point and scope of their being. Yea, the very inanimate and irrational creatures are serviceable to those ends and uses in their several places and stations. Birds build their nests exactly, bringing up their young tenderly. Beasts scramble and scuffle for their fodder, and at last become man's food. The sun, moon, and stars move regularly in their orbs, and by their light and influence advantage the whole world. The little commonwealth of bees work both industriously and wonderfully for the benefit of mankind. Flowers refresh us with their scents; trees with their shade and fruits; fire moveth upward; earth falleth downward, each by nature hastening to its centre; thunder and winds, being exhalations drawn up from the earth by the heavenly bodies, are wholly at, though stubborn and violent creatures, the call and command of the mighty possessor of heaven and earth; and with them, as with besoms, he sweeps and purifieth the air; fish sport up and down in rivers; rivers run along, sometimes seen, sometimes secret, never ceasing or tiring till they empty themselves into the ocean; the mighty sea, like a pot of water, by its ebbing and flowing purgeth itself, boileth and prepareth sustenance for living creatures. Through this womb of moisture, this great pond

of the world, as Bishop Hall<sup>2</sup> termeth it, men travel in moveable houses, from country to country, transporting and exchanging commodities. Thus the almighty Creator doth, γεωμετρεῖν, as Plato saith, observe a curious comely order in all his work, and appoints them to some use according to their nature. Surely much more is man, the point in which all those lines meet, designed to some noble end, suitable to the excellency of his being; and what can that be, but to worship the glorious and blessed God, and the exercising himself to godliness?

'The Lord made all things for himself,' Prov. 16:4. God made things without life and reason to serve him passively and subjectively, by administering occasion to man to admire and adore his Maker; but man was made to worship him actively and affectionately, as sensible of, and affected with, that divine wisdom, power, and goodness which appear in them. As all things are of him as the efficient cause, so all things must necessarily be for him as the final cause. But man in an especial manner is predestinated and created for this purpose: Isa. 43:1, 7, 'Thou art mine; I have created him for my glory; I have formed him, yea, I have made him.' There is both the author and the end of our creation: the author, 'I have created him;' the end, 'for my glory.' As man is the most exact piece, on which he bestowed most pains, so from him he cannot but expect most praise. Lactantius accounteth religion the most proper and essential difference between men and beasts. The praises which beasts give God are dumb, their sacrifices are dead; but the sacrifices of men are living, and their praises lively.

God did indeed set up the admirable house of the visible world (floating it with the earth, watering it with the ocean, and ceiling it with the pearly heavens) for his own service and honour; but the payment of this rent is expected from the hands of man, the

inhabitant. He was made and put into this house upon this very account, that he might, as God's steward, gather his rents from other creatures, and pay in to the great landlord his due and deserved praise. Man is made as a glass, to represent the perfections that are in God. A glass can receive the beams of the sun into it, and reflect them back again to the sun. The excellencies of God appear abundantly in his works; man is made to be the glass where these beams of divine glory should be united and received, and also from him reflected back to God again.

Oh, how absurd is it to conceive that God should work a body so 'curiously in the lowest parts of the earth,' embroider it with nerves, veins, variety and proportion of parts, (miracles enough, saith one, between head and foot to fill a volume,) and then enliven it with a spark of his own fire, a ray of his own light, an angelical and heaven-born soul, and send this picture of his own perfections, this comely creature, into the world, merely to eat, and drink, and sleep, or to buy, and sell, and sow, and reap. Surely the only wise God had a higher end and nobler design in forming and fashioning man with so much care and cost.

The upright figure of man's body, as the poetical heathen could observe, may mind him of looking upward to those blessed mansions above; and that fifth muscle in his eye,<sup>2</sup> whereby he differeth also from other creatures, who have only four—one to turn downward, another to hold forwards, a third to turn the eye to the right hand, a fourth to turn the eye to the left; but no unreasonable creature can turn the eye upward as man can—may admonish him of viewing those superior glories, and exercising himself to godliness, it being given him for this purpose, saith the anatomist, that by the help thereof he might behold the heavens. Thus the blessed God, even by sensible demonstrations, speaks his mind and end in making man;

but the nature of man's soul being a spiritual substance, doth more loudly proclaim God's pleasure, that he would have it conversant about spiritual things. He made it a heavenly spark, that it might mount and ascend to heaven.

A philosopher may get riches, saith Aristotle, but that is not his main business; a Christian may, nay, must follow his particular calling, but that is not his main business, that is not the errand for which he was sent into the world. God made particular callings for men, but he made men for their general callings. It was a discreet answer of Anaxagoras Clazamenius to one that asked him why he came into the world; Ut cœlum contempler, That I might contemplate heaven. Heaven is my country, and for that is my chiefest care. May not a Christian upon better reason confess that to be the end of his creation, that he might seek heaven, and be serviceable to the Lord of heaven, and say, as Jerome, I am a miserable sinner, and born only to repent. The Jewish Talmud propounds this question, Why God made man on the Sabbath eve? and gives this answer: That he might presently enter upon the command of sanctifying the Sabbath, and begin his life with the worship of God, which was the chief reason and end why it was given him.

## CHAPTER VI

**Religion is a work of the greatest weight.  
It is soul-work, it is God-work, it is  
eternity-work**

Secondly, Godliness ought to be every man's main business, because it is a work of the greatest concernment and weight. Things that are of most stress call for our greatest strength. Our utmost pains ought

to be laid out upon that which is of highest price: man's diligence about any work must be answerable to the consequence of the work. The folly of man seldom appears more than in being very busy about nothing, in making a great cry where there is little wool; like that empty fellow that shewed himself to Alexander—having spent much time, and taken much pains at it beforehand—and boasted that he could throw a pea through a little hole, expecting a great reward; but the king gave him only a bushel of peas for a recompense suitable to his diligent negligence or his busy idleness. Things that are vain and empty are unworthy of our care and industry. The man that by hard labour and hazard of his life did climb up to the top of the steeple to set an egg on end, was deservedly the object of pity and laughter. We shall think him little better than mad that should make as great a fire for the roasting of an egg as for the roasting of an ox.

On the other side, the wisdom of men never presenteth itself to our view in livelier colours than in giving those affairs which are of greatest concernment precedency of time and strength. Of brutes man may learn this lesson: When the cart is empty, or hath but little lading, the team goeth easily along, they play upon the road; but when the burden is heavy, or the cart stuck, they pull, and draw, and put forth all their strength.

Now godliness is, amongst all man's works, of the greatest weight. The truth is, he hath no work of weight but this; this is the one thing necessary, and in this one thing are man's all things. Our unchangeable weal or woe in the other world is wrapped up in our diligence or negligence about this; our earthly businesses, be they about food or raiment, about honours or pleasures, or whatsoever, are but toys and trifles, but baubles and butterflies, to this. As candles before the sun, they must all disappear and give place to this.

Moses, a pious and tender father, when leaving them, in his swan-like song, gives savoury advice to his children. We need not doubt but his spiritual motions were quickest when his natural motions were slowest; that the stream of grace ran with full strength when it was to empty itself into the ocean of glory. Mark what special counsel he gives them who were committed to his special care: Deut. 32:46, 'Set your hearts to all the words which I command you this day; for it is not a vain thing; because it is your life.' In which words we have, 1. A commandment; and, 2. An argument. The commandment is, 'Set your hearts to all the words which I command you this day;' that is, 'Exercise yourselves to godliness.' He doth not say, lend them your ears, to listen to them slightly; or let them have your tongues, to speak of them cursorily. No; it is not, set your heads, but set your hearts, to all the words, &c. He doth not say, Let your works be according to these words, or let your feet ever make them your walk; no, it is not set your hands, but set your hearts to the words that I speak unto you. Make it your business, and then your ears and tongues, your feet, your heads, your hands, and all will be employed about them to the purpose. But what special argument doth Moses urge for the enforcement of this great work? Surely that which I am speaking of, the weight of it: 'Set your hearts to all the words which I command you this day; for it is not a vain thing; because it is your life,' ver. 47. Moses had experience that the hearts of the Israelites were exceeding knotty wood, and therefore he useth a heavy beetle to drive home the wedge: it is not a vain thing; it is life. As if he had said, Were it a matter of small moment, ye might laze and loiter about it; but it behoves you to bestir yourselves lustily to follow it, laboriously to set your hearts to it; for it is as much worth as your lives; that pearl of matchless price is engaged and at stake in your pursuit of godliness. Life, though but natural, is of so much value that men will sacrifice their honours and pleasures, their wealth and liberty, and all to it.

The Egyptians parted with their costly jewels willingly to redeem their lives, as Calvin observeth. The widow in the Gospel spared none of her wealth to obtain health, which is much inferior to life: 'Skin for skin, and all that a man hath, will he give for his life.' Throw but a brute into the water to drown it, how will it labour, and toil, and sweat, to preserve its life! View a man on his death-bed, when a distemper is, like a strong enemy, fighting to force life out of the field, how doth nature then, with all the might and strength it hath, strive and struggle to keep its ground! What panting and breathing, what sweating and working of all the parts do you behold! And no wonder—the man laboureth for life. If there be such labour for a natural life, that is but *umbra vitæ*, a shadow to this the substance, which is but the union of the body and soul, and lieth under a necessity of dissolution; what labour doth a spiritual life deserve, that consisteth in the soul's union and communion with the blessed Saviour, and which neither men nor devils, neither death nor hell, shall ever deprive a believer of, but in spite of all it will grow and increase till it commence eternal life? Well might Moses expect that such a heavy weight as this should make great impression, and sink deep into their affections: 'For it is not a vain thing; because it is your life.'

We may say of this work of Christianity, compared with all other works, what David said of Goliath's sword, 'There is none like it:' this is soul-work, this is God-work, this is eternity-work, and therefore of greatest weight, and requireth us all to make it our business; such blows as these three are, one would think, might force fire out of a flint.

This is soul-work: as soul-woe is the heaviest woe, and soul-wants are the greatest wants, so soul-work is the weightiest work; the dangers of a soul are the deepest dangers, the loss of the soul is the



dreadfullest loss, the neglect of the soul is the dolefullest neglect. The consequence of the action is frequently specified from the excellency of the person or subject concerned in it. The soul of man is a most excellent piece, both in regard of the spirituality and immortality of its substance, as also in regard of that divine image imprinted on it, those heavenly qualities with which it was at first endowed. Princes stamp not their image, except in cases of necessity, on brass, or tin, or leather, but on gold and silver, the chiefest and most excellent metals. Therefore, though those affairs which concern the body are but of ordinary respect, yet those that concern the soul are of unconceivable weight and regard. One soul is more worth than ten thousand bodies—than ten thousand worlds.

The greatest thing, saith one, in this world is man, and the greatest thing in man is his soul. It is an abridgment of the invisible world, as the body is of the visible. The body, though no mean work considered absolutely, yet of ordinary worth considered comparatively to the soul. It is a mud-wall enclosing a rich treasure, as a common mask to a beautiful face, as a coarse cabinet having in it a precious carcanet.

The very heathen acknowledged that the soul was the man, the body but its servant; and therefore the Christian may well call it and care for it as his darling, as his only one, as the original is in that place, Ps. 22:20. Chrysostom observeth, *Omnia Deus dedit duplicia*, God hath given man two eyes, two ears, two hands, two feet, that the failing of the one may be supplied by the help of the other; *Animam vero unam*, but one soul—if that miscarry, there is no remedy. Nebuchadnezzar lost his reason, and that was restored; David lost his wives, children, and goods, and yet they were recovered; nay, Lazarus lost his life, and was revived; but for the loss of the soul no power can recover it, no price can redeem, no pearls, no, not the whole world, can recompense its loss.

Well might Charles the Fifth, when solicited by a great counsellor, Antonino de Leva, to cut off all the princes in Germany, that he might rule alone, forbear to put his advice into practice, and cry out, O anima, anima, O my soul, my soul!—what then will become of my soul? It was a royal answer which Maximilian, king of Bohemia, gave the pope, who persuaded him to turn good Catholic, promising him much advantage: I thank your holiness; but my soul's health is dearer to me than all the things in the world. (Hist. Conc. Trent.)

The apostle calls the body a 'vile body,' Phil. 3 ult., in regard of its original production; it was made not of heavenly materials, as sun or stars, nor of precious materials, as pearls, or jewels, but *ex pulvere limoso et lutoso*, of dust mingled with water; and in regard of its ultimate resolution, it becomes first an ugly, ghastly carcase, and then moulders into earth; but the Holy Ghost calls the soul 'The breath of the Almighty,' Job 33:4. It was not, as the body, framed of dust, but immediately breathed by God himself; it was not the fruit of some pre-existent matter, but the immediate effect of divine power. The soul is, in a spiritual as well as in a natural sense, the life of the body, especially if you take *vivere* for *valere*—to live for to be lusty, and to be in health; for what the sun is to the greater, that the soul is to the lesser world. When the sun shineth comfortably, how cheerfully do all things look! how well do they thrive and prosper! the birds sing merrily, the beasts play wantonly, the trees and herbs put forth their buds and fruits; the whole creation enjoyeth a day of light and joy. But when the sun departeth, what a night of horror followeth; how are all things wrapped up in the sable mantle of darkness! nay, let but the heat of its beams abate, how do all faces gather paleness! the creatures are buried, as it were, in the winding-sheet of winter's frost and snow: so when the soul shineth pleasantly on the body, refreshing it with its beams of holiness, with its rays of grace, the body cannot but enjoy a summer of health and strength.

Such a soul in such a body is like a pure wax-candle in a crystal lantern, refreshing with its scent, directing by its light, and comforting with its heat; but if the soul be weak, and full of spiritual wants, the body must needs wither. The soul is the ship in which the body sails; if that be safe, the body is safe, if that sinks, the body sinks for ever.

From all this it appeareth that soul-work is a weighty work, not to be dallied or trifled with, but to be made the business of every man. Godliness must therefore be followed with care and conscience, because of soul consequence. It was our deprivation of godliness which was the soul's greatest loss, and therefore, for the regaining of it, ought to be our greatest labour. God sent his Son into the world for this very purpose, that he might by his bloody passion restore man to his primitive purity and perfection. Godliness is the soul's food, which nourisheth it; who would feast his horse,—*Corpus est jumentum animæ*,—and starve himself? the soul's raiment, both for its defence and warmth, nay, the life of its life. The life of the soul, as Jacob's in Benjamin, is bound up in godliness. Take godliness away, and the soul goeth down into the grave of the other world with unspeakable sorrow.

Godliness, as it is soul-work, so it is God-work; as the excellency of the subject in which, so also the excellency of the object about which, it is conversant, speaks it to be weighty. The moralists tell us, that actions are specified not only from their ends and circumstances, but likewise from their objects. And the divines assure us, that the chiefest source of man's sin and sorrow is his causing the bent and stream of his inward man to run after wrong objects. If objects then can vary the species, they may much more add to the degree, to the weight of an action. Where the object is great, no slip can be small.

Evil words spoken, or blows given, to an ordinary man, bear but a common action at law; but in case they relate to the king, they are treason. The higher the person is with whom we converse, the holier and more exact should our carriage be. If we walk with our equals, we toy and trifle by the way, and possibly, if occasion be, wander from them; but if we wait upon a prince, especially about our own near concernments, we are serious and sedulous, watching his words, and working with the greatest diligence for the performance of his pleasure. A lawyer will mind the countryman's cause when he is at leisure, when greater affairs will give him leave, and then, it may be, do it but coldly and carelessly. But if he have business committed to him by his sovereign, which concerns the prerogative, he will make other causes stay, crowd out of the press to salute this, attend it with all his parts and power, and ability and industry, and never take his leave of it till it be finished. I need not explain my meaning in this; it is obvious to every eye that godliness is the worshipping the infinite and ever-blessed God. Surely his service is neither to be delayed nor dallied with, it is not to be slighted or slubbered over. 'Cursed is he that doth the work of the Lord negligently.'

When we deal with our equals, with them that stand upon the same level with us, we may deal as men; our affections may be like scales that are evenly poised, in regard of indifferency, but when we have to do with a God so great, that in comparison of him the vast ocean, the broad earth, and the highest heavens are all less than nothing, and so glorious that the great lights of the world, though every star were a sun, yet in respect of him are perfect darkness, we must be like angels, our affections should be all in a flame in regard of fervency and activity. The very Turks, though they build their own houses low and homely, yet they take much pains about their mosques, their temples—they build them high and stately. David considered about a temple for God. 'The work is great, for the palace is not for man, but

for the Lord God.' Now, saith he, 'I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God.' Upon this foundation, that it was God-work, David raiseth this building, to make it his business, to prepare for it with all his might, as if he had said, Had it been for man, the work had been mean, it had wanted exceedingly of that weight which now it hath; but the work is great, for the palace is not for man, but for God; and because it is a work of such infinite weight, therefore I have prepared for it with all my might. I can think no pains great enough for so great a prince.

It was provided in the old law, that the weights and measures of the sanctuary should be double to the weights and measures of the commonwealth. The shekel of the sanctuary was half-a-crown of our money, and the shekel of the commonwealth but fifteenpence; the cubit of the sanctuary a full yard, the common cubit but half a yard, compare 1 Kings 7:15, with 2 Chron. 3:15. The common talent was one hundred and eighty-seven pounds ten shillings; the king's talent two hundred and eighty-one pounds five shillings; the talent of the sanctuary was three hundred and seventy-five pounds, (Itinerarium Sac.) And what was the gospel of this, but to teach us that in things that appertain to God, we must give double weight, double measure, double care, double diligence; though men be slothful and sluggish in the service of men, yet they must be fiery and 'fervent in spirit' when they are 'serving the Lord,' Rom. 12:11. To give brass money to any is lamentable, but to cast it into the treasury is most abominable. God is a great God, and looks to be served like himself, and according to his excellent greatness: 'Cursed be the deceiver which hath in his flock a male, and sacrificeth to the Lord a corrupt thing; for I am a great king, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen,' Mal. 1 ult.

There are some of the heathen that worship the sun for a god, and would offer to the sun somewhat suitable; and therefore, because they wondered at the sun's swift motion, they would offer a horse with wings. Now a horse is a swift creature, and one of the strongest to continue in motion for a long time together; then, having wings added to him, they conceived him a sacrifice somewhat suitable to the sun.<sup>3</sup> Surely much more cause have Christians to take care that their sacrifices to the glorious and boundless Majesty, be some way suitable to his inconceivable and infinite excellencies.

Further, godliness is eternity-work, and therefore must needs be of infinite weight, and is worthy of all our pains and diligence. We esteem lands which we hold in fee-simple to us and our heirs for ever, at a far greater rate, and are more diligent to secure our titles to them, than those lands which we have only a lease of, or a life in. Men's estates are of more or less value, according to the term of years they have in them; ministers are often much more exact in their printing than in their preaching. Such in whose ordinary preaching words like a spring run full and fast, and sense, or at least judgment, like a pond stands still, will, if they print, screw their parts to the highest pitch, and spare for no pains that, if possible, sense and sentences, reason and expressions, may keep equal pace. Even those whose sermons, when delivered in their auditories, smell, as Chalcus said of Demosthenes' orations, of the lamp, are the fruits of much prayer and study; yet when they are to publish them to the world, they will survey every sentence, weigh every word, bestow more care and labour on them—hence possibly our proverbial speech, when a thing is done exactly, This is done in print. But what is the ground of this? I suppose one of the chiefest, because men print, in a sense, for eternity. Sermons preached, or men's words, pass away with many like wind—how soon are they buried in the grave of oblivion! but sermons printed are men's works, live when they are dead, and

become an image of eternity: 'This shall be written for the generation to come.'

Godliness is a work that relates not only to a few lives, as lands do, or to a few generations, as men's books do, but to the boundless, bottomless ocean of eternity indeed, and therefore calleth for all our care and diligence. Drexelius observeth well out of the father, Our works do not pass away as soon as they are done, as they may seem to do, but as seed sown in time, they rise up to all eternity. A little neglect now may prove an eternal loss; whatsoever we think, speak, or do, once thought, spoke, or done, it is eternal, it abideth for ever.

Eternal life is promised to the diligent, eternal death is the portion of the negligent. The former shall be bathed in 'the rivers of God's eternal pleasures,' the latter shall suffer the 'vengeance of eternal fire.' To be tormented day and night for ever and ever, and to enjoy the 'exceeding and eternal weight of glory,' are certainly no jesting matters, but of more concernment than we can possibly conceive. Who would not labour hard to attain eternal life! Who would not work night and day to avoid eternal death, eternal woe!

Zeuxis the famous limner made painting his business, and was exceeding careful and curious in drawing all his lines; he would let no piece of his go abroad into the world to be seen of men, till he had turned it over and over; viewed it on this side and that side again and again, and being asked the reason, answered, Because what I paint, I paint for eternity. So it is with every man and woman in the exercise of godliness, it is of eternal concernment; we pray, we hear for eternity, we read, we sing, we watch, we fast, we live, we die for eternity; oh, how exactly, how diligently, should all be done!

The Holy Ghost urgeth it as a reason why men's eyes and hearts should not be set upon riches, because they are not eternal. In one

place Solomon tells us, that riches 'are not,' Prov. 23:5. In another place, that they are 'not for ever,' Prov. 27:4, because things that are not for ever, are as if they were not at all. Eternal life is the true life, saith Augustine; this is but the shadow or semblance of life. The affairs of time are but trifles to the affairs of eternity; but our eyes and hearts must be set upon godliness, because it is for ever, it will do a soul good for ever; our Saviour doth from this argument command us to make godliness our chief employment: 'Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth to everlasting life,' John 6:27, where labour for temporal food is not prohibited, but labour for eternal food is preferred.

It was the consideration of this that made the forty martyrs suffer so venturously and valiantly under Licinius, A.D. 300. When Agricolaus, his deputy, and one of the devil's agents, set upon them several ways to draw them to deny Christ, and at last tempted them with an offer of wealth and preferment, they all cried out with one consent, ὦ αἰδιότης, ὦ αἰδιότης, χρήματα δίδως τὰ ἀπομένοντα, Oh eternity, eternity, give us money that will last to eternity, and glory that will abide for ever! They slighted that pitiful wealth which was current only in this beggarly world, and made religion their business because it brought them in durable riches. Things that are transient and temporal may, like hasty storms, salute only the surface of our hearts, and away; but things that are permanent and eternal, must, like soft showers, sink deep into our affections, and command all our actions. Ah, did but man know what it is to be eternally in hell-fire, and what it is to live eternally in God's favour, he would do anything, were it never so hard, to arrive at heaven.

The Romans built their temples round; and the rule of Pythagoras was, when men worshipped, they must turn themselves round. Those heathens had confused notions of eternity, and represented it by



round things, because such had neither beginning nor end If they, by the light of nature, saw a little of it, and thence would have their temples and worship suitable to it, then much more we, who have clearer apprehensions by the light of Scripture, must have our conversations answerable.

## CHAPTER VII

### **The necessity of making religion our business, both in regard of the opposition a Christian meets with, and the multiplicity of business which lieth upon him**

Thirdly, Godliness must be made our principal business, our main work, because otherwise we shall lose our reward. We say, As good never a whit, as never the better. Piety without much pains will redound to little or no profit. How foolish is that builder who, in setting up a house, hath been at much cost, and yet loseth all, because he will be at no further charge. Many 'lose what they have wrought,' 2 John 8. Their works, because not their business, are not perfect, and so to small purpose. 'The slothful roasts not what he took in hunting,' Prov. 12:27. He was at some labour to catch the beast, but was loath to be at any more in dressing it, and so all was lost; laboriousness to godliness is as the soul to the body, which, being separated from it, godliness dieth and quickly becomes unsavoury.

The reward of godliness is of infinite worth, the end of holiness (as of hope) is the salvation of the soul, the eternal and immediate enjoyment of God in heaven. Now, who can think to attain the place of such ravishing pleasures without much pains? Iter per angusta ad augusta.

Things that are most delicate cannot be had without the greatest difficulty; they that will enjoy large diadems must run through many deaths and dangers, and use much diligence. Nature herself will not bestow her precious treasure without much unwearied labour. Dust and dirt lie common in streets, but the gold and silver mines are buried in the bowels of the earth, and they must work hard and dig deep that will come at them. Ordinary stones may be had in every quarry, but pearls are secret in the bottom of the sea, and they must dive low, and hazard their lives, that will fetch up the oysters in which they breed, and enjoy them.

When did we ever find nature so prodigal of her gifts, as to bestow skill and excellency in any art or science, without industry and diligence. Doth she not force her students to beat their brains, to waste their bodies, to break their sleep, to burn up their strength, before she will permit them to pry into her secrets, to pick the lock of her curious cabinet, and gain any considerable knowledge of her wealth and richness? And can we think the God of nature will give men to know him, as they are known of him—will bestow on them the unspeakable gift, the pearl of price, the Holy of holies, such things as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither man's heart conceived, while they lie lazying on the bed of idleness?

Heaven is not unfitly compared to a hill; among heathens to Olympus, among Christians to Mount Zion. They that will climb up to it must pant and blow and sweat for it. Elijah's translation to the

place of bliss was much more speedy and facile than ordinary. We see no panting heart, no trembling hands, no quivering lips, no ghastly looks to be the forerunners of his passage into eternal life. Where the union is near and natural, there the separation is hard and painful, but behold here the marriage-knot betwixt body and soul is not untied. Those loving relations, like husband and wife, ride triumphantly together in a stately chariot to the heavenly court; yet even in this rapture God would teach us that the virgin inheritance must be ravished: 'There appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven,' 2 Kings 2:11. Why a chariot of fire, but to note that heaven must be stormed and taken by force. Fire is the most active inanimate creature; hereby is figured that laborious action is the way to the beatifical vision. The chariot is made of fire, the wheels upon which it runs are a whirlwind. Activeness and violence are the only way to the blessed inheritance. Who ever entered into heaven with ease? They that will be knighted must kneel for it; they that will wear the crown must win it. 'A man is not crowned except he strive lawfully,' that is, strenuously, 2 Tim. 2:5. He that will be saved must 'work out his salvation, and that with fear and trembling,' Phil. 2.

Christ, who first bought the purchase, hath already set the price upon which, and no other, the sons of men may come to the possession. There is, indeed, a twofold price of a thing, a natural price, when so much is laid down as is commensurate or proportionable to the thing bought; so the price of heaven was the blood of Christ, Heb. 10:19.

A pactional price, when so much is laid down, (though inferior to the commodity,) upon which the seller is contented that you enjoy the thing desired; so labour, knocking, working, is the price of heaven, Isa. 55:3. This price is made of man's future felicity, and Christ is resolved not to abate the least farthing. 'Strive,' saith he, 'to enter in

at the strait gate; for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able,' Luke 13:24. As if he had said, There will be many seekers, many that will both cheapen heaven by a profession, and bid somewhat by performances, but they shall miss the place for want of more pains; 'they shall not be able.' If ye, therefore, have any love to your souls, be not only seekers but strivers; do not only cheapen and offer a little, but come up to the price. Put forth all your strength, as wrestlers do that strive for masteries, as ever you would enjoy those eternal pleasures. Men were as good bid nothing, as not come up to the seller's price.

'All run in a race, but one receiveth the prize; so run that ye may obtain,' 1 Cor. 9:24. They that intend for the crown do beforehand diet themselves, breathe their bodies, and when they run for the conquest, strive and stretch themselves to the utmost; he that loitereth, is as sure to lose as if he sat still.

The lazy world, because Christ sends chapmen up and down with his wares, to offer them to every house, to every heart, think to have them at their own ordinary rates: but they shall find that grace, which is many degrees short of glory, is not to be had by sloth and idleness; there must be lifting up the heart, lending the ears, seeking, searching, begging, digging, attention of the outward, intention of the inward man, before men can 'understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God,' Prov. 2:3–5. Though it be easy to let the bucket into the well, yet it is hot work and hard labour to draw water out of the well of salvation. The laborious bee only is laden with honey.

'The desire of the slothful killeth him, because his hands refuse to labour,' Prov. 21:5. He is full of wishing, but far from working. As the cat, he would fain have the fish, but is unwilling to wet his feet; his

desires are destitute of suitable endeavours, and therefore rather harm him than help him. Like Ishbosheth, he lazieth on his bed till he is deprived of his life. He thinketh to be hurried in haste to heaven, to be carried as passengers in a ship, asleep in their cabins to their haven, but is all the while in a deceitful dream. There is no going to those heavens where Christ is in his glory, as the sick man came to the house where Christ was in his estate of ignominy, let down in a bed.

He that will be but almost a Christian, must be content to go but almost to heaven.

Idleness is the burial of our persons, and negligence is the burial of our actions. Writing on the sand is easy, but soon worn out, it is marred with a small breath of wind; but writing on marble, as it is more permanent, so it costeth more pains. An idle servant is in God's esteem an evil servant; he doth not distinguish betwixt a slothful and an unfaithful man: his word tells us that he hath bonds for those hands that are folded in the bosom, when they should be working for a blessing; that he hath fetters for those feet that stand still, and stick fast in the mire and mud of sinful pleasures, when they should be running the way of his precepts; nay, that he hath utter darkness for them that will not walk and work while they enjoy the light, Mat. 25:26, 30. He that takes his ease in this world must travel in the next.

Two things shew a necessity that godliness must be made our business, if ever we would make anything of it.

First, Because of the opposition we meet with in the way of religion. When the wind and tide are both with the mariner, he may hoist up his sail and sit still, but when both are against him, he must row hard, or never think to come to his haven. The way to heaven is like Jonathan's passage against the Philistines, betwixt two rocks,—the

one Bozez, dirty; the other Seneb, thorny; the men of the world will be ever diligent, either with dirt to bespatter their credits, or with thorns to wound and pierce their consciences, that walk in this path; he must therefore have a mind well resolved to take pains, and his feet well shod with patience, that will go this way to paradise. The way of this world is like the vale of Siddim, slimy and slippery, full of lime-pits and stumbling-blocks to maim or mischief us. Saints are princes in all lands; but as princes that pass through a country in disguise meet with many affronts, so do Christians.

The flesh is like bird-lime, which, when the spirit would at any time mount up to heaven with the wings of faith and meditation, hampers and hinders it; it is the holy soul's prison, wherein it is fettered and fastened, that it cannot, as it would, walk at liberty, and seek God's precepts. The devil, both a serpent for craft and a lion for cruelty, doth, out of his hatred to God, make it his constant business by his power and policy to hinder godliness. As the panther, because he cannot come at the person, he tears the picture wherever he finds it: 'We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers,' Eph. 6:12. While Satan reigneth in a creature, all may be quiet and calm; but if he be once cast out, he will rage and roar to purpose. While Israel serveth the Egyptians, carrying their crosses, bearing their burdens, doing their drudgery, all is well; but when once they shake off Pharaoh's yoke, turn their backs upon Egypt, and set out for Canaan, with what force and fury are they pursued to be brought back to their former bondage! Christ was no sooner baptized than buffeted; he went, as it were, out of the water of baptism into the fire of temptation. And if the prince were all his time persecuted, his subjects must not expect to be wholly privileged. The cross is tied as a tag to the profession of Christianity, Mat. 10:30. One article in the indenture which all apprentices must seal to, that will call Christ master, is to bear the cross daily, Mat. 16. The saints are as vessels

floating on the waters of Meribah, where (*omne quod flat aquilo est*, as Tertullian saith of Pontus) no wind blows but what is sharp and keen. The Hebrews were no sooner 'enlightened' to their conversion, but they 'endured a sharp fight of affliction;' their lightning was accompanied with a grievous storm, Heb. 10:32. Holiness is usually followed with much hatred and hardship. The enemies of man's salvation are impudent and incessant, ever raging, never resting. What the Carthaginian commander said of Marcellus, may be truly spoken by us in regard of them, That we have to do with those who will never be quiet, either conquerors or conquered; but conquerors they will pursue their victory to the utmost, and conquered, labour to recover their loss. Satan especially is both wrathful and watchful to undermine souls.<sup>2</sup> He is fitly called Beelzebub, the master-fly, because as a fly he quickly returns to the bait from which he was but now beaten. Though emperors may turn Christians, saith Austin, yet the devils will not.

Doth not this fully speak the necessity of making godliness our business? Can such difficulties be conquered without much diligence? Who can eat his way, like Hannibal, through such Alps of opposition without hot water and hard work? If, like Samson, we would break all these cords of opposition in sunder, we must awake out of sleep, and put forth all our strength. Saints are all called to be soldiers; our whole life is a warfare, 'All the days of my appointed time,' Job 14:14; an expositor reads it, 'All the days of my warfare I will wait till my change come.' The soldier's life is no lazy life; armies are wholly for action, especially when they deal with such subtle strong adversaries, that assault them day and night without ceasing. Who can conquer three such mighty monarchs as flesh, world, and devil are, or force his way through their temptations and suggestions, unless he fight in earnest, and make it his business? That fire, if ever any, had need to be hot, that must melt and overcome such hard

metal; and that hand, if ever any, had need to work hard, that will remove and level such high mountains. If the silly hare, pursued by such a pack of hounds, offer once to stand still or lie down, she is sure to be torn in pieces and devoured. There is a time, saith the holy bishop,<sup>2</sup> when kings go not forth to warfare; our spiritual war admits no intermission, it knows no night, no winter; abides no peace, no truce; this calls us not into garrison, where we may have ease and respite, but into pitched fields continually; we see our enemies in the face always, and are always seen and assaulted; ever resisting, ever defending, receiving, and returning blows; if either we be negligent or weary, we die. We can never have safety and peace but in victory; there must our resistance be courageous and constant, where both yielding is death, and all treaties of peace mortal.

Secondly, There is a necessity of making it our main work, because of the multiplicity of business that is incumbent on every Christian. That stream had need to run freely, and with full force, that must be divided into many channels. That estate had need to be large, that must be parted among many children. Who can count the variety of works that every Christian must be engaged in? how many dangers he must wade through? how many snares must he avoid? how many taunts and mocks must he abide? how many temptations must he conquer? how many graces must he exercise? how many lusts must he mortify? how many duties must he perform? Every relation, every condition calls for answerable duty and diligence; every ordinance must be improved by him, every providence must be sanctified to him. Mercies must, like a ladder, mount him nearer to heaven; misery must, like the famine to the prodigal, force him to hasten to his father's house. His wife, his children, his servants, his neighbours, his friends, his enemies, his shop, his closets, his visits, his journeys, do all require suitable service; and who can perform it that is not diligent and sedulous?



Consider him in reference to God's immediate worship; he must pray, hear, read, meditate, watch, fast, sanctify sabbaths, sing psalms, receive the sacrament, and in all walk humbly, reverently, and uprightly with his God. Consider him in reference to poor men; he must love mercy, and supply their necessities according to his ability, and not, like a muck-heap, good for nothing till carried forth; whatever men he deals with, he must do justly, love his neighbour as himself, and as God gives him opportunity, provoke them to mind grace and sanctity; as musk, perfume, if possible, all that he comes near. Consider him in reference to himself; he must live soberly, vigilantly; his heart is like a subtle, sturdy thief, ever seeking to break the jail, and therefore must have a strong guard; his corrupt nature is like fire, and his whole man like thatch, and therefore he must keep a narrow watch; his senses are the outworks, which Satan is ever assaulting, by them to gain the royal fort of the soul, that he must defend them with care and courage day and night. What is said of the husbandman, is true of every Christian. His work is never at an end; the end of one work is but the beginning of another; he must always be employed, either in dunging, dressing, ploughing, sowing, harrowing, weeding, or reaping his ground; he hath no leisure to be idle and lazy, who hath so much work lying upon his hand. Seneca thought philosophy cut him out so much work, that he was necessitated to spend every day, and part of the nights, in making it up. Christianity, a nobler mistress, as she gives better wages, so she commands greater work; that her servants may say well with the emperor, Let no day pass without a line; and with Solomon's housewife, not let their candle go out by night, Prov. 30.

The French Duke d'Alva could say, when he was asked by Henry the Fourth whether he had seen the eclipse of the sun, that he had so much business to do upon earth, that he had no time to look up to heaven. Sure I am, the Christian may say with more truth and

conscience, That he hath so much business to do for heaven, that he hath no time to mind vain or earthly things. That servant who doth ponder the strictness of his master, consider the shortness of his time, conceive the largeness of his task, and believe the weightiness of his work, how it must be done, or he is undone for ever, will be easily convinced that it very nearly concerns him, that it highly behoves him, to shake off sloth and sluggishness, to gird up the loins of his mind, to give it the precedency in all his actions, to pursue it with industry against all opposition, to persevere in it with constancy to his dissolution, and, in a word, to make it his main business, his principal work.

## **CHAPTER VIII**

### **A complaint that this trade is so dead, and the world's trade so quick**

The use which I shall make of this doctrine, shall be either by way of complaint or counsel.

First, By way of lamentation. If godliness ought to be every one's principal business, How sadly should it be lamented that this calling is so exceedingly neglected! What one man is there of many that doth follow this trade, and exercise himself to godliness? Men generally cry out, trading is dead, their particular callings are gone; they make no considerable returns, they stand in their shops all the day idle. But may not God rather complain, the holy heavenly trade is decayed and dead; general callings are left and lost; why stand ye all the day idle, and refuse to work in my vineyard? While the devil has whole droves to do his drudgery, the flesh vast flocks to flatter its fancies, and the world many millions to admire and adore its vanities, 'The

ways of Zion mourn, they are unoccupied, none come to the solemn feasts, all her gates are desolated.' While the lawyer's closet is filled with clients for counsel about their estates, the physician's chamber with patients about their bodily health, and the tradesman's shop crowded with customers, Jesus Christ is left alone; though he offereth wares which are of infinite worth, and stretcheth out his hand all the day long, yet no man regardeth.

It is reported of some Spaniards that live near the place where is store of fish, that they will rather go without them than take the pains to catch them. Heaven and happiness, Saviour and salvation, are near men, they are brought to their very doors; and yet men will rather lose than labour for them, rather go sleeping to hell, than sweating to heaven. 'All seek their own, and none the things of Jesus Christ.'

Offer a crust to a dog and he will catch at it, offer him a crown and he will contemn it; offer these men the crusts of vanity, and how greedily are they embraced, while the crown of glory is most unworthily despised; like beastly swine, they trample this pearl under their feet, and love to wallow in the mire.

But possibly you may say that there are many that make religion their business, only they are so near me that (according to the rule of optics, which requires a due distance between the faculty and the object) I cannot behold them; they abound in every country, parish, family; all are Christians, and make the worship of God their main work.

I must answer as he did when he saw the vast army of Antiochus, There are many men, but few soldiers; many mouths, but few hands: there are many nominal, but few real Christians; many that flourish like fencers, beating only the air, but few that fight in earnest the

good fight of faith. Godliness hath many complimentary servants, that will give her the cap and the knee, a few good words and outward ceremonies; but godliness hath few faithful friends, that make her the mistress of their affections, that give her the command of their hearts, and that wait upon her, and walk with her all the day long. Pretenders to her service are indeed like the sand of the sea, numerous; but practitioners or faithful servants are like the pearl of the sea, rare and precious; many court her, but few marry her; for indeed men generally deal with godliness as the Germans with the Italians, or the Dutch with the Spaniards, hold a fair outward correspondence, enough to serve for mutual trade and traffic, but enter not into a near familiarity; they have no great intimacy with godliness; it is rather a stranger to them, whom now and then they bestow a visit on for fashion sake, than an indweller or constant inhabitant.

Lepidus Major, a loose Roman, when his comrades were exercising themselves in the camp, would lay himself down to sleep in the shade, and cry out, *Utinam hoc esset laborare*, Would this were all the duty I were to do. Such soldiers are many who pretend to fight under Christ's banner; when they should be watching their souls, and warring with Satan and sin, they are sleeping and snoring, as if that were the way to work out their salvations. Reader, I must acquaint thee with the physician's rule, that *Spontaneæ lassitudines morbos loquuntur*, Weariness without some apparent cause is a sign of a diseased body; so thy laziness doth speak a very unsound soul.

This complaint is urged with a threefold consideration.

First, How eager is the worldling for wealth and earthly things! Though they loiter about the meat which endureth to eternal life, yet they can labour for the meat that perisheth; though they are so

negligent about the kingdom of heaven, yet the kingdom of earth suffereth violence. What pains do the mariners take for treasure! What perils doth the soldier undergo for plunder! What labour and industry doth the husbandman use for profit! he riseth early, sits up late, denieth himself, loseth his sleep, rides and runs to and fro, embraceth all opportunities, is eaten up almost with cares and fears, all for the earthly mammon; whilst the heavenly mansions are like the unknown part of the world, which no man regardeth or looketh after; they 'pant after the dust of the earth,' as greedily as hot creatures do after the air to cool their scorched entrails, Amos 2:7. The serpent's curse is entailed on that poisonous brood; the dust is their diet, they feed on ashes, Gen. 3:14; Amos 7. They laugh at dangers, and trample upon difficulties, they force their way through darkness and the shadow of death, through stifling damps and overflowing floods, through rocks and mountains, in the pursuit of earthly treasures, Job 28:9–11. It is said of the Dutch, they are so industrious at navigation, that, if it were possible to sail in ships to heaven, they would not come short of that haven. Ah, what pity is it that this jewel should hang in a swine's snout, which would so well become the Christian's finger; that this diligence, this violence, should be exercised about men's earthly and particular, which would so well suit their heavenly and general, calling. The ambitious person, like the panther, is so greedy of the poisonous aconite (hung up by the hunters purposely in vessels above their reach) of air and honour, that he never leaves leaping and straining thereat till he breaks and bursts himself in sunder.

The covetous man, saith one, that hath more than enough, yet perplexeth himself with his own wants, look how like a fool he goeth, leading his horse in his hand, and carrying his saddle on his back, till he be pickled in his own sweat, and killed with cares, when his horse would with ease carry him and his saddle. The voluptuous man, like

the drone, is busy about the glass of water baited with honey; in it he labours and wearieth himself, even till he be drowned.

How do men, like the Israelites in the Egyptian bondage, travel up and down, and even weary themselves to gather straw! What pains do they take to hew unto themselves broken cisterns! Their chief strife is, with the toads, who shall fall asleep with most earth in their paws, who shall leave this world with most wealth in their hands; their parts and gifts, their time and talents, are all improved to help forward their earthly trade; they are 'wiser in their generation than the children of light.'

Oh how lamentable is it that the onions and garlic of Egypt are preferred before the milk and honey of Canaan! Luther tells us of a nobleman at Vienna, in the time of his abode there, which made a great supper, and in the midst of his mirth belched out this windy and blasphemous speech, If God will leave me this world to live and enjoy my pleasure therein but a thousand years, then let him take his heaven to himself. This man spake what most men think; the bramble of their bodies reigneth, and fire ariseth out of it to consume the cedar of their souls.

The heathen have admired and bemoaned man's industry about earth; they have wondered what made man, who is of an erect countenance looking up to heaven, thus to bow down and bury himself alive in the earth. Tertullian stood amazed at the folly of the Romans,<sup>3</sup> who would undergo all manner of hazards and hardships to be consul, which he fitly calls one year's fleeting joy. The prophet tells such that they 'rejoice in a thing of nought,' Amos 7. Nay, the forementioned moralist tells us, that such worldlings, operose nihil agunt, take a great deal of pains to do nothing. That their whole life is but a laborious loitering, or at most a more painful kind of playing;

their account will be nothing but ciphers; like children, they run up and down, and labour hard to catch a gaudy butterfly, which, when caught, will foul their fingers and fly from them. O mortal men, 'how long will ye love vanity, and follow after leasing?' Ps. 4.

Is it not sad, that so noble a being as man's soul should be wholly taken up with such mean, sordid things? That phrase in Ps. 24:5, 'That hath not lift up his soul unto vanity,' is read by Arius Montanus, 'He that hath not received his soul in vain.' Oh how many receive their souls in vain, making no more use of them than the swine, of whom the philosopher observes, *Cujus anima pro sale*, their souls are only for salt to keep their bodies from stinking. Who would not grieve to think that so choice a piece should be employed about so vain a use!

Reader, if one should be entrusted with the education of a great prince, (who was descended of the blood-royal, and heir to a large empire,) and should set him only to rake in dunghills, or cleanse ditches, thou wouldst exceedingly condemn such a governor. Wouldst thou not think, It is pity, indeed, that so noble a person should be busied about such low, unworthy projects? God hath entrusted thee with a precious soul, descended highly, even from God himself, claiming kindred with the glorious angels, and capable of inheriting that kingdom, to which the most glorious empires of the world are but muck-heaps. Art thou not one of them that employ this princely soul altogether about unsuitable and earthly practices, and causing it (as the lapwing, though it have a coronet on its head) to feed on excrements? It was one cause of Jeremiah's sad lamentation, that 'the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold,' should be esteemed as 'earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter;' that they which were 'brought up in scarlet,' should 'embrace dunghills,' Lam. 4:2, 5. Have not we more cause of sorrow that men's

souls, the precious sons of God, should be put to no better use than earthen pitchers; that they which should be brought up delicately in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, should be busy about dross, and embrace dunghills; that thy precious soul should thus lackey after earth and vanity, when it should, like an angel, be always standing and waiting in the presence of God?

Who can read the stories how Domitian the king spent his time in catching flies; Solyman the Magnificent in making arrow-heads; Achmat the last in making strings for bows; Harcatius, the king of Persia, in catching moles; Caligula, the emperor, in playing the poet; Nero, the emperor, in fiddling; and not admire at their folly, that such great princes should busy themselves in things so infinitely below their places. But thy folly, reader, (if one of them I am writing of,) is far greater, in that thy practices are more below thy spiritual and heavenly principle. May I not say to thee, as Philip to Alexander, when he heard him singing, Art thou not ashamed, being a king's son, to sing so well? Art thou not ashamed, being an immortal angelical substance, the offspring of God, and capable of his likeness and love, to be glued as a toad-stool to the earth, to spend thy time and strength, venture the perishing of thy mortal body, and immortal soul too, for that meat which perisheth? It is storied of Pope Sixtus the Fifth that he sold his soul to the devil, for seven years' enjoyment of the popedom. What fool ever bought so dear? what madman ever sold so cheap? yet every worldly person doth implicitly the same with this pope. He selleth what is more worth than all the world for a little wind. Ah, how costly is that treasure which makes him a beggar to all eternity!

O Lord, what a foolish, silly thing is man, to prize and take pains for husks before bread, vanity before solidity, a shadow before the substance, the world's scraps before the costly feast, the dirty kennels



before the crystal water of life, an apple before paradise, a mess of pottage before the birthright, and the least fleeting and inconstant good before the greatest, truest, and eternal good. Their particular callings are but about earth—the lowest, meanest, and vilest of all the elements in these callings; they deal but with men and brutes; their gains here at best cannot be large, because their lives here cannot be long; and yet how eagerly are they pursued! how closely are they followed! how constantly are they busied about them! Their general callings are about their souls, their eternal salvations; in these they have to do with the blessed God, the lovely Saviour, in communion with whom is heaven upon earth; their gains here are above their thoughts, and beyond their most enlarged desires, no less than infinite and eternal! The profit of godliness is invaluable above price. 'It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof: It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it, and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral or of pearls, for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold,' Job 28:15–20; yet how lingeringly is this calling entered upon, how lazily is it followed, and how quickly cast off. O foolish man, who hath bewitched thee, that thou dost thus dislike and disobey the truth?

I cannot more fitly resemble man than to a silly hen, which, though much good corn lie before her, takes little notice of it, but still scrapes in the earth. The favour of God, the promises of the gospel, the covenant of grace, the blood of Christ, the embroidery of the Spirit, the life of faith, the hope of heaven, joy in the Holy Ghost, are laid before man; yet he overlooks them all, and lives like a mole, digging and delving in the earth.

Though men see before their eyes a period and end of all earthly perfections, that the beauty, bravery of all earthly things is but like a fair picture drawn on ice, quickly perishing; that their riches and estates are but like snow, which children take much pains to rake and scrape together to make a ball of, which upon the sun's shining on, it presently melteth away; though they see daily men that hoarded up silver, and wrought hard for wealth, hurried away into the other world, leaving all their heaps behind them; yet they will take no warning, but, as the silly lark, still play with the feather in the glass till they are caught and destroyed by the fowler. Men wrong themselves, and misconstrue God, who, as if he had hidden those things because he would have them sought, and laid the other open for neglect, bend themselves only to the seeking of those earthly commodities, and do no more mind heaven than if there were none. If we would imagine a beast to have reason, how could he be more absurd in his choice?

What a beast is he to love his silver above his soul, and lose his God for a little corruptible gold. While he lives, like the king of Armenia, by Marc. Anton., he is a close prisoner in golden fetters; and when he dieth, this worldling may say to his darling, as Cornelius Agrippa to his familiar spirit near his end, *Abi, perdita bestia, quæ me perdidisti*, Begone, thou wicked wretch, thou hast undone me.

It was good counsel which was given John, the third king of Portugal, to meditate a quarter of an hour every day on that divine sentence, (and oh that, reader, I could persuade thee to it!) 'What will it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?' Mat. 16. I have read of a philosopher, who, living near a blacksmith, and hearing him up every morning at his hammer and anvil, before he could get out of his bed to his book, professed himself much ashamed that such an ignoble

trade as a smith's should be more diligently attended than his more serious and excellent studies. What sayest thou, reader; dost thou not blush to think that worldlings are more busy and laborious about the low things, the rattles and trifles of this life, than thou art about the high affairs of God and thy soul, the noble and serious concernments of eternity?

## CHAPTER IX

### **The complaint continued, that this calling is so much neglected, when superstition and sin are embraced and diligently followed**

Secondly, How do men make superstition and idolatry their business? Though they are careless about divine institutions, yet they are zealous for human traditions. How zealous were the pharisees for the inventions of their elders! they called them Mashlamathath, completions or perfections, esteeming them both helpful to the observation of the law of God, and also to the perfection of it. Superstitious persons do naturally think that their postures, gestures, ceremonies, and additions, do render the worship of God more comely and more complete; but truly such embrace a cloud instead of Juno, worship the shadow of Christ, whilst the prince himself goeth unsaluted. Men are exceeding prone to, and earnest for, such vain and false ways and worship, partly because it is pleasing to corrupt spirits, who naturally love a fair show in the flesh; a pompous holiness suits best with a proud heart; partly because these traditions were received from their ancestors; and as Austin observed in his time, men were resolved, right or wrong, to be

followers of their fathers. Suitable to which, Cicero said, I will never forsake that way of divine service which I have received from my forefathers, for any man's pleasure, or by any man's persuasion; no, not though Christ himself died to redeem them from their 'vain conversations, received by tradition from their fathers,' 1 Pet. 1:18, 19. Hence, though they are so backward where God commands, yet they are forward when men command. What an outcry doth Micah make for his idol! What a privy search doth Laban make for his image! Gideon must die for throwing down the altar of Baal. How earnest are many for priests, tapers, altars, sacrifices, days, meats, consecrations, the holy of holies, crossings and cringings! In these their zeal is hot, boiling over to the scalding of themselves and others. Though this fervency is aptly compared to a ship without ballast, overtired with sails, which in a storm casts away all aboard her, they disesteem their estates and possessions in comparison of idolatry and superstition. Such persons are not only liberal, but lavish. Jeroboam will be at great cost for his idols; they must be not iron or brazen, no, not silver, but golden calves; not gilded over, but massy, molten gold. 'They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god, and they fall down and worship it,' Isa. 46:6. The Israelites will spare their jewels for their idols, Exod. 32:3. Micah's mother, to make molten and graven images, will lay out eleven hundred shekels of silver, Judges 17:2, 3. The papists are so prodigal,—though it is the less wonder in them, because they hold such actions meritorious of salvation, (and what would not a man give or do to be saved?)—that not only their churches, but even cloisters, are stuck and stuffed with costly, pearly presents to their supposed saints. The Indians in the isle of Ceylon, having a consecrated ape's tooth got from them, offered an incredible mass of treasure to recover it. How many zealots, that will hardly give a penny to the relief of a poor Christian, throw away pounds for the maintenance of superstition!

They slight their relations to further their idolatrous devotion. The superstitious Jews would sacrifice their children to Moloch, 2 Kings 17:17. The Carthaginians at one time, (after they had received an overthrow by Agathocles,) sacrificed two hundred of their prime nobility to appease their incensed deity. Good God! whither is man fallen, to be more cruel than a beast to the children of his own body! What slavery is it to serve Satan, and what liberty to serve thee!

Nay, they will sacrifice not only their estates and children, but their lives and all their outward comforts, to superstition. How did the worshippers of Baal cut and lance themselves! Ahaz sacrificed to the gods of Damascus that smote him, 2 Chron. 28:23; so fervent he was that he chose rather in the service of false gods to be scourged, than in the service of the true God to be saved.

Among the Mohammedans are a sect called the dervises, whose sharp and strict penances exceed those of the papists; they live on the tops of hills, solitary, for contemplation; fast, till nature be almost decayed; have no clothes but to cover their nakedness; wear such massy fetters of iron upon their legs that they can scarce stir, and yet go as fast as they can with them many miles, to visit the sepulchres of their deluded saints. The Turks willingly lay down their lives in their wars to propagate their religion, which their prophet hath taught them must be done, non disputando, sed pugnando, not by disputing with, but by destroying others. The unhappy Jesuit, though his religion be a heap of formalities, as the Turks' a bundle of fooleries, is yet so zealous for it, that Campian could impudently, in a letter to Queen Elizabeth's council, affirm, that as long as there was one Jesuit left for Tyburn, they had vowed never to desist endeavours to set up their religion in this nation. Oh devout ungodliness, or ungodly devotion! how few take such pains to go to heaven, as many do to go to hell!

Alas! what sorrow doth this call for and command! that men should be so hot and fiery in will-worship, in false worship, wasting their wealth, cutting and carving their bodies as if they were made only to be their slaves, and themselves to be the tyrants over them, laying out so much cost, and exercising so much cruelty, for that which is worse than nothing, for that which will not only not profit them, but extremely and eternally prejudice them; and in the interim the easy yoke of Christ is scorned, the power of godliness slighted, which might be minded with much more mildness and mercy to their outward and inward man.

It was a good meditation of a fore-quoted author, Those that travel in long pilgrimages to the Holy Land, what a number of weary paces they measure! what a number of hard lodgings and known dangers they pass! and at last, when they are come within view of their journey's end, what a large tribute they pay at the Pisan Castle to the Turks! and when they are come thither, what see they but the bare sepulchre wherein their Saviour lay, and the earth that he trod upon, to the increase of a carnal devotion! What labour should I willingly undertake in my journey to the true land of promise, the celestial Jerusalem, where I shall see and enjoy my Saviour himself! What tribute of pain or death should I refuse to pay for my entrance, not into his sepulchre, but his palace of glory, and that not to look upon, but to possess it?

Thirdly, As many make the world their main work, and others superstition their principal occupation, so most make wickedness their chief, their constant trade and business. While sanctity is but coldly entertained, but complimented with, sin is laid in the bosom and heartily embraced; the turnings and windings that are in the sinner's way are not easily to be observed; the pains which he takes to bring forth and breed up those birds which will peck out his own

eyes, can neither be fully described nor sufficiently lamented. In what haste and hurry is Absalom for a halter! what work doth lust make in Amnon to waste his body, and send his soul to endless woe! how fast doth Gehazi run after a leprosy, as if he might come too late! how sick and violent is Ahab for Naboth's vineyard! how fiercely doth Balaam ride, even without reins, after the wages of unrighteousness! how eager and earnest were Pharaoh and his Egyptians to fight against God! what a stir, what ado they make to overtake destruction, and to 'sink like lead in the midst of the mighty waters!' Joshua could stop the sun in his course, but not Achan in his covetous career. Paul, before his conversion, as one observes, followed the saints with such close persecution, and was so mad upon it, that like a tired wolf, wearied in worrying the flock, he lay panting for breath, and yet still breathed out persecution; in one journey he travelled one hundred and sixty miles—namely, from Jerusalem to Damascus—as an inquisitor for private heresy. At Musselburgh-field many of the Scots ran away so fast that they fell down dead; truly so do men by sin run away apace from God, even to the tiring of themselves here, and tormenting themselves hereafter. They run as fast as if they feared that hell would be full before they came thither.

'The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days,' Job 15:20. A wicked man's whole course is spent in carking care, as the LXX read it. He hath many sharp throes, bitter pangs, before he can bring forth that hideous, horrible monster, sin. Some women are very long in labour, several days in pain; but a wilful, wicked man travaileth with pain all his days; he works himself weary in digging descents into hell, and labours harder at it than many do for heaven. I remember Buntingus, in his *Itinerarium totius Sacræ Scripturæ*, when he comes to the travels of Antiochus Epiphanius, that fierce enemy of God's people, first relates the tedious journeys, (in all eight thousand one hundred and fifty-three miles,) various hazards, desperate dangers

and difficulties which this wicked wretch underwent to satisfy his malice, and gratify his revengeful spirit, and then concludes thus: We see that the wicked, with more sorrows, troubles, and vexations, gain eternal damnation, than the just, though they suffer grievous affliction, obtain everlasting salvation. For amongst all the patriarchs, good princes, and prophets, there is not found any that had so many long and tedious journeys as this Antiochus, who continually oppressed his mind and conscience with unprofitable vanities and wicked thoughts, and at length had a miserable and terrible end.

Though God hath few diligent servants, yet the devil hath many drudging slaves, that work hard at grinding in his mill all their days. Their calling is a trade of corruption, which they follow with diligence and constancy. 'They plough iniquity, sow wickedness, and reap the same,' Job 4:8. Alas! what pains do they take to pollute themselves spiritually, and perish eternally! They plough iniquity. Ploughing is no easy, lazy work. We say of such works as require much pains, a man were as good go to plough all day; these sons of Belial, that will not stoop to the easy yoke of the Saviour, can submit their proud necks to the hard yoke of Satan, and follow his plough willingly. Sin is their diet, their meat and drink: 'They eat the bread of violence, and drink the wine of deceit,' Prov. 4:17. Nay, it is their dainties, their delicacies; 'Let me not eat of their dainties,' Ps. 141:4. These apish monkeys, who now and then act the part of Christians without a principle of Christianity, feed on spiders, on poison. Further, it is not only their nourishment in the day, but their refreshment in the night: 'They cannot sleep unless they cause some to fall,' Prov. 4:16. Till their stomachs are gorged and glutted with the sweetmeats of sin, and thereby their heads filled with filthy fumes and vapours arising thence, they can take no rest. They love sin above sleep; and let them but riot, they will lose their rest. The



murderer riseth with the light to cut asunder the silver thread of his neighbour's life. The drunkard, that hellish good husband, can be all night drinking healths to others, whilst he leaves none to himself; how often doth his brains crow before break of day! The thief and adulterer love and long for darkness to cover and countenance their cursed deeds, Job 24:14–16; Prov. 7:9. Once more, as sin is their nourishment, their food and sleep, so it is their garment, their ornament. 'Pride compasseth them about as a chain, violence covereth them as a garment,' Ps. 73:6. A chain of pearl doth not better become their necks, nor the richest robes adorn their backs, than sin doth, in their judgments, become and suit their souls; they glory in their shame. Plato saith of Protagoras, that he boasted, whereas he had lived sixty years, he had spent forty years in corrupting youth. They brag of that which they ought to bewail.

They plot sin with their heads; 'they conceive mischief,' Ps. 7:14. They affect sin with their hearts; 'their hearts are after their covetousness,' Ezek. 33. They act with their hands what their heads forge and their hearts favour; they 'do evil with both hands earnestly,' Micah 7:3. They work so hard till they are weary; 'Thou hast wearied thyself in the multitude of thy counsels,' Isa. 47:13. Pliny saith of the scorpion, that there is not one minute wherein he doth not put forth his sting; these cannot cease from sin, 2 Pet. 2; they do even contend which of them shall exceed in sin, as unhappy boys strive who shall go farthest in the dirt.

All the rubs which are laid in their way do rather increase their rage than hinder their riot. When God would stop the stream of their lusts by his prohibitions, laws, judgments, like waters dammed up, they swell the more, and like the possessed person, break all those cords in pieces. When Paul chides the Ephesians for their idolatry, they cry out for it with the greater vehemency. When Stephen had reproved

the Jews for their cruelty, 'they were cut to the heart, and gnash upon him with their teeth,' Acts 7:54, 57. When Ahaz was hampered in affliction, like a mad dog he bites at his chain, and 'sins yet more in his distress against the Lord.' When the sinner's tide of nature is thwarted and crossed by the winds of reproof, or some judgment, what a storm is presently raised! how doth he, like the sea, presently discover and 'foam out his own shame.' Though God command, entreat, persuade, threaten, promise, yet all this physic doth often but move and stir, not remove nor purge away their ill-humours. Oh how deadly is that disease which no physic can cure! and how tough is that wood which no wedge can cleave! The bird will beware of the pitfall in which she hath been caught, and the beast of the snare in which he hath been taken; but brutish man, more foolish than beasts, will not be parted from sin, though he hath been sharply punished for it.

'The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ears; which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely,' Ps. 58:3–5. The serpent, when she begins to feel the charmer, clappeth one ear presently to the ground, and stoppeth the other ear with her tail, although by hearkening to the charmer, as some observe, she would be provoked to spit out her poison, and renew her age. So hot is man upon his harlot sin, that he is deaf to all that would counsel him to the contrary; he stoppeth his ear, hardeneth his heart, stiffeneth his neck against the thunders of the law, the still voice of the gospel, the motions of the Spirit, and the convictions of his own conscience. When sin calls, they run through thick and thin for haste; when the world commands, how readily do they hearken, how quickly do they hear, how faithfully do they obey! but when the blessed God crieth to them, chargeth them by his unquestionable

authority, beseecheth them for their own unchangeable felicity, they, like statues of men rather than living creatures, stand still and stir not at all. Other things move swiftly to their centres; stones fall tumbling downward, sparks fly apace upward, coneys run with speed to their burrows, rivers with violence to the ocean, and yet silly man hangs off from his Maker—that neither entreaties, nor threatenings, nor the word, nor the works of God, nor hope of heaven, nor fear of hell, can quicken or hasten him to his happiness. Who would imagine that a reasonable soul should act so much against sense and reason? Where is the saint that is not shamed by the very damned? Sinners drive furiously, like Jehu, against their God, their sovereign; but saints, like Egyptians, drive heavily, though they are marching in the road to the heavenly Canaan. Ah, who presseth towards the mark for the prize of high calling? Who works so hard to be preferred to the beatifical vision, as wicked men do to be punished with eternal, destruction? They sweat at sowing in the devil's field, when all they shall reap thereby will be damnation, and thou freezest in seeking God's favour, when the fruit thereof will be everlasting salvation.

O reader, consider and mourn, that the deceitful world (who will leave their lovers in the greatest danger) should have such hot and violent wooers; that superstition should be so greedily caught at, though, like hemlock, it makes them run mad that eat it, and ends often in desperation; nay, that the loathsome monster sin—whose father is the devil, whose service is perfect slavery, whose jointure is blackness of darkness for ever—should have so many and such eager, earnest suitors; and yet godliness, whose birth is noble from heaven, whose person is lovely, the beautiful image of the blessed God, whose portion is large, no less than eternal life, should be by most wholly slighted, and at best but coldly courted. Surely this ought to be for a lamentation. Good God! whither did man go when he departed away from thee!

The ancient men wept when they saw the foundation of the second temple laid, considering how far it came short of the glory and beauty of the first, Ezra 3:12. What cause have we then to weep floods of tears when we ponder how short man is, nay, how contrary man is to his primitive purity and perfection! Godliness was then his business, but is now his burden; sin was then loathed as his bane, but is now loved as his daily bread.

## **CHAPTER X**

### **An exhortation to make God our business in the whole course of our lives**

The second and principal use which I shall make of this doctrine shall be by way of exhortation. Ought godliness to be every one's business? then, reader, let me persuade thee in the fear of God to put this precept into practice—'Exercise thyself to godliness.' Let it be the chief trade thou drivest, the principal calling thou followest, to worship the true God in heart and life, according to his revealed will. I hope thou art satisfied in the weight of the reasons already delivered; what canst thou say why thou shouldst not presently set upon the work. Thou hast heard it is the great end of thy being and continuance in this world; that it is an employment of the greatest concernment—how it is soul-work, God-work, eternity-work; that it must of necessity be made the main business, or otherwise all thy labour will be lost. Canst thou easily break this threefold cord. Let conscience judge between God and thee, whether such a work as this is doth not deserve all thy time and strength, thine utmost care and greatest diligence, and ten thousand times more than thou canst possibly give it. Thou hast also read how fiery and furious worldlings,

formalists, sinners are for their Delilahs and minions. Oh, why art thou so slothful to 'go in and possess the good land'? Judges 18:3.

Themistocles seeing two cocks fight, when he was going to a battle, pointed his soldiers to them, and said, 'Do you see yonder combatants, how valiantly they deal their blows, with what fury they fight! and yet they fight not for their country, nor for their gods, nor for the honour of their ancestors, nor for glory, nor liberty, nor children! What courage then, my brave countrymen, should this put into our hearts, on whose resolution all these depend, and by whose valour they subsist!' So I say to thee, reader; dost thou see yonder worldling, how he rideth, runneth, toileth, moileth, sweateth, wasteth his strength, wrongeth his body, makes a very pack-horse of it, and will scarce allow it time to eat or sleep? Dost thou see yonder superstitious person, how zealous he is for the inventions of men, laying his estate, limbs, liberty, and life at the feet of his own idol? How like one upon a fiery steed full of mettle, he rides post out of God's way, and from God's word! Nay, dost thou see yonder sinner, what time he spends, what miseries he endures, what wealth he wastes, how hard he labours to gratify his lust? And yet these work not for the blood of Christ, nor for the love of the Father, nor for the graces of the Spirit, nor for freedom from the curse of the law, the slavery of Satan, the torments of hell, nor for their souls, nor for their God, nor for fulness of joy, and the pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore. What zeal and fervency should this put into our hearts, dear friends, and what diligence and industry into our hands, when we work and trade for all these! and if we make them our business our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

Exercise thyself to godliness, not to superstition. As the ivy in time eats up the very heart of the oak it groweth about, so doth formality and superstition the very heart and life of religion. Let God's laws,

not thy own or others' lusts, be the rule whereby thou governest thy heart and life.

Superstition, saith an eminent divine, is to true holiness, what the concubine is to the true wife—who is sure to draw the husband's love from her. This brat the devil hath long put out to nurse to the Romish church, which hath taken a great deal of pains to bring it up for him; and no wonder, when she is so well paid for its maintenance, it having brought her in so much worldly treasure and riches.

What some observe of horse-hairs, that, though lifeless, yet lying nine days under water, they turn to snakes, may pertinently be applied to superstitious ceremonies, which, though at first dead, or held at most but indifferent, yet in continuance of time have quickened, and done much mischief. There is a simplicity in the word and worship of God, which I would entreat thee to look after. 'I fear lest your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ,' 2 Cor. 11:3, not as simplicity is opposed to wisdom, but as simplicity is opposed to mixtures; compositions do but diminish and abate the virtue of simples. The more natural and simple the wine is, the more pure it is; mixtures do but adulterate it. The more simple the worship of God is—I speak of gospel simplicity and order—the more pure it is; human inventions and mixtures may abase it, they cannot adorn it. God's altar under the law must be of earth; 'If thou lift up a tool upon it, thou hast polluted it,' Exod. 20:24, 25. Men are apt to think, that by lifting up tools on God's altar they polish it, but God himself saith they pollute it.

When the church was in her infancy, she was dressed in the swaddling clothes of ceremonies; but since she is grown up, God hath provided her other attire. To the Jews, the Sun of righteousness was

behind, and therefore the shadow of those ceremonies was before. They were in force and power; but to us Gentiles the Sun of righteousness is before, and therefore the shadow of ceremonies is behind. When Christ came, those shadows seemed to say, as the angels to Jacob, 'Let us go, for the day breaketh,' Gen. 32:26; at the death of Christ the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, to acquaint us that the Jewish ceremonies must then vanish, Mat. 27:51.

Reader, I would not be mistaken; I do not advise thee against that order and decency which is commanded in the worship of God, nor against active obedience to authority in things that are circumstantial, or not directly nor consequentially forbidden in Scripture, but I would counsel thee to beware, lest, like the dog in the fable, whilst thou art snapping at any shadow, thou dost not lose the substance; and withal I must tell thee, that as when the shadows grow long, it is a sign the sun is declining, so when those shadows, those even indifferent things increase, usually the substance, the light of holiness, decreaseth.

When corn runs out into straw and chaff, those that feed on it may well be thin and lean; but when it runs into ear and kernel, thou mayest expect such as eat of it to be fat and well-favoured: when religion runs into formalities and ceremonies, her followers can never be thriving spiritually—they may starve, for all the gaudy flowers wherewith the several dishes on her table are decked and set forth; it is the power of godliness alone, which, like wholesome and substantial food, will distribute nourishment and strength to the inner man. I expect nourishment from bread, not from straw or stones, because God hath annexed his blessing to the former, not to the latter. I look for spiritual strength from divine institutions, not from human inventions, because God's promise is made to word-

worship, not to will-worship. One would think the sparks of that fire wherewith Aaron's sons were consumed should fly in the faces of men, and make them afraid to offer up to the Lord what he commanded them not, Lev. 10:1, 2.

Exercise thyself to this worshipping the true God according to his revealed will; do not dally and trifle at it, be not cold and careless about it. Take heed of the worldling's political principles: 'Fair and softly goeth far. Too much of one thing is good for nothing. It is good to be religious, but not too conscientious. A little moderation would not do amiss.' These men would serve thee as ignorant mountebanks do their patients, that whilst they go about to cool the liver, lest it should set the blood in a flame, kill the stomach, and thereby necessarily destroy the body. They pretend some fear that thou mayest work too hard, even to thy hurt; when thou canst never do enough, much less too much, for thy God and thine everlasting good. I must needs tell thee that there is an impossibility of dividing thy service betwixt thy sins and thy Saviour, and of parting thy heart and work between the world and the word: 'No man can serve two masters,' Mat. 6:24. If like a meteor thou hangest between heaven and earth, haltest between Christ and the flesh, as a hunting dog between two hares, running sometime after this, sometime after that, thou wilt be sure at last to lose both.

Those creatures under the law, which did both move in the waters, and hover up and down in the air, were unclean in God's account, Lev. 11:10. There is a story of a bastard eagle, which hath one foot close like a goose, with which she swims in the waters and dives for fish, and another foot open and armed with talons, with which she soareth in the air, and seizeth her prey; but she, participating of both natures, is weak in either, and at last becomes a prey to every ordinary vulture. The ambidexter in religion, who is both for the



flesh and the spirit, for riches and righteousness, is all his time a servant of sin, and will at last become a prey to Satan.

Wherefore I must entreat thee, reader, to make godliness thy sole design and delight, thy main occupation and recreation. If thou find not the golden veins upon the surface, or just under the skin of the earth, do not throw off thy trade, nor cast away thy tools, but delve and dig lower; thou shalt certainly at length come to the rich treasure. The virtuous man in Greek is denominated from a word, σπουδαῖος, that signifieth industrious and diligent. Labour is the way to get and increase virtue, and the more virtuous thou art, the more laborious thou wilt be; frequent use must keep thy spiritual arms from rust.

It is a more worthy thing to abound in work, than to abound in wealth. Melanchthon spake nobly, Let others take riches, give me labour. They who have been busy about much meaner studies, have yet pursued them with incredible pleasure and extraordinary pains. Endymion spent whole nights on rocks and mountains, in contemplating the motions of the stars. It is said of Chrysippus, that he was so intent on his book, that he had starved his body, had not his maid put meat into his mouth. Cicero<sup>2</sup> professed he would part with all he was worth, that he might but live and die among his books. Did they reckon human knowledge, that curious piece of vanity, at so high a rate, that they would trample on their possessions, take any pains to procure it, to promote it? What a price shouldst thou set upon godliness, upon divine knowledge, which is the very seed of eternal life! John 17:3. Shouldst not thou undervalue thy estate and strength for it? Shouldst not thou spend all thy time, employ all thy talents, and improve all thy opportunities for the furthering of it? Oh that holy Paul might be thy pattern, 'Herein I exercise myself, to keep a conscience void of offence towards God

and men,' Acts 24:16. Here is Paul's precious cabinet, and his care to preserve it; his cabinet was his conscience void of offence, a treasure of inestimable value; in this cabinet were all the jewels of divine graces. His faith and love, his hope and humility, his patience and heavenly-mindedness, were glistering in it gloriously, like so many costly and sparkling diamonds; but observe Paul's care of this cabinet, 'I exercise myself to keep a conscience void of offence;' Paul knew many subtle thieves were abroad, and therefore he must make it his business to keep his pearls, or otherwise they would be stolen from him. He knew if he were robbed he were ruined; nay, if but a flaw were made in the jewel of his conscience, it would be of exceeding ill consequence to him, therefore he did 'exercise himself to keep a conscience void of offence.'

Again, exercise thyself to godliness; make it thy business in the whole course of thy life, nay, in every passage of thy conversation. As the blood runs through the whole body, and every vein of the body, so godliness must run through our whole conversation, and every particular action of it. Godliness must be like the sun, (though its situation be in heaven, and that the main place of its residence,) enlighten and warm the whole body of the air, and all the earth by its influence, shine on all thy natural, civil, and spiritual works, 'nothing must be hid from the heat thereof.' Reader, observe the command, 'Be ye holy in all manner of conversation,' 1 Pet. 1:15.

The Greek word ἀναστροφὴ, and the Latin word conversatio, for conversation, come of a verb that signifieth to turn; to note, that which way soever a Christian turneth himself he must be holy; he must be holy in his closet, alone, holy among company, holy at home, holy abroad, holy in his shop, holy among his sheep, holy in the church, holy in his chamber, holy at his table, holy in his travels, holy in prosperity, holy in adversity, holy in every relation and in every

condition, 'in all manner of conversation.' As oil is laid over all colours to make them durable, so godliness must be laid on every part and practice of our conversation, and thereby they will be permanent to our comfort, and run parallel with the line of eternity. We lay gold, because excellent, on all sorts of metals; godliness, which is more precious than fine gold, must be laid on our naturals, morals, intellectuals; all of them must have their virtue and value from it. The truth is, they all, like ciphers, stand for nothing, unless this figure be joined with them, and put before them.

Believers are commanded to be 'holy men,' Exod. 22 ult. In the original it is men of holiness; and 'ye shall be men of holiness unto me'—that is, all over holy. As Christ is called 'a man of sorrows,' because his whole man, body and soul, was steeped in tears, and his whole time, from the womb to the tomb, was spent in sorrows and sufferings, full of tribulations; and as Antichrist is called a 'man of sin' because he is, as Beza observes well, *merum scelus*—mere sin, nothing but sin, Isa. 53:3; 2 Thes. 2:3; so the children of God should be men of holiness, mere holiness, made up of holiness, nothing but holiness. Every part of them should be holy, and every deed done by them should be holy. Holiness in their hearts should, as the lungs in the body, be in continual motion; and holiness in their life must run through all their works, as the woof through the whole web.

The Jews had their daily, weekly, monthly, yearly addresses unto God, to teach us that we must be always trading heavenward; that there must be an unwearied commerce, an uninterrupted intercourse, betwixt God and our souls. Saints' lives are therefore compared to a walk, and called a 'walking with God,' or a 'walking before God.' They must still walk as in company with him, and tread every step as under his eye, Gen. 5:22, and 17:1. The planets, because of their wandering nature, are sometimes nearer to, sometimes

farther from the earth, yet always within the zodiac, the highway of the sun. So the Christian, though he be sometimes stooping to the earth in his particular calling, sometimes mounting up to heaven in the immediate worship of God, yet he must always be in the path of godliness—the highway of the Sun of righteousness: 'Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long,' saith Solomon, Prov. 23:17. Whether a Christian be eating or drinking, or buying or selling, or ploughing or sowing, or riding or walking, whatever he be doing, or wherever he be going, he must be always in the fear of the Lord. Godliness must be his guide, his measure, and his end; as the salt, it must be sprinkled on every dish to make it savoury. Thy life, O Christian, must be so led that it may be a continued serving of God.

The precept is full, (though if a true Christian, thou wilt esteem it a privilege,) that whatsoever thou dost, thou art to 'do all to the glory of God,' 1 Cor. 10:31. God must be the 'Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end,' of all thy actions. Thy duty is to 'pass the whole time of thy sojourning here in fear,' 1 Pet. 1:17. Every moment must be devoted to God; and as all seasons, so all actions, must be sacred. There is a prophecy that in Jerusalem, 'In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness to the Lord, and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar; yea, every pot in Judah and Jerusalem shall be holiness to the Lord of hosts,' Zech. 14:20, 21. Mark, the same inscription is to be upon the bells of horses, and on every pot, which was on the high priest's mitre, HOLINESS TO THE LORD, to teach us, that everything, though but of common use, should be sanctified to God's service—that every ordinary enterprise, saith Calvin, should be a sacrifice.

In the prosecution of this exhortation, I shall—

First, Speak to the nature of this duty, and manner; how a Christian must exercise himself to godliness in the whole course of his life, and in every part thereof.

Secondly, I shall lay down some means for the accomplishing this duty.

Thirdly, I shall annex some motives to encourage the reader in this holy trade and calling.

First, As to the manner how a saint may, in every passage of his life, follow this trade. I shall divide my discourse into these several heads.

1. How a man may make godliness his business in religious actions, or the worship of God in general, as also in his carriage, in hearing or reading, in prayer, at the Lord's Supper, and on the Lord's day in particular.
2. How a Christian may make religion his business in his natural actions, of eating, drinking, sleeping, and clothing.
3. In his recreations.
4. In his particular vocation or calling.
5. In reference to his relations and family.
6. In his dealings with all men.
7. In all conditions, whether of prosperity or adversity.
8. In all companies, whether good or bad.
9. In solitariness, or when he is alone.

10. On a week-day, from morning to night.

11. In his visiting the sick.

12. Upon a dying bed.

## **CHAPTER XI**

### **How a Christian may make religion his business in spiritual performances and religious actions**

First, Make godliness thy business in religious duties.

I shall put that first in order which is first in nature and excellency; and truly, friend, thy special care must be here; thy greatest diligence will be little enough when thou comest solemnly into God's presence. Cleanly men wash their hands and brush their clothes every day, but when they are to dine with a king they will wash and scour their hands; they will brush their clothes over and over again, that their hands may be, if possible, clean from the least dirt, and their garments from the least dust. The true Christian is, in all company, and in the whole course of his life, every day careful to keep his soul clean and his conscience clear—nay, to increase his godliness; but when he draweth nigh to God, then he hath more special care and extraordinary caution. Though tradesmen are, all the year long, doing somewhat at their callings, either casting up their accounts, or gathering in their debts, or amending something in their commodities which are amiss, and therefore have no time for idleness; yet at some times of the year they are full of trading; their shops are crowded with customers; they are all the week either

sending out or taking in wares. Now this time calls for their greatest diligence and watchfulness.

The time of sacred duty is a Christian's market-day, wherein he is much employed, and therefore it calls for his greatest diligence. He that leaves his shop, or loiters in it at such a time, must expect that his shop will quickly leave him. The husbandman hath his seasons to plough and sow in, which if he be heedless and careless about, that either his seed be smutty or his servant slothful, he can look for but a mean and poor harvest. The hours of praying, and reading, and hearing, are the saints' opportunities and seasons of grace. If he be not, then, careful and conscientious to 'plough up the fallow-ground of his heart,' and to 'sow to the Spirit,' his return will be very inconsiderable; he will reap but a thin crop. But truly, friend, if thou hast no respect to thy soul's good, God hath to his own glory; and though he stoop to thee in giving thee leave to seek his face and hear his voice, yet he will not be slighted by thee. He is a glorious and jealous Majesty, and esteemeth it a disparagement to him for any to wait upon him without their best attire. Though Uzzah be dead, yet he speaketh to thee to take heed how thou touchest the ark.

A prince may be pleased, if his kitchen be but indifferent neat and handsome; but he looks that in his parlour, where he gives entertainment to his friend, all things should be in print. Where God's special walk is amongst his candlesticks, and amidst his myrtle-trees, there godliness must be our special work. 'Holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, for ever,' Ps. 93 ult. Godliness doth always suit the back of a saint; this gracious garment is a glorious ornament to him, whatever he is doing, or wherever he is going; but the apparel doth become him best in his approaches to the Holy God. No hangings, no tapestry becomes God's house so well as holiness;

and no place is so proper as the house of God for this costly, comely furniture.

God is more honoured or dishonoured in our religious actions, than in all the actions of our lives; in them we do directly and immediately pretend his honour and service; and therefore if we do not walk in them watchfully, and intend them seriously, the greater is our sin. For a trespass committed against holy things, the Jews were to bring a ram, to be valued by the shekel of the sanctuary; for a trespass against their brethren a ram was required, but no such valuation expressed; whence Origen infers, *Aliud est peccare in sanctis, aliud extra sancta*: It is one thing to sin in holy things, another thing to sin beside them. And he urgeth that place in Samuel, 1 Sam. 2:25, 'If a man sin against another man, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?' Lev. 5:15, and 6:6. When men are some way off in a king's eye they will be comely in their carriage; but when they come into his presence-chamber to speak with him they will be most careful. Because saints are always in God's sight, their constant deportment must be pious and seemly. 'I have kept thy precepts, for all my ways are before thee,' Ps. 119:168. But because the ordinances of God are the very face of God, and they who worship him therein do solemnly appear before him, therefore at such seasons they are bound to be most holy and serious, Exod. 23:17; Ps. 42:2. The saying of the sage orator hath some weight, Worship the gods at all times, especially in public—that is, in their sacrifices. God is very curious how men carry themselves in his courts, and commandeth thee, reader, to be eminently pious when thou appearest in his presence. Do but observe under the law how choice he was about all things relating to his worship: the tabernacle must be made of the best wood, the purest gold, the finest linen, and every part and pin of it done exactly according to God's own precept; the persons called to set it up must be rarely gifted, and singularly



endowed for that very purpose. He that offereth sacrifice must be without blemish, 'For whatsoever man he be that hath any blemish, he shall not approach. A blind man, or a lame man, or he that hath anything superfluous, or a flat nose, or he that is broken-faced, or broken-handed, or crooked-backed, or a dwarf, or that hath any blemish in his eye, or the scurvy, or is scabbed. No man that hath any blemish of the sons of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the Lord, made by fire: he hath a blemish; he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God,' Lev. 21:17–20. So the sacrifice also must be perfect, without spot. If it were 'blind, or broken, or maimed, had a wen, the scurvy, or were scabbed,' Lev. 22:19, 22, 24, it must not be offered; it must be 'a male without blemish, of the best of the flocks;' nay, the best of these beasts, the fat, even all the fat, which covereth the inwards, Lev. 3:3. And what is the substance of all these shadows, but this, that God will be served by holy men in the purest, holiest manner; that we must be very exact, both as to our persons and performances, when we are in his presence; that he expects the best of living sacrifices, the hearts and spirits of men; nay, the best of the best, all the heart, and all the soul, and all the strength, Prov. 23; John 4:24; Mat. 22:37. Oh how much is an ordinary, slight performance, below and unsuitable to so great and glorious a Prince! Religion is as tender a thing as the apple of thine eye, by playing with the eye it may be put out, by dallying with duties thou mayest spoil all.

If the Egyptians did reverence Mercurius Trismegistus so much, that they did forbear, out of respect to him, to pronounce his name rashly, what respect shouldst thou bear to ordinances, which are the name of God, Exod. 20:24. How fearful shouldst thou be of taking the name of God in vain.

The blind heathen were choice and devout in the service of dumb idols; they served them in white, an emblem of purity; they thought nothing too good for those false gods, for whom the worst was not bad enough. Solon, the Athenian lawgiver, enacted, that none should serve the gods obiter, or by the by, that their sacrifices should be all select and chosen, and that the sacrificers should purify themselves some days beforehand. Lycurgus had made a law, that no man should be at any great charge in a sacrifice, lest he should grow weary of divine service: yet when Phidias, the famous carver, advised the Athenians to make the statue of Minerva of marble rather than ivory —1. Because it was more durable, this reason was approved; 2. Because less chargeable: at the mention hereof, with much rage and wrath, they commanded him silence. They had a higher respect for those lies and falsehoods than many have for the true God. When they were going to offer sacrifice their priest cried, Τὶς τῇδε, Who is here? Those present answered, Πολλοὶ καὶ ἀγαθοὶ, Many and good. Were they so choice and wary in the service of their dunghill deities; and wilt not thou, friend, be circumspect and conscientious in the service of the living God? Did they think nothing costly enough for inanimate creatures, and wilt thou offer to the Lord thy God that which cost thee nothing? Can thy box of precious ointment, though it be worth never so much, be bestowed better than on thy dearest Saviour? And can thy care and caution, thy love and labour, be employed better than in his service? Or dost thou think that the false gods were more affected with their dishonour, or more to be feared in their displeasure, than the living, true God? Dost thou not know that he 'will be sanctified in them that draw nigh to him'? Lev. 10:3. Great persons are impatient of contempts and affronts, especially when they are offered to them in their own houses; God will sooner overlook thy forgetfulness of him in thy trade or travels than in his tabernacle. When thou drawest nigh to him, there he will be sanctified, either in thee or upon thee. If thou refuse to give him

glory in his service, believe it, he will get himself glory by thy suffering. His worship is his face, and look for his fury, if thou darest him to his face.

The waters of the sanctuary are like the waters given to a suspected wife: if she were innocent, it witnessed her honesty, made her fruitful if barren, and did her good; but if she were guilty, swelled her belly, rotted her bowels, and did her hurt. If thou make godliness thy business in the ordinances of God, thou mayest get much spiritual good, thou mayest meet Christ in them, receive grace through them, and thrive as the babe by the breasts in health and strength; but if thou, like the horse in the mill, only goest thy round in religious duties, never minding the true end of them, nor thy carriage in them, thy prayer will be an abomination, the word 'a savour of death unto death,' and the very sacrament a seal of thy damnation. It doth therefore nearly concern thee to hearken to that counsel which I shall give thee from the word, to prevent thy miscarriage in the duties of God's worship: for preparation to duties, I shall speak when I come to treat of sanctifying the Lord's day.

First, Be heedful and watchful over thyself when thou art about religious duties. Heedless service is fruitless service; what measure of care we give God in duties, the same measure of comfort we may expect from duties. Eccles. 5:1, 'Keep thy feet when thou goest into the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools.' Thine heart, like Dinah, is apt to wander abroad, especially from the way and worship of God; it behoves thee then to have a strict hand over it, if thou wouldst keep it at home: 'Observe, consider thy feet,' so the word signifieth.

The feet of the harlot abide not within her house, neither will thy affections easily within the house of God; doth not experience tell

thee that they love to be gadding, and therefore require a strong and vigilant guard? Parents set their children before them at church, and have their eyes much upon them, because otherwise they will be toying and playing; truly so will thy heart, if thine eye be not on it. Alas, thy heart in duty is like one that looks through an optic glass on some small object, with a palsy hand, it is long before he can discern it, and as soon as he hath found it, so unsteady is his hand that he hath lost it again; therefore it behoves thee to keep it diligently, and to watch it narrowly; there is a bottomless depth of deceit in thine heart—how unwilling is it to a duty! how much wandering in a duty! how soon weary of a duty! 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who knoweth it?' Jer. 17:11. Take notice of the centre of the poison, the heart is deceitful; a deceitful hand is nothing so dangerous as a deceitful heart; when poison gets to the very seat of life, in what danger is a soul of death! Here is also the measure of the pollution. The heart is deceitful above all things, the best part is unspeakably poisoned. The prophet's expression hath a threefold gradation. First, There is deceit in man's heart, it is a word used of ways, Isa. 40:5, which are full of windings and turnings, and therefore are hard to be found; so is man's heart full of nooks and corners, slights and craft, and so doth easily supplant us; it hath not only weakness and proneness to be deceived by others, but also an activeness and aptness to deceive itself. Secondly, there is the degree of its deceit, and indeed it is beyond all degrees. 'The heart is deceitful above all things;' no creature so sly and subtle as man's heart, nothing in this world can equal it for tricks and wiles: nay, as this deceit of man's heart is so great that none can match it, so also is it so deep that none can find it, none can fathom it, 'Who can know it?' The largest, the longest line of man's understanding can never search to the bottom of this sea. Thirdly, Here is the danger of it, 'the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.' It is not deceitful in such a degree, so much through weakness as

through wilfulness, it is desperately carried towards deadly courses. It devotes itself wholly to deceive and destroy. How many pretences will it have to make thee to omit holy performances! if thou overcome them, how subtle will it be to make thee heedless and heartless in the service of God! It will fill thee with cares and thoughts of the world, purposely to choke the good seed of the word; if at any time thou wind it up to any seriousness in an ordinance, how quickly and how swiftly, like a clock or a jack, doth it run down. Surely, reader, the master that hath such a cozening servant, must look narrowly to him, if he would not be cheated by him. If thou dost not watch at the altar, the birds will devour the sacrifice.

Those that were before the throne day and night were full of eyes, behind and before, and within, Rev. 4:6 and 8. Extraordinary heed is necessary when we come into God's house. We had need to have our eyes about us, when we come to deal immediately with him, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. The Athenians in time of their sacrifice, had a monitor to bid them be serious, calling on them, Hoe agite, Mind the work ye are about. (Plut.) Cyprian observeth, that in the primitive times the deacon often cried out to the people, Sursum corda, Lift up your hearts: and the pastor stirred them up with Oremus, attendamus, Let us pray, let us attend; commanding their greatest attention when they were about religious actions.

Eutychus was drowsy while he was hearing, which had like to have cost him his life; God will not be slighted when he is speaking to the children of men. Christ commandeth thee to 'take heed how thou hearest,' Luke 8:18. The heart is needful in hearing more than the ears. We read of those that 'had ears and yet heard not,' Isa. 6:9, 10; Mat. 13:13. It is one thing to hear, and another thing to heed a sermon. 'Let him that hath an ear hear what the Spirit saith to the churches,' Rev. 2. When the word passeth through both ears, as

waters through a leaking vessel, no wonder if it be unprofitable. Lest it should do so, 'let us give the more diligent heed,' saith the apostle, Heb. 2:1. If men be told of the dreadful end of sin, and the great danger of their precious souls, and they mind it not, will they ever strive to prevent it? Our proficiency by the word depends not a little upon our earnest attention to the word, Luke 19:48. It is said there, 'the people were attentive to hear him.' They hanged on Christ as if their ears and minds had been tied to his tongue, or as eagerly as the little bird on the dam's bill for corn.

In prayer also be heedful, 'watch unto prayer,' Mark 13:33. Nehemiah, when building, did work and watch, watch and work, because of his enemies; when thou art at prayer, temptations without will be waiting, corruptions within will be working; and therefore it is requisite for thee to be watching.

Those that perform their duties, as papists say their paternosters, and musicians play their lessons, with their fingers, when their minds are busied about other things, will make but harsh and displeasing music in God's ears. 'O God,' saith the psalmist, 'thou art terrible out of thy holy places,' Ps. 68:35. The sanctuary or place of worship was divided into three parts, thence called 'thy holy places;' now out of them God was comfortable to his watchful and diligent servants, but terrible to the slothful and negligent. He is terrible not only in the high places of the field, but also in the holy places of the faithful.

How canst thou expect that God should heed thy prayers, when thou dost not heed them thyself; wouldst thou give alms to a beggar that by his carriage and language should slight both thee and thy bounty? If a condemned malefactor were suing to a prince for his life, and in the midst of his entreaties should see a moth or a fly, and leave his

suit and follow after that, would this wretch deserve a pardon? And is it not as unreasonable that God should grant thy requests, if thou wilfully follow those foolish objects which thy heart, or the devil offer to thee in the midst of thy prayers; monstrous compositions, wherein is the face and voice of a man, the heart and feet of a beast, must needs be odious to God; Oh bind thine heart to its good behaviour, when thou goest into God's house. Men put locks and fetters on wild horses, whom no enclosure can keep in. This watching the heart in duties will fasten and tie it, as with cords, to the altar.

Secondly, Act grace in duties. The acting of grace in a duty is the grace of a duty. The Christian must attend on the means of grace, in a gracious manner; the manner of performing duties is the most spiritual part of them, and therefore must most of all be minded. God made a breach on them who sought him, 'not after the due order,' 1 Chron. 15:13. If the matter of thy performance be according to the word, and thou wilfully fail in the manner, thou wilt, instead of a blessing, meet with a blow. God had sacrifices from the Jews of his own appointment for the matter, and yet they were unsavoury to him, Isa. 1:13–15. It is the manner which makes or mars every action, that is the form which specificates all our devotion; grace is God's own image, abundantly amiable in his eye, and that must be stamped on all our coin of duties, or they will never be current with heaven. Kings suffer no coin to go in their dominions, but what hath their own stamp. Tamerlane would not own a pot of gold which his soldier found and brought him, because it wanted his father's impression. Christ will own no performances unless they have his Father's picture, somewhat of his image on them.

Indeed, the Christian hath no natural power for these spiritual performances, but God gives him his Spirit for this purpose, that he might be enabled to do sacred duties, with suitable graces; 'we know

not how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit helpeth our infirmities,' Rom. 8:26. Man is impotent, but the Spirit is an able assistant, 'helpeth our infirmities,' συναντιλαμβάνεται. The word is either an allusion to a nurse, which helps her weak little child to go, so the Spirit affords his hand and helps us to go to God in duties; or, as the composition of the word imports, it is an allusion to those who lift at a weighty piece of timber, too heavy for one alone, one man tugs and pulls hard, but he cannot wag it, till one stronger than he comes and helps him, then he bears it away cheerfully; so the Christian, he pulls and hales at his own heavy heart in a duty, to perform the duty aright, and yet makes nothing of it till the Spirit comes and helps him, and then he goes along comfortably through the duty. As to preaching there is required external mission, so to every prayer and performance there are required internal motions; therefore we find the 'Spirit of grace and supplication' joined together, Zech. 12:10. Samson when his lock was cut off, became like another man; the Christian, when the Spirit withdraweth, that grace be not acted, he performeth duties like a carnal man. It is the breath of the Spirit of God in a duty, which is so sweet and savoury to God; gifts may do somewhat as to the outward part of a duty, as a carver may make an image with the external lineaments of a man, but unless grace and spiritual life be in it, it is but the counterfeit, the resemblance of a true duty.

The two special graces, which I shall speak of, to be acted in religious exercises, are fear and faith; upon these two feet David walked into God's house. 'I will go into thine house, in the multitude of thy mercies,' there was his faith; 'and in thy fear will I worship towards thy holy temple,' Ps. 5:6, here is his fear. The Christian, like a net, must have both the lead of a holy fear, and the cork of a lively faith, if he would catch anything out of the waters of the sanctuary: if the cork of faith was without the lead of fear, the net would lie too high;



if the lead of fear were without the cork of faith, the net of the soul would fall too low, and so nothing would be caught; but both together lay in the likeliest place for a good draught.

1. Fear and awful apprehensions of God's infinite majesty is requisite in our religious actions: this must be the handmaid to wait upon the mistress of the soul in all its addresses to the King of heaven, 'Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling,' Ps. 2:11. God alloweth an humble familiarity in the walks of obedience, yet he will always have the children of men to know their distance. And though this habit of fear must be ever in our hearts, as fire was constantly on the altar, yet he expects that it should be blown up and flame out at the time of offering sacrifice. Our greatest reverence is then most needful, when we approach the great God in his ordinances. 'God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and had in reverence of all them that are round about him,' Ps. 89:7.

When God intended to give the law to Israel, the Jews must sanctify themselves three days beforehand, Exod. 19:11, 12, 14; and when God came on the third day to deliver his pleasure to the people, with what pomp and terror was proclamation made! He descends in his royal robes, with a noble retinue of saints and angels, and with the dreadful ensigns of his power, majesty, and jealousy. Deut. 33:2, 'The Lord came from Sinai, and rose from Seir, he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousand of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them.' Exod. 19:16, 18, 'Then were there thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that were in the camp trembled. And mount Sinai was altogether in a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly;' and why is all this? Why doth the mighty possessor

of heaven and earth appear at that time in such state and royalty and magnificence, with such a train of heavenly courtiers, with such thundering volleys of shot, with the mountain smoking under him, and trumpets sounding before him, but to assure us that he is not so contemptible, as to be slighted by any; that he is not impotent, but able to revenge himself on all that affront him; nay, to teach us that he will be feared and revered in all them that draw nigh to him? Therefore he will make even Moses, whom he knew face to face, at such a time exceedingly to quake and fear, Heb. 12:21.

Civil or natural difference amongst us here below commandeth proportionable reverence, the subject must fear his sovereign, 1 Pet. 2:17. The servant must obey his master with fear and trembling, Eph. 6:5, the wife must see that she reverence her husband, Eph. 5 ult. If there be such reverence due from one creature to another, when they were all made of the same coarse earthly mould, and must all be buried in the bowels of their common mother; when there is no essential, but only an extrinsecal difference between them; what reverence is due from poor dust and ashes to 'the God of the spirits of all flesh'? the King of kings, and Lord of lords, between whom and his creatures there is an infinite distance?

It behoveth us, said Bernard, to enter into the celestial court, at prayer time, where the King of heaven sits on his starry, stately throne, environed with an innumerable company of glorious angels and crowned saints, with great reverence and fear. Ah, with what humility should a poisonous, polluted toad, creep and crawl out of a ditch into the presence of so glorious and dreadful a Majesty! The holy servants of God were anciently called *Nephalim*, from *nephal* to fall down, prostrates, or fallers, because in the worship of God they usually fell on the earth.

The elders of Israel trembled at the coming of Samuel, 1 Sam. 16:9, and shall not we tremble when the great God cometh to us in his ordinances?

Every relation in which men stand to God calls for awfulness and dread of him. 'If I be a father, where is mine honour? if I be your master, where is my fear?' Mal. 1:6, but especially in the saints' approaches to him; they must stand in awe of him. When God appeared to Jacob at Bethel, where he saw nothing but visions of love, he crieth out, 'This is none other but the house of God; how dreadful is this place!' Gen. 28:17.

The great Turk, when he goeth into his temple, layeth aside all his state, and hath none to attend him but a professor of the law.

Therefore, reader, be persuaded to 'fear that glorious and fearful name, the Lord thy God,' Deut. 28:58. That name which is the greatest prop of thine affiance, commandeth thy fear and reverence.

When thou hearest, in the fear of God give audience to his word, Acts 13:16. Poor peasants must be trembling when this prince is speaking. With meekness receive that word which will damn or save thy soul. Alas! with what fear should a condemned prisoner attend to his king, when every word he speaks is life or death! It becomes the greatest persons to be awful in God's presence. Constantine the Great, when hearing a sermon, would start out of his chair of state, being ravished with the word, and stand up for a long time; and being minded by his courtiers that such a posture was unbecoming his high place, he would not hearken to them. Eglon, though a fat unwieldy man, as soon as Ehud told him that he had a message from God to him, rose up to hear it, Judges 3:20. Abraham, who had the honour and favour to be God's friend, yet when God spake to him, fell on his face, Gen. 17:3. Moses, though high in the heart of God, yet is humble when he

hears from God; he boweth his head towards the earth, and worships, Exod. 34:8.

When thou prayest, put up thy petitions to him with awful apprehensions of him. The vulg. Lat. read that Ps. 84:11, *abjectus in domo Dei mei*, to be cast upon the earth, to lie prostrate in the house of God. The eastern Christians, when they called on God, threw themselves on the ground. Luther prayed with confidence as to a father; but with reverence as to a God. Remember when thou takest upon thee to speak unto the Lord, yet thou art but dust and ashes, Gen. 18:27. Thou art at best but a beggar, and a proud heart will not suit a beggar's purse. 'The poor must use entreaties,' Prov. 18:23. The twenty-four elders fell on their faces and worshipped, Rev. 11:16. So did Jesus Christ himself in prayer, Mat. 26:30. 'O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker,' Ps. 95:6. The elephant, that could not bow nor kneel, was no fit beast for a sacrifice.

Go to the sacrament, that representation of Christ's suffering, as the disciples went from his sepulchre, 'with fear and great joy,' Mat. 28:8. The Fathers call it *mysterium tremendum*; the nearer we draw to God in any ordinance, the greater must be our reverence. In a sermon we draw nigh to him, as pupils to their tutor; in prayer, as children to their father; but at a sacrament we talk with God face to face, we sup with him, and he with us. If angels veil their faces in his presence, much more cause have we to serve him with fear and trembling in every ordinance. In a word, 'Let us have grace whereby we may serve him acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire,' Heb. 12:28, 29. Mark, the way to serve God acceptably is to serve him reverently. As the quaver addeth a grace to the music, and makes it more acceptable to us, so a holy trembling graceth our performances, and makes them more acceptable to God.

2. Perform religious duties with faith as well as fear; fear will keep the heart awful, and faith will make it cheerful in the service of God: 'Let us draw nigh to God with full assurance of faith,' Heb. 10:22. In ordinances man draweth nigh to God, but if he would do it with acceptance he must do it with affiance, with faith: 'By faith Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain,' Heb. 11:4. Faith doth instrumentally justify both our persons and performances, because it looks up to, and lays hold on Christ, who justifieth both meritoriously. God is 'of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Now there are many sins in our best services; we must therefore carry all our sacrifices (as the Israelites did, Exod. 28:38) to our high priest, who will take away the iniquity of our holy things, and procure their acceptance with the Lord: 'He shall purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness, then shall the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord,' Mal. 3:2–4. It is a prophecy of Christ. He shall purge away the dross from our duties, and then they shall be pleasing to God.

It was a sacred law among the Molossians, that whosoever came to the king with his son in his arms should be pardoned, whatsoever offence he were guilty of. The Athenian general, therefore, when banished his country, fled to Admetus, king of the Molossians, his deadly enemy, and prostrated himself before him with his son in his arms, and found favour. God and man are enemies; there is no appearing before this dreadful King without his Son in our arms, and with him there is no fear of a repulse: 'In him we have boldness, and access with confidence by the faith of him,' Eph. 3:12. As God and man are angry, Christ is medium reconciliationis—he makes them friends; as God and man are reconciled, Christ is medium communionis—he is the means of their fruition of each other. Therefore, reader, whatever thou dost, whether thou prayest, or nearest, or singest, or readest, 'do all in the name of Christ,' Col. 3:17.

Consider, thy admission into God's presence is by Christ: 'No man cometh to the Father but by the Son,' John 14:6; 'Through him we have access unto the Father,' Eph. 2:18. It is his blood which hath purchased thee this gracious privilege. He alone hath turned the seat of justice into a throne of grace. When thou approachest God, he would be a fire to consume thee, not a Father to embrace thee, were it not for his Son. Consider also, thy assistance in duties is from Christ: 'Without him thou canst do nothing,' John 15:3. Oh how dull and dead is thy heart in the most solemn duty, unless this Lord of life quicken it. Though thou hast a real principle of spiritual life, yet unless Christ draw thee, give thee quickening and inciting grace, thou canst not run after him in a duty.

Further, Thine acceptance in the ordinances of God is through Christ. Oh how unsavoury would thy best duties be, were it not for the odours of his most sweet sacrifice! The golden censer and the incense under the law typified that all our performances must be perfumed, and presented by Christ, before they can be accepted with God. The smoke of the incense must ascend with the saints' prayers before they can be pleasing. The incense (which signified the merits of Christ) is the pillar of smoke in which the believer's performances mount up to heaven, Rev. 8:3, 4. No wonder that David begged so hard, 'Let my prayers come before thee like incense.' The priests, when they went into the tabernacle to sacrifice, were commanded to put off their own, and to put on the holy garments provided for them, Exod. 28:43, intimating that none must approach God in the rags of their own, but in the robes of Christ's righteousness. The ark, which was a special type of Christ, (without of shittim-wood, speaking his humanity, within of wrought gold, typifying his deity,) did signify thus much to us; it covered the two tables, so Christ the law; there God gave his precious answers, and was propitious to his people; so God accepteth the persons and prayers of men in Christ, Eph. 1:6. If

the patriarchs were welcome to Pharaoh, it was for Joseph's sake; and if the people of God are welcome at any time to him, it is for Jesus' sake.

Faith in Christ is the eye which ravisheth the heart of God: 'Thou hast stolen away mine heart with one of thine eyes,' Cant. 4. Of all the virgin graces none find such favour in his sight. This, this is the Esther on whose head he sets the crown; when she appears before him, though it be contrary to the law of works, he constantly holds out the golden sceptre of grace: he is so delighted with her beauty, so ravished with her comeliness, that he granteth her request, be it to the half or whole of his kingdom. Therefore, reader, when thou goest to God, be sure to take Christ along with thee, as ever thou wouldst speed. Let thy prayers and petitions be in his name, with an eye to his promise, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, I will do it,' John 14:13. Let thy praises and thanksgivings be in his name, according to his precept, 'Giving thanks always, and in all things, unto God and our Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,' Eph. 5:20. To be short, 'As a holy priest offer up all thy spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.'

Thirdly, If thou wouldst make religion thy business in holy duties, perform them to give God glory by them, and to receive grace through them. Ordinances must be used both as a testimony of our subjection to God, and as the way of communion with God. God is present in his ordinances. 1. In majesty and beauty, and in that respect our end in them must be to give him glory. 2. In communication and bounty, and in that respect our end in them must be to receive grace from him, Ps. 27:4; Rev. 2:3, 6; Exod. 20:24. God's eye is very much on our ends in duties; he takes notice when he is neglected, and self exalted: 'When ye fasted and mourned, even these seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me? And when

ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did ye not eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?' Zech. 7:6, 7. God seeth when self-credit or self-profit is the end of a performance, Mat. 6:1, 2; Hosea 7:14. He weigheth all our actions by our aims. Now, as duties are considerable in a twofold respect, so a Christian must have in them a twofold end.

1. Duties are considerable, as services, in relation to the command; and so a Christian must mind them, that he may testify his obedience to God, and his dependence on him; 'Thou hast commanded me to keep thy precepts diligently; O that my ways were directed to keep thy commandments! Ps. 119:5, 6.

'Warn the unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient towards all men; rejoicing evermore; pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God concerning you,' 1 Thes. 5:14–18. God required the Israelites to bring a sheaf in a ghomer, about a pottle, for all their increase of the fruits of the earth, Lev. 23:10, whereby they acknowledged that they receive all from him. Though man be unable to satisfy God's justice by all his devotion, yet God will be owned and acknowledged in holy duties. Copy-holders, though they have the profits of their houses and lands to themselves, yet pay some small quitrent, and at certain times do suit and service to the lord of their manor, acknowledging thereby that the fee-simple is his, and they enjoy them through his favour. 'The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.' He is the mighty possessor of heaven and earth; and though he gives the earth by leases for lives, as it were, and copies to the children of men, yet the fee-simple and original right is still in himself, and he hath appointed seasons daily and weekly for duties, wherein Christians should acknowledge that they hold all of him, and enjoy all through his grace and good-will.



The worshipping of God in his ordinances is the homage which, as creatures, we owe to our Maker, and as Christians we owe to our Redeemer. God alloweth us the comfort of our mercies, but he reserveth to himself the credit of our mercies, and hath appointed the hours of prayer to be the set times for the payment of this small quit-rent (infinitely inferior to our engagements) to his sacred Majesty.

Truly, reader, this end must be minded in thine attendance on the means of grace—namely, to give God glory by acknowledging his sovereignty over thee and bounty to thee, or else when thou bendest the bow of thine heart, and shootest thy spiritual arrows, thou wilt never hit the mark.

2. Duties are considerable as means in relation to the promise; and so they are channels cut out by Christ to convey grace into the hearts of men; therefore thine end in this respect must be to derive grace from the God of all grace through the means of grace. The place of ordinances is called by some the door of heaven, because there Christ gives his alms, his dole. Others call it the celestial exchange between God and his people: God doth there exchange mercies for duties, and they exchange glory for grace. At the tabernacle, saith God, 'I will meet with the children of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory; and I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God,' *Exod. 29:43, 45*. When God comes to his house he never comes empty-handed. If Paul comes 'with the fulness of the blessings of the gospel of Christ,' with what clusters of blessings is the true Vine laden! with what a train of graces and comforts is this great King attended! 'I will meet with the children of Israel there.' When Jacob met Joseph, they kissed and wept, *Gen. 46:29*; but when God meets the believer, they have a merrier meeting; they kiss and rejoice.

'And I will dwell among them.' Who can imagine the house which God keeps where he dwells—the dainties, the delicacies which he provides for his friends and family! Great princes have great provision in their courts, answerable to their quality; but what provision doth the great God make! surely answerable to his infinite majesty!

The table in the tabernacle was furnished with so many loaves as there were tribes in Israel, signifying that God keeps a constant and plentiful table in his church for all believers.

Ordinances are canales gratiæ, conduit-pipes whereby the water of life is derived from Christ in the hearts of Christians. As the light and beams of the sun is the vehiculum or chariot to convey the heat and influence of the sun to the world; so the ordinances of God are the chariots whereby God conveyeth the heat of his grace, and the influences of his Spirit to men and women. Saints behold his face in the glass of ordinances, and are 'changed into his image from glory to glory,' 2 Cor. 3:18. Those divine graces, which are for meat to satisfy, and for medicine to heal the soul, are found growing only upon the banks of the waters of the sanctuary; therefore go to ordinances, as the viemalim, a bird in America, flieth to the fields for the dew which falls down from heaven there, upon which it liveth.

Socrates one day meeting Xenophon, the son of Corillus, in a certain port town, stopped him with his staff, and asked him, Where was the place where several commodities were to be had? He answered him readily, In such a place. Then saith Socrates, Where is the place that a man might be made good? Xenophon answered, He could not tell. Then follow thou me, saith Socrates, and thou shalt learn: and from that time he became Socrates' scholar. The ordinances of God are the places for both; there true riches and virtue may be had; the temple

is both the exchange for traffic, and a school for learning: the good Master teacheth his scholars there those lessons which make them wise to salvation.

Reader, the ordinances are the food of the soul—milk for babes and meat for men—do thou feed on them to get spiritual health and strength; it is a shame for a Christian to be like an ant, busy about a mole-hill, and never to grow greater. Go to those wells, that the vessels of thy soul may be filled with living water.

David longed (as a woman with child, so the word signifieth) to see the beauty of the Lord, and receive of his bounty in the sanctuary, Ps. 84:2, 63:1, 2, and 27. Thou goest to the market to supply thy bodily necessities, and art ashamed to come home empty. Dost thou not come to the ordinances of God for the relief of thy soul indigencies, and art thou not grieved to come away poor and beggarly? Merchants take in some goods from one part, some from another part, and at last come home richly laden: do thou get some true riches at prayer, some from the word, and then how comfortably mayest thou conclude thy duties.

Do not rest in the formal performance of duties, as the harlot that cried out, 'I have had my peace-offerings to-day,' Prov. 7:14, and therefore all must be well; but as the people, when Moses went to speak to God for them; they all looked after him to see what speed, what success, Exod. 33:8. After thine attendance on ordinances, long and look for the fruit of them. If a man present a petition to a king, he gives attendance to see whether it will be granted or no. It is a contempt both of God's majesty and mercy for thee to throw down thy prayers before him, and then to run away, not caring what becomes of it. When thou hast been speaking to God, hearken what God will speak to thee; for 'he speaketh peace to his people and to his

saints, that they return no more to folly.' Let down thy net into the waters, and expect to catch somewhat which may feed thy soul; if thou fish all night, and, as the disciples, catch nothing, look for the coming of Christ in the morning, and that purposely to give thee a good draught of fish.

Reader, remember thine errand at ordinances is to get grace; thou hast God's promise to them, and his power and faithfulness, both engaged for its performance; and it is thy fault and folly if thou goest hungry from a full table, and empty from a free and large treasure. Be as wise for thy soul as others are for their bodies. The country tradesman wants commodities, he goeth to London, where is a merchant that hath variety and abundance; when he comes there he doth not spend his time in seeing fashions and visiting friends, but in going to this and that warehouse, as his occasions require, to buy wares; and you see sometimes what considerable quantities he sends home: go thou and do likewise. Thou complainest that thou wantest grace to go to Christ, who hath variety and sufficiency for thy supply; but do not go to see men, or to be seen of men, but to see God, and to be transformed into his likeness; go to this and that duty as shops, (where Christ sits and sells,) and 'buy wine and milk without money and without price.' Little dost thou know, were this but thy business, how certainly, how liberally he would supply thee! Why should the tradesman be a better husband for corruptible wares, than thou art for durable riches? Alas, alas! Christ is more willing to sell than thou canst be to buy—to give than thou art to ask.

Balaam, as bad as he was, when he had prepared seven altars, and offered seven sacrifices, could expect to meet God, and canst thou, O Christian, contentedly miss him? Surely he is a pitiful beggar that can go to the gate of a bountiful peer, where is plenty of provision for the poor, and come away willingly without his alms.

A good wish about religious duties in general, wherein the former heads are epitomised

The immediate worship of the infinite God, being a work of the greatest work that I ever did, or can possibly undertake, yea, that men and angels are capable of, I wish, therefore, that I may never enter rashly upon it, but may ordinarily take some pains beforehand, to awe my heart by a serious apprehension of the unconceivable greatness, jealousy, and holiness of that God to whom I am approaching; how he is resolved to be sanctified either actively or passively, in every one that draweth nigh to him; and by a savoury consideration of the unspeakable consequence of the duty in which I am engaged, how it concerneth the unchangeable welfare of my never-dying soul in the other world. I wish that all the time of the duty, I may look as narrowly to my heart, as ever keeper did to that prisoner, for whose escape he was to die; and bind it to the altar, as they of old their sacrifice, with the strongest cords of all watchfulness and circumspection imaginable. I wish that I may perform each part of the duty with suitable grace, and to this end, that all my graces may be upon the wing, ready upon the least call to mount up to heaven; as several strings of a viol, wound up to their due height and pitch, each in their place, upon the least touch (as occasion shall be) to make music in the ears of the Lord my God. Oh, that while my beloved sitteth at his table, my spikenard may send forth a pleasant smell. In particular, I wish that I may be so sensible of the infinite distance which is betwixt the incomprehensible Lord of heaven, and me a poor worm, who lie grovelling here on earth, that I may both in my carriage and language, affections and expressions, behave myself throughout the ordinance with all godly fear, humility, and reverence. I wish that I may be so truly affected with the sins and unworthiness of my person and performances, and my Saviour's infinite meritoriousness, that I may carry all my sacrifices to the high

priest of my profession, believing assuredly, that they being perfumed with the odours of his death, and presented by his hands, shall be offerings of a sweet-smelling savour to my God. Finally, I wish that all ends of pride, merit, and self, set aside, I may, therefore, attend on duties, that I may, by my poor peppercorn, acknowledge those millions of eternal obligations by which I am bound to my God; and also, that by those buckets (oh that they might never come up empty to me!) I may draw water out of the well of salvation. Amen.

## CHAPTER XII

### **How a Christian may exercise himself to godliness in prayer. And first, of prayer in general, and of the antecedents to it**

The infinite and glorious God, though he be so high that he 'humbleth himself to behold things in heaven,' and so holy that 'the heavens are unclean in his sight,' is yet so gracious that he condescendeth to, and converseth with, poor sinful dust and ashes. Amongst all those ways which he hath appointed the children of men to walk with him in, prayer is one of the fairest and pleasantest. In this duty, the children of God whisper him in the ear, open their minds, and unbosom themselves to him, as his intimate friends and favourites. He hath been pleased to command it, not only out of his dominion over them, and for his own glory—'He that offereth praise glorifieth me,'—but also out of his compassion to them, and for their good, that by prayers (as men far distant do by letters) there might be a constant and uninterrupted intercourse and correspondence betwixt heaven and earth.

Men, by discoursing together, come to be acquainted at first, and continue their acquaintance by sending to, and hearing from, one another. Prayer, which is the speech of man with his maker, is a special means whereby he comes to be acquainted with God, as also to increase and continue this acquaintance. Prayer indeed bringeth heaven down to man, and prayer carrieth man up to heaven. It is the chief duty, wherein all the graces meet. They shine brightly like so many glorious stars in this firmament.

Of all graces, faith obtaineth the crown,—'Above all, take the shield of faith.' Other jewels are of great value, but this is the fairest sparkling diamond. Among all duties, prayer seems to challenge the garland of honour, 'Concerning the work of my hands command ye me.' This is the favourite in the heavenly court, to whom the King of kings can deny nothing. This duty is of such weight, that it is frequently put for God's whole worship: 'Seek ye the Lord, seek his strength; seek his face evermore,' Ps. 105:4. God's temple, which was the beauty of holiness, the habitation of the Most High, was baptized by God himself, with this name, 'My house shall be called of all nations an house of prayer,' Isa. 56:7. God's people, which are higher than the kings of the earth, are known to be nobly born by this practice. 'This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob,' Ps. 24:6. Nay, God himself is pleased to wear prayer's livery, and to be distinguished by the royal robes of his relation to this duty, 'O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come,' Ps. 65:2. Pearls of a very high price are never set but in gold, the choicest metal. The worship and people of God are more worth than all this world; but oh, how much is God worth! yet all these glister gloriously in the ring of prayer.

There is no duty in my observation which hath so many precepts for it, or promises to it, as prayer, and sure I am, there is no duty which

giveth more honour to God, or receiveth more honour from God, than prayer.

Prayer hath a twofold pre-eminence above all other duties whatsoever, in regard of the universality of its influence, and opportunity for its performance. The universality of its influence. As every sacrifice was to be seasoned with salt, so every undertaking, and every affliction of the creature, must be sanctified with prayer. Nay, as it sheweth the excellency of gold, that it is laid upon silver itself, so it speaketh the excellency of prayer, that not only natural and civil, but even religious and spiritual actions, are overlaid with prayer. We pray not only before we eat or drink our bodily nourishment, but also before we feed on the bread of the word, and the bread in the sacrament; prayer is requisite to make every providence and every ordinance blessed to us. Prayer is needful to make our particular callings successful; prayer is the guard to secure the fort-royal of the heart; prayer is the porter to keep the door of the lips; prayer is the strong hilt which defendeth the hands; prayer perfumes every relation; prayer helps us to profit by every condition; prayer is the chemist that turns all into gold; prayer is the master-workman; if that be out of the way, the whole trade stands still, or goeth backward. What the key is to the watch, that prayer is to religion; it winds it up and sets it a-going. It is before other duties in regard of opportunity for its performance. A Christian cannot always hear, or always read, or always communicate, but he may pray continually. No place, no company can deprive him of this privilege. If he be on the top of a house with Peter, he may pray; if he be in the bottom of the ocean with Jonah, he may pray; if he be walking in the field with Isaac, he may pray when no eye seeth him; if he be waiting at table with Nehemiah, he may pray when no ear heareth him; if he be in the mountains with our Saviour, he may pray; if he be in the prison with Paul, he may pray; wherever he is, prayer will help him



to find God out. Every saint is God's temple; and he that carrieth his temple about him, saith Austin, may go to prayer when he pleaseth. Indeed to a Christian, every house is an house of prayer; every closet a chamber of presence; and every place he comes to an altar, whereon he may offer the sacrifice of prayer.

Prayer is a humble lifting up the heart, or pouring out the soul to God in the name of Christ; it is a crying, Abba, Father! As Scripture is God's letter, wherein he openeth his mind to man, so prayer is man's letter, wherein he openeth his mind to God. It is fitly resembled to Jacob's ladder, the bottom of which was on earth, but the top reached to heaven. A thought can fly speedily to the uttermost parts of the earth, so can prayer in a moment to the highest heavens. One of the fathers compareth it to a chain, one end of which is tied to man's tongue, the other end to God's ear. Another, *Ascensus mentis ad Deum*, A lifting up the mind to God. Paul calls it, a 'making known our requests to God,' Phil. 4. Jamblicus, a profane writer, calleth prayer, *Rerum divinarum ducem et lucem, et copulam qua homines cum Deo conjunguntur*: The guide and light of divine truths, the band whereby God and man are joined together. *Clavis instar qua Dei penetralia aperiuntur*: Like a key that openeth God's secrets. Austin calls it, *Dei sacrificium, diaboli flagellum, et Christiani subsidium*: A sweet savour to God, a terror to the devil, and a shelter to a Christian. Bernard calls it, *Vinculum invincibilis*: The conqueror of him who is invincible. Luther saith, It is omnipotent. Archimedes made such an engine, that, saith he, could I but find where to fasten it, I would not doubt but to remove the whole earth with it. Such an engine is prayer. By prayer fire hath been quenched, waters divided, the mouths of lions stopped, iron gates opened, the bottles of heaven opened and stopped, the course of nature overturned, diseases removed, health restored, sin subdued, grace bestowed, kingdoms supported, church enemies scattered, the blind restored, the dead

enlivened, devils dispossessed, and the blessed God himself conquered. The Jews have a proverb, *Sine stationibus non staret mundus*, alluding to their standing posture in prayer; the world would not stand without prayer.

When a great fire in Constantinople had fastened on a great part of the city, took hold of the church, flamed in at several of the windows, the bishop ran into the church, fell down on his knees, and would not rise from prayer till the fire was vanquished. And as prayer hath hindered fire, so it hath brought down water; the legions of Christians under Aurelius in a time of drought, entreated rain of God, and prevailed, for which they were called, the Lightning Legion.

Prayer is the midwife to bring all those mercies into the world to the believer, which are conceived in the womb of the promises. It is the Christian's messenger, which he sends to heaven for the supply of his necessities, and, like Jonathan's bow, it never returneth empty. Oftentimes, as the echo doubleth the voice, so doth the answer the prayer; when the soul, like Gehazi, asketh but one talent, God, like Naaman, forceth two upon it. 'The Lord is rich unto all that call upon him,' Rom. 10:12. Prayer is the Thames, in which all sorts of commodities are brought up for the relief of the citizens of Zion. Some say of cornucopia, that it hath all things necessary for food in it. Prayer hath in it all things pertaining to this life and a better.

It is said of the pope, he can never want money while he can hold a pen; his writing of pardons and indulgences filleth his coffers; it is more true of the Christian, he need never want if he will but pray. Prayer is a key to God's own coffers, wherein there are infinite and all sorts of comforts. I have no friend, said a good woman, but I have a prayer; and so long as I have a praying heart, God will find a pitying heart and a helping hand. It is but Ask, and receive; seek, and find;

knock, and it shall be opened, Mat. 7:7, 8. The child presenteth his petition to his father, and at the foot of it there is fiat quickly written.

Prayer is like the Spaniards' Plate-fleet, which returns home worth thousands and millions. A courtier will sometimes get more by a petition to his prince in a morning than some tradesmen do all their lives. A regenerate person being in favour at court gaineth more by a morning prayer than a wicked man, though he works hard, gets while he liveth. 'I never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.' Some asked but the cure of their bodies, when God healed their bodies and souls too; he hath forced many an unexpected favour upon an upright fervent prayer.

Prayer is not only a storehouse of mercies, but a fort-royal to defend the soul against miseries; as some write of the herb panaces, it is good for all diseases. When Satan entered the field against Paul, the apostle held up this shield of prayer to defend himself against his fiery darts. 'For this I besought the Lord thrice,' 2 Cor. 12:7. Prayer hath stormed and surprised more cities, conquered and routed more armies, than old men's heads, or young men's hands, than all the policy and power on earth.

Prayer is like the ring which Queen Elizabeth gave to the Earl of Essex, bidding him, if he were in any distress, send that ring to her, and she would help him. God commandeth his people, if they be in any perplexity, to send this ring to him: 'Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will hear thee, and thou shalt glorify me,' Ps. 50:15.

Oh, what a privilege dost thou enjoy, reader, in having freedom of access to the throne of grace! The Persian kings took state upon them, and enacted, that none should come uncalled, upon pain of death; but the gates of heaven, as the Ædiles at Rome, are always open; thou hast liberty, night and day, of presenting thy petitions in

the name of Christ to the King of the whole earth, and needest not fear (so thy prayers be according to Scripture directions) so much as a chiding for thy presumption. The poets say that Litæ, prayers, are Jupiter's daughters, and always about the throne. If it be esteemed such a favour to have an earthly prince's ear, what a favour art thou invested with that hast the ear of the 'blessed and only potentate'? Elisha offered his courteous host a great kindness, when he asked her, 'Wilt thou be spoken for to the king?' 2 Kings 4:13. Some purchase that liberty, as the chief captain his Roman freedom, with a great sum, but thou mayest speak to the King of kings thyself, and be welcome, and needest not be at the charge of having either saints or angels thy mediators, or any of those heavenly courtiers, to bring thee into the king's presence. The Son of God himself will do it for thee gratis. 'In him we have boldness,' Eph. 3:12; παρρησίαν, liberty of speech, freedom to speak all thy mind, to lay open thy very inwards to God. If thou art in doubts about thy spiritual estate, and about thy title to the inheritance of the saints in light, thou mayest by prayer go to him who is 'marvellous in counsel,' and have his advice for nothing. If any disease appear in thy soul, which thou fearest may endanger its life, at least hinder its peace and health, thou mayest by prayer knock up the true physician at midnight, and prevail with him to hasten to thy help and cure. If thou art surrounded with many and bloody enemies, that thou knowest not what to do, nor where to go, thou mayest by prayer send post to heaven, and thou needest not fear but Christ will meet the messenger half-way, and come in timely to thy rescue. If thou art bound with the bond of iniquity, and, like Peter, watched narrowly night and day; nay, though thou art encompassed round with the black guard of hell, lest thou shouldest make an escape, yet 'prayer without ceasing' would knock off thy chains, break open the prison doors, and, in spite of all the legions of devils that kept thee, set thee at liberty. If thou art, like the Psalmist, overwhelmed with sorrow, this sighing into God's ears by prayer will

ease thy heart. When the glass of thy soul is so full of those strong spirits, fear and grief, that it threateneth to burst, thou mayest give it vent by prayer to God, and there will be no danger. Whilst thou art in this valley of tears, thou art encompassed with enemies, hast many and urgent necessities, doubts, and dangers; but prayer, like Moses, will go before thee, engage him on thy side that will overcome them all, and guide thee all the way through the wilderness of this world to the very borders of Canaan. and never leave thee till thou comest to enter into the place of praise.

But, reader, the more richly this vessel of prayer is laden, the more careful and skilful must the pilot be that steers it, lest it suffer shipwreck. Queens that have great heirs in their wombs must be tenderly used, lest they miscarry. If prayer be so bountiful a friend, as thou hast heard, thou oughtest to be the more fearful of abusing it. Princes who allow favourites their ears, yet expect that they should know their distance, and ask in such a manner as they appoint, and such things for the matter as will be consistent with their honour to give; or else, instead of a grant, they may meet with a repulse and a sharp reproof. Haman, though he were so intimate with the king that he had his hand and seal at pleasure, found by woeful experience what it was to abuse the king's favour, by desiring the satisfaction of his own lust in that which was exceedingly to the king's loss.

The incense under the ceremonial law was a type of prayer—'Let my prayer come before thee like incense;' but if it had not been made exactly, both for matter and manner, according to God's own prescription, who himself gave special direction about it, *Exod.* 30:34–36; as sweet as the spices were, it had been loathsome and unsavoury to him; the burning of incense had been but as the blessing of an idol, *Isa.* 66:3. I shall therefore, for thy right

management of this duty, which is of such weight and importance to thee, speak to these three particulars:—

1. To the antecedents, or those things which must go before prayer.
2. To the concomitants, or those things which must accompany prayer.
3. To the consequents, or those things which must follow after prayer.

1. To the antecedents of prayer.—Preparation is necessary before prayer. Zophar acquainteth Job how his prayers might come to be prevalent, 'If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hand unto him,' Job 11:13. The heart is the forge where these vessels for the sanctuary are formed and fashioned and made in secret; the tongue is but the shop wherein they are exposed to public view; therefore the heart must do its work well before the tongue can commend its ware; the heart must 'indite a good matter' before the tongue will be as 'the pen of a ready writer.'

God commandeth us both to look to our hearts and mouths when we are in his house: 'Be not rash with thy mouth to utter anything before God, and keep thy feet when thou art in the house of God,' Eccles. 5:1, 2. The former is a bridle for our mouths and expressions, the latter is a guard for our hearts and affections.

In reference to the antecedents—1, Some things which will further the duty must be used; 2, Some things which will hinder the duty must be refused.

(1.) First, Those things which will further the duty are meditation and the stirring up of grace. Meditation will be helpful to the matter

of prayer; the quickening and stirring up of grace will be helpful to the manner of the duty.

[1.] First, Meditation.—Meditation fits the soul for supplication; meditation fills the soul with good liquor, and then prayer broaches it, and sets it a-running. David first mused, and then spake with his tongue, 'Lord, make me to know mine end,' Psa. 39:3, 4. Nay, to assure us that meditation was the mother which bred and brought forth prayer, he calls the child by its parents' name, 'Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation,' Ps. 5:1. Meditation is like the charging of a piece, and prayer the discharging of it. Isaac 'went into the field to meditate,' Gen. 24:63. The Septuagint, the Geneva translation, and Tremellius, in his marginal notes on it, read it to 'pray;' and the Hebrew word *suach* used there signifieth both to pray and meditate; whereby we may learn that they are very near akin; like twins, they lie in the same womb, in the same word. Meditation is the best beginning of prayer, and prayer is the best conclusion of meditation. When the Christian, like Daniel, hath first opened the windows of his soul by contemplation, then he may kneel down to prayer.

Prayer is a building which reacheth up to heaven, meditation layeth in all the costly materials which are requisite for this building. He that would make any riddance of his work must take care that all his materials be brought in beforehand; if they be to fetch when he comes to work, he will make long and tedious church-work indeed.

Something thou art to meditate on relating to thyself, something relating to God.

Those things which relate to thyself are thy sins, wants, and mercies. There are three parts of prayer, though I know some reckon the first rather an adjunct—confession, petition, and thanksgiving. Now

meditation gives each of these the work which they are to do; like a faithful steward it gives everyone their proper and peculiar portion. Meditation on our sins helpeth in confession, meditation on our wants helpeth in petition, meditation on our mercies helpeth in thanksgiving. A Christian ought to keep a catalogue, at least in the table-book of his heart, of these three particulars. David did so; he registered his unrighteousness, or the wrong he had done to God, 'My sin is ever before me,' Ps. 51:3. He thought much upon his wants and sufferings, he often crieth out, 'I am poor and needy,' Ps. 109:21, and 25. 'My sorrow is ever before me,' Ps. 38:17. And for God's mercies, he did not write them in the sand, but he treasured them up in his memory. 'Thy loving kindness is before mine eyes,' Ps. 26:3. And though some of them were stale, ancient mercies, yet they were not sour to David's taste; he did not throw them away as old almanacs out of date: 'I will remember the days of old, the years of ancient times,' Ps. 77. Rather than God should not be paid his thanks for favours to his forefathers, David would take the debts from their score, and set them upon his own file.

Confession of sin must be with shame and sorrow; petition for mercy must be with faith and fervency; thanksgiving must be with admiration of God, and delight in God. Now it is meditation of our sins, wants, and miseries, which provides fuel for the fire of these graces to work upon, by which they break out into a heavenly flame.

Meditate on thy sins. Thy duty in prayer is to indict, arraign, and condemn and execute those malefactors and transgressors of the royal law, which can never be done till they are apprehended. If thou wilt kill those foxes that spoil the vine, those lusts which hinder thy regenerate part from thriving, thy care must be by meditation to hunt them out of their lurking holes and take them. Thy wounds, which stink and are so unsavoury to God, must by serious



consideration be searched and felt before they can be healed. When thou art going to prayer, do as Jehu, when he went to sacrifice to Baal, send out and fetch in all thy false worshippers, those enemies of the true God, that deny his supremacy, and bow the knee to the world or the flesh, and then by a humble penitential confession, and self-judging, cut them off. Who ever bewailed his sins, that did not know their sinfulness? or who ever was ashamed, that did not see his own nakedness? When the Jews came to know that they were the betrayers and murderers of the Lord Jesus, then they were pricked to the heart. Oh do that for thyself which God will do for many others! set thy sins in order before thine eyes, thine original and thine actual, thine omissions and commissions, thy personal and relative, thy secret and public, thy sins about natural, civil, or spiritual actions, thy sins under mercies and against afflictions. Say to thy conscience, as Samuel to Jesse, 'Are all thy sons here?' are all thy sins here? If any be wanting to thy knowledge, cause it to be sent for and brought, and sit not down to sacrifice before it come; when this is done, put them all into their own colours, accent them with their several aggravations, consider what light, what love, what motions of God's Spirit, what convictions of thy own spirit, they were committed against.

Above all, meditate on the infinite majesty, purity, and mercy of that God against whom thou hast sinned. Those three attributes duly weighed would, like Moses' strokes, fetch water out of a rock. Ah couldst thou, that hast heard of this God by the hearing of the ear, but see him with the seeing of the eye, thou wouldst quickly abhor thyself in dust and ashes! How ugly, how loathsome would sin be, couldst thou behold the glory, holiness, and grace of that God whom thereby thou hast offended! Ah, how great an evil must that be which is so opposite and offensive to the greatest good! Think also on the blood of the dearest Jesus, which was let out by thy lusts; and surely

when thou beholdest those knives before thee which made those bloody mortal wounds in his blessed body, anger and grief will both strive within thee for the mastery.

Meditate on thy wants. He that is ignorant what he ails, cannot not complain, at least so as to be relieved. The messenger who knoweth not the errand upon which he comes, must expect to be sent back as wise as he came. Do as the good housewife, when she is going to market, where provision is to be had, doth: first, she considereth with herself what her family needs, what food, what clothes, what her husband, what her children, what herself, and accordingly disposeth her money at market; so when thou art going to God by prayer, who is able to supply all thy necessities, consider what thou wantest, what pardoning mercy, what purifying mercy; what sin thou didst lately foil, and art afraid it will recover again, that thou mayest beg strength to pursue the victory; what lust lately got the better of thee, that thou mayest entreat pardon of it, and power against it; what grace thou art defective in, either in reference to thy calling or relations, or any condition, that thou mayest request God to bestow it on thee; what new providence hath befallen thee, or new work is laid upon thee, that thou mayest beseech God to give thee suitable grace and power.

This consideration of thy wants, with the weight of them, will make thee more urgent and instant with God for supply; they that feel hunger, how hard will they beg for bread! Poor prisoners that are ready to famish for want of food, how earnest are they for relief! Bread, bread, for the Lord's sake! Remember the poor prisoners for the Lord's sake! Consideration of thy soul-necessities, and of what infinite concernment the relief of them is to thee, will make thee feel thy wants, and then thou wilt be importunate with God for mercy. A

man that considereth not his indigencies, is like a full stomach, that loathes the honeycomb.

Consider thy mercies, meditate on the several particular passages of God's providence towards thee, from thy birth to this moment; how many dangers thou hast been delivered from, how many journeys thou hast been preserved in, what seasonable succour God hath sometimes sent thee in dangers, what suitable support he hath afforded thee in distress, what counsel he hath given thee in doubts, what comforts he hath vouchsafed thee in sorrows and darkness. Make past mercies, by meditation, present with thee. How many years hast thou lived, and every moment of thy life hast breathed in mercy? Do not forget former favours bestowed on thee or thine. The civet box, when the civet is gone, still retains its scent; the vessel, when the liquor is gone, hath still a savour of it. So when thy mercies are past and spent, thou shouldst still have the scent and savour of them in thy spirit.

Meditate upon the number of thy present mercies, personal, domestical, national, temporal, spiritual. How many are the mercies which thou enjoyest in bed, at board, at home, abroad! Thy house, thy barns, thy children, thy body, thy soul, are all full of blessings; thou hast many positive, many private mercies. 'Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak them, they are more than can be numbered,' Ps. 40:5. Think of them particularly. Meat swallowed down whole doth not yield such nourishment as when it is cut into small pieces. If jewels are bundled up together, their riches and worth are hid; they must be viewed and considered one by one, then their value will appear.

Meditate on the nature of them, how freely they are bestowed. When thou wast God's enemy he fed thee, and clothed thee, and maintained thee. As when a man turneth his back upon the sun, the sun even then refresheth him with his beams; so when thou didst depart away from God, he even then followed thee with goodness; like the fountain, he giveth his pleasant streams to thee gratis. For, alas! thou art less than the least of all God's mercies, worse than any loathsome toad or poisonous serpent. This will be an excellent foil to set off the mercies of God in their lively, lovely colours. That David, so great a king, should do so much for such a dead dog as Mephibosheth, did exceedingly affect his heart, 2 Sam. 7. So do thou think with thyself, What am I, and what is my Father's house, that the Lord should do so much for me?

Meditate upon the fulness and greatness of thy mercies. What distinguishing mercies are thy body-mercies! they are more than God oweth thee, and more than he bestoweth upon others. Alas! many want health, liberty, food, raiment, sleep, limbs, senses, reason, and possibly thou enjoyest them all. But oh! of what concernment are thy soul-mercies, the image of God, the blood of Christ, eternal life, the gospel of thy salvation, sabbaths, sacraments, and seasons of grace. God hath not dealt so with every people, as with this nation; nor with every person, as with thee. Thou art, as the psalmist phraseth it, laden with benefits, hast such a weight, such a burden of benefits upon thy back, that thou canst hardly stir or stand under them. Hast thou not blessings of the womb, blessings of the field, blessings of the throne, blessings of the footstool, blessings in thy going out, blessings in thy coming in, which way canst thou look and not see blessings? Where canst thou tread and not stand on blessings? Thy whole life is in this respect a bundle of blessings. These thoughts before prayer may stir thee up to bless the giver. If thou shouldst

bless men when they curse thee, much more shouldst thou bless God, when he blesseth thee.

Meditate on the God to whom thou art to pray, consider his majesty and greatness; Nehemiah calls him, 'The great and terrible God,' Neh. 1:5. He is so great, 'the heavens and heavens of heavens cannot contain him;' that the earth, heavens, and ocean are in comparison of him as nothing; yea, 'less than nothing, and vanity.' Think of his attributes and infinite excellencies. 'God is in heaven, and thou art on earth: therefore let thy words be few,' Eccles. 5:2. As God riseth in our thoughts, self falleth. That sun discovereth all our dust. Oh, how are we ashamed of our drops when we stand by this ocean! This serious apprehension of thy distance will quicken thee to reverence. God's greatness, and man's vileness, are both arguments to make man humble and wary in the worship of God. Couldst thou behold God in heaven, in what majesty he there appeareth on his throne of glory, how his heavenly courtiers veil their faces in his presence, lay their crowns at his feet, and serve him, though joyfully, yet humbly and awfully, with what reverence and holy fear wouldst thou go to prayer!

Meditate on his mercy and goodness; what promises he hath made to prayer, how bountiful he is to his suppliants. He doth more than they can ask or think; he gives liberally without upbraiding. It was said of Severus the emperor, that he was more troubled that men asked nothing, than that he gave much. God delighteth both to be sought and found. This is necessary to strengthen thy faith, 'He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,' Heb. 11:6. He that would pray and obtain a blessing, must believe God's being, 'that he is;' and God's bounty, 'that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.' Meditate on his rich bounty; Abraham asked but one son, God gives him seed like

the stars in the heavens for multitude; the debtor desires but forbearance, and he freely forgives the whole debt. The shekel of the sanctuary is double to the ordinary shekel.

God delighteth to see men joyful in his house of prayer, Isa. 56:7, to see their countenances commend his cheer; now meditation of his royal bounty, how he giveth like a king, like a God, will help thee to this hearty cheerfulness. Believe before thou prayest, that thy hand of prayer shall not knock at heaven's gate in vain, that God will not send thee away sad. It is reported of the Emperor Flavius, that he should say, I am sorry that any man should present a petition to me as if he were offering meat to an elephant, with a trembling hand. Consider not only his habitation, which art in heaven, but also his relation to thee, our Father; 'Before thou callest he will answer, and when thou speakest he will say, Here am I,' Isa. 65:24. Thus when thou hast by meditation cut the sacrifice in pieces, put the wood in order, and laid all upon the altar, thou mayest by prayer put fire to them, and offer up a sacrifice to God 'of a sweet smelling savour.'

[2.] Secondly, As meditation, so the stirring up of thy graces is needful to further this duty. Meditation will do much towards it, as thou hast heard, I shall therefore speak the less to it. Every person that hath grace doth not always pour out his prayers rightly. Graces must be exercised in our duties. Grace may lie as fire under ashes upon the hearth of thy heart, and be so far from flaming, that it may not so much as glow, and how then canst thou expect any warmth from it? Thy duty is, therefore, to stir up the coals, and endeavour that the fire may blaze out. It is the language of Canaan, communication seasoned with grace, which only is savoury to God. Cato being asked why he was so diligent to learn the Greek language in his old age, answered, I hear the gods speak Greek, and I would willingly speak to them in their own language. All the words of God

are gracious; it is said of his Son, 'Grace is poured into thy lips,' Ps. 45:2. Those, therefore, that would not speak to God in an unknown language, a tongue which he understandeth not, must accent all their expressions to him with grace. It is the smell of the spice of grace in the Israelite, not of garlic and onions in the Egyptian, which is so pleasant and fragrant to God; 'Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?' Cant. 3:6. Some take the words to be the voice of the angels, those friends of the bridegroom, admiring the church's gracious expressions, and continual ascensions of her soul, in her prayers to God; others take them to be the words of Christ, being ravished with the odoriferous smell of those graces which his spouse acted in her sacrifices; he stood amazed at the beauty of her person, and the sweetness of her breath, the graciousness of her petitions. What lovely lady, what woman is here? (so the Hebrew,) What peerless paragon is this which sendeth up such spiritual sacrifices, such sweet incense, kindled by the fire of God's own Spirit, laid upon a meritorious altar, ascending and fuming up, like the rollings and agglomerations of smoke, to the Lord himself, and more welcome and grateful than all the costly evaporations of myrrh and frankincense, and all powders of the merchants? The angel which ascended to heaven in the flame of the altar, is said to do wondrously, Judges 13:19, 20. It was wonderful both to Christ and his friends to behold the acceptance of his spouse's gracious performance, how it ascended to heaven, *elationibus fumi*, like pillars of smoke, and came up for a memorial before God. The desire of nature in prayer, is like sparks which fly out of the tunnel of the chimney and then vanish; but the desire of grace in prayer is like pillars of smoke, which mounteth up to the highest heavens.

When Jacob's sons went down to Egypt to fetch corn, they carried some along with them to support them by the way; when the Christian goeth to Christ by prayer for more spiritual food, he must carry some along with him to strengthen him in the duty. A little water poured into the pump will fetch up much; a little grace acted in a duty may help thee to much more. As the ship is sometimes wind-bound that it cannot move towards its haven, so without the exercise of grace the soul is wind-bound, there is no stirring towards heaven. A graceless man in prayer, as was said of Alcibiades, may talk much, but speaketh little.

(2.) Some things which will hinder the duty must be refused.

All sin in general, sin regarded in the soul, makes prayers disregarded of God. 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear my prayer,' Ps. 66:18. He that expecteth pardon must throw down his weapons of rebellion. The child that asketh forgiveness of his oaths, must not desire it of his father with curses in his mouth. When dust clogs the wheel of the watch or clock, they cannot strike true; when sin hampereth and clogs the wheels of the affections, the mouth will never speak true or right in its petitions. 'He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination,' Prov. 28:9. It is high impudency for him that will not hear God, to look that God should hear him.

When the sin of the petitioner is before God's eyes, his petitions cannot enter into God's ears; the wide mouth of sin outcrieth the voice of his prayers. As the fish called the Remora, though it be but little, will stop a great ship in its full career; truly so the smallest sin, loved and liked, will hinder the course of prayer, though it be never so instant and vehement. 'The Lord's ear is not heavy that it cannot hear, but your iniquities separate between you and your God,' Isa.



59:1, 2. Men by falls sometimes lose their speeches, men by sin lose their prayers.

When the Ninevites prayed and turned from their evil ways, then God granted their requests, Jonah 3. The Israelites cried to God, but in vain; he bid them go to the gods whom they had served, till they put away the strange gods from among them, then 'his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel,' Judges 10:10–17. Reformation is a good usher to go before supplication. When the Duke of Saxony prepared war against the Bishop of Magdenburg, the bishop, hearing of it, falls to praying and reforming, saying, At ego curabo ecclesiam meam, et Deus pugnabit pro me; I will take care to reform my church, and God will take care to fight for me. When the duke heard this, he disbanded his forces with this speech, I am too weak for him that can engage God on his side.

Be sure, reader, to put away iniquity far from thee when thou art drawing near to the throne of grace, 'Then shalt thou make thy prayer unto God, and he shall hear,' Job 22:23, 27. Prayer is, as it were, a plaster to heal a man that is wounded. Now, as a plaster to one pierced with an arrow or bullet will do no good, till the dart or bullet be taken out of the body, so prayer will not be healing and prevalent till sin, in regard of love and delight, be taken out of the soul.

As all sin in general must be laid by, so worldly thoughts and wrath in particular. Wrath; anger, like leaven, soureth the sacrifice. 'I will that men lift up holy hands without wrath,' 1 Tim. 2:8. He that beggeth peace at God's hands, must not do it with war in his own heart. How canst thou think that God will forgive thee many millions, when thou wilt not forgive thy brother one mite? God is peremptory that he will reserve for them his wrath, who will not

remit their wrongs, Mat. 6:15. Jerome confessed of himself that when he had been angry he durst not enter into the church, but totum animo et corpore contremuisse, he did tremble very much both in body and mind; Christians must be singular, as in their principles, so in their practices. It is more comfortable to love a friend, but this a heathen may do; it is more honourable to love an enemy, and this every Christian must do.

There are two things in forgiving those that wrong us. First, An inward remission of the fault, so much as it concerneth us, or a removal of wrath and revengeful desires towards the person wronging us; and this if we do not, we lose our prayers. A stormy, troubled sea casteth up mire and dirt; so when there is a storm of passions in the soul, the heart foameth up its own shame in prayer, it bubbleth up a great deal of filth. Secondly, In forgiveness there is an outward profession of this inward remission, and this must be done when the party acknowledgeth his fault. If the offender say, I repent, the offended must say, I remit. Surely, did men but consider the infinite wrongs they do, and affronts which they offer to the glorious God every day, and yet how they expect to be pardoned, they would, when abused, say, as Francis the First, king of France, to one that begged pardon for a friend of his who had used ill speeches against his majesty, Let him for whom thou art a suitor learn to speak little, and I will learn to pardon much. The spouse of Christ is compared to a dove, which, some say, is sine felle, without gall. The very heathen, when they offered sacrifice, threw the gall of the beast away; and, reader, wouldst thou offer to God the gall of malice, revenge, wrath, and bitterness with the sacrifice of thy prayers? Remember, where the gall is broke, the flesh tasteth bitter; and when the strings jar, the instrument will make but harsh music, Mat. 5:24.

Worldly thoughts must also be laid by. Our Saviour, when he taught us to pray, by the preface to the petitions, telleth us where our affections in prayer should be: 'Our Father which art in heaven.' Our hearts in prayer must be in heaven; the eyes of our minds must look up thither, as well as the eyes of our bodies. The Mohammedans in India, when they begin their devotion, stop their ears, and fix their eyes, that nothing may disturb their minds, or divert their thoughts. When the meat is fly-blown, it quickly corrupts; when our petitions to God are blown upon by worldly thoughts, and mingled with mental discourses with men, they lose their sweetness.

Some poor people, whose houses are troubled much with vermin, have sometimes a great part of their small provision eaten up of rats and mice; truly sometimes a poor Christian loseth half a meal by these vermin of worldly thoughts, they devour sometimes half his prayer. Resolve before thou prayest to watch thy heart narrowly, that these may not hinder thee in prayer.

## **CHAPTER XIII**

## Of the concomitants of prayer

2. Secondly, I come now to the concomitants of prayer; and herein I shall speak:

(1.) To the matter of our petitions.

(2.) To the person that prayeth.

(3.) To the properties of our prayers.

(1.) To the matter of our prayers: God's word and will must be the rule of our prayers, what we must ask of him, as well as of our practice, what we must do for him. Subjects must set bounds to their desires, and take heed that their petitions do not encroach upon the prerogative royal. Divine precepts, what God commandeth us to act; divine promises, what God engageth himself to do for us; and divine prophecies, what God hath foretold shall come to pass, are to be the bounds of our prayers: he wandereth to his loss, that in his requests goeth beyond these limits. Balaam would needs ask leave of God, that he might be the devil's chaplain to curse Israel; but mark the issue, he hath an ironical concession to go to his own destruction; the sharp razor indeed of his tongue would not pierce the Israelites, who had armour of proof; but the sword of the Israelites soon entered his body, and sent his soul to receive its wages of that master that set him a-work. The Israelites on a sudden are all in a hurry for a king: 'God gave them a king in his anger,' for their punishment, rather than for their protection; and how soon were they sick, like children, of that which they cried so loud for—the king and people, at least many of them, perished together. Oh how much better is a

favourable denial, than an angry grant of such prayers; but immodest desires never have profitable answers.

And as some err in the matter of their petitions, so others in the matter of their thanksgiving. We read of them that when like thieves they had robbed others, looked up to heaven and blessed God for a booty, that they had prospered in their calling: 'Thus saith the Lord God, feed the flock of the slaughter, whose possessors slay them; and they that sell them say, Blessed be the Lord, I am rich,' Zech. 11:5, 6. That spurious brat the devil begot upon their cursed hearts, they lay at God's door as if he were its father.

Take heed, reader, of exceeding the limits of prayer; those beasts which will not be kept within their bounds, are soonest caught and killed. Israel had their wish, to their woeful cost, when they cried out, 'Would God we had died in the wilderness,' Num. 14:2, 28, 29. 'Be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is,' Eph. 5:17. Indeed, the Christian may have anything of God, if he do but in his prayer secure God's honour; but he that exalteth his own will, not minding God's, like a proud beggar, will be a chooser; and therefore he shall be sent away either without an alms, or else with the serpents which he desired, instead of the fish which he denied. The Christian's charter is wide enough, he hath no cause to desire its enlargement: 'And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us,' 1 John 5:14.

(2.) The petitioner must be a justified and regenerate person, or the prayer will never be prevalent. He must be a favourite at court, that presenteth his supplication with confidence of success. Others must pray, and may speed through Christ; but where there is no faith, there will be much fear about the event. The precept is to all, but the promise is only to the believer: 'The righteous cry, and the Lord

heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry,' Ps. 34:15, 17. Strangers may howl, and we take little notice what they ail—it is a venture whether we relieve them or no; but if our children cry, being in great distress, we hasten to their help. Our relation to God may well strengthen our hope, that our desires shall be heard. He that can cry Abba, Father, may be confident of the success of his suit, and that God will deal with him as a son.

Faith in Christ is essential to prayer, as I shewed in religious duties in general, and therefore omit it here; now an unbeliever goeth to God without the blessed Saviour, and therefore may well come away without an answer. The Israelites, in their prayers, were still to mind the temple, either to pray in it or towards it; which temple was a type of Christ, the alone altar upon which our prayers must be offered, if ever they be accepted, 2 Chron. 7:15; Dan. 6:10. Kings will not gratify or pardon traitors whilst they continue in their treasonable designs. A sinner, even while he is wooing God for mercy, is warring against God; when his voice is the voice of Jacob, his hands are the hands of Esau, and therefore with what face can he expect favour? 'I will,' saith Paul, 'that men lift up holy hands,' 1 Tim. 2:8, meaning in prayer. Where the hands are unholy and wicked, the heart is worse, and God cannot abide a stinking breath. Some write of Diacletes, that it hath many excellent virtues in it, but if it be put into the mouth of a man without life it loseth all. Prayer, as I shewed before, hath many rare and incomparable qualities, but being in the mouth of one that is dead in sins and trespasses, it loseth them all. When a vicious man propounded in the Roman senate a most excellent law, they rejected the motion, because it was made by a bad mouth. When the face is comely, the person beautiful through Christ, then only the voice will be pleasant, Cant. 2.

When Godfrey of Bouillon was demanded, in the Holy War, by an ambassador from the king of the Saracens, How he became so strong to fight, and to do such exploits? He answered, *Quia manus semper habui puras*, Because I kept my hands always as clean as I could from the filth of sin. A pure hand in prayer is ever prevalent, through Christ, to conquer the strongest enemies; but it is a principle in nature, that God heareth not a sinner, John 9:31. The prayers of a natural man are like Jehoshaphat's ships, which were made to go to Tarshish for gold, but were broken by the way; they come short of that merchandise which is better than silver, and that gain which is more precious than choice gold, for which they pretended to launch forth: but the prayers of a regenerate person are like Solomon's navy, which were sent forth to Ophir—went through with their voyage, and brought from thence four hundred and twenty talents of gold; unsearchable are the riches which the vessel of his prayer returneth fraught with, 1 Kings 22:48, and 9:28.

(3.) The properties of our prayers; they must be humble, hearty, fervent, and constant.

[1.] Our prayers must be humble. Prayer is one of our nearest approaches to God on this side heaven; in it we speak to God mouth to mouth, and therefore must be poured out with much humility. Rebecca, though she rode along on the road, mounted upon a camel, yet when she drew near to Isaac, she lighted off her stately beast, putteth on her veil, and presenteth herself to him in a humble posture. Humility ought to be a Christian's constant clothing,—'Be ye clothed with humility,'—but it never fits him better than when by prayer he doth solemnly draw near to God. We are then most careful to put on our best raiment, when we go to speak with great persons. Subjects present their petitions to their sovereigns upon their knees: 'O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord

our maker,' Ps. 95:6. Princes must have silken words given them, as the mother of Artaxerxes told one: our words to the great God must be submissive.

The special end of prayer is to exalt God and debase man; he therefore that is proud in that performance, doth wholly thwart God's end in its institution, and may be confident that God will thwart him in his petitions. When we go to God in this duty for grace and mercy, we do not go to him as those that go to market to buy relief, but as those that go to a rich man's door to beg an alms. And surely, of all persons, beggars, who live wholly upon another's charity, have least reason to be proud. The proud beggar never got anything at God's door.

It is observable, how the children of God, though they were never so rich in grace, were poor in spirit, and humble in language and carriage, when they approached the Lord of glory; every one of them, notwithstanding the greatness of their spiritual stock, sued in forma pauperis: 'Behold, now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes,' saith Abraham, Gen. 18:27; 'I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies which thou hast shewed to thy servant,' saith Jacob, Gen. 32:10; 'I am a worm, and no man,' saith David; 'So foolish was I, and ignorant, even as a beast before thee,' saith Asaph; 'I am more brutish than any man; I have not the understanding of a man,' saith Agar; 'O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee; for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens,' saith Ezra; 'I am a man of unclean lips,' saith Isaiah. They all have learned the same lesson, as scholars in the same form; they all speak the same language, as children of the same father.



It is reported of Aristippus the cynic, that he used to fall on the ground before Dionysius when he presented a petition to him. Oh, what posture is low enough when we go to the infinite and incomprehensible God in prayer! He humbleth himself to open his eyes upon us; well may we be humble when we open our mouths and hearts to him, Job 14:3.

Reader, if thou wouldst have thy prayers heard, let them be humble. God loves to walk in the low valleys: 'Lord, thou hast heard the desires of the humble; thou wilt prepare their heart, and wilt bow thine ear,' Ps. 10:17. Though God behold the proud afar off, and disdains so much as to open his eyes, or give them a look, yet he will be sure to draw near to the humble, and vouchsafe to open his ears, and his very heart to them, Ps. 138:6; Isa. 66:14. He that can have his face shine, and take no notice, is a fit person to go up into the mountain and converse with God.

[2.] Thy prayers must be hearty; thy tongue and heart must keep time and tune: 'Give ear to my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips,' Ps. 17:1. If in prayer thou art as Ephraim, 'a silly dove without an heart,' and givest God only the calves of thy lips, they will be as unacceptable as Jeroboam's calves at Dan and Bethel, which provoked the Lord to anger. The Jews have this sentence written in their synagogues, where they meet to pray, A PRAYER WITHOUT THE HEART, IS LIKE A BODY WITHOUT A SOUL. What a deformed, loathsome spectacle is a body without a soul! truly so is thy prayer without thy heart. God respecteth the heart in prayer above anything; men mind the expressions most, but God mindeth the affections most. 'Let us draw nigh to God with a true heart;' 'let us lift up our hearts with our hands unto God in the heavens,' Heb. 10:22; Lam. 3:41. God looketh not so much to the elegancy of thy prayers, how neat they are, nor to the geometry of thy prayers, how

long they are, but to the sincerity of thy prayers, how hearty they are. Socrates made more account of poor Æschines, for giving himself to him, than of Alcibiades, and other rich scholars, who gave him large presents. God esteemeth infinitely more of a heart-sprung (though broken) prayer, than of dissembling petitions, clothed with and dressed up in the neatest and most gaudy expressions.

The heart is the metal of the bell, the tongue is but the clapper: when the metal of the bell is right and good, (as silver,) such will the sound be; if the metal of the bell be cracked or lead, the sound will soon discover it to a judicious ear. God can see the diseases and spots of the heart upon the tongue. Oh it is dangerous to do, as some princes with their neighbours, who set on foot a treaty of peace for their own ends, but resolve beforehand that it shall never be brought to any period. As Jacob said to his mother, 'If I dissemble, my father will find me out, and I shall meet with a curse instead of a blessing:' so say I to thee, If thou dissemblest in prayer, thy God will find thee out, and thou wilt meet with a curse, a blow, instead of a blessing. There is no going to God, as Jeroboam's wife thought to go to the prophet, in a disguise.

Under the law, the inward parts were only to be offered to God in sacrifice, the skin belonged to the priests: whence Origen inferreth, That truth in the inward parts is that which is most pleasing in a sacrifice. Indeed others compass God about with lies, and therefore highly provoke him. 'They did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongue, for their heart was not right with him,' Ps. 78:36, 37; Hosea 11:12. It is sinful for thee to tell a lie to thy fellow-creature, but how abominable is it to tell a lie to the almighty Creator! Thy prayer without thy heart will be a sacrilege, not a sacrifice.

When the heart is rector chori, chief leader of the choir, then the voice is pleasant indeed in God's ear. 'The Lord is nigh to all that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth,' Ps. 145:18. When the wife giveth the husband her heart, and defileth not the marriage bed, he will, if wise, bear with many infirmities in her. When the heart in prayer is devoted to God, he is pleased out of his grace and goodness to pardon and pass by many imperfections in the duty; but if that bed be prostituted to any other, he gives a divorce to the sacrifice, and putteth it away, for he is a iealous God. Jacob's small present could not but be acceptable to Joseph, because it was 'the best of the land.' The heart of man is but little, yet it is the best of man, and therefore taken kindly by God. The main inquiry at prayer is concerning the heart: as Jonadab was asked by Jehu, so is the Christian by God, 'Is thy heart right, as mine is? Then come up into my chariot.' Then come to the throne of grace, and welcome.

[3.] Thirdly, Thy prayers must be fervent. Prayer is a duty which consisteth not in words or expressions, but in the working of the affection; therefore it is called a crying to God: 'Out of the depth I have cried to thee,' Ps. 130. A rending the heart, Joel 2:13, as if the heart were by prayer torn in pieces; and a pouring out the soul, as if the body had been left without life, the soul being departed, and ascended to heaven in holy petitions. The true beggar is ever earnest for spiritual alms; he will not let God go without a blessing, Gen. 32. Paulus Æmilius being to fight with the Macedonians, would never give over sacrificing to his god Hercules, till he had some sign of victory. The Christian is more urgent with the true God than the heathen is with his god of clouts. When Daniel prayed, with what force were his words uttered! with what fire was his sacrifice offered! 'O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, defer not for the Lord's sake.' That wine is best which is fullest of these heavenly spirits. Winter fruits are sour and unpleasant to men, and so are cold petitions to

God, Dan. 9:13. Reader, when thou art praying for pardon, how shouldst thou even pour out thy soul! Alas! when thou considerest, if God do not pardon, I perish eternally; if sin be imputed, I am damned. How should thy heart cry out, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; after the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out mine iniquities.' Again, 'Wash me from mine iniquities, and cleanse me from my sin.' And again, 'Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.' Once more, 'Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation,' Ps. 51:1, 2, 11, 14. When thou art begging grace and purity, with what earnestness shouldst thou pray! believing how destructive sin is to thy precious soul, and how offensive to the jealous, just, and almighty God, and in what absolute necessity thou standest in of holiness, without which thou canst never see God. As when the clock strikes, the wheels within move notably, we may hear them run round; so when thy tongue is pleading with God for remission of sins, and repentance towards God for the Son of God, the Spirit of God, and thine everlasting salvation, how should thine heart move! what work should there be among thine affections, to enforce those weighty petitions! This fervency is necessary to prepare thy soul for the mercy thou desirest. What men get lazily they spend lavishly; but that food which a devout woman longeth for, she prizeth much, and eateth with most delight. When one whispered Demosthenes in the ear that he was beaten, and desired him to plead his cause, the orator would not believe him, till at last the man cried out; Now, saith he, I feel your cause.

It is the intension of the spirit, which giveth efficacy to our petitions; it is not the length of the arm, but the strength of it, which draweth the bow, so as to make the arrow fly fast and far. Fervency to prayer is as wings to the bird, by which it mounteth up to heaven: 'The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous prevaieth much,' James

5:16. When prayers are drivelled like rheum out of a man's mouth, they fall down at his feet. The mother will let the child alone, if it only whimper and whine a little in the cradle, but when it crieth outright, then she hasteth to take it up: 'This poor man cried,'—was not dull and drowsy, there is his fervency—'and the Lord heard him, and delivered him out of all his troubles,' Ps. 34:9. Here is his prevalency. There is no getting to the Indian mines by the cold northern seas, though because it is a shorter cut, some have attempted that way, but they lost their labour. Other duties are a serving God, prayer is a seeking God; now they that seek him early shall find him, Prov. 8:17. A low voice doth not cause a loud echo, neither doth a lazy prayer procure a liberal answer. Sleepy requests cause but dreams, mere fancied returns. When there is a cushion of ease under the knees, and a pillow of idleness under the elbows, there is little work to be done.

When Daniel had been fervent all day at prayer, an angel is sent to him at night with an answer. Importunity prevaieth with an unjust judge; much more with a righteous and gracious God. Though God be almighty, yet a fervent prayer, through his grace, hath held his hands: 'Let me alone,' Exod. 32. Who holdeth thee, Lord? saith Austin. Moses' earnest cry was the cord, which. I may speak with reverence, fastened God's hands.

Prayer is a sword to wound both sin and Satan, but fervency is the edge of it, doing the execution: 2 Cor. 12, 'For this I besought the Lord thrice.' When a man strikes his enemies with his full strength, then the wounds are made.

The lack of this fervency is the loss of many prayers. The lazy petition tires before it comes half-way to heaven: indeed it is eaten up, as the cold honey of wasps and flies, of wandering thoughts; when fervent

prayers, like honey boiling over the fire, is free from such ill guests. An idle prayer, like a lazy beggar, wandereth and gaddeth up and down, and, as a rolling stone, gathereth no moss. The working of the affections in prayer, like David's harp, allayeth those devils which would disturb the Christian in this duty. When a man is intent upon the God to whom he prayeth, and eager after the mercies for which he prayeth, though the world whisper him in the ear, he cannot hear; though Satan jog him by the elbow, he will not heed him.

But here a caution will be seasonable: The fire of thy fervency must be from heaven, not such strange fire as Nadab and Abihu offered to the Lord; I mean, it must not be the voice of nature—an earnest cry for the enjoyment of creatures—but the voice of the Spirit, an importunate desire for conformity to, and communion with, the Lord Jesus Christ. We read of those that howled upon their beds for corn and wine and oil, Hosea 7:14. Many, like children, roar, are much out of quiet, disturb others with the noise they make; but it is for clouts for a baby. 'Who will shew us any good?' The voice of a saint must be, as of a wise son at full age, for the inheritance: 'Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me.'

The petitioner herein must be very careful: he that rides apace had need to be sure that he is in the right way, or else, the freer his horse is, the more he wandereth to his loss. The greater the fire is, the more watchful we must be that it be kept within the chimney; the more earnest our affections are, the more we must mind what our petitions be: the promises of God must be the foundation of our prayers. What he promiseth to give I may pray to receive: 'Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope,' Ps. 119:49. But it is dangerous for the building to jut out (upon the king's highway) beyond the foundation; this may cause the house to fall or be taken down. Because 'godliness hath the promise of this life,' I am

bound to pray, 'Give me this day my daily bread.' Temporal good things must be part of the matter of my prayer; but because God promiseth these things conditionally—so far only as he seeth fit for his honour and my comfort—therefore I must pray for them conditionally. The apish child that crieth and squeaketh for the knife, to be its own carver, and will not be satisfied with its parents feeding it, deserveth the rod; our prayers, both for the matter and the manner, must run parallel with God's promises. Prayer is a putting God's promises into suit; but he that sueth a bond must mind the condition in it, or the verdict will be to his cost and damage. That which boils gently over a small fire may be of use to us, which, if it should boil hastily, and run over, it may raise ashes enough to spoil itself. The way to lose our requests for temporals is to be as hot and hasty for them as if they were our all, even our eternals.

That incomparable pattern of prayers, the Lord's prayer—which is like a standard measure in a corporation town, for present use, and an example for others—hath five petitions for spirituals, and but one for temporals.

God hath promised spiritual things absolutely, therefore thou mayest desire them absolutely: for pardon, and the image of God, and the blood of Christ, and fulness of joy in the other world, thou mayest be as earnest (so humble and reverent) as thou wilt. And oh, what a mercy is it that God, though, like a wise father, he deny us leave to cry for the candle which would burn, and the thorns which would prick our fingers, yet he giveth us liberty, nay, commandeth us, to besiege and storm heaven, to follow him up and down, to cry day and night, to give him no rest, to be instant, urgent, and fervent with him, that our persons may be justified, our natures sanctified, and our souls and bodies glorified eternally!

[4.] Fourthly, Thy prayers must be constant: thy duty is to give thyself to prayer, as a servant devoted to, and at the command of, his noble master. This fire, like that on the altar, must never go out day nor night: 'Night and day praying exceedingly,' 1 Thes. 3:10. Paul speaks as if his practice had been nothing but prayer; he did that so much that he seemed to do nothing else. Prayer is a saint's breath, which he constantly draweth: Eph. 6:18, 'Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.' Those that work in iron mills keep a continual fire; though they suffer it sometimes to slack or abate, yet never to go out. A Christian's prayer may have an intermission, but never a cessation.

Our blessed Saviour, besides his set times for ordinary, did pray whole nights. David was a good husband, up early at it: 'Mine eyes prevent the dawning of the morning,' Ps. 119:147. At night he was late at this duty: 'At midnight will I rise to give thanks to thee,' Ps. 119:62. This surely was his meaning when he said he should dwell in the house of the Lord for ever; he would be ever in the house of prayer.

Gregory writes of his aunt Trucilla, that her elbows were as hard as a horn, by often leaning upon a desk when she prayed.

Joachim, the father of the Virgin Mary, used to say that prayer was his meat and drink.

There is no duty enjoined a Christian for his constant trade so much as prayer: 'Pray always,' 'pray continually,' 'pray without ceasing,' 'pray with perseverance,' 'pray evermore.' But why is all this? would God have his people do nothing else but pray? must they cast by their callings, cast off all care of their children, and shut themselves up into some cell or cloister, and there be always upon their knees at



prayer, as the Euchites fancied? No; I shall therefore give a brief description of this praying without ceasing.

[1.] Thy soul must be ever in a praying frame. The soldier hath his weapons ready, though not always in fight with his enemy. Thy heart must be ever in tune, and ready upon the least touch to make heavenly music. The church's lips are compared to a honeycomb, Cant. 4:11. The honeycomb doth not always drop, but it is always ready to drop. The believer's spirit is like fire upon the hearth; though it do not blaze, yet it is ready upon any opportunity to be blown up into a flame.

[2.] No considerable business must be undertaken without prayer. Thou art God's servant, and thy duty is to ask his leave in all thou dost: Eph. 4:6, 'In all things let your requests be made known to God.' When thou risest up or liest down, when thou goest out or comest in, prayer must still be with thee. Prayer is the way to prevent evil. The world's poison may be expelled with this antidote, John 17:11. He that converseth with God by prayer dwelleth in heaven, and to such a one the earth is but a small point. Prayer is both a charm to enchant, and a scourge to torment Satan. It engageth Christ in the combat with the devil, and so assureth the soul of conquest. When the saint is fighting, and like to be foiled, either by the world, the flesh, or the wicked one, prayer is the letter which he sendeth post to heaven for fresh supplies of the Spirit, whereby he becometh 'more than a conqueror.' Prayer is the way to procure good: he that will not speak must not expect to speed. It sanctifieth our food, raiment, sleep, callings, and all our enjoyments to us. The Christian, like the chemist, extracteth all good things out of this one body of prayer.

[3.] He that prayeth constantly hath set times every day for prayer. The morning and evening sacrifice were called the 'continual

sacrifice,' Num. 28:4. The Christian hath his set meals for his soul every day as well as for his body. With the marigold, he opens himself in the morning for the sweet dews of heaven's grace and blessing, and he doth at night, (though his occasions hinder him in the day,) like a lover, find some opportunity to converse with his beloved.

He is most free and fresh in the morning; the top of the milk is the cream, and he doth not think his best too good for God. His evening fare is sometime extraordinary, like the Jewish feasts, which were at supper. The spiced cup is best at the bottom. Prayer is the key of the morning, to open the door of mercy; and prayer is the bolt at night, to shut him up in safety. The Jews prayed in the temple the third, sixth, and ninth hour of the day; our privileges under the gospel are enlarged, and I know no reason why our prayers should be lessened.

He that prayeth continually cloth upon all occasions in the daytime, whatever he be about, put up his supplication to God. He hath his ejaculations, his holy apostrophes, wherein he doth turn his speech, at least internal and inarticulate, from man to God. This liberty is a great privilege, and this practice turns to wonderful profit. When Jacob was blessing his sons, he takes breath with, 'I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord,' Gen. 49:14. Nehemiah, when at the king's elbow, would not open his mouth to the king till he had opened his heart to God, Neh. 2:6.

When Noah was cursing Ham, he had a short ejaculation for a blessing on Japheth, 'God shall persuade Japheth to dwell in the tents of Shem:' which prayer hath been answered, and will be to the end of the world. We Gentiles fare the better for that prayer. Christ upon the cross darted up a short ejaculatory prayer for his murderers, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,'

and as an answer to it, we find some thousands of them presently converted.

Truly, reader, I would commend these ejaculations as an excellent receipt for all companies, and in all conditions. If thou art a stranger to it, thou dost not know the virtue of it. It is, as some write of the herb Panaces, a universal remedy for all diseases, a special, though cheap preservative both against the evil of sin and suffering. This is the best way to avoid dangers, to overcome difficulties, and to prosper us in our lawful designs, Gen. 24:12.

When thou receivest a sudden mercy, hearest unexpected good news, thou mayest presently rear an altar, and offer up a sacrifice of praise to God. If thou art protected through grace from any transgression, in which thou wast falling, or afflictions of which thou wast afraid, thou mayest suddenly despatch a messenger to heaven with thanks, who will be more welcome there than thou art aware of. So did a good servant, Gen. 24:26; and a godly soldier and governor, Judges 7:15. 'I will bless the Lord at all times,' saith David; 'his praise shall be continually in my mouth.' When thou art in a sudden plunge, thou mayest dart up a thought to God for counsel or protection; these short breathings would prepare thee for a long race.

There are, indeed, some seasons for prayer, which must by no means be slighted; when the Spirit of God stirreth in thee, and cometh for thee, then make haste to God. Courtiers watch for convenient seasons to present their petitions to their kings, and will be sure to lay hold of such seasons. If the king himself offer any discourse relating to their requests, then they will close and strike in: when the Spirit of God in a morning or evening, or in the day time, commandeth thee to go and cry to God for pardon and life, (I speak of regular motions, for no other come from the Spirit,) then is a fit

time to present thy requests; he sendeth for thee for that end; take heed of delaying or denying. 'Thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' Suitors have their mollissima tempora fandi, their special times of wooing. Esther waited once and again for a fit time to beg her life, and the lives of her people, of the king; and when Ahasuerus put her upon it, gave her an opportunity, she then did it, and prevailed.

Whatsoever actions thou enterest upon, whether civil, natural, or religious, let prayer be to thee, as the Baptist to Christ, the messenger to prepare the way before thee. Bonaventure, that seraphical doctor, being asked by Aquinas, How he got such divine knowledge? pointing to a crucifix in his study, said, Ille est liber meus, by praying to that crucifix. A Christian by praying to God, in the name of a crucified Christ, may get saving knowledge. Be confident of this, those mercies will be most savoury which come flying to thee upon the wings of prayer. Those favours are suspicious which steal in at a window, and come not in at the door of prayer. How sweet was that water to Samson, which streamed to him in the channel of prayer, Judges 15:19, he called the name of it En-hakkore, 'the well of him that prayed.' Jacob saw God smiling in Esau's smooth countenance, because prayer was the sun which scattered and cleared that sky. When thou canst say of the mercy which God giveth thee, as Hannah of Samuel, 'For this child I prayed,' saith she; he is the travail of my soul, as well as of my body; he is the fruit of my heart, as well as of my womb: when thou must say, For this blessing I prayed; many a time did I weep and make supplication, and lo I have prevailed. Such a mercy will be a double mercy; a Samuel indeed, 'asked of God,' and dedicated to God.

As Jesus Christ was more welcome to Mary his mother, when she and his father had sought him sorrowing; so those blessings,

especially spiritual, will be received with most joy, which were sought with most sorrow: what thou winnest with prayer, thou wilt rear with praise.

But it may be, reader, thou art one that art so far from constant praying, that the garment of the atheist will fit thy back very well: 'They call not upon God,' Ps. 14:4; if so, bethink thyself, for thou livest like a beast, as Nebuchadnezzar did, though thou hast the shape of a man: 'They are become brutish, and have not sought the Lord,' Jer. 10:21. Brutes are like mutes: oh, it is a dreadful condition to be possessed with a dumb devil! When men once grow speechless, it is a sign death is hard by. If that bloody butcher can but muzzle thy mouth, and with cords hinder thy crying, expect the stroke of the axe; or possibly that livery which Eliphaz made for Job, though it was much below him, yet will become thee, 'Thou restrainest prayer before God,' Job 15:4. The pulse of thy soul falters; thou layest by thy prayers, as some do their best clothes, till they go to church again, or for some holiday. Oh, this is a sad sign, that prayer, which should be thy element, is thy torment! Friends that love one another, long to converse together, and take all opportunities of sending to, and hearing from, each other; hadst thou any love to the blessed God, it would be so with thee. But as painfulness in speaking often argueth unsound inwards, so thy inconstancy in praying giveth thee cause of suspecting thy spiritual unsoundness and insincerity.

## **CHAPTER XIV**

### **The subsequent duties after prayer**

3. Thirdly, I shall speak to the consequents, or those duties which must follow after prayer; and they are principally two, watching and

working.

(1.) Watching for an answer. Pious prayers are precious commodities; and who, unless a madman or a fool, will throw away what is of value and worth? When thou hast shot thine arrow, observe where it lights, and how near it flew to the mark. Wise men, when they have delivered their petitions to their prince, watch and wait sometimes a year together, all the while longing and looking for an answer. Thy requests to God are of infinite concernment—thy heaven, thy eternal happiness is involved in them; with what holy impatience then shouldst thou desire an answer! 'In the morning I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up,' Ps. 5:3. The words discover David's posture in prayer, and his practice after prayer: his posture in prayer, 'I will direct my prayer unto thee.' The word is an allusion to an archer, or to a general, as some observe on it.

[1.] To an archer; and then the meaning is, I will be up betimes, and take as good aim as I can possibly at the mark, and so draw my bow, and direct my arrow, that I may hit it.

[2.] To a general; and then it importeth thus much: I will rise early, and set my requests to God, as soldiers in battalia, in rank and file, in good array. I will so marshal them, that they be not routed by being out of order. I will see that they stand in their places and keep their ground; and what then? His practice after prayer, 'and will look up.' I will observe what became of the arrow I shot. Or, the word being an allusion to a watchman, as the former word to a commander-in-chief of an army, speaketh thus: When I have marshalled my prayers in good array, and sent them forth to fight against my spiritual enemies, and to wrestle with God himself for his grace and love, I will get up to my watch-tower to see what execution they do upon my adversaries; what power they have with God—whether they get or lose ground—

whether they prevail and win the day. It was the custom in those days, when forces were sent forth to fight, for the general to command one to watch in some high place, if he could spy any coming from the armies with news; so when David's soldiers were engaged with Absalom's, the watchmen went up to the roof over the gate, and spied Ahimaaz and Cushi coming with tidings. Thus holy David stood, as it were, sentinel, and watched as a spy, longing every moment to hear and see the event, issue, and success of his prayers.

Men that work for a dead horse, as we say, when their business is done, look no further, because they had their pay beforehand; but those whose reward is behind, labour in expectation of it, and, after they have wrought, look for it. An unbeliever's hopes are in this present world, and therefore, if he procure but some earthly profit, it is no wonder if he look no more after his prayers; he had his pay beforehand. But a believer, whose reward—not of debt, but of grace—is ever behind and to come while he is upon earth, when he hath prayed, in obedience to God's precept, cannot but expect the performance of God's promise.

He that ventureth nothing in a ship save a small parcel of pins, or a few quires of paper, or something which is little better than nothing, takes little thought what becomes of the vessel; if it sink or swim, it is all one to him, he loseth not a moment's sleep for it. But the merchant who ventureth all he is worth in a vessel, and sendeth it out very richly laden, though it be a long journey, yet he is impatient to hear of it; many an anxious thought hath he about it. Many a time he putteth the supposition to himself, What if this ship should miscarry? what will become of me, my wife, and children? He can hardly eat or drink with comfort, or sleep with quietness, till he hears it is safe. A wicked man that is worth nothing ventureth nothing in his prayers, and therefore, whether they miscarry or no, it matters

not much with him. When he prayed for pardon and grace he counted them little worth; he prized his stock and his riches at a far higher rate, and so must needs be very indifferent whether the vessel wherein things of such small worth, in his esteem, were hazarded, come home safe or no. But a godly man hazardeth all he is worth for this and the other world in his prayers. He knoweth that all his happiness is involved in the pardon of his sins, in the righteousness of his Saviour, in the love of his God, and the renovation of his nature, all which he beggeth with strong cries and groans. He esteemeth these things as the very life of his life, and the very soul of his soul; and oh, thinks he, how richly laden is this vessel which I have sent forth! My precious soul, my dearest Jesus, my interest in the covenant of grace, my eternal fruition of the ever-blessed God, are all aboard her. If she should miscarry, good Lord, what would become of me? I am lost, I am damned, I am undone eternally. Was ever ship better fraught? Her burden is of inestimable value. My joy, my peace, my love, my delight, my hope, my heaven, my all, are in her. Oh, what should I do if the arch-pirate Satan should seize her? or if she should split upon the rock of my presumption? or sink in the quicksands of my infidelity? Alas, alas! whither should I go? where should I appear? Such a soul never failed of a rich return of his venture.

Reader, when thou hast prayed, wait and expect an answer. Though thy prayers were mingled with many imperfections, if they were the travail of thy soul—upright, I mean—do not give them over for lost.

When Moses' mother could keep him no longer, she made an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with pitch, and put him in, and hid it in the flags by the river's brink; and his sister stood afar off, to see what would become of him. And Pharaoh's daughter came to wash herself, spied the ark, sent and fetched it; the babe wept, and she had



compassion on it; sent for the mother, gave it her to nurse, paid for its nursing, and the child became the great deliverer of Israel. Truly so when the fruit of thy heart, thy tears, and sighs, and groans, and prayers, are ready, in the eye of sense, to be given over for dead, they lie floating upon the water; let thy faith and hope be near at hand, to see what will become of them. The king's son may take pity on the weeping babe, pay the charge of its nursing up, bringing it into favour at the heavenly court, and make it serviceable for the conducting thy soul through the wilderness of this world towards the true and celestial Canaan.

Though the messenger thou sendest to heaven tarry long, yet wait and expect his return. Those that send to the Indies for the golden wedges wait many months, though they long every moment for their arrival.

If, after thy expectation, thou findest little fruit of thy petitions, do not therefore lay aside that calling: 'Continue in prayer, and watch in the same,' Col. 4:2. Anglers, though they have fished many hours and caught nothing, do not therefore break their cane and line, but draw out their hook, and look upon their bait, which, it may be, was fallen off, or not well hung on, and mend it, and then throw it in again. So when thou hast been earnest in prayer, and yet received no answer, reflect upon thy prayers; consider whether something were not amiss, either in thy preparation for the duty, or in the matter or manner of thy petitions. It is possible thou mightest desire stones instead of bread, or fuel for thy lusts, or didst forget to deliver thy petitions to the only master of requests, the Lord Jesus, that he might present it to the Father. If any of these were the fault, no wonder if they failed. Whatever it be, be diligent to find it out; amend it, and fall to thy work again with confidence, that thou shalt not work at the labour in vain. The archer, if he shoot once, and again,

and miss the mark, considereth what the reason was, whether he did not shoot too high, or too low, or too much on the right hand, or too much on the left hand, takes the same arrow again, only reformeth his former error, and winneth the wager.

(2.) Secondly, Working is necessary after prayer, as well as watching. Begging and digging must go together. Thy duty is to pray, as knowing assuredly that thou canst do nothing of thyself, and yet to work as if thou wert to do all by thine own power. He that doth not endeavour, in a lawful use of those means which God affordeth him, to attain the mercies he needeth and asketh, doth tempt, not trust God, and may expect a rod sooner than relief. A good use may be made of that story: A carter, having overthrown his cart, sat in the way crying, Help, Hercules, help! (Hercules was counted by the heathen a god for his strength,) O Hercules, help! At length one appeared to him in Hercules' shape, with a good cudgel in his hand, and beat him handsomely, saying, Ah, thou silly, lazy fellow, dost thou call to me for help, and sit still thyself? Arise, and set to thy shoulder. Do thy part, and I will do the rest.

If thou prayest for thy daily bread, be thou diligent in thy calling, or else expect a crop out of the ocean. If thou prayest against some particular sins, avoid the occasions of those sins. If it be against drunkenness, avoid evil company. If it be against pride, avoid and discourage such as will flatter thee, for otherwise thou dost as he that runneth into the fire, and prayeth to God that it may not burn him. Such a man mocketh God, but himself most. If thou prayest for holiness and grace, hear, read, meditate, watch, use the means, and expect a good issue from God.

Observe David, his prayer was, 'Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips,' Ps. 141:3. But now, because he hath

committed the main charge of this unruly prisoner, his tongue, to God, desiring him to lock the double doors of his lips and teeth fast upon it, and to have a main guard always watching before the doors, lest it should break through and attempt an escape, doth he therefore sleep himself, thinking the prisoner was safe enough? No, he himself would be upon the guard. 'I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle while the wicked is before me,' Ps. 39:1, 2. David, as he desired God to put a good bit into the mouth of this wanton beast, so he would himself keep a strict hand, and rein him in.

### **A good wish about prayer, wherein all the forementioned particulars are epitomised**

Prayer is one of my nearest and solemnest approaches to the most high God, and one of my choicest privileges on this side the place of praise, wherein I may go to my God at all times and acquaint him what I ail—where it is well, where it is ill, with my poor soul. I wish in general that I may never suffer this key to God's own treasury to rust for want of use, nor to be ineffectual to the opening of the divine bounty by my unskilfulness in turning it, that neither by my unfitness for the duty, miscarriage at the duty, nor misbehaviour after the duty, I may demean myself unworthy of so great a favour, so high an honour, and so good a Master. In particular, I wish that I may (at least morning and evening) before I enter upon this ordinance, whether in my closet or family, make a privy search for those Barabbases which have moved sedition in my soul, and murdered my dearest Saviour, and that I may have such a sight of them all, in their horrid nature and bloody colour, that I may arraign them at the tribunal of God, with confusion of face and contrition of heart, and may with all possible ardency plead for their execution. I wish that my necessities may ever be in my memory; that, as the sick

child, I may point readily to the place of my pain, whenever I go to make my moan to my heavenly Father; and that, affected with the weight and importance of them, I praying feelingly, may pray the more fervently.

I wish that the many and weighty mercies which I, unworthy wretch, enjoy, may be written so firmly in my mind, and presented to me before prayer, in the various and lively colours of their freeness, fulness, and seasonableness; that I may never steal the custom of thanks from my God, which is all he desires, for those rich and full vessels which he sendeth me in every day; but may pay him this impost of praise and glory with all uprightness and alacrity.

I wish that my graces may never be, like Jonah, asleep, when I am to call upon my God; but as the heavenly host, they may be moving in their several places, and fighting in their courses against my spiritual enemies. Oh that, like holy Bradford, I might never leave confession without sorrow for sin; petition, without some sense of the worth of mercies; nor thanksgiving, without some solace and joy in God, the author and fountain of all my happiness. I wish that I may draw nigh to God with a pure conscience; and before I go to desire the lovely portion of his friends, give a bill of divorce to all my lusts, and, at least, banish from the bed of my heart those enemies of his which would not have him to reign over me. I wish that I may never desire mercy at his hands with the least degree of malice in my heart, but may love, as saints, because they are Christ's seed, so sinners, and them that hate me, for Christ's sake; and, as a special medicine against that poison, whatsoever friend I should forget in my prayers, I wish I may resolve beforehand to remember in particular my enemies, to beg of God that he would pardon, sanctify, and save them. I wish that my affections may not, as Saul's person, be hid among the stuff of worldly affairs, when I should be busy about the

concernment of an eternal crown; but that I may leave those servants always at the door behind, while I go in to speak to the King of nations, and may, all the time of the duty, serve and seek the Lord my God without distraction. I wish that I may be specially careful to look up to the Master of requests, the Lord Jesus Christ: first, for the justification of my person, and then for the acceptation of my prayer; and that I may be so enabled, with the hand of faith, to put on the glorious robes of his perfect righteousness, that neither the nakedness of my person nor performance may appear to my shame. I wish that all the flowers which I present to my God, in the posy of prayer, may be gathered out of his own garden, the Scriptures; I mean, that I may never exceed those bounds which he hath set me for the matter of my prayer, but may use much caution that all those spices, which I make my incense of, may be of his own prescription: and oh that, to this end, his Holy Spirit, who knoweth his mind fully, might draw up all my petitions for me! I wish that my prayers may be ever presented upon the bended knees of my soul, and also, in regard of my body, in the lowest and most submissive posture; ah, how humble should dust and ashes be, when he takes upon him to speak to the most high God! I wish above all that I may never mock the most jealous God in this duty, by speaking parrot-like what I neither mind nor mean; but whatsoever dish be wanting on the table to which I invite my God, my heart, which I know he loveth above all, may be there, and that my prayer may be the travail of my soul, and not the labour of my lips. I wish that I may so feel my spiritual wants, that my bowels may so pinch me, that, as the hungry and almost starved beggar, I may cry aloud for the bread of life; yet not so much in regard of the extension of my voice, as the intension of my spirit. When I am petitioning for pardon and grace, I wish I might beg as earnestly, and beseech God as importunately, as if it were in the power of my prayer to change his mind and procure the blessing; but when I am asking temporals, I would not, as the dry earth, cry and

cleave and gape for wine and corn and oil, but willingly be at my Father's allowance, and desire no more than what his infinite wisdom seeth needful to bear my charges, till I come to my blessed and everlasting home. I wish that I might observe that standing law, according to which heaven's bounty is dispensed, in all things to make my requests known to God, and never expect, though the mercies of God be never so ripe, that any of them should fall down upon me in mercy, unless I shake the tree by prayer. I wish that every mercy may come flying to me upon the wings of prayer, and may fly back to God upon the wings of praise; that prayer may be the mother to breed and bring forth all my blessings, that not one child of them but may be named Samuel, asked of God; that when I first open my eyes in the morning, I may then, in some ejaculatory prayer, open my heart to my God, that at night prayer may make my bed soft, and lay my pillow easy, that in the day-time prayer may perfume my clothes, sweeten my food, oil the wheels of my particular vocation, keep me company upon all occasions, and gild over all my natural, civil, and religious actions. I wish that, after I have poured out my prayer in the name of Christ, according to the will of God, having sowed my seed, I may expect a crop, looking earnestly for the springing of it up, and believing assuredly that I shall reap in time if I faint not; yea, that though the promise may stick long in the birth, yet it will at last bring forth, when God will give me large interest for my forbearance. Finally, I wish that, though before sorrowful, having opened my mind to God about any suffering, my countenance, like Hannah's, may be no more sad; that I may never busy myself about God's work, the success and event of things, nor like an idle, lazy beggar, be careless about my own work, but may in my place, and to my power, be industrious in the use of all those lawful means which his providence affords me for the enjoyment of my desires, that as I did lift up my heart in praying, so I may lift up my hands in working to God, who dwelleth in the heavens.

## CHAPTER XV

### **How a Christian may exercise himself to godliness in hearing and reading the word, and of preparation for hearing**

The blessed God, as he appointeth the children of men their ends—namely, to serve him here, and to enjoy him hereafter—so he doth also afford them directions about the way how they may attain and accomplish those ends. He is our master, and cutteth out that work for us, which he expecteth we should make up. He bestoweth on all the starlight of nature, which, though it be but small and dull, by reason of our first fall, yet it ruleth and commandeth the night of the pagan world, and is sufficient to leave them inexcusable for not working and walking by it. When heathen shall be thrown into the jail of hell, and bound with chains of everlasting darkness, their own consciences will hinder them from the least thought of commencing a suit against God for false imprisonment, because they are judged not by the law moral, written in tables of stone, but by the law natural, written in the tables of their hearts.

But out of his infinite favour he is pleased to give some—in those places where he intendeth to gather a people to himself, for his eternal praise—beside the twinkling starlight of nature, the clear and perfect sunlight of Scripture, to 'guide their feet in the ways of peace.' Which word is one of the most signal mercies that ever he bestowed upon the sons of men, the whole world without it being but a barren and rude wilderness.

The word of God is a spring of living water, a deep mine of costly treasure, a table furnished with all sorts of food, a garden wherein is

variety of pleasant fruits, the church's charter, containing all her privileges and her deeds, manifesting her title to the purchased possession. It hath pious precepts for the Christian's reformation, and precious promises for his consolation. If the saint be afflicted, it can hold his head above water, and keep him from sinking when the billows go over his soul; there are cordials in it rich enough to revive the most fainting spirit. If the saint be assaulted, the word is armour of proof, whereby he may defend himself manfully, and wound his foes mortally. If the soul be unholy, this word can sanctify it; 'Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken to you,' John 15:3. This water can wash out all the spots and stains. If the soul be an heir of hell, this word can save it: 'From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise to salvation,' 2 Tim. 3:15; other writings may make a man wise to admiration, but this only can make him wise to salvation.

This word, which is of such unspeakable worth, God hath deposited as a special treasure into the hands of the children of men, that they might 'obey his will, and know the just one.' And, reader, it is thy duty to search and study this book. When kings send out their proclamations, either concerning acts of grace, or some law which their subjects ought to obey, they expect that all should take notice of them, and give them the reading and hearing. What an affront dost thou offer to the King of the whole world, if thou turnest thy back upon his word! I must tell thee it is no less than crimen læsæ majestatis; 'He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me,' Luke 10:16. Thou mayest think, possibly, that by neglecting to hear, thou dost only condemn the preacher; but believe me, it is a contempt of thy Maker—ministers are God's ambassadors. Now to deny an ambassador audience, is one of the greatest disrespects which can possibly be offered him, nay, it is an affront to his prince,



on whose errand he cometh, and whose person he representeth; and what is the conclusion usually of such bad premises, but a bloody war? Consider what thou dost, when thou 'refusest him that speaketh from heaven;' for if thou shuttest the windows of thine eyes from reading, and the door of thine ears from hearing, God may clap such a padlock of a judiciary curse upon them both, that thou shalt never open thine eyes nor ears, till thou comest, as the rich glutton, to see Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom, and to hear and bear thy part in those dreadful screechings and howlings which are in hell.

It is a mercy that the tree of knowledge, the word of God, is not forbidden, but commanded fruit; nay, that it groweth in the very path to the tree of life. Oh, why shouldst thou then, like the pharisees, 'reject the counsel of God against thy own soul'? If thou art a child of Adam, I am sure thou hast thy death's wound; now by neglecting the word, thou, like a frantic patient, throwest away that plaster which only can cure thee.

Do not say thou wast not warned of thy danger and duty. I do here shew thee the hand and seal of the King of kings to that warrant to which I require thy obedience. The Scripture is the word of Christ, and God commandeth thee upon thine allegiance to hear him, Col. 3:16; Mat. 3:17. The word is the cabinet in which thy Saviour, that pearl of infinite price, is laid up; and therefore thou art commanded to look into it for this jewel: 'Search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of me,' John 5:39. The word is ἐρευνᾶτε, and speaketh such a diligent search as covetous men make for silver; they spare no labour, that they may attain their deified treasure. What shouldst not thou do for 'durable riches and righteousness'?

But, reader, if thou art a child of God, I doubt not but thou delightest to look into thy Father's will, and weighest every word in it, as

knowing that in his testament there is a great charge committed, and a great legacy bequeathed, to thee. It is thy daily companion and counsellor; thou darest not go without thy cordial, being liable every day to faint; nor without thy weapons, being called every hour to fight. The Scriptures are the light by which thou walkest, and the tools with which thou workest. Let me persuade thee to persevere in this gracious practice; take the counsel of the author of it, who is fittest to give laws for thy carriage towards it: 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,' Col. 3:16. The word is ἐνοικέτω, and signifieth to keep house with you. Do not leave thy Bible, as some do, at church, and hear nothing of it all the week long; but bring it home to thy house, let it dwell with thee. Let not the word be 'as a wayfaring man, to tarry with thee but for a night,' and so begone; but let it be an inhabitant, one that accompanieth thee to bed and board, and with whom thou conversest continually as thy familiar and intimate friend. Make thine heart, as Jerome saith of Nepotianus, by his assiduous reading and hearing the Scriptures, Bibliothecam Christi, the library of Jesus Christ. I cannot but think that thou hast found the Bible so bountiful a guest, to pay thee so liberally for its board, that thou hast bid it heartily welcome, and wouldst not part with it for the whole world. Agesilaus is commended, saith Xenophon, because he never went to bed, nor rose up, before he had looked into Homer, whom he called his sweetheart. Advise thou with a divine, at least, as often as he did with a profane author. Kings have their counsellors, and great men their remembrancers; let God's testimonies be 'the men of thy council,' Ps. 119:24.

Let not others' negligence abate the least of thy diligence, but rather, by an antiperistasis, let their extreme coldness double thine inward heat. As the fire is hottest when the weather is coldest; so David's heart boiled with zeal after it, when the waters of others' affections to it were frozen. 'They have made void thy law. Therefore I love thy

commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold. Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right,' Ps. 119:126–128.

Oh, consider what love the saints of God have ever had to his law! Luther said that he hated the books he made, and could wish them all burnt, lest the time spent in reading them, might hinder the reading of the Scriptures. 'Oh, how love I thy law!' saith David. The godly have meditated therein day and night; they have esteemed it above the sweetest honey and the finest gold; the martyrs in England have given much of their estates for a few leaves of it, and they laid down their lives before they would lose the precious fruit in it. The French protestants, saith their historian, burnt in zeal to the word, whilst the bloody papists burnt them for the word. Scipio Africanus was applauded for having usually in his hands the books of Xenophon's Institutions of Cyrus. Oh let this book of books be often before thee, and always in thee; let it be thy meditation all the day! One would think that he who knoweth and believeth the contents of the word, should hardly ever let a Bible be out of his hand; at least he will lay it up, as the two tables in the ark, in his heart. One of the fathers calls it the heart and soul of God. Indeed, as a man by his word discovereth his mind and will; so God by the gospel, which is his word, revealeth his eternal good-will to men. It is the copy of his everlasting love, of which his decree is the original, containing all his precious thoughts, before the foundation of the world, of redeeming miserable man with the blood of his Son, and making him an heir of the eternal weight of glory. Those gracious and mysterious purposes of his, which were hid in the night of many ages, when the Sun of righteousness once appeared in the horizon of the gospel, were visible and legible to every eye: 'He hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel,' 2 Tim. 1:10.

The apostle calls it 'the grace of God,' and 'the word of his grace,' Tit. 2:11; Acts 20:32; not only because the rain of the word goeth by coasts, as a gift of grace, Ps. 147:19, 20—'He causeth it to shower down upon one city, and not on another,' Amos 4:7—and not only because, like a seal, it stampeth grace, the image of God, upon the soul, Acts 2:37, but chiefly because, on the stage of the word, the grace and favour of God to mankind is fully displayed. The gospel presenteth us with the whole method of God's grace and love to poor sinners. This world is the theatre in which grace acteth its part, (the triumph of justice is reserved for the other world,) and the gospel is the throne on which grace sits, and from whence it holds out its golden sceptre. The language of the law is no less than a sentence of death; but the gospel alloweth a psalm of mercy, and in it GRACE REIGNETH, ἐβασιλεύσε, playeth the king, commandeth in chief 'unto justification of life,' Rom. 5:17, 18, 21.

But the more precious this water of life is, the more fearful thou shouldst be of spilling it. Kings cannot endure that their acts of grace should be trampled under foot. Abused favour turneth into greatest fury. Men surfeit soonest of the greatest dainties, and further their misery by that which was given them as in mercy.

Our Saviour therefore commandeth, 'Take heed how ye hear,' Luke 8:18. There are two special lessons which Christ commendeth to his scholars. The first concerneth the matter of their hearing, 'Take heed what you hear,' Mark 4:24. Ministers are Christ's ushers; Christ himself is the head master. Now Christ forbiddeth the pinning our faith upon our usher's sleeve. The Bereans have an honourable crest put into their coat of arms by God himself, to distinguish them in nobility from others, for bringing the coin offered to them to the touchstone of the Scripture, to try whether it were true gold or counterfeit. 'And these were more noble than those of Thessalonica,

because they received the word of God with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so,' Acts 17:11. Men must not, like children, take down whatever their nurses put into their mouths, whether meat or poison, but know how to distinguish between good and evil. Our faith must not 'stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.' All weights and measures must be compared with, and tried by, the king's standards. The copy is no further authentic than it agreeth with the original deed.

The second lesson concerneth the manner of their hearing, 'Take heed how ye hear.' The richest cordial may be lost as it may be taken. It will be requisite, therefore, to give thee some prescription how thou mayest take this costly physic to thy greatest profit.

In reference to which duty I shall speak—

1. To thy preparation for it.
2. To thy carriage at it.
3. To thy behaviour after it.

1. As to thy preparation for hearing the word, I shall request thee from God to mind these ensuing particulars:

(1.) Empty thine heart of evil frames and prejudice. Evil frames. The dish must not be sluttish into which we put these spiritual dainties. If the stomach be clogged with filth and phlegm, it cannot digest and concoct our food. The light of the sun, as pleasant and delightful as it is to sound, is yet offensive and painful to sore eyes. This part of preparation is enjoined us by the Spirit of God: 'Wherefore lay apart all filthiness, and all superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls,'

James 1:21. If the body be feverish, the sweetest syrup will taste bitter. If any ill humour or lust be predominant in thee, like the full and foul stomach, thou wilt loathe even the honeycomb. The table book of thine heart must be wiped clean before any new thing (as the law of God) can be written in it. Briers and thorns must be stubbed up before the ground be capable of the grain.

As evil humours, because of the doctrine taught, so prejudice against the person teaching must be removed. Prejudice against the preacher is the greatest prejudice to the hearer. A condemned person will esteem a beggar when he brings a pardon. 'How beautiful are'—not the lips only and hands, but the meanest parts—the feet of them that bring the glad tidings of peace.' I confess it is a mercy to be related to a pastor who hath both parts and piety, gifts and grace; and if thou art to choose a dwelling, I would wish thee to bear with many outward inconveniences, to sit down under such a ministry. But suppose thy teacher, at least in thy thoughts, is a man of mean parts, wilt thou thence conclude his pains will yield thee little profit? Truly, shouldst thou gratify Satan so far, it would be the speediest way to find a truth in what thou dost fancy. Friend, friend! doth the efficacy of the ordinance depend on the parts of man, or on the power of God? May not a costly treasure be brought to thee in an earthen vessel? Consider, thou mayest light thy candle as well, it may be better, with a brimstone match, as at a great fire. Christ taught his apostles by a little child, Mat. 18:2. A small damsel was instrumental for Naaman's recovery both of his spiritual and corporal leprosy. And who art thou, that none must instruct thee, but such a one as, like Saul, is higher than others by head and shoulders in gifts and abilities? I wish it be not from the pride of thy spirit that none is worthy enough to teach thee thy grammar lesson, but some head of the university. A picking stomach, I am sure, argueth a diseased body, and then a squeamish heart and itching ear cannot argue a

sound soul. The industrious bee sucks honey from the thyme, a harsh and dry herb. The meat is as good in a pewter as in a silver dish.

It may be thou goest to table only for the sauce, to church for the style and elegancy of the language; if so, I dare be bold to tell thee, that 'thine heart is not right in the sight of God.' Dost thou not know that it is the naked sword which doth the execution, that a crucified Christ is the great conqueror, not a pompous, gaudy Messiah, which the Jews dreamed of? Paul is commanded to preach, 'not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect,' 1 Cor. 1:17, so also ver. 27, 28.

Truly, if thou lustest after the quails of some new dish, it is a sign that thou loathest manna, the bread of heaven; and what a condition is thy poor soul in then! They that have the greensickness care not for solid food, but hanker after trash. They have souls sadly sick that neglect the good word of God, and long after the fancies and wit of men.

God doth, 'by the foolishness of preaching, save them that believe,' that he alone might have the glory of their salvation; 'that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us,' 2 Cor. 4:7. When men nibble at the bait of human eloquence, and are caught, the skill of the angler is applauded; but when men bite at the naked hook, the simplicity of the gospel, all will grant this to be a miracle, and say, 'This is the finger of God.'

Dost thou not see, that as Daniel and his companions thrived better and looked fairer with feeding upon pulse, than the other captives who fed on the king's dainty provision, so those Christians in every parish, look abroad where you will, thrive more in holiness, and are fairer in God's eye, who feed on plain, naked Scripture, than those whom no dishes will please but such as are curiously cooked for a

king's palate? Thou wilt not believe but that thy face may be seen in a glass where the sides are not gilded; thou wilt choose a horse, not by its trappings and fine furniture, but by its usefulness and serviceableness. Why shouldst thou be so childish as to be in love with no garments but what are daubed with silver lace, when other plain raiment will warm thy body as well?

Reader, if the fault be not thine own, thou mayest gain much, nay, I must say most, good by plain preaching. Those that dwell by the sea-side gather up those precious commodities, bequeathed to the sea at the death or wreck of the ship, when the sea is lowest, which they cannot do when the waters are highest. I do not here plead for vain repetitions and tedious circumlocutions, nor for them that dress their meat so slovenly that their guests loathe it. I know it is below the majesty of a king, when he is delivering his mind by his ambassador, to play the orator; but it is not below him to speak sense and reason. Wise men love a neat, compact discourse, but it must be more full of matter than words, convincing the judgment, and working upon the affections. Plain, solid sermons, are most acceptable to pious and serious souls. There is a vast difference between washing the face of a discourse clean, and painting it; the former is lawful and commendable, the latter sinful and abominable. Ministers must mind the capacities of their auditories, and not put that meat into their mouths which their teeth cannot chew, nor their stomachs concoct. Their sermons of quiddities, hæccieties, and school niceties may, in the opinion of giddy men, tend to their own praise, but never to their hearers' profit. 'Such men, when their children ask bread, give them stones, which may choke them, but will not cherish them. It is a pity he should ever teach school that will not speak to his scholars so as they may understand him.



But the worst supposition is, thy teacher may be untaught himself; his life may give the lie to his lips. As to this prejudice—1. Remember that an accusation must not be received against an elder, except under two or three witnesses; thy charity, O Christian! and the dignity of his calling, must both move thee to be slow to believe. As it is sinful to raise up an evil report, (Constantine the emperor said, that if he saw a bishop committing uncleanness, he would rather cover that foul fact with his imperial robe, than suffer it to be divulged to the dishonour of the gospel,) so it is sinful to take up an evil report, whoever laid it down ready for thee. 2. But, secondly, if thy pastor, like a wooden vessel, giveth that wine to thee which he never tasteth nor savoureth himself, be not therefore wholly discouraged. If it be true that thy minister is false to God and his own soul, that he only wears Christ's livery that he might the more unsuspected do the devil's work, I confess it is matter of great lamentation; the good Lord take care either for their conversion or ejection; for certainly they, being listed under Christ's colours, and false to their captain, do his adversary the devil double service. The sins of teachers are the teachers of sins; they who forget their sermons will remember their sins, to patronise their own. But if the providence of God should bind thee to such a pastor, which is no small unhappiness, consider that God fed Elijah by a raven, and surely he can feed thee by an unclean creature. He increaseth sometimes his enemies' gifts, that they might be instrumental to increase his people's graces. It is unquestionable in my judgment, though some I know doubt it, that a sinner may convert a soul; and my reason is this, because the operation of the word doth not depend upon the piety of the preacher, but upon the free grace and power of the Lord. Yet I must also confess that I believe that God doth not so often vouchsafe to his enemies as to his friends that honour and happiness. But as bad as he is, God may use him to do thee good. As the best ministers' sermons are not to be received for their good lives'

sake, so the worst ministers' preaching is not to be rejected because of their evil practices. A blind man may hold a candle to give light to others, whilst he himself remains in the dark; the Sun of righteousness may convey the light of holiness into the house of thine heart through this sluttish window; thou mayest derive water from the fountain of life through a leaden pipe; a deaf bell may be useful to call a Christian to church; and he that never heard so as to live, may call a soul to Christ; wholesome sugar may be in a poisoned cane.

The Egyptian jewels were helpful to the tabernacle. David made the spoils of the Gentiles serviceable to the temple, and surely the Son of David can make the parts and gifts of an Egyptian, an enemy to God, serviceable to thy soul. The pharisees in the days of Christ were many of them vicious persons, yet they, sitting in Moses' chair, Christ doth not deny them audience, but commandeth his disciples to distinguish between their words and their works; he doth not forbid them to hear their doctrine, but enjoins them to forbear their doings, Mat. 23:2, 3.

(2.) The second thing requisite to preparation is this:

Before thou goest to hear, labour to affect thine heart with the necessity, excellency, and efficacy of the word. There was half an hour's silence in heaven before the seventh trumpet sounded; thy duty is to weigh the nature and end of the word, before thou goest to hear that trumpet sounded by one of the angels of the churches. Consider its necessity. Mary minded 'the one thing necessary;' indeed she gave the word her heart, but the way to it was this, she gave it her ear; she 'sat at Christ's feet and heard his word.' The custom even in those days was for the teacher to preach either out of a desk or pulpit, or some place above the people; hence their hearers

sitting below them are said to sit at their feet. Urge thy soul with this: The word which I am going to hear, in regard of the ordination of God, is absolutely necessary to my spiritual and eternal good. I am dead, and it is the word that must enliven me; I am blind, and it is the word that must enlighten me. It is absolutely necessary that I know my sins and misery; now the word must do this, and is therefore called a glass, James 1. It is absolutely necessary that I know my Saviour, and the way of my recovery; now the word must do this, and is therefore called faith and life, John 6, Rom. 3. It is necessary to open mine eyes to see Christ, to open my heart to receive Christ, and that heaven hereafter may open to my poor soul. My soul is sinful, and it is the word that must sanctify it; my soul is sick, it is the word that must heal it; my soul is hungry, and it is the word must feed it, or I shall starve; my soul is thirsty, and it is the word that must satisfy it, or I shall die for thirst. Whatsoever conditions of misery I am in, it is the word that must give suitable exhortations to support me; whatsoever relations of life I stand in, it is the word that must give suitable exhortations to direct me; whatsoever service I am called to, whether of doing or suffering, it is the word which must relieve me with suitable supply. Oh, what concernment is this word to my well-being in this and the other world! I must be sanctified, or I can never be saved; I must turn to God, or burn in hell; and the word must do this for me, or it will never be done. Good Lord, how should I hear! Men are careless about things which are indifferent, but they are careful about things that are absolutely necessary; necessity makes men strive oftentimes beyond their strength. None work so hard as they that have necessity for their master.

Consider its excellency; it is the word of God. Though thou dalliest when men are speaking, yet surely it becomes thee to be serious when the great God is speaking. It is of divine inspiration: 'All

Scripture is given by inspiration of God.' The Ephesians cried up their idol Diana, because it was the image which fell down from Jupiter: 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians.' Oh, how shouldest thou prize and prepare for the word, when it came down from the great God! Men were but the organs through which the almighty God spoke; *Non vox hominum sonat*. It is the voice of God, and not of man. It is of divine operation. 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, which is the power of God to salvation,' Rom. 1:16. What wonders hath the great God wrought by his word! He hath given eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, ears to the deaf, life to the dead, by his word. What legions of devils and lusts hath he unkennelled and cast out with his word! Some write of the weasel that it doth *aure concipere et ore parere*, conceive in the ear, &c. He hath caused many a soul to hear and live by his word; he hath awakened many a soul that was asleep in sin by the voice of the Scriptures, and caused them to arise and work out their own salvations; thousands of poor creatures, who were sinking into the bottomless hell, have, by God's hand stretched out in his word, been delivered from going down to the pit, and lifted up to heaven.

It is a word of divine institution and of divine benediction, Rev. 1:3. It is the word in which the Father speaketh: John 6:45, 'Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh to me.' It is the word of Christ, Heb. 12:25; Col. 3:16. In it the Spirit speaketh to the churches, Rev. 2:11. The pearl hid in it, (the Scriptures are 'they that testify of Christ,' John 5:39,) the price paid for it, (both Testaments are sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, Heb. 9:27,) do fully speak the excellency of it.

Now, reader, think with thyself thus: I am going to hear that word which hath God for its author, Jesus Christ for its matter, and eternal life for its end. Shall I, like a beastly swine, trample these invaluable

jewels under my feet? Shall that which is infinitely more precious than fine gold be esteemed by me as dirt? It is the picture of God's own excellencies; how chary should I be of the picture for the person's sake! Ah, how tender should I be of that glass which hath wine in it more worth than heaven and earth! Would it not be a thousand pities that I should suffer the flies of my wandering thoughts to corrupt and spoil this box of precious ointments?

Consider the efficacy of it. The revealed word is like the essential word; 'for the fall, as well as for the rise, of many in Israel.' As there is nothing so evil but a serious holy person may get good out of it—like some creatures we read of, he may digest and fetch nourishment out of serpents;—so there is nothing so good but a careless, graceless heart may pervert to his hurt; like the spider, he may suck poison out of the sweetest rose. The word will work one way or other; if it work not for thy salvation, it will work for thy damnation; if it be not 'a savour of life to life,' it will be 'a savour of death to death.' 'As the rain cometh down and watereth the earth, and returneth not thither again; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void,' Isa. 55:10, 11. The word is compared to fire: fire doth either purify the metal or consume it; the word will either convert thee or confound thee. The sea sinks some vessels, and lands others safely; the Scripture will either further thee towards heaven or towards hell. 'The ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein,' Hosea 14:9.

Mark, reader, what an engine is here to screw thee up to the greatest attention to the word which is possible. It is like strong physic to a person exceeding sick, which either mends them or ends them. Think thus with thyself: I am going to hear that word which will not be in vain, but will either kill or cure me: this sword of the Spirit is sharp and keen; if it doth not defend me, it will destroy me. Oh, it is bad

jesting with such edge-tools! How sad will it be for me to find death about the lips of Christ, to fall into hell with a stumble at the gospel of the kingdom of heaven! How exceedingly am I concerned to set my heart to all the words which I shall hear this day! for 'it is not a vain thing, but it is for my life,' Deut. 32:46, 47.

Urge thy soul in earnest with these particulars. As Elisha, stretching himself upon the young dead child, at last got life and quickening into it; so thou, forcing and stretching, as it were, these things upon thy heart, mayest quicken it, how dull and dead soever it is.

(3.) Thirdly, If thou wouldst prepare thyself for the word, entreat God to bless it to thee. The operations of the Spirit must accompany the administration of the word, or it will be ineffectual. 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth,' John 6:63. The fire burneth naturally, and the water cooleth naturally; but if the fire of the word ever burn up thy corruptions, or the water of the word refresh thee with real consolations, it must not be by its own nature, but by a divine power. If thine eye be opened by, that eyesalve of Scripture, to see Christ in his native beauty, or thyself in thy natural deformity, God must anoint thine eyes therewith. Therefore David beggeth this favour at God's hand, 'Open mine eyes, that I may see wonderful things out of thy law,' Ps. 119:18. As good sight as David had, he could not read in God's law without God's light. If the door of thine heart be opened by this key to give admission to the King of glory, God's hand must turn the key. 'The Lord opened the heart of Lydia, that she attended to the words of Paul,' Acts 16. Paul might have preached his heart out before Lydia's heart would have opened to let the word in, if God had not undertaken the work.

If the sword of the word pierce thy soul, hack and hew and slay thy most beloved sins, those enemies within thee, which would not have

Christ to reign over thee, the arm of the Lord must wield it. 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God,' 2 Cor. 10:4. Surely that voice of thunder must come from heaven, which can pluck up the strong trees of thy natural unbelief and senselessness, and pull down the high towers of pride and self. If the word, which is called a seal, Rom. 6:17, ever imprint thy Saviour's image on thee to thy regeneration, God must add weight to the seal, or it will make no stamp. 'He hath of his own will begotten you by the word of truth,' James 1:21. He that made the watch can make it strike right, and he that made the word can make it strike home, even 'to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow,' Heb. 4:12. If the word, which is called life, John 6:63, quicken thee to thine eternal salvation, God must breathe on thy dry bones and bid thee live. 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, which is the power of God to salvation,' Rom. 1:16.

It was the angel's troubling the waters, which made the pool of Bethesda medicinal to the diseased people; and it is not the water of the word which can heal thy soul-sicknesses, unless the angel of the covenant work in it, and with it.

Elijah's mantle could not divide the waters of Jordan, but the Lord God of Elijah did it; the preacher may shew thee thy lesson, but God only can help thee to learn it.

Reader, before thou hearest, remember it is God's prerogative to open thine ear: 'Mine ear hast thou bored,' Ps. 40:6. There is a thick film in thine ears naturally, which hindereth thine hearing; thine ears are stopped that sermons can have no passage. Now God alone can with his syringer dissolve the wax congealed there, and break

through the skin, whereby thou mayest come to hear and live. Remember that the seeing eye, and the hearing ear, the Lord hath made them both, Prov. 20:12. Therefore entreat him to open thine eyes, that thou mayest see his comely face in the glass of the word; and to open thine ears, that thou mayest hear his lovely voice in the word; and to open thine heart, that thou mayest receive grace from him through the word. Say as David, 'Shew me thy way, O Lord; teach me thy paths.' 'Make me to understand the way of thy precepts, so shall I talk of thy wondrous works,' Ps. 25:4; Ps. 119:27. And be not discouraged, either at the mysteriousness of the word, or at thine own dulness; for he that made the lock can help thee to a key that will fit all its wards.

But be sure thou forget not to commend thy minister to God. As thy duty is to beg a 'door of entrance' for thyself, so a 'door of utterance' for thy pastor. 'Withal praying for us, that God would open to us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ,' Col. 4:3; Eph. 6:19. Thy profit by him will be not a little furthered by thy prayer for him. He that loves his child, will often remember the nurse that feeds it; he that loves his precious soul, will often mind the preacher that prepareth and bringeth its spiritual portion. I have known some to praise their cooks highly, when they would prevail with them to dress a dish curiously for their palates. I am sure thy way is to pray for thy pastor fervently, if thou wouldest have him provide such food as may be for thy soul's pleasure and profit. Starve the mother, and you starve the child in her womb. If the heavens do not favour the hills with showers, they cannot fatten the valleys with their chalky streams. If the pipes be broke which convey water to our houses from the river, we can expect no supply.

(4.) Let thine end, in going to hear, be to please God, and profit thy soul. Propound a good end in hearing, if thou wouldest have a good



end of hearing. Some go to church for nothing; like the Ephesians, the greatest part knew not wherefore they were met together, Acts 19. They have as much as they come for; they come for nothing, and they often go away with nothing. Others go to carp and catch at the preacher, as the Herodians went to Christ to entangle him in his talk, Mat. 22:15. These go not to hear God's word, but to do the devil's work, and he will pay them their wages. These fly to the carcase, not to defend it, but to devour it. A third sort go to hear wit and parts, neat expressions, and an affecting, graceful pronounciation; like the Jews, to hear Ezekiel, 'Lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument,' Ezek. 33:32. These go to hear man, not to hear God. They hear out of curiosity, not out of conscience; they desire to have their ears tickled, not their hearts touched; they hear and do not, ver. 33. Such go to church just as they who go to a noise of musicians, only for the pleasant sound—for nothing but to hear.

Reader, take heed of these and other sinful ends, lest God answer thee according to the idols of thine heart. Children go to fairs for babies and rattles, but men go for some serviceable commodities, for the supply of their own and their relations' necessities. Though foolish men go to church to quarrel with the person teaching, or to admire at some fine cadences or allusions in the doctrine taught, do thou go to the word for the relief of thy spiritual wants. 'As a new-born babe, desire the sincere milk of the word, that thou mayest grow thereby,' 1 Pet. 2:2. Here is a good end of a good action, not to gaze upon the people or pastor, but to grow by his preaching. Some men go to gardens to gather gillyflowers or roses, merely to smell them or look on them, and in a short time throw them away; when a good housewife goeth to her garden for a better end; she gathereth them to make a precious conserve or syrup of them, which she keeps constantly by her to comfort her in a time of sickness. Though too

many go to a sermon merely to look on the gaudiness of its dress, or to scent the wit and fancy of the preacher, which sight and scent are quickly gone; do thou gather those flowers which grow in Eden, the garden of the Lord, that thou mayest by faith make such a cordial of them as may be ever ready at hand to revive thy spirit in each fainting fit, whether of death, or any civil or spiritual danger, whilst thou livest.

Lastly, If thou wouldest prepare thyself to hear or read the word rightly, leave thy worldly thoughts behind thee. It is written of Bernard, that when he came to the church-door he would say, Stay there, all my earthly thoughts! Say to the cares of this life, when thou art about reading or hearing, as Abraham to his servant, 'Abide you here, and I will go yonder and worship,' Gen. 22:5. If thou shouldest suffer those weeds, they would hinder the springing up of the good seed, the word. They are like thieves, never dogging thee at this duty but to do thee a mischief, either to steal thy comforts, or to wound thy conscience.

Christ sharply reproveth the Jews for turning his Father's house, which should be called a house of prayer, into a den of thieves; but how did they do this? By buying, and selling, and changing money in the temple. If thou, reader, shouldst in thine heart be buying in thy provision, or selling out thy commodities, or hankering after thine hoards and heaps of corn, or wares, or money, when thou art in God's house, thou turnest the house of prayer into a den of thieves; therefore thy best way is to keep them out, and if they come in afterwards, (as Christ did,) to whip them out.

When men hear with their harvest-ears, (meditating and musing on their flocks, or shops, or fields,) no wonder if the word be ineffectual to them. If the wits of men be a wool-gathering, the word of God will

be 'like water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again.' Some garden seeds are mingled with ashes when they are sown, and thereby they spring up the better; but this seed must not be mixed with dust and ashes; if it be, it will not spring up at all.

It is reported of one of England's lord treasurers, (some say Cecil, others say Burleigh,) that though by reason of his office he was crowded with business all day, yet when he was going to rest at night, he would throw off his gown and say, Lie there, Lord Treasurer! What he did going to bed, we must do when we go to this heavenly banquet; though the concernments of our families and callings throng us at other times, yet when we go to hear or read the incomparable word, we must lay them by with, Lie here, all my thoughts of this lower beggarly world! Thus I have despatched the first particular, Preparation for the word.

## **CHAPTER XVI**

### **Of the Christian's duty in hearing**

Secondly, I come now to the second, which is, Thy carriage at the word, in reference to which I shall commend to thee these three things:

1. When thou art hearing or reading, set thyself seriously as in the presence of God. God setteth before thee in his word, and offereth to thee life or death, blessing or cursing, his infinite favour or fury, heaven or hell; and, friend, are these things to be jested with? Imitate Cornelius in his carriage, when he was to hear Peter, 'We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God,' Acts 10:33. The piety of this centurion appeareth in the ground

and motive of his hearing; he came not to hear men, but God: 'to hear all things which are commanded thee of God.' 2. In the gracious manner of his hearing; he doth not say, We are all here present before thee, but, 'We are all here present before God.'

When the heart is awed with the apprehension of a divine presence, the iron gates of the ears will fly open of their own accord, and give the word a free passage. The creature dares not but hearken diligently to the speech of that God, on whose breath depends his life and death, when he seeth him immediately before his eyes. I can speak it by experience, saith Erasmus, that there is little good to be got by the Scripture, if a man read or hear it cursorily and carelessly; but if a man do it out of conscience, and as in God's presence, he shall find such an efficacy in it, as is not to be found in any other book. This setting thyself seriously, as in God's presence, is like the master's eye to his servant, which will make him ply his work whether he would or not; or rather like the fire to the smith's bar of iron, which doth so mollify it, that he striking whilst it is hot, may beat it into what form and mould he pleaseth.

This temper of soul in the Thessalonians was so great a favour that Paul thought he could never praise the author of it sufficiently: 'For this cause thank we God without ceasing, that when ye heard the word of God, ye heard it not as the word of man, but, as it is indeed, the word of God,' 1 Thes. 2:13. The apostle knew his children could not but thrive when they received their meat in such a manner as the word of God. It is the speech of Senaclæus concerning Diarius the martyr, Methought when I heard him speak, I heard the Holy Ghost himself preaching to me.

Truly the want of this is one main cause why the word of God doth so little good. The devil is very diligent at duties; he is every Lord's day

the first at church. The children of God never gather together but Satan is amongst them. His great design is to render this engine of the word fruitless, whereby the strongholds of his kingdom have been battered and broken down. Therefore, as a jailer will sometimes let his prisoners have their hands and feet at liberty, so long as the doors of the prison are barred and bolted, that they cannot run away; so he will let thee have thy hand at liberty for some acts of charity, and thy feet at liberty to walk in some paths of civility, so long as he can but have the doors of thine ear and heart locked fast, that thou canst not get from him. He knoweth Christ waiteth at the outward door of the ear, that he might thereby come to the inward door of thy heart, and deliver thee a poor captive out of his hands; for this cause, if it be possible, he will keep the street-door shut, he will hinder thee from hearing as in God's presence, he will find thee other work to do than to hear. It may be he will get thee to play and toy, as he doth many great ones; or if not, to be talking to thy pew-fellows, or to be reading, (possibly somewhat sinful, at least somewhat unseasonable,) or to have thy heart in thine own house, whilst thy body is in God's house; or as a child, though thou art at thy book, he will make thee look off, if but a butterfly come by; he will set thee about some business or other, unless thou art serious as in God's sight, that thou shalt never have so much leisure as to hear even when thou art in the church.

It is reported of Henry the Third, king of France, that in a solemn procession at Paris, he could not be without his jester, who, walking between the king and the cardinal, made mirth to them both; in the meantime there was brave devotion. Alas! they that hear in jest, will find hell to be hot in earnest! Were not men Indians and infidels in English habits, did they but believe the invaluable worth of their souls, the consequence and weight of their unchangeable estates, what a searching, trying time the hour of death will be, and what

dreadful, terrible things will be seen at the day of judgment! Good Lord, how would they hear! The minister need not call to them to attend to the word of God; they would of themselves give it their ears, and minds, and hearts, and think all too little for it.

2. Apply the word to thy own soul: the word is a salve of sovereign virtue. Some talk of the weapon salve, that it heals at a distance, but the word will not; it must be applied to the sore, or it will never cure. The word is seed; preaching is the sowing of this seed; application of it to thy heart is the harrowing of this seed into the earth. If the seed be thrown on the ground, and not harrowed in, we can expect no harvest.

A good hearer is said to eat the word: 'Thy words were found by me, and I did eat them,' Jer. 15:16; 'Eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled,' Prov. 9:5. It is not the bread in the cupboard of the Bible, or on the table of a sermon, which will nourish thy soul, unless it be by application of it to thyself, eaten and taken down into thy stomach; the glass of wine in thine hand will not make thy heart glad; the precious promises in thine ears will not rejoice thee; they must by application be drunk down, then they will refresh and comfort thy conscience.

Faith is both the mouth to receive in, and the stomach to digest, this spiritual food. It is worthy thy observation, how frequently the Holy Ghost attributeth the famous effects and heroic acts of the word to this commander-in-chief, under whose courageous and wise conduct it warreth. The word fighteth boldly, and worketh miraculously under faith's banner: 'The gospel of Christ is the power of God to salvation to them that believe,' Rom. 1:16. 'It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe,' 1 Cor. 1:21; so

also 2 Tim. 3:15. Application is the life both of preaching and hearing.

If the threatenings and curses of the law are preached, faith is to them as the powder to the bullet, causing them to make grievous havoc, and to do great execution upon the lusts of a man. Faith turneth those stones, as I may speak, into bread, and helpeth the Christian, like Samson, to fetch meat out of the eater.

If the precepts and commands of the law are preached, faith is the eye to see the equity in them, and the excellency of them, and faith is the hand to put them into practice.

If the promises and comforts of the gospel are preached, faith is to them as induction to a minister; it gives him actual possession of them, it makes them his own. Faith in the threatenings causeth humiliation; faith in the precepts causeth subjection; and faith in the promises worketh consolation.

If at any time thou goest from hearing dead and undone, thou mayest say to faith, as Martha to Christ, 'If thou hadst been here, my soul had not died.' The unbeliever, like a man in a swoon, shuts his mouth against those life-recalling cordials which are before him in the gospel. Other sins wound the soul, but unbelief, like Joab, strikes under the fifth rib, and kills outright.

Unbelief spoileth all. An unbeliever is dead, he cannot hear Christ in his word; he is blind, he cannot see God in the gospel. Like Hagar, though a fountain be before him, he beholdeth it not. Unbelief makes the word, like rain upon rocks, wholly useless and fruitless. What is said of the essential Word, is true of the revealed word. It 'can do no mighty works, because of their unbelief.' Unbelief is a bulwark whereby sin secureth itself against all the darts and shot which the

word dischargeth at it. What was the reason that the word was not helpful to the Jews? Heb. 4:2, 'The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.' Unbelief was the crack in the glass, through which this inestimable water of life did leak out, and so was lost.

Nay, what made the word hurtful to them? This leaven of unbelief soured all, 1 Pet. 2:8. That rock on which faith builds a house which reacheth up to heaven, unbelief stumbleth at, and tumbleth the soul into hell.

3. Let the word come with authority and power to thy conscience. This is one of the chiefest ingredients that goeth to the composition of a preacher, that he speak as Paul did, 'in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power,' 1 Cor. 2:4. By this force wherewith he spake, and execution which he did, that incomparable pattern of preachers, 'the captain of our salvation,' was distinguished from the pharisees; who, in discharge of this holy ordinance, only made false fire: 'He taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes.' 'And the people were astonished at his doctrine,' Mat. 7:28, 29. He is the best soldier who in this warfare makes bloodiest work amongst our spiritual enemies. This is preaching to purpose.

This is also the best disposition requisite in a religious hearer; 'For our gospel came not to you in word only, but in power,' 1 Thes. 1:5. When the word of God cometh like a mighty rushing wind, rooting up the tall trees of thy sins, bringing down high thoughts, overturning all before it; when as fire it burneth within thee, consuming thy lusts, and turning thee into its own likeness, making thee holy, spiritual, and heavenly; oh this is excellent hearing, this is hearing to purpose!



The word is preached to many, and not to their profit. They hear the minister as chickens hear the hen; the hen calls to the chickens to come to her; they lie scraping in the dust still many times and will not hear her, till the kite come and devoureth them. So God endeavoureth in his word, by his ministers, to cluck sinners to himself; 'Wisdom crieth, understanding putteth forth her voice;' but they lie scratching and digging in the earth, and will not hear him, till at last the devil comes and destroyeth them; but when the word cometh with power the soul heareth it, as Peter heard the cock; he goeth out and weepeth bitterly, when he hears of the boundless mercy which he hath deserted, and the matchless misery which he hath deserved, and the infinite love which he hath abused, and the righteous law which he hath transgressed; he is cut to the heart; he goeth out, and weeps bitterly.

The word is compared to rain, Deut. 32:2. Now the rain falls upon flints and doth no good, makes no impression. Ministers drop it on many to as little purpose as Bede did when he preached to a heap of stones. They spend their strength in vain, and labour in vain; nay, like many highways and low grounds, they are the worse for these showers. But this rain falls on others to much advantage: 'My doctrine shall drop as the rain, and my speech shall distil as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender grass, and as the showers on the herbs,' Deut. 32:2. The fine soft shower of the word soaks into their affections, softeneth their hearts, and makes them fruitful in holiness.

The naturalists observe of the salamander, that though she live in the fire constantly, yet she is never the hotter. How woeful is the condition of thousands, who live all their days under the word of God, in which is kindled the heavenly fire of God's infinite love in Christ to poor sinners, and the hell-fire of the hideous horrid nature

of sin, yet they are never the hotter! neither warmed with the former, nor scorched with the latter; nay, though these fires are sometimes by the workmen who divide the word aright, heated, as I may say, seven times hotter than ordinary, by discovering the freeness without, yea, against desert; fulness, (a known, unknown love,) and fastness, (whom he loveth, he loveth to the end,) of this divine affection, and by declaring the ugliness and loathsomeness of corruption, in its contrariety to a righteous law and a gracious Lord, and in its opposition to the soul's happiness and perfection, that the very ministers who take them up to put them into this fire, are themselves, with the extremity of its heat, turned into a live coal, or all in a flame of love to the blessed God, and hatred against his and their enemy, sin; yet these hearers, like the three children, are not touched with all this fire, their garments are not so much as singed, nor the least smell of the fire on them. O woeful wonder!

What little comfort can poor ministers take in their lives, when they converse with such dead carcasses; though they cut them with the law's curse, pierce them to the quick, one would think, with the terrible day of judgment and the unquenchable fire, yet they ail nothing, feel nothing, and complain not at all.

Reader, when thou art hearing, let thy care be, that thy soul may be changed into the similitude of the Scripture, that the word may come with power. When the threatenings are shot off, do thou fall down before them with fear: 'My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy righteous judgments.' When God thundered, Josiah's heart trembled. When thou viewest the precepts and patterns in the word, labour to resemble them. It is said of the Earl Elzearus, one much given to passion, that he was cured by reading and hearing of Christ's patience.

When the glad tidings of peace are preached, let thine heart leap with hope. Oh, let the nearer, approach of the sun call forth and ripen thy fruits of righteousness! When the law comes like a corrosive, eating out thy festered flesh and corruption; when the gospel is like a lenitive, both refreshing and refining thee, then they come with power; when the threatenings, like wine, search the wound, and the promises, like oil, heal it, then it cometh with authority and majesty. If search be made by a reproof for thy beloved sin, do not, like Rachel, hide it, neither do thou fret when thy sore is touched, but hold thine arm forth to that knife which should prick thy vein, and let out thy bad blood. Be not angry when a prophet smites thee in the name of the Lord; believe it, he that hates thy sins most, loveth thee best. If thou favour thy lusts so much as to keep them safe from the sword of the Spirit, it will prove, like Joram's respect to Jehu, thine own destruction. Their hearts surely were very rugged which cried out, 'Prophecy unto us smooth things.' Those feet are very sore or gouty which cannot go but in downy, mossy walks, where the ground yields to them. Let a reproof be welcome for his sake that sendeth it. Thy Father knoweth that a bitter potion sometimes, though not pleasant, yet is profitable to thee.

As the working of physic kindly and well commendeth both the physician and body of the patient, so the powerful operation of the Scriptures, whether of the purging potions of judgments denounced, or cordial juleps of mercies discovered, do highly applaud both the skill of thy Saviour and state of thy soul. It is written of Philetus, a disciple of Hermogenes the conjurer, that, going to dispute with St James the elder, the apostle preached Christ to him so powerfully, that he returned to his master, and told him, Magus abieram, Christianus redeo; I went forth a conjurer, but am come back a Christian. Oh, how happy it will be for thee, if whatever thine end were in going to church, yet when thou returnest, thou canst upon

good ground say, I went forth proud, but am come home humble! I went to church a bond-slave of Satan, but am returned a free-man of Christ. I went out earthly, carnal, a malicious and obstinate sinner; but, for ever blessed be the most high God, I am come back a heavenly, spiritual, and gracious saint.

## **CHAPTER XVII**

### **Of the Christian's duty after hearing**

Thirdly, I proceed now to the third thing, which is, Thy behaviour after hearing or reading; and I must tell thee that it concerneth thee now to be very watchful, for many birds wait to peck up the corn as soon as the husbandman hath sowed it. Our Saviour telleth us, 'He that received seed among thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful,' Mat. 13:32. As highwaymen watch the honest countryman as he cometh from the fair, where he hath sold his cattle and filled his purse, and then set upon him, and rob him, so do the cares of the world dog the honest Christian as he cometh from the word, where he got some spiritual treasure, and then fall upon him to plunder him.

Besides, Satan is so subtle that he will be sure to haunt the soul after reading or hearing the word: 'When any one heareth the word, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart,' Mat. 13:19. The season, then, is worthy our observation. When the Christian hath made a good meal, then the devil trieth all his wiles and tricks to make him vomit it up again. Servants, when

they carry full cups of wine in the midst of unlucky boys, must be wary and watchful, or they will spill it. Some people take physic, and, though it doth them some good at present, yet all is quickly marred by their neglect of those rules which should be observed afterwards. The word, possibly, when thou heardest it, made some work among thy affections. The beauty of Christ's person was displayed before thine eyes, and thy heart began to fall in love with thy Saviour. The extremity of his passion was described to thee, and thine heart began to loathe the cause thereof, thy sins. Well, now then thy conscience is a little warmed and awakened, and the pores of thy soul opened, shouldest thou go into the cold presently, all would come to nothing. If water be taken from the fire when it is a little warm, it cooleth quickly. He that would have it boil must rather increase the fire.

There are two things which God requireth of thee, after hearing and reading the word—namely, prayer and practice.

1. Prayer. Petition for a blessing upon the word, and thanksgiving for the blessing of the word.

Petition for a blessing upon the word. After the seed is sown, the influence of heaven must cause it to spring up and ripen, or otherwise there will be no harvest. 'Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God must give the increase,' 1 Cor. 3:6. The minister preacheth, thou nearest, but it is the Lord who teacheth to profit. Thou mayest, like Mary, have Christ before thee in a sermon, and yet not know him till he discover himself to thee. The eunuch could read of Christ in the prophet, but could not reach Christ till God came to his chariot. There is a twofold light requisite to a bodily vision—light in the eye, and light in the air. The former cannot, as we experience in the night, do it without the latter. There is also a twofold light necessary to spiritual sight: beside the light of understanding which

is in a man, there must be illumination from the Spirit of God, or there will be no beholding the Lord in the glass of the word.

When the disciples had heard Christ's doctrine, they were not able to understand or profit by his preaching, and therefore they cry to him, 'Lord, open to us this parable.' When thou hast read or heard the word, go to God, and say, 'Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; give me understanding and I shall keep thy law, yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not unto covetousness,' Ps. 119:33–37. Entreat God to write his law on the fleshly tables of thine heart. Bernard observes, bodily bread in the cupboard may be eaten of mice, or moulder and waste; but when it is taken down into the body, it is free from such danger: if God enable thee to take thy soul-food down into thine heart, it is safe from all hazards.

Thanksgiving. Consider what a distinguishing mercy, what a precious treasure the word of God is; how without it thou hadst for ever been both unholy and unhappy; how by it thou mayest eternally be both gracious and glorious; and without question thou wilt find cause to bless the giver for such a rare and profitable gift. The apostle ranketh this favour amongst the blessings of the highest form: 'What advantage hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way; chiefly, that unto them were committed the oracles of God.' And the psalmist, mentioning this differencing mercy, concludeth it with, 'Praise ye the Lord,' Ps. 147:19, 20.

The light of the sun, moon, and stars is of such concernment to men, that without them the beauty of the old creation would be buried in darkness; and therefore the children of God have given the Most High the credit of those greater and lesser candles, Ps. 136:7–9; nay,

they have seen eternal love by those luminaries. The light of God's law and word is of infinitely more worth; for by it the glory and beauty of the new creation, and that curious piece of man's redemption, is seen and known. What honour then doth God deserve for this favour!

Ptolemy, king of Egypt, was at great cost and charge to have the law of the Jews translated by the Seventy into Greek. Thou hast the Old and New Testament both at a cheap and easy rate: thou mayest read thy Father's will in thy mother-tongue; thou hast in it a suitable medicine for every malady, seasonable succour in all thy miseries, the costliest cordials and choicest comforts, 'without money and without price.' And surely all this deserveth thanks and praise!

Didst thou but know the misery of those places and persons who want the word, surely thy heart could not but be affected with thy mercy in the enjoyment of the word. It is sometimes described by famine: 'I will send a famine, not of bread and water, but of hearing the word of the Lord,' Amos 4. How dreadful are the concomitants and consequents of famine! what shrivelled cheeks, hollow eyes, pale visages, fainting hearts, and trembling limbs, have men in a famine! they seem rather like walking ghosts, and moving carcasses, than living creatures. 'The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst; the young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them. Their visage is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets: their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick. The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people,' Lam. 4:4, 8, 10. These, friend, are the woeful fruits of a bodily famine; hut a soul-famine is the sorer famine. How many starve for want of the bread of life! Thou sittest, it may be, at a full table, but couldst thou conceive what

millions famish for lack of this spiritual food, thou wouldst pray to God earnestly to pity such places, and praise him heartily for providing so plentifully for thee. Their misery is sometimes set forth by 'darkness and the shadow of death;' darkness is dreadful, though but external; it was one of the greatest plagues which befell the Egyptians. When Job would curse his day with a witness, what is his wish? 'Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; let a cloud dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it,' Job 3:5. It was sad when Paul and his companions saw neither sun nor stars in many days; but oh, how sad is it, when men see not the Sun of righteousness shining in the heavens of the gospel all their days! Such may enjoy the light of God's providence, but they enjoy not the light of his countenance. How can they work, that want the light of the word to direct them? or how can they walk? Surely they that walk in the dark stumble—'the dark corners of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty'—and fall even into hell. 'Where no vision is, the people perish.' O reader, what infinite cause hast thou to bless the Lord, that thou art not in their condition! If thou hast any compassion for the poor, dark, dead souls, be instant with the Lord; pray, 'O send out thy light and thy truth, that thy ways may be known upon earth, and thy saving health unto all generations.' If thou hast any affection to thy own soul, praise God for his law. 'Blessed be the Lord who hath shewn us light.' Procopius reporteth, that nigh to the pole, where the night endureth for many months together, the inhabitants in the end of their long night get up to the top of the mountains, striving who shall have the first sight of the sun; and as soon as they see it, they embrace and hug each other, crying out, Ecce, sol apparet! Behold, lo, the sun, the sun appeareth! This poor island had a long night of darkness, when the people in it served dumb idols and devils; blessed for ever be the unsearchable goodness of God, the sun of the gospel hath appeared amongst us. Nay, as it is



said of Rhodes, it may be said of England, the sun always shines on it. 'What shall we render to the Lord for this benefit?'

On the town-house of Geneva is written, upon a marble table in letters of gold, *Post tenebras, lux*—After darkness, light. In remembrance of, and thankfulness for, their deliverance from the pride, power, tyranny, and abominations of the pope, anno 1535. I doubt not but we in these parts of the world have as much cause to set up a monument of praise and thanks to the blessed God, for bestowing upon us the light of his glorious gospel, and freeing us from the power of that man of pride, who exalteth himself above all that is called God.

Reader, is it not a privilege for thee to sit by the fire of the word, when many poor souls are freezing in the cold? for thee to walk in the light of the word, when many sit in darkness and the shadow of death? for thee to be clothed out of the rich wardrobe of the word, when many have their nakedness appearing to their eternal shame? Nay, what an advantage hast thou, that when thousands and millions have none to give them bread, but starve and famish, thou hast a table fairly spread, and fully furnished with all sorts of food, both for necessity and delight! Yea, and if sickness hinder thee from coming down to dine or sup with thy brethren and sisters, upon that day of exceedings, the Lord's-day, thy God is so tender of thee, that he sendeth thee somewhat up to thy chamber (alloweth thee his Bible and blessing at home) for thy nourishment and comfort: 'O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and his wonderful works to the children of men.'

2. Practice. When the preacher hath done in the pulpit, the hearer must begin in his practice. He heareth a sermon best who practiseth it most. What one saith of Ps. 119, I may say of the whole Scriptures,

They are verba vivenda, non legenda, words to be lived, more than to be read or heard. A Christian's life should be a legible comment on God's law. The strokes in music must answer to the notes and rules set down in the lesson.

It is observable that the blood was to be sprinkled on Aaron's right ear, right thumb, and great toe of his right foot, Exod. 29:20. The first did note his right hearing the word, the second and third his working according to it, and walking in it. The doing, not the hearing or reading Christian, goeth away with the blessing: 'And he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it,' Luke 11:28. The occasion of the expression is considerable; one of Christ's hearers having tasted, was so taken with the lusciousness of his doctrine, that she could not before all the company forbear commending the tree for the fruit's sake: 'Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked;' 'Yea rather,' saith Christ, 'blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.' In which words he doth not deny her assertion, but her inference, or the foundation of it. Mary, though happy, yet was not so happy in bearing the essential, as in keeping the written, word of God. She was rather blessed in having Christ formed in her, than in having him formed of her. It was her greater honour and happiness to be a member of Christ, than to be the mother of Christ. The porter is not so rich by carrying a bag of gold, as the merchant that owneth it. The Christian only that keepeth the word of Christ is truly related to Christ the Word, Mat. 12:50.

It is reported of the nobles of Polonia, that when the Gospel is read, they lay their hands upon their swords, and begin to draw them, intimating thereby that they will defend it with the hazard of their lives. Saints must be ready to die for the gospel; but a Christian may defend it as truly by a holy life as by a bloody death. A scandalous

conversation is an offence to religion, and openeth the mouths of its enemies; but as fire is a good defence to a man in a wilderness, against the fury of ravenous beasts, so the heat of grace flaming, and the light of holiness shining in the lives of professors, defendeth the word against its opposers. A sermon practised is a sermon in print, and by it the hearer teacheth all the week long.

The Romans were commended for 'obeying from the heart, the form of doctrine delivered to them,' Rom. 6:17. In the original it is εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε, 'whereunto they were delivered.' A good hearer, as I said before, is one that eats the word. Now, as meat eaten becomes one with the body, and takes the same form with it, the body and meat are so much the same that they are one, and you cannot know them asunder; so the word is well heard when it becomes one with the Christian, when they are both of the same form; the hearer is delivered up into the likeness and form of the Scripture; the word of God may be read in every leaf, in every line, of the volume of his life.

Our blessed Saviour, describing good hearers, tells us they are such as bring forth fruit, 'some thirty, some sixty, some an hundred fold,' Mat. 13:23. And elsewhere he compares the obedient hearer to the man who built his house upon a rock, which stood firm and immoveable in the midst of all winds, waves, and weather; and the man that heareth and doth not practise, to him who built upon the sands, which house quickly fell, when the winds blew and the waves beat, Mat. 7, latter end. His meaning and intention, reader, was to quicken thee and me to mind subjection to the word, without which we must perish. Suppose thou art never so great a hearer, yet if not a doer, thou deceivest thine own soul. Alas! what will become of the frequent hearer, when the non-, or negligent, doer shall be thrown to hell!

I have read a story of two men who, walking together, found a young tree laden with fruit; they both gathered and satisfied themselves at present; one of them took all the remaining fruit, and carried it away with him; the other took the tree, and planted it in his own ground, where it prospered, and brought forth fruit every year; so that though the former had more at present, yet this had some when he had none. They who hear the word, and have large memories, and nothing else, may carry away most of the word at present; yet he that, possibly, can remember little, who carrieth away the tree, plants the word in his heart, and obeys it in his life, shall have fruit when the other hath none. The practical memory is the greatest mercy.

It is reported of a good man, that coming from a lecture, and being demanded whether all were done, he should fetch a deep sigh, and say, All is said, but all is not done.

Reader, when thou hast heard the word, consider, though the sermon be at an end, yet there must not be an end of the sermon. Practice, which is the heart of hearing, is still behind. Observe the properties of those persons to whom, and their posterity, God will be propitious: 'The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting, and his righteousness to children's children; to such as keep his covenants, and remember his commandments to do them,' Ps. 103:17, 18. They are described by their act; they lay the word up, they 'remember his commandments;' and by their end, to lay the word out in their lives, 'to do them.' A good husband having received a bag of money, locketh it up safe, that none may rob him of it, and as occasion is, fetcheth it down and layeth it out, some for food, some for clothes, some for rent, some for servants' wages, some for this, some for that, as his necessities require; so, friend, do thou lay up the precious treasure of the word safe in the cabinet of thine heart, and bring it out as thy occasions call for it in thy life. Art thou in adversity? fetch

out the promises for thy comfort; broach that strong liquor which was purposely tunned up for thee against a groaning hour: 'This is my comfort in mine affliction, for thy word hath quickened me,' Ps. 119:15. Art thou in prosperity? bring forth the precepts for thy carriage; look to that card and compass by which thou mayest sail evenly and trim, notwithstanding those high winds and swelling waters: 'Thy word is a light to my feet, and a lamp to my paths,' Ps. 119:4. Wouldst thou resist and conquer Satan's temptations? the word is a shield, which, as they say of Vulcan's armour, is full proof against all thrusts and darts: 'By the words of thy mouth I have kept myself from the paths of the destroyer,' Ps. 17:4. Nay, fetch but this sword of the Spirit out of God's armoury, and the devil will run like a coward; he is more afraid of it than leviathan his namesake is afraid of the sword-fish, which some write he dreadeth more than all the fish in the ocean. Thy Saviour gave Satan such a wound with the sword of the word, that he feeleth it to this day. If thou wouldst overcome the world's insinuations, do but feed on the word, and thou wilt scorn the scraps of the world. As the Greeks in their sailing to fetch the golden fleece, when the sirens endeavoured to enchant them with their songs, found help against those assaults by hearkening to Orpheus's pipe; so when that harlot the world striveth to bewitch thee with her pleasant voice and poisonous breath, thereby to hinder thy pursuit of the golden crown of righteousness, do but hearken to those spiritual songs, that ravishing music, those high and noble delights which are in the gospel, and thou wilt find assured help. That thy corruptions within thee may be subdued, let still the word of God be consulted; thou mayest find in it such a bit and curb as will bridle thy youthful, most headstrong lusts: 'By what means may a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word,' Ps. 119:9. If thine evil humours be never so many and filthy, yet the word, like the Catholicon drug, is instead of all purges. That thy relative duties may be performed, the holy

Scriptures must be fetched out and minded. Whether thou art a husband, or wife, or parent, or child, or master, or servant, to defray the charge of all those duties, thou mayest take enough out of the word of God. It is a well-drawn picture, that looks on all that look on it, and it guides thee by its eye how to order and govern thy feet, on what ground soever thou standest, whether on the higher ground of a superior, the plain, even ground of an equal, or the lower ground of an inferior. He that layeth up the word for these purposes, and bringeth it out in these practices, is the right profitable hearer; for he 'remembereth the commandments of God to do them.'

Some hear and jeer; they go to a sermon as to a stage-play, to laugh and be merry. Others hear and fret and fume, as those that live under the torrid zone curse the very sun. Others hear and forget what would do them most good; their memories are true to the flesh, but treacherous to the spirit; they are like vessels made of ivy, which, some say, if wine and water be poured into them, will leak out the wine and keep in the water. Others hear and admire; but, reader, if thou wouldst not have the word to witness against thee, when thou shalt be judged by it, for thine everlasting life or death, do thou hear and amend. Charles the Great did set his crown upon the Bible, intimating thereby that his crown, his carriage as a king, should be according to the commands of the word. Oh, do thou hide this word in thine heart, that thou mayest hold it forth to thy companions by the hand of a holy conversation. Walk according to this rule.

### **A good wish about the word, wherein the former heads are epitomised**

The holy Scriptures being of such authority, as the handwriting and heart of God himself, and so singular a mercy to me, that by the guidance of this star I am directed, as the wise men, to Jesus Christ, I

wish in general that I may set a high price upon every part thereof, that every piece may be current with me, for his sake whose image and superscription it beareth. Oh that my carriage before, at, and after hearing, may witness to God and my conscience, that I esteem the law of his lips above thousands of gold and silver! In particular I wish that, as the Jews, when they went to hear the law, sanctified themselves, and washed their clothes; so, before I go to read or hear the word, I may sanctify my soul, and wash my heart from all superfluity of naughtiness, and with meekness receive that ingrafted word which is able to save my soul. I wish that, like Jehoshaphat, I may prefer one Micaiah before four hundred false prophets; yet that I may ever make a difference betwixt an evil minister's preaching and practice, and even when the minister is full of grace, may so distinguish between the treasure and the vessel, as not to value the message for the messenger's sake, but to bid the workman welcome for the word's sake. I wish that I may be so sensible of my own inability to profit by this holy ordinance, and of the speaker's impotency to preach home to my conscience, that I may cry mightily to my God, that he would open my heart to receive the word with all affection, and so direct the arrows which the preacher taketh out of the quiver of Scripture, that they may hit and pierce my dearest corruptions. I desire that the consideration of the word's excellency may cause me to prize it highly; of its necessity may make me to improve it diligently; and of its efficacy may move me to go to hear, as a prisoner going to a bar, to be tried for my everlasting life or death. I wish that the weight of the word may sink so deep into my heart, that I may never hear sermons to pick flowers of oratory, or to please my fancy, but to receive virtue from Christ, for the drying up of my issue of sin, and that I might cleanse my ways, by taking heed thereto according to God's word; that the noise of the world may never hinder me from hearing the voice of my God. I wish that, when I come into the place of worship, I may set myself solemnly, as before

the judge of quick and dead, and as in the presence of the Lord, with fear and awe, give audience to his word. If I were hearkening to an earthly prince I would be serious. Oh, with what reverence should I hear from the blessed and only potentate! Because without application the word will be unprofitable, I wish that I may never draw a curtain before my own picture, but overlooking others, may see my own face in the glass of the law. Oh, that by faith I may so take down the book of the word, as to be caught and taken by it! My prayer is, that the gospel may come to me, not in word only, but in power also; that I may go to it as clean paper for any inscription, as soft wax for any impression, which my God shall be pleased to make upon me. Oh that I might behold the Lord so effectually in that glass as to be changed into his image, from glory to glory! In special I wish that my sins may be placed by me in the front of this spiritual battle, as Uriah, purposely to be slain; and that those smooth stones which are taken out of the silver streams of the sanctuary may be thrown by so skilful and powerful a hand, that they may sink deep into the foreheads of those uncircumcised ones, to their death and destruction. I wish that after the seed is sown, I may beg that the showers of heaven's blessings may accompany it, that it may spring up in the fruits of righteousness, to the glory of my God, and good of my precious soul. And because the gospel is a dish which is not set on every table, though free grace bestoweth it on me, I wish that I may never rise from this spiritual food, before I have given thanks to the master of the feast. I desire, finally, that as I looked like a saint in hearing, I may live like a saint after I have heard; that those blossoms of good purposes, which sprouted forth while the minister was preaching, may ripen into practice; that whatsoever characters others are known by, to be Christians, I may be known by this earmark to be one of Christ's sheep, even by hearing his voice, so as to follow him wheresoever he goeth. Though others, like petty chapmen, deal only in some particular commodities, and those such



as will serve their own turns, I desire that I may deal with the word by wholesale, and esteem all God's precepts concerning all things to be right. Oh that I might order my whole conversation aright, and at the last see the salvation of my God! Amen.

## **CHAPTER XVIII**

### **How a Christian may exercise himself to godliness in receiving the Lord's supper; and, 1. Of the nature of that ordinance, and preparation for it**

When God had caused his everlasting decree to fall in labour, and had delivered it by giving the world a being, and upon infinite consultation had formed man to be his viceroy over all the works of his hands, he embarked him, with all abilities needful for such a voyage, in the bottom of the covenant of works. Adam set forth fully furnished with skill, and richly fraught with all the fortunes, hopes, and happiness of mankind; but he had scarce launched out of sight, before Satan, who knew very well the worth of the prize, envying man the haven of bliss to which he was sailing, and envying God, who was the owner, the honour of such a venture, raised a storm, whereby the vessel, through the unfaithfulness of Adam, the pilot, ran upon a rock and miscarried. Oh what a joyful spectacle was that to Satan! What a doleful sight to Adam, to behold himself, and all his posterity, sinking into the boundless, bottomless ocean of destruction and misery, through his falseness and treachery! when; lo, on a sudden the glorious God, out of the superabundant riches of his mercy, resolving that the devil should never rob him of the honour of that manifold wisdom, unsearchable goodness, and

almighty power, which had been manifested in the work of creation, did provide and cast out the covenant of grace, a plank sufficient for his poor shipwrecked creature to swim safe to shore on.

As all the rivers meet in the sea, and all the lines in the centre, so do all the comforts of mankind meet in this covenant. The whole Scripture is 'sincere milk,' but this covenant is the cream of it: all our mercies are contained in it, all our hopes are sustained by it, and our heaven is at last attained through it.

The blessed God doth not only enter into a covenant of mercy, but out of compassion to our infirmities, hath been pleased to confirm it by his hand and seal: by his hand in his word, by his seals, by the privy-seal of his Spirit, and by the broad seals of the sacraments, that by these 'immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us,' Heb. 6:18.

The Lord's supper is a sign and seal of the righteousness of faith, or the covenant of grace, Rom. 4:11.

When the blessed Saviour was taking a doleful farewell of an ungrateful world, as a lively resemblance of his sufferings for his, and as an undeniable evidence of his love to his, he instituted this supper: 1. As a lively resemblance of his passion for his people. A crucified Christ is the sum of the law, and the substance of the gospel; the knowledge of him is no less worth than eternal life. Now as he was crucified by the Jews and soldiers actually, and by unbelieving Gentiles, who live amongst us, interpretatively, so he is crucified in the gospel declaratively, and in the sacrament representatively. 'This cup,' saith Christ, 'is the New Testament in my blood,' 1 Cor. 11:25. The Old Testament was sprinkled with the blood of beasts, but the New Testament with the blood of Christ, Heb. 9:15, 19. This precious

blood, which was the costly price of man's redemption, which is the only path to eternal salvation, which was promised to Adam, believed by the patriarchs, shadowed in the sacrifices, foretold by the prophets, and witnessed in the Scriptures, is drunk, received, signified, and sealed in the supper.

Christ instituted this ordinance also to be a standing evidence of his affection to his. 'The same night that he was betrayed he took bread.' The dearest Jesus kept his best wine till the last. He knew his disciples would be full of sorrow for his departure; he therefore provided his strongest cordial against their saddest fainting fits. After the passover he took bread and instituted the sacrament. After supper, then comes the banquet, the sweetmeats. At the Lord's table Christ kisseth his spouse with the sweetest kisses of his lips, and ravisheth her heart with his warmest love. In other ordinances he wooeth her; in this he marrieth her. In other ordinances she hath from him the salutes of a loving friend; but in this the embraces of a husband; other duties are pleasant and wholesome food, but this is the costly, delightful feast. In this Christ bringeth his beloved 'into his banqueting house,' a storehouse of all sweet delights, of variety of delicacies, 'and his banner over her is love,' Cant. 2:4.

'A certain man made a great supper,' Luke 14:16. I may truly say so of the sacrament. This is a great supper in regard of its author: the great God is master of the feast. He gave his own Son for the life of the world. 2. In regard of the matter of it, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ; men set bread and wine on the table, but Christ setteth his own body and blood there. In this ordinance, we eat not only, *Panem Domini*, sed *panem Dominum*, the bread of the Lord, but the bread which is the Lord. 'The gods,' say they, 'are come down in the likeness of man;' behold, here God the Son cometh down in the likeness of bread and wine; he himself is eaten and drunk by faith. Is

not this a rare banquet? 3. In regard of the great price of it. Banquets are costly; but oh, what did this feast cost! Beasts are slain before they can be food for our bodies; but, lo, here the Lord of life was put to death, that he might be food for our starving souls. Cleopatra dissolved a pearl worth fifty thousand pounds in vinegar, and drank it up at a draught; but as costly as her liquor was, it was much worse than puddle water in comparison of the precious blood of Christ, which the believer drinketh at this great supper. 4. In regard of its great effects: it sealeth pardon, peace, and salvation to the saint; it conveyeth the image and love of God, nay, God himself into the soul; through the golden pipe of this ordinance is conveyed the golden oil of divine influence. There is manna indeed in this pot. Well may it be called a great supper. The elements are of small value, but the sacrament is of infinite worth. A conveyance of land fairly written in parchment, with wax fastened to it, is of little price, but when it is signed, sealed, and delivered to the use of a person, it may be worth much, it may convey thousands: a little bread, and a spoonful or two of wine, are in themselves of very small value; but when received according to Christ's institution, and accompanied with his benediction, they will be of unspeakable value; they will convey thousands and millions to the believer.

The Lord's supper is indeed like an elixir, which is small in quantity, but great in value and efficacy, having in it the spirits and substance of many excellent things; in prayer all the graces are exercised, and so also at the supper; but not only all the graces, but most of the other ordinances of God are invited to this feast. The word, prayer, singing, do all meet at the table, and contribute their help to carry the Christian up to heaven. I premise these things, reader, purposely to make thee more wary. The corrupting of the best is worst of all. Poison in wine is much worse than in water; kings expect that their children should be respected, though their officers be refused.

'Surely,' saith God, 'they will reverence my Son,' Mat. 21:37. The very work about which he comes will make him welcome. Though they refuse my servants, yet 'they will reverence my Son.' The casuists say, *Sacramentum et articulus mortis æquiparantur*; A man must be looked upon at the sacramental board as if he were on a dying bed; friend, thou shouldst be as serious when thou art going to the Lord's supper, as if thou wert going into the other world.

He that cometh carelessly, gets nothing from Christ; it is one thing to take the supper of the Lord, and another thing to taste the supper of the Lord. 'Not one of them which were bidden shall taste of my supper,' Luke 14:24. Many crowd near a king's person on some days, when he sheweth himself in public, who never enjoy his gracious presence. Hundreds receive the elements, but few receive the sacrament.

If a beast did but touch the mount, when God solemnly appeared on it, it was to die. What, then, will become of thee if thou shouldst touch the table of the Lord with a brutish heart? If any did eat of the passover in his uncleanness, he was to be cut off from Israel, Exod. 12, which some interpret of a violent death by the hand of the magistrate; others, of a cutting off from the privileges of God's people on earth, and their possession in heaven. Surely it is as dangerous to eat the supper in thy pollution as the passover.

It is evil to dally with the jealous God in any duty; but worst of all in this, where the great affection of the Father in giving his Son, and the grievous passions of Christ, (to satisfy God's justice for sin,) the most serious things which man's heart can conceive, are represented. Melanehthon telleth a story of a tragedy which was acted of the death of Christ; but it proved a tragedy indeed at last, for he that acted Christ's part on the cross, being wounded to death, by one that

should have thrust his sword through a bladder of blood, fell down, and with his fall killed one acting a woman's part, and lamenting under the cross. His brother, who was first slain, slew the murderer, for which himself was hanged by order of justice. Cyprian speaketh of an ancient woman, who had denied the faith, and yet ventured to this heavenly feast; but it proved her bane, for as soon as she had received the elements, she fell down dead. Oh it is sad jesting with the sufferings and ordinances of Christ! Friend, let others' woe be thy warning. Take example by others, lest God make thee an example to others.

I shall lay down two motives to quicken thee to a serious preparation for this ordinance:

1. Consider Christ's diligent inspection. The Lord Jesus will take special notice what respect thou hast for his body and blood. 'And when the king came in to see his guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment,' Mat. 22:11–13. Jesus Christ observeth all his wedding guests, whether they come with the wedding-garment or no. Though there was but one, yet he could not lie hid, and escape in the crowd; the king quickly spied him.

The King of saints taketh exact notice in what manner thou comest to his supper; whether thou examinest thy regeneration, and provest thyself to be one of the family, before thou offerest to eat of their food; whether thou carriest the gold of thy graces to the touchstone of the Scripture, and triest their truth, before thou tenderest them to him for current coin. He observeth with what sense of thy misery thou runnest for refuge to the spring of mercy; he knoweth whether, when thou art going to this heavenly feast, thou hast the mouth of faith; with what resolution against sin for time to come thou goest for pardon of sins past. He seeth whether thou goest to this gospel

ordinance in a gospel order; if not, both thy preparation for the sacrament, and thy carriage at it, and after it, are eye-services to Jesus Christ; how holy, therefore, shouldst thou be in them! Wouldst thou trample upon the picture of thy dear friend, or of thy lawful sovereign, before their faces? wilt thou tread under foot the infinitely precious blood of the Son of God, as if it were the blood of a malefactor, or of a dog, and that while he himself standeth by, and looketh on? Canst thou, friend, find in thine heart to offer such an abominable affront to thy best friend, and that before his face? Truly, if thou art not faithful in thy preparation for it, thou dost all this. Think with thyself, I am now to sit down at the table of the Lord, amongst his own children; I know beforehand that the King will come in to see his guests, even that King who is too just to be bribed, too great to be slighted, too wise to be deceived, and too good to be forfeited. O my soul, what solemn provision wilt thou make for so sacred a presence? If in any time of thy life thou wouldst be extraordinarily serious, this is the season. Oh let thy preparation be such for this glorious supper that the Master of the feast may see that thou art tender of his honour, watchful of his eye, and fearful of his anger!

2. Consider the dreadful condition of those that receive the Lord's supper unworthily. Their sin; they are 'guilty of the body and blood of the Lord:' their suffering; 'they eat and drink their own damnation,' 1 Cor. 11:27, 29.

(1.) Their sin: they are 'guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.' The unworthy receiver is a Christ-murderer. He that tears the letters, or defaceth the picture, or clippeth the coin of a prince, offereth the indignity to his person. The Romans, when they would dishonour a person, would disfigure the statue which was erected to his praise.

The same wickedness of heart which carrieth a man out to profane the sacrament, would carry him out to kill the Saviour.

When one shoots at another to slay him, though he miss, he is a murderer; the error of the hand doth not wipe out the malice of the heart. Joseph's brethren were guilty concerning their brother, though they did not lay violent hands upon him, Gen. 42:21. When Julian shot darts up to heaven, his cruelty and rage were as bad as if he had hit Christ's body. Besides, men may be guilty of murder, by approving it after it is committed,' Mat. 23:35. What doth the unworthy receiver less than justify Judas and the Jews in all their treacherous and barbarous carriage towards Jesus Christ?

Consider, therefore, what thou dost, when thou goest unpreparedly to the Lord's table; thou art guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. Simple murder is a crying sin: 'The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the earth,' Gen. 4:10. It is one of those sins which will give God no rest till he take vengeance on the actor and author of it, and is therefore called a crying sin. The light of nature taught the barbarians that vengeance would not suffer a murderer to live, Acts 28:4. The Scripture acquainteth us that 'no satisfaction shall be taken for the life of a murderer, for blood defileth the land,' Num. 35:31, 34. But the murder of a superior is a far greater sin. Cicero telleth us, He that killeth his father committeth many sins in one; he killeth him that begot him and brought him up; he sinneth against many obligations. To kill a king is high treason: 'Who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless?' 1 Sam. 26:9. But what is it to murder the Son of God? No tongue can tell, no pen can write the horrid, heinous nature of Christ-murder. He is thy everlasting Father. It made a dumb child speak to see another stabbing his father, and wilt thou imbrue thine own hands in thy Father's blood? Jesus Christ is thy king, and wilt thou stretch forth



thy hands against thy Head, thy Sovereign? 'Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?' Nay, Jesus Christ is thy Redeemer, and wilt thou put him to death who is the author of thy life? He gave thee thy being, and wouldst thou deprive him of his being? He is the only physician that can cure thee, and wilt thou kill him? Once more, Jesus Christ is God, and wilt thou lift up thy hand (I would say a thought) against the blessed God? God deserveth infinitely more love than thou canst possibly give, and shall thine heart be so full of hatred as to let fly against the God of heaven? Oh, say with David, when Abishai persuaded him to slay Saul, 'The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed!' When Satan, or thy own heart, would persuade thee to be slight in the examination of thyself, and formal in thy humiliation for sin, that thou mightest be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, let conscience cry out. God forbid that I should stretch out my hand against Jesus Christ, the Lord's anointed; and truly, friend, if after such warning as God gives thee in this head, thou shouldst dare to receive unworthily, thou wouldst find it hereafter to thine unspeakable hurt, as Reuben told his brethren when they were in distress, 'Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child? and ye would not hear, therefore behold his blood is required,' Gen. 42:22. So, if thou now darest to approach the Lord's table in thy sinful, unregenerate estate, in thy filth and pollution, when thou comest to lie under some smart rod, or on thy dying bed, or at least in the other world, conscience will fly in thy face, Did I not speak unto thee, saying, Do not sin against the holy child Jesus, and thou wouldst not hear? therefore behold his blood is required at thy hands! O friend, friend! what wilt thou do in such an hour? If on him who slew Cain vengeance should be taken sevenfold, what vengeance shall be taken on him who slayeth Jesus Christ? How dreadful will thy perdition be if the only Saviour be thine accuser, and that blood

which alone can procure thy pardon shall cry for thine eternal punishment!

Oh think of it seriously, hast thou never had hard thoughts of the Jews for their cruelty to the Son of God? and wilt thou do worse thyself? The Jews crucified him but once, but thou, by continuing an unworthy receiver, crucifiest him often. The Jews did it ignorantly; 'Had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory,' 1 Cor. 2:8; but thou knowest him to be the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. They crucified him in his estate of humiliation, but thou in his estate of exaltation; they had not thee for a warning when they put him to death, but thou hast them for a warning to thee; they crucified him when he was to rise again the third day, but thou so crucifiest him that he might never rise more, were it in thy power. Oh take heed what thou dost, and be not worse than a Jew!

(2.) Thy suffering; 'He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself,' 1 Cor. 11:29. Some I know are offended at the translation of the Greek word κριμα, damnation, but I see little reason for it; for damnation is the end of every sin, though it be not the end of every sinner. Paul speaketh of believers indeed; but as it may be truly said of one that drinketh poison, such a man drank his bane, though by the help of a physician such an antidote may be given as may prevent the patient's death; so it may be truly spoken of a believer who receiveth unworthily, he eateth and drinketh his own damnation, though, through the grace and help of Jesus Christ, no thank to himself, he is recovered out of that sin, and saved. Beza and the Geneva translation take it in this sense. So the word is taken, John 3:17, 18; Rom. 3:8, and in several other places.

Now what an argument is here to dissuade thee from going rashly or unpreparedly to the table of the Lord. That which is a worthy

receiver's meat will be thy poison; the same red sea of Christ's blood, which is salvation to others—they pass safely through it into the land of promise—will be damnation to thee. King John, as our English chroniclers write, was poisoned by a cup of wine. The Emperor Henry VII. was poisoned by the bread in the sacrament, through the treachery and treason of a monk. The Israelites 'did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink; but with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness,' 1 Cor. 10:3–5. Those that eat and drink in Christ's presence were punished with everlasting perdition, Mat. 7:23. And do not please thyself because thou feelest no such poisonous operation at present in unworthy receiving, that therefore thou needest not fear it. They that eat Italian figs carry their death about them, though they fall not down dead suddenly.

Therefore, reader, take some time and pains to commune with thy own heart before thou goest to the sacrament. Charge it upon its allegiance to God to hear thee patiently, and to carry itself suitably. If I receive this supper with a holy preparation, it will be a seal of, and a help to, my eternal salvation; it will be an earnest of matchless love, and an entrance into an endless, happy life. But if I eat and drink unworthily, there is death in the pot, death in the cup; I eat and drink my own damnation. Oh how doleful is that one word damnation! What a dreadful sound doth it make in mine ears! What fearful sighs doth it cause in my soul! Damnation is no trifling business; God threateneth it in earnest, the damned feel it in earnest, and shall I jest with it? Surely I were better eat the bread of affliction, and drink the water of adversity, than eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily. Canst thou be so bloody as to stab thyself and thy Redeemer to the heart with one blow? O my soul, bestir thyself, awake out of sleep, and do not dally about the concernments of eternal life and death; let thy care and conscience be such, in fitting

thyself for this sacred ordinance, that thy Saviour may see thou hast a high respect for his precious blood, and a tender regard to thine own everlasting good.

For thy help about this ordinance I shall speak,

1. To thy duty before the sacrament.
2. To thy duty at the sacrament.
3. To thy duty after the sacrament.

First, To thy duty before the sacrament; and herein my counsel is, that thou wouldst prepare thyself solemnly for this ordinance. The Jews had their preparation for their passover, John 19:24. 'It was the preparation of the passover.' Nay, they took their lamb the tenth day of the month, and did not kill it till the fourteenth, Exod. 12:3; and, as some of their writers observe, they tied it all the while to their bedposts, that in the interim they might prepare themselves for it. Our Lord Jesus, when he was to eat the passover, and institute the supper, would have so much as the house in which he would do it prepared beforehand, Mark 14:15. The ancient fathers and primitive Christians used to sit up whole nights at prayer before the Lord's supper, which they called their *vigiliæ*.

Reader, thy care must be to trim thy lamp, and make sure of oil in the vessel, now thou art going to meet the bridegroom. Samuel spake to the inhabitants of Bethlehem, 'Sanctify yourselves, and come to the sacrifice;' so say I to thee, Sanctify thy soul, and then come to the sacrament, 1 Sam. 16:9. Joseph prepared himself, by shaving himself, and changing his raiment, before he went unto Pharaoh; and wilt not thou prepare thyself by putting thy soul into the holiest posture thou canst, when thou art to go in unto the king of heaven and earth? He

that would make a good meal, even when he is to feast at another's cost, must prepare his stomach beforehand by moderate fasting or exercise. God expecteth that the hands be pure, but especially that the heart be prepared. 'The good Lord,' saith Hezekiah, 'pardon every one that prepareth his heart, though it be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary,' 2 Chron. 30:18, 19. The king speaketh of those who came to the passover with some ceremonial pollution, yet had moral purity; and his words are to this purpose: Lord, though several of my people have failed in regard of external purification, let it please thee to pardon them, if they have minded internal preparation. Friend, there is no hope of remission without this heart preparation; the devil himself would not come into a house till it was 'ready, swept, and garnished,' Mat. 12. And dost thou think that Jesus Christ will come into thy heart while it lieth nastily and sluttishly, before the filth of sin be swept out, and it be garnished with the graces of his Spirit? Surely that room had need be richly hung with the embroidery of the Spirit, in which the glorious and blessed potentate will sup and lodge. Where thy expectation is great from a person, there thy preparation must be great for him. Dost thou not look, like Herod, to see some miracle done by Jesus, some extraordinary thing for thy soul? Therefore I say to thee, as Joshua spake to the Israelites, 'Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders amongst you,' Joshua 3:5. Oh sanctify thyself, and to-morrow—on the sacrament day—the Lord will do wonders for thee; he will feast thee at his own table, he will feed thee with his own flesh, he will give thee that love which is better than wine, he will embrace thee in his arms, and kiss thee with the kisses of his mouth; he will delight thine eyes with the sight of his beautiful person, ravish thine ears with the sound of his precious promises, and rejoice thine heart with the assurance of his gracious pardon. Oh do but sanctify thyself, and to-morrow the Lord will do wonders for thee! This

preparation consisteth in a serious examination of thyself, and a sincere humiliation for thy sins.

Thy serious examination of thyself must be, first, Of the good in thee; secondly, Of the evil done by thee.

'Let a man examine himself, and so' (and no otherwise) 'let him eat of this bread, and drink of this cup,' 1 Cor. 11:28. Examine himself, δοκιμαζέτω: some take it to be a metaphor of a goldsmith, as he trieth gold in the fire whether it be pure or no; so thy duty is to try thy graces by the fire of the word, whether they be true or not. So the word is used, 1 Peter 1:7. Others take it as an allusion to ministers, who are tried whether they are fit for their office or no, 1 Tim. 3:10; so thou oughtest to try thyself, whether thou art fit for this ordinance or no. This examination must be,

First, Of the good in thee. Thy duty is to examine thyself in general, concerning thy regeneration or spiritual life. The sacrament is children's bread, and it must not be given to dogs; dogs must be without doors, not within, snatching the meat from the table. Men must prove their right to the purchase before they take possession. He must have an interest in the covenant of grace who will finger the seal of the covenant. It is high treason to annex the king's broad seal to forged writings.

'Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor: thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies,' Cant. 7:2. The words are Christ's praise of his spouse, for her fruitfulness in bringing children forth, and her faithfulness in bringing them up. By the navel expositors agree that baptism is understood, by which, as children by the navel, the members of the church are nourished, even then when they are so feeble that they cannot feed themselves, but their whole sustenance is conveyed to them by others. By the belly is meant the

Lord's supper; now observe the provision how the table is furnished, and the persons which are to sit at it. For the provision; 'Thy belly is like an heap of wheat.' Ainsworth on the words observeth, that in those times they brought their corn in and stacked it up in heaps; so that as the belly distributeth to every part of the body its proportion of nourishment, and as a heap of wheat satisfieth the hunger of, and affordeth strength to a whole family, so doth the church by this sacrament bestow on all her children, through Christ, that food which is needful for health and strength. The persons which are to eat of this wheat 'set about with lilies;' they must be saints, and are compared to lilies, first, For their innocency, they are lily-white; secondly, For their glory and nobility, Mat. 6:29. Pliny telleth us that lilies are next to the rose for nobility; Christ is 'the rose of Sharon,' the 'plant of most renown;' but his church is next to him. Thirdly, For the savour, Cant. 4:12. The graces of believers are like sweet perfumes, and scented as far as heaven. The Lord's supper is a sacrament, not of regeneration, but of sustentation. When the prodigal came to himself, then the fatted calf was killed for him, Luke 15. Men must have natural life, before they can eat natural meat; and men must have spiritual life, before they can eat spiritual meat. It was an ancient abuse of the sacrament, cast out by the Carthaginian council, to give it to dead men. The invitation is not to enemies but friends: 'Eat, O friends; drink abundantly, O beloved,' Cant. 5:1. The water of life is only for the thirsty, and the bread of life only for the hungry. The shewbread under the law was to be eaten only by the priests, Lev. 24:9; so the bread of the sacrament is to be eaten only by such as are spiritual priests unto God, as saints are, Rev. 1:5.

Reader, examine thyself therefore whether thou art born again or no. Look into the word of God, and compare thyself with the characters which are there given of new born creatures. They are sometimes described by their hearts: 'God is good to Israel, to such as are of a

clean heart,' Ps. 73:1. Their hearts are clean, not with a legal cleanness, which denieth the being of sin in them—in that sense 'none can say, I have made my heart clean,' (this spotless robe is reserved for the saints' wearing in the other world;) but with an evangelical cleanness, which denieth the dominion of sin over them, (this cleanly garment is the saint's ordinary attire in this world.) We call river water clean water, though there be some kind of illness and impurity in it, because it will not, like pond water, mingle with it, and suffer the filth to rest there, but worketh it out, and sendeth it forth in its scum and froth. Now, how is it with thee, friend? Doth sin rest quietly in thee? or is it resisted by thee? Dost thou love sin or loathe sin? Dost thou count it thy pleasure or thy poison? When the body is dead, vermin crawl in it without opposition. When the soul is dead, lusts abound in it and reign without any considerable disturbance. An unclean heart is quickly overcome by sin. As when a chimney is foul, it is apt to be fired by every spark that flieth up; whereas, when it is clean, though many fly up, it remaineth safe. So when the heart is unclean, Satan can no sooner throw in his fiery darts, but presently it is in a flame; whereas a clean heart is like wet tinder, not so soon burning when he strikes fire. Godly men, as they have clean hearts, so they have 'clean hands,' Job 17:9. The hand is the instrument of action; by clean hands the Spirit of God meaneth clean and holy actings.

Saints are described by their lives. They 'walk after the Spirit;' they 'order their conversations aright.' *Per brachium fit judicium de corde*, was Galen's rule. Physicians feel the pulse of the arm, that they may know the state of the vitals. Now, how beats the pulse of thy conversation? according to that, judge of the soundness or sickness of thy constitution. Dost thou walk, in reference to thyself, soberly, in reference to others, righteously, in reference to God, religiously? Rom. 8:1, 5; Titus 2:12.



Thy duty is to examine thyself in particular also of those graces which are specially requisite in a communicant, of thy knowledge to discern the Lord's body. There is a competency of knowledge needful if thou wouldst receive acceptably. Dost thou know the threefold estate of man?—his innocency, apostasy, and recovery; what a pure piece he was, how holy, when he came out of God's hands; what a miserable polluted creature he hath made himself by disobeying God, and hearkening to the tempter; what a glorious remedy God hath provided to restore man to his primitive purity. Dost thou know God as he discovereth himself in his works, but especially as he is represented in the glass of his word? Dost thou know Jesus Christ, his two natures, his three offices, how he executeth them, both in his estate of humiliation and exaltation? Dost thou know the nature and end of the Lord's supper?

An ignorant person can no more discern Christ's body than a person stark blind can discern the bread. God hath expressly forbidden lame and blind sacrifices, Mal. 1:8. The hypocrite's sacrifice is lame, for he halteth in God's way. The ignorant person's sacrifice is blind, for he can give no account of his own work. When the leprosy was in the head, the priest was to pronounce the party 'utterly unclean,' and exclude him the camp, Lev. 13:44. Do not say, though thou art ignorant, yet thy heart is good, when God himself saith, 'Without knowledge the mind is not good.'

Fish stink first in the head, and then the whole body putrifieth.

Examine thy faith. This grace is thy spiritual taste, without which thou canst relish nothing on the table. This is the bucket, and if it be wanting, I may say to thee, as the woman to Christ, 'The well is deep, and thou hast nothing to draw with.' This is the hand to receive Christ, John 1:12. This is as the arms whereby we embrace Christ;

they 'embraced the promises' by faith, Heb. 11:13. As loving friends that have been a great while asunder, when they meet together, hug and embrace each other in their arms; so the Christian who longeth to see Jesus Christ in the promises, when at a sacrament he meeteth him, huggeth and embraceth him in the arms of faith.

Examine not so much the strength as the truth of thy faith. The wings of a dove may help her to mount up towards heaven, as well as the wings of an eagle. Try whether thy faith be unfeigned, 1 Tim. 1:5. What price dost thou set upon Christ? 'To them that believe, Christ is precious,' 1 Pet. 2:7. An unbeliever, like the Indians, seeth no worth in this golden mine, but preferreth a piece of glass, or a few painted beads, mean, earthly things, before it; but a believer, like the Spaniard, knoweth the value of it, and will venture through all storms and tempests that he may enjoy it. Dost thou prize the precepts of Christ, the promises of Christ, the people of Christ, the person of Christ, (is that altogether lovely in thine eyes?) and the passion of Christ? Is thy greatest glory in Christ's shameful cross? Dost thou esteem it above the highest emperor's most glorious crown? One of England's kings bestowed as much on a crucifix as the revenues of his crown were worth in a year. 'God forbid,' saith Paul, 'that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ,' Gal. 6:14.

Doth thy faith purify thine heart? 'Having their hearts purified by faith, Acts 15:9. The hand of faith, which openeth the door to let Christ into the heart, sweepeth the heart clean. Faith looks to be like Christ in glory, and faith labours to resemble Christ in grace. An unbeliever, like a sluttish woman, though he keep the room of his life a little clean, which others daily observe, yet he cares not how dirtily those rooms of his inward man lie, which are out of their sight; unbelieving and defiled are joined together, Tit. 1:15.

Examine thy love. The primitive Christians kissed each other at the supper, which they called *Osculum pacis*, A kiss of peace. They had their 'feasts of charity,' Jude 12. 'The bread which we eat, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?' As the bread is made of many grains, and the cup of wine of many grapes united, so is the body of Christ of many members, united under one head. Eating together was ever a sign of love and friendship. Joseph hereby shewed his love to his brethren. The sons of Brutus, and the Vitellii, when they conspired with Tarquin's ambassadors against the consul, drank the blood of a man together, to confirm their amity. Even beasts have been brought to agree by feeding at the same rack.

Now, reader, what love-fire hast thou for this love-feast?

Dost thou love the brethren as brethren, because they are related to God, and because they have the image of God? Or dost thou love them only for the natural qualities in them, and their courtesy to thee? This fire I must tell thee is kitchen fire, which must be fed with such coarse fuel; the former only is the fire which is taken from God's altar. Dost thou love Christ in a cottage as well as in a court? Dost thou love a poor as well as a rich Christian? Dost thou love grace in rags as much as grace in robes? Is it their honour or their holiness which thou dost admire?

As thy duty is to examine thyself concerning thy graces, so also concerning thy corruptions. Before a sacrament there should be a thorough search for all thy sins. The Jews, before their passover, searched all over their houses for leaven; nay, they searched every corner and mouse-hole with a wax candle, as some write. There is a threefold leaven: First, A leaven of hypocrisy; 'Beware of the leaven of the pharisees, which is hypocrisy,' Luke 12:1. Secondly, A leaven of heresy; 'A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump,' Gal. 5:9. Thirdly, A

leaven of enormity or scandal; 'Purge out the old leaven,' 1 Cor. 5:7. Thy care must be to make a diligent inquiry for all this leaven. The iniquities of wicked men will find them out, but good men will find out their iniquities: 'I know mine iniquities,' saith David, Ps. 51. When evil humours lie hid in the body, they hinder the strength it might get by food; when sins lie undiscovered in the soul, they will hinder its digesting spiritual meat and drink.

At a sessions there are some indictments read, and it may be some execution done; but at an assize there are many malefactors arraigned and many executed, the jail is then cleared of those vermin. A Christian should keep a petty sessions in his heart every day,—do what he can for the conviction and condemnation of his sins;—but before a sacrament he must keep an assize; there must be a general jail-delivery; all his sins must be sought after, indicted, and executed; the room of his heart must be cleared of those vipers. Particularly examine thyself of thy sins since the last sacrament; how forgetful thou hast been of the oath of the Lord which thou didst then enter into. Be not slight or formal in searching after thy sins, like some officers that willingly overlook the thieves they search for; but be as diligent to find them out as thou wouldst be to find out the murderers of thy father or best friend.

But be sure thou compare thy heart and life with the law of God. Oh how many spots will that glass discover! When the woman hath swept her house and gathered the dust up altogether, she thinks there is none left; but when the sun doth but shine in through some broken pane of glass, she seeth the whole house swarm with innumerable motes of dust floating to and fro in the air. The light of God's law will make innumerable sins visible to thee, which without it will lie hid.

2. There is requisite, as a serious examination of thyself, so also sincere humiliation for thy sins. The cleanly dame is careful always to keep her pewter and brass clean; but against a good time she is very curious to have her vessels not only clean, but bright, and for this end she will not only wash them, but take much pains in scouring them. Christian, now is the good time before which thou shouldst scour the vessel of thy heart, that no dirt if possible may stick to it. This true humiliation consisteth partly in mourning for sin, partly in turning from sin.

1. In mourning for sin. The pharisees would not eat their common bread 'with unwashed hands,' lest they should transgress the traditions of their elders. Friend, if thou shouldst eat this sacred bread with an unwashed heart, thou wilt horribly transgress the commandment of thy God. The Jews did eat the passover with bitter herbs, and truly we Gentiles must eat a broken body with broken bones. The more bitter sin is to thee before, the more sweet thy Saviour will be to thee at, the sacrament; 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted,' Mat. 5:3. A wet seed-time will bring a sunshiny and plentiful harvest. One of the fathers observeth that David, the greatest mourner in Israel, was the sweetest singer in Israel. Beans thrive best if steeped in water before they be sown, and truly so will thy soul if steeped in godly sorrow before thou goest to the sacrament. 'Give strong drink to him that is ready to perish, and wine to those that are of heavy hearts,' Prov. 31:6. When thy heart is heavy under the sense of thine unholiness, and thou art ready to perish under the weight of thy wickedness, then Jesus Christ will give thee that wine, that blood which will refresh and make thine heart glad.

Those trees shoot highest in summer that shoot lowest into the earth in winter. No Christian usually riseth so high in consolation as he

that is cast down lowest in evangelical humiliation. There are two in the New Testament famous for their contrition, and they are famous for God's respect and affection to them. Mary was a great mourner; we seldom have a view of her in Scripture without dew on her face and tears in her eyes, Luke 7:38, 39, and 23:27, 28; John 19:25, and 20:11, 15. But she had the special honour and favour of seeing the best sight which ever mortal eyes beheld before all others, even the blessed Redeemer in the first step of his exaltation: 'Now when Jesus was risen early, the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils,' Mark 16:9. Mary had sinned greatly and sorrowed greatly, and was upon it greatly respected by God. Peter wept bitterly. A look from love broke his heart in pieces; but Christ took special care to bind up this broken heart, to pour oil into his wounded conscience; and therefore when a messenger is despatched from heaven to acquaint the world with the joyful news of the Saviour's resurrection, no name is particularly mentioned in his commission but Peter's. God gives him an express command, that whosoever should remain ignorant of those happy tidings, he should be sure that Peter have notice of it. 'Go your way,' saith the angel, 'tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee; there ye shall see him.' When a king hath some extraordinary good news, and sendeth a courtier to acquaint his intimate friends with it, but chargeth him, Tell them all of it, but be sure such an earl have notice of it: whoever you forget, remember him;—all will conclude this is the favourite. Peter thought that, because he had forsworn Christ, therefore Christ might justly forget him; but Christ took such care, that if but one in the world, besides those two women at the sepulchre, had notice of his resurrection, penitent Peter should be the man. Oh the rhetoric, the power of an unfeigned tear! Repentance hath more prevalency with the blessed God than all the robes, riches, crowns and diadems of the greatest potentates in the world.

O reader, if thou wouldst have heavenly music at the feast, mind this holy mourning! When Joseph's brethren were sensible of their sin in selling him, then, and not till then, he made them a feast. Jesus Christ made the best wine that ever was of water. The bee, naturalists tell us, gathers the best honey of the bitterest herb; God hath solid joy for the broken bones, the contrite spirit. Cast up the accounts betwixt God and thy soul, see how infinitely thou art indebted to his Majesty. Abhor thyself with Job, bemoan thyself with Ephraim, and judge thyself, as Paul enjoineth his Corinthians in relation to this ordinance, as ever thou wouldst have God at the sacrament to seal thee a general acquittance.

Sacrament days are sealing days; God doth then seal his love, and stamp his image more fairly on the soul; now, if thy heart be melted into godly sorrow, and made thereby like soft wax, thou wilt be fit for this seal and stamp. The hart in grazing kills and eats a serpent, which so inflames her that she can have no rest till she drink of the water-brooks. Repentance will make thee feel the scorching nature of that serpent sin, and thereby long for and relish the water of life.

2. There must be a turning from sin. Thou canst never communicate with true comfort if thou dost not communicate with a clear conscience. The Mohammedans, before they enter into their temples, wash their feet, and when they are entering in, put off their shoes. As thy duty is to wash thy soul in godly sorrow, so also to put off thy sinful affections, before thou enterest into God's house to partake of this ordinance. If God takes it ill when men 'take his name into their mouths,' who 'hate to be reformed,' how ill will he take it if such take the body and blood of his Son into their mouths? Christ's body was not to see corruption, neither will it mingle with corruption. He lay in a new womb, in a new tomb, and he will lie in a new heart. When sin is cast out, then Jesus Christ will enter into thy soul. 'Draw nigh

to God, and he will draw nigh to you.' But mark how they must prepare themselves who would approach the Lord: 'Cleanse your hearts, ye sinners, and purify your hands, ye double-minded,' James 4:8, 9.

The Jews before the passover cleansed all their vessels, which they feared might have leaven sticking to them, burned all the leaven they could find, and cursed all in their houses, whether found or not found; as their antiquaries inform us. Truly, when thou goest to the supper it concerneth thee to cleanse thy soul of the leaven of sin, by a high indignation at it, and hearty resolution against it. 'Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump. For Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth,' 1 Cor. 5:7, 8. Reader, it would be a trampling under foot the blood of Christ, and counting it as an unholy thing, if thou shouldst go to the table of the Lord with love to any lust. For the Lord's sake, and for thy souls sake, take heed of paddling in the blood of Christ, as if it were channel water. Alas! thou dost little less if thou partakest of the sacrament without anger and indignation against every sin. True repentance implieth an aversion from sin: 'If they shall humble themselves, and turn from their evil ways,' 2 Chron. 7:14. The burnt child will dread the fire. The man that hath smarted for suretyship will by no means be persuaded to come again into bonds; urge him to it never so much, he will tell you he hath paid dear for it, and therefore you must excuse him; he is resolved, nay, hath vowed against it, and though he be never so much entreated, is still inexorable. The Christian who hath truly repented is so sensible of the weight of sin and wrath of God, that he is resolved never more to meddle with those burning coals; alas! they are too heavy for him. David, that had repented of his sin, would not drink of that water which had but been



the occasion of hazarding men's lives, though before he could drink the blood of Uriah. Penitent Peter, though before he was so full of self-confidence that he preferred himself before the other apostles, —'Though all deny thee, yet will not I,'—yet afterwards, though occasion were offered him of commending himself, forbears it: 'Peter, lovest thou me more than these? Lord, thou knowest I love thee.' He saith not, more than these. O reader, it was Esau's expression, 'The days of mourning for my father are coming, and then I will slay my brother Jacob:' so say thou, 'The days of mourning for the death of my dear Saviour and everlasting Father are come, and now I will slay my most beloved lusts; now will I be revenged of them for their endeavour to rob me of my spiritual birthright, to wrong me of my eternal blessing.'

This repentance exercised before the sacrament would prepare thy stomach for the feast, it would cleanse it, and cause it to savour the dainties there; it would make thee hungry, and hunger is the best sauce. Artaxerxes, flying for his life, fed on barley bread and a few dried figs, and said it was the best meal that ever he made.

When thou hast thus prepared thy stomach for this heavenly banquet, take heed of relying upon thy pains and preparation, either for a right performance of the duty, or for thine acceptance in the ordinance. Many a poor creature, I am persuaded, goeth with much humiliation for sin, and cometh away without any consolation, because they made a saviour of their sorrow. Praise thy physician if he have made thee sensible of thy sickness, but do not provoke him by making thy pain to be the plaster for thy cure. Alas! thy preparation itself needeth much pardon; if God should deal strictly with thee, thy prayers should be found dung, thy sighs unsavoury breath, thy very tears puddle water. Reflect on them thyself, and compare them with the law of God, and thou wilt find cause to pray

over thy prayers, to weep over thy tears, to be ashamed of thy shame, and to abhor thyself for thy self-abhorrency.

Do not think with thyself, I have examined my heart faithfully, and find that I do not come short of the grace of God; I have acknowledged mine iniquities, and been sorrowful for my sins, and therefore I cannot miscarry at this sacrament. Such a trusting of thyself would be a tempting of thy Saviour, and would certainly hinder the success of the sacrament: it would be to thee as the cutting off Samson's locks was to him: Judges 16:20, 'He thought to have gone forth as at other times, and shake himself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.' Thou mayest think, after such self-confidence, to go to the Lord's supper as at other times; but, alas! what wilt thou do? for the Lord will depart from thee, and then what sport will Satan and sin, those uncircumcised ones, make with thee?

Reader, let me persuade thee, when thou hast been diligent in the trial of thy spiritual estate, and hast with many tears bewailed the pollution of thy nature and transgressions of thy life, to cast thyself wholly upon Jesus Christ for assistance in the duty. As Jehoshaphat, when he had fifty thousand men ready armed for the battle, cried out, 'O Lord our God, we have no might against this great company, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are unto thee,' 2 Chron. 20:6. So after thou hast made the greatest preparation possible, as believing the weight and worth of the supper, the purity and majesty of the master of the feast, do thou look up to Christ, and say, Lord, I have no ability, no might, for this great supper, for a right performance of this great ordinance, neither know I what to do, but mine eyes are unto thee. When Asa had an army of two hundred and fourscore thousand men of valour to fight with the Ethiopians, he prayeth and trusteth to God as if he had not one man: 'Lord, it is

nothing for thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this great multitude,' 2 Chron. 14:11. So do thou say, Lord, I have no power for this holy supper; help me, O Lord my God, for I rest on thee, and in thy name I go to this great and weighty ordinance. Truly couldst thou, after all the provision thou hast made, disclaim it wholly in regard of dependence, and cast thyself on Christ for assistance; I durst be the prophet to foretel a good day. The gaudy flower, which standeth upon its own stalk, doth quickly wither; when the plain ivy, that depends upon the house, and leans on it, is fresh and green all the year. He that trusteth to his own legs in this duty is as sure to fall as if he were down already. The weak child walketh safest, that all the way holdeth by and hangeth upon its parent.

If thou wert now going to receive, be advised to write after David's copy; he looked up to God both for assistance and acceptance: 'I will go in the strength of the Lord: I will make mention of thy righteousness, yea, of thine only,' Ps. 71:16. Let thy practice be suitable to his when thou goest out of thy house; and let thy prayer be the same as the spouse's when thou art entering into God's house. Oh then look up to heaven, and cry mightily, 'Awake, thou north wind; and come, O south: blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits,' Cant. 4:16.

## **CHAPTER XIX**

### **How a Christian may exercise himself to godliness at the table**

I come to the second particular about the Lord's supper, and that is thy behaviour at the table, or in the time of receiving; in reference to which I would advise thee: 1. To mind the suitable subjects which are to be considered at it; 2. To observe the special graces which are to be exercised in it. There are three principal subjects of meditation, when thou approachest the table, in order to the three graces which must then be acted. The subjects of meditation are Christ's passion, his affection, and thy own corruptions. The three graces are faith, love, and godly sorrow. Christ's death is sure footing for faith. Paul never desired better, 1 Cor. 2:2; it is not only an 'elect and precious,' but 'a tried stone, and a sure foundation, on which, whosoever believeth, shall never be confounded,' Isa. 28:16. Faith picks excellent food from this heavenly carcase. The love of Christ displayed in his death causeth and calleth forth the love of a Christian. Faith bringeth the soul, that is like a dead coal, near to the live coals of God's burning love in giving his only Son, and Christ's burning love in giving himself; and by these it is turned into fire, all in a flame of love: as the echo answereth the voice, it returneth the love it receiveth. Our own sins meditated on stir up the third grace, which is godly sorrow; though, indeed, this liquor will run from any of the three vessels if they be but pierced. When Christ hung upon the cross under the weight of God's wrath, water came out of his sides as well as blood. Who can think of his sufferings without sorrow? and of his blood without tears? His love in its heat may well thaw the most frozen spirit; but sin, the cause of his sufferings, will, like a knife, cut and prick to the heart indeed. But,

First, I begin with the subjects of meditation, and among them, in the first place, with the passion of Christ.

First, Meditate now on the sufferings of thy Saviour. The wounds of Christ, out of which came precious balsam to heal all thy sinful sores,

ought never to be forgotten; but the remembrance of them is never so seasonable as at a sacrament. One end of the institution of this ordinance was the commemoration of Christ's death: 'As oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye shew forth the Lord's death till he come,' 1 Cor. 11:26, 27. The sacrament is a lively crucifix, wherein 'Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified before thine eyes.' When thou seest the bread and wine consecrated and set apart, consider how God the Father did from eternity set apart his only Son for his bloody passion, and thy blessed redemption. Consider he was a lamb slain before the foundation of the world. When thou seest the bread and wine upon the table, consider that, as the corn was ground in the mill to make that bread, and the grapes squeezed to make that wine, so thy Saviour was beaten in the mill and wine-press of his Father's wrath before he could be meat indeed and drink indeed to nourish thee unto life everlasting. When thou seest the bread broken in pieces, think how the body of Christ was broken for thine iniquities. 'It pleased the Lord to bruise him,' (as spice is beaten small in a mortar with a pestle—so the word signifieth,) Isa. 53:10. Well might he cry out, 'I am feeble and sore broken; I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart,' Ps. 38:8. When thou seest the wine poured out, meditate on his precious blood, which was 'shed for many, for the remission of sins.' Oh, consider his wounds and his words, 'I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels,' Ps. 22:14. Consider the doleful tragedy which he acted from first to last; meditate on his incarnation. For the Son of God to become the Son of man; for him that lived from all eternity to be born in time; for him that thundereth in the clouds to cry in the cradle; for him that created all things to become a creature,—is a greater suffering than if all the men and angels in this and the other world were crowded into an atom, or turned into nothing. This was the first and greatest step of his humiliation. Consider the manner of his birth: he was born,

not of some great princes, but of mean and indigent parents; not in a royal palace, but in a place where beggars and beasts are entertained—a stable; he was no sooner born but sought after to be butchered. He fled for his life in his very swaddling-clouts, and was an early martyr indeed. When he grew up, though he was of ability to have swayed the sceptre of all the empires in the world, to have instructed the greatest potentates and counsellors in the mysteries of wisdom and knowledge; though to him Adam and Solomon, yea, and angels themselves, were fools, yet he lived privately with his supposed father many years, and suffered his deity to be hid, as light in a dark lantern, near thirty years, save that once it darted a little out, when at twelve years of age he disputed and confuted the great Rabbis of the Jews, Luke 2:46.

When he entered upon his public ministry, he is no sooner ascended the stage, but all the devils in hell appear against him, and he is forced to fight hand to hand with them for forty days together; and when they left him they did not take their leave, but 'departed only for a season,' Luke 4:13. His whole life was a living death. How poor was he, when he was fain to work a miracle to pay his tax! 'The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests; but the Son of man had not where to lay his head,' though he were 'heir of all things,' Mat. 8:20. What did he suffer in his name when the worst words in the mouths of the Jews were thought not bad enough for him! He is called the carpenter's son, a glutton, a drunkard, a blasphemer, a friend of publicans and sinners, a Samaritan, a devil; nay, the prince of devils. What hunger and thirst and weariness did he undergo! He that feeds others with his own flesh had many a hungry belly. He that gave others that water, of which whosoever drinketh shall thirst no more, had his own veins sucking and paining him for thirst. He that is himself the only ark for the weary dove to fly to for rest, did himself take many a wearisome step, and travel many a tiresome

journey. Well might the prophet call him 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs,' though he had suffered no more than what is already written; but all this was but the beginning of his sorrows. The dregs of the cup were at the bottom. Doubtless many an aching heart had he, as a woman with child, beforehand, when he thought of the bitter pangs, sharp throes, and hard labour which he was to suffer at the close of his life. O friend, remember this Son of David and all his troubles. But to come to his end, which is specially represented in this ordinance, I will take him in the garden, where he felt more than I can write or think. Consider his body there; it was all over in a gore blood. Ah, what suffered he, when he did sweat clods of blood! To sweat blood is against nature, much more in a cold season, most of all when he was full of fear and terror; then the blood retreats to the heart to guard it, and to be guarded by it.

But behold, reader, thy Saviour for thy sake, and under the weight of thy sins, did sweat blood in a cold night, when he was exceedingly afraid. Ah! who would not love such a Saviour, and who would not loathe sin? But the sufferings of his body were nothing to the sufferings of his soul; these were the soul of his sufferings. Observe his expression, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful:' 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death.' Unto death, not only extensively, seventeen or eighteen hours, till death ended his life; but chiefly intensively, such sorrow as the pangs of death bring—surely far greater. Again, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' Wise and valiant men do not complain of nothing. Ah, how bitter was that cup which valour and resolution itself seemed unwilling to drink! The two most tormenting passions, which are fear and grief, did now seize upon him in the highest degree: 'He began to be sorrowful and very heavy,' saith Matthew, chap. 26:37. 'He began to be sore amazed and very heavy,' saith Mark, chap. 14:33.

Reader, follow him further; one disciple selleth him at the price of a slave; another disciple forsweareth him; all of them forsake him, and fly; the greedy wolves lay hold on this innocent lamb; the bloody Jews apprehend him, bind his hands like a thief, and hale him away to the high priest; then they hire persons to belie truth itself: but when their testimony was insufficient, upon his own most holy confession, a sentence of condemnation is passed upon him. Consider now how the servants smite his blessed cheeks with their fists, and spit on that beautiful face with their mouths, which angels counted their honour to behold; the masters flout him with their scornful carriage, and mock him with their petulant language: he must be the sink into which they fling all their filth. Afterwards they carry him to Pilate; he sendeth him to Herod; Herod, with some scorns and scoffs, sendeth him back. Thus is he, like a foot-ball, spurned up and down between those inhuman wretches: Pilate tears his flesh with wounds and nails, and presenteth him to the people with a crown of thorns on his head, to move pity; the people, thirsting after his blood, can by no words be persuaded, by no means be prevailed with, to let this innocent dove escape. Though he be put in competition with a murderer, yet the murderer is preferred before him; and as the worst of the two, he is at last condemned as a seditious person, and a traitor against Cæsar's crown and dignity, to be crucified without the gate, lest the city should be polluted with his blood. Now, reader, come along, like the beloved disciple, and behold thy Saviour bearing his own cross, and going to the place of execution to die the death of a slave, for no freeman was ever crucified; therefore Julian, in derision, called him The staked God. He is no sooner come to the dismal place of dead men's skulls, but they tear off his clothes, and some think skin and all, glued to his back with their bloody scourgings. Now they stretch his body, as cloth with tenters, and rack it so that his bones start out of his skin — 'I may tell all my bones,' Ps. 22:17,—in nailing his two hands to the



two horns, and his feet, those parts so full of nerves and sinews, and so the most sensible of any parts of the body, to the stump of the cross, ('They digged my hands and my feet,') and hang him up between two thieves, as the most notorious malefactor of the three; 'He was numbered among the transgressors.' His bloody, watching, fasting, scorched, racked body, is oppressed with exquisite pain, and his anguish so vehement that he crieth out, 'I thirst;' to quench which they give him vinegar and gall, and spice it with a scoff to make it relish the better; 'Let us see whether Elias will come and save him.' But oh, who can imagine what he suffered in his soul, when he hung under the weight of men's revenge, devils' rage, the law's curse, and the Lord's wrath! Men 'revile him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself: he saved others, himself he cannot save:' 'To him that was afflicted, pity should have been shewn; but they added affliction to the afflicted, and forsook the fear of the Almighty.' All the devils in hell were now putting forth their utmost power and policy, for 'this was their hour, and the power of darkness,' to increase his sufferings, that, if possible, they might provoke him to sin, thereby to have separated his human nature from his divine, that it might have perished eternally, and all mankind with it; but the sting of his death is yet behind. The head of that arrow which pierced his heart indeed was the frown of his Father. That his kinsmen, the Jews, whom he came to sanctify and redeem, for he was 'the glory of his people Israel,' should deliver him up to be crucified, was not a small aggravation of his misery: that his apostles, that had been eye-witnesses of his miracles, and ear-witnesses of his oracles, (to whom he had spoken so pathetically, 'Will ye also forsake me?' and who had told him so resolutely, 'We will go with thee into prison, and to death,' Luke 22:23; Mat. 26:35,) should now in his greatest extremity turn their backs upon him, added some more gall to his bitter cup: that his mother should stand by the cross weeping, and have her soul

pierced through with the sword of his sufferings, was far from being an allay to his sorrows; but that his Father, of whom he had often boasted, 'It is my Father that honoureth me;' 'My Father loveth me;' 'I and my Father are one,' should now in his low estate, in his day of adversity, in his critical hour, not only not help him, and leave him alone, as a harmless dove amongst so many ravenous vultures, to contest with all the fury of earth and hell; but also pour out the vials of his own wrath upon him, and (though the union was not dissolved, yet) suffer the beams, the influences to be restrained, that he might fully bear the curse of the law, and feel the weight of sin; this was the hottest fire in which the paschal lamb was roasted; this caused that heart-breaking, soul-cutting, heaven-piercing expression, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Oh how, how justly might he have cried out with Job, 'Have pity upon me, my friend, have pity upon me, for the hand'—not only of my enemies and my friends, of multitudes of men, and of legions of devils, but the hand—'of God hath touched me.' How truly might the husband have taken up his spouse's lamentation: 'Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by! Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.' Ah, who can write or read such a tragedy with dry eyes?

Friend, when thou art at the sacrament, think of these sufferings, and believe it, they will make work among thy sins. When thou takest the cup of wine, do not forget the cup of wormwood which thy Saviour drank for thy sake; 'he drank of the brook in the way;' he drank the cup of his Father's wrath, infinitely embittered with the curse of the law, that thou mightest drink the cup of blessing. At the table obey his own command, 'Do this in remembrance of me.'

Secondly, Meditate on the affection of Christ. 'We will remember thy love more than wine,' saith the spouse. When thou seest the wine,

think of that love which is better than wine. Believe it, if ever there were a love-feast, this is it. Men testify their love in bestowing food on their hungry friends; but ah, what love was that which gave his blessed body and precious blood to feed his starving enemies! He that considereth what Christ suffered, and for whom, may well think he was little else but a lump of love. His compassion is infinitely visible in his passion! What love was that which moved him to lay down his life for thee! Friend, if ever thou hadst hard thoughts of Christ, take a view of him in the former subject of meditation, and consider whether his heart be not set upon sinners, when he shed his heart-blood for their souls. The redness of the fire discovers its heat. Oh, how did the redness of this Rose of Sharon, the blood which issued from his head, and back, and hands, and feet, and heart, and whole body, speak his burning, his fiery love! Well might the apostle John join and pair those turtle doves: 'Who hath loved us and washed us in his blood,' Rev. 1:5. In every drop of his blood there is an ocean of love. Well might the apostle Paul produce this as an undeniable testimony of the truth of his love, 'Who loved me, and gave himself for me,' Gal. 2:20. His bleeding passion was such a full demonstration of his dearest affection, as the whole world never saw the like before, nor ever shall again. In it his love was dissected and ripped up—you may tell all its bones. Judas gave him to the Jews, out of love to money; the Jews gave him to Pilate to be condemned, out of love to envy; Pilate gives him to the soldiers to be crucified, out of love to self-interest; but Christ gave himself, out of pure love to save souls. The great and glorious God doth things that are singularly eminent for the manifestation of his attributes. When he would evidence his power, he produceth with a word the whole creation out of the barren womb of nothing. He did but will it, and the whole world presently started into being. By this he often proves his deity, Isa. 45:12, and 43:11. As shadows represent the figure of those bodies

from whence they are derived, so do the creatures manifest the power of their maker.

When he would manifest his justice, he layeth the dark vault of hell, and layeth in, and storeth it with fire, and brimstone, and chains, and blackness of darkness, and gnawing worms, and pure wrath, and devils, and all the instruments of eternal death, Rom. 9:22. When he would make known his wisdom, he findeth out a fit mediator, and thereby reconcileth those attributes which before were at odds, his justice and his mercy. When man was fallen, justice pleaded for his deserved damnation, according to the threatenings of the law; mercy pleadeth for his gracious salvation, he being deluded by the devil. Now, it would have non-plussed the heads of all the men and angels in the world, had they been united in a consultation, to have found out away to satisfy both the demands of justice and the entreaties of mercy; but God did it—he causeth 'mercy and justice to meet together, pity and righteousness to kiss each other,' therefore the mediator is called 'the wisdom of God,' 1 Cor. 1:24; and the finding out this way is called 'the manifold wisdom of God,' or the 'embroidered wisdom of God,' Eph. 3:10. It is an allusion to a curious piece of needlework, wherein there are various expressions of art. So in this way of man's recovery, there are various and curious expressions of divine wisdom. But when God would proclaim his love, that attribute which, like oil, swimmeth at the top of them all, which is most in favour, which he delighteth so exceedingly in, what will he do? Why, he layeth down his life: 'Greater love than this hath no man, than that a man lay down his life for his friends,' John 15:13. Jacob shewed his love to Rachel, by enduring the heat of the day and the cold of the night for her. But Jesus shewed his love to his beautiful spouse by undergoing the cursed, painful, and shameful death of the cross for her. Oh, what love was that! It is storied of the pelican, that when her young ones are stung with some poisonous

serpent, she beats her breast with her beak, till the warm blood gusheth out, which they suck, and recover. We were all stung mortally by the old serpent, the devil, but behold the love of this heavenly pelican, he lets out his heart blood to recover us. In his birth and life he manifested his love; the midst of that chariot in which he drew his spouse before, was 'paved with love;' but his death wrote his love in the greatest print, in the largest character, though all in red letters; for his whole body was the book, his precious blood was the ink, the nails were the pens, the contents of it from the beginning to the end are love, love. There is nothing else to be read but love, love. 'In this was manifest the love of God,' saith the apostle, 1 John 4:9. His love before was glorious, yet hid as the sun under a cloud; but at his death it did shine forth in its meridian splendour, in its noonday brightness, with such hot beams and refreshing rays, that every one must needs take notice of it. The Jews say of Esdras, that if the lamp of love were quite extinct it might be lighted again at his brain. How true is this of Christ! If love were quite lost amongst all the creatures, all might be found in Jesus Christ. His name is love, his nature is love, all his expressions were love, all his actions were love: he bought love, he preached love, his lips dropped love, he practised love, he lived in love, he was sick of love; nay, he died for love; it was love that took upon him our nature; it was love that walked in our flesh; it was love that went up and down doing good; it was love that took our infirmities; it was love that gave sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, ears to the deaf, life to the dead; it was love that was hungry, and thirsty, and weary; it was love that was in a bloody agony; it was love that was sorrowful unto his own death, and my life; it was love that was betrayed, apprehended, derided, scourged, condemned, and crucified; it was love that had his head pierced with thorns, his back with cords, his hands and feet with nails, and his side with a spear; it was love that cried out, 'Weep not for me, weep for yourselves:' 'Father, forgive

them, they know not what they do.' Love left a glorious crown, and love climbed a shameful cross. O dearest Saviour, whither did thy love carry thee!

Reader, I could lose myself in this pleasant maze of Christ's love. Methinks thy heart should be ravished with the sense of this love. The truth is, it is a bottomless love; none can sound it. The apostle might well call it, A known unknown love, Eph. 3:19. It is well thou canst find it; but I am sure thou canst not fathom it. One disciple may shew his love to another, by giving a cup of cold water; but the Master shewed his love to his disciples by broaching his heart to give them a cup of warm blood. The sacraments, as Calvin observeth, did flow out of the sides of Christ. When the soldier pierced his side, there came out water (for baptism) and blood (for the supper).

Reader, when thou beholdest the broken bread, and rememberest the bruised body of Christ, do not forget his love, which is the best sauce to thy meat. I must tell thee, though there be never so many dishes at the table, this love is the banquet. Consider his willingness to be wounded for thee, because his heart was so deeply wounded with love to thee. Thou hast heard of such indignities and injuries offered to him, as the sun himself was ashamed to behold, and hid himself from them; yet Christ was ready for them, and willing to them. The Lamb of God did not struggle when he was led to the slaughter, but did bear his own cross: he was his own priest, as well as his own sacrifice and altar. His death was violent in regard of others, but voluntary in regard of himself. He cried to his Father, 'Lo, I come to do thy will, O God,' Heb. 10:4. When his sinless nature had a reluctancy against it, though when he was in a bloody sweat, he soon corrects it with, 'Not my will, but thy will be done.' He went to the place which Judas knew, John 18:2. He struck them that came to apprehend him down, to shew that he could, if he had pleased, have

struck them dead. Rather than they shall want proof for his condemnation, he will confess himself guilty of the charge. He might, if he had listed, have commissioned twelve legions of angels for his lifeguard, but he forebore it: 'He 'laid down his life;' he 'gave himself;' he 'gave up the ghost;' he had 'a baptism to be baptized with, and he longed to have it accomplished.' But, friend, what thinkest thou was the lump of sugar which did so sweeten this cup, notwithstanding all its bitter ingredients, to make it go down so glib and pleasant? truly nothing but love. Love to Dinah made Shechem willing to be circumcised; love to Christians made Christ willing to bleed, and be buffeted, and crucified. The mother can toil and moil all day with her child, and count it a pleasure, when another had rather go to plough all day; but what is the reason? nothing but her love. Jesus Christ delighted in the work of man's redemption—'I delight to do thy will, O God'—which would have broke the backs of the very angels; and why? because of his love.

It is observed, the myrrh which is let out by the incision of the tree is precious; but that which floweth of its own accord is most choice and precious. Christ's veins were indeed opened by others' incision, when Pilate scourged his back, and the nails his hands and feet; but one drop of this blood is more worth than millions of worlds; for even at these times he bled voluntarily, as well as in the garden, when the myrrh of his blood dropped of its own accord. Oh, of what infinite value is his blood! oh, how much did he love his, when the very oil which consecrated him to those unknown sorrows was the oil of gladness to him! Remember this love more than wine.

Thirdly, Meditate on thy corruptions. As his love was the inward moving cause, so thy sins were the outward procuring cause, of his sufferings: 'He was wounded for thy transgressions, he was bruised for thine iniquities; the chastisement of thy peace was upon him,' Isa.

53:5. When thou art at the sacrament, which fitly representeth Christ's sufferings, consider with thyself, What was that which brought the blessed Saviour into such a bleeding condition? It was my sin; I was the Judas which betrayed him, the Jew which apprehended him, the Pilate that condemned him, and the Gentile which crucified him. My sins were the thorns which pierced his head, the nails which pierced his hands, and the spear which pierced his heart. It was I that put to death the Lord of life: he died for my sins; he was 'made sin for me, who knew no sin;' his blood is my balm, his Golgotha is my Gilead. Oh, what a subject is here for meditation! He suffered in my stead, he bore my sins in his body on the tree, he took that loathsome purging physic for the diseases of my soul. When he was in the garden in his bloody agony, grovelling on the ground, there was no Judas, no Pilate, no Jew, no Gentile there, to cause that unnatural sweat, or to make his soul sorrowful unto death; but my pride, my unbelief, my hypocrisy, my atheism, my blasphemy, my unthankfulness, my carnal-mindedness, they were there, and caused his inward bleeding sorrows, and outward bloody sufferings. Ah, what a heavy weight was my sin to cause such a bloody sweat in a frosty night! My dissimulation was the traitorous kiss, my ambition the thorny crown; my drinking iniquities like water made him drink gall and vinegar; my want of tears caused him to bleed; my forsaking my Maker made him to be forsaken of his Father. Because the members of my body were instruments of iniquity, therefore the members of his body were objects of such cruelty; because my soul was so unholy, therefore his soul was so exceeding heavy. O my soul, what hast thou done?

We do not say the executioner kills a man for theft or murder; but his theft or murder, they hang him; so in this case, it was not so much the Jews or soldiers—for they were the executioners—that put Christ



to death, as our thefts and murders, and breaches of God's law, which were imputed and laid to his charge.

There is a story of a king of France named Lladoveyus, that when he was converted to Christianity, one day hearing Remigius the bishop reading the Gospel of our Saviour's passion, he presently fell into this passionate expression: Oh that I had been but there with my Frenchmen, I would have cut all their throats! little considering that his and others' iniquities were Christ's greatest and most cruel enemies. Reader, when thou art at the table, think of those sins which caused such sufferings. Consider the deepness of that stain which the blood only of God could wash out. Ah, what a sickness is sin, when nothing less than the blood of the Son of God can heal it!

Secondly, As at the table some subjects must be considered, so some graces must be exercised. A sacrament is a special season, a spring-time for those trees of God's own planting to bud, blossom, and put forth their fruit. Now, reader, if ever, rouse up thy spirit, and stir up the gifts of God which are in thee. Call aloud to thy graces, which may possibly be sleeping, as David: Ps. 57:8, 'Awake, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.' Awake, my graces! Can ye not watch with my dearest Saviour one hour? Awake, my faith, love, and repentance; I myself will awake presently. It is not the hawk which sitteth hoodwinked on the fist, but the seeing, flying hawk, which doth the service. The clock which standeth still is of no use; it is the going, moving clock which attains its end. Grace acted will now do thee eminent service, and help thee to attain the end of the sacrament.

First, Act faith. Dormit fides et dormit Christus, saith Austin, If faith sleepeth, Christ sleepeth. Call forth first that commander-in-chief; and then the private soldiers, the other graces, will all follow. Faith

must be the eye whereby thou seest Christ: Zech. 12:10, 'They shall see him whom they have pierced, and mourn.' Faith is the mouth by which thou feedest on Christ, John 6:53. Faith is the feet by which thou goest to Christ, John 6:35. Faith may say to thee, as Christ did, 'Without me thou canst do nothing;' without me thou canst do nothing for thy own welfare, nothing for God's honour at this ordinance. It is said of the Indian gymnosophists, that they will lie all day upon their backs gazing on the beauty of the natural sun. Friend, at this ordinance, if at any time of thy life, view the beauty of this true Sun. As Pilate, when he had scourged him in such a bloody, barbarous manner, brings him forth to the Jews with, Behold the man; so when thou considerest the bread and wine, behold the man; behold the broken, bruised Saviour. A man without faith, like the unbelieving lord, seeth the plenty, but doth not eat of it.

There is a threefold act of faith to be put forth at a sacrament. First, Faith must look out for Christ; secondly, Faith must look up to Christ for grace; thirdly, Faith must take Christ down, or receive him and grace.

1. Faith must look out for Christ. Consider that Jesus Christ is the very soul of the sacrament; without him it is but the carcase of an ordinance. Christ and the Scripture bring comfort; Christ and prayer cause spiritual profit; *Accedat Christus ad elementum, et fiet sacramentum*. Christ and the elements make a sacrament; Christ and the sacrament make a rare feast. Therefore be sure thou look out for Christ. Rest not in the bread and wine, but look farther. When thou sittest at the table, let the speech of thine heart be, 'Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?' Turn to God and say, as they to Philip, 'Sir, I would fain see Jesus;' Lord, I would fain see Jesus Christ. Let neither word, nor prayer, nor elements, nor all things content thee without Christ. As Isaac told his father, 'Father, behold here is the wood and

the fire, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' so do thou look up to thy heavenly Father: Father, behold here is the preacher and here is the Scripture, and here is the bread and here is the wine, but where is the body and blood of my Saviour? Lord, where is the lamb for a sacrifice? Father, Father, where is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world? If the angels that are present at the sacrament should speak to thee, give them occasion for the same language which they gave the woman at the sepulchre, 'We know whom thou seekest, thou seekest Jesus which was crucified: come, see the place where the Lord lay.' Come see the promise, see the elements in which the Lord lieth, Mat. 28:5, 6.

If the Spirit of God, seeing thee so eager and earnest for a sight of Christ, should put by the hangings behind which the Lord Jesus hid himself purposely to be sought, and present him to thee with his glorious retinue of graces and comforts, with the precious fruits of his grievous passion, and bespeak thee thus, Cheer up, poor Christian, behold the Lamb of God; behold King Jesus with the crown of thorns wherewith his foes crowned him in the day that he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs; behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his father crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart; O friend, what would such a sight be worth to thee! I am confident thou wouldst value it above all the silver in the world. Well, be of good comfort; do but look for him and he will look after thee. Say to him, as the spouse, 'Make haste, my beloved; be thou like the hart and roe upon the mountains of spices;' 'Make no tarrying, O my God;' and doubt not but he will answer thee almost as he doth his spouse, in a sense of mercy, not of judgment, 'Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me,' to give to thee according to thy faith.

Reader, act Mary's part, and thou shalt meet with Mary's portion. When Mary went to the sepulchre, John 20:13, she looketh into it, seeth the linen but not the Lord, and presently falleth a weeping. Oh, saith she, 'they have taken away my Lord!' 'They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.' Jesus Christ could now no longer absent himself; he heard the voice of her weeping, and gave her a gracious meeting: 'Mary,' saith Christ; 'Rabboni,' saith Mary. Now her heart cleaves to him, and her hands clasp about him; and she hears that golden message, 'Go to my brethren, and tell them I go to my Father and your Father.' So when thou comest to the table, and seest the linen and not the Lord Jesus, be not satisfied; Oh, dart up thy complaints to heaven, Lord, I came not to see the linen, I came not for the bread and wine, I came to see Jesus Christ. O Lord! what shall I do? They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where to find him. Ah, Lord, what is the word to me without Christ, but as a conduit without water! and what is the element to me without Christ, but as a cup without wine! Oh, what wilt thou give me if I go from thy table Christless! Thou mightest be confident that Jesus Christ would hear such sighs, and would hasten away to bless and kiss thee.

2. Faith must look up to Christ for grace. Look up to Christ as a treasury of grace for the supply of all thy necessities, and put thy hand of faith into this treasury, and thou shalt take out unsearchable riches. Austin puts the question, how a Christian may put out a long arm to reach Christ in heaven? and answers, Crede, et tenuisti, Believe, and thou hast taken hold of him. Christ is a full breast; faith is the mouth which draweth and sucketh the breast, and getteth spiritual nourishment out of it. The blessed Saviour is a precious and deep mine, but faith is the instrument whereby we dig the gold out of it. As the Spanish ambassador said of his master's treasury, in comparison of that treasury of St Mark in Venice, In this, among

other things, my master's treasury differeth from yours, in that my master's treasury (alluding to his Indian mines) hath no bottom, as I see yours to have. For thy comfort, know that the riches in Christ are inexhaustible, and his bags are bottomless. He can 'supply all thy needs,' Phil. 4:13.

When thou art at this ordinance, look on Christ as a fountain running over with the water of life, and the sacrament as a channel cut out by Christ himself to convey living water to thy soul. Thou art diseased; go in this ordinance to Christ as a physician to heal thee. Thou art an indigent beggar; go to Christ's door, I mean the sacrament, with an expectation of a large dole. Do not sit down in despondency, as the patriarchs in a scarcity of food; but since thou hast heard there is corn in Egypt, bread enough in thy Father's house, sufficiency of grace in Jesus Christ, go make haste to this Son of Joseph, who is Lord of the country, and hath the command of all the storehouses in the land, and will load thee with more than thou canst desire. Are thy wants many? He hath infinite wealth. Hast thou no money to buy, no merits to offer? Why, he selleth 'without money, and without price.' They that bring money have it returned back in their sacks, for he takes none. 'Whosoever will, may drink of the water of life freely,' Rev. 22:17.

The sacrament is as a conduit which receiveth water from the river; therefore when thou hast brought the vessel of thy soul to the conduit, thy work must be by faith to turn the cock, and then it will run freely, and fill thy vessel. Be sure that thou mind the promise, 'This is my body;' 'This cup is the New Testament in my blood.' Thy faith will be celestial fire to extract the quintessence and spirits of the promise.

3. Faith must receive Christ, and apply him to thy soul. When thou puttest forth the hand of thy body to take the bread and wine, do thou put forth the hand of faith to receive the body and blood of Christ. This is one principal act of faith, like Joseph of Arimathea, to take Jesus down from his cross and lay him in the new tomb of thine heart. Like Thomas, put thy finger of faith into his side, and cry out, 'My Lord, and my God.' Be not discouraged, O penitent soul. Are thy sins many?—His mercy is free. Are thy sins weighty?—His merits are full. Thou comest for bread, and will thy Saviour give thee a stone? He took notice of thy serious preparation for this ordinance, and will he frustrate thine expectation at it? Did he ever send hungry soul empty away? The law of man provides for the poor in purse, and will not the gospel of Christ provide for the poor in spirit? Is not his commission to bind up the broken-hearted, and can he be unfaithful? Why shouldst thou mistrust truth itself? Let me say to thee, as the disciples to the blind man, 'Be of good cheer, he calleth for thee.' See how he casteth his eyes upon thee with a look of love, as once upon Peter. Observe, he stretcheth out his arms wide to embrace thee; he boweth down his head to kiss thee. He crieth to thee, as to Zaccheus, 'I must abide at thy house,' in thy heart to-day. Oh make haste to receive him, and make him a feast by opening the doors of thy soul, that the King of glory may enter in. Say to Christ, Lord, though I am unworthy that thou shouldst come under my roof, yet thou art so gracious as to knock at the door of my heart, and to promise, if I open, that thou wilt come in and sup with me; and then call to him, as Laban to Abraham's steward, 'Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, why standest thou without? I have prepared lodging for thee,' Gen. 24.

Truly, reader, shouldst thou, having mourned unfeignedly for thy sins, now by unbelief hang off from thy Saviour, thou wouldst much dishonour him, and disadvantage thyself. Christ's greater things are

for them that believe: 'If thou wilt now believe, thou shalt see the glory of God.' I am very confident, if thou hadst been by the cross (broken heart) when thy Saviour suffered, and shouldst have kneeled down before him, and said, Dearest Saviour, Why art thou now wrestling with the wrath of heaven, and rage of hell? He would have answered, To satisfy (poor soul) for thy sins. Again, Why dost thou die such a cursed death? He would have said, To take the curse of the law from thy back, that so thou mightest inherit the blessing. Once more, let not my Lord be angry, and I will speak this once; blessed Redeemer, why didst thou cry out I thirst, and drink gall and vinegar? Thou mightest have heard such a reply, To assure thee, thirsty sinner, that I am sensible of thy thirst, being scorched with that fury which is due to thy sins, and that thou mightest drink of that love which is better than wine. But stay, O weary, thirsty soul but a while, and by and by thou shalt see this side opened, and blood issuing out to quench thy thirst. Oh put the mouth of faith to that wound, and what thou shalt suck thence shall do thee good for ever. Reader, I have read that the soldier who pierced Christ's side was blind, and that the blood flying out upon him recovered his sight. Sure I am that this blood, sprinkled on thy conscience, will purge it from dead works, to serve the living God. Oh, therefore, bathe thy soul in this blood; when thou art at the sacrament, say to God, as the eunuch to Philip, 'Here is water, what hindereth but I may be baptized?' Lord, here is blood, here is a fountain, what hindereth but I may wash in it? True, Lord, my person is unrighteous, but thy blood is justifying blood. My heart is polluted, but, O Christ, thy blood is sanctifying blood. My lusts are many and strong, but thy blood is mortifying blood. My soul is lost, but, sweetest Saviour, thy blood is saving blood. This justifying, sanctifying, saving blood, I drink, I apply for these ends. Oh, let this blood be upon me and my children for ever.

Away despair, my gracious Lord doth hear;  
Though wind and wave assault my keel,  
He doth preserve it, he doth steer,  
Even when the boat seems most to reel.  
Storms are the triumph of his art,  
Well may he close his eyes, but not his heart.  
Hast thou not heard what my Lord Jesus did?  
Then let me tell thee a strange story;  
The God of power, as he did ride  
In his majestic robes of glory,  
Resolved to light, and so one day,  
He did descend, undressing all the way:  
The stars his tire of light, and rings obtained,  
The clouds his bow, the fire his spear,  
The sky his azure mantle gained;  
And when they asked what he would wear,  
He smiled and said, as he did go,  
He had new clothes a-making here below.



When he was come, as travellers are wont,  
He did repair unto an inn;  
Both then and after, many a brunt  
He did endure to cancel sin,  
And having given the rest before,  
Here he gave up his life to pay our score.  
But as he was returning, there came one,  
Who ran upon him with a spear;  
He who came hither all alone,  
Bringing no man, nor arms, nor fear,  
Received the blow upon his side,  
And straight he turned, and to his brethren cried,  
If ye have anything to send or write,  
(I have no bag, but here is room,)  
Unto my Father's hands and sight  
(Believe me) it shall safely come;  
That I shall mind what you impart,  
Look, you may lay it very near my heart.

Or if hereafter any of my friends

Will use me in this kind, the door

Shall still be open; what he sends

I will present, and somewhat more,

Not to his hurt; sighs will convey

Anything to me. Heart-despair, away!—(Herbert—THE BAG.)

2. The second grace to be called forth is love; and truly if thou hast acted thy faith in his passion for, and affection to thy soul, I shall not in the least doubt but thy love to him will play its part. The creatures, some tell us, follow the panther, being drawn after her by her sweet odours. When Jesus Christ, out of infinite love, offered up himself a sacrifice for thy sins, surely the sweet savour thereof may draw thy heart after him. 'Because of the savour of thy good ointments, therefore the virgins love thee,' Cant. 1:4. There is nothing in Christ but what may well command thy love: 'He is the fairest of ten thousand: he is altogether lovely.' But his bloody sufferings for thee, and his blessed love to thee, one would think, are such loadstones, that if thou wert as cold and hard as steel, would draw thy soul both to desire him, and to delight in him. Meditate a little more on his love to thee. Publicans and sinners love their friends who love them; and wilt thou be worse than publicans and sinners? Consider seriously; Jesus Christ loved thee when thou wast in a loathsome estate, Ezek. 16; when thou wast wallowing in thy blood, when no eye pitied thee, then was his time of love; 'He passed by thee, and said unto thee, Live: yea, when thou wast in thy blood, he said unto thee, Live.' And wilt thou not love him?

Ponder the heat of his love; possibly the greatness of that fire may warm thy heart, and thou mayest reflect some heat back again; for indeed love is a diamond, which must be written upon with its own dust. He loveth thee as a servant; surely this is a favour; for he hath thousands of glorious angels, who count it their honour and happiness to serve him. To be made one of his hired servants, was the great privilege desired by the prodigal. 'Ye call me Lord and Master, and ye say well, for so I am,' John 13:13. But though this may be somewhat, it is not enough for him. He loveth thee as a friend: 'Ye are my friends,' John 15:15. 'I have not called you servants, but friends.' Friends love entirely—witness Jonathan and David: 'Jonathan loved David as his own soul.' Friendship is one soul in two bodies, saith the philosopher: this is much; but his love to thee is more than so, he loveth thee as his brother: 'He is not ashamed to call them brethren:' 'I will declare thy name unto my brethren,' Heb. 2:11. Some brethren are knit very close in the bond of love. In Queen Elizabeth's reign, in a fight between the Earl of Kildare and Earl of Ter Owen, two of the Earl of Kildare's brethren were slain, which he took so heavily, that he died shortly. Some write, that there is no such love in the world as between foster-brethren in Ireland: this love is great, but his love is greater. He loveth thee as his child; the stream of love descendeth most swiftly from parents to their children: 'He shall see his seed,' Isa. 53:10. How tender is the mother of her child: 'Can the mother forget her child that sucketh her breast?' The mother's bowels will yearn towards her child; the mother's breasts will put her to pain, if not drawn, and thereby mind her of her child. But though the mother may prove a monster, and, like the ostrich, leave her young to be destroyed, 'yet will I not forget thee, saith the Lord. Thou art engraven upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are ever before me,' Isa. 49:13–15. 'Children, have you any meat?' If not, lo, here is my body. Thou mayest say of Christ's love to thee, as David of Jonathan's, 'Thy love to me is wonderful, it far

surpasses the love of women;' for he loveth thee as his spouse. Men do, or at least should, love their wives above all relations: 'For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and cleave to his wife.' But who can conceive Christ's love to his spouse? 'Thou art all fair, my love; thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse,' Cant. 4:8–10. The nearest affinity is spouse, and the nearest consanguinity is sister; to shew that his affection is like that of the nearest relations. If this be not enough, reader, he loveth thee as himself, nay, above himself; he did, as it were, hate himself out of love to thee. He denied himself, displeased himself, and gave himself to be buffeted, scourged, condemned, racked, crucified, and to be a sacrifice for thy sins. Well, is it possible for thee to read of this infinite love without love? When wood hath been laid a-sunning, it takes fire presently: hast not thou been so fitted by the warm hot beams of this sun, that now upon the very thoughts of Christ, thou art all in a flame? Truly it would be as great a miracle for thee to be in such a furnace of love, and not fired with love to him, as for the three worthies in Daniel to be in the midst of the fiery furnace and not burnt. Christ loved thee so unspeakably, as thou hast read, as a servant, as a friend, as a brother, as a child, as a wife, as himself; nay, above himself: and all this when thou wast a sinner, without strength, yea, his enemy, (which threefold gradation the Holy Ghost taketh special notice of, Rom. 5:6, 8, 10;) and wilt thou ever give him cause to complain of thee, as Paul of his Corinthians, 'The more I love, the less I am beloved'? Love him dearly, love him entirely, love him above all, love him more than all. Say with the spouse, 'Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love;' and with holy Bradford, sprinkle thy trencher, thy food with tears, that thou canst love so loving and so lovely a Saviour no more.

3. When thou art at the table, exercise repentance. What sorrow for and anger against thy sins should the sight of a crucified Saviour cause! Some tell us, that if the murderer be brought near and touch the body slain by him, it bleeds afresh. Oh, when thou, who art indeed the murderer of the Son of God, doth touch and taste his body and blood, shouldst not thou fall a-bleeding, a-weeping afresh? Behold his broken, bleeding body with an eye of faith, and thine eye cannot but affect thine heart with grief. I am confident thou canst not see it with dry eyes. Was his soul exceeding sorrowful, heavy even unto death for thy sake; and is not thine, friend, for thy sins? Did he drop so much blood, and canst thou drop never a tear? The very rocks were rent at his sufferings, and is thy heart harder than those stones? Is it possible for the head to be so pained and pierced, and the members not be affected with it? Surely deep calleth unto deep—deep sufferings in Christ for deep sorrow in thee, O Christian. If his body were broken to let his blood out, thy soul may well be broken to let it in. 'They shall see him whom they have pierced, and mourn for him as one that mourneth for his only son,' Zech. 12:10.

His love may make—as David's kindness—even a Saul to lift up his voice and weep. It is so great and so hot a fire, that one would think it would distil water out of thee, wert thou never so dry an herb. When Christ sat at supper in the pharisee's house, Mary washed his feet with her tears. When Christ and thy soul are supping together, thou mayest well weep in remembrance of thy unkindness and wickedness.

But the chiefest reason why I mention repentance now to be exercised, is not so much for thy contrition or sorrow for sin—though when the sweet sauce is a little sharp with vinegar the meat will relish the better for it—as for thine indignation and anger against sin. When thou considerest that thy dearest Saviour in a cold night lay

grovelling on the ground, all over in a bloody sweat; that thy best friend in the world was so inhumanly used, so barbarously butchered, thou shouldst cry out, as David, in a holy passion, 'As the Lord liveth, the (man, the) sin that hath done this thing shall surely be put to death.' When Antonius, after Cæsar was murdered in the senate-house, brought forth his coat all bloody, cut, and mangled, and laying it open to the view of the people, said, Look, here is your emperor's coat; and as the bloody-minded conspirators have dealt by it, so have they dealt with Cæsar's body. Upon this they were in an uproar, and cried out to slay the murderers, and took brands, and ran to the houses of the conspirators, and burned them down to the ground, and, as they apprehended the murderers, put them to death. Reader, thou seest at the sacrament the wounds and blood of thy blessed Redeemer, the dreadful, painful death which thy Sovereign underwent. Oh, what canst thou do less than vow to be revenged on his murderers, thy corruptions, and in a holy anger endeavour their speedy execution. If thou wouldst have a full sight of sin's filth and sinfulness, go to mount Calvary, and behold thy Saviour hanging upon the cross, and, good Lord, what thoughts wilt thou have of thy lusts! Physicians in unseemly convulsions advise their patients to look into a glass, that beholding their deformity, they may strive the more against it. The world never had such a glass as the sufferings of Jesus Christ for the discovery of sin's loathsome, ugly features, and its horrid, hideous, hellish face. Now, how should this light provoke thee to loathe and hate sin! Oh, what child would not abhor those weapons which murdered his dearest father!

It was the glory of Alexander, that, as soon as ever he had opportunity, he slew the murderers of his father upon his father's tomb. Truly, reader, a sacrament day is a special opportunity, and thou wilt shew but little love to thine 'everlasting Father' if thou dost not now put his murderers to death, upon those monuments of his

passion. Now thou art at the table, think of thy unthankfulness, ambition, hypocrisy, covetousness, irreligion, and infidelity, and the rest, how these 'crucified the Lord of glory,' and resolve through the strength of Christ that these Hamans shall all be hanged, that these sins shall be condemned and crucified.

## **CHAPTER XX**

### **What a Christian ought to do after a sacrament**

I shall speak to thy duty after the supper, which consisteth mainly in these two things, thankfulness and faithfulness.

1. Thankfulness. After such a banquet as this, thou mayest well give thanks. The Jews at their passover did sing the hundred and thirteenth Psalm, with the five following psalms, which they called the great Hallelujah. A Christian should in everything and at all times give thanks, but at a sacrament the great Hallelujah must be sung; then God must have great thanks, then we must with our 'souls bless the Lord, and with all within us praise his holy name.' O reader, call upon thyself, as Barak and Deborah did, 'Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake, Barak; utter a song, and lead captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam,' Judges 5. 'Awake, my love; awake, my joy; utter a song.' 'A feast is made for laughter, and wine rejoiceth the heart of man.' Friend, is not this a rare feast? where is thy cheerful face? Is not here good wine, a cup of nectar indeed, the blood of the Son of God? What mirth, what music hast thou to this banquet of wines? Anciently it was the beginning and ending of letters,—

Gaudete in domino, rejoice in the Lord. It will be an excellent conclusion of this ordinance to rejoice in the Lord. O let thy 'soul magnify the Lord, and thy spirit rejoice in God thy Saviour,' Luke 1:46, 47.

The cup in the sacrament is called the Eucharistical cup, or 'the cup of blessing;' let it be so to thee. Let thy heart and mouth say, 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath visited and redeemed his people,' Luke 2.

Canst thou think of that infinite love which God manifested to thy soul without David's return, 'What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?' His heart was so set upon thy salvation, his love was so great to thy soul, that he delighted in the very death of his Son because it tended to thy good. 'It pleased the Lord to bruise him,' Isa. 53:10. Valde delectatus est, Junius reads it, 'He was exceedingly delighted' in it. Surely the mind of God was infinitely set upon the recovery of lost sinners, in that—whereas other parents, whose love to their children in comparison of his to Christ is but as a drop to the ocean, follow their children to their graves with many tears, especially when they die violent deaths—he delighted exceedingly in the barbarous death of his only Son, in the bleeding of the head, because it tended to the health and eternal welfare of the members. Friend, 'what manner of love hath the Father loved thee with?' He gave his own Son to be apprehended, that thou mightest escape; his own Son to be condemned, that thou mightest be acquitted; his own Son to be whipped and wounded, that thou mightest be cured and healed; yea, his own Son to die a shameful cursed death, that thou mightest live a glorious blessed life for ever. 'Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will to men.' Alas, how unworthy art thou of this inestimable mercy! Thou art by nature a child of wrath as well as others, and hadst been now wallowing in sin with



the worst in the world, if free grace had not renewed thee; nay, thou hadst been roaring in hell at this hour if free grace had not reprieved thee. Thy conscience will tell thee that thou dost not deserve the bread which springeth out of the earth, and yet thou art fed with the bread which came down from heaven, with angels' food. O infinite love! Mayest not thou well say with Mephibosheth to David, 'What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am? For all my father's house were as dead men before my lord, yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table.' Lord, I was a lost, dead, damned sinner before thee, liable to the unquenchable fire, and yet thou hast been pleased to set me among them that eat at thine own table, and feed on thine own Son. Oh, what is thy servant, that thou shouldst take notice of such a dead dog as I am?

Look abroad in the world, and thou mayest see others refused when thou art chosen, others passed by when thou art called, others polluted when thou art sanctified, others put off with common gifts when thou hast special grace, others fed with the scraps of ordinary bounty, when thou hast the finest of the flour, even the fruits of saving mercy. As Elkanah gave to Peninnah, and to all her sons and daughters, portions, 'But to Hannah he gave a worthy portion, because he loved her;' so God giveth others outward portions, some of the good things of this life; but to thee, O Christian, he giveth a Benjamin's mess,—his image, his Spirit, his Son, himself,—a worthy portion, a goodly heritage, because he loveth thee.

Others have a little meat, and drink, and wages, but thou hast the inheritance; others, like Jehoshaphat's younger sons, have some cities, some small matters given them; but thou, like the firstborn, hast the kingdom, the crown of glory; others feed on bare elements, thou hast the sacrament; others stand without doors, and thou art

admitted into the presence chamber; others must fry eternally in hell flames, and thou must enjoy fulness of joy for evermore. O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever; to him that chose thee before the foundation of the world, for his mercy endureth for ever; to him that called thee by the word of his grace, for his mercy endureth for ever; to him that gave his only Son to die for thy sins, for his mercy endureth for ever; to him that entered into a covenant of grace with thee, for his mercy endureth for ever; to him that hath provided for thee an exceeding and eternal weight of glory, for his mercy endureth for ever. 'O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever.'

Remember the poor on that day. God's bounty to thee in spirituals may well provoke thy mercy to others in carnals. The Jews at their passover released a prisoner, in remembrance of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Surely at the Lord's supper, when thy heart is warmed with God's compassion to thee, thy hand should be enlarged in contribution to the poor, in remembrance of thy redemption out of slavery to sin and Satan. The primitive Christians had their collections for the poor, and the Lord's supper, both on a day, on the first day of the week, because the saints, like the wall being then heated by the sun, should reflect that heat on the passengers, on others, Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1. Thy cup runneth over, O let others drink with thee; thy charity may make thy coffer lighter, but it will make thy crown heavier. It was a notable expression of one, who having given much away, was like to want, and asked what she would do: I repent not of my charity, for what I have lost in one world I have gained in another.

2. Faithfulness. The sacrament is a strong engagement to sanctity, *Sacramentum est juramentum*. At the Lord's supper thou takest a new oath of allegiance to the King of saints, whereby every wilful

iniquity after it becomes perjury. The Greek word for an oath cometh from a word which signifieth a hedge, to shew that an oath should keep men in, and prevent their wandering out of the field of God's word. It is the character of a harlot, 'she forgetteth the covenant of her God,' Prov. 2:17. I know that the devil will come to sit with thee after supper. Flies love to settle on the sweetest perfumes. When Israel had 'drunk of the rock which followed them, which rock was Christ,' then Amalek sought them. When Jesus Christ had received the sacrament of baptism, then the devil pursued him with his fierce assaults. When thou hast been at the table, expect the tempter. That subtle thief will hear of the new treasure of grace which is brought into thy house, thy heart, and will use all his policy and power to rob thee of it. Thy care must be by stronger bolts and locks than ordinary, by greater diligence and watchfulness than before, to secure it.

Surely, reader, if thou didst but find the Saviour in the sacrament, thou canst not but fear sin after the sacrament. Thou hast seen what sin cost Christ, Didst thou not at the table see the Lord Jesus hanging on the cross? Didst thou not thus bespeak thy soul:—Look, O my soul, who hangeth there! Alas! it is thy dearest Redeemer. See his bloody head, bloody hands, bloody back, belly, his body all over bloody; but, oh, his bleeding soul! Dost thou not hear his lamentation? 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' What thinkest thou is the cause of all this? Ah, it is thy sins which is the source of all these sorrows. And canst thou join with them, or love those lusts that hate the Lord? Canst thou wound him whom God hath wounded, and crucify the Lord Jesus afresh? Hath not thy Saviour suffered enough already? Oh, here is a medicine instar omnium, instead of all, to kill those diseases of thy soul. It is said of the soldiers of Pompey, that though he could not keep them in the camp by any persuasion, yet when Pompey threw himself upon the

ground and told them, If ye will go, ye shall trample upon your general,—then (saith Plutarch, in the life of Pompey) they were overcome. Truly, if nothing will dissuade thee from sin, yet this consideration, that it is a trampling upon thy blessed Saviour, should prevail with thee. Though thou shouldst be marching never so furiously, yet (as Joab's soldiers, when they saw the dead body of Amasa, stayed their march, and stood still) when thou seest the mangled, wounded, pierced, crucified body of thy Saviour, thou shouldst stop and proceed no further.

How many arguments mayest thou find in this ordinance to be close in thy obedience! The greatness of Christ's love calleth for graciousness in thy life. 'The love of Christ constraineth,' 2 Cor. 5:14. Other motives may persuade, but this compelleth. If deliverance from the yoke of Pharaoh were such a bond to obedience, what is deliverance from sin, and wrath, and hell? Mayest not thou, reader, say with the Jews, after such a deliverance as this, 'Should I again break thy commandments, wouldst thou not be angry with me till thou hast consumed me?' Ezra 9:14. They that receive such courtesies (if any men in the world) sell their liberty, and ought to be Christ's servants, Luke 1:14. Friend, hath God wiped off the old score? and wilt thou run again in debt? Did Christ speak peace to thee at the table? and wilt thou turn again to folly? O reader, when thou art tempted to sin, say with the spouse, 'I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?' I have washed my soul, how shall I pollute it with sin? I have given myself wholly to God before angels and men, and 'how can I do this great wickedness, and sin against my God,' against my Saviour, against my covenant? There is a beast, some write, which, if she be feeding, and doth but turn her head about, forgetteth what she was doing. Oh, do not thou, after thou hast fed on the bread of life, forget what thou wast doing; but as at the sacrament thou hast remembered Christ's death, so do it after by

dying to sin all the days of thy life. Oh, do not use this ordinance, as papists do the pope's indulgences, to purchase a new licence to sin. Judas went from the supper to betray his Master. Absalom, as arrant a dissembler as he was, pretended to hate such ingratitude. 'Is this thy kindness to thy friend?' saith he to Hushai; 'why hast thou left him?' When thou art, by any sinister carriage, departing from Christ, give conscience leave to ask thee, Is this thy kindness to thy friend? Ah, why dost thou leave him, and serve him thus? Thy sins will be more sinful, because God is more merciful to thee than to others. 'The children of Israel have (only, the Seventy read) done evil from their youth up,' Jer. 32:30. As if there had been no sinners in the world but they: their privileges being greater than others', their provocations were more grievous. The unkindness of a friend hath much of an enemy in it. David was not much troubled at Shimei's railing; but Absalom's rebellion pierced his very soul. 'My son that came out of my bowels hath lifted up his hands against me.' Wilt thou give thy Saviour cause to complain, 'He that did eat bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me'? Ps. 41:9. He that did eat at my table, nay, eat of my flesh and drink of my blood, he hath lift up his heart, and his hand, and his heel against me. It was an aggravation of Saul's fall; he fell 'as though he had not been anointed,' 2 Sam. 1. And it will be a sad aggravation of thy fall, if thou shouldst sin as if thou hadst not been at a sacrament.

It is reported of an elephant, that being fallen down, and by reason of the inflexibleness of his legs, unable to rise, a forester came by and helped him up, with which kindness the elephant was so taken, that he followed the man up and down, did him much service, and never left him till his dying day. Reader, the moral is plain: thou wast fallen, and never able to rise of thyself. The Lord Jesus Christ forsook his Father in heaven, and his mother on earth, suffered unconceivable sorrows, to help thee up. What love shouldst thou

have to him? What service shouldst thou do for him? Thou canst not do less, since he hath 'redeemed thee out of the hands of thine enemies,' than 'serve him in holiness and righteousness all thy days.' As the hop in its growing follows the course of the sun from east to west, and will rather break than do otherwise, so shouldst thou, in all thy actions, follow the course of the Sun of Righteousness, and rather die than deny him.

When Moses came from the mount, where he had been conversing with God, his face shined, Exod. 34:30. When thou goest from the table where thou hast had sweet communion with thy God, the face of thy conversation must shine so with holiness that others may take notice of it.

It is said of the high priest and elders, that observing the language and carriage of Peter and John, 'they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus,' Acts 4:13. So thy words should be so gracious, and thy works so exemplary after a sacrament, that all those with whom thou hast to do, may marvel and take knowledge that thou hast been with Jesus; that at the table thou didst sup with Christ, and Christ with thee.

I shall only answer a doubt or two from a troubled conscience, and conclude this ordinance.

Obj. 1. But possibly thou wilt say, (O penitent soul!) I have been at the sacrament and found little joy, what shall I do?

Ans. Though thou didst not find any ravishing comfort at the table, yet it may be thou mightest receive more grace from Christ. When thou didst not spring upward in joy, thou mightest root thyself more downward in humility. Here is no loss: heaven is the proper place for comfort, earth for grace. I expect my reward in another world. If I

can but do my work well here, I shall be satisfied. A serious Christian may well be contented with solid peace without ecstasies. Therefore be not discouraged.

Obj. 2. But I find no peace, no calmness of spirit. I fear my heart was so dead and dull, that I did neither act grace in the ordinance, nor receive grace through the ordinance, for I saw never a smile in God's face all the while.

Ans. Didst thou not go in thine own strength? if so, no wonder that thou art disheartened. Jacob told his wives, 'I perceive that your father's countenance is not towards me as at other times;' but what was the matter? This Jacob, say Laban's sons, 'hath taken away all that was our father's, he hath got his riches.' The glory of God, as I may say, is his wealth, his treasure, 'the riches of his glory,' Rom. 9:23. Now if thou didst rob God of any part of his treasure, by thy self-confidence, it is no marvel that thy Father's countenance was not so pleasant towards thee as at other times. In brief, I would wish thee to reflect both upon thy preparation for, and carriage at the ordinance, and if thou findest thyself faulty, confess and bewail it; hereby thou mayest yet attain the efficacy of the ordinance. When physic is taken down and doth not work, physicians often give their patients something to quicken it, and it proves exceeding instrumental for the diseased person's good; a sincere lamentation of thy negligence before, or carelessness at the table, supposing that thy heart be right with God, will much help forward the operation of the sacrament. If thou findest that thou wast faithful in the discharge of thy duty, then by no means despond, but wait. Food doth not nourish as soon as it is taken into the body, there must be time allowed for concoction. The strongest meats are longest in digesting, but they give the most and the best nourishment. Faith and prayer will at last, like skilful midwives, deliver the promises safely of those blessings

which did stick for a time in the birth. 'It is good that thy soul should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of God.' There is light sown for thee, O thou child of light, who walkest in darkness; and be confident it will spring up.

### **A good wish about the Lord's supper, wherein the former heads are epitomised**

The Lord's supper being one of the greatest mysteries of the Christian religion, a lively representation of my dearest Saviour's bleeding passion and blessed affection, and a real taste of that eternal banquet which I shall hereafter eat of in my Father's house at his own table, I wish in general that I may never distaste the person of my best friend by abusing his picture; that I may not go to the Lord's table as swine to their trough, in my sin and pollution, but may receive those holy elements into a clean heart. Oh that my lamp might be flaming, and my vessel filled with oil, whenever I go to meet the bridegroom! I wish, in particular, that my soul may be so thoroughly affected with Christ's special presence at this sacred ordinance, that I may both prepare for it, and proceed at it with all possible seriousness and diligence. Oh let me never be so unworthy and impudent as to defile that holy feast before the author's face.

I wish that my heart may have an infinite respect for the blood of my Saviour, the stream in which all my comforts, both for this and a better world, come swimming to me, which hath landed thousands safely at the haven of eternal happiness, one drop of which I am sure is more worth than heaven and earth; that as all murder is abominable, being against the light of nature, so Christ-murder may be most of all abhorred by me, as being directly against the clearest light of Scripture, and the choicest love which ever was discovered to the children of men. Good Lord, whatever I jest with, let me never



sport or dally with the death of thy Son! Let me not give him cause to complain of me, as once of Judas, 'He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish is the same that betrayeth me!' Let me never buy a sacrament, as the Jews the potter's field, with the price of blood. 'Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy loving-kindness.'

I wish that true self-love may be so prevalent with me, that since I believe the profanation of the most precious things will be most pernicious to my soul, as the whitest ivory is turned by the fire into the deepest black, and the sweetest wine becometh the sharpest vinegar, I may tremble and fear before I receive, lest I should poison myself with that potion which is intended for my health, and cut the throat of my precious soul with that knife, wherewith I may cut bread, feed on it, and live for ever.

I wish that I may prepare my heart to meet the God of Israel at this holy ordinance; and to this end, that I may be impartial in the search and examination of my soul, whether I come short of the grace of God or no. Physicians judge sometimes of the inward parts by the tongue. The Roman Emperor Tiberius, when one pretended to the crown of a kingdom, discovered him to be a counterfeit by feeling his hands, and finding that they were not soft, as of a person tenderly bred, but hard as the hands of a mechanic. I desire that both by my tongue and hand, by my words and works, I may know the state and condition of my heart. In special, my prayer is, that I may never fail to try my faith, which is to the soul what the natural heat is to the body, by virtue of which the nutritive faculty turneth the food into nourishment, but may make sure of an interest in the vine before I drink of the fruit thereof.

I wish that before I go for a discharge, I may look into the book of my conscience, cast up my accounts, and consider how infinitely I am indebted to my God, that I may consider whence I am fallen and repent, and like Tamar, though I am ravished and defiled by force, may yet rend my garments, my heart I mean, with godly sorrow and self-aborrancy. Oh that my soul might be so searched to the bottom that none of my wounds may fester, but all may be discovered and cured. I pray that I may not dare to turn the table of the Lord into the table of devils, by receiving the sacrament in the love of any known sin, but may go to it with a hearty detestation of every false way, and a holy resolution against every known wickedness. I wish that after all my pains in preparing myself, I may look up to Christ alone for assistance, as knowing that I am not sufficient of myself so much as to think anything, but my sufficiency is of God; blessed Saviour, be thou surety for thy servant, and bound for my good behaviour at the last and loving supper.

I wish that when I come to the table I may, like the beloved disciple, behold the wounds of my Saviour, and see that water and blood which did flow out of his side; that as in the Gospel I read a narrative, so in this ordinance I may have a prospective of his sufferings: how he emptied himself to fill me, and to raise my reputation with his Father, laid down his own; how he humbled himself, though he had the favour of a Son, to the form of a servant, and though he were the Lord of life and glory, to the most ignominious death, even the death of the cross.

I wish that in his special passion I may ever take notice of his affection, and esteem the laying down his life, as the hyperbole of his love, the highest note that love could possibly reach. Ah! how near did this high priest carry my name to his heart, when he willingly underwent the rage of hell to purchase for me a passage to heaven! 'I

will remember thy love more than wine.' I desire that when I see Christ crucified before mine eyes, in the breaking of the bread, and pouring out of the wine, I may not forget the cause, my corruptions, but may so think of them and my Saviour's kindness, in dying to make satisfaction for them, that as fire expelleth fire, so I may be enabled by the fire of love to expel and cast out the fire of lust.

I wish that however my body be attired, my soul may by faith put on the Lord Jesus Christ at this heavenly feast; that I may not only look up to him, as the cripple to Peter and John, expecting an alms, but may receive him by believing, and so banquet on his blessed body, and bathe my soul in his precious blood, that my spirit may rejoice in God my Saviour, whilst I am assured that though the pain were his, yet the profit is mine; though the wounds were his, yet the balm issuing thence is mine; though the thorns were his, yet the crown is mine; and though the price were his, yet the purchase is mine. Oh let him be mine in possession and claim, and then he will be mine in fruition and comfort, 'Lord, I believe; help mine unbelief!' I wish, since love is the greatest thing my Saviour can give me, for God is love, and the greatest thing which I can give my Saviour, that his love to me may be reflected back to him again, that my chiefest love may be as a fountain sealed up to all others, and broached only for him who is altogether lovely, that I may hate father, mother, wife, child, house, and land, out of love to him; that many waters of affliction may not quench this love, but rather like snuffers make this lamp to burn the brighter. Beasts love them who feed them. Wicked men love their friends and benefactors; my very clothes warming me are warmed by me again, and shall not I love him who hath loved me, and washed me in his own blood! Oh that I could groundedly cry out with Ignatius, my love was crucified, and meet this Lord of heaven, as Elijah went up to heaven in a chariot of fire, in a flame of love; I desire that I may follow Christ at this ordinance, as the women did to

his cross, weeping, considering that my sins were the cause of his bitter and bloody suffering; and oh that, as Saul eyed David, I might eye them all from that day forward, to slay and destroy them.

When my soul has been thus feasted with marrow and fatness, Lord, let my mouth praise thee with joyful lips. Ah, what am I, and what is my father's house, that when others eat the bread of violence, and drink the wine of deceit, I should eat the flesh and drink the blood of thine own Son? 'What is man, that thou art so mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou dost thus visit him?' I wish that I may shew my thankfulness to my God and dearest Saviour for these benefits—the worth of which men and angels can never conceive—by the love of my heart, the praises of my lips, and the exemplariness of my life. At the sacrament Christ gave his body and blood to me, and I gave my body and soul a living sacrifice to him, and that before God, angels, and men; the sacrament was Beersheba, 'the well of an oath.' Shall I pollute that heart which was solemnly devoted to God, and profane that covenant which I have seriously contracted with the most High? Should I, like Samson, break those bands asunder, and fetch that sacrifice away from the altar, which was tied with such strong cords of oaths and covenants? must I not expect to bring the fire along with it? Oh let me never start aside from my vow like a deceitful bow! Lord, I have sworn, and will perform, that I will keep, through thy strength, thy righteous judgments. Lastly, I desire that I may not only differ from them who, like the Habassines, will not spit on a sacrament day, but will spew the next day; deny sin at present, but afterwards defy<sup>2</sup> it; that I may not only be faithful to my oath of allegiance, but also fruitful in obedience; that as Elijah walked in the strength of one meal forty days, I may walk in the strength of that banquet, serving my Saviour and my soul all my days. In a word, I wish that I may ever after walk worthy of my birth, having royal, heavenly blood running in my veins; worthy of my breeding, being

brought up in the nurture of the Lord, fed at his own table with the bread of heaven, clothed with the robes of his Son's righteousness; and that my present deportment may be answerable to my future preferment. Oh that I might in all companies, conditions, and seasons, walk worthy of him who hath called me to his kingdom and glory! Amen.

## CHAPTER XXI

### **How to exercise ourselves to godliness on a Lord's-day**

Because the Lord's-day is the special time for religious duties, I shall therefore, reader, give thee here some particular directions for thy sanctification of it, and edification by it.

As of all actions, none call for more care than holy duties; so of all seasons for those actions, none commandeth so much caution and conscience as the Lord's-day.

The first command teacheth us the object of worship; the second, the matter of worship; the third, the manner of worship; the fourth, the time of worship.

That God is to be worshipped, that some time must be set apart for that work, is moral natural, and written on the tables of all our hearts; but that one day of seven must be consecrated to this end, is moral positive, and written on the tables of stone.

All nations have had their seasons for sacrifice; even the heathen, who worshipped dumb idols, had their festivals and holidays. It is reported of Alexander Severus, emperor of Rome, that he would on a Sabbath-day lay aside his worldly affairs, and go into the capitol to worship his gods. Among those that acknowledged the true God, the Turks have their *stata tempora*—set times of devotion—nay, they have their Friday-Sabbath.

But to keep the Lord's-day upon a conscientious ground, and in a religious manner, is peculiar to the true Christian. In the primitive times, the observation of this day was esteemed the principal sign of a saint. Indeed, our sanctification of it is by God himself counted a sign that he hath sanctified us, Exod. 31:13.

It is observable that God hath fenced this command with more hedges than ordinary, to prevent our excursions:

1. It is marked with a memento above other commands, 'Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy,' partly because of our forgetfulness, and partly because of its concernments.
2. It is delivered both negatively and affirmatively, which no other command is, to shew how strongly it binds.
3. It hath more reasons to enforce it than any other precept,—its equity, god's bounty, his own pattern, and the day's benediction.
4. It is put in the close of the first, and beginning of the second table, to note that the observation of both tables depends much upon the sanctification of this day.

It is considerable also, that it is more repeated than other of the commands, Exod. 20:8, 31:14–16, 35:2; Levit. 16:31, 23:3, 32.

God would have Israel know, in those forequoted places, that their busiest times, earing and harvest, and the very building of the tabernacle, must give way to this precept.

On the Lord's-day we go into God's sanctuary, and his pleasure is, that we reverence his sanctuary, Levit. 19:30. The Jews indeed made a great stir about their outward reverencing the temple. They tell us they were not to go in with a staff, nor shoes, nor to spit in it, nor,

when they went away, to turn their backs upon it, but go sidling, Ezek. 8:16; but certainly God's meaning is principally that we do, with inward reverence and seriousness, worship him in his sanctuary.

Reader, I desire thee to take notice, that the more holy any action is, the more heedful thou oughtest to be about it; upon which account the duties of this day require extraordinary diligence; for they have a double dye of holiness upon them; they are double-gilt. Thy task on that day, or the exercises thereof, are of divine institution, and so is the time, the day. Thou hast God's hand and seal to the duties; he commands thee to pray, hear, sing, meditate, receive the sacrament; and thou hast also God's hand and seal to the day, Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1, 2; Rev. 10. It is considerable, that in the fourth command God doth not say, 'Remember the seventh day, to keep it holy'; but, 'Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy.' This Zanchy takes great notice of. Further, the seventh, or a seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; so, then, the morality of that command is one day of seven. The Jews' seventh day was buried in Christ's grave, though its shadow walked a little while after. Take heed how thou observest this day; God's eye is very much upon thy behaviour in his house; therefore in the tabernacle, the place of public worship, it was commanded, Exod. 25:37, 'Thou shalt make seven lamps, and they shall light the lamps that they may give light;' to teach us that nothing there escapes his sight, for in his house there is always light. His eye beholds all thy commission of evil, and all thine omission of good there. In his sanctuary thou canst not sin in secret; there are seven lamps to discover thy miscarriages in the Lord's house, and therefore it behoves thee to be very pious in that place. Afterwards, when the temple was built, and became heir to the tabernacle, as that succeeded this in the celebration of God's worship; so also, in God's observation of all the works done there: 'Mine eye,' saith God, 'shall



be there perpetually,' 1 Kings 9:3. There is a threefold eye of God present in the assemblies of his people.

1. There is the eye of observation and inspection: God seeth what uprightness and seriousness there is in thy prayers and performances; God eyeth and takes notice what integrity and fervency thou hast in thy services and sacrifices: 'Mine eyes are upon all their ways,' Jer. 16:17. Whether thou art praying, or reading, or hearing, or singing, his eye is upon thee; and whether thou performest thy duties slothfully and sluggishly, or dutifully and diligently, he observeth thee: 'His eyes behold, and his eyelids try the children of men.'

2. There is the eye of favour and benediction. God's eye can convey a blessing as well as his hand: 'I will set mine eyes upon them for good,' Amos 9:4. And God's eye can speak his good will, as well as his heart: 'Mine eye and my heart shall be there;' that is, in my house, 2 Chron. 7:16. The affection of the breast is seen at the brows. 'Mine eye shall be upon the faithful of the land,' Ps. 101:6. God's eye is in his house, to approve and bless thee, if thou sanctify him in ordinances. Friend, keep the Lord's-day with care and conscience, perform thy duties with suitable graces, and God's eye will be upon thee, thou shalt see his love in his pleasant and gracious looks. Jesus Christ beholds and approves the gracious performances of his people; he seems to say to them, as Paul to the Colossians, 'Though I am absent from you in the flesh, yet am I present with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order,' Col. 2:5.

3. There is the eye of fury and indignation. God's looks will speak his anger, as well as his blows: his fury is visible by his frowns. 'Mine eyes shall be upon them for evil.' God's sight can wound as deeply as his sword. Job speaks of him, 'He sharpeneth his eyes upon me,' Job

16:9. Wild beasts, when they fight, whet their eyes as well as their teeth. An enemy enraged looks on his antagonist as if he would look through him. He sharpeneth his eyes upon me, as if he would stab me to the heart with a glance of his eye; so an expositor glosseth on it: if thou wait on God irreverently, worship him carelessly, and profanest his day, either by corporal labour or spiritual idleness, thou mayest not expect his eye of favour, but of fury: 'If ye will not hearken unto me, to hallow the Sabbath, then will I kindle a fire which shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and none shall quench it,' Jer. 17 ult., Ezek. 22:26–31. God's severity hath been remarkable on the profaners of his Sabbath. The first blow given the German churches was on the Lord's-day, which they carelessly observed; on that day Prague was lost. When men disturb God's rest, God doth usually deprive them of rest. The day of the Lord is like to be a dreadful day to them that despise the Lord's-day.

Truly God is as jealous in his courts under the gospel as he was under the law. Christ, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks throughout the world. He observes how holy duties are performed, and how his holy day is sanctified; 'Where two or three are gathered together in his name, he is in the midst of them,' Mat. 18:20. He is in the midst of us, to behold our inward and outward carriage in his courts; he observeth in praying, what confessions are made of sin, with what confusion of face, and contrition of heart, what petitions are put up for grace and pardon, with what integrity of spirit, and fervency of affection. He observeth in hearing, whether men hear with attention suitable to that word which is able to save their souls, whether men receive the truth in the love of it, whether they resolve on subjection, and to give themselves up to that form of doctrine which is given down to them, or whether men hear sermons, as children turn over books, merely for the gays that are in them. 'He goeth down into the garden of nuts, to see the

fruits of the valley,' Cant. 6:11. He seeth the rotten bough of hypocrisy, the leaves of profession, without the fruits of an answerable conversation, he seeth all thine unripe, sour, indigested duties.

Reader, if I were to counsel thee how to spend a market-day, so that thou mightest gain much wealth and treasure, I doubt not but thou wouldst hearken to me; I am now to advise thee how to spend the Lord's-day, the market-day for thy soul, so that thou mayest get the true treasure, durable riches and righteousness; I pray thee to hear and obey the directions which I have to deliver to thee from the Lord for that end.

First, Make preparation for the day. There is scarce any work which admits of any considerable perfection but requires some previous preparation. In works of nature, the ground must be dunged, dressed, ploughed, harrowed, and all to prepare it for the seed. In works of art the musician tuneth his violin, screwing up some of his strings higher, letting some down lower, as occasion is, and all to prepare it for his lesson, and indeed without this he would make but sad music. Truly, friend, thus it is with us in matters of higher moment; hearts, like soil, must be prepared for the seed of the word—how many a sermon hath been lost because this was wanting!—and the violins of our souls must be tuned to praise God, or otherwise they will sound but harshly in his ears.

The priests were to wash in the laver when they went into the tabernacle, and when they came near to the altar to minister, upon pain of death, Exod. 30:19, 20. Signifying that to holy performances there is required holy preparation; suitable to which is David's speech, 'I will wash my hands in innocency, so will I compass thine altar,' Ps. 26.

When the temple was to be built, the stones were hewn, and the timber squared and fitted, before they were brought to the place where the temple stood; there was neither axe, nor hammer, nor any use of them in the temple: and what doth this speak, but that the Christian must be polished and prepared to be a spiritual temple, an habitation for the God of Jacob, and also fitted for his worship, which was then in the temple?

There is no duty but requires some previous disposition. A little breakfast quickens the appetite to a good dinner; duty fits the heart for duty; consider prayer. The Christian must be poor in spirit, that would prevail in prayer for spiritual riches. The vessel must be empty before it can be filled. 'O Lord, thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear,' Ps. 10:17. For hearing; the weeds must be plucked up before the grain be thrown into the ground. 'Wherefore laying aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisies, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word,' 1 Pet. 2:1, 2. In singing, the lungs must be good, the inwards clean before the voice will be sweet and clear. 'O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise,' Ps. 57:7. So for the Lord's-day, the Israelites had their preparation. It was 'the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath,' Mark 15:42.

The preparation for the Lord's-day consisteth partly in care so to order worldly businesses, that they may not encroach on the Sabbath; some expositors observe that the word remember, in the Fourth Command, enjoineth a provident foresight and diligent despatch of earthly affairs on the day before, that nothing may remain to disquiet us in, or disturb God's day of rest. There is an observable place, 'If thou keep thy foot from my Sabbath,' Isa. 58:13, that is, from treading on my holy ground with the dirty feet of earthly affairs or affections. The Jews' preparation began at three of the

clock in the afternoon, which the Hebrews called the Sabbath eve: the ancient fathers called *cœna pura*, from the heathen (say some) whose religion taught them in their sacrifices to certain of their gods, to prepare themselves by a strict kind of holiness, at which time they had a supper, consisting of meats holy in their opinion.

The Jews were so careful in their preparation, that, saith mine author, to further it, the best and wealthiest of them, even those that had many servants, and were masters of families, would chop herbs, sweep the house, cleave wood, kindle the fire, and do such like things. The mariner that intendeth a voyage, putteth his ship off from land; so truly, friend, if thou wouldst launch heavenward upon a Lord's-day, there is a necessity that the vessel of thy heart be put off from the earth. When our blessed Saviour was teaching the people, he was disturbed by one that told him, 'Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee,' Mat. 12:47. So when thou art hearing or praying, or about any religious ordinance, what an hindrance, what a disturbance will it be for thy heart to suggest to thee; man, thy calling, thy companions, or such and such things which lie upon the spoil through thy negligence in the week-days, they all stand without desiring to speak with thee. If thou wouldst avoid distraction, prevent the occasions. As Isaiah said to Hezekiah, 'Set thine house in order against thy death's day;' so I say to thee, set thy house in order, and thy heart in order, against the Lord's-day.

The main preparation of the heart for a Sabbath, lieth in removing the filth of sin, and in quickening and awakening grace. Sin must be removed. If the stomach be foul, it must be purged before it be fed, or the meat will nourish and strengthen, not nature, but the ill humours: 'If a man purge himself from these,' it is true of evil affections, as well as evil persons, 'he shall be a vessel unto honour,

sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work,' 2 Tim. 2:21.

'Superfluity of naughtiness' must be laid aside, before we can receive the word with meekness, James 1:21. When the vessel is unclean, it sours quickly the sweetest liquors poured into it; when the heart is unclean, it loseth the good it might receive by the truths of God.

As sin must be cast out, so grace must be called up; grace is like fire, apt to be deadish and dull, thy duty is beforehand therefore to blow it up. Most people upon a Sabbath adorn their bodies with their best clothes; but, alas! who almost attireth his soul as he ought on this day, when he is going to meet the blessed Redeemer!

Reader, suppose thou wert a person of great quality and estate, and the king should send thee word that he would dine with thee tomorrow, what preparation wouldst thou make for his entertainment? Would not thy first work be to cleanse thy house, by causing the dust to be swept out, the floors to be washed, nay, rubbed, everything to be neat and cleanly? Wouldst thou not put up thy choicest hangings, lay on thy richest carpets, bring out thy best plate, adorn thy room with thy costliest furniture, endeavour that all things should be in point, somewhat suitable to the dignity of so great a prince? I tell thee, that the great King of all the world doth give thee notice in his word, that on such a day, being the Sabbath, he intends to sup with thee. Now, friend, what preparation wilt thou make to testify thy respect to this blessed and only potentate? Canst thou beforehand do less than sweep out the dust of sin, and wash the room of thine heart clean, adorn it with the best furniture, the graces, the embroidery of the Holy Ghost? Truly unless this be done, Christ will not think himself welcome; nay, all thy pretended entertainment of him, will

be not only infinitely unworthy of, but also provoking to, so jealous and glorious a prince.

Believe it, thy profit by a Sabbath depends not a little upon thy preparation for the Sabbath; till the matter be prepared, how can it receive the form? Job 11:12, 13. Thou hast enjoyed many Lord's days, and it may be got little soul-saving good; thou goest to the house of God, where a table, in the preaching of the gospel, is set before thee, spread with all the dainties of pardon, love, grace, peace, and eternal life, at which others sit and feed; their souls are filled with marrow and fatness, and their mouths praise the Lord with joyful lips; but thou hast no stomach, canst eat little, and savour nothing; I dare be the physician to tell thee the cause and cure of this. The cause is, thy stomach is foul, thy heart is unclean; and therefore as a man that hath a cold, or some disease predominant, cannot relish his meat, but complains sometimes of the meat, sometimes of the cook, when the fault is in himself, so thou canst taste no goodness in the best meat; neither prayer nor Scripture, neither sermon nor Sabbath are savoury to thee, yet it may be thou blamest the preacher, he doth not dress the meat to thy mind, when the fault is in the foulness of thy affections. Thy cure must be, to purge out this old leaven, to take some pains beforehand in cleansing thy heart. When the stomach is clean, as after purging or fasting, how sweet is a piece of bread! So if thou wouldst but in secret search thy soul, vomit up thy filth by a penitent confession, cleanse thine heart by sincere contrition, and wouldst then frequent the public ordinances, thou wouldst find prayer sweet, preaching sweet, the sacrament sweet, every service sweet. Oh, how wouldst thou love 'the habitation of God's house, and the place where his honour dwelleth!'

'Prepare to meet thy God,' O Christian! betake thyself to thy chamber on the Saturday night, confess and bewail thine unthankfulness for,

and unfruitfulness under, the ordinances of God; shame and condemn thyself for thy sins, entreat God to prepare thy heart for, and assist it in, thy religious performances; spend some time in consideration of the infinite majesty, holiness, jealousy, and goodness of that God, with whom thou art to have to do in sacred duties; ponder the weight and importance of his holy ordinances, how they concern thy salvation or damnation, thine everlasting life or death, how certainly they will either further thine unchangeable welfare, or increase thine endless woe; meditate on the shortness of the time thou hast to enjoy Sabbaths in; how near thy life may be to an end, how speedily and how easily God may take down thine earthly tabernacle, how there is no working, no labouring, no striving in the other world, to which thou art hastening; and continue musing and blowing till the fire burneth; thou canst not think the good thou mayest gain by such forethoughts, how pleasant and profitable a Lord's-day would be to thee after such a preparation. The oven of thine heart thus baked in, as it were, overnight, would be easily heated the next morning; the fire so well raked up when thou wentest to bed, would be the sooner kindled when thou shouldst rise. If thou wouldst thus leave thine heart with God on the Saturday night, thou shouldst find it with him in the Lord's-day morning.

Secondly, Possess thy soul in the morning with the greatness of thy privilege, in the enjoyment of a Sabbath, and such seasons of grace. Look upon thy work that day as thy reward, thy duty on that day as thy greatest dignity. Oh, what a favour, what an honour, what happiness doth God vouchsafe to thee, in affording thee such a golden season! David, though a king, the head of the best people in the world, esteemed it an honour to be the lowest officer in God's house, to be a 'doorkeeper' there, to sit at the threshold, as it is in the Hebrew, Ps. 84:10. If the Queen of Sheba could say, when she saw the wealth, and heard the wisdom of Solomon, 'Happy are these thy



men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. And blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king,' 1 Kings 10:8, 9. Mayest not thou, when thou beholdest the beautiful face of thy Saviour, in the glass of ordinances, and hearest the sweet delightful voice of Jesus Christ, a greater than Solomon; when thou seest the delicate and plentiful provision, the feast of fat things, of wine on the lees well refined, which he makes for his people, upon better ground say, Blessed are thy servants that hear thee daily, 'watching at thy gates, waiting at the posts of thy doors,' Prov. 8:34. 'Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee.' And blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel, because he loved Israel for ever, therefore hath he made thee King.

The ordinances of God are called an appearing before God, the fruition of them is a seeing his face. Capernaum, because of them, was said to be lifted up to heaven. Who can tell what honour it is to appear in the presence of this king, or what happiness it is to see his comely countenance! Those that enjoy this are lifted up to heaven.

Israel was an unparalleled people, because of this incomparable privilege: 'For what nation is there so great, which hath God so nigh unto them?' Deut. 4:7. In the ordinances of God, the Christian hath sweet communion, with ravishing delight in, and inflamed affection to, the blessed God; in them he tastes God to be gracious, hath the first-fruits of his glorious and eternal harvest.

Well might the French Protestants call their place of public meeting paradise. Well might David cry out, Ps. 84:1, 2, and 27:4, 'How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!' At the tabernacle God

did meet David. Who can tell what joyful greeting there was at that holy meeting, what sweet kisses, what loving embraces God gave his soul?

As the ordinances are heaven in a glass, so the Lord's day is heaven in a map. This is to be valued at a high rate, because therein we enjoy all the means of communion with God, in the highest degree and measure, without interruption. The Hebrews call the week days profane days, but this is a holy, pious day. The Greeks call them working days, but this is a day of sweet rest. Other days are common and ordinary handmaids, but this is fitly termed by the Jews the queen of days. Many daughters have done wisely, but thou hast excelled them all. Many days, as lecture days, fast days, thanksgiving days, have done virtuously, have done valiantly; but thou, O queen of days, hast excelled them all. They, like Saul, have slain their thousands of spiritual enemies, but thou hast slain, as David, thy ten thousands. They, like the people, must worship afar off, but thou, like Moses, mayest draw near, go up into the mount. There is none like thee, whom God knoweth face to face. Well may other days say to thee, as the people to David, Thou art worth ten thousand of us. Well might the good soul run to meet thee in the morning, and salute thee with *Veni, sponsa mea*, Come, my sweet spouse, thee I have loved, for thee I have longed, and thou art my dearest delight.

Take heed of counting the Sabbath thy burden, and thine attendance upon that day on the ordinances of God thy bondage. It argued spirits full of froth and filth to cry out, 'When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell our corn; and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?' Amos 8:5. Count religious duties not thy fetters, but thy greatest freedom.

Think what the phoenix is amongst birds, the lion among beasts, fire among the elements, that is the Lord's-day among the days. Ordinary days, like wax in a shop, have their use, are worth somewhat; but this, like wax to some deeds, or which hath the king's seal to it, is worth thousands. What is said of that day of the Lord, may in a gracious sense be spoken of the Lord's-day, 'There is none like it, before it, neither shall be after it.' Upon this day Christ carrieth the soul into his wine-cellar, and his banner over it is love; upon other days he feeds his members, upon this day he feasts them; they have their ordinary every day, but upon this day exceedings—upon this day he brings forth his living water, his best wine; on this day he gives the sweetest bread, the finest flour, the true meat, his own body. On this day he met the two disciples, and made their hearts warm, and even burn within them by the fire of his words; on this day, saints that slept arose out of their beds, their graves, Mat. 27; on this day the Holy Ghost descended on the apostles; on this day the Lord brought forth the light of the world in creation; on this day Christ brought forth the light of his new heavens and new earth by his resurrection; on this day St John had his glorious revelation, containing the church's state to the world's dissolution; on this day he visited his dear apostles with grace and peace, saying to them, 'Peace be unto you, behold my hands and my feet.' On this day he burst asunder the bands of death, he broke in pieces the gates of hell, he led captivity captive, trampled upon principalities and powers, and triumphed over grave, sin, the curse of the law, and Satan. Upon this day he still rides triumphantly in the chariot of his ordinances, conquering and to conquer, casting down high thoughts, and subduing sinners to himself. It may be said of the Sabbath, as of Zion, 'This and that man was born in her, and the highest himself shall establish her. The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there. Selah,' Ps. 87:5, 6. Oh blessed day, how many thousand souls have known thee the day of their new

births! How willing have the people been in the day of God's power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning, thou hast the dews of thy youth. Blessed art thou among days, from henceforth all generations shall call thee blessed. Blessed be the Father who made thee, blessed be the Son who bought thee, blessed be the Spirit who sanctifieth thee, and blessed are all they that prize and improve thee. Reader, thou hast not a drop of true holiness, if thou dost not bless God (as is reported of the Jews) at the coming in and going out of this holy and blessed day.

Thirdly, Consider there is a present price put into thy hands, to get and increase grace, and therefore improve it. The wisdom of a Christian consisteth in observing his seasons; the high God sends man to school to the silly ant, to learn this art and piece of good husbandry, 'Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise, which having no guide, overseer, nor ruler, provideth her food in the summer, and gathereth her meat in the harvest,' Prov. 6:6–8. The ants are a feeble folk, but famous for their forecast, and deserve, saith one, to be fed with the finest of the wheat, for the pattern they give to man. They labour not only all day, but even by moonlight they gather huge heaps together, lay it out a-drying in a warm day, lest it should putrefy, and bite off the ends of the grain lest it should grow; but observe the season of this care and diligence, 'She provideth her food in the summer, and gathereth her meat in the harvest.' Then that time is the ant's opportunity, if she do it not then she cannot do it at all; therefore she makes use of that season. Oh that, friend, thou wert but as wise for the bread which came down from heaven, as this poor pismire is for the bread which springs out of the earth! Christians are called doves. The turtle dove is called in the Hebrew *Tor*, of the original *Tur*, (and thence comes our Latin *Turtur*,) which signifieth to observe or search, for so this bird observeth her time of going and coming, Jer. 8:7, for she departeth before winter into some

warm climate. The Lord's-day is the summer, thine harvest time, labour now for Christ and grace, or thou art lost for ever. The farmer that loiters at other times will work hard and sweat in harvest. If he do not reap then he knows he can never pay his rent, and feed his family, but is ruined. Reader, if thou dost not on a Lord's-day gather in grace, how wilt thou do to lay out grace in the week-days? nay, how wilt thou do to spend grace upon a dying bed, when thou art to step into the other world? 'He that gathereth in summer is a wise son, but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame,' Prov. 10:5. The Jews might gather no manna on the Sabbath, but Gentiles must then especially get the bread of life. The waterman must observe when wind and tide are for his turn, and then bestir himself, or otherwise he must come short of his haven. It concerns thee to mind Sabbaths; then the gales of the Spirit blow fair for thy voyage, then the waters of ordinances run right for the port to which thou art bound; therefore do not then laze and loiter, but labour for thy God, thy soul, and thine everlasting life: 'Therefore shall every one that is godly, seek thee in a time when thou mayest be found,' Ps. 32:6.

The musician must play his lesson whilst the instrument is in tune, because the weather may alter. The good husband, for his soul, must buy of Christ gold to enrich him, and raiment to clothe him, while the fair lasts, for it will quickly be over. Esau came too late and lost thereby the blessing; many come too late and lose their souls by it. 'To everything there is a season,' saith God, Eccles. 3:1. The Lord's-day is thy season when grace and mercy are tendered to thee; 'how wilt thou escape if thou neglectest (or carest not for, as the word ἀμελήσαντες signifieth) so great salvation', Heb. 2:3. Open unto Christ when he knocketh at the door of thy heart with the finger of his Spirit. Do not bid him come tomorrow, lest that morrow never come.

It is good, we say, to make hay while the sun shines, for the heavens may be cloudy. It is good to embrace a present opportunity, for time is bald behind; thou canst not assure thyself of a second Sabbath. Seasons of grace are not like tides, that a man may miss one and take another. What Christ said of himself is true of Sabbaths: 'The poor ye have always with you, but me ye have not always.' Time thou hast always with thee while thou livest, but the Sabbath thou hast not always. Nay, within a shorter time than thou imaginest, God may deprive thee both of time and opportunity, both of week-days and Lord's-days; and if thou art now sleeping and snoring, when thou shouldst be waking and working, what a cut will it be to thy heart to reflect upon the Sabbaths which thou hast had and lost, enjoyed and misspent! Jerusalem, in the days of her affliction and of her misery, remembered all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old, Lam. 1:9. So, reader, if thou shouldst neglect to improve Sabbaths now in the day of thy misery, or rather in the everlasting night of thine affliction in hell, thou wilt remember thy Sabbath seasons of grace, and all thy pleasant things which thou hadst in the days of old. Good Lord, what a rueful, woful remembrance will it be to call to mind the means, the mercies, the helps which were afforded thee to have avoided hell and attained heaven; and yet thou, like a fool, or rather a madman, didst dally about them, and delay till the market was done! Now is the time for thee to accept of grace, because now is the only time that grace will accept of thee. 'Oh that thou wouldst know in this thy day, the things which concern thy peace, before they be hid from thine eyes.'

Fourthly, Esteem the public ordinances the chief work of the day, and let thy secret and private duties be so managed that thy soul may be prepared for them, and profited by them. Duties in thy closet and family are of use and have their blessing; but to put God off with these, and neglect the public worship, is to rob God of a greater sum,

to pay him a lesser. The sacrifice of the Jews on that day was double; they offered sacrifice in the tabernacle, besides their lambs for the daily sacrifice. It is worth your observation, that the Sabbath and public service are by God himself joined together, and therefore let no man put them asunder: 'Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary, I am the Lord,' Lev. 19:30. They that despise God's sanctuary, cannot observe God's Sabbath.

Everything is beautiful in its season. Private duties are beautiful, and in season every day; but public ordinances are never so lovely and beautiful, because never so much in their prime and season, as on a Lord's-day.

In public worship God receiveth the highest praises: 'I will praise thee in the great congregation,' Ps. 29:9. 'In his temple doth every one speak of his glory. I had gone with the multitude to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day Ps. 42:4. The gracious God is pleased to esteem it his glory to have many beggars thronging at the beautiful gate of his temple for spiritual and corporal alms. What an honour is it to our great landlord, that multitudes of tenants flock together to his house, to pay heir rent of thanks and worship for their all which they hold of him! How loud and lovely is the noise of many golden trumpets! Good Lord, what an echo do they make in heaven's ears! When many skilful musicians play in concert, with well-tuned and prepared instruments, the music cannot but be ravishing to God himself. Methinks it is a notable resemblance of the sweet melody which is made by the celestial choir above: Ps. 68:26, 'Bless ye God in the congregation, even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel: for he loveth the gates of Zion, above all the dwellings of Jacob,' Ps. 87:2.

As in public God receiveth the highest praises, so there he bestoweth the richest mercies: 'Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple,' Ps. 65:4. Here is David's position and its proof. His position is, that the templer, or inhabitant in God's house, is an happy man: 'Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy house.' The proof of it is from the quality and quantity of the provision, which God makes for them that are of his household. For the quality of it, it is not only good, but goodness; which word signifieth not only the good will which God beareth to, but all the good things which God bestoweth upon, his people: pardon, peace, love, grace, every good thing, all good things are in the womb of that one word goodness. God's provision for his people is beyond all their knowledge or apprehension.

There be four ordinary ways by which men come to the knowledge of good things: either by hearing them immediately themselves, or by hearsay from others, or by the sight of the eyes, or by discourse of reason: 'But from the beginning of the world, men have not seen, nor heard, nor perceived by the ear, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath provided for them that love him,' 1 Cor. 2:9; Isa. 64:4. The love discovered there is an unknown love; the joy bestowed there is unspeakable joy. All the costliest dainties prepared for heaven's table, the fulness of joy and pleasures for ever at God's right hand, are expressed by this one word goodness, Ps. 31:19. So that the quality of the provision is beyond all exception, it is Goodness. For its quantity, it is to satisfaction: 'We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.' The saint shall have enough of this luscious fare to content him—indeed the Christian's full meal is reserved for him, till he comes to eat bread in the kingdom of heaven; but here he hath enough to stay his stomach.



He is very well satisfied that his allowance in this world is sufficient. God calls him in the other world to greater work, and so will give him a greater allowance for suitable strength, but God doth not in this world under-keep him. He feeds proportionable to their employments, nay to their satisfaction and contentment, all that are in his inferior family—his children have till they leave.

But, reader, where is the place of this good, this great provision? Is it not in God's house, in his holy temple, in the public worship? Great princes bestow their largesses, and shew their bounty, glory, and magnificence, before much people. If thou wouldst know where believers have seen their best sights, where they have heard their most ravishing sounds, where they have made their most delightful meals, it was in the house of God: 'They have seen thy goings, O God, in the sanctuary,' Ps. 68:24. 'They have heard the joyful sound of thy word: they have been abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house.'

Do but consider David's tears and grief for want of, and his fervent prayers for the fruition of, public ordinances, even then when he had opportunities for private performances; and surely thou wilt esteem the ministry of the word no mean mercy. See his sorrow when he was driven from God's sanctuary: 'When I remember these things, my soul is poured out: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God,' Ps. 42:3, 4. My soul is poured out; that is, I am overwhelmed with grief, and even ready to die, when I compare my present condition with my former happiness, in the fruition of religious assemblies. There is an elegancy in the phrase poured out; the word is applied to water, or any liquid thing, and in Scripture signifieth abundance, Joel 2:28. My life is ready to be poured out as water upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again, when I remember my former mercies, and consider my present misery. How

bitterly and passionately doth he plead with Saul! 'If the Lord hath stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering; but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the Lord; for they have driven me out this day from the inheritance of the Lord,' 1 Sam. 26:19. How pathetically doth he bemoan it to his own soul! 'Woe is me, for I dwell in Meschech, and my habitations are in the tents of Kedar.' The loss of his father, mother, wives, children, lands, liberty, nay, of his very life, would not have gone so near his heart, as the loss of public ordinances. As his sorrow was great for the want, so was his suit most earnest for the enjoyment of them. How many a prayer doth he put up for the liberty of the tabernacle! Ps. 43:3, 4, and 27:4. It is the one thing, the principal special request which he begs of God: 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life;' and verse 8, how hard doth he pray for this privilege: 'Thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' To seek the face of God in a general sense, is taken for the substance of religion, or to seek God, Ps. 24:6; but by the face of God in a strict sense, is meant the ark of God, and place of his residence. Now David at this time being deprived of this inestimable benefit, in the ardency of his zeal presseth God, with all the arguments he could devise, to restore him to that happiness; among the rest he urged God with his own words—thou hast commanded me to worship thee in thy tabernacle, to appear before thee, that is my desire and delight, my heart would seek and see thy face there. Thus he presseth God for performance on his side, that he might be enabled to obey God's precept.

Where God denieth public ordinances, there he himself will be a little sanctuary to his chosen, Ezek. 11:16. But where he affords them, he expects that they should be attended. Christ himself went often into the synagogues.

'Peter and John went up into the temple at the hour of prayer,' Acts 3:1. 'On the Sabbath, we went out of the city by a river's side, where prayer was wont to be made,' Acts 13:23. 'And Paul reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath,' Acts 18:4. Those that by their practices condemn public worship, have neither Christ nor his apostles for their pattern.

One of the Jewish rabbis hath a saying, He that dwells in a city where there is a synagogue, and cometh not to prayers, *merito dicitur vicinus malus*, is deservedly styled a bad neighbour. Reader, if thou forsakest the assemblies of the saints, how useful soever thou mayest be to others' bodies, yet thou art a bad neighbour in neglecting soul-service.

The Lord Jesus Christ, as he was faithful as a Son in his own house, took special care to provide and prepare such public servants as might give every one their meat in due season. The ministers of the word are his public officers, appointed by himself, to have the oversight of his saints. They are both fathers to beget, and tutors to bring up his sons and daughters. They are his stewards to dispense publicly the mysteries of the gospel of peace. But little do they think, who set light by public ordinances, what a price Christ paid, that he might enable and qualify them for his church's profit. The gifts he bestoweth on pastors are not the least sign of his good will to his people. Wherefore, he saith, 'When he ascended up on high, he gave gifts unto men. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors; and some, teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,' Eph. 4:8–13. As kings, on the day of their coronation, usually appear in all their

majesty and magnificence, and do some famous act, (as of a general pardon or the like,) which may speak their love and respect to their subjects, so Jesus Christ, when he rode triumphantly in the chariot of his ascension into heaven's glorious city, to sit and reign there at the right hand of the Majesty on High, gave abilities to ministers, endowed them with answerable gifts and graces, that they might dispense the ordinances of God powerfully and profitably, as a special fruit of his passion for, and a singular testimony of his affection to, his church.

I would wish thee, therefore, to be present at, and to continue to the end of public ordinances. David would be a door-keeper in the house of God; because a door-keeper is first in and last out. Friend, if thou wert feasting some noble person, thou wouldst not rise from table, unless necessity forced thee, before all were taken away, and thanks returned. I must tell thee, that when thou art feeding with the blessed Potentate, it is much below good manners to turn thy back upon him, without his leave and blessing.

Fifthly, If thou wouldst make religion thy business on a Lord's-day, tune thine heart to spiritual joy and delight therein. Holy alacrity and joy is not only a crown and credit to, but also a special part of, Christianity. 'The kingdom of God consisteth not in meat and drink, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,' Rom. 14:17. God's ways are not so bad but that the travellers in them may be cheerful. His work is good wages, and therefore it is no wonder that his servants are so joyful.

Because believers have ever cause of comfort, therefore they are commanded always to rejoice, Phil. 3. Whether their sins or sufferings come into their hearts, they must not sorrow as they that have no hope. In their saddest conditions, they have the Spirit of

consolation. There is seed of joy sown within them when it is buried under the clods, and appears not above ground. But there are special times when God calls for this grain to spring up. They have some red letters, some holy days in the calendar of their lives, wherein this joy, as wine at a wedding, is most seasonable; but among all those days it never relisheth so well, it never tasteth so pleasantly, as on a Lord's-day. Joy suits no person so much as a saint, and it becomes no season so well as a Sabbath. Joy in God on other days is like the birds chirping in winter, which is pleasing; but joy on a Lord's-day is like their warbling tunes, and pretty notes in spring, when all other things look with a suitable delightful aspect. 'This is the day which the Lord hath made, (he that made all days, so especially this day, but what follows?) we will rejoice and be glad therein,' Ps. 118:24. In which words we have the church's solace, or joy, and the season, or day of it. Her solace was great: 'We will rejoice and be glad.' Those expressions are not needless repetitions, but shew the exuberancy or high degree of their joy. The season of it: 'This is the day the Lord hath made.' Compare this place with Mat. 21:22, 23, and Acts 4:11, and you will find that the precedent verses are a prophetic prediction of Christ's resurrection, and so this verse foretells the church's joy upon that memorable and glorious day. And, indeed, if 'a feast be made for laughter,' Eccles. 10:19, then that day wherein Christ feasteth his saints with the choicest mercies may well command his greatest spiritual mirth. A thanksgiving-day hath a double precedency of a fast-day. On a fast-day we eye God's anger; on a thanksgiving-day we look to God's favour. In the former we specially mind our own corruptions; in the latter, God's compassions;—therefore, a fast-day calls for sorrow, a thanksgiving-day for joy. But the Lord's day is the highest thanksgiving-day, and deserveth, much more than the Jewish Purim, to be a day of feasting and gladness, and a good day.

On this day we enjoy the communion of saints, and shall we not delight in those excellent ones? Ps. 16:3. On this day we have fellowship with the blessed Saviour, and shall we not sit under his shadow with great delight? Cant. 1. On this day we are partakers of the ordinances of God, and shall we not be joyful in the house of prayer? Isa. 56:7. On this day we have special converse with the God of ordinances, and who would not draw water with joy out of the well of salvation? Isa. 12:3. Surely whilst we are in the midst of so much musk we must needs be perfumed. Who can walk where the sun shines so hot and not be warmed?

It is God's precept, as well as thy privilege, to make God's day thy delight. 'If thou call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord,' Isa. 58:13. Delights, Tremel. reads it, thy delicate things, according to the Septuagint. Whether thou art meditating on God's works, or attending on God's word, which are the two principal duties of the day, they both call for delight and joy.

If on this day of rest thou considerest the work of creation and God's rest, it behoveth thee to follow David's pattern, 'Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy works; I will triumph in the works of thy hands,' Ps. 92:4.

If thou considerest the work of redemption, and Christ's rest, surely out of the carcase of the lion of the tribe of Judah thou mayest get such honey as may delight thy soul, and force thee to sing, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour,' Luke 1:46, 47. The babe in the womb leaped for joy of him before he was born. The heavenly host sung at his birth, and wilt not thou at his second birth, his resurrection from the dead? O let primitive Christians' salutations be thy consolation, 'The Lord is risen.'

If thou meditatest on glorification and thine own rest, canst thou do less than rejoice in hope of glory? What prisoner, shackled with Satan's temptations, and fettered with his own corruptions, in the dark jail of this world, can think of the time when his irons shall be knocked off, and he enjoy the pleasant light and glorious liberty of the sons of God, and not be transported with joy? What heir in his minority, banished from his kindred and country, can think without comfort of his full age, when he shall have the full fruition both of his estate and friends? Doubtless, friend, the Sabbaths of the holy are the suburbs of heaven. In heaven there is no buying, no selling, no ploughing, no sowing, nothing but worshipping God, communion with him, fruition of him, and delight in him. There remains a rest for the people of God. There they rest from their labours. If thou on a Lord's-day turnest thy back upon the world, and goest up into the mount, conversing with, and rejoicing in the blessed God, what dost thou less than begin thine eternal Sabbath here? Such a Lord's-day can be no less than heaven in a looking-glass, representing truly, though darkly, thy future eternal happiness. There is no perfume so sweet to a pilgrim as his own smoke.

When thou art attending on the word, truly that aqua vitæ, that hot water may well revive thy spirit. 'Thy testimonies are my delight,' saith David. 'I have rejoiced more in thy testimonies than in all manner of riches,' Ps. 119:24, 77. The word of God is sometimes called a treasure, and what beggar would not rejoice in a treasure? Sometimes fire; and truly, reader, thine heart is frozen to purpose if this fire do not heat it. Solomon tells us, 'As cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country,' Prov. 25:25. The word of God contains the best news that ever was heard, 'Peace on earth, good will towards men;' and the glad tidings of the gospel come from heaven, a far country. What canst thou say then, why they should not be as welcome and refreshing to thee as cold water to a thirsty soul?

Variety of things that are excellent is not a little ground of complacency in them; variety of choice voices please the ear; variety of curious colours delight the eyes; variety of dainties are acceptable to the taste. Nero promised rewards to them that invented new pleasures. God hath for that purpose dished out his worship into several and various duties, that it might be more pleasant to us. Sometimes we speak to God; sometimes we hear from God; sometimes we are praying for supply of our necessities; sometimes we are praising him for his infinite excellencies; sometimes our mouths are open to sing; sometimes our ears are open to hear the sermon; sometimes our eyes are open to see the sacrament. The same meat is dressed several ways to make it the more welcome, and so the more strengthening to us. Hippocrates observes, that that food which nature receives with delight, though not so good in itself, affords better nourishment than that which is more wholesome, against which nature hath a reluctancy. Reader, thy delight and pleasure in the sacred ordinances of the Lord's-day will help to make them more profitable to thee. Some colours which do delight, do also strengthen the sight.

Sixthly, If thou wouldst make godliness thy business on a Lord's-day, let no duty satisfy without communion with God in it. Ordinances are the galleries and gardens (and for that end appointed) wherein God and thy soul may walk together. For this cause they are called a glass, because therein the Christian beholds the glory of the Lord, 2 Cor. 3:18. As Zaccheus climbed up the sycamore-tree to see Jesus, and when he once had a sight of him, he came down joyfully; so go thou up into the trees of duties for this purpose, that thou mayest see God in Christ, and unless this be granted thee, come down sorrowfully. When men go to meet a friend at a certain place, and they miss him, how discontentedly they do go away!



Alas! what are the ordinances without God, but as a table without meat, from which a living soul must needs depart thirsty and hungry? David loved the habitation of God's house, but it was because it was the place where God's honour dwelt, Ps. 27. David longed for the courts of God, more than for his crown, relations, or possessions, or any outward comforts; but it was because God afforded there his gracious presence. God's glorious presence is in his church triumphant, but he is graciously present in his church militant. 'My soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God,' Ps. 84:2. His desire was as eager and earnest as of a longing woman with child, who is ready to faint away and die if she be not satisfied. Sometimes he compares his desire to thirst, of which creatures are more impatient than hunger, Ps. 63:1; sometimes to the thirst of an hart after the water-brooks, which creature being naturally hot and dry in a very great degree, is exceedingly thirsty; but the object of his desire, of his thirst, was God: 'My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: Oh, when shall I come and appear before him?' Ps. 42:1, 2. 'To see thy beauty and glory, as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.' It was communion with God in his life and love, in his graces and comforts, which the psalmist so much longed for. The sweet smile of God's face, the honey dews of his Spirit, were David's paradise of pleasure, his heaven upon earth.

They that come to duty merely for duty, know not what it means to meet with God, and therefore though they neither see his face nor hear his voice, yet are contented: like those that were born in some dark dungeon, and never yet saw the sun, they are well enough satisfied without it; but those who have seen it, and know that that light is pleasant, if they look up to the heaven of ordinances, and see not the Sun of Righteousness, it is no longer day with them. The true disciples met together the first day of the week, and enjoying Jesus

among them, rejoiced indeed; but they are only glad in duties, when they had seen the Lord, John 20:20. 'They were glad when they had seen the Lord.'

Reader, when thou goest to the ordinances of God, go to meet God in the ordinances. As Moses, go up into the mount of duties to converse with thy Maker. Go to view the beauty of his face when thou inquirest into his holy temple. When thou goest to prayer, let it be in hope to get thy heart nearer to heaven.

When thou goest to hear, mind communion with him that speaks from heaven, and then only rejoice in the word, when, as the star to the wise men, it leads thee to the place where Christ is. It is God in the word which causeth efficacy, it is God in prayer who causeth prevalency, it is God in the sacrament who causeth alacrity, it is God in a Sabbath who causeth complacency.

When thou goest to the waters of the sanctuary, say as Elisha at the waters of Jordan, 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?' Where is the God and Father of my Lord Jesus Christ? Why is thy chariot, O Sun of Righteousness, so long a coming? Why tarry? What clogs the wheels of thy chariot? 'Oh, when wilt thou come unto me?' Ps. 101:2. When thou comest from the ordinances, and hast not met God in them, though thou hast showed never so great parts or gifts, or outward devotion, say as Absalom, 'All this avails me nothing, so long as I may not see the king's face,' 1 Sam. 28:15. Saul himself was sad and sorrowful, when 'he inquired of the Lord, and the Lord answered him not.' And canst thou, O saint, be joyful, when thy beloved hath withdrawn himself?

Look upon performances as boats to ferry thy soul over, and give it a passage to God, and take heed of going contentedly from God without God: let thy prayer be, 'Oh send out thy light and thy truth,

let them lead me, let them bring me to thy holy hill, to thy tabernacle: then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy,' Ps. 43:3, 4.

Seventhly, Sanctify the whole day to God's service; be early up in the morning, and as late as thy body will permit at night. The Israelites, when they were to batter down the strongholds of Jericho, 'rose up early in the morning,' Josh. 6:15. Upon the Lord's-day thy work must be to batter down the strongholds of sin; rise early, lose no time, do not lose the least moment, if it be possible, of this sacred day. The very filings of gold are of worth; the smallest part of this holy day is of great price. The word shamur, to keep the Sabbath, Lev. 19:30, signifieth to keep with care and diligence, as a great treasure, of which a man would lose none. When men beat ginger, they will (if good husbands) be careful that little fly out of the mortar; but if they beat pearl, they are extraordinary watchful that not the least of that be lost, because a little of that is of great value. Reader, if thou art a good husband for thy soul, I doubt not but thou esteemest thy time in the week-days at so high a rate, that thou darest not squander it away in doing nothing, or in that which is worse than nothing; but oh, what worth, what price wilt thou set upon an opportunity upon a Lord's-day! How diligent wilt thou be to improve the least piece of that day! God giveth thee six whole days for thine own works; do not deny to him one whole day in seven. Let thy conscience be judge. Is it not unrighteousness to buy by one measure, which is greater, and sell by another measure, which is lesser? When the day is consecrated to God as the goods of Ananias, it is dangerous to keep back any part of it for our own use.

Do thou all the day long live and walk as it were in the other world; make it a Sabbath, a day of rest—(1.) From sin and wickedness: this is thy duty every day, but especially on this day: every sin on a

Sabbath is double, the season is a great aggravation of the sin. The wicked indeed 'are like the raging sea, which cannot rest, but every day bubble up mire and dirt,' Isa. 57:20. (2.) From the world and the works of thy calling: 'Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death; for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people,' Exod. 31:14. The Jews were to rest from works of least importance, as gathering sticks—he that fetched in sticks, was sent out of the world with stones,—and of greatest concernment, as building the tabernacle; and though the Christian now hath more liberty, yet he hath no leave at all to pollute the day by wickedness, or to profane the day by any earthly work, which might have been done before the day, or may be done as well after it.

May I not say to thee of this day, as Elisha to Gehazi: 'Is this a time to receive money, and garments, and sheep, and oxen, and men-servants, and maid-servants?' 2 Kings 5:26. Is the Sabbath a time for civil affairs? The Sabbath-day is therefore called 'a day of restraint,' Deut. 16:8, because then men are forbidden all work, saith Junius. As none were ever losers by laying aside their own works to attend God's worship, he took care of Israel's safety whilst they were in his service, that none of their neighbours, though bitter enemies, should so much as desire their cities, Exod. 34:24. So none, I am confident, were ever gainers by inching in some part of their callings unnecessarily at the end of God's day, and, by setting God aside, to serve themselves; the very time will be a canker to consume their estates. And as they that take crocus into their stomachs, bring up not only ill humours, but that also which would prove good nourishment; so some have had experience, that their profanation of God's day to increase their estates, hath forced them to vomit up the whole. God hath given thee days enough for thy calling, space enough to mind it in, thou needest not trespass upon his holy day,

upon his holy ground. It was no small aggravation of Adam's sin, that though he had choice of fruits, he would eat only of the forbidden fruit; so it will much increase thy sin, if when thou hast choice of time for thy trade, thou shouldest meddle with it on a Sabbath.

Reader, as thy duty is to rest the whole day from wickedness and worldly work, so also to employ the whole day in God's worship, be either praying, or reading, or hearing, or singing, or meditating, or discoursing with others about the works or word of God. Be always taken up either with public, private, or secret duties. In the ninety-second Psalm, that psalm for the Sabbath, ver. 1 and 3, we are exhorted to 'shew forth God's loving-kindness in the morning, and his faithfulness at evening,' Now we know that in Scripture sense the morning and the evening are the whole day; the whole day is God's by ordination, and why should it not be his by observation. God hath dedicated this day wholly to his own worship; now every devoted thing is most holy to the Lord, Lev. 27:28.

The pope and church of Rome have half-holidays, as St Blacy's day, which is holy in the forenoon only; but God and the church of Christ have no half-holidays. Observe how exact God is in expressing a whole natural day: 'From evening to evening you shall keep the Sabbath,' Lev. 23:32. Their days were reckoned from evening to evening, from the creation; but ours, because Christ rose in the morning, from morning to morning.

If thou hast any sincere delight in God, and esteem of the true riches, I cannot but think that thou wilt be covetous of the smallest part of God's day, and wish, as R. Jose, that thy portion may be to begin the Sabbath with those of Tiberias, because they began it sooner than others; and to end it with those of Tsepphore, because they continued it longer than others. If thy soul ever met God on a

Sabbath, thou wilt surely be ready to say with Joshua, 'Thou sun, stand still in Gibeon; and thou, moon, in the valley of Aijalon,' Josh. 10:12. Oh that the day were longer, that I might have more time to fight the Lord's battles against my spiritual enemies!

Eighthly, If thou wouldst make religion thy business on a Lord's day, meditate therein on the word and works of God. Consider his works, this is part of the work of the day. David, in that psalm for the Sabbath, gives thee a pattern: 'O Lord, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep,' Ps. 92:5. It is a dishonour to a workman to make excellent pieces, and to manifest abundance of skill, and art, and ingenuity, and then not to have them taken notice of. God hath done his mighty works to be remembered and wondered at. It is said of Pythagoras that he lived sequestered from men in a cave for a whole year together, that he might meditate on the abstruse points of philosophy. I wish thee to an easier and pleasanter task, to sequester thyself some time every Lord's-day, to ponder the infinite perfections which appear in the operations of his hand. God will be both admired and magnified by his people on earth as well as in heaven, which none can do but those that seriously consider his works. Men have been much wondered at for some peculiar rare works, though in them a Christian should look further, even to God, the author of their skill and wisdom. The very Greeks acknowledged somewhat like this, that all arts come from God, in making Minerva the daughter of Jupiter, and to have had her generation in his divine brain; but alas, the choicest pieces of men to the smallest works of God are but as children's houses of dirt to the stateliest courts of Christendom. Archites was much extolled for causing a dove of wood to hang in the air, being equally poised with its own weight; but what is this to the work of God in hanging the earth upon nothing? Job 26:7. The earth is the heaviest and lowest element. A little piece of earth held up and let fall will never cease moving till it come to rest upon some solid

body; and yet behold, the great mass of earth, with innumerable bodies upon it, hangs fast in the midst of the open air, having no visible pillar nor foundation to rest upon. Well might God reckon it to Job among his wondrous works, Job 38:4–6, 'Upon what be the sockets of it fastened?' Aristotle himself could not but admire it. Archimedes was famous for contriving the motions of the sun, moon, and stars in his horology; but alas, what is this to the glorious heavens themselves, which God stretched out like a curtain, and to the noble host of great and glittering bodies, keeping their rank and file, and being not only incredibly swift, but also regularly and orderly in their motions? 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork.' There is so much of God appearing in the heavens, that many have taken them for God, and given them divine worship. Naturalists tell us that the head of Nilus cannot be found, but many sweet springs issuing from it are discovered. Though thy finite capacity can never reach fully the fountain and head, God's infinite being and excellencies, yet thou mayest find many refreshing streams which flow from it. A little river will lead thee to the ocean! Oh, how much of the goodness, power, and wisdom of God appeareth in the work of creation! The rabbis say that in every apex of the law there is a mountain of sense; sure I am that in the smallest creatures there is abundance of the Creator. How doth the wisdom of God shine forth in the exquisite workmanship, variety, order, subordination, and serviceableness of the creatures one to another, that David might well cry out, 'O Lord, how marvellous are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all,'

Pontanus, chancellor of Saxony, propoundeth to be viewed and weighed the most beautiful archwork of heaven resting upon no post but God's power, and yet standing fast for ever. The clouds as thin as the liquor contained in them; behold, saith he, how they hang and move, though weighty in their burden; they salute us only, or

threaten us rather, and pass we know not whither. How doth his goodness appear in furnishing the world so richly for the supply of his creatures! 'The earth is full of thy goodness.' Luther, in his *Colloquia Mens.*, tells us that God is at more charge every day to maintain sparrows than all the yearly revenues of the king of France are worth; but especially towards man, in making him so excellent a creature, and in making so many excellent creatures for him.

His power is also evident both in creating such great and noble creatures of nothing—he used not the least tool or instrument in making the heavens and earth—and in having them all at his beck and bidding, at his call and command; the greatest do him homage, and the smallest do him service. The sun, as strong and swift as he is—moving, as some write, every hour 16,000 miles—yet he flies back like a coward if God speak but the word, Josh. 10:12; Job 9:5–10. He armeth flies and lice, and what execution did they do upon the Egyptians!

Cambden tells us the arms of the Shagburies in Warwickshire, being stars, are found engraven in the very stones within their manor of Shagbury. Whether that be true or no, I know not; but sure I am that the arms of the infinite God, his eternal power, manifold wisdom, and matchless goodness, are so plainly written on his works in the world, in that first volume of creation, that he that runs may read them. Solomon tells us, God hath set the world in men's hearts—namely, that the skilfulness of the workman may be admired in the exactness of his works, Eccles. 3:11.

I might draw thee further, and show thee (but that I would not be so large) how these glorious perfections of God are printed in a larger letter, in a fairer character, in the second volume, the work of



redemption. This is the object of angels' admiration, and ought to be of thy meditation.

Truly thy duty is to read God in the first book, the book of the creatures; and more especially in the second, in Jesus Christ, upon his own day.

Thy meditation of God's works, as it will give honour to God, so it will not a little further thy spiritual good. When David considered the work of creation, he falls presently upon exalting God, and debasing himself: Ps. 8:1–4, 'When I consider the heavens, the work of thy hands, the moon and the stars which thou hast made, O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth, and thy glory above the heavens.' There he sets God up high, but then he casts himself down low: 'What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou dost thus visit him?'

When thine heart is like wax hardened, bring it by meditation to the warm beams of this sun, and they will soften it.

So when David considered the work of redemption, how doth he magnify God and vilify himself: 'What am I? and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me up hitherto? and yet this was a small thing in thine eyes, O God; for thou hast also spoken of thy servant's house for a great while to come,' 1 Chron. 16:16, 17. O friend, as rubbing the limbs with hot oils is a great means to recover them when they are benumbed, so when thy heart is dull and dead, on a Lord's-day, if thou wouldst but ply it with the meditation of the infinite love and goodness of God in sending his Son to die for thy soul, it would be a sovereign means to quicken and revive it.

Consider also the word of God which thou hast heard on that day; do thou, like Mary, ponder it in thine heart. Meditation to the word is

what fire is to water; though water be naturally so cold, yet put fire under it, and it will make it hot and boiling; so, though thine heart be cold in regard of affection to the word, put but this fire under it, and it will boil with love to it. 'Oh, how love I thy law!' There is his heat of affection, (the expression is both by way of interrogation and acclamation, shewing the fervency and intention of his love,) but what was the fire which caused it? 'It is my meditation all the day,' Ps. 119.

The reason why some men profit so little by the word is, want of meditation. If a man eat his food, and as soon as it is in his stomach vomit it up again, it is no wonder if he get little strength by it, or if he pine and consume away. Truly, if sermons enter in at one ear and out at the other, making no stay with thee, I shall not marvel if they work no change in thee.

## **CHAPTER XXII**

### **Brief directions for the sanctification of the Lord's-day from morning to night**

Reader, besides those general directions which I have largely insisted on, I shall annex here some short directions how thou mayest spend a Lord's-day, from the beginning to the end of it, as may be most for the honour of God and the furthering thine own everlasting good.

1. Be sure thou takest some pains with thy heart the afternoon (or evening at least) before, to prepare thy soul for the ensuing Sabbath. As our whole life should be a preparation for death, yet the nearer we

draw to the night of our dissolution, the more gloriously (as the setting sun) we should shine with holiness; so in the whole week we should be preparing for the Lord's-day; but the more the day doth approach, the more our preparation must increase. The bigger the vessel is, the more water may be carried from the fountain. According to the measure of the sacks which the patriarchs carried to Joseph, so were they filled with corn by Joseph; preparation doth not only fit the heart for grace, but also widen the heart that it may receive much of the Spirit of God. Some servants when they are to bake in the morning put their wood in the oven overnight, and thereby it burneth both the sooner and the better. Men make much the more riddance of their work, who, being to travel a great journey, load their carts, or put up their things, and lay them ready overnight. If thou art a Christian, thy experience will tell thee that after thou hast on a Saturday called thyself to account for thy carriage on the foregoing week, bewailed thy miscarriages before the Lord; in particular, thy playing the truant on former Lord's-days, when thou shouldst have been learning those lessons which Christ hath set thee in his law, and hast been earnest with God for pardon of thy sins, and a sanctified improvement of the approaching Sabbath,—I say, thy experience cannot but teach thee that thy profit after such preparation will make thee abundant amends for thy pains; and that thou hast the best visits, the sweetest kisses, when thy lips, thy heart, are thus made clean beforehand.

2. If the weakness of thy body do not hinder, rise earlier on the Lord's-day than ordinary. When the Israelites were encompassing Jericho, on the seventh day, they rose early in the morning; and, according to many expositors, it was on the Sabbath-day the walls of Jericho fell down, Joshua 6:15. One main work which thou hast to do on a Lord's-day is to batter down the strongholds of sin, to conquer those Canaanites which would keep thee out of the promised land;

do thou rise early for this end. He that riseth and setteth out early goeth a considerable part of his way before others awake. It is sordid to lie lazying and to turn upon thy bed as a door on the hinges (and never the farther off) upon any day, but most sad and sinful on a Lord's-day.

3. When thou first awakest turn up thy heart to God in praise for his protection the night past, for the light of another day, especially of his own day; and in prayer for the light of his countenance, and for assistance in every duty, and his direction throughout the day. As thou art rising, if no other more profitable subject offer itself to thy thoughts, meditate how the night is spent, the day is at hand; it concerneth thee therefore to put off the works of darkness, and to put on the armour of light. When thou thinkest on the nakedness of thy body, how unseemly it would be for thee to walk up and down without raiment, do not forget the nakedness of thy soul by sin, and how uncomely thou art in the sight of God, without the robes of Christ's righteousness, and the graces of the Holy Ghost.

4. When thou art dressed, let nothing hinder thee from thy secret devotion. When thou art in thy closet, consider of the price which God hath put into thy hand, the value and worth of a Lord's-day, the weight and concernment of the duties therein, and the account thou art ere long to give for every Sabbath and season of grace. These thoughts, as heavy weights on a clock, would make thee move more swiftly in the work of the day. After some time spent in meditation, in some short yet reverent and hearty petitions, entreat God's help in the present and subsequent duties of the day; after which read some portion of the Scripture, and pour out thy soul in prayer. Get thy heart effectually possessed with this truth, that God must work his own work in thee and for thee, or it will never be done; that, as the Spirit moved on the waters at first, and then the living creatures were

formed, so the Spirit must move upon the waters of ordinances before they can produce or increase spiritual life. Hereby thou wilt be stirred up to more fervent supplication for, and more importunate expectation of, help from heaven. In thy prayers remember all the assemblies of the saints that they may see God's beauty, power, and glory, as they have sometimes beheld them in his sanctuary. Entreat God to clothe his ordinances with his own strength, that they may be mighty through him for the bringing in and building up many souls. In special, when thou art at prayer, think of the preachers of the gospel; conceive that thou hearest every one of them speaking to thee, as Paul to his Romans, 'I beseech thee, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,' Rom. 15:30. Their work is of infinite weight; it is God-work, soul-work, temple-work. Not one of them but may say, with Nehemiah, on a Lord's-day, upon much greater reason, 'Oh, I am doing a great work,' Neh. 6:3. Their opposition is great. The devil will do what may be to hinder them; the world hates them; their own hearts will disturb them; their strength is small; their graces are weak. Alas, what can they do? Oh, therefore, pray for them.

5. After thy secret duties thou mayest, if nature require, refresh thy body with convenient food. Thy God alloweth thee to cherish, though not to overcharge thy outward man. I shall speak to thy carriage about eating and drinking in the twenty-third chapter, and therefore omit it here.

6. In the next place, it will be fit that thou call thy family together, and enter upon family duties. Namely, to read the word of God, to call upon the name of God, and to sing to the praise of God.

7. Let as many of thy family as can conveniently be spared accompany thee to public ordinances. Remember the command, 'Thou, thy son, thy daughter, thy man-servant and maid-servant, and all within thy gate.' Do not pamper their bodies, and starve the souls of thy household. It is recorded of Dr Chaterton, master of Emmanuel College, that he never caused any of his servants to stay at home on a Lord's-day, barely to dress meat; be able to say with Cornelius, who feared the Lord with all his house, 'We are all here present before God.'

8. As thou art going to the place of public ordinances, consider with thyself, that thou art going to converse, not with men, but with God; even with that God who searcheth the heart, who will not be mocked, and who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, that thou mayest hereby be quickened unto uprightness and seriousness, and to dart up some ejaculatory prayer to God for aid and assistance.

9. In every part of public worship, carry thyself with reverence, humility, love, faith, and sincerity. Hear, sing, pray, receive the sacrament, as one that doth all in God's sight, as one that is working for his immortal soul, and as one that within a few days shall enter the gates of death, and never have a season more for such sacred duties. Depart not from the church till all be done. In a court of civil judicature, thou wilt stay till the court riseth; if thou wouldst have God's blessing with thee, do not leave it behind thee. As thou comest from the church, meditate on what thou hast heard, chew that meat which the minister hath put into thy mouth, thereby thou mayest get much spiritual nourishment.

10. When thou art come home, usually let nothing hinder from prayer, either in thy family or closet, wherein I would advise thee to turn the heads of the sermon and chapters read into petitions, as also

to beg pardon of thy wanderings in the worship of God, and beseech him who with his own hand wrote the law in two tables, that he would write the word read and preached in the tables of thine heart.

11. At dinner take heed of excess, whereby thy body will be unfitted to serve thy soul; yet do not pinch or punish thy body, because the day is a day of joy and delight; I would wish thee to watch thy heart and tongue all the day long, but especially at meals, that thou mayest not think thine own thoughts, nor speak thine own words. If thyself or others start any unseasonable or earthly discourse at table, give conscience leave to speak to thee, as Judas to the apostles, 'What needeth this waste?' what needeth this waste of precious time, of so rich a treasure as every part of this day is? Let the first dish at table be God's—I mean when a blessing is desired, let presently some savoury discourse be offered; hereby sin may be prevented. The Jews had two notable defeats on the Sabbath-day, because they would not defend themselves; the first defeat was by Antiochus, the second by Pompey the Great. Reader, if thou wouldst not have Satan to foil thee on a Lord's-day, keep a strict watch over thy thoughts, words, and works. After dinner, as time will give leave, either sing or pray with thy family, or repeat what thou hast heard, or busy thyself in godly conference, chiefly about what was read or preached that morning.

12. Neglect not afternoon ordinances. Some persons are like some physicians, forenoon men; they must be sought to in the morning only, if you would find them about religious duties. Friend, if thy soul ever met thy Saviour in public duties, thou canst not but love and prize them at a high rate. In the close of the day sometimes God sendeth in the chief blessing of the day. A Sabbath tide hath brought in many a good draught of fish. Be present at, and serious in, public ordinances. As an error in the first concoction can never be mended

in the second, so an error or carelessness in public, cannot be mended by carefulness in private.

13. When thou returnest from public ordinances, take some time to meditate on the word or works of God; thou mayest read over the eighth particular in the twenty-first chapter to help thee therein.

14. Do not lessen thy secret or private duties on that day, let them rather be increased than diminished. The offering under the gospel was prophesied to be greater than under the law. Under the law one lamb was to be offered; under the gospel six lambs, Num. 28; Ezek. 46.

15. Call thy children and servants to account what they have learned that day, and explain what they understand not; hereby thou wilt benefit both thyself and others. Chemnitius observeth that our blessed Saviour in the 4th of Mark, and 14th of Luke, after he had instructed the people as a public preacher on the Sabbath-day, did examine and teach his apostles as a private master of a family.

16. At evening, sing, pray, and if thou canst, repeat the heads at least of both the sermons. Plutarch reporteth of a river which runneth sweet in the morning, and bitter at night. Let it not be said of thee, that thy morning was like Nebuchadnezzar's image, of gold, and thy evening like the feet of it, of clay.

17. Before thou goest to rest, examine thyself what thou hast got or lost that day. Reflect upon the carriage of thy heart in the several duties, as also what welcome thou hadst at the throne of grace; what covered dishes were brought thee by the Spirit from God's own table; that accordingly thou mayest beg pardon or return praise. If thou hast been melted with God's affection, obtained any strength against thy corruptions, or received any degree of grace, take heed of



ascribing the glory to thyself. In Justinian's law it was decreed, that no workmen should set up his name within the body of that building which he made out of another man's cost. If thou didst pray, or hear, or sing, or read, or meditate with any life or delight, seriousness or sincerity, in any measure agreeable to his word and will, all was from God; there was not a stone used by thee towards this spiritual building, but it was taken out of his quarry. As he is the author, so let him have the honour.

18. Be watchful over thyself at the latter end of the day, with all imaginable circumspection, that the last part of the day may be the best part of the day. Some soldiers prevail in the day, but lose all again at night, because they are slothful when their quarters are beaten up by their enemies. Some lose again at night what they got in the day; like Hannibal, they know how to obtain a victory, but not to improve a victory. Usually the evenings are cold, though the days are hot.

19. As orators at the close of their speech, use all their art and skill to move the affections of their auditors, so at the close of the Lord's-day, put forth all thy grace and spiritual strength, to prevail with God for a blessing. Say of the Sabbath, as Jacob to the angel, I will not let thee go without a blessing.

20. Labour to keep the influence of the Lord's-day ordinances warm upon thy spirit all the week after; let not thy devotion pass away with the day. Some children, when they put on new shoes on a Sabbath, are very careful to keep them clean, are unwilling to set their feet to the ground for fear of dirt, but in the week-days will run up to the ankles in water or mire. Oh, let not children's play be thy earnest, but endeavour that thy practices in secret and private, in thy calling, and in all companies on the week-days, may be answerable to the great

privileges which thou didst enjoy, and the grace which thou didst receive, on the Lord's-day.

### **A good wish about the Lord's-day, wherein the former heads are epitomised**

The first day of the week being of divine institution, and baptized by God himself with that honourable name of the Lord's-day, partly in regard of its author, 'This is the day which the Lord hath made;' partly in regard of the blessed Redeemer, who rose that day, and triumphed over the grave, the devil, the curse of the law, and hell; it being a day sanctified for the glory of my Saviour, of which I may say as of Jacob, 'The Lord hath chosen it to himself for his peculiar treasure,' Ps. 135:4, and a day set apart for the spiritual and eternal good of my precious soul, wherein I may enjoy communion with my God in all his ordinances, without interruption, I wish, in general, that as the Spirit may be in me in the week-days, so that I may be in the Spirit on the Lord's-day, filled therewith, and enabled thereby to have my conversation all the day long in heaven. Oh that my care in fitting my soul for it, my holy carriage at it, and my suitable conversation after it, may testify that I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness; and that I esteem one day in his courts better than a thousand elsewhere. I wish, in particular, that I may prepare for it as for a wedding-day, wherein Christ and my soul are to be espoused together; and to that end, before it cometh, may be careful so to order my earthly affairs, that they may not encroach upon this holy ground; and so open the door of my heart, and adorn it with spiritual excellencies, that the King of glory may enter in, and think himself a welcome guest in my soul. Oh that I might never give my God cause to complain of me, as once of the Jews, 'Your Sabbaths and solemn feasts I cannot away with, for your hands are defiled.' As Nehemiah shut the gates of the

city, that no burdens might be carried in on the Sabbath-day, so let me secure the gate of my heart, that no worldly things may disturb me in Sabbath duties. Oh let me not, like Martha, be careful and troubled about many things, but on this day especially sit at Christ's feet, mind the one thing necessary, and choose the good part which shall never be taken from me. I wish that I may long more for it than ever a bridegroom did for his bride; that when it is come in, I may bid it heartily welcome, and that as my Saviour rose early that morning to justify me, so I may rise early on this day to glorify him.

I desire that this holy day may be a high day in my account, both because the Lord of the Sabbath hath separated it to sacred uses, and because it is the day of his resurrection, whence so much, good cometh to my soul. By his passion he laid down the price of my redemption; but by his rising again—the judge of quick and dead sending his officer, an angel, to roll away the stone, open the prison door, and let him out—he manifesteth to the world that the debt is discharged, and the law fully satisfied. Oh, of what value should this day be to me! My Redeemer's humiliation indeed was like Joseph's imprisonment, but his delivery out of the grave, like Joseph's enlargement and preferment, whereby he came into a capacity to advance and enrich all his relations.

I pray that I may look on this day as a special season to sow to the Spirit in, and improve it accordingly. I believe that my God will not hold him guiltless that takes his name, or spends his day, in vain. Oh let me not, like a foolish child, play by that candle which is set up for me to work by, lest I go to the bed of my grave in the dark of sin and sorrow. I wish that I may not neglect either secret or family duties on this sacred day; but yet that I may so perform them that they may be helps, not hindrances to public ordinances; that since God loveth the gates of Zion above all the dwellings of Jacob, I may set a high price

upon, and have an ardent love to, the habitation of God's house, and the place where his honour dwelleth: that as a true child of my heavenly Father, I may love most, and like best, that milk which is warm from the breasts of public ordinances. I wish that I may call the Lord's-day my delight, it being a day wherein I enter into the suburbs of the holy city, and begin that work of praising, pleasing, and enjoying my God, which I hope to be employed in to eternity: that it may be my meat and drink to do the will of my God. Oh that I might so savour the things of the Spirit, and so taste the Lord to be gracious, that love may be the loadstone to draw me to my closet, family, and to church; and season every service I am called to upon the Sabbath,. Because every part of this day is of great price, more worth than a whole world, I desire that not the least moment of it may be squandered away, but (as the disciples after the miracle of loaves) I may gather up with care and conscience the smallest fragments, that nothing be lost. My God giveth me good measure, heaped up, pressed down, shaken together, and running over; why should I be niggardly to him, (to myself, indeed, for it is my profit, not his,) when he is so liberal, so bountiful to me? I wish in regard the blessed God is not only the master, but also the marrow of his day, that no Lord's-day may satisfy me without the Lord of the day. Alas! what is the best time, without the rock of eternity? what is the best day without the Ancient of days? what are the ordinances of God without the God of ordinances? what are Sabbaths, sermons, sacraments, and seasons of grace, without the dearest Saviour, but as broken cisterns, glorious dreams, or gilded nothings? I have read of a good soul, who answered his friend, Speak to me while you will, no words can satisfy, except you mention Christ; write to me what you will, it will not satisfy, except in your letters I may read Christ. Oh that in no sermon I might be contented till I hear Christ, and that in no chapter I might be pleased till I can read Christ. That as the needle touched with the loadstone never resteth till it turn to the

north, so my heart may be restless in holy duties till it turneth to, and hath fellowship with, the Lord of heaven. The Lord's-day is an excellent resemblance of my future blessedness, wherein I shall enjoy my Saviour fully, and my God shall be all in all to me. Lord, let never this day pass without some taste of those celestial pleasures. Meditation on the works and word of my God, being a duty most in its prime and season on a Sabbath-day, I beg that what time I spare from public, private, or secret performances, I may employ to this purpose, that I may behold my God to be infinite in wisdom, power, and goodness in his footsteps of creation, and stand amazed at that rare workmanship, those curious contrivances of his (which angels look into with admiration) that appear in his masterpiece, that work of redemption; and for his word, let my heart be able to say with David, 'O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.'

I wish that I may watch over my thoughts, words, and actions, all the day long; in special, that as when the holy things belonging to the sanctuary were to be removed, they were covered all over, lest any dust should soil them; so I may cover my heart with such circumspection that no dust of sin may cleave to it. Oh that I might be so wise and watchful, that there may not be the least minute of the day wherein I may not either do, or receive some good. Lord, let no Sabbath pass without some saving good to my precious soul.

I desire, finally, that I may not lose the heat of the day in the cool of the evening. I mean that what good I gain from my God through his ordinances in the day, may not be lost by my negligence at night; but that as a wise commander, I may then double my guard, and expect with much importunity, some evening dews of comfort and grace. Oh that I might so keep the Sabbath of my God, choose the things that please him, and take hold of his covenant, that I might so turn away my foot from the Sabbath, from doing my pleasure on his holy day,

and call the Sabbath my delight, the holy of the Lord, that I may have, with the eunuch, within the house of my God, a name better than of sons and daughters, even an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. Amen. Isa. 56:4, 5, 58:13.

### **A good wish to the Lord's-day**

Hail thou that art highly favoured of God, thou map of heaven, thou golden spot of the week, thou market-day of souls, thou day-break of eternal brightness, thou queen of days, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among days, Luke 1:28. I may say to thee what the angel said to Daniel, Oh day greatly beloved! Dan. 9:23. Thou art fairer than all the children of time, grace is poured into thy lips; God, even thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows, Ps. 45. Of the Jewish Sabbaths and other festivals, in comparison of thee it may be spoken, They perish, but thou remainest, and they all wax old as a garment; and as a vesture hast thou folded them up, and they are changed, but thou shalt (maugre the malice of men and devils) continue the same, and thy years shall not fail, Heb. 1:11, 12. As the temple succeeded and exceeded the tabernacle, this was fleeting, that was fixed, so dost thou all former Sabbaths, they were but morning stars to usher in thee, the sun, and then to disappear. Other festivals in all their royalty are not arrayed like unto thee. All the graces triumph in thee, all the ordinances conspire to enrich thee; the Father ruleth thee, the Son rose upon thee, the Spirit hath overshadowed thee. Thus is it done to the day which the king of heaven delighteth to honour. Thou hast not only a common blessing with other days by the law of nature, but a special blessing above all other days, from the love of thy maker. Let thousands mark thee for their new birthday; be thou a day, as it was said of that night to the Jews, much to be remembered, much to be observed to the Lord, for bringing many out of worse than Egyptian bondage, Exod. 12:42; be

thou to them a day of light and gladness, of joy and honour, and a good day, Esther 8:16. On thee light was created, the Holy Ghost descended, life hath been restored, Satan subdued, sin mortified, souls sanctified, the grave, death, and hell conquered. Oh how do men and women flutter up and down on the weekdays, as the dove on the waters, and can find no rest for their souls, till they come to thee their ark, till thou put forth thy hand and take them in! Oh how do they sit under thy shadow with great delight, and find thy fruits sweet to their taste! Oh the mountings of mind, the ravishing happiness of heart, the solace of soul which on thee they enjoy in the blessed Saviour! They are sorry when the days shorten for thy sake, they wish for thee before thou comest, they welcome thee when thou art come, and they enjoy so much of heaven in thee, that thence they love and look, and long the more for their eternal Sabbath. 'Go forth, O thou fairest among women, and be thou fruitful in bringing forth children to thy maker and husband. Be thou the mother of thousands and of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of them that hate them,' Gen. 24:60. Do thou, like Rachel and Leah, build up the house of Israel; do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be thou famous in Bethlehem. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O thou mighty and gracious day, and in thy majesty ride prosperously; because of meekness, righteousness, and truth, let thy right hand teach thee terrible things; let thine arrows be sharp in the hearts of spiritual enemies, whereby the people may fall under thee. The Lord hath chosen thee, he hath desired thee for his habitation, Ps. 132. Thou art his rest for ever; in thee he will dwell, for he hath desired it. Let him abundantly bless thy provision, and satisfy thy poor with bread; let him clothe thy priests with salvation, and let thy saints shout aloud for joy; let thine enemies be clothed with shame, but upon thy head let the crown flourish. Let nations bow down to thee; let kingdoms fall down before thee. Let all the kingdoms of the earth become the kingdoms of thy Lord and of thy Christ; be thou honoured as long as

the sun and moon shall endure, even throughout all generations. Thou art like Joseph, a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a wall, whose branches run over the wall. The archers have sorely grieved thee, and shot at thee, endeavouring to weaken thy morality, and hated thee, but thy bow abode in strength by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob, from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel; even by the Lord of Sabbaths who shall help thee, and by the Almighty who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts and of the womb; the blessings of this day have prevailed above the blessings of all other days; let them be continued and increased on the heads of this holy and honourable day, and on the head of that day which is separate from its brethren. Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after thy hurt, let them be turned back and put to confusion that desire thy ruin; let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee; let them that love thy sanctification say continually, Let the Lord be magnified, who delighteth in the prosperity of his saints, and therefore hath set apart his Sabbath for their soul-good. Thou, like Jacob, hast got away the blessing from the other days, yea, thy God hath blessed thee, and thou shalt be blessed: 'Blessed are they that bless thee, and cursed are they that curse thee.' In a word, the Lord be gracious to thee, and delight in thee, and cause the light of his countenance to shine upon thee; let all thine ordinances be clothed with power, and be effectual for the conversion and salvation of millions of souls; let thy name be great from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. Finally, farewell sweet day, thou cream of time, thou epitome of eternity—thou heaven in a glass, thou first-fruits of a blessed and everlasting harvest: Did I say farewell? A welfare I wish to thee; but oh let me never lose thee, or take my leave of thee, till I come to enjoy thee in a higher form, to see the Sun of righteousness,—who early on thy morning rose and made a day indeed while the natural sun was behind,—face to face, and to know



thy maker and master as I am known of him, when I shall be a pillar in the temple of my God, and shall go out no more, but serve him day and night, to whom, for the inestimable dignity and privilege of his own day, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen, amen.

## **CHAPTER XXIII**

### **How a Christian may exercise himself to godliness in natural actions. And first, in eating and drinking**

As thy duty is to make religion thy business in religious, so also in natural actions. A good scrivener is not only careful how he makes his first and great letters, his flourishes, but also the smallest letters, nay, his very stops and commas. A scribe instructed for the kingdom of heaven, is heedful not only that the weightiest actions of God's immediate worship, but also that the meaner passages of his life, be conformable to God's law. A wise builder will make his kitchen as well as his parlour according to rule. A holy person turns his natural actions into spiritual, and whilst he is serving his body he is serving his God. It is said of a Scotch divine, that he did eat, drink, and sleep eternal life. Luther tells, that though he did not always pray and meditate, but did sometimes eat, and sometimes drink, and sometimes sleep, yet all should further his account; the latter as truly, though not so abundantly, as the former. And indeed it is our privilege that natural actions may be adopted into the family of religion, and we may worship God as really at our tables as in his temple.

Saints must not, like brute beasts, content themselves with a natural use of the creatures, but use them as chariots to mount them nearer,

and cords to bind them closer to God. Piety or holiness to the Lord must be written upon their pots, Zech. 14:20. 'Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God,' 1 Cor. 10:31. Philo observeth that the ancient Jews made their feasts after sacrifice in the temple, that the place might mind them of their duty to be pious at them. It is a memorable expression, 'And Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God,' Exod. 18:12. In which words we have the greatness of their courtesy, and the graciousness of their carriage. For their courtesy, though Jethro were a stranger, and no Israelite, yet the elders honoured him with their company. And Aaron and all the elders came to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law. But mark the graciousness of their carriage, they came to eat bread with him before God; that is, In gloriam et honorem Dei, to the honour and glory of God, saith Calvin. They received their sustenance, as in God's sight, and caused their provision to tend to God's praise.

God takes it ill when we sit down to table and leave him out, Zech. 7:6, 'When ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did ye not eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?' He sends us in all our food, we live at his cost; and therefore our eating may well be to his credit who is the master of the feast.

The Jews, according to some, had officers at every feast whom they called *præfecti morum*; their work was the inspection of the guests, that none should disorder themselves. I must tell thee, God's eye is upon thee every meal, he takes notice whether thy behaviour is as becometh a saint.

And truly, friend, it behoves thee to use religion as a bridle in thy mouth, to hold thee in when thou art eating or drinking. Thy throat is a slippery place, and sin may easily slip down; it is no hard matter

to sin whilst the thing thou art about is not sinful. How many feed without fear, and thereby fatten themselves to the slaughter! Jude 12. We read of some whose tables are snares, in which they have been caught by Satan, Ps. 69:22. Job feared his sons had sinned in their eating and drinking, Job 1:5. There are more guests every meal than thou invitest to thy table. The devil lieth in ambush behind the lawful enjoyment, and will certainly surprise thee before thou art aware, if thou art not watchful. The fatal wound he gave Adam at first was in the throat; by getting him to eat, he brought him and us all to die. If Adam, strengthened with his perfect original purity, was yet caught with this hook, sure I am it concerns thee to beware of the bait; have a care lest the quinsy in thy throat kill thee. Satan is a subtle angler, thou art a poor silly fish; be careful lest he take thee by the teeth and send thee to the fire.

God hath given thee a rule, as for his table, when thou art eating of that body which is meat indeed, and drinking of that blood which is drink indeed, so for thy table, when thou art feeding on ordinary creatures. He sends in thy provision, and he gives thee direction according to which, and no other, thou mayest use it. A tenant who holds lands of his lord may not use them otherwise than according to the conditions on which his lord let them to him; if he do, the premises are forfeited. Now the great God, who is Lord of the whole earth, giveth his creatures to thee conditionally, that thou make use of them according to his will revealed in his word; if thou usest them otherwise thou makest a forfeiture, and mayest expect every moment that he should take possession.

For thy direction, I shall here set down the conditions upon which God giveth thee thy food, that thou use it sacredly, soberly, and seasonably.

First, Thy duty is to eat and drink sacredly. Piety must be mingled with all thy provision, or else it will be poison. Grace must spice every cup, and be sauce for every dish, or nothing will relish well. Water taken from the fountain quickly corrupts, and becomes unsavoury, but in the fountain it is sweet indeed. Godliness will cause thee to enjoy the creatures in God, the fountain of them, and thereby they will be pleasant to thee.

The daily bread which the Israelites did eat was made of the same corn with the shew-bread which was always before the Lord; to teach us that we should be holy as in God's sight when we are eating our ordinary bread, Exod. 25:30. Therefore saints are said to eat to the Lord, Rom. 14:6. As they eat by him, so they eat to him.

Thy piety at meals consisteth in begging a blessing before thou eatest, in holy expressions and affections when thou art eating, and in thanksgiving after thou hast eaten.

1. In begging a blessing upon thy food. The creatures on thy table are God's creatures; and I must tell thee that thou art more bold than welcome if thou makest use of his goods without asking his leave; he expecteth, though not to be satisfied for his mercies, yet to be acknowledged and sanctified in his mercies. 'Every creature of God is sanctified by the word of God and prayer,' 1 Tim. 4:5. By the word: all the creatures were polluted to us by the first Adam, but they are purified to us by the second Adam, Ps. 8. The word of promise to Christ, the heir of all things, is our warrant, and speaks our permission. And prayer: the word gives us leave to use them, and prayer brings down a blessing upon them. The word sheweth our right to them through Christ, and prayer acknowledgeth God's right (Gen. 9:3) to them and us.

God's blessing only is the staff of bread, Exod. 23:25. 'Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God,' Mat. 4:4. Bread doth not nourish by its own power, but by God's word of promise; he can easily withhold his blessing, and then bread will strengthen no more than chips of boards. 'And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver your bread again by weight; and ye shall eat and not be satisfied,' Lev. 26:26.

Even heathen princes began their solemn feasts with sacrifices. The Israelites would not eat before Samuel came, because he used to bless the sacrifice, 1 Sam. 9:13. Our blessed Saviour, though he were Lord of all, yet would not feed before he had looked up to heaven and blessed the fish, Mark 6:41. Paul, though amongst many infidels, yet, before meat, would desire a blessing in presence of them all, Acts 27:35. He is worse than an ox or ass, who will not acknowledge his owner, Isa. 1:5.

Reader, God can give thee sour sauce to thy sweet meat if thou dost banish him thy table; he can make thy meat lie so hard and heavy at thy stomach, either by sickness, Job 33:20, or sorrow, Ps. 107:17, that thou shalt never digest it whilst thou livest. When thou art at thy merriest meeting he can send such a mournful, terrible message, as to Belshazzar carousing in his cups, that shall make thine ears to tingle, and every joint thou hast to tremble. He can make thy feast to end, either as Adonijah's, in a fright, or as Absalom's sheep-shearing, in a funeral. When thine heart is merry with wine he can summon thee, as Amnon, into the other world. Thy wisest way therefore is to beseech his company, whomsoever thou wantest.

The fruits of trees under the law were the three first years unclean, the fourth year offered to God, and after that free for the owners. All

thy comforts are by reason of sin unclean and cursed to thee; if thou wouldst have them clean and blessed, they must be sanctified by the word of God and prayer. The elephant is said to turn up towards heaven the first sprig that he feedeth on. O friend, wilt thou be worse than a beast? For shame, be not so swinish as to feed on the acorns, and never look up to the tree that bears them.

2. In holy expressions and affections when thou art eating. Whilst thy body is filling, thy soul must not be forgotten. Though it be not unlawful at meals to talk of other matters, yet it is pity saints should ever meet to eat earthly bread, and not have some discourse of their eternal heavenly banquet. How often did our Saviour at such a meeting raise the hearts of his company to better meat! Luke 5:31. As their outward man was feeding, he feasted the inward man. When the publican was at much cost to make him a great feast, he entertains him and the rest too with better cheer: 'The whole need not a physician, but the sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' When one of the chief of the pharisees invited him to his table, observe how he teacheth the guests humility, and the master of the feast charity, Luke 14:7, 8, 12, 13. His lips dropped honey to sweeten and make all their dishes savoury. One of the fathers writeth, that the primitive Christians were so holy in their talk at their table, that one would have thought they had been at a sermon, not at a supper. Plato gives rules for the writing down the table-talk of men, thereby to make them more serious. Luther's Colloquia Mensalia, printed in a large folio, do abundantly prove that he was not idle when he was eating, but that his table was his pulpit, where he read many profitable lectures. There is scarce a meeting of ungodly men to eat but the devil hath his dish among them. The drunkards have a song of David to sugar their liquor, Ps. 35:16; the gluttons have some taunts to fling at saints as sauce to their meat. At Herod's birthday banquet one dish served in was the Baptist's head.

Should not, friend, God have his dish at thy table? When thou art eating bread, let thy meditation and expression be like his who sat at table with Jesus Christ. 'Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God,' Luke 14:15.

Consider God's bounty and mercy in feeding thee and clothing thee, when many hungry bellies and naked backs are abroad in the world. How many would be glad of thy scraps! When thou hast asked God leave for his creatures, thou mayest taste his love in the creatures. Mayest thou not gather and conclude, if the streams are so refreshing and satisfying, what refreshment and satisfaction is there in the well of living waters? If bread be so savoury to a hungry body; how sweet, how savoury is the bread which came down from heaven to a hungry soul! 'Lord, give me evermore that bread.'

Do as the Jews: 'They did eat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness,' Neh. 9:21. When thou art feeding thy body, delight thy soul in God's great goodness. Thus, like Mary, when Christ was at meat, thou mayest break thy box of precious ointment, and perfume the whole room with its fragrant smell.

3. In returning thanks when thou hast eaten. Thy duty is to begin thy meals with prayer, and to end them with praise. Thou canst not give God his due price for mercies, but thou mayest give him his due praise. Though thou art never able to buy them of him, yet thou art able to bless him for them. If thou didst dine at thy neighbour's table, thou wouldst think thyself very unmannerly to turn thy back upon him without any acknowledgment of, and thankfulness for, his courtesy. Every meal thou makest is at God's cost; for shame, be so civil as to thank him for his kindness. Saints are compared to doves, Isa. 60:8, especially for their eyes. 'Thou hast doves' eyes,' Cant. 5. Now doves, after every grain they peck, look upward, as it were

giving thanks. When God opens his hand, thou mayest well open thy lips. When thou hast eaten and art full, thou shalt bless the Lord thy God, Deut. 8:10; Joel 2:26.

Do not, like the fed hawk, forget thy master, or, like them that go to the well, as soon as they have filled their buckets at it, turn their backs upon it. Why shouldst thou forget God, when he remembereth thee? 'When thou shalt have eaten and be full, then beware lest thou forget God,' Deut. 6:11, 12. Let not thy fulness breed forgetfulness. You think him a surly beggar who, if he receive but a small piece of bread, shall fling away from your doors, and give you no thanks.

The primitive Christians did break bread from house to house, and did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God. Some understand it of sacramental, others of corporal bread, Acts 2:46, 47. The Lord Jesus was known by his actions or expressions in giving of thanks, Luke 24:31. Nay, the heathen would acknowledge their dunghill deities in those outward mercies: Dan. 5:4, 'They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, and of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.' Wilt not thou do as much for the true God as they for their false gods? Oh let him have all thy praise, who sendeth in all thy provision. God takes it very ill when we do not own and honour him as the author of our meat and drink. Because Israel was so prided with her pronouns possessives—my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink—God turns them all into privatives: 'For she did not know that I gave her corn and wine and oil, therefore will I return and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and recover my wool and my flax,' Hosea 2:5, 8, 9. Trumpeters love not to sound in those places where they are not answered with a considerable echo: God delights not to bestow mercies on those persons who will not return him suitable praise. Those that return



things borrowed without thanks, must expect, the next time they need, to be denied.

I have read a story in the writings of an eminently pious minister, who was an eye and ear-witness of the truth of it, of a young man who, lying upon his sick-bed, was always calling for meat, but as soon as he saw it was brought to him, at the sight of it he shook and trembled dreadfully in every part of his body, and so continued till his food was carried away; and thus being not able to eat, he pined away, and before his death acknowledged God's justice, in that in his health he had received his meat ordinarily without giving God thanks. The despisers of God's beneficence have been patterns of his vengeance. He hath remembered them in fury who have forgotten his favours.

Some write of the Jews, that in the beginning of their feasts the master of the house took a cup of wine in his hand, and began its consecration after this manner: Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, the King of the world, which createst the fruit of the vine. This they called Bircath hajain, the blessing of the cup. Possibly to this David alludeth in Ps. 116:13, 14, 'What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.' After the cup the master of the house took the bread and consecrated it thus: Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, the King of the world, which bringeth forth bread out of the earth. This they called Bircath halechem. At the end of the feast, the master called to his friends, Let us bless him who hath fed us with his own, and of whose goodness we live; and concluded with a large thanksgiving, wherein he blessed God, first, for their present food; secondly, for their deliverance from Egyptian bondage; thirdly, for the covenant of circumcision; fourthly, for the law given by the ministry of Moses; and then he prayed that God would have mercy on his people Israel;

secondly, on his own city, Jerusalem; thirdly, on Sion, the tabernacle of his glory; fourthly, on the kingdom of the house of David his anointed; fifthly, that he would send Elias the prophet; sixthly, that he would make them worthy of the days of the Messiah, and of the life of the world to come. After this prayer the guests, with soft and low voices, said unto themselves, Fear ye the Lord, all ye his holy ones, because there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions want and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall want no good thing.

Alas, alas! how few Gentiles spend half that time in devotion at their tables which the pious among the Jews did! Many go from their food, as the cow from her fodder, taking no notice of the author of it; and like the idolatrous Israelites, 'they sit down to eat and drink, and rise up to play,' Exod. 32:6. They sit down to eat and drink, and to rise up to play the beast, to play the atheist.

Remember every creature of God is good if it be received with thanksgiving, 1 Tim. 4:4; but this thanksgiving must not be only in thy words, but also in thy works: thy unblamable conversation, and thy charitable contribution must speak thy thankfulness. When the master hath fed the servant, he expects that he should go about his business, and do the work appointed him. That strength which thou receivest from God must be improved for God. It is good to bless God with thy lips, but best of all to bless him with thy hands, and in thy life. God will judge of thy thankfulness by thy conversation. Think thus with thyself: This is the God that feedeth me, that satisfieth me with good things: how sweet, how comfortable are his mercies! What sweet refreshment have I had from the creatures, when some better than myself want food! Others have it, but their lives abhor bread, and their souls dainty meat, Job 33:20. Why should I not love, fear, and trust, and serve this God? I will walk before the Lord in the land

of the living. Oh be ashamed to live at God's cost, and to do Satan's work. Be not like the young mulets which, when they have sucked their fill, turn up their heels and kick at their dam. Further, thy duty is to manifest thy thankfulness by supplying the wants of the needy. Job would not eat his morsels alone, but the fatherless had a share with him, Job 31:16, 17. The forementioned author observes, that the heathen were not forgetful, when they were feeding, of their absent friends. God's hand is open to thee: why should thy heart and hands be shut against the hungry bellies and naked backs? Thy goods extend not to God's person, therefore they must to God's poor, Ps. 16:2. Have a monitor within thee, to call upon thee when at meals, Remember the poor, remember the poor, remember poor Christ, and hungry Christ, and naked Christ: by this test he will try thee for thine eternal estate; and upon the neglect of this he will sentence thee to the eternal fire, Mat. 25:41.

If thou art a rich person, do thou frequently mind this duty. Great housekeepers must be good housekeepers. All must contribute, according to their abilities, to the poor's necessities; but where God gives much, he requires much; he expecteth a harvest suitable to the seed he soweth. It is credibly reported of Mr Sutton, founder of Sutton's Hospital, that he used often to repair into a private garden, where he poured forth his prayers unto God, and amongst other passages was overheard frequently to use this expression, Lord, thou hast given me a liberal and large estate; give me also a heart to make a good use of it. I am confident, a heart to use wealth aright, is a greater mercy than the greatest heap of wealth; I had rather have a little, with a heart to improve it for God, than much, than millions without such a heart. Make thee friends of the unrighteous mammon, that when that fails thee, thou mayest be received into the celestial habitation. When Dionysius,<sup>2</sup> the Syracusan tyrant, saw what heaps of gold and silver his son hoarded up in his closet, he

asked him what he meant, to let it lie there, and not to make friends with it, to get the kingdom after his death: O son, saith he, thou hast not a spirit capable of a kingdom. The rust of many a rich man's wealth will eat his heart with pain and torment in the other world, and the apostle calls upon such to weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon them, James 5:1–4. God findeth fault with them that could fare on the finest bread and fattest flesh themselves, and yet forget the afflictions of others, Amos 6:5.

How many riotous rich men are there, that though they cannot eat and drink all with sobriety, will rather spoil it by gluttony and drunkenness, than let the poor have part with them! like children, who will rather crumble away their food, than impart any to their fellows. Oh, how justly was the rich man denied a drop in the other world, when he denied a crum in this world. How many covetous muck-worms, like hogs, are nourished only to be destroyed! they are good for nothing whilst they are alive. The hog is neither good to draw as the ox, nor to bear as the horse, nor to clothe us as the sheep, nor to give milk as the cow, nor to keep the house as the dog, but good only to be killed. Such are these scraping wretches, good for nothing till they come to the knife. Like barren trees, they do but cumber the ground, and serve for no use till they are cut down for the unquenchable fire. And truly, their hearts will never bewail him dead, whose bowels did not bless him alive. His life did not deserve a prayer, nor his death a tear, who laid out that to serve his pride, which God laid in to serve the poor.

Reader, if God have dealt thee a considerable portion of outward good things, consider that thou art but God's factor; he is the merchant. The factor knoweth that the goods transported to him are his master's goods, and he must dispose them according to directions from his master. All thine estate is God's; thou art but his servant, his

factor; he gives thee order in his word to dispose it thus and thus, to such poor members of Christ, so much to one, and so much to another, and he will shortly reckon with thee how thou obeyest his directions; and if thou forbearst charity now, thou wilt then be counted and found as real a thief, before the whole world, as ever servant was that put hundreds into his own purse which his master appointed him to pay to other persons. 'Withhold not thy goods from the owners thereof,' Prov. 3:27, from them to whom it is due, either by the law of justice, or by the law of love, Rom. 13:8. And truly charity is the best way to plenty; he gets most that gives most; he that soweth liberally, shall reap liberally.

I have sometimes considered with myself, and wondered why Nabal should be so exceeding churlish to David as not to spare of his superfluities to supply David's necessities, when David had been so exceeding civil to him as to preserve his flocks in safety from the rage of hungry soldiers. But when I marked well the story, I quickly found the cause of Nabal's covetous carriage. He looked upon himself as master of his estate, and not as God's servant to improve it for his profit and praise. 'Shall I take my bread, and my water, and my flesh, and give it to men whom I know not whence they be?' 1 Sam. 25:11. Had he but had so much grace as to have called it God's bread, and God's water, he would have disposed it according to God's word, and not have denied a poor persecuted saint; but because he counted it his own proper wealth, therefore it must be disposed according to his own pernicious will.

Reader, look upon thyself, in regard of thine estate, only as a servant in trust, which thou must shortly give an account of, and then 'To do good, and to distribute thou wilt not forget, as knowing that with such sacrifices God is well pleased,' Heb. 3:16.

Secondly, Thy duty is to eat and drink soberly. 'The grace of God which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to us, teaching us to live soberly in this present evil world,' Titus 2:12. This sobriety respecteth both the quantity and the quality of thy diet.

First, Thy duty is to be temperate as to the quantity of thy diet. Reason is content with a little, religion with less. Although no certain proportion of food can be prescribed to men, for those showers which drown the clay valleys, do hardly quench the thirst of the sandy hills; neither the bodies of men, nor their stomachs are all of a size; yet this is a certain rule, for a man to eat or drink so much as to oppress nature, and to unfit himself for prayer, is a degree of intemperance. God gave man food to further, not to hinder him in his general and particular calling; and surely they sin who feed till, like fatted horses, they are unfit for service. Tertullian, speaking of the carriage of the primitive Christians at their meals, tells us, They do not sit down before they have prayed; they eat as much as may satisfy hunger, they drink so much as is sufficient for temperate men, are filled as they that remember they must pray afterwards.

Christians may cheer nature, but they must not clog it. It is a great privilege in the charter granted us by the King of kings, that we should have dominion over the creatures; but it will be a sordid bondage if we suffer them to have dominion over us; instead of being our servants, to become our masters, Ps. 8:5–7. God, in the very framing of man, intended him for temperance, by giving a little mouth, with a narrow throat, and a lesser belly than other creatures. And in man's charter, which speaks his leave to slay the beasts in God's forest, observe in what tenure it runs: 'Every living thing that moveth shall be meat for you, (there is the general concession,) even as the green herb have I given you all things,' (here is the special

limitation;) that is, saith an expositor, to use them soberly and moderately, not to gluttony and excess.

It is an abominable shame to a saint to be a slave to the beast in him, his sensitive appetite. 'He that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things.' Beasts seldom surfeit at their food, never sin. Epicurus, who esteemed man's happiness to consist in pleasures, was yet very temperate, as Cicero and others observe. Socrates was wont to say, that evil men live that they may eat and drink, but good men eat and drink that they may live.

Some of the heathen did very much hate excess, either in eating or drinking. The old Gauls were very sparing in their diet, and fined them that outgrew their girdles. Drunkenness, by Solon's law, was punished with death. The Spartans brought their children to loathe drunkenness, by causing them to behold the beastly behaviour of their servants when they were drunk.

But how many nominal Christians, in regard of temperance, come short of heathens! Woe to the drunkards of Ephraim, of England, (God hath a cup of red wine, of pure wrath, and these must drink the dregs thereof,) how doth this iniquity abound! Men drink healths so long till they drink away their health and their heaven too. Some mariners observe that as the waters grow shallower (the sea losing) about the coasts of Holland and Zealand, the waters grow deeper (the sea gaining) about the English coasts. Whether drunkenness ebb in Holland or no, I know not; I am sure it flowerth in England. We may complain, as Diogenes Laertius of his countrymen, that when they went to sacrifice to health, they did then most riotously abuse health.

There was a street in Rome called Sobrius Vicus, the Sober Street, because there was never an ale-house there. But how few towns have

we which may be called sober towns, because there are no drunkards there!

Reader, if thou art one guilty of this sin, for the Lord's sake bethink thyself speedily; dost thou know what thou dost?

Thou wrongest thy body. Vermin abound, as rats and mice, where there is much corn; and diseases abound in bodies given to excess. Too much wood puts out the fire. Meat kills more than the musket; the glutton digs his grave with his teeth, and the drunkard drowns himself in his cup. Stratonicus spake fitly of the Rhodians, they build their houses as if they were immortal, but feed as if they intended to live but a little while.

Spare diet is the best cordial of nature. Moderate fasting is the best physic. He that riseth with an appetite, secures his digestion. It was said of Queen Elizabeth, that she ever rose with an appetite, and that Edward the Sixth was wont to call her his sweet sister Temperance, and she lived seventy years. Galen lived one hundred and forty years, and almost all the time without any sickness, and this natural reason is given, that he did never eat his fill.

It wrongs thy estate. The drunkard and glutton shall come to poverty, Prov. 23:21. Their throats are open sepulchres to bury their estates in. Diogenes, when he heard of a drunkard's house to be sold, cried out, I thought he would ere long vomit up his house.

It wrongs thy soul. After rioting and drunkenness, followeth chambering and wantonness, Rom. 13:12, and woe and sorrow, and wounds without cause; look not upon the wine, at last it biteth. like a serpent; thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things, Prov. 23:20. Excess turns men into swine, and then they are for legions of devils. Intemperance calls off the guard,



thy watchfulness, and then the enemies may enter thick and threefold. They that are not sober, cannot be vigilant, 1 Pet. 5:8.

How unfit is a man in his intemperance for any duty. Ambrose observes, As Moses received the tables fasting, so he broke them when the people had been feasting, judging them at that time very unfit to hear the law.

It may be thou art not a drunkard, but yet usest to exceed in eating. Austin avoided the sin of drunkenness, sed crapula nonnunquam surrepit servo tuo; he sometimes transgressed in eating: but Lord, saith he, thou hast taught me to use my meat as my medicine.

Let the rational faculty command thy sensitive; consider how contrary to reason it is for a man, like a dolphin, to have his mouth in his maw; and like the ass-fish, to have his heart in his belly; and how contrary to religion it is, to have the kitchen for thy church, a table for thine altar, and the belly for thy God, Luke 21:34. 'Take heed lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and so that day come upon you unawares.' God alloweth us sometimes a liberal use, as in days of thanksgiving, and at marriages, but never a lustful abuse of his creatures.

Secondly, Thy duty is to be temperate as to the quality of thy diet. Though here no certain quality of food can be set down, God allowing something to the conditions, and much more to the weakly and sickly constitutions of men; yet in general this must be observed, that we make not provision for the flesh, Rom. 13:12. We may preserve the flesh, but we must not provide for the flesh. Our enemy is strong enough already, we need not put more weapons into his hands. To live after the flesh is the sign of a sinner, Rom. 8:13. It is intemperance for a person in health to study and strive how he may gratify his palate. The Spirit of God calls it a sowing to the flesh, Gal.

6:7. The husbandman plots, contrives, and labours, how he may sow his seed to his best advantage. A fleshmonger will be meditating in the morning before he riseth, with what art his dinner may be so sauced and dressed, that if possible he may excel a beast in carnal delights; he is sowing early, that he may reap liberally. The Christian may take his food, but his food must not take him. It is sinful to be given to our appetites. It is not unlawful to eat dainties, but it is unlawful to set the mind upon them. We may receive them into our stomachs, but not into our hearts. 'When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee: and put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. Be not desirous of his dainties: they are deceitful meat,' Prov. 23:1–3. In which words we may take notice:—1. Of a supposition, if thou be a man given to appetite; for a man to be given to wine, it notes his extraordinary love to and liking of that liquor. For a man to be given to women, it speaks his excessive care and endeavour to enjoy that brutish and ungodly pleasure. For a man to be given to prayer, Ps. 109:4, it speaks prayer to be his trade, his employment, the work which he chiefly minds and pursueth. For a man to be given to God, Rom. 12:1, it notes the soul to be wholly at God's service, to go when God bids him go, to come when God bids him come; so for a man to be given to his appetite, it implieth that all his projects are to please his palate, he is a caterer for the flesh, wholly subject to that sense, altogether at the devotion of his appetite; our appetites are given to us, but we must not be given to our appetites; as Heliogabalus, who was served in at one meal with seven thousand fish, and five thousand fowls. And 2. Here is an imposition, 'Be not desirous of his dainties;' this is a dissuasion from the former irregular affection. We may eat and digest dainties, but we may not crave and desire dainties. God made man not for fleshly dainties, but for spiritual delights. It is a beastly principle and practice to be at the command of provender, as Apicius the Roman, who wrote ten books of

directions how to set forth a feast with all sorts of dainties, and it is said the expenses of his kitchen amounted to two millions of gold. 3. Here is a position, 'For they are deceitful meat.' The desire of dainties is a deadly desire. There is murder under the meat; ordinary, nay manna, extraordinary fare, would not satisfy the sweet-tooth Israelites; they lusted for quails, but God gave them their desire, they had flesh and death together. Some read the former verse thus, Thou puttest a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. To pamper the body, is the way to destroy soul and body too. Dainties entice to excess. He that erreth in the quality of his food, will quickly exceed in the quantity. They that plot night and day to please the flesh, declare publicly that they have nothing of the Spirit; 'sensual, not having the Spirit,' Jude 19. The flesh and the Spirit are like two buckets in a well, as the one mounts up the other falls down. There is a flat opposition between sowing to the flesh, and sowing to the Spirit, Gal. 6:7. Nay, the apostle is express in the mention of this kind of intemperate men, 'They serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies,' Rom. 15. All the servants of Christ are sovereigns over the flesh. Ordinances are ineffectual to persons that are sensual. Rain falls off, as it falls on, upon an oiled post. When the waters of the sanctuary flowed, the miry places, that is sensual hearts, could not be healed, Ezek. 47:11. Behemoth lieth in the fens, that is, saith an expositor, the devil in fleshly men, Job 40:21. Epicures, saith one, whilst he favoureth his fleshly palate, doth neglect the heavenly palace.

There is a distinction of diet to be considered, in regard of bodies, in regard of estates, and also in regard of times; all which piety and prudence must direct the Christian about. But sure I am it is a duty to 'keep under the body, and to bring it into subjection,' 1 Cor. 9:27. They that acquaint us with the Jewish customs, tell us that their ordinary meals were neither many in a day, nor costly; they were

called Arucoth, which signifieth such ordinary fare as travellers have in their journey.

The feast which Moses made for his father-in-law and the elders of Israel is called bread, Exod. 18:11. So also the entertainment of Christ at the house of one of the chief of the pharisees, Luke 14:1, 2; and the daily fare of the disciples, Acts 2:46, 47. Elijah could be content with a raven for his cook. Daniel fed and thrived upon pulse: he looked fairer by it than those that did eat of the king's fare. Brown bread and the gospel are good cheer, said the martyr. John the Baptist could live upon locusts and wild honey. The apostles had some ears of corn for a Sabbath-day's dinner. Though God is pleased out of mercy to afford us better provision, yet our work must be to mind moderation. Oh, how great a curse is it for thee, like Ham, to be a servant of servants, a servant to thy belly, which should be a servant to thee! Thy soul in such a body is but a bright candle in a greasy lanthorn. How much was that speech below a rational creature which Philoxenus uttered, I wish that I had the throat of a crane, that the pleasure of my taste might last the longer! The spider is little else save belly, but she is full of poison.

Besides, it will be a poor account which such men can give for their expenses this way at the great day. God giveth us our wealth for necessities, conveniences, and moderate delight: not for prodigality and luxury. Heliogabalus made whole meals of the tongues of singing-birds and peacocks, and brains of costly creatures. He used to say, that meat is not savoury whose sauce is not costly. Many men have sold all their lands for their kitchen.

What a pattern doth the heir of all things give us of providence: John 6:12, 'Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.'

Some indeed are debtors to their bellies; they pinch and pine them with penury, not allowing them what nature requires, whose gold is their god. They are worse than cannibals, eating their own flesh. He that is 'cruel to his flesh, troubleth his own house,' Prov. 11:7. But the bellies of most are debtors to them, receiving much more than is fit or due, as if they had been born to bow down to and worship their bellies.

If Esau had the title of 'profane' for selling his birthright for a mess of pottage when he was hungry, Heb. 12, how profane then are they that sell their estates, and reason, and health, and souls, and Saviour, and salvation, and all for a moment's brutish pleasure, intemperate eating or drinking.

Our Lord Jesus commandeth his disciples not to be curious about their diet, 'Whatsoever is set before you eat,' Luke 9. If it be wholesome, though it be not toothsome, accept it. The Turks will drink no wine, because Mohammed, their false prophet, forbids it. Reader, be thou temperate, both in regard of the quantity and quality of thy food, because the blessed Jesus, the true prophet of his church, commandeth it.

Thirdly, Thy duty is to eat and drink seasonably. We read of eating in due season, Eccles. 10:17. As there is a season for spiritual actions, when they are most profitable, so there is a season for natural actions, when they are most proper. It is a foul fault not to observe fit hours for our food. Our diet is unseasonable when we begin the day with it. There is a woe to the nation: whose princes eat in the morning,' Eccles. 10:17; and a woe to the persons that 'rise up early in the morning to follow strong drink,' Isa. 5:11. It is a bad sign when men leap out of their beds into their butteries, and, like children, call for their breakfasts as soon as they are up. The servant must wait on

his master till he hath fed. After him is manners. The body must wait on the soul till that hath broke its fast, and had some spiritual refreshment with the blessed God. The body's place is after, not before the soul. The first of the day must ordinarily be given to the Ancient of days. God hopeth to hear from men before either their butlers or cooks hear from them. He expecteth that we should serve him before we serve ourselves, though indeed our serving of him is the only serving of ourselves. Mollerus observeth that David thence pleaded for early protection, because he was early at his petitions. He was early in the morning at his prayer, and therefore he hoped that God would not come late at night with his answer.

Food is unseasonable when one meal treads upon the heels of another, like Job's messengers. The Holy Ghost speaks of some that are early up at it, and continue at it till night, Isa. 5. Some make but one meal, as it were, all day. If either meat or drink be offered them, they can no more refuse it, though they were full before, than a dog his bones. Like children and chickens, they are always feeding. Too much oil puts out the lamp.

Men eat and drink unseasonably when they turn the night into day; and when God and nature call them to rest, they ordinarily, like the Roman glutton, spend that time in pampering their bodies. I have read of one that boasted he had not in so many years seen the sun.

The Dutch will sit at a wedding-feast from eight at night to four in the morning, rising in the interim two or three times to ease nature, and then to their dainties and sweetmeats again. They are industrious on the water, and gluttonous on the land. Reader, I hope though they are prodigal, yet grace hath taught thee to be more provident of thy time.

## CHAPTER XXIV

## **How a Christian may exercise himself to godliness in his apparel and sleep**

Apparel and sleep being of less concernment than some other subjects, I shall speak but little to them; yet because in these things we must walk by the rule of God's word, I shall not wholly omit them. And first, For apparel. The saint's outward, as well as his inward clothing must be sacred. Spiritual priests do all wear, in a sense, holy garments. Sin may cleave to our clothes: the leprosy was not only in the Israelites' houses, but also in their habits, Lev. 13. Some persons carry the plague up and down in their raiment; their garments are spotted with the flesh, with pride, and wantonness, and prodigality. A Christian may manifest grace in his garments; he may clothe his soul in covering the nakedness of his body; his garments may smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, Ps. 45. As under the law the clothes of God's people were washed and purified ceremonially, Exod. 19, Num. 11; so our apparel under the gospel, if we observe God's counsel about it, may be clean and pure spiritually, For thine help herein, reader, I shall speak briefly—

1. To the ends of apparel, which must be minded.
2. To the sins about apparel, which must be avoided.
3. To the virtues in apparel, which must be manifested.

First, To the ends of apparel, which are four:—

1. To cover our nakedness. Innocency at first was man's comely robe, in comparison of which the richest clothes are but nasty rags. Ah, how lovely did he look in that heaven-spun attire! In his primitive



splendour, the most gaudy and costly apparel would have been but as a cloud over the face of the sun, or a coarse curtain over a beautiful picture. But sin caused shame, and shame called for clothes to cover it: Gen. 3:7, 'They knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig-leaves together and made themselves aprons.'

2. To defend our bodies from cold. Clothes are a great shelter against the sharpness of the air and weather. Some men's coats are pistol-proof: all men's clothes should be weather-proof. God knew that Adam's fig-leaves were as far from keeping his body warm, as from hiding his soul-wickedness, and therefore made him a coat of skins, Gen. 3:21. This end of apparel is mentioned, Prov. 31:21: 'She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet.'

3. To adorn us. Clothes render men more comely. A decent habit is handsome, naked ghosts are frightful. 'Those members of the body which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness,' 1 Cor. 12:23.

4. To distinguish sexes and persons. One end of apparel is to difference sexes. The law of nature and the custom of all nations do teach a distinction between the habits of men and women. God himself in Scripture doth expressly command it. 'The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's apparel: for all that do so are an abomination unto the Lord thy God,' Deut. 22:5. Those that have worn the apparel of women, as Caligula, Clodius, and others, have been noted for the worst of men.

Another end of apparel is to distinguish persons. The nobility among the Romans were anciently distinguished from the meaner sort by

their ornaments about their shoes. As God hath made a difference among men, some are high, some are low, some are rich, some are poor, so doth he also allow a difference in their apparel; 'Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled are in kings' houses,' Luke 7:25. Robes and rich attire become judges and justices. They are honourable additions to their office, and cause reverential apprehensions of their persons. The habits of men should be suitable to their conditions and honours, Dan. 5:29; Esther 8:15; Ex. 25:2. As it is sinful for men to go above their abilities, so it is sordid for men to go much below their estates and places; such draw contempt on their persons. Charles the Fifth, emperor of Germany, being to make a royal entrance into Milan, there was great preparation made for his entertainment, the houses and streets were beautified and adorned, the citizens dressed in their richest attire, and a golden canopy prepared to be carried over his head, and a great expectation to see a glorious emperor; but when he came into the city in a plain cloak, and with an old hat on his head, the people would not believe their eyes, but still asked which was he, and laughed at themselves for being so much deceived.

Secondly, The vices about our apparel, which must be avoided. 1. Pride. Pride is a moth which is soon bred in fine garments, but a Christian will consider that the meanest apparel is nature's garment, and the best but sin's garnish. The pedigree of our raiment must be remembered, to allay our pride. Our richest clothes are characters of reproach; and as Adam's livery, they are an implicit confession of our sin and shame. The dim-sighted person is not proud of his spectacles, nor he who hath lost one eye, of the plaster which covereth it. When the thief looketh on his fetters, he thinketh of his felony, which was the cause of them. When we behold our habits, we may well be humble, reflecting upon our apostasy, the cause of them. Before the fall Adam and Eve were both naked, and were not

ashamed, Gen. 2:25. A murderer hath as much reason to be proud of his halter as a man of his habit.

Beside, the matter of our clothes is considerable. We are beholden to the beasts for them; what are they but the skin, hair, or wool of beasts? and the finest but the spittle of the silk-worm? Alas! what a pin is this to pierce the bladder of pride, and abate its swelling! One would think if this weed should grow, it must be like the misletoe, out of the rocks; for here is not the least earth to breed or feed it, not the least cause for it.

This pride consisteth inwardly in men's valuing themselves the higher for their habit, which indeed is childish. They discover their want of wit whose spirits rise with their garments, as the boat with the waters. The dogs that kept Vulcan's temple fawned upon a good suit; but if a man came in ragged apparel, they would tear him in pieces. They are brutish who judge either themselves or others to have real worth from the bravery of what they wear. Pride is manifested outwardly by men's readiness to follow new fashions. It is no commendation to Englishmen that they are Frenchmen's apes. *A la mode de France* is most in the gallants' mouths. But they who borrow, saith one, fashions of Egyptians, may meet with their botches and boils. They who affected the Babylonian finery had with it the Babylonian fetters, Ezek. 23:15. 'I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel,' Zeph. 1:8. God speaketh of them, who in their clothes imitated the Egyptians, or the Babylonians. Though they were never so high, (princes' and kings' children,) yet being vain in their habit, they were sure to feel the weight of God's hand. 'I will punish them.' Idolaters are no fit measure for God's people to make their clothes by. The prophet Isaiah draweth up an inventory of the ladies' wardrobe in Jerusalem, and pronounceth both a sharp objurgation and severe

commination against them for their twinkling with their eyes, and tinkling with their feet, for their lofty gait and stately garb, Isa. 3:18–24. We may read there what strange fury God hath for strange fashions. The daughters of London, saith one, do in pride of countenance and carriage far exceed the daughters of Zion. Alas, how many men are dressed like poppets in a play, and women like Bartholomew babies. Some that are professors, by their antic habits (which are the covers of their shame) become a shame to their profession.

2. Prodigality in our apparel must be avoided. A man must cut his suit according to his cloth. I mean, his apparel must not be above his rank and estate. Some men famish their bellies to make their backs fine; others turn their rents into ruffs, their riches into robes, their lands into laces, and hang, as Seneca saith, two or three lordships in their ears; that when they have their best clothes on, we may say of them, They are in midst of all their wealth.

Even those whose honour may allow richer garments than the vulgar, ought to distinguish between prodigality and what is suitable to their places. Alcisthenes had a costly cloak, sold by Dionysius to the Carthaginians for a hundred and twenty talents. Heliogabalus had rich apparel, yet never wore it twice; his shoes were embellished with diamonds, his seats were strewed with musks and amber, his bed was covered with silver and gold, and beset with pearl. But Augustus Cæsar was much on the other hand, and wore no other garments than what his wife, his sister, or his daughter made him: and being asked the reason, answered, that rich or gay clothing was either the ensign of pride or nurse of luxury. So Alexander Severus, emperor of Rome, did always clothe himself in ordinary apparel, saying, that the empire did consist in virtue, not in bravery.<sup>4</sup>

The ancestor of us all was clad in leather, Gen. 3:21, and so were the Lord's worthies, of whom the world was not worthy,' Heb. 11:37. Though now every servant forsooth must be clad in silk, and for gallantry outvie their lady. It is recorded, as a piece of high presumption, of Hubert, archbishop of Canterbury, that when King John had put his courtiers into a new livery, he put his servants into the same; but in our days presumption and prodigality exceed, for peasants can be more gaudy than their prince. The peacock hath more gay feathers than the eagle, the king of birds.

A wise man that dwelleth in a hired house, having no certain time of abode in it, will so far take care of it, that it may be a shelter to him against the weather, and possibly that it be neat and handsome; but he will not be at the cost of curious ornaments or rich pictures, because he knoweth not how soon he may have warning to be gone. Our bodies are the houses of clay in which our souls dwell; we know not how soon death may seal a lease of ejection, and turn our souls out of doors. It is prudence to fence our bodies so well with garments, that they may be defended against the cold, yea, to be clothed somewhat suitable to our conditions but it is extreme folly to be prodigal in garnishing our earthly tabernacles, when, it may be, this night our souls shall be required of us. Confident I am that tailors' long bills, and their poor neighbours' short coats, who have scarce enough to cover their nakedness, will be little for many rich men's credit at the day of Christ. Reader, if thou art a wealthy man, remember this note whilst thou livest, That one plain coat bestowed on the back of the poor, will become thee better at this day, and yield thee more comfort at the last day, than twenty silver laced ones on thy own back.

There is another thing to be avoided about apparel, and that is curiosity and wasteful expense of time. Excessive outward neatness

is often accompanied with excessive inward nastiness. Seneca speaketh of some that spend all their morning, inter pectinem et speculum, between the comb and the glass, and are more troubled at a tangle in their hair than at a disorder in the commonwealth. How many in our days spend the whole forenoon in decking their dying bodies, and leave no time to dress their immortal souls! they spend that precious time between the comb and the glass which should be spent between prayer and Scripture. These painted carcasses will tell us that if they can but dress themselves by dinner time, it is as much as they desire. Alas, poor souls! what will they do when they come to enter into their eternal estates, when time shall be no more? A dying bed—if their consciences be but awakened—will teach them to value time at a higher rate, and make them know that a commodity of such worth is not to be wasted.

3. I shall speak to the virtues in apparel which must be manifested.

1. Modesty. One end of apparel is to cover our shame and nakedness; those, therefore, that discover their naked necks and breasts, cross this end, and glory in their shame. Such women proclaim their wantonness. Lascivious habits are unhandsome and unholy: 'That women adorn themselves with modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with brodered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array,' 1 Tim. 2:9. Modesty is a woman's special beauty, and a needful virtue in them that are the weaker vessels. As some tempt men to folly by their tongues, so others by their attire. This the very heathen were so sensible of, that Zaleueus, the lawgiver of Loeris, enaeted, That no woman should be attended with above one maid in the street, except she were drunk; that she should not wear embroidered nor indecent apparel, but when she intended to play the whore.

2. Gravity. Ancient men, those that are in seats of justice, and professors, must not take up every new-fangled fashion. Clothes of light colours on their backs will not be comely. Joseph, a child, might be handsome enough in a parti-coloured coat, but not so a man. When a grave Roman petitioned the emperor for a favour, and was denied, and had afterwards coloured his hair, shaved himself, and in light clothes requested the same courtesy, he was wittily answered by Cæsar, who understood the fraud: I denied your father yesterday, and should I grant it you to-day, he might take it ill.

Christians must be much guided by the credit of religion. 'Whatsoever things are of good report' is both a general and a special rule for a saint to walk by in all such things.

There may be excellent use of that place, Rom 12:2, 'Be not conformed to this world, μὴ συσχηματίζεσθε. Beza translates it, Fashion not yourselves. I love not affected singularity, but I like a Christian gravity, both in countenance, carriage, and attire.

3. There is another thing which a Christian must have a respect to in his apparel, and that is his calling and ability. It is dishonourable both to a man's person and profession, when God hath ranked him among the rich, for him to rank himself among the poor and ragged. Of Lewis the Eleventh, King of France, it is written in his chamber of accounts, 'Two shillings for fustian to new-sleeve his Majesty's old doublet, and three-halfpence for liquor to grease his boots.' Agesilaus, king of Sparta, was slighted by the Persians for his over-plain habit. Covetous men often please themselves that they are not guilty either of pride or prodigality in their apparel, when it may be often said to them, what Socrates told the ragged Grecian, A man may see your pride through the holes of your coat. As the prodigal erreth in excess, so the niggard erreth in defect.

One of the Jewish Rabbis used to say, that men should apparel themselves below their estates, that they may thrive the sooner; that they should clothe their wives above their estates, that they might live the more peaceably; but their children according to their estates, that they might marry them the better.

Of Sleep.—I shall now speak to sleep, which is the last natural action I have mentioned. In reference to which, three things are principally to be minded—

1. The quantity of it.
2. The season.
3. The end of it.

1. The quantity of it. Thy sleep, reader, must be moderate; but how much, or how little, thy own prudence, or piety together, must judge. No certain time can be prefixed, though some general rules may be propounded. Seven hours sleep is, by physicians, judged sufficient for any ordinary person in health. Youth requires more sleep than age, weak men than strong men. Thy discretion will much help thee, if thou observest thy constitution. Choleric and melancholic bodies need longer sleep than the phlegmatic or sanguine, that the acrimony of choler may be tempered, and the concoction furthered. To the phlegmatic much sleep doth increase their cold and moist humours, and will in time make their bodies altogether sickly; the sanguine are apt to wax gross and corpulent, and unfit for action, all which is helped forward by much sleep. Take heed of immoderate sleep. There is no part of our lives so totally lost as that which is spent in sleep. Sleep cometh like a publican, saith Plutarch, and stealeth away a third part of our time. Therefore the wise heathen have been watchful against this enemy. Aristotle used to sleep with a bullet in



his hand, over a brazen pan, that when it fell out of his hand he might be awakened with the noise. Pythagoras used with a thread to tie the hair of his head to a beam over him, that so when he did but nod, he might be awakened thereby. Christians have more cause for bodily, as well as spiritual watchfulness.

David was so far from sleeping at prayer that he would break his sleep for prayer: Ps. 119:62, 147, 'I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried; I hoped in thy word.'

Many are the discommodities of immoderate sleep. It wasteth time, a most precious talent, which is committed to us by God, and must be accounted for at the great day. A man asleep can hardly be said to live. Sleep is a kind of death. It injureth the soul, hindering it of time, robbing it of the body's service, and by blunting its tools, dulling its faculties, that they become unfit for those ends to which they were designed, Prov. 26:13–17.

It wrongeth the body, by weakening the natural heat, and filling the head with vapours, by abating the memory, lessening the understanding, and by making the body heavy, lumpish, and, in a word, a sink of diseases.

It is an enemy to a man's estate. Solomon dissuades from sluggishness, from this argument, 'So shall thy poverty come as one that travaileth, and thy want as an armed man,' Prov. 6:11. Wealth will not come without working. They are deceived who think to have the pleasure of slothfulness and the plenty of laboriousness; 'The diligent hand maketh rich, but slothfulness will clothe a man with rags,' Prov. 10:4, and 23:21.

2. The season of sleep. In general, the day is, by the command of God and order of nature, the time for watching, and the night for

sleeping. The sun approaching draweth forth the spirits from the centre to the circumferent parts, and openeth the pores of the body, both which do provoke to working and waking; but when the sun departeth, the spirits return to the inmost parts of the body, which inviteth to sleep; and besides, the natural moisture and silence of the night are, according to physicians, very conducive to sleep. Wherefore, to sleep in the day and watch in the night, is (unless necessity compelleth it) sinful, and a perverting the course of nature. 'They that sleep, sleep in the night,' 1 Thes. 5:6, 7, which may be understood literally of a natural, as well as mystically of a spiritual sleep. That Roman Emperor that turned the day into night, and the night into day, was abhorred as a monster in nature; such persons are great hinderers of their own health, and thereby of their outward happiness; for sleep draweth the natural heat inward, and the heat of the day draweth it outward, whereby there ariseth a fight with nature, to the ruin of the body. Sleep after dinner in young persons causeth heaviness of the head, dullness of wit, defluxions of humours, lethargies, and other cold diseases of the brain, and also palsies, by relaxing the sinews. Besides, it is not to be forgotten that Ishbosheth lost his life, and David his chastity, by lazying on their beds in the day time.

The most convenient season, I suppose, for sleep—I confess I speak in another's art—is some considerable time after a moderate supper. When thou hast commended thy soul to God, and put off thy cares with thy clothes, then thou mayest commit thy body to thy bed: 'He giveth his beloved sleep,' Ps. 127:2. Ahasuerus, who commanded one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, could not command one hour's sleep, Esther 1.

3. The ends of sleep must be minded; sleep is given us by God, not for the solution or weakening, but for remission and refreshing of

nature, which would be not only wearied, but quite tired out by continual labour. The effects of moderate sleep will speak its ends. Sleep will, if taken seasonably, and not in excess, help digestion, recreate thy mind, repair the spirits, comfort the whole body; it concocteth not only the meats, but also the humours. By the retreating of the heat into the inner parts, the vital faculty is much strengthened, because the heart is abundantly supplied with blood for the breeding of spirits.

The ends of sleep will somewhat direct us about the measure. Sleep may be followed till the concoctions in the stomach and liver are finished, which will be discovered upon our awaking ordinarily by a sensible lightness of the body, especially of the head, and the passage down of the meat from the stomach.

Thus I have despatched natural actions, and discovered how a Christian in eating and drinking, clothing and sleeping, may serve Jesus Christ.

### **A good wish about natural actions, wherein the former heads are epitomised**

My corrupt heart being prone to turn things lawful into fuel for lust, like the spider to suck poison out of the sweetest flowers, and to make what my God giveth me for a comfort, to prove, through the subtlety of the serpent, as Eve to Adam, a cross and a curse, I wish, in general, that whilst I use my meat, and drink, and sleep, and apparel, I may never abuse them, but that I may so ensure my right to them through Christ, the heir of all things, to taste the love of my God in them, and make such a holy and sanctified improvement of them, that I may have a spiritual title to natural good things; may hold all in capite, and the things of this life may be whetstones to quicken my holiness, and loadstones to draw my affections nearer to heaven. In

particular, because the snare in eating and drinking is unseen, and so the less suspicious, but the more dangerous, I wish that I may never feed without fear, but eat all my bread before the Lord; that I may not, as 'the horse and mule, which hath no understanding,' drink of the streams, and never look up to the spring, but may acknowledge my God to be the author of every favour, and be so sensible of the weakness of the creature to strengthen me without the influence of the Creator, that I may constantly look up to heaven for a blessing on that food which springeth out of the earth.

I desire that my heart may so relish the goodness of my God in the bounty of his hand, that whilst I am filling my body, I may by some savoury serious discourse, feed my own and others' souls, that by the blessings of the footstool, as by a ladder, I may mount up to the blessings of the throne. Lord, when thou rememberest me, an unworthy wretch above many others, let me not be so sordidly ungrateful as to forget thy majesty; but as the rivers lead me to the sea, so let common blessings direct me to thyself, the father and fountain of all my mercies. 'Open thou my lips, that my mouth may shew forth thy praise.' Oh let not my thanks be only verbal, but cordial and real; let thy mercy be returned to thyself again in suitable duty, and thy beneficence by answerable obedience. If I receive courtesies from men, I esteem myself bound to requite them to my power. Ah, why should not I then, since I receive millions of mercies from my God, improve all to his praise! I desire that I may not, as the Israelites, bestow that corn and oil on Baal, or make provision for any sin with those favours which my God bestoweth on me; but that all those cords of love may draw me nearer, and bind me closer to himself. I live at thy cost, enable me to live to thy credit. 'Let thy loving-kindness be ever before me, that I may walk in thy truth.'

I wish that I may not only take my food piously, as from God's hand, but also use it temperately, as in God's eye. Excess hath been abhorred by mere heathens. Beasts know when they have drunk enough, and by no beating will be forced to more; and shall I, who, beside my reason, have the help of religion, perish in the water, like the swine possessed with devils? Oh let my sensitive faculty be such a servant to my rational, and both so serviceable to my God, that I may use my food as my physic, receive it sparingly, and for health's sake to become thereby more instrumental for the glory of my Saviour. I do not live to eat, but eat to live; why then should I use my food as if, like the locust, I were all belly, or as some beasts made only to be filled and fatted for the slaughter? I wish that I may observe the seasons for feeding my body, as well as those golden opportunities for my soul; that I may not prefer the beast before the angel within me, but may usually every morning serve my God before myself, and refresh my inward before my outward man. In a word, I beg that all my pots may be so spiced with piety, and all my meat so sauced with religion, that 'whether I eat, or drink, or whatever I do, I may do all to the glory of my God;' that so when I shall eat and drink no more in this infirm estate, I may 'drink of the rivers of his own pleasures,' and 'eat of that tree of life which groweth in the midst of paradise.'

I wish, in general, that my clothes, as well as my closet, may be perfumed with godliness, that 'the smell of my garments,' as Isaac said of Jacob's raiment, 'may be as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed.' I desire, in particular, that I may so observe the ends for which apparel is appointed, that I may wholly forbear those vices about them which my God forbiddeth, and truly exercise those virtues on them which my God commandeth.

I wish that since garments are given me to cover my nakedness, I may never discover the lust of my spirit in any lewd or loose attire on

my flesh, nor ever be proud of those rags, be they never so gaudy or costly, which call aloud to me to be humble, as being the signs of my first and most dreadful sin and shame. I desire that I may not be of the number of them that waste their wealth about that which is at the mercy of the moth, yet that I may not through covetousness offer myself by my clothes to just contempt, but may so walk between the two extremes, as one who wears the livery of religion, that my God may never be dishonoured, nor the gospel disgraced by any spots in my garments. Oh that my soul may so put on the garments of my elder brother, and the graces of the Holy Spirit, that thereby I may be known, as David's daughters, by their raiment of divers colours, to belong to the heavenly court, and thereby be prepared to walk with my God in the white of glory. I wish that I may observe the ends of sleep, how my God alloweth it for the strengthening, not the weakening of nature, that I may not by excess herein turn my friend into an enemy, and whilst I seem to indulge my flesh, wrong both flesh and spirit too. Oh that prudence and piety might both so guide me, that I may ever be watchful against this encroaching adversary, and not, like a dormouse, live as if I were born to sleep! Finally, I wish that I may be so sensible of the worth of those narrow streams of time, because of their tendency to the boundless ocean of eternity, that, like holy Hooper, I may be spare of sleep, sparer of diet, and sparest of time, that I may redeem it as much as may be conveniently from those natural actions which are necessary; and that when eating, drinking, and clothing, and sleeping, and days, and weeks, and years, and ages shall be no more, I may eat of my Saviour's hidden manna, drink of the new wine in my Father's kingdom, be arrayed with the white linen of the saints, and inherit that rest which remaineth for the people of my God, for ever and for ever. Amen.

## CHAPTER XXV

### **How a Christian may exercise himself to godliness, in his recreations and pleasures**

Thy duty is to exercise thyself to godliness in thy recreations; the Christian in his walking, as well as in his working, must be furthering his eternal weal. Our gardens or places of delights, as well as our houses, must be consecrated ground; David's cymbal, viol, and timbrel were all useful in and serviceable to the tabernacle; with them he praised God, Ps. 150. Saints' outward pleasures must be some way or other subservient to their inward purity. It was a witty observation of Bernard on the signification of Isaac, which is laughter or joy, Sacrifice your Isaac, and your Isaac shall live. It is the ram, the rankness and stoutness of your heart which shall die. Reader, sacrifice thy recreations, thy joys, thy delights to God, and they shall all live; it is rankness of them which God desireth should be put to death. That these pleasures are not simply unlawful, is plain; 'Eat thy bread,' saith God, 'with joy, drink thy wine with a merry heart; live joyfully with the wife of thy youth,' Eccles. 9:7–9. Epicurism is not at all commanded, but moderate delight in creatures is allowed and commended, 'He gives all things richly to enjoy.' To enjoy, not to behold, nor to hoard up; he condemneth those rich cormorants that starve at a full table, and like asses laden with good victuals, feed on thistles, Eccles. 6:2, 3, 2:24, and 3:12. The merciful God is pleased, out of his bounty, not only to allow his creatures what is for necessity, but also what is for delight. Christian, it is more than God requireth of thee to be always pondering and poring on such subjects as make thy heart sad, whereby thou thyself

art disadvantaged, banishing that cheerfulness from thee, which is an ornament to Christianity; and others discouraged, supposing that all who walk in heaven's way, must needs be, as thou art, mopish and melancholy. Piety doth regulate, but not extirpate our pleasures. It is a pruning-knife to cut off the luxuriancy of them, not a weeding-hook, to pluck them up by the roots. If thy body be, as one of the fathers calls it, *jumentum animæ*, the soul's beast, then it must be allowed some rest and refreshment, or else it will carry thee but heavily along in thy journey.

It is reported of a primitive Christian, that as he was on a time playing with a bird, two or three youths going by saw him, and one of them spake to the other, See how this old man plays like a child with a bird! Which the good old man overhearing, called him to him and asked him, what he did with the bow in his hand, and how he used it. Whereupon the young man bent his bow, shewed him what he did with it, and unbent it again. Why do you unbend it? saith the old man. Because, saith the youth, if my bow should always stand ready bent, it would prove a slug and be unserviceable. Such is the condition of man, saith the old Christian; if his mind were always bent and intent about the best things, the wings of devotion would soon flag, and the arrows of contemplation fly but slowly towards heaven.

The most, I know, need a curb in this particular of recreation rather than a whip, yet some there are that whilst they strive to 'keep under their bodies,' ride over them, and make them much more unserviceable than they would be. Whilst they go about to punish their bodies for their former wantonness and excess, in the end they punish God and their souls too. The temper of the soul, philosophers tell us, followeth the temperament of the body; a dull knife cannot cut well. A pen worn out will not make good letters; he that would do



his work well, must see that his tools be right for his turn, otherwise he will but bungle at the best.

I am confident that it is thy duty to keep thy body in the best plight and health, vigour, and liveliness that thou canst, for thy soul's sake. I must confess I intend in this head those recreations which exercise the body or mind, so as to fit them to follow the better our general or particular callings.

A holy man could indeed wish that his body needed no such diversion, but when he findeth that after long sitting, or much labour, his body is clogged and tired, he is forced to give way to reason. For vain and sinful recreations, reader, I must in the name of God forbid them; I am not about to teach thee how to honour God by doing Satan's work. They that study the devil's books, will hardly learn Christ's lesson. There be some that 'take pleasure in unrighteousness,' Rom. 1:32. Holy things are too good to be sported with, and vicious things are too bad; things of an indifferent nature are fit to be the subjects of our recreations. Those sports which are of evil report amongst saints, or which thou hast experienced to be bellows to blow up the fire of thy passion, or fuel to thy covetousness, must be avoided. Avoid all occasions and appearances of evil; sports sinful in the act, like the play between Abner's and Joab's soldiers, will be bitterness in the end.

When Thespis, a poet at Athens, made a play which delighted all the citizens, grave Solon himself went to see it; but when the play was ended, wherein Thespis acted a part, Solon called him to him, and asked him, if he were not ashamed to lie so openly in the face of the whole city? Thespis answered him, that it was no matter, so long as it was but in sport. But Solon, beating his staff on the ground, replied, If we allow lying in sport, we shall shortly find it in earnest in our

bargains and dealings. Certainly heathens will another day condemn our mongrel Christians; the sober sort of them seemed to hate and abhor that harlot vice, though presenting herself upon a stage with her painted face, and most gaudy dress, which many among us love and like, and even doat upon her; but such must know that sins in jest will bring at last sufferings in earnest. Men laugh, and jest, and mock at sin; 'It is a sport to a fool to do mischief,' Prov. 10:23, but surely they will find hell a serious thing, for 'God will not be mocked.' They pretend now that they have time to spare, and if they should not spend it at a playhouse—I had almost said a whorehouse—they should spend it worse. Alas, do they not know that God gave them time to provide in for their eternal felicity, and not to squander it away in such foolish vanities? If time be a drug that hangs on their hands to their trouble, God may take it off before they are willing or aware, and send them to their everlasting home. Those were worthily condemned that 'took the timbrel and harp, and rejoiced at the sound of the organ;' and therefore said unto God, 'Depart from us,' Job 21:14.

But, reader, thou mayest be merry and not mad, enjoy thy pleasures without such poison; thou mayest have thy recreation, and never be beholden either to sin or Satan for them; God alloweth thee choice enough of trees in his garden, though thou dost wholly forbear the forbidden fruit; nay, thou mayest, like a skilful mariner, I make use of this side-wind of recreation, to help thee towards the haven of rest.

The author of the Belgic Commonwealth tells us, that printing was first invented by one Lawrence Jans, when he walked abroad for his recreation. It is said of Socrates, that he profited his companions by his recreations, no less than if he had been reading lectures. I have read of one, that by hearing music, tuned his heart to think of, and admire the melody and music in heaven. Truly I see no reason but a

Christian may cause his recreation to do that, which naturalists deny to odours, even both to refresh and nourish him.<sup>2</sup> Only be sure thy recreation be innocent, neither dishonourable to God, nor disadvantageous to thy neighbour. Think of that rule, 'All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient.' Some recreations are lawful, which are not expedient, either in regard of thy age, calling, or the company thou art with. He that will do all he may, will quickly be brought to do what he ought not. It is much easier and safer for the fowl to pass by the snare when she is out, than to go out when she is once in.

We say, It is not evil to marry, but it is good to be wary: so say I, It is not bad to use recreations, but it is good to be watchful, that we do not abuse them; which that thou mayest not do, I desire thee to enclose this common, which many wander in to their woe, with these three cautions:

First, Mind moderation at them; remember thy recreation is not to be thy occupation. God made leviathan to sport in the waters, but God made not man to play upon the land. Our time here is our pilgrimage, and therefore not to be spent in pleasures. The candle of our lives is set up, not to play, but to work by. Spinster is a title given to our greatest women in our law language. A man that builds a house, will not make it very full of windows, for then it would be weak; neither will he make it without any, for then it would be dark. Recreations to our natural, are like windows to our artificial houses; some are convenient, many weaken the building, and strengthen the thief, who hath the more advantage thereby to steal.

Fish that leap into the air for their recreation, return quickly to their own element again. Beasts that play up and down in the fields, in a short time return to their food. Recreation is like some pleasant

house which we may call at, as we pass on toward our heavenly country, but must not stay, much less dwell there. Sir Francis Bacon said of parliaments, in reference to the English body politic, that they are good purging physic, (to be made use of now and then,) but bad diet-drink, (to be taken constantly.) The same may be said of recreations; if used in measure, they are helpful; if immoderately, they are hurtful. They are good sauce, but bad meat. Plato reproved a young man for playing at dice; the young man answered him, For how small a matter do you reprove me! Ay! but, saith Plato, the custom is no small matter.

Those that put their hands to their mouths, when they drank water, were elected by God to fight his battles; those that bowed down to the ground upon their knees, were rejected, Judges 7:5–7. Those that swoop their handful of pleasant waters, are fitter for God's work, than they that swill their bellyful. God taxeth them sharply, who make carnal delights the end of their lives: 'Ye have lived in pleasure on earth, and been wanton.' God alloweth us pleasures in our lives, but God doth not allow us to live in pleasures, James 5:5. When our lives are nothing else but a diversion from one pleasure to another, we may fear our deaths will be the beginning of our pains. Nimrod, Ishmael, Esau, all vicious persons, are noted to be given up to such pastimes.

The people of Tombutum in Africa are said to spend their whole time in singing and dancing. Some persons, especially gentlemen, spend their whole time in hawking, or hunting, or gaming; of whom I may speak, as Pliny to his son, when he saw him spend his time in talking, and walking, and neglect his studies; they might put those hours to better use; or as the Holy Ghost saith of the voluptuous widow, They are 'dead while they live,' 1 Tim. 5:6.

Great men think, with Galba, that no man shall be called to account for his idleness; but they will one day hear of 'wicked and slothful servants,' and find a truth in the German proverb, that gentlemen are venison in heaven; they seldom come thither.

Reader, take heed of the hook that is hid under this bait of pleasures; thou mayest nibble at it safely, but if once thou goest with open mouth to swallow it down, thou art caught, and in danger to be undone. The fly that cometh to a glass of sweet syrup, and only tasteth it, may get away securely; but if once he bathe his body and wallow in it, he is limed and loseth his life. Some drugs are given to procure sleep, which, if taken moderately, may give the patient rest, and do him good; but if in any great quantity, may cause him to sleep his long sleep, and send him to the place 'where the weary are at rest.' Weigh thy pleasures warily in the balance of the sanctuary, lest thou shouldst eat of that luscious diet, more than thou canst possibly digest. In a word, follow the advice of reverend Bede, For pleasure, saith he, we must deal with it as we do with honey, only touch it with the tip of the finger, not with the whole hand, for fear of surfeit. Though a little honey be sweet and comfortable, yet much causeth gripings, and breedeth choler. Fragrant flowers, if used moderately, refresh the brain; but if too much, cause the headache. 'Light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing to behold the sun;' yet a man by staring too long, too much, may dazzle, nay, blind his eyes. Do as Jonathan did, 'He put forth the end of the rod which was in his hand, and dipped it in an honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth, and his eyes were enlightened,' 1 Sam. 14:27. His eyes were enlightened; a little will satisfy, much will surfeit. Though swine lie night and day in such mud, do thou as the sheep, which sometimes fall into the mire, but hasten out of it to the pleasant meadows. Though the necessity of thy body calleth thee to thy recreations for a season, yet let the necessities of thy soul and family call thee off from them in

due time. Let thy recreations be like a porter, whom thou mayest use for half an hour or an hour, as thy occasions are, and dismiss; and not like a household servant, to dwell with thee constant. The Lacedemonians were so sparing, that they are said to be even covetous of their time.

Secondly, Look that thine end in them be right. The end here will speak much to the specification of the act; thy recreation must be as sauce to thy meat; we eat sauce to sharpen our appetites to our food, and to make us relish it the better; so we must use recreations to whet our stomach to our callings, and to make them the more savoury to us. As music to the Jews did stir up their minds, and prepare their hearts for holy performances; so lawful recreations may be used by us Gentiles, to fit us for the service of God in our general and particular vocations. The saint, by the comforts of his life, may delight more in God, the life of all his comforts; he may follow these streams so long, till he comes to the fountain of living waters. He may conclude with himself, if recreations by the creature be so sweet, how sweet is communion with the Creator!

The musician doth not leave his strings constantly wound up, but sometimes lets them down, and his end is, that when he goeth again to use his viol, it may make the better music. The wise husbandman will not always cross-crop his ground, but lets it sometimes lie fallow; and his end is, that sowing upon a tilt, he may have the greater crop. So the Christian may allow his mind moderate release, he may afford the ground of his outward man some rest; but his end must be, that when it comes again to be sowed, to be employed, it may be the more serviceable to God and his soul; and truly so by going back a little, he may have this advantage to leap the farther.

Oh, how sordid a thing is it for men to use sports merely to pass away their time! hence they foolishly call them pastimes. Reader, art thou in haste to have some part of the thread of thy life cut off, as if it were too long? Wilt thou never consider that time is a silver stream, running along into the ocean of eternity, and that eternity dependeth on the spending of this moment of time? Dost thou not believe that thy jovial companions, now in hell, would give a whole world, if they had it, for one hour; and that when thou thyself comest to die, and to look into the other world, thou wilt say, with the Roman general Sertorius, in answer to his soldiers, who told him it was dishonourable to the Romans to pay tribute to the barbarous people inhabiting the Pyrenean mountain, time is a precious commodity, to be taken up at any rate. Good God, how much wilt thou think a week, a day, nay, an hour worth!

For thy soul's sake weigh thy time as it stands in relation to thine everlasting condition, and then I am confident thou wilt aim at another end in thy recreations. Though children go to school, and work in hope of play, yet men play to fit themselves for work. Though wicked men have such sordid sinful ends in their delights, do thou mind more noble and worthy designs: therefore oil the wheels, that thou mayest move the more cheerfully, and run the more swiftly 'in the way of God's commandments.'

Thirdly, Have an eye to the season of them. Scholars have their play-hours, yet if they be found playing when they should be at their books, they must expect to be beaten. The master that doth not grudge his servant time to visit his friends, and rejoice with his familiars; yet if he should do it when his work lieth upon the spoil, he could not but take it very ill. God alloweth us liberty for moderate delights, but it is only when our general and particular callings will give us leave. Cardinal Angelot is chrouicled for a sordid person for

stealing away the oats which his man had given his mare: how sordid are those parents who steal their children's food to pursue their own pleasures! He that neglecteth his particular calling to follow his sports, is like him that starveth his son to feed his swine; and he that omits his prayers and religious duties to mind his pleasures, is like him that is condemned to be hanged, and hath only three days allowed him to procure his pardon in, yet he spends all that time in hawking or hunting.

"Recreations are like some fruits, not always in season; though at some times they are very wholesome, yet at other times they are very hurtful. The wise man tells us, There is a time to weep, and a time to laugh, a time to mourn, and a time to dance,' Eccles. 3:2, 5. There is a time to weep: sorrow is not always seasonable. Delilah disparaged her discretion by weeping on the day of her wedding. There is a time to laugh: delights are sometimes out of fashion. He forfeits his credit that sports at a funeral: music never suited with mourning.

In general, recreations are then unseasonable when God and men's families are neglected that they may be minded; when, to give them water, we are forced to make the mill of our general and particular callings to stand still. Oh what a fool is that voluptuous youngster, who having no more horses than what is sufficient for his ploughing, will yet take one to hunt upon, and thereby cause the rest to be idle, and his business to be undone! But how mad is that person who, Esau-like, is hunting, and thereby misseth the blessing!

In particular, our recreations are unseasonable on a Lord's-day, and in times of public calamities.

1. Recreations are unseasonable on a Lord's-day; carnal pleasures must then vanish, and spiritual pleasures must take place. Our joy must be pure and heavenly on that day. It is a holy day, and therefore



calls for holy delights. God inviteth the saint on that day to his own table, provideth for him costly, curious food, and expecteth that he should come, and not bring along with him the world's coarse fare. Observe the precept in the evangelical prophet: 'If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shall honour him, not finding thine own pleasures, then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord,' Isa. 58:13, 14. Take notice, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, our pleasures are such as flow from creatures. Now, the wine which makes glad the heart of a saint on a Sabbath must be drawn from another pipe. That which runs from the world is too flat, low, and full of dregs, to be served in to the great King.

When Aristotle was asked what he thought of music, he answered, *Jovem nec canere, nec citharam pulsare*, That Jupiter cared not either for singing or fiddling; he was for higher and more refined exercises. The infinite God doth always overlook our puddle-water, more especially on his own day, when he alloweth us to drink of his own richest wines: 'They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasure,' Ps. 36:8. Mark, 1, The excellency of the provision, fatness of thy house, the river of thy pleasures. The fattest is esteemed the fairest, and the most excellent food; therefore the saint was enjoined to offer the fat in sacrifice under the law. As God expects the best from us, so he gives the best to us: this made David, when he had feasted so curiously, to sing so cheerfully. Fatness here is the top, the cream of all spiritual delicacies. 'My soul is filled as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips,' Ps. 68:5. But though God keeps so noble a house to satisfy his people's hunger, what special care doth he take to quench their thirst! 'Thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures.'

Oh, he drinks to them, and they pledge him in his own cup! Hath the child then any cause, when his Father keeps so rare and costly a table, to leave such dainties, and go a-begging up and down the country for scraps and fragments? Oh, how much do these disgrace their Parent's provision and their own discretion! But mark, reader, 2, The plenty as well as the excellency of this provision. Here is fatness in the abstract; a 'river of pleasure,' and so much as that they who enjoy it shall be 'satisfied,' and 'abundantly satisfied.' A river is overflowing and ever flowing; it communicates its water, and yet is never empty. It is fed with springs and fountains, and therefore it is no wonder if it always be full. They that are at such a well need not complain of want—but here is not only rivers and fatness, for some have much, and yet cannot feed—but of God's people it is said, 'they shall be abundantly satisfied:' in the original it is inebriated, they shall have not only a sufficiency, but a redundancy of spiritual delights; the vessels of their souls shall be filled to the brim out of that river 'whose streams make glad the city of God.' Surely, then, they that may have bread in such abundance, enough and to spare, in their Father's house, made of the kidneys of the wheat, of the finest flour, need not hanker after the world's homely fare. Our heavenly Father doth not keep so starveling a house, that the world's scraps should go down with us.

Besides, how abominable is it to disturb God's rest with our sports! Some work hard on the week-day, and play on the Lord's-day. No melody so delightful to them as temple music, no draughts so sweet as in temple vessels, Amos 6:5; Dan. 5:2. No time so fit for their foolish triumphs as God's time. The heathen Philistines, when they offered a great sacrifice to their god Dagon, call for Samson to make them sport. These uncircumcised persons mingle their sacrifices to the true and living God with sports and carnal, nay, sinful pleasures.

Week-days, like ordinary virgins, are excused, and the Lord's-day, the queen of days, must be deflowered.

Reader, if thou art guilty of this sin, know that to steal time from thy family or master on a week-day is theft; but to steal time from thy Maker and Redeemer on this day is sacrilege. Hast thou no metal to disfigure and embezzle but that which hath the King's stamp on it? Hast thou no time to sleep in thy cabin or play on the deck but just when the wind blows fair for the vessel of thy soul to launch forward towards heaven? I must tell thee that God calls thee on this day to be wholly taken up in working out thy salvation, and not at all in minding thy recreations. It were better, as Austin saith—though that were very bad—to plough all day than to play all day. But as Cyrus dealt with the Lydians, when he had conquered them in the battle, he allowed them liberty for all sports and pastimes, and thereby subdued them in such a manner that they became his servants for ever;<sup>2</sup> so Satan dealeth with the children of men: when they are his already in part, by Sabbath-day pastimes he makes them his sure and settled servants altogether, and so they become his for ever.

2. Secondly, Recreations are unseasonable in times of public calamities. The son is very undutiful who laughs under the rod, and that daughter very unnatural who is sporting when her mother is dying: 'A sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished;' it is sharpened to make a sore slaughter; it is furbished that it may glitter; 'Should we then make mirth?' Ezek. 21:9, 10. Should we then make mirth? as if he had said, Such seasons call for sighing, not for singing: for mourning, not for mirth.

The Jews tell us, the very beasts abstained from copulation in time of the deluge. Naturalists tell us of the bees, that when one is sick, the rest in the hive are all sad. Experience tells us, that the very birds,

who in summer sing division prettily, with divers tunes and variation of their pleasant voices, in winter forbear their notes, and seem to sympathise with the season; and shall not we humble our hearts when God's hand is lifted up? How much is he displeased when his chastenings are despised! Amos 6:5–7. 'In that day did the Lord God call to weeping and mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged away till ye die, saith the Lord of hosts,' Isa. 22:12, 13. In that day: When the Persians invaded God's people, then they minded their pleasures; the unseasonableness of their laughter provoked God to anger. Solace in the day of Jacob's troubles, is like winter fruits, harsh and sour, Jer. 9:1. The church may speak to such as they did to the philosopher, who in a great tempest at sea was asking many trifling questions, 'Are we perishing, and dost thou trifle?

Our duty is to sympathise with our fellow-members in their sufferings: 'Weep with them that weep,' Rom. 12:15. Now if we give ourselves then to take our ease, we shall hardly feel our brethren's cords through our soft beds.

Alexander, though in extreme thirst (when his army was ready to famish for want of water) refused the cup of water presented to him, with this excuse, I cannot drink alone, and here is not enough for every one of my soldiers to wet their lips. Surely Christianity layeth a stronger obligation upon us, when the church is like her husband, carrying her cross, to cut herself short in regard of worldly comforts.

Reader, is thy mother sick, and art not thou sorrowful? Is thy God, thy Father, pierced and dishonoured by sin, and canst thou take thy pleasure? Are thy brethren and sisters in great affliction, and hast

thou no fellow-feeling affections? When David asked Uriah why he went not to his house after his journey, he answered him, 'The ark, and Israel, and Judah abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord are in the open field; shall I then go into mine house, and eat and drink, and lie with my wife? as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing,' 2 Sam. 11:10, 11. Truly, if thy flesh should tempt thee to carnal mirth in a day of Zion's tribulations, do thou repel it as he did. The beautiful spouse of Jesus Christ, the blessed members of his body, are in great affliction; they water their couches with tears, and they mingle their drink with weeping; and shall I mind my play and sports and earthly delights? Through the Lord's help I will not do it. No, by the rivers of Babylon let me sit down and weep when I remember Zion. Alas! how foolish is that man who can laugh and jest, and be merry in his private cabin, as if he were safe and secure, when the ship of the church in which he saileth is in a boisterous and dangerous storm.

Thus I have despatched the third particular, wherein a Christian must exercise himself to godliness, namely, recreations.

### **A good wish about recreations**

Recreations being the intermission of my labour, and spending of some time in delightful exercise, for the refreshing of my body and mind, which, by working much, are apt to tire and grow weary, I wish, in general, that I may never abuse this favour which my Master affordeth me (as some drunken servants) to make me unfit for his work, but may be so conscientious in observing those cautions about it, which his law prescribeth, that my vigour and strength being thereby repaired, I may after it follow his business with the more alacrity and ability. In particular, I wish that my teeth may never water after forbidden fruit, that I may not be so prodigal as to lay my

precious inestimable soul at stake by any sinful pleasure. My God hath told me how I may be merry and not have the devil for my playfellow. Oh let me never defile my spirit whilst I am delighting the flesh, but let my sport, for the kind of it, be like Cæsar's wife, without the least suspicion of fault. I desire that my carriage at it may be wholly free from passion and covetousness; and to this end, that I may never venture what I esteem at any value. My mind hereby would be disturbed, not refreshed, and so the end of recreation altogether frustrated. I wish that such delights may be used as my medicine—only now and then, when nature requireth them—not as my meat, constantly every day. Let my God of all consolation lie, as a wife, in the bed of my heart, in my bosom, be the delight of my eyes, whom I would by no means have out of my sight; but let those low pleasures, as my servants, always remain in an outward room, and go or come as occasion shall require and religion direct. I wish that I may never mind recreations for those foolish sinful ends of passing away the time or pleasing the flesh; but, as Elijah called for a minstrel, that his mind being thereby calmed and cheered, he might be the more fitted to prophesy, so I may refresh my body for this very end, that it may be the more serviceable to my soul, and both of them thereby to my dearest Saviour. I wish that my earthly delights may not be unsavoury, because, as fish at some times of the year, they are unseasonable; that when my general or particular occupation require my presence, I may not be absent at recreations. Why should I, like the rich fool, be talking of taking my bodily ease, when my soul is in danger of endless pain, or, like profane Esau, be following my carnal pleasures, to the loss of my spiritual privilege? Finally, I desire that I may not (as Nero, when Rome was on fire) be singing, when the people of God are sighing, but moderate or deny my mirth when the members of Christ are mourning. Oh let me 'prefer Jerusalem before my chief joy.' In a word, I wish that I may not disparage my God, by meddling with drossy comforts, when he calleth me to golden

cordials; that I may not disobey his law by minding my pleasure on his holy day, but may delight myself, on that day of the Lord, in the Lord of that day. Oh let me gather from recreations, with the holy father: If ordinary glass be at such a price, how precious is a true diamond! If the world's trash drain such joy, what joy will flow from the true treasure!

Lord, let my chieftest and constant recreations be to walk with my beloved in the garden of thy word, to refresh my spiritual scent and sight with the fair and fragrant flowers of thy promises and precepts, to do the work which thou hast given me to do, and to enjoy fellowship with thyself in ordinances, till I come to that place where bodies are above such dreggy delights, and souls above all mediate communion, and thou thyself art all in all. Amen.

## **CHAPTER XXVI**

### **How to exercise ourselves to godliness in our particular callings**

As religion must be our business in our spiritual and natural, so also in our civil actions and particular callings. The heavenly bodies have an influence, not only on men and women, but also on trees and plants. The holiness of a saint must be operative, not only in his more noble exercises, the ordinances of God, but likewise in his earthly and inferior employments. Thy duty is, reader, to mind thy general in thy particular calling, and to drive a trade in heaven, whilst thou art following thy trade on earth. When thou art called to the Lord, thou art not called from thy labour; nay, as thou art a servant of Christ, thou art bound to be serviceable to thy country, in some mental or manual calling; but thy diligence therein must

proceed from conscience, not from covetousness—from subjection to God's word, not from affection to thy wealth.

As thy particular calling is the zodiac through which thou daily passest, so godliness must be the ecliptic line to go through the midst of it. Godliness must be the key to open the shop; godliness must be the whip to drive the cart; godliness must be the cock to call thee up to thy work; godliness must be the clock to call thee off from thy work; godliness must be the principle, the rule, and the end of thy work. Holiness to the Lord was written upon the bridles of the horses, Zech. 14:20.

Truly, reader, thy care had need to be great about thy calling, lest it cause thy ruin. More die by meat than by poison. By lawful things many perish. Worldly things will court thee that they may kill thee. They that dig deep into the bowels of the earth have not seldom been stifled with the damps that arise thence. These things are so subject to defile and destroy us, that God made a law that they should not be used before they were purified, Num. 31:22, 23. Some were destroyed by those houses which were made to defend them. Like Saul, they fall on those swords which should have been for their safety. Particular callings were designed for our good; but how often do they prove our grief! Are there not those who, like Korah and his company, are swallowed up alive of earth, and consumed? Pliny observes, that in Phoselis the hill Chimæra burneth night and day. The fire, saith he, is kept burning by water, but quenched by earth. The earth of particular vocations hath sometime put out that fire of devotion, which the water of affliction could not do.

It behoves thee to take heed how thou handiest these thorns, if thou wouldst not prick thy fingers and pierce thy conscience. I shall for that end give thee some directions out of the word.



First, Be diligent in thy calling. It is observable that the apostle adviseth the Romans, 'Be not slothful in business, serving the Lord,' Rom. 12:11. All the children of Adam are enjoined to mind their particular callings, by virtue of that command or threatening to their father, 'In the sweat of thy brows thou shalt eat thy bread,' Gen. 3. As in the body politic, so in the body natural, there must be order, to which three things are requisite. 1. That every part be in its proper place, each star in its own orb. 2. That the parts have each to other a due proportion. 3. That every member do its duty, and be some way or other helpful to the body. Idle persons are like wens in the face, which receive of the body's nourishment, but serve only to disfigure it. Those that are no workers, in God's account, are disorderly walkers, 1 Thes. 5:14. Augustus built an Apragopolis, a city void of business; but God made not the world to be a nursery of idleness. The Ethiopians, as the historian observeth, would acquaint their youth that they were born to labour, by accustoming them betimes to fling great stones. Amongst the Turks, every man must follow some trade, the grand Signor himself not excepted. The censores morum among the Romans were to observe who were diligent, who were negligent in their vocations, and accordingly to commend or condemn them. The Grecians, according to Solon's law, were great discouragers of them that, like vermin, lived only to eat-what others earn. The Council of the Areopagites inquired how every man lived, and punished such as they found idle. The devils themselves are diligent about their deeds of darkness. Creatures void of life are serviceable in their places and stations: angels, nay, God himself is always working. An idle person cannot find either in heaven or hell a pattern. Our lives are therefore called, 'the lives of our hands,' because they are to be maintained by God's blessing on our labours.

The patriarchs, those persons of renown, were eminent for taking pains, they did not eat the bread of idleness. How frequently and how

ardently doth the word call upon us to be working in our particular callings! What precepts doth the Scripture give for it, 'That you do your own business, and work with your own hands, as we commanded you,' 1 Thes. 4:11. What promises doth God make to it: 'He that tilleth his land, shall be satisfied with bread,' Prov. 12:11, 24. 'The soul of the diligent shall be made fat,' Prov. 13:4. That arm which is most used groweth stronger and bigger than the other: the more the vine spreadeth itself against the wall, the more it receiveth of the sun's warmth and influence.

Pliny reporteth of one Oressianus, who from a little piece of ground got much wealth, and more than his neighbours could from a greater quantity, whereupon he was accused of witchcraft; but to defend himself he brought forth his servants and instruments of labour on the day of trial, and said, Veneficia mea, Quirites, hæc sunt: These, O Romans, are all my witchcrafts; I say not to my servants, Go and do this; but, Come let us do this and that, and so the work goeth on. The keys that men keep in their pockets and use every day wax brighter and brighter; but if they be laid aside, and hung by the walls, they soon grow rusty. Students who are given to a sedentary life often waste in their strength, when others whose time is spent in bodily labour increase in strength; 'In all labour,' saith the wise man, 'there is profit.'

There is a threefold care mentioned in the word of God. There is a care of the head, a care of the hand, and a care of the heart. The care of the head is the care of providence, this is commendable, Prov. 31:16. The care of the hand is the care of diligence, this is profitable, Prov. 21:5. The care of the heart is the care of diffidence, this is abominable, Phil. 4:6. Upon which words Zanchy observeth well: God doth not say, μηδὲν πράττετε, but μηδὲν μεριμνᾶτε, not do nothing, but be careful for nothing. The two first are commanded,

but the last is forbidden. Reader, thou mayest as well expect riches to rain down from heaven in silver showers, as to provide for thy family and children without industry in thy calling. Solomon telleth us, 'the blessing of the Lord maketh rich,' and 'the diligent hand maketh rich,' Prov. 12:24, and 10:4, 22.

As the nether millstone is heavy, slow, and of small riddance, yet the upper millstone, though of greater agility and quicker despatch, doth not grind without the nether, but both together make good meal; so the diligent hand of itself can do little, nay, nothing without the blessing of God; yet the blessing of God, though of infinite efficacy, will seldom do anything without the diligent hand, but both together make a person rich.

Besides, negligence about men's vocations is one great cause of corruption. The proud person is Satan's throne, and the idle man his pillow; he sitteth in the former, and sleepeth quietly on the latter. When men have nothing to do, the devil always sets them a-work: 'As a bird that wandereth from his nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place,' Prov. 27:8. By place, the Holy Ghost understandeth particular callings. Now God had taken care that none should molest a bird in her nest, there she was safe, Deut. 22:6, 7; but when she begins to wander, then she is in danger, either to be shot by the fowler, or caught in the snare, or made a prey to other ravenous birds. So a man that is diligent in his calling, whilst he is employed therein, is in God's precincts, and so under God's protection; but when he wandereth abroad from his calling, going out of his bounds to sit and talk, he is a waif and a stray, and so falleth to the lord of the manor, 'the god of this world.'

Reader, thou mayest expect to be preserved whilst thou art a-working, but not when thou art wandering. Tertullian speaks of a

Christian woman, who, going to a play, was possessed by the devil, and when he was asked by those that came to cast him out, how he durst possess one that was a Christian, he answered, I found her in my own place. Friend, they who, like Dinah, gad abroad, are often defiled before they come home. Those soldiers who leave their places in a march, and straggle to pilfer, are many times snapped and slain by their enemies, when they who keep their places are safe and secure. Oh mind thy calling in its place and season, and know this for thy comfort, that whilst thou art about thy lawful work, observing Scripture rules in it, thou art under God's wing.

Secondly, Deal righteously in thy calling. Take heed of unjust gain. Believe this truth, 'A clear and clean conscience is infinitely better than a full purse. A little with the fear of the Lord is better than the possessions of many wicked men,' Ps. 37:15. A little wholesome food is better than a thousand poisoned dishes. All the wealth which is got in God's way is pleasant; but all the wealth which is got unjustly by wickedness is poison. 'The blessing of the Lord maketh rich, and bringeth no sorrow of heart with it,' Prov. 10:22. Defrauding thy neighbour and cheating thy customers maketh rich, and bringeth the sorrow of hell with it. He that resolveth to be unrighteous, it is commonly said, may soon be rich. When the spring of conscience is screwed up to the highest pin, that it is ready to break, and godliness is locked up fast into an outhouse, and not suffered so much as to peep into the shop or warehouse, to take notice of what is done there, such a tradesman may gain silver, but alas! he loseth his precious Saviour, and his never-dying soul. Oh, what a dreadful gain is it to get earth with the loss of heaven! He that will be rich in haste, shall be poor enough in hell. 'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven? Be not deceived, God will not be mocked,' 1 Cor. 6:9. Do not think, reader, though thou canst cheat thy chapmen, that thou canst cozen God. No; he will not be mocked.

He seeth thy false weights and false measures which thou ordinarily usest, though thou hast others to bring forth, for a colour, if occasion be; and he will deal justly with thee for thy injustice, by sending thee to that place where there is 'judgment without mercy.' I have read of an old rich covetous wretch, that, lying upon his death-bed, he asked his son whether he would not do anything that his father should desire him. His son answered, yea. Then, saith the father, hold your finger in the flame of that candle an hour. Sir, saith the son, I cannot possibly endure that. No, saith the father; I must burn for ever in hell, for raking up an estate unjustly for you, and yet you will not burn a finger one hour for me! O reader, if thou art guilty of this sin, think of it betimes. Thy ill-gotten wealth will breed those worms which will gnaw thee eternally! Besides, thou mayest think to raise thy house by such heaps; but God himself saith it is the way to ruin it. 'He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house,' Prov. 15:27. Whilst he thinks to feather his nest, he doth indeed fire it. It is an observation of the house of Desmond, in Ireland, that Maurice, the first earl of that family, raised it by injustice; and by injustice Gerald, the last earl, ruined it. The crafty fox in the fable hugged himself that he had cozened the crow of his breakfast; but when he found himself poisoned therewith, he wished it out of his belly. Unjust gain, like the Italian buttered sponge, may go down glib, but it swelleth in the body, and never cometh away till it hath ruined the party. Such men spin a fair thread to strangle themselves with. 'The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death,' Prov. 21:6. Cornelius à Lapide hath a pretty fable, wherein he compareth men unjust in their dealings to spiders, the righteous to bees. The spider upbraided the bee for going up and down for honey. Thou stayest at home, saith the bee, but in thy working lovest thy life. How often is that Latin proverb fulfilled! The burden of salt returneth to the place whence it came. The occasion of which was the falling of salt by the wreck of a ship into the sea: the

place whence it came. God often sendeth some to squeeze those muck-worms when they have sucked themselves full. Deceitful dealing, as a huge heap of ice by the sun, by the scorching fire of God's wrath dissolveth into nothing. 'As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool,' Jer. 17:11.

Thirdly, Be careful that thy particular calling encroach not upon thy general. Many lose religion in a crowd of earthly business. The interposition of the earth, as to the moon, eclipseth the light of their holiness. It is reported of the inhabitants of Oenoe, a dry island near Athens, that they bestowed much labour to draw in a river to water it, and make it fruitful; but when the passages were opened, the water came in so plentifully that it overflowed the island and drowned all the people. Many 'that will be rich,' by their extraordinary labours to make their flocks and fields fruitful, 'fall into temptations and snares, and many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown them in destruction and perdition,' 1 Tim. 6:9. A candle that burns well above ground, when put under ground doth many times burn blue, and go out. The light of holiness which hath shined eminently in some professors, when they have had little to do with the world, hath been abated in a great degree when they have had great dealings. They, in regard of much business, have been like those in a mill, who cannot hear what is spoken by reason of the clacking and noise which is made there. Christ calleth, and the Spirit of God crieth to them, but their ears are stopped with earth that they hear not.

As we say of fire and water, they are good servants, but bad masters. Keep them within their bounds, and they are exceedingly useful; but when they go beyond their bounds, how hurtful are they! What

mischief hath fire done in England! What sad work hath water made in Holland! The same is true of our particular callings: they are faithful servants, but they are dreadful masters. Keep them within their limits, and they are helpful to ourselves, our relations, and our neighbours; but suffer them once to transgress their bounds, and they will make miserable work. They will rob God, wrong the soul, nay, often ruin it eternally. When those that were born slaves and servants come once to be kings and commanders, they are ever the worst tyrants.

Now, if thou wouldst not have thy particular calling to encroach upon thy general, take heed that it steal not away thy heart, nor thy time.

1. Take heed that thy particular calling steal not away thy heart from thy general calling. If the mistress keep her distance, and maintain her authority over her maidens, she may find them obedient and serviceable; but if she grow fond of them, and familiar with them, they will grow saucy and encroach upon her. Reader, keep thy inward distance, and maintain that authority which God hath given thee over the things of this life, and then all will be well; but if once thou doatest on them, and delightest in them, expect to have them thine hindrances in all holy exercises. The world may have thy hands, but it must not have thy heart. Thy actions may be about thy particular calling, but thy affections must be above it. 'Set your affections on things above, and not on things below,' Col. 3:2. Thy occupation is, as the first Adam, of the earth, earthly; but thy conversation must be like the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, heavenly. A Christian should follow the things of this world with such a slighness and indifferency of spirit as wicked men do the things of a better world. The holy angels behold our earthly affairs but as strangers to them. It is happy for him that can carry himself towards his own estate as if it were another man's. A heathen could say, I do

not give, but only lend myself to my business. Surely, then, a saint should go through the world as one in a deep study; his mind being the whilst intent upon a better object. Brutish horse-flies fasten on dunghills; swallows make their nests of earth. They who have no heaven hereafter may give their hearts to the earth; but, Christian, if thou lovest thy soul, 'though riches increase, set not thine heart upon them,' Ps. 62:10. 'Love not the world, nor the things of the world.' This is a certain truth, The hotter thy love is to the world, the colder it is to the Lord. When the sap of worldliness is in a man, he will never flame well heavenward. The ship may sail in the water, and be safe; but when the water getteth into the ship, it sinketh it. Thou mayest work about thy earthly affairs, and all may be well; but if thine affairs once work themselves into thee, then thou art in danger. Thy God alloweth thee to warm thyself at the sun of creature comforts, but not to turn Persian and worship it.

The rivers lightly salute the earth as they pass along, and make no stay, but pass forward to the ocean. Thy affection should but slightly touch the earth, weeping for worldly crosses as if thou weepedst not, and rejoicing for worldly comforts as if thou rejoicedst not, and so pass on to the ocean of thy happiness. It is said, Germanicus reigned in the Romans' hearts, Tiberius only in the provinces. Thy general must reign in the city, in thy heart, thy particular calling only in the suburbs of thy hands. Reader, if the world ever get into the throne of thine inward man, farewell all religion. I have read of a custom among the Germans, to know whether their children be bastards or not, to throw them in fluvium Rhenum, into the river Rhine. If they floated above, then they acknowledged them to be their own; but if the waters carried them away, then they esteemed them as bastards. Truly, reader, if thou canst float above the waters of thy worldly employments, thou art a child of God; but if that carry thee away by lying near thy affections, look to thyself and fear thy condition. It is



not the greatness of man's estate or employment, so much as the nearness of it to his heart, which will hinder holiness. A small hat held near our eyes will hinder our sight of the sun, which a great mountain afar off will not do. A little near the affections will hinder our sight of Christ, when thousands far from the heart may, as employed, further it. Besides, the closer we lay the flowers of our earthly mercies to our breasts, the sooner they wither. A nosegay in the hand will continue fresh and sweet, as is generally observed, much longer than when it is stuck in the bosom.

2. That thy particular calling may not encroach upon thy general, be careful that it steal not away thy time. Thy piety, reader, and thy prudence is so to order thine affairs relating to heaven and earth, to God and thy family, that they may not interfere or cross each other. A wise forecast will much help thee in this particular. As to the winding a skein of silk, he that begins at the right end will make quick riddance of it; so to the despatching of worldly employments, that they may not prove heavenly impediments, he that hath discretion to forecast them well, may do very much. However, thy duty is to give the affairs of thy soul, and thy God, precedence. I know the devil and thy corrupt heart will often jostle and quarrel with thy closet and family duties, by suggesting to thee that they must of necessity be omitted, because otherwise such and such concernments of thy calling, upon which the welfare of thyself, wife, and children doth depend, will be neglected. As when Moses spake of the Israelites sacrificing to God, then Pharaoh spoke of work to put them off; so when thou art thinking of entering upon the performance of duties, whether in secret or private, thy back friend, the evil one, will send thee a message, either by thy wife, or friend, or thine unregenerate part, that some other affairs of weight call for thy company elsewhere, and therefore a dispensation must be granted thee at present, as to thy solemn devotion. Friend, if thou lovest Jesus

Christ, take heed of hearkening to such temptations; let the flesh but once obtain such a conquest over thee, and thou shalt hear of it again, it will pursue its victory to purpose. Sin is a subtle sophister, it will bring arguments and reasons for all it doth, as is plain in Saul's sparing Agag, and the best of the flock. The beasts were to be sacrificed to God; and in Jeroboam's calves they were set up to save the Jews those tiresome journeys to Jerusalem; but 'take heed that thy heart be not hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.' Remember, piety is the best path to outward prosperity.

Aristotle, though a blind heathen, could see and say, Make religion thy first and chief care, that thou mayest prosper. The Mohammedans are so sensible of this, that what occasion soever they have, they will pray five times a day; because the Jews suffered God's house to lie waste, therefore God blew upon their heaps and wasted their wealth.

He that stealeth away time from his general for his particular calling, like a thief in the candle, wasteth all; our work on earth is done best when our work in heaven is done first. Religious duties, in reference to our worldly occasions, is like sharpening the tools, which helpeth our work forward with more speed and ease. Mass and meat hinder no man's thrift, was a truth visible in the dark night of popery. He that neglecteth the service of his God for the following his trade, may put what he getteth into his eye, as our proverb is, and never see the worse; nay, like the gold of Toulouse, or the vineyard of Naboth to Ahab, the profit will be the perdition and ruin of the possessor. They who want time to do God's work, must want an eternity to receive God's reward. If men are so busy as not to attend their souls, God will be so busy as not to bestow salvation. I know farms, and oxen, and wives do hinder many from holiness; and I know also that they will hinder many from heaven, Luke 14:24, Mat. 22:5. That German

prince who would not part with his silver to pay his soldiers, lost thereby his empire and treasure too. He that will not spare time from his present business for his future blessedness is like to lose both.

How much time dost thou squander away in long meals, in vain sports, in idle discourse, in superfluous sleep! and yet hast thou the face to tell God that thou hast no time in a whole day to seek his favour, and to mind thine eternal felicity? The truth is thou dost not so much want time as waste time.

Do not think that it will be a sufficient excuse at the last day to tell God that thy devotion was neglected, because thy earthly occasions abounded and pressed upon thee. If thy servant should tell thee, when he hath neglected thy business of concernment, that he could not help it, because he had business of his own to look after, a friend called him to the ale-house, wouldst thou think that a sufficient plea? Believe it, thy defence is far worse when thou omittest the service of God for thy particular calling.

The philosopher could say, that he would rather neglect his means than his mind, and his farm than his soul. The very Turks, though they work their slaves hard, will yet allow them time every day for food and rest. Wilt thou, reader, deal worse with thy precious soul, than the Turks do with their galley-slaves? For shame, man, be not so cruel to thy best part.

A good Christian, if business crowd in upon him so much that he cannot wait on them, and worship God daily in his closet and family as he ought, will rather, like a wise mariner, when the ship is overburdened, cast some overboard, than endanger the loss of all and himself too. Times of earing and harvest were very busy times with the Israelites, yet then God would not allow them to make bold with him, *Exod. 32:21*.

He that is a faithful and wise steward will give every one their portion, their meat in due season; as he will give his body and his family their portion every day, so he will give his God and his soul their portion every day; surely he is not faithful who attendeth the lacquey all day and neglecteth his lord; much worse is he who feedeth his flesh and starveth his spirit. Reader, take notice that there is a time for all things: as there are ploughing times, so there are praying times every day; as there is daily time for thy shop, so also for thy closet. When the Jewish daily sacrifice was intermitted, as in the days of Antiochus, it was 'the abomination of desolation.'

I am the larger in this particular, as observing that professors are exceedingly faulty in suffering the canker of their particular callings to devour and eat up the gold and silver of their general callings. Sometimes they will wholly omit family duties, because the world will not permit them to be at leisure; but too too often when they perform them, they turn them off with a short cut, in a huddling manner, as a physician his poor patients, though their business with him concern their lives, when rich men stand without, expecting to be called in, because the world stayeth at their doors to speak with them. Friend, as a special help against this soul-hindrance, let me persuade thee to be early in the morning at thy religious duties. Some men must be spoke to betimes in the morning, or not at all; their public affairs take up the whole day, and would if it were twice as long. The devil hath a thousand devices to make him an atheist all day, who neglecteth morning duties. Be not so hasty about thy calling in the morning, as to forget to take God along with thee. Remember this one note, If the world gets the start of religion in the morning, religion seldom overtaketh it all day. Something warm in the morning, before men go to work, is very wholesome. A warm prayer, warm communion with the blessed God, in meditating or reading, will help thee to work with more comfort and courage, and may

prevent infections from ill fumes and vapours in the daytime. Job had a large family, much cattle; he had besides his domestical, much civil business, for he was a magistrate; yet Job 'rose up early in the morning to offer up sacrifice, and thus did Job continually,' chap. 1:5. In the daytime also, or at evening, let nothing put by the concernments of thy God, and thine everlasting estate; what company soever thou art in, say, as a devout soul I have read of, when his hour of prayer was come, You must excuse me, I must be gone; a friend, meaning his God, stayeth to speak with me.

Cato repented of three things, one of which was, that he had spent a whole day idly. Truly, friend, if thou neglectest thy general calling, how busy soever thou hast been all day long about thy particular, I must tell thee, though an hour cannot be bought with the revenues of the whole earth, thou hast spent a whole day idly; and thou hast much cause to sigh out with the Roman emperor at night, when he had neither done nor received any good all day, *Hodie diem perdidisti*, To-day I have lost a day.

Fourthly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness in thy particular calling, look up to God for a blessing upon thy labours therein. Creatures may be the object of thy diligence, but God alone the object of thy confidence; thy supplication must be to God, and thy expectation from God. Thou canst as soon by thine own power add a cubit to thy stature as a penny to thy purse: 'Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth,' Deut. 8:18. All thy endeavours without God's blessing are but, as Cæsar said of Seneca's works, *arena sine calce*, sand without lime, they will not hang together. If God bless them, they prosper; if he blast them, they perish. The devil himself was so far orthodox, Job 1:10, 'Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.' Alas, the whole course of nature turneth only

as it is moved by the hand of God. It is not in the frame of nature as in frames of art. When a watch is made, it may go though the workman be many miles off, or though he be dead; but there is not the least wheel in the frame of nature which doth not depend upon God for its motion every moment. As the vapours exhaled by the sun depend so much upon it that if that withdraw its influence they fall to the earth, so do the creatures depend on God; if he withdraw his influence from them, they presently come to nothing.

Take notice, reader, to instance but in one calling, how the genealogy of corn and wine, by a concatenation of causes, is resolved into Jehovah: 'I will hear the heavens, and the heavens shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and wine, and oil; and they shall hear Jezreel,' Hosea 2:21, 22; God hath the key of food under his own girdle, Ps. 145:16. Hence some call the earth God's great purse, which he openeth for man's profit, and shutteth for man's punishment. The Jewish rabbis call the earth *alma parens*, a kind mother, and the rain her husband, because the showers do fecundate and make that great mother of plenty fruitful. But as likely a mother as the earth is to bring forth, she is barren unless God open her womb. 1. The ploughing and sowing of the ground is from God; the hands of men cannot do it without his protection and providence, and the heads of men would not have thought of it without his direction and assistance, Isa. 28:24 to the end. 2. When the ground is ploughed and sowed it must be watered, or the grain will quite die; this also is from God alone. The monarch of Mexico was wont to take an oath at his coronation that it should be what weather he pleased; but, 'Can any of the vanities of the heathen cause rain?' Jer. 14:22. God alone can unstop those bottles of heaven, they are all above man's reach; the most spongy clouds distil not one drop, no more than a rock, till God give the word of command. He decreeth rain, Job 28:26; he prepareth rain, Ps. 135:7; and he poureth down the

former and latter rain, Deut. 28:12, Joel 2:21, Job 5:10. He also covereth the body of the earth with the white mantle of snow, whereby the corn is warmed and the ground mellowed, Ps. 147:16. 3. The stars—those purses of gold, as one calleth them, out of which God throweth down riches, which good men gather and bad men scramble for—are all at God's beck and bidding, Ps. 19:4, 5, Mat. 5:45, Job 38:32. 4. The fruitfulness of the earth after it is ploughed, sowed, watered with the clouds, and warmed with the influence of the sun and stars, is wholly from God: 'Thou crownest the year with thy goodness, and thy paths drop fatness,' Ps. 65:11, Heb. 6:7. This some of the heathen acknowledged by the light of nature; and therefore when they went to plough in the morning they did lay one hand upon the plough, to speak their own part to be painfulness, and hold the other hand up to Ceres, the goddess of corn, to testify their expectation of plenty to be from their supposed deity. How easily can God blast all the corn in the field, or blow upon it in the barn! if he do but will it, it is done. The whole creation, indeed, is but a glass without a bottom, which cannot stand of itself, but as God is pleased to hold it up. The philosophers tell us, the sun and man beget a man, the sun and the earth bring forth corn, and speak of the sun in everything as a principle efficient. But the divines tell us more truly, God and the heavens, God and the earth, cause harvest. God, by the creatures, doth all things; God is the only principal efficient; the sun itself, and all other creatures, are but lifeless instruments, moved and acted by God according to his purpose and pleasure: 'Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. It is in vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, and to eat the bread of sorrows,' Ps. 127:1, 2. Apricot-trees that depend on their own strength, leaning on nothing, as experience teacheth us, bring forth little or no fruit, when they that lean on the wall abound in clusters. The way to thrive in thy trade is not to trust to thy own head or hands, but to trust in the Lord for a blessing on thy endeavours.

Fifthly, If thou dost prosper in thy calling, let God alone have the praise. Do not sacrifice to thy own net, Hab. 1:10, as the Jews, as though by thy skill and wisdom thou hadst met with such a draught, but consider the providence of God hath brought in all thy profit: 'Beware when thy herds and thine flock multiply and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, lest thine heart be lifted up, and thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of my hands hath gotten me this wealth,' Deut. 8:14–18. Man is apt to make himself his idol, and to attribute all to his own pains and prudence. Men boast, saith Luther, *Hoc ego feci*, and *hoc ego feci*, and shew themselves to be mere *fæces*. They brag, this I have done, and this I have done, and thereby appear to be nothing but dregs. God took it ill that Tyros should say, 'By my traffic and my wisdom I have increased my wealth;' and telleth her that she had 'set her heart as the heart of God,' Ezek. 28:3–5.

The Israelites were commanded to bring their first ripe fruits to God, whereby they acknowledged him the owner and author of all their increase, Exod. 23:16, 19; Lev. 23:10.

The very heathen were somewhat sensible of this. The Metapontines, after a plentiful harvest, which had much enriched them, dedicated a harvest cut in gold to Apollo, their god: 'Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion: for he maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat,' Ps. 147:12–14. When God sendeth thee in profit, thy duty is to give him praise. Do not bury God's mercies, as the barren earth the seed, that when once it is thrown into the ground we hear no more of it. God expecteth, as the trees by their leaves in autumn pay their tribute of thanks to the earth, the mother of their fruitfulness, so that we should honour him when he heapeth favours on us.



Some men are like fishermen's weels, wide to receive in mercies; but there is no passage out for the returning of praises. Those places where the rivers are shallowest make the greatest sound; those where they are deepest are most silent. Men while they are poor, sound with prayers, make a great noise for mercies; but when God blesseth them with wealth, they are silent in regard of thanks; they are lifted up with pride, but look not up to God with praise.

It is reported of Willigis, a wheeler's son, that being made archbishop of Mentz, and one of the prince electors in Germany, he did constantly acknowledge God's great providence in his great preferment; and therefore gave in his coat of arms three wheels, with this motto, written in his bedchamber in great letters, Willigis, Willigis, recole uncle veneris—Willigis, Willigis, remember from whence thou comest! Thus holy Jacob in his prosperity remembered both his former poverty and his present plenty, to its author's praise, 'O God of my father Abraham, I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and all thy truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant: for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands,' Gen. 32:9, 10. So do thou, reader, when God blesseth the work of thy hands, ponder his goodness, that thou mayest give him his praise, and think of thy own unworthiness; thereby thou mayest be preserved from pride. It is reported of that noble captain Iphicrates, that being enriched, he should cry out, From how small, to how great an estate am I raised!

Sixthly, Labour for contentedness, and a holy composedness in all conditions: 'Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have, for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,' Heb. 13. Thy duty is, to have the scales of thy mind equally poised in all providences; not rising in prosperity through lightness, nor sinking in adversity under the heaviness of the

load. As the tree bendeth this way and that way with the wind, but still keepeth its place; so thou mayest yield according to the gales of providence, but still retain and keep thy standing, thy piety. If thine estate decrease, let not thine heart despair; if the world flow in, let not thine heart flow out. Oh, it was an excellent lesson which Paul had learned, 'I know in what state soever I am to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; I know how to be full and how to be empty,' Phil. 4:11. Paul was not like a musical instrument, out of tune with every change of weather; but like a cypress-tree, which no storms, naturalists tell us, can alter; and like the hill Olympus, above all winds and weather.

Some men are like the leaves of a tree, which every wind sets a-shaking and trembling; or like a bone out of joint, which a man cannot stir without pain: if the world do but frown upon them, you may see it in their faces, they are quite dejected with sorrow. Oh, how heavy presently are their hearts, as if they had lost their heaven! It is to be feared that bough is rotten, which breaketh if but a little weight be hung upon it. A godly man should be like a rock, immoveable, though high winds and boisterous waves of providence blow and beat upon him; and like a die, however he be thrown, always to fall upon a square. The traveller need not murmur, though his inn afford him but mean fare, and a hard bed, when he knoweth that he must be gone next morning. The ox is not happier, which hath two or three mountains to graze on, than the bee which feedeth upon that dew which falleth daily from the storehouse of heaven. If thou hast secured thine everlasting estate, the boundless God is thy portion, and surely then thou mayest be like a spring full, under the most scorching providence.

It was a worthy speech of Mr Bradford, the martyr, to one who asked him whether he should petition the queen for his life. If the queen

will take away my life, I will thank her; if she will give me my life, I will thank her; if she will banish me, I will thank her; if she will burn me, I will thank her; let her deal with me how she pleaseth, I will thank her. So, reader, thy heart will be in an excellent frame indeed, if thou canst thank God when he enricheth thee, and thank him when he impoverisheth thee; if thou canst thank him when he smiles on thee with the light of his countenance, and thank him also if he frowns by some sad providence; if thou canst thank him when he is at addition, and thank him when he is at subtraction; thank him giving to thee, and thank him taking from thee. Oh, here is a heart worth gold indeed. Truly the want of this calmness and composedness of mind is a great impediment to Christians. Alas, when their spirits are like some men's flesh, no sooner raised with a pin, but they rankle and fester; no sooner touched with a light affliction, but they faint and are dejected; how unfit are they for religious actions! as men in extremity of pain, they rather chatter than pour out a prayer. Either men must use the world as if they used it not, or they will serve the Lord as if they served him not. He who knoweth that nothing can befall him whilst he is diligent in his calling, but what is the fruit of bottomless love, and the result of infinite wisdom, may certainly be steady in the greatest storm. Thrice happy is that soul, who hath so much care of doing his work, and such an eye to the recompence of reward, that the allurements and affrightments of the world, though they may assault the outworks, can never surprise the royal fort of his heart.

The only way, reader, to find thine own will, is, to lose it in God's will; those that grumble at his doings, and quarrel at his dealings, do but like a bull in the net, and the silly bird among the lime-twigs, by struggling entangle themselves the more. Unsubmissiveness to God's will is the fountain of all man's woe; the quiet resignation of our persons and portions to God's pleasure is the only sleeping pill which

can give rest to the soul. Christian, let me ask thee this question, Didst thou give up thyself to Christ for temporal, or for eternal comforts? Didst thou enter upon religion to save thine estate, or thy soul? Oh, why then shouldst thou be so sad, when thine eternal happiness is so safe? For shame, live like a child of God, an heir of heaven; and let the world know, that thy hopes and happiness are in a better world; that though thou art denied those acorns which thy father giveth to his hogs, yet thou hast the children's bread, and expectest thine inheritance when thou comest to age.

Thus I have despatched the fourth particular, how a Christian may exercise himself to godliness in his particular calling.

### **A good wish about particular callings, wherein the former heads are epitomised**

My particular calling being a peculiar and distinct station, wherein I am bound to be serviceable to my country and family, and wherein also I have this privilege, that I may further my general calling, if I mind it out of conscience to the Lord, and in obedience to his word, I wish, in general, that I may never cross the wise providence of my God, in the government of the world, by neglecting it, or thinking lightly of it; but since I am listed under the captain of my salvation, may serve him faithfully, not only in general as a soldier, but also in that place or office to which he hath chosen and called me. I wish, in particular, that what my hand findeth to do, I may do it with all my might. That I may be of the number of them that spend themselves with labour, and not of them who waste with rust and laziness; my diligence herein is some help against the temptations of the devil. The sluggard's heart is like his field, overgrown with weeds. Lord, let me rather wear out by work, than consume, like a garment laid by with moths, for want of use. Yet I wish that I may not by my industry

make more haste to be rich than good speed—I mean, that I may never increase my riches by dealing unrighteously in my calling, knowing that unjust gain is a morsel which the strongest stomach in the world cannot possibly digest, but may esteem a penny got by the blessing of God upon my honest labour, at a far greater price than thousands of pounds by rapine and robbery, and may weigh all my wares in the scales of loving my neighbour as myself, by the standard of that royal law, 'Whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, do you even so unto them; for this is the law and the prophets.' Oh that I might not upon any pretence whatsoever, either by taking advantage of the buyer's ignorance, or by putting unserviceable wares into his hands, or by false weights and measures, or by defrauding my neighbour any other way, 'Consult shame to my house, and sin against my own soul,' Hab. 2:10. But when I am in my shop or warehouse, or instructing my servant how to sell, I may hear the sound of that dreadful threatening against unrighteous dealers in mine ears, 'He hath swallowed down riches, he shall vomit them up again: God shall cast them out of his belly,' Job 20:15. 'He shall suck the poison of asps; the viper's tongue shall slay him; the increase of his house shall depart, and his goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath.' I desire that I may watch my calling, as they who make powder do their fire, with my greatest care, to keep it within its own bounds, that I may so give to the world the things of the world, as to give to my God the things of God. To this end I wish that I may not, like Demas, embrace this present world, but how deep soever I wade in earthly affairs, may be sure to keep my head, I would say my heart, above water, lest I sink and perish in them eternally. Lord, though I possess outward things, yet let outward things never possess me. I am married to thy sacred Majesty; though I converse with my calling as a friend, yet let the bed of my heart never be defiled therewith, but reserved only for thy blessed self to lodge in. My prayer is, that my earthly traffic may never be suffered to play the thief, and to steal

away that precious treasure of time, which at least morning and evening my heavenly trade requireth in my closet and family: but though like the eagle I stoop to the earth for my prey, my outward provision, I may not dwell there, but mount up again to heaven. Oh that I might be deaf to all the vain excuses which the world will plead for the total omission or shortening of religious exercises, and even when a real necessity, not through any negligence of mine, appeareth by some sudden providence, I am denied time to draw the long sword of solemn devotion, I may be then so affected with my duty and danger, as to draw the short dagger of ejaculatory petitions, to defend myself against my spiritual enemies. My God never intended that my trade should be my trouble, or my calling like the clouds to impede my sight of the true Sun; therefore if so much business lie upon my hands, that if that be attended my soul must be neglected, let me rather, as a wise traveller, case myself of some part of my burden, than permit it to hinder me in my journey to heaven.

I desire that I may be so sensible that good things here below come from the most high God, and the success of my labours dependeth more on his providence than my diligence, that I may never in a morning open my shop, or lift up a tool, as my trade is, before I have opened my heart, and lifted up my soul to my God for his blessing upon my endeavours. All creatures in the hands of my God are as dead tools in the hands of a living workman, by whose force and influence alone they act. Lord, let me never look upon second causes as more than the order in which, and the means with which, thou art pleased to work. I wish that if God shall by my calling increase my wealth, I may not sacrifice to my own nets, nor burn incense to my own drags, but may be so spiritual as to acknowledge my God the author of temporals, and receive them so thankfully from his hand of bounty, that I may improve them faithfully, as may be most for his glory. The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; he is the owner

of all I enjoy, I am but his steward, and must shortly give account of my stewardship. Oh let me make me friends of the unrighteous mammon, that I may be trusted with the true riches; let my whole estate be employed according to thy word, for the furtherance of my own everlasting weal.

Finally, I wish that I may sail trim and even in all waters; that when it is full tide in regard of outward comforts, I may not swell with pride; nor when it is low water, grumble through peevishness. Murmuring is the music of hell, holy contentedness is the foretaste of heaven. Why should I rejoice my worst enemy, and dishonour my best friend, by being fretful at that which the only wise God seeth to be fit and needful? The lean ox is fitter for service than the fatted one. The true Israelite may well be satisfied in his journey to Canaan with his homer a day, with his statute-measure, and his Father's allowance. What though my Father deny me that entertainment at present, which he giveth to strangers; yet I have his love now, and the inheritance hereafter shall be mine. 'My God will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' Lord, let me never discredit thy housekeeping, by my grumbling carriage or frowning countenance; but so, by the prospective-glass of faith, behold those things which are invisible, that I may in all things give thanks; like some birds, sing even in winter, and as clothes dyed in grain, retain my colour in all weathers; that 'when the fig-tree doth not blossom, nor the vine yield her fruit; when the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields yield no meat; then I may rejoice in the Lord, and be glad in the God of my salvation.' In a word, I wish that I may, like the wise merchant, sell all I have to buy the pearl of great price; the gold tried in the fire, that I may be rich; the white raiment, that I may be clothed; and drive such a constant trade with my God in the other world, bearing from thence, and sending thither daily, that when the king of terrors shall

give me a writ of ease from my particular calling, I may die in the Lord, rest from my labours, and have my works following me through free grace, into an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Amen.

**A good wish about the calling of a minister; wherein the several properties and duties of a conscientious pastor are epitomised**

The ministry of the word being a calling above all others of greatest weight, as set up by the ever-blessed God, for the payment of himself the deserved praise of his curious, eternal, and infinitely wise purpose; and for the payment of the Lord Jesus Christ, the precious fruits of his bloody passion, by the turning of sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God; in which he is pleased to commit to men, duly qualified and rightly called, the word of reconciliation, and commandeth them in his name, as his ambassadors, to offer terms of peace, and to persuade and beseech rebellious sinners, with all earnestness and faithfulness, as they would not have the blood of their people's souls required at their hands, to accept of and submit to those articles of grace and pardon, —I wish, in general, that since my God hath counted me faithful, put me into the ministry, and intrusted me with that which so nearly relateth to his own glory, and which so highly concerneth the eternal felicity of precious souls, that I may take heed to myself, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made me overseer, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood, Acts 20:28. In particular, I wish that I may know experimentally what regeneration meaneth, before I travail with others, till Christ be formed in them; that I may dissuade from compliance with sin, and persuade to a hearty acceptance of the Saviour, not by hearsay or at second-hand, but upon my own knowledge of the bitterness of the



former, and the goodness and sweetness of the latter. Let me not, like some cooks, dress that meat for others which I eat not of myself. Let not my sermons be, as Minerva, the children of my brain, but the travail of my soul, that I may serve my God with my spirit in the gospel of his Son; and as a true vessel of the sanctuary, have within me a savour of that water of life which I pour out to others. It is doleful to fall into hell from under the pulpit; but ah, how dreadful is it to drop thither out of it! Doth not my heart tremble to think that it is possible for me, like the unbelieving spies, to coast the heavenly Canaan, to commend it to others, and yet never to possess it myself? that whilst I preach to others, I myself may be a castaway? Lord, let me so exalt thee in my heart, as my chiefest good; in my life, as mine utmost end; and preach so effectually to my own soul and to others', that I may both save myself and them that hear me.

I wish that the spring of my motions, and principle of all my work, may be love to my Master, and not expectation of any temporal reward. That I may never be so sordidly sinful as to sell the incomparable Saviour for a little corruptible silver; to turn my Father's house into a house of merchandise; and to cry up my God, as the Ephesians their goddess, because by that craft they had their wealth; but that unfeigned affection to the bleeding head, and tender compassion to his blessed members, may be all the oil to feed that lamp wherewith I enlighten others in the way to life. Oh that that pathetical affectionate expression of my dearest Redeemer might sound often in mine ears, and pierce my very soul, 'If thou lovest me, feed my lambs; if thou lovest me, feed my sheep.'

I desire that my ends in the ministry may be purely to exalt the glorious name of my God, in the conversion and edification of his precious and chosen ones. That I may not use preaching, as a thief a picklock, to open men's coffers, but as a key to open their hearts, that

the truth of God, and the God of truth, may enter in. Why should I profane so pious an ordinance by so poisonous an end, and serve myself like the eagle, by having my eye to the prey whilst I soar aloft, and pretend to the world that I serve my Saviour? Let me not like Balaam, divine for money, nor through covetousness, with feigned words, make merchandise of inestimable souls, which Christ thought worth his precious blood. Oh that I might seek not my people's goods, but good; not my own profit, but the profit of many, that they might be saved. Lord, let this design lie at the bottom of my heart in every act of my office, that I may, as Abraham's steward, provide a wife for my master's son; and enable me through thine help, so to set forth the beauty of his person, the excellency of all his precepts, and the vastness of his portion, that I may woo to purpose, and prevail to present my people as a chaste virgin unto Christ.

I wish, that because the work I am occupied about is great, in regard it is not for man, but for the Lord, that I may, as Bezalcel and Aholiab for the service of the sanctuary, be singularly gifted and endowed by my God, for the building of his spiritual temple; that, as a wise builder, I may lay the foundation of sound doctrine, raise it up strong pillars of convincing reasons, and cover it with useful and powerful application. I would not, like some young shopkeepers, for want of stock, set out pictures of wares instead of parcels; but be so thoroughly furnished unto every good work, that I may, upon all occasions, bring out of my treasury things both new and old. Lord, let a double portion of thy Spirit be poured on me, and let thy blessing so prosper my studies, that I may be an 'able minister of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth,' 2 Cor. 3:6.

I wish, that since I am a steward of the mysteries of Christ, and that it is required of a steward that he be found faithful, that I may upon no pretence be false to the souls of my people; that I may not daub with untempered mortar, or sow pillows under men's elbows for any gain or advantage, but may be a Barnabas, a son of consolation to the penitent; a Boanerges, a son of thunder to the presumptuous, that, knowing the terror of the Lord, I may persuade men, and give to every one their particular and proper portion in due season. Oh let me not be curious to provide meat toothsome for polluted palates, to the feeding of their distempers—like Ahab's four hundred trencher-chaplains, who sold their lord's life at the cheap rate of a lie—but as Micaiah, be careful to distribute food that is wholesome and suitable to their several spiritual constitutions. Though my patients may be angry at present, when I search their festered wounds to the bottom, and thereby put them to pain, yet, when upon my faithful dealing they recover, they will give me hearty thanks. It was the saying of Mauritius the emperor, when he heard that Phocas was a coward, If he be a coward, he is a murderer. If I be fearful to tell men of their sins, I murder their souls. Lord, when I am visiting my parishioners in private, or preaching to them in public, cause me to hear thy voice behind me: 'When I say unto the wicked, that he shall surely die; and thou givest him no warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, that he may live; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquities; but his blood will I require at thine hand,' Ezek. 3:18.

I desire that I may not be obnoxious to the censure of a wicked and slothful servant; not of wicked, by hiding my sins in the cloak of excuses; nor of slothful, by hiding my talent in the napkin of idleness; but may mind the work of the ministry, and make it appear that both in my preparation for, and execution of my office, I labour in the word and doctrine. My time and parts are not mine own, but, under God, my people's, and to be improved for their profit. If men

die for robbing single persons, what shall befall me, should I be such a thief as to rob the poor, the rich, and indeed the whole parish's stock? My prayer is, that I may not offer to the Lord my God that which cost me nothing; that my meat, which I set before the family committed to my charge, may not be, like Ephraim, half-baked, raw or crude, and so unmeet for their stomachs to concoct, because of my negligence in preparing it; that I may 'give attendance to reading; meditate on those things; give myself wholly to them; that my profiting may appear to all men,' 1 Tim. 4:13, 15. They that spend upon the main stock where it is but small, will quickly prove bankrupts. My layings-out are considerable, my comings-in had need to be answerable. Surely, if any in the world should feed high, should study, read, and pray hard, those should do it who carry so many in their wombs, or give so many suck. I wish that I may be industrious as well in rearing the temple as in providing materials, that I may cheerfully 'spend, and be spent in the service of Christ.' My Saviour was taken to be fifty when he was little above thirty, by reason of his excessive industry; his very countenance was aged. O my soul, follow thou this blessed pattern. Do not play, 'but work the work of him that sent thee in the Lord.' Improve all opportunities to the utmost, be instant in season and out of season, serve thy God with all thy strength; like fuel, consume thyself in burning to warm the spirit of the saint, and to thaw the frozen heart of the sinner. Thy work is of infinite consequence, thy time is exceeding short, thy reward is glorious and eternal. 'Up, and be doing,' and, like the silkworm, wear out thine own bowels to hide others' nakedness; waste thyself to prevent thine own and others' endless woe. Be thou a fruitful mother to conceive and bring forth new creatures, though thou conceivest with sorrow, and bringest forth with much pain, and thy labours at last should cost thee thy life.

I desire that I may be tenderly affected to all the souls in my charge, as knowing their worth, and believing of what concernment their unchangeable estates are in the other world. Lord, what melting bowels should I have towards them, when I consider that every one of them must die within a few days, and either live in heaven, or fry in hell to all eternity! My Saviour was a faithful and merciful high priest. He had compassion on the multitude when they had nothing to eat, and would not send them away empty, lest they should faint in the wilderness. Oh that I had but that pity for the souls which he had to the bodies of men! Nature will help me to pity a body without a soul; why should not grace teach me to pity a soul without a God? Lord, when I behold wounded, bleeding, dying souls, let mine eyes affect my heart with sorrow, that both mine eyes and heart may be up to thee, with the greatest importunity for a blessing upon my most diligent endeavours for their recovery. Make me so tender and affectionate a mother, that I may patiently bear with the frowardness, and willingly go through with the burden of instructing my children. Though others nurse children for the love of wages, let me nurse mine for the wages of love. Let all my actions towards them flow from sincere affection to them; and not only my counsel and comforts, but even my rod of reproof, like Jonathan's, be dipped in this honey. When I am rebuking them cuttingly, and frightening them from sin with the fear of the unquenchable fire, let all my bitter pills be given in this sweet syrup of love, that they may know and acknowledge my greatest anger against their sins to proceed from a tender respect and love to their immortal souls.

I wish that, being a sworn soldier of the Lord of hosts, whatsoever trials and tribulations I meet with in my holy warfare, whatsoever dangers and death shall look me in the face, I may never fly from my colours, or forsake my captain, but 'endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.' When I first listed myself in his muster-roll, I

understood the grievous hardships and various hazards which all his army, but especially his officers, must encounter with; that to preach the gospel is, as Luther saith, to draw the hatred of the whole world upon a man; yea, that earth and hell would both conspire and plant their strongest batteries against the bulwarks of the church, (under God,) the ministers of the word; notwithstanding all which I entered my name as a volunteer, and promised to live and die in his quarrel; and shall I now, because the enemies appear numerous, and the bullets fly thick, like Peter, deny my righteous cause, and disown my glorious captain? Lord, let me die with thee rather than deny thee; enable me through thy strength to be ready not only to be bound, but to die for the name of the Lord Jesus. My only safety consisteth in keeping close to my Saviour; should I, through cowardliness, run away, I must expect martial law. 'If any man draw back, thy soul will have no pleasure in him.' If I, like Jonah, should run from thy presence, as unwilling to deliver an unwelcome message, I must expect a storm to follow after me, and either the waves to swallow me up, or the whale to swallow me down; I should but go out of thy blessing into the warm sun. If the service of my God be not in all respects the best, why did I choose and like it? If it be, why should I refuse and leave it? My cause is good, I fight against sin and Satan, the desperate and bloody enemies of my soul; my crown is better; after a temporal conflict, followeth an eternal crown of glory. 'O my soul, be thou faithful unto death, and thou shalt have a crown of life.' But my captain is best of all; he looketh upon me, goeth before me, fighteth for me; and as he leadeth me on to this trial, so he will not, like the devil and the world, who leave their servants and lovers in the lurch, but bring me off with triumph, either safe on earth, or safe to heaven. Lord, whatsoever dirt of calumny shall be thrown in my face, whatsoever dart of cruelty shall be stuck in my body, for keeping the word of thy patience in an hour of temptation, yet let none of these things move me, neither let me count my life dear unto

me, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the grace of God, Acts 20:22.

As to the preaching of the gospel, which is the principal work of the minister, as being the main engine in the hand of God, wherewith he undermineth and overturneth the strongholds of sin and the kingdom of darkness, I wish that I may prepare for this work diligently, ever handle this weapon warily, deliver the message of my God soberly, as may be most for his glory and my people's good, not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. To this end I desire that all my sermons may be, like Monica's son, children of many prayers and tears, and thereby the more unlikely to perish. Luther saith, He that prayeth hard, studieth hard. Lord, let all my sermons, as dew, be heaven-born, that they may drop down upon my people like rain upon the mown grass. Let prayer be the key to open the mysteries of Christ to me, and let prayer be the turning of the key, to lock them up safe within me. Let prayer open and shut all my books, form and write, begin and conclude every sermon. Ah, how should he pray both for his preaching, and before he preacheth, who, by every sermon, preacheth his beloved neighbours into eternal burnings, or eternal pleasures!

I wish also, for the furtherance of the former ends, that I may preach over every sermon to my own heart before I preach them to my hearers; that I, preaching feelingly, may preach the more effectually; and the milk of the word coming warm out of the mother's breasts, may be, as more natural, so more pleasing and nourishing to the children. Why should I, like a lawyer, plead the cause of my God, for my fees, and not at all have my own person concerned in it? Oh let

me rather, as a physician, drink of those potions myself, which I prescribe and administer to my patients.

I desire that I may never dare to play the huckster with the word of God, to sophisticate or adulterate it by my additions to it, but that I may receive from the Lord what I deliver to men, and feed all my charge with the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. If it be treason to counterfeit the king's coin, what high treason is it for me to imprint the King of king's stamp on my brass money! Oh that, as I am an ambassador, I might keep close to my instructions; and as a builder, may lay every stone in his temple by the line and rule of his word; and as a physician, may never try experiments upon the souls of my people, but hold fast to the form of wholesome words, and ever prescribe those tried and approved receipts, which the great physician hath left me under his own hand. Because my work is to touch and pierce my hearers' hearts, and not to tickle and please their ears, I wish that I may preach a crucified Saviour in a crucified style; that I may not blow up my sermons, as butchers some joints of meat, to make them show fairer, with a windy pomp of words; but by using all plainness, and stooping to the lowest capacity, may 'become all things to all men, that I may save some.' I am a barbarian to my people, whilst I preach to them in an unknown language; I starve their souls, whilst I give them such meat as they can never digest. Let me not read authors, as the butterfly goeth to flowers, only to gild her wings; but as the bee, to gather honey, and bring it home to the hive for the supply of her young. Lord, let me never be guilty, by painting the windows, of hindering the light of thy glorious gospel from shining powerfully into the hearts of men and women.

My prayer is, that I may not strengthen the hands of sinners, nor sadden the hearts of the godly, but be able to distinguish between the



vile and the precious, and accordingly give them their several portions: that I may give milk to babes, and strong meat to stronger men; order my prescriptions suitable to their particular constitutions; use the needle of the law to make way for the thread of the gospel; and lead my sheep, as Jacob drove his flock, as they were able to bear it, and as Christ taught his, as they were best able to hear him. Oh that I might not only preach prudently, but also powerfully; that my sermons may be delivered, not as prologues to a play, as matter of sport or pastime, but as the message of a herald, with all imaginable seriousness and fervency, as containing conditions of life and death. The word is a hammer, but it will never break the stony heart if lightly laid on; what is preached coldly, is heard carelessly. Lord, let me not, like the moon, give some light without any heat, but cause me to lift up my voice like a trumpet; to give, as fire, heat as well as light; to be eaten up with the zeal of thine house; to beseech poor souls to be happy, with as much fervency as if I were begging for my life; and to preach so successfully that I may raise up much spiritual seed to my elder brother.

I wish that all my parishioners, without exception, may have so deep a share in my affection, upon a religious account, that without ceasing I may make mention of them always in my prayers; that my heart's desire and prayer to God, both in secret, private, and public, for poor and rich, may be, that they may be saved. Oh let me daily offer sacrifice for them, confess their iniquities, bewail their misery, and cry mightily to God for mercy. Lord, let me prevail with thy Majesty to speak to their hearts, and I shall prevail with them to hearken to thee; yea, I shall stand before thee at the last day with courage, and say, 'Behold, here am I, and the children which thou hast given me.'

Because the small keels of children are quickly overturned, when they meet with the high winds of temptations, as they sail along in the sea of this world, if they be not ballasted with the principles of the oracles of God; I pray that I may be a diligent instructor of babes, and a faithful teacher of the simple. That I may season, through God's help, those new vessels with the precious water of life, that they may retain their savour to their old age; that the younger amongst my people may, from their childhood, know the holy Scriptures, the way to salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

I wish, that in the administration of the sacraments, I may have an impartial regard to the fitness and meetness of the subjects, lest I set those precious seals of the covenant of grace to blanks, whereby they should signify nothing, especially that about the Lord's supper, as I would not be partaker of other men's sin, nor be an instrument of furthering their eternal suffering, I may be tender, and walk altogether by the rule of Scripture. Oh let me never pollute that sacred ordinance, by giving it to profane persons; nor be so prodigal of my dearest Saviour's blood and body, as to give those holy things to dogs, and to cast those pearls before swine, who will trample them under their feet. Ah, it is much better that such scandalous sinners should be angry with me on earth, for my wholesome severity, than curse me for ever in hell for my foolish pity and soul-damning flattery.

I wish that, like a faithful shepherd, I may often visit my flock, and warn every one night and day with tears; and not as a careless non-resident, expose them to the rage and cruelty of the devouring wolf, by my absence from them, or by my negligence when present among them; lest another day, when it is too late, they cry to me, and complain of me. Sir, if thou hadst been here our souls had not died.

The priest under the law visited the suspected or leprous houses, inquired how it was with them; and as he found it so gave sentence. Oh that I might, under the gospel, visit diseased hearts, and diligently inquire how things stand betwixt the great God and their poor souls, and give them suitable, savoury, and profitable advice. Though I, therefore, desire a great auditory, because among many fish there is the greater probability that the baits of the gospel will take and catch some, yet therefore I should desire a small parish, because thereby I am in the greater capacity to deal with every one in it in particular about the concernments of their everlasting peace. Lord, let thy strict command frequently come into my mind, 'I charge thee, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and dead at his appearing, and his kingdom: preach the word, be instant in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with long-suffering and doctrine,' 2 Tim. 4:1, 2.

I wish that I maybe as the Baptist, both a burning light in my sermons, and a shining light in my conversation, lest my works give the lie to my words; whilst I, as Mercury, direct others in the right way, but walk not in it myself. The priests under the law had their Urim and Thummim, signifying purity of doctrine and sanctity of life; a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate, typifying that preaching and practice must go together. Oh that I might preach as powerfully by my life as by my lips; and, like a faithful nurse, avoid the scandals of distempers, and even forbear those meats which I love, though lawful in themselves, when not expedient, not only for my own sake, but also for their sakes to whom I give suck. Nazianzen saith of him that was the 'voice of one crying in the wilderness,' that he was all voice, a voice in his habit, a voice in his diet, a voice in his conversation. Lord, enable me in all things so to shew myself a pattern of good works to my people, Tit. 2:7, to be such an example to believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in

purity, 1 Tim. 4:12, that I may be able to say to my flock, as Paul to his Philippians, 'Brethren, be followers together of me,'—and to his Corinthians, 'Be followers of me as I am of Christ,' 1 Cor. 11:1—'and mark them which, walk so as ye have me for an ensample,' Phil. 3:17.

I wish, that though my labours should prove unfruitful, when I in the discharge of my trust am faithful, that I may not be discouraged, knowing that I shall be a 'sweet savour to my God, as well in them that perish as in them that are saved.' And 'though Israel be not gathered by me, but I spend my strength in vain, yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God.' Yet, oh that I might not be sent about that dreadful message, to make the hearts of any people fat, to make their ears heavy, and to shut their eyes; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert, and be healed, Isa. 6:10; but that I may turn many sinners from the errors of their ways, save many souls from death, and hide a multitude of sins.

I wish that as Joab, when he took the city of Rabbah with David's soldiers, was willing to have the crown set on the king's head; so when my God hath enabled me by his Spirit to cast down imaginations and high things that exalted themselves against the knowledge of him, and to bring into captivity many sinners to the obedience of Christ, that I may set the crown of glory upon the head of God alone, and not suffer the least part of his honour to stick to my fingers. I am but the instrument, he is the principal efficient; I am but the pipe, he is the spring whence the water of life floweth; I do but lay on the plaster, he made the precious salve of the word, and bestoweth also healing virtue on it. Oh that I might never be so ungrateful, when he is pleased to honour me, as to dishonour him by thinking of myself above what is meet, but that all my services may

be as so many scaffolds, erected purposely for the raising of his name, and the setting up of his praise.

Finally, I wish that I may take heed to myself, to my doctrine, to my life, be watchful in all things, endure affliction, make full proof of my ministry, do the work of a faithful pastor, lest, as they who prophesied in Christ's name, and in his name cast out devils, I be east to devils as a worker of iniquity, and find that gate of life which I opened to others shut against my own soul, 1 Tim. 4:16; 2 Tim. 4, 5; and Mat. 7:21, 23. Oh let me not, as porters in great houses, lodge without myself whilst I let others into heaven; let it please thee, O God of all grace, to fill me with the fruits of thy Spirit, that I may feed thy people with knowledge and understanding; 'take the oversight of them, not by constraint, but willingly: not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; not as being a lord over God's heritage, but as being an example to the flock. That so when the chief shepherd shall appear, (on, the great day in which the sheep shall be separated from the goats,) I may receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away,' 1 Pet. 5:2-4. Amen.

## **CHAPTER XXVII**

### **How a Christian may exercise himself to godliness in his family as the governor thereof**

It is thy duty to exercise thyself to godliness in thy family and relations. A Christian must not, like the Israelites' pillar in the wilderness, be light on one side and dark on the other, be diligent in one relation and negligent in another; but as a candle in a crystal

lantern, be lightsome quite round it, be holy in every relation in which he standeth.

Reader, I shall consider thee as governor or governess of a family, and herein direct thee what thou shouldst do for the faithful discharge of thy trust in that relation.

Houses under the law were to be dedicated to God at their first setting up, Deut. 20:5; which was done, saith Ainsworth on the place, with singing and praising God, as well as feasting. David's psalm, Ps. 30 Vide title, at the dedication of his house, is worthy our imitation. Hezekiah, upon the law touching the sanctifying a house to God, Lev. 27:14, 15, giveth this exposition, That to dedicate or sanctify an house to God, is for the governor to be careful for the instruction of his family, and the religious conversation of his household: that his house maybe God's house, and his children God's children, and his servants God's servants.

A family is a natural and simple society of certain persons, having mutual relation one to another, under the private government of one head or chief. Aristotle calleth families the first society in nature, and the ground of all the rest. Before the flood, the whole form of civil and ecclesiastical government was confined within the precincts of private families. A family is the epitome of a kingdom and a commonwealth in a little volume. The way to make godly parishes, and godly countries, and godly kingdoms, is to make godly families. When sin as a plague spreadeth abroad, it beginneth in families: one atheistical family defileth and destroyeth many; it sendeth a son into one house, a daughter into another, a servant into a third, and every of them, like infectious persons, poison those with whom they converse: like a nest of foxes, they destroy and devour all the country over. As one house on fire often burneth down many; so one profane

family injureth many: one godly family, on the contrary, doth good to many. As one stock of bees sendeth forth swarms and honey into many parts of the country; so one religious family, sending religious children and servants abroad, (they come in time to have families of their own,) may bring much honour to God, and be helpful to the eternal welfare of many souls.

A godless family, like a gun or cannon, killeth at a distance, as their swearing children and drunken servants come to spread abroad. A gracious family, like the weapon-salve, healeth at a distance, as the pious relations in it come to be dispersed in other places. Solomon was a religious housekeeper; and it is observable, his servants were so seasoned by him with godliness that their children, five hundred years after, were recorded by the Spirit of God to be the most eminent in their time for religion, Ezra 2:58. Solomon being a godly governor of his family, did good after he was dead at so great a distance. Theodosius being asked how a private person might be a public good, answered, By ordering all things well at home. The way to make our orchards good is to look well to our nurseries.

It concerneth thee, therefore, reader, nearly, to exalt godliness in thy house as well as in thy heart; nay, I will be bold to tell thee, if there be in thee the truth of religion, thou wilt propagate it amongst thy relations. Thou wilt not be like the whirlpool, to suck all into thyself, but be diffusive for the good of others. A good Christian is like a needle touched with the loadstone, which being drawn itself, will draw others along with it. When Christ had drawn Philip, he presently draweth Nathanael, John 1:43, 45. The bird hath no sooner found a heap of corn but she chirpeth and calleth her fellows, and will be sure to carry some home to her nest. A saint should endeavour the conversion of his neighbours, that they may eat of the bread of life with him; but he should have a special regard to his own

family, that all in it may feed on Christ by faith, and live. Nature hath taught the beavers to help one another in swimming; and the cranes flying over the mountain Taurus, when the foremost is weary in beating the air, that the next should succeed, and so in order every one to labour for the safety of them all. Christians are taught from other creatures to be helpful one to another; but the master of the family, like the sun, must outshine all in respect of public influence.

Plutarch saith of the neighbour villages about Rome in Numa's time, that sucking in the air of that city they breathed righteousness. The family ought to be a wholesome air for others to breathe in. It is reported of Andronicus the elder, that he was master of such a family as was the shop of virtue, and therefore it was called τῆς γῆς ἥλιος, The sun of the earth. Tremellius, who for a time sojourned in Bishop Cranmer's family, telleth us that it was Schola vel palæstra pietatis et literarum, The school or nursery of piety and learning. The houses of the primitive Christians were little churches in regard of the worship and service of God: 'To the church that is in thine house,' Philem. 2; Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:9; Col. 4:15. Though many a man's house is so far from being God's church and temple, that it is the devil's sty and kennel, that God may say to the master of the family, as in Rev. 2:13, 'I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is.' Nay, though they are civil abroad, then they will have some rags to cover their nakedness and naughtiness, they are sordid at home, and discover there all their nastiness. David, on the contrary, whatever steps he might take awry, and whatsoever slips he might meet with in his public walking, would be sure to look to his feet in his private dwelling: 'I will walk in the midst of my house with a perfect heart until thou come unto me,' Ps. 101:2. David was no hypocrite; he did not put on his best clothes when he went out, and put them off when he came in; but purity was his livery, as abroad, so at home.



Imitate that pious governor, who, though he had the burden of all the Israelites' civil and military affairs lying upon his shoulders, yet could say, 'I and my house will serve the Lord.'

Reader, I shall offer two thoughts to quicken thee to this necessary duty, and then give thee directions for the management of it.

1. Consider that religion in a family is the way to procure God's blessing on thy family. The holy family alone is the happy family. The Lord blessed the house of Obed-edom for the ark's sake, 2 Sam. 6:11. If the ark be in the house, that is, religion, God is there; for the ark was a type of God's presence; and canst thou need any comforts when thou hast God's company?

The philosopher could say, Though he had few goods in his house, yet he had the gods in his house. Though thou hast a poor dwelling, yet if godliness be there, thou shalt have God's blessing. 'His presence will make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous,' Job 8:6. Thou mayest say of thy house, as Jacob of Bethel, 'The Lord is in this place; this is none other but the house of God.' Basil speaketh, that in some countries they draw other pigeons to their dove-houses by anointing one of their pigeon's wings with sweet ointment. If thy house be anointed with the oil of godliness, it will allure the blessed God to it; and then what evil needest thou fear, or what good canst thou want? It is observed of the Palladium in Troy, that whilst that remained amongst them their city was safe. The only way to have a destroying angel pass by thy house is to have the door-posts sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ. 'Through wisdom is a house builded, and by understanding it is established; and by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all pleasant and precious riches,' Prov. 24:3, 4. Here is true wealth, and the right way to enjoy it. 1. The true wealth: thy chambers shall be filled with all pleasant

and precious riches. Righteousness is the best way to riches. 2. The way to this: by wisdom a house is builded, and it is established by understanding. By wisdom and understanding godliness is understood; and unto man he said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding,' Job 28:28. This wisdom is the best foundation for any house to stand upon. When religion layeth the foundation, raiseth the walls, and covereth the roof, such a house is built upon a rock, and will stand against all the winds and waves, wrath and rage of men and devils. Some families had lasted longer, saith Luther, if they had been holier.

Religion will bring a blessing on thy estate, Job 1:10. 'Blessed is he that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments; for thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands; happy shalt thou be; and it shall be well with thee,' Ps. 128:1, 2. It will bring a blessing on thy children; God will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee, Gen. 17:7; Prov. 20:7. The branches will fare the better for the sap of grace which is in the root. It will bring a blessing on thy name, Prov. 10:7. Holiness will make thy house truly honourable; it will bring a blessing on all thine affairs. In a word, that day in which religion is set up in thy house, I may say to thee, as Christ to Zaccheus, 'This day salvation is come to thy house.'

2. Consider, a family without religion is a cursed family. That house which is not Bethel, a house of God, but Bethaven, a house of vanity, is Bethany, a house of sorrow and misery. 'The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked,' Prov. 3:33. Whatsoever cordials or comforts, dishes or dainties are there, the curse of God, like the wild gourd which the sons of the prophets put into their pottage, will spoil and poison all. As a little leaven, a little of this curse of God will sour the whole lump of thy family blessings. 'I have seen the foolish taking root, but suddenly I cursed his habitation,' Job 5:3. The words are

not a malediction from Eliphaz's private spirit, but a prediction from God's Spirit, as if he had said—I was neither malicious against his person, nor envious at his prosperous condition, but by the help of the Holy Ghost I foresaw his destruction; that though his house was built high, yet his unholiness would lay it low. Thou mayest possibly presume, that though thou livest without God, yet thou art beyond the reach of his rod; thou canst moat thy house round against the fire of divine fury, but thy confidence shall be rooted out of thy tabernacle, and brimstone shall be scattered on thy habitation. God will unkennel all such foxes, and drag them to their deserved destruction. When Dioclesian the persecutor retired from the empire to a private life, after he had feathered his nest, fire rained down from heaven and consumed his house. When Nicephorus Phocas had built a mighty wall about his palace for his defence, he heard a voice in the night saying, Though thou buildest thy walls as high as heaven, sin is within, and that will pluck it down. The leprous house must be pulled down. God will have every brick, stone, tile, and piece of timber down. 'Where is the house of the prince? and where is the dwelling-place of the wicked?' Job 21:28.

Atheism in thy house will bring a curse upon thy calling, Job 5:2, 3. The works of thy hands will fare the worse for the wickedness of thy heart. On thy children—it is ill to be related to a traitor—diseases, and so destruction, may be hereditary. Children may inherit both their parents' riches and ruin, Job 5:4, 5; Isa. 14:20. His seed are far from safety—they are crushed. When a wicked man pulls down his house upon his head, many in it perish with him; as when Samson pulled the house down upon the Philistines.

The curse of God will be a moth in thy wardrobe, murrain among thy cattle, mildew in thy field, the plague to thy body, wrath to thy soul, will indeed make thy house a very hell upon earth. The highest family

in the world without godliness, though never so rich and ruffling, is but like Golgotha, a place full of frightful skulls, and like a churchyard full of carcasses, gilded, rotten, and golden damnation.

I shall now lay down some directions how thou mayest exercise thyself to godliness as the governor of a family.

First, Be careful whom thou admittest into thy family. Art thou unmarried, and to choose a husband or wife? Do thy occasions call for a man-servant or maid-servant? Be careful where thou fixest; for, believe it, not only thy grace will appear in a good choice, but also godliness will be much hindered or furthered by thy choice. 'One sinner destroyeth much good,' Eccles. 9:18. One man may pull down that house, which many, with much care, cost, and pains, did set up. We read that wicked men have been the better for taking godly men into their families, as Laban and Potiphar; but we never read that godly men were ever the better for having wicked persons in their families; nay, how much have they been the worse, and by such been brought to great wickedness! As black corn, they smut and sully the good corn; as rusty armour, they injure that which is bright by being near it. The Lacedemonians were so sensible of this, that they would not suffer a stranger to abide among them above three days, lest by his evil example he should corrupt others. And wilt thou, friend, take them into thy house to dwell with thee, that will bring the plague along with them, and thereby probably destroy the bodies and souls of others? Canst thou think it safe, for a little worldly advantage, to be nigh them who are under God's fury, and next door to eternal fire? Shall thy house be as Noah's ark, abounding in creatures clean and unclean, when God commandeth thee to worship him uprightly, with thy whole family? I hope, Christian, better things of thee. It was written over Plato's door, οὐ γεωμετρῆς, μὴ τις εἰσὶτω, There is no man may come hither who is not a geometer. Let it be written over

thy door, None may expect to dwell here who will not make religion his business.

Magnus, a Roman orator, complaineth of St Jerome, that he brought many uncircumcised Greeks into the temple, and defiled *candorem ecclesiæ sordibus ethnicorum*, the unstained chastity of the church, with the impure sentences of heathen authors. Take heed that thou dost not defile the church of God, for such thy house should be, with heathen themselves in Christian habits.

If thou wantest a wife, consider before thou choosest: take heed whom thou takest into thy bed, into thy bosom, lest thou meetest with a yoke-fellow that will draw as strongly towards hell as thou dost towards heaven. It is rendered as the reason why one of the kings of Israel was so wicked, because he had to wife the daughter of Ahab. There is little work to be done when the second horse in the team is always drawing back. The devil can make use of Eve to draw thee to undo thyself and posterity. He can make use of the rib, saith the father—alluding to that part of man out of which the woman was taken—to break thy head. The heathen tell us that every man when he marrieth, bringeth a good or an evil spirit into his house, and thereby makes his house either a heaven or a hell.

Be sure that wickedness do not woo for thee: do not send the unclean spirits, either of lust, or covetousness, or pride, to make the match. When men do as those sons of God, who saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and took them wives of them, Gen. 6:1, hand over head, it is no wonder that they are married and marred together. Consider, a wife or a husband is the greatest outward comfort or cross in this world; and let prayer be the messenger thou employest about it. 'A good wife is from the Lord,' Prov. 19:14. It is God's special gift, and therefore do thou go to him for it. Peter Martyr saith, that

Adam, in that deep sleep in which God formed Eve out of him, was then praying for a meet help. And Isaac went forth to pray, when he had sent forth for a wife. He had need to have good counsel who is to take one to be his constant companion. When Joshua entered into a league with the Gibeonites, and never asked counsel of God, how sad were the effects of it! If thou enterest into a league with a man or a maid, for I know not what sex thou art of, and dost not ask counsel of God, expect a sad consequence of such rashness. Why shouldst thou, as our proverb is, for a little land take a fool by the hand—sell the comfort of thy life for a little perishing wealth, and make thy whole time on earth bitter, out of a love to a little fading treasure?

It was the advice of the late Earl of Salisbury, in his book of precepts to his son, that he should be exceeding careful whom he matched with, because, as in a project of war, when an army is foiled by the enemy, they seldom recover; so to err once in the choice of a wife, is usually to be undone for ever; and the more cause there is of special care, because he that seeketh out for a wife goeth to a lottery, where he shall meet with a hundred blanks for one prize.

But I am persuading thee to circumspection in this particular not upon a politic, but a conscientious principle, as thou wouldst exalt religion in thy habitation. Next to thyself, thy wife will be the best friend or worst foe that godliness can have in thy family. Nay, possibly, and probably too, if thy wife should be wicked, though thou art at present like a sound apple, thou mayest quickly be specked, by lying near one that is all over rotten: the nearer the relation, the easier and speedier is the infection. He that could overcome a lion to his glory, was himself overcome by a woman to his sin and shame. The most perfect man, Adam, the strongest man, Samson; the wisest man, Solomon, were all betrayed by their wives into the hands of their spiritual enemies. The meekest man, Moses, hearkened so

much to his wife, that it was like to have cost him his life. Some expositors give this reason why Satan spared Job's wife, when he slew his children, not to comfort him—surely the devil did not love Job so well—but to cross him, by provoking him to curse God: the devil knew that none was so fit to present that poisonous potion with success to Job, as his wife; that if he ever took it, her fair hands must give it, and her sugared words sweeten it. Solomon saith, 'Woe be to him that is alone;' surely it is also true, Woe be to him who is not alone, but hath a wicked wife like a snake in his bosom.

Reader, dost thou want a servant? Choose for God, not for thyself. Let not thy main query be, whether he can do thy work, but whether he will submit to God's word; though the former must not be neglected, yet the latter must be preferred. It may be for advantage sake thou receivest a drunken or swearing person into thy house; but dost thou consider that he will be an Achan, a troubler of thy family? Canst thou think to do God's work with the devil's tools? Put off thy disguise of Christianity if thou esteemest thy particular calling above thy general. Besides, dost thou know what thou hast done? Thou hast taken into thy house an usher to instruct thy children in the black art of hell; believe it, thy children will catch sins as soon as vermin from those that are of Satan's ragged regiment. Thy sons and daughters are like Polypus in *Ælian*, that turneth to the colour of that rock or weed in the sea which lieth nearest. Once more, thou wilt be frustrated in the end of thy entertaining such a servant, for they will never be faithful to their master who are unfaithful to their Maker. Constantius, the father of famous Constantine, gave out that all such as would not deny the faith should be deprived of their honour and offices; whereupon several forsook the faith, others stuck close to the truth. Whereupon the emperor, when he had discovered those hailing hypocritical persons, turned them all out of their places, saying, that they who were false to God would never be faithful to

man. I do a little question his policy in the premises, but his piety in the conclusion is out of question; for they who will rob God of his glory, will, if opportunity serve, rob men of their goods and good name too. It is recorded to the credit of Queen Elizabeth that she would suffer no lady to approach her presence of whose dishonesty she had the least suspicion. Friend, mark and follow the man after God's own heart: 'Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house, he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight,' Ps. 101:6, 7.

As thou wouldst have God's company in thy family, do not entertain his enemies into thy family. 'What communion hath God with Belial?' As thou wouldst make religion thy business, avoid those quench-coals, those hinderers of holiness. Bid the workers of iniquity depart, if thou wouldst keep the commandments of thy God, Ps. 119:115.

Secondly, Mind holy performances in thy family. Every master of a family is a priest, and his whole family should be a royal priesthood, offering at least morning and evening sacrifice to God, acceptable through Jesus Christ. The Jews had sacrifice in their families, as well as in the tabernacle, Exod. 12:2. 'Let me go, I pray thee, for our family hath a sacrifice in the city,' saith David to Jonathan, 1 Sam. 6:20.

It was prophesied that in the days of the gospel the Spirit should be poured down upon men, and they should see Christ, and mourn 'every family apart,' Zech. 2:10. It was the advice of Jerome to a pious matron, So take care of thine house, as alway to allow liberty and time to thy soul. The governor hath the cure of the souls as well as of the bodies in his family; and if he mind their outward man and



neglecteth their inward, he is but a brute in human shape, for beasts feed the bodies of their young.

As the school fitteth young men for the university, so holy performances in private prepare servants and children for, and help them to profit by, the ordinances of God in public. A foundation well laid by the master of a family is a great help to the minister when he goeth to rear and raise the building. Confident I am our work would not have half that difficulty which now it hath, if masters of families would but do their duties. He that findeth his timber ready hewn to his hand hath a great advantage in setting up a house of him that must fell, bark, season, and hew it himself. It is no wonder that an apprentice is so backward to his work and so bungling at it, when he is wholly unacquainted with it and a stranger to it. If children and servants were accustomed to religious exercises at home, sermons would not be so tedious nor Sabbaths so tiresome to them as they are.

The ordinary duties in families are prayer, reading the word, with instructing children and servants out of it, and singing.

1. Prayer must be in families. It is said of Bishop Usher that he had family prayer four times a day, at six in the morning and eight at night, and before dinner and supper in his chapel. 'David returned to bless his house,' 2 Sam. 6:21—that is, say expositors, to bless God with his family, and to beg God's blessing on his family. Esther prayed and fasted with her maidens, Esth. 4:16. The Holy Ghost enjoineth husband and wife 'to dwell together as fellow-heirs of the grace of life, that their prayers be not hindered,' 1 Pet. 3:7. Our blessed Saviour is to be our pattern. Now he prayed with his family of disciples: 'And it came to pass as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him', Luke 9:18. He was alone, not secretly, to exclude all

society; but privately, to include only his own family. Our houses are God's houses, and in God's house there must every day be morning and evening sacrifice. 'I will that men pray everywhere;' surely then in private as well as in secret and in public, 1 Tim. 2:8. Families need direction in the day and protection in the night, and truly either of them is worth a prayer. Thy family sins must be pardoned, thy family wants must be supplied, and if they do I not deserve a prayer they deserve nothing. Horses kneel before they lie down at night, and when they rise up in the morning; and I shall thy house be worse than a stable of beasts?

They that will not beg family supplies and bless God for family mercies, may well be branded for ungodly and ungrateful wretches. Prayer and praise are like the double motion of the lungs; what we suck in by petition we breathe out in thanksgiving, and without this, religion cannot live in a family. What dangers are thy family liable to every day! and without prayer thou hast no guide, no guard. Origen, going once to comfort a martyr, was himself apprehended, and constrained either to have his body abused by a blackamoor, or to offer to the idol, which latter he did; but bewailing it, saith, I went out that morning without prayer, which I know was the cause of that evil.

It is said of the Egyptians that there was a great cry at midnight, for in every house there was one dead. Reader, are there not dead souls in thy family, children and servants dead in sins and trespasses? and shall there be no cry, no complaining to God there? I must tell thee thy house is worse than a pest-house, for thou hast infected and dangerously diseased souls in it, and not so much as 'Lord have mercy upon us' written on thy door. Heathens and families without prayer are fitly joined together, Jer. 10:25. The truth is, such persons are English in their language, but Indian in their atheistical carriage;

they feed and clothe their bodies like Englishmen, but they starve and go naked in their souls like Indians. Only herein they differ, that they cannot be prayerless in their houses at so cheap a rate, but must expect a hotter hell, because they sin against a clearer light. Many families are the picture of hell: one may hear twenty oaths for one prayer; the master will often curse, but seldom or never bless his family; he loveth cursing, so it will come to him; and as he delighted not in blessing, so it will be far from him.

Do not say thou canst not pray. Had the Father of spirits ever any dumb children? Every beggar at thy door who is pinched with hunger, will tell thee that sense of misery will teach thee to be earnest for mercy. If thou wert condemned to be hanged, thou wouldst not want words to plead for a pardon. Surely eternal death, to which thou art liable, is far more lamentable; and if ever God make thee sensible of it, which must be done, or thou art lost for ever, thou wilt quickly follow him with prayers and tears for grace and life.

Thy affections in prayer, if right, will abundantly make up thy want of expressions. A sanctified heart is better than a silver tongue. Though thou hast not the gift of prayer, yet if thou canst act grace in prayer, all will be well.

Pray much in secret, and thou wilt quickly learn to pray well in private. Use at any trade will make men prompt and perfect.

Rather use a form out of a book than omit the duty. They who cannot dress their meat themselves, must be beholden to their neighbours to do it for them. Set upon it presently; it is thy honour, thy privilege; and use crutches till thou art able to go alone; only do not content thyself with them, (alas, who ever was proud of stilts!) but labour to

gain knowledge in spiritual things, by reading, secret praying, and conference, that thou mayest throw them away.

2. The word of God must be read in thy family, and thy household instructed there. As by prayer thy duty is to acquaint God with thy family wants, so by reading some portion of Scripture daily, thy duty is to acquaint thy family with God's will. A house without light is in a dreadful lamentable condition; thy household, without the word, sit in darkness, and thereby in the shadow of death. The commandment is a lamp, and the law is light, Prov. 6:23. Alas, how can thy servants or children do their heavenly Master's and Father's work, when they are wholly ignorant of his will? The weeds of sin grow of themselves; but the ground must be ploughed, and sown, and harrowed, and watered, before good corn will spring up.

God expecteth that thou shouldst be both a priest to offer up sacrifice for, and a prophet to instruct and teach thy family. A good housekeeper is like that nobleman, who had for his impress two bundles of ripe millet, with this motto, *Servare et servari meum est*; for the nature of millet is, say some, to guard itself from corruption, and that which lieth nearest to it. The word of God, and holy instructions to a family, are as salt, which is helpful against putrefaction: Mat. 5, 'Ye are the salt of the earth.' Masters must be sure to have salt in themselves, and for their families. It is said that the Hammanients in Cyrene made their houses of salt, hewn out of their hills in manner of stone. Jerome counselled Leta, Let thy children daily give thee some account of some choice flowers gathered out of the Bible. Teach thy children to remember their Creator in the days of their youth. It is too late to season flesh when it crawleth with worms; do it therefore betimes. Bishop Eider read and expounded Psalm 101, which treateth of the good government of

families, often to his household, and hired them with money to learn it.

Abraham had letters testimonial from heaven of his sincerity, and the favour to be trusted with *arcana imperii*, God's secrets, because of his faithfulness in this particular; 'And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham the things which I do? For I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord,' Gen. 18:17, 19. Oh, how few Abrahams are there in England! Many teach their families the works of the devil, but few teach them the way of the Lord; many lop their trees, prune their plants, break their horses, train their hawks, yea, teach their dogs, yet never instruct their children.

Friend, consider the worth of thy children and servants' souls, and the weight of their everlasting estates, and how in the dark of ignorance they must unavoidably stumble into hell; and for the Lord's sake be persuaded to instruct them in the knowledge of the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, John 17:3. Naturalists tell us that bees carry small gravel in their feet to poise their bodies as they fly through stormy winds. If thou wouldst not have thy little ones blown away with the winds of temptation, do thou labour to poise them with the principles of the oracles of God. Ah, what pity is it that men, like silly doves without hearts, should sit in their dove-cots, see their nests destroyed, and their young ones killed before their eyes, by the old manslayer the devil, and never stir or offer once to rescue or revenge them! Good Lord, what unnaturalness is in many parents and masters! Cardan speaks of one that had a receipt for the certain dissolving the stone in the bladder, and I question not, saith he, but he is damned for not discovering it before his death. Thou knowest the word, under God, must cure the persons in thy family of the stone in the heart; and wilt thou neglect to acquaint

them with it, but suffer them to die eternally? O reader, be not guilty of such horrid and barbarous cruelty. Do as that holy bishop of Armagh, who one day in every week did catechise his family. It is reported of Louis IX. of France, that he was found instructing a poor kitchen boy, and being asked the reason, answered piously, I know the meanest in my family hath a soul as precious as my own, and bought with the blood of Jesus Christ. Our Saviour taught his disciples often in private as their governor, and according to their capacities, Mark 4:33; Mat. 16:17, 18. It is an honour to the highest prince to teach his household God's precepts. Oh let thy words in thy family, as the waters of Nilus, often overflow to make others fruitful. The papists confess that all the ground which we have got of them is by catechising and instructing our youth.

3. Singing of psalms must be used in thy family. The Lord Jesus and his family did practise this duty: Mat. 26:30, 'And when they sang a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.' David in that psalm, at the dedication of his house, speaketh that his glory should sing praise to God, and not be silent, Ps. 30 title, ver. 4 and 12. Our tongues are called our glory, not only because by our speech we excel beasts, but chiefly because therewith we should glorify God. It is observable that most of those places which prophesy the Gentiles' conversion, do mention their worshipping the true God by singing, Ps. 108:3, 100, and 64:4; Isa. 54:1, and 52:8. The Holy Ghost when he commandeth that the word should keep house with us, doth also enjoin us to 'teach and admonish one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs,' (which are the titles of David's psalms, and the known division of them, expressly answering to the Hebrew words, Shurim, Telhillim, and Mizinurim, by which his psalms are distinguished and entitled, as the learned observe,) 'singing and making melody with grace in our hearts to the Lord,' Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19; James 5:13. Basil speaks high in the praise of praising God by

this holy exercise. Chrysostom speaketh of some in his time who always concluded their suppers with singing a psalm, and, saith he, they lived like angels.

This ordinance will much quicken holy affections, and help a Christian to serve God with more cheerfulness. When the Israelites were singing the 136th psalm at the bringing in the ark, the glory of the Lord filled the house, 2 Chron. 20:22. The sweet singer in Israel was the man after God's own heart.

Only, reader, be careful to sing David's psalms with David's spirit, and not like a nightingale to sing by rote: 'I will sing with my spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.' Making melody with grace in the heart, is the best tune to set all David's psalms with.

Thirdly, Set a good pattern to thy family. The fore-horse in the team had need to go right, because all the rest follow in the same road. If the commander be treacherous, how soon may he betray his soldiers, who follow him at the heels, into the enemy's hands!

A governor of a family must, like Moses, be mighty both in word and deed. Patterns are very prevalent both to good and evil. Precepts teach, but examples draw. 'Why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?' Gal. 2:14. Peter did not compel them by his preaching, but by his pattern. His example was so powerful, that even Barnabas, as well as others, was drawn away therewith. It is observable that Jeroboam seldom appeareth in the heaven of Scripture, but in the form of a blazing star, with a tail after him, 'Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin;' by his precepts he commanded them to sin, but by his pattern he compelled them to sin. As examples are attractive to evil, so also to good. 'That if any believe not, they may be won without the word by conversation of the wife,' 1 Pet. 3:1, 2. If godliness be written in the book of thy life, in a

fair character, in a large lovely letter, it may invite thy children and servants to read and like it, who otherwise possibly would not have taken the least notice of it.

He that ruleth others, must not be unruly himself. If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked, Prov. 29:12. If a governor of a family, a father or mother, be a drunkard, a swearer, or an atheist, their children will quickly imitate them; they will as certainly inherit their lusts, as their lands. As some parents make their children rich by their lordships, so they make them riotous by their evil lives. Observe, Abraham, a good man, denieth his wife; Isaac is his heir not only in his wealth, but also in that weakness; Isaac denieth his wife likewise, Gen. 20:2, with Gen. 26:7. Jacob's wives got little good by the pattern and practice of Laban their father, Gen. 31:19, and 35:1, 2.

The parents of the children destroyed by the two she-bears, were wont to jeer Elisha in their ordinary talk. What! Elisha the baldpate must be taken up to heaven, forsooth, as well as Elias! The children hearing it spoken by them, learned it of them, though they paid dear for their learning, for it cost them their lives, and, for aught I know, their souls, 2 Kings 2:24. O reader! doth not thine heart ache to read this, and hast thou not abundant cause to be heedful, lest by thy pattern thou shouldst draw thy children to sin and to hell? The idolatrous Israelites drew their children to join with them in the worship of the false gods, Ezek. 18:2.

Plutarch observeth of Cato that he was very wary not to speak an uncomely word in the presence of his children. This heathen will condemn many Christians, who will curse and swear, and drink and roar, and that in presence of their children. Reader, avoid sin, both for thine own and others' sake. As a stone thrown into the water



makes but one circle at first, but that one begetteth many; so though the sin in thee at first be but one, yet it may cause many both in thy children and servants. The sin of a master or mistress is like an infectious air, which others breathing in are infected by it. Thy servants will as readily put on thy lusts as thy livery, and thy children will be proud of such a patronage, such a cloak for their villany. A dark eye benights the whole body. Weigh all thy words and all thy works, considering how many followers thou hast; he that sinneth once, sinneth twice if he sin before others.

Be serious and diligent about the concernments of God and thy soul, that others may take example by thee. The biggest stars are brightest, and give light to those that are of a lesser magnitude. Thou who art the greatest shouldst be the most gracious in the family; if the sun shine not on the mountains, it must needs be set in the valleys. If thy children and servants behold thee careful of thy language, and conscientious in thy carriage, when they see thee humble, fervent, constant, and serious in holy duties, they may learn by thee and write after thee; such a pattern may tend exceedingly to thy spiritual profit.

It is observed of Cæsar by Cicero, that he would never say to his soldiers *Ite, sed Venite*, Go ye, but *Come ye*, marching before them himself, and giving them a pattern. Do thou, reader, go before thy family in sobriety and sanctity, as their faithful captain, and they may sooner than thou expectest follow after thee.

Naturalists tell us of the mulberry-tree, that there is nothing in it but what is medicinal in some sort or other; the fruit, the root, the bark, the leaf, all are useful. Truly, so it ought to be with thee. All thy expressions, all thy actions, should be instructions to thy inferiors. Thy behaviour in private, in public towards God, towards thy wife, towards thy children, towards thy servants, towards thy neighbours,

should all be lectures to teach others religion and righteousness; that you may be able to say to your children, as Seneca to his sister, Though I can leave you no great portion, yet I leave you a good pattern.

Besides, one work required of thee, as I shall shew thee before the conclusion of this chapter, is to admonish and reprove others in thy family for their faults; which with what face canst thou do, or with what hope of success, unless thou art free thyself? It was a shame to Plutarch that his servant should say, My master writeth falsely; he saith it is unbecoming a philosopher to be angry, et ipse mihi irascitur, and he himself is angry with me. If thou reprovest thy child for not praying, and thy servant for drunkenness, and art guilty thyself, though thou acquaintest them never so much with the wrath of God, which will certainly seize upon atheists and drunkards, they will never believe thee; for they know thou dost not believe thyself. Thy words would seem to draw the nail of sin out, but thy works are such a heavy hammer, that they drive it in to the very head. When the rude soldiers saw the Roman senators sit gravely, and discourse soberly, they took them for gods, and were awful of them; but when they perceived one of them to grow waspish, they took them for men, and spoiled them. Herod feared John's reproof, knowing that he was a just man, Mark 6:20. Where there is piety in the person, there is majesty and authority in the reprehension; 'Let the righteous smite me,' Ps. 141:5 The snuffers of the sanctuary were of pure gold. He that would reprove others' dimness, and make them shine brightly with the light of holiness, had need to be irreprovable himself.

Reader, walk unspottedly, otherwise when thou threatenest thy children or servants with the judgments of God against sin, thou dost, like David, pass a sentence of death and condemnation against thy own soul.

Fourthly, Be careful and diligent that thy whole family may sanctify the Lord's-day. When the Israelites were to sacrifice to God in the wilderness, they went with their little ones, and all their households, Exod. 12. When Elkanah went up to sacrifice to the Lord, all his house went with him, 1 Sam. 1:21. Thy duty is, according to these examples, to see that all thy family, unless necessity should hinder, serve the Lord in public. Do not suffer any of thine to be playing idly in the churchyard, when they should be praying earnestly in the church; nor to be talking vainly of the world, when they should be hearkening reverently to the word. Oh, what pity is it that they should be sucking poison, when they should be sucking milk out of the breasts of consolation! The fourth commandment doth fully speak thy duty, not only to be careful that they forbear thy work, but also that they mind God's worship. Thou knowest not but that thy child or servant, by missing one season, may miss of salvation. Possibly they are wrought hard in the week-days, and have very little time for their souls, so that their only time of improving their spiritual stock, by trading towards heaven, is on a Sabbath-day. Or it may be they are careless of their main work, of providing for the other world, all the week, that if thou shouldst neglect them on the Lord's-day, they will be left under a necessity of perishing: surely they who have but one good meal in seven days, and are robbed of that, are unconceivably wronged. When David came to his brethren to the camp, Eliab said to him, 'How comest thou down hither? Where is the flock? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thy heart,' 1 Sam. 17:28. Give not God cause to greet thee thus at church, How camest thou hither? Where is thy flock, thy family? With whom hast thou left those few sheep, thy children, and thy servants? I know thy pride, they are not good enough to come along with thee, to be minded by thee: or, I know thy covetousness, thou hast employed them about thy earthly business; or, I know thy carelessness and

soul-cruelty, thou carest not what becometh of them, whether they be saved or damned for ever. I tell thee, friend, some gentlemen by going abroad alone without their servants, have lost their silver; and for aught I know, by thy going to church without thy company, thou mayest lose the blessing and efficacy of the ordinances. How canst thou expect that God should have any care of thy soul, when thou tramplest the precious souls of others under thy feet, which he hath given thee special charge of?

O reader, think of it. Are not thy children and servants strangers to God, and alienated from his life, through the ignorance that is in them? And is not the ministry of the word appointed to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God? How shall they be converted if the ordinances of God be neglected? Though a person be dangerously diseased, if he observe his purging days, according to the advice of his able physician, there may be hopes of recovery; but if he neglect the means, if he perish, it will be no marvel. If thy children and servants are holy, canst thou expect the fire of grace should continue or increase, whilst thou takest away the fuel? Dost thou think that spiritual life can be maintained without spiritual meat?

In private also be watchful over thy family, that all under thy charge be present at holy duties, as singing, praying, repetition of sermons, and the like. Thou art careful that in the week-days they do work diligently; and why shouldst thou not be as careful that they do God's work on his day? Is thy work of greater concernment than God's? or dost thou love thyself, the poor withering world I mean, above the blessed God?

Examine those who waited on the word of God in public, what good they have got, what lessons they have learned, from the great Master

of assemblies. Our Saviour, after sermon, asked those of his family, 'Have ye understood all these sayings?' Mat. 13:5. Hereby thou wilt make them more attentive to public ordinances, and better their memories; as also, by this means, thou mayest quicken thy own affections.

Suffer none of thy house to spend any part of the day either in idleness, pastimes, or worldly business. Thou art accountable to God, as well for sins of permission as for sins of commission, and it will another day be imputed to thy charge, if the day be profaned by thy carelessness. If thou wouldst not suffer for others, do not suffer others in sin.

Fifthly, Let discipline be set up in thy family. When Jacob would dedicate his house to God, he commandeth all his family to change their garments, and put away their strange gods. Their change of garments did signify that change of heart and life which he desired should be his household livery, Gen. 35:1, 2. As the governor of a family must be a priest to pray, and a prophet to teach, so also a king to rule; to be a terror to evil-doers, and an encouragement to them that do well in his family: 'Let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacle,' Job 11:14. Zophar meaneth not a natural or personal, (though so the word is sometimes taken, as 2 Cor. 5:1,) but a domestical and civil tabernacle. Though sin may come into thy house by children or servants' commission, yet it must not dwell there, but be cast out by severe reprehension. Wickedness is a bold guest, it will come uncalled, but it must be more bold than welcome; it must not dwell in thy tabernacle. It is said of Cato he would bear with faults anywhere rather than at home. Bishop Jewel at night called his servants to an account how they had spent the day, and, after prayer, admonished them accordingly.

Thy duty is to 'warn the unruly,' 1 Thes. 5:13, to acquaint them of sin, how near and dear soever to thee, with the dishonour they bring thereby to God, the disgrace to the gospel, and the disadvantage and destruction to their own souls. If the fault be the first, or of infirmity, or not so great a sin as to waste the conscience, and poison thy family by its pattern, let the medicine thou appliest for its cure be mild; earthen glasses must be tenderly washed, when iron vessels must be scoured with wisps. 'Of some have compassion, making a difference,' Jude 22. Who would, that is wise, give the same physic to an infant, which would purge a lusty grown person? 'For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart-wheel turned about with the cummin: but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod,' Isa. 28:27, 28.

If the crime be crimson and scandalous, or repeated, or justified, rebuke sharply; hard knots must have strong and sharp wedges: 'Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire,' Jude 23. In such a case weak physic will only stir, not remove the disease, and thereby leave the patient in a worse condition than it found him. Nettles touched gently sting the more; a prick with a rapier is more dangerous sometimes than a wound with a sword, because the latter wideneth the orifice, and thereby maketh the place more open to the plaster which should heal it. It is much better for them to be preserved in brine and pickle, than to rot in flesh-pleasing and fondness. Kindness, and bearing with such in thy family, is like the kiss of Judas to Christ, a betraying them; and like Joab's salutation to Abner, destroying and killing them.

Be sure, therefore, not to bear with any under thy charge in sin: 'Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.' He is a drone, unserviceable to his house, his hive, who hath lost this sting of reproof. Pious Asa would not suffer sin in

his own mother, 'Asa removed his mother Maachah from being queen, because she made an idol in a grove; and Asa cut down her idol, and stamped it, and burnt it at the brook Kidron,' 2 Chron. 15:16. Patient Job would not suffer sin in his own wife, 'Thou speakest like a foolish woman,' chap. 2:6. Plain-hearted Jacob would not suffer sin in his own children, 'Ye have troubled me, to make me stink among the inhabitants of the land.' 'Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel,' Gen. 34:30, and 49:7. David would not abide sin in a servant, Ps. 101:7, nor Edward the Sixth in his own sister.

Let thy reproofs against sin be mingled with, and so managed that they may manifest love to their souls. When the nail is dipt in grease it entereth without renting the board; when reprehension is dipt in, and tipt with love, it will probably enter the heart, without cutting it in pieces with rage and revenge. Prudence may do much towards the advancement of the offender's profit in this particular.

Though thy words should be soft, yet thine arguments should be hard against the sin committed. To this end let thy reproofs be as near as may be in Scripture phrases, that the offender may see it is not so much man as God, who rebuketh him for his fault. The word is a hammer; if well laid on, it will drive the nail of reproof to the head. If the oil of reprehension be gently and prudently bathed in by the hot fire of the word, it may abate very great swellings. But be sure to perform this duty. The magistrate who spareth a man-slayer is guilty of his second murder. Plato seeing a child commit a fault, went and corrected his father. The master of a family who alloweth any in sin, is partaker of their sin. We perpetrate those sins which we may and do not prevent; we shall answer one day for sins of communion as well as for sins of commission. Oh, how miserable will thy condition be, when the provocations in thy family, which thou knowest of, and

winkest at, shall all be charged upon thee! Naturalists tell us that if a serpent eat a serpent, it becomes a dragon; if thou to thy own sins add the sins of thy children and servants, what a monster in sin wilt thou be! Are not thy own sins heavy enough? Dost thou want more load upon thy precious soul to sink thee deeper into hell? 'Is not thy iniquity (already) great, and thy wickedness infinite?' as Eliphaz said to Job, Job 22:5. Great for the nature of thy sins, and infinite for their number; and wilt thou, like one that is pressing to death, cry and call for more weight?

Maintain thy power and authority in thy family; a wise grave carriage will sharpen the weapon of reproof, and make it pierce the deeper. Foolish familiarity blunteth the edge of it. He that would throw a stone forcibly to do execution, must stand at some distance.

Encourage small beginnings of good in any in thy family; shine with a lightsome countenance, cast a warm influence upon the blossoms of holiness; hereby thou mayest do much towards their ripening. David's eye of favour was upon the faithful, Ps. 101:6. A governor of a family must, like a gardener, pluck up weeds, but cherish and tender the good flowers and plants.

Sixthly, Take care that all in thy family be well employed; not to permit idleness in thy house is one way to prevent ungodliness. There is employment suitable to every person in thy dwelling; servants should be diligent in the discharge of their duties. Job's servants were about their work when the Sabeans and Chaldeans fell upon them, and sent them into the other world, Job 1:14, 17. Jacob served his master Laban with all his might, Gen. 31:6. Apelles painted a servant with hind's feet, to shew that he should be nimble in despatching any errand; with broad shoulders, signifying that he should contentedly bear hard usage; and with his hands full of tools,



because he should be always at work. Children also, if at home, must be employed in their places; if young, in learning; if elder, in some calling. Solon, the Athenian lawgiver, enacted that the son should not relieve his father in his old age who had brought him up idle, and without a trade. The patriarchs, though principal men in their generation, brought up all their children to some calling; their tender daughters were not exempted from household business. Rebekah, the mother of prophets and princes, was not ashamed of her pitcher, and drawing water therewith for her father's cattle.

Those dainty dames who plead her pattern for their ear-rings and bracelets, will hardly plead it for a pitcher and painfulness. Augustus Cæsar brought up his daughters in carding and spinning. Gentlemen, though they are not bound to bring up their children to low or mean callings, yet are bound to keep them out of the snare of idleness, and to take care that they be in some lawful business serviceable to themselves and others. The wife, as well as servants and children, ought to be industrious in her station. Spinster is a term given to the greatest women in our law. It is said of the good housewife, 'She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness,' Prov. 31:13, 27. A woman's work consisteth in sewing, and doing somewhat herself, and overseeing others, as appeareth in the fore-quoted place, besides the charge of her children. Hereby a wise woman is said to build her house, Prov. 14:1. As a carpenter layeth the platform of a house in his head, and so studieth that none of his stuff be cut to waste, so a good housewife doth so overlook the affairs of her family, and so contrive and order things by a prudent provident forecast, that there may be no waste, but all things disposed for the best. Hence it is that, though the husband is called the guide of the wife, yet the wife is called the guide of the house, Prov. 2:17, 1 Tim. 5:14; and for this end, they are commanded to be

keepers at home, Titus 2:5. They that gad much abroad, do their families at home but little good; such are according to the signification of the second wife of Lamech, Zillahs, the shadows of wives. The Grecians had a custom, when the new-married bride was brought home to her husband's house, to burn the axletree of the chariot or cart in which she was brought, before the door, to teach her that she must abide at home. But the main work lieth upon the governor of the family. 'Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flock, and look well to thy herds,' Prov. 27:23. He that is far from his work, is not far from want. The Jews have a proverb: The master's foot makes his ground fat; which speaks thus much, that if the master be not forward with his own hands, all things will go backward in his house. Εἷς ἐστὶ δοῦλος, ὁ δεσπότης οἰκίας, The master is the greatest servant in the house. It is said of Albanus, bishop of Scotland, that he was never idle, nor ever suffered any in his family to be so.

Reader, this particular of overseeing, that all under thy roof mind their proper work, will be some help to godliness, and a great stop to wickedness. Iphicrates would never let his soldiers be idle in their garrisons, but would set them to lop trees, or dig, or carry burdens, saying, that if they had nothing to do they would mutiny, or commit some villainy. The bird that sitteth still is a fit mark for the murderer of souls, when the flying bird is safe. As corrupt blood is the cause of all natural, so is idleness of all spiritual diseases. When persons in a family neglect their task, then is their hour of temptation. Idleness is often the cause of drunkenness; they leave their work-house who run to the ale-house, Amos 6:2. Uncleanness is the daughter of idleness; lust will easily creep in upon those who are lazy, as did appear sadly in Sodom, Ezek. 16:49: *Otia si tollas, periere Cupidinis arcus*. Hence fellow-servants commit uncleanness together. Idleness is the mother of unrighteousness: they who neglect their tasks turn thieves; they

must not starve, they say, and will not work, therefore they must steal, 2 Thes. 3:12. When servants are idle, many times they rob their masters. Tale-bearing also is one of the fruits that groweth upon this tree. When servants are idle, they run tattling from house to house, making difference amongst neighbours, 1 Tim. 5:13, Prov. 11:23. Carping Momus was never found working. Truly, friend, thou canst not think the wrong thou doest thy family if thou suffer them, like millstones, to consume themselves thus for want of work. St Greenham, as Bishop Hall calleth him, when a woman, tempted much by the devil, came to him for advice, gave her this direction, Never be idle, but be always well employed; for in my own experience I have found it, when the devil came to tempt me, I told him that I was not at leisure to hearken to his temptations, but was busy in my calling, and thereby resisted his assaults.

Seventhly, Maintain peace and love in thy family. Contentions will hinder religion; strife, like fire, is wholly opposite to the water of grace. As in times of warring the laws of men are silent in a state, inter arma silent leges, so in jarring families, the laws of God can be little heard. God was not in the tempestuous rough wind, nor in the fire, but in the still low voice, 1 Kings 19:12. 'Live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you, 2 Cor. 13:11. If thy house be in a flame it is time for thy best friends to be gone. Thy house should be a lesser heaven, in it thy God must be worshipped and glorified; but in heaven there are no storms; tempests ascend no higher than the middle region. Where God is served with perfect purity, there is perfect peace. As in the ringing of bells, where every one keepeth its place, and time, and order, they make a harmonious sound, and delight the daughters of music; but when they jar and strike against each other, their noise is harsh and distasteful. The holy performances of families that live in love, are heaven's music; but brawlings in houses make prayers ungrateful, and have too much

resemblance of the bellowings in hell. When the wind of contentions is high, the smoke of thy incense cannot ascend, it will be beaten down again. In stormy weather, one but a little way distant sometimes cannot hear his neighbour calling; storms of passions will hinder God's hearing thy petitions.

It is said that in Cimmeria there is no light: and truly it is more sad that in some families there is no love. The husband is against the wife, and the wife against the husband; master and servants, parents and children, are ever quarrelling. Seven devils could agree in one heart, nay, a legion, which is seven thousand six hundred and twenty-two, if Varro may be believed, in another; and yet seven persons cannot agree in one house. The language in it is usually like Billingsgate, and the carriage often like Bedlam; but the hand of the devil is in all this, who knoweth his best time to fish is when the waters are troubled. When there is a tempest raised in the spirits of men, we may quickly know that Satan was the conjurer to raise the high winds. He knoweth one way to take a house is by firing it.

Truly, Satan hath a mighty advantage against an idle and a brawling family: as the dog, he devoureth the sheep in pieces which he could not do whole. When Cyrus came near Babylon with his great army, and finding the river, by reason of its depth, unpassable he divided it into many channels, whereby the main river sank so on a sudden, that his army went over and took the city. Thus, by division doth Satan conquer and surprise families.

There is mention made of a dispute betwixt Mars and Pallas, which of them should have the honour to give the name to the city of Athens. At length it was resolved that he should give the name who could find out that which could most conduce to the benefit of the city. Hereupon Mars presented them with a stately horse, signifying

wars and divisions; but Pallas came in with an olive branch, the emblem of peace. Upon which the city chose Pallas to be their guardian, as knowing that unity is the way to prosperity.

Godliness in a family ebberh and floweth much, according to the wranglings or love in a family. As the Lapis Tyrrhenus Pliny speaketh of, which, being entire, swimmeth; but broken, every part of it sinketh to the bottom. Truly, thy family may float above water while it is whole and undivided, but if it be in pieces, it will quickly sink.

But I must especially commend this duty to the governors of families, husbands and wives. Children are seldom so impudent, and servants may either be made quiet within, or be turned out of doors; but if the chief strings jar, all the melody is marred. Observe how the Holy Ghost giveth this particular precept in order to the promotion of piety in a family. The wife must be of a 'meek and quiet spirit,' and the husband must 'give honour to the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, as heirs together of the grace of life, that prayers be not hindered,' 1 Pet. 3:4, 7. We may consider the injunction, and the reason of it. The injunction is first to wives; they must be of meek and quiet spirits; quiet, not quarrelsome; meek, not murmuring through peevishness, or mad with passion. 'A contentious wife is a continual dropping,' saith Solomon, Prov. 19:13. The man would stay at home, but her tongue, like rain dropping through the roof upon his head wherever he sitteth down, drives him out of his house. Where is godliness in the meantime? The wise man saith again, 'It is better to dwell in the wilderness, (amongst venomous creatures,) than with such a wife,' Prov. 21:13. When she should be praying, she is, like a mad dog, barking or biting. Such a wife, saith Lycophron, is but a cold armful. This made Sylla say, I had been blessed if I had continued a bachelor. Upon this ground, I suppose, Julian the apostate (whose mouth was often black with blasphemies) said, that Moses, instead of meet help,

might have written meet hinderer. But certainly whatsoever some men's perverseness may drivel and utter, or some women's peevishness occasion, a woman, if of a godly and quiet spirit, is the greatest comfort on earth, and a great help she may be to her husband in his journey to heaven. The injunction is, secondly, to the husband. He must 'honour his wife as the weaker vessel, as his fellow-heir of the grace of life.' He must honour her, not be bitter to her. He must give her his greatest love, not deny her a good look. Some husbands are so currish and crabbed, they are always raging and fretting at their wives, nay, like those that are distracted, they sometimes beat and tear their wives themselves, 'for they two are one flesh.' How far are such from obedience to God's law! Let the husband 'honour the wife as the weaker vessel'—that is, use her tenderly. China dishes and Venice glasses must be tenderly handled, because they are weak vessels. The husband must, with the mantle of love, cover many infirmities. A heathen could tell Sarah, that 'Abraham was a covering of the eyes to her,' Gen. 20:16. The eye is the tenderest part of the body. God hath provided a special cover to fence it. When God would speak his infinite respect to, and care of, his people, he saith, 'They are as dear to him as the apple of his eye.' Truly, husbands ought to be as tender of their wives as of the apple of their eyes. But, reader, see the reason of this injunction of love to husbands and wives, 'that your prayers be not hindered.' As if he had said, Wind up those weights of meekness and love, or religion will stand still. Take away those needful props, and piety will fall to the ground. O friend, as thou hast any love to the honour of God, honour thy wife as the weaker vessel, if God hath called thee to that relation. If thou art a wife, be of a meek and quiet spirit. If there be not concord in affections, there will be sad discord in petitions. When there is war in a kingdom, how are Sabbaths profaned, ordinances despised, prayer and Scripture neglected! Men are hurried away in haste to this and that place, and leave duties behind them. So, in a

family, which is a kingdom in a little volume, divisions will put religion behind, and force it to stand back. Rubenius Celer would needs have it engraven on his tomb, that he had lived with his wife Ennea forty-three years and eight months, and yet they never fell out.

It is happy where the husband and wife are like the two branches in the prophet Ezekiel's hand, so closed together in one bark that both made but one piece; or, like Pylades and Orestes, of whom it is said, they both lived but one life; and where the whole family, like the multitude of believers, 'is of one accord, of one heart, and of one soul in the Lord,' Acts 4:32, with the increase of God.

I have now despatched what I intended to offer thee, for the advancement of godliness in thy family. If thou art a stranger to this honourable, comfortable work of worshipping God in and with thy family, oh that I could prevail with thee to put the counsel of God speedily into practice! I must assure thee from the living and almighty God, that thou art accountable to the judge of quick and dead, for all the souls in thy family. God hath the chief propriety in every person in thy dwelling. As the flock which Jacob looked after was Laban's, Gen. 31:43, so the family which thou hast the oversight of is God's. 'Thy sons and thy daughters which thou hast born to me,' Ezek. 16:20. God may say to thee more truly than Laban did to Jacob, 'These sons are my sons, and these daughters are my daughters, and these servants are my servants, and all that thou seest is mine.' Indeed, God doth in effect say to thee, what Pharaoh's daughter did to Moses' mother, 'Take this child, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages,' Exod. 2:9. Take this son, this daughter, and nurse them for me in my nurture and admonition. Take this man-servant, this maid-servant, and bring them up for me, in my fear and service, and I will give thee an eternal reward. Friend,

thou wouldst be faithful in bringing up children or servants for thy brother or sovereign; and wilt thou be unfaithful in bringing up sons and servants to thy God and Saviour? Is it fit that God's servants should do the devil's work? Let conscience judge. Did God give thee them to be brought up in drinking, or swearing, or lying, or atheism, or like so many heathen or beasts, without any knowledge of his word and will? Did he honour and intrust thee with their education, to have thee poison their souls by thy irreligious pattern, and starve their souls by not giving them spiritual food? Is this thy love to thy Maker and Redeemer?

Besides, I must tell thee, as Jacob was answerable to Laban for the whole flock, if any were torn by beasts, or stolen by day or night, he bore the loss of all, Gen. 31:39, 'Of his hands it was required;' so art thou answerable to God for every one in thy family. If any one be devoured and torn in pieces by the roaring lion the devil, through thy negligence, God will require his soul at thy hands.

O reader, consider, death will shortly break up thine house, when thy children and servants must go to everlasting fire, if they die without grace, and the knowledge and fear of God. If thou art now careless about the eternal good of thy children and servants, that they perish for ever, through thy falseness and unfaithfulness, how dreadful will thy account be! What wilt thou do, when the blood of their souls shall be required of thee? If Christ sentence men to hell for not visiting sick and imprisoned bodies, for not feeding hungry bodies, what sentence will he pass on thee for not visiting those souls committed to thy charge, which were imprisoned by the devil, and sick unto death, and for not giving them the bread of life, but suffering them to starve and die?



If on him that brought a temporal death on Cain vengeance should be taken sevenfold, what vengeance shall be taken on thee, who tumblest others into eternal death! Believe it, reader, these are no jesting things. If, therefore, thou hast any bowels towards the children of thine own body, if thou hast any compassion towards thy poor servants, whom Christ thought worth his own blood; if thou hast any love to thy dearest Saviour, or thine own everlasting salvation; if thou wouldst leave this withering world with comfort, and look into the other world with courage, exercise thyself to godliness in thy family, obey the particulars for that end commanded thee by the infinite God, do thine utmost that all of thy family may be of the family of faith, and all of thine household may belong to the household of God, that so when the king of terrors shall give a discharge from all relations, thou mayest with thy family be translated from living together in one house to dwell for ever in one heaven.

Reader, thou mayest perceive in the close of the tenth chapter that much more is promised than I have in this treatise performed, the payment of which, though I do at present defer, yet through the strength of Christ I shall not deny. If thou hast any interest at the throne of grace, I do earnestly desire thy prayers that this part may find acceptance with the saints, and be instrumental for the advantage of many souls, and that in the other part I may receive much assistance from the blessed Saviour; thereby I shall be the more enabled to be serviceable to thine and others' salvation.

### **A good wish about the government of a family, wherein the former heads are epitomised**

The government of my family being a special talent and trust committed to me by the blessed God, and being a business of

exceeding concernment, both in regard of its influence upon the whole kingdom, which is raised or ruined by the good or wicked management of families, and in reference to the everlasting estates of the precious souls in it, wherewith I am charged, I wish, in general, that I may never, like a rotten post, endanger the whole building of church and state in any degree by my unfaithfulness in my place, nor be so unmerciful and unnatural as to see that bloody butcher Satan drive my children and servants, like silly sheep, to the shambles of hell, and never stir or strive to rescue them out of his hands. But that my resolution and practice may be according to Joshua's religious pattern, that whatsoever gods others serve, whether the world or the flesh, yet I and my house may serve the Lord. Oh that I might so walk in the midst of my house with a perfect heart, that grace, like Mary's box of ointment, may perfume the whole house with its savour, and that in every corner of it, as it was said of holy Hooper's, there may be some scent of godliness.

In particular, I wish that I may keep my house so cleanly swept from the filth of sin, and so curiously furnished with the ornaments of the Spirit, that it may invite the noblest guest, the ever-glorious God, to take up his abode in it. My God hath told me that the house of the righteous shall stand, Prov. 12:7, though sin rotteth the timber, and maketh the houses of the wicked to fall; that in the house of the righteous is much treasure, Prov. 15:6, even when there is but a little silver; that he blesseth the habitation of the righteous, Prov. 3:33. Surely his blessing can make my bed easy, my sleep sweet, my food savoury, my clothes warm, my dwelling pleasant, my children hopeful, my wife a meet help, my ground full of plenty, and all I set my hands to to prosper. O my soul, what an argument is this to move thee to exalt holiness in thy house! Thy God will bless it, nay, that God whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, will come and dwell in it. Without question, his coming will, as to Zaccheus, bring

salvation to thy house; the company of this king will turn thy cottage into a court, and his presence will change thy dwelling, were it a prison, into a palace. Oh let nothing be in thy house which may be distasteful to so great and so good a friend. Let no sin dwell in thy tabernacle, but let 'Holiness to the Lord' be written on every person, room, and vessel in it, that whatsoever name other houses are known by, the name of thy house may be from henceforth and for ever, Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord is there.

I wish that I may so give credit to the word of truth, which saith, that 'the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked,' that the flying roll of curses (the length whereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth ten cubits) shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely, and shall consume it with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof, Zech. 5:2–4, and that he will pour out his wrath upon the heathen which know him not, and upon the families that call not on his name; that I may tremble for fear that atheism should reign in my house, and so it should be ranked amongst the irreligious, and marked for vengeance. Alas, what a dreadful noise do those murdering pieces make in mine ears! The curse of God will canker all my comforts, and blast all my blessings, and that both speedily and irresistibly. But, O my soul, meditate a little upon the latter text, which is a prediction as well as a petition. What a bitter potion doth thy God give thee to purge atheism out of thy family! Consider its nature, it is wrath. Pour out thy wrath. God's anger is terrible, like fire, burning and overturning all before it; if but a spark of it light upon his own people, how pitifully do they roar out! Ps. 90:7, and 85:4. 'We are consumed by thine anger.' 'Cause thine anger towards us to cease.' 'O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger.' 'there is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger.' Truly, no wonder that they thus bewail it; for who knoweth the power of his anger? But his wrath is anger in the greatest degree, anger boiled up

to the height. Oh, how scalding is this boiling lead! If the wrath of a king be the messenger of death, what is the wrath of an almighty God? This wrath can stuff the bed with thorns, and appoint wearisome nights unto thee; it can sauce thy dishes with poison, infect thy raiment with plague sores, fill thy body with torturing distempers, thy soul with horrors and terrors; it can waste all thy wealth in a moment, and turn thy wife, children, and all thy comforts into amazing crosses and terrifying curses. Hell itself is nothing else but this wrath to come; one spoonful, one drop of it will turn an ocean of the sweetest wine into gall and wormwood. Wouldst thou be an atheist in thy family for all the world, to live one hour under this scorching wrath? Alas, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of thy God, for thy God is a consuming fire. Observe further its measure, 'Pour out thy wrath.' When thy God poureth out his Spirit he giveth it an extraordinary degree. The persons upon whom it was poured, are said to be full of the Holy Ghost. If thy family be irreligious, thou mayest expect this scalding wrath, not by drops, but by showers to come pouring down upon it. O my soul; let this thought soak and sink so deep into thee, that thou mayest dread the omission of duties in thy family as much as the unquenchable fire. Let his favour make thee cheerful in his service, and let his anger make thee fearful of the least sin in thy house.

To this end I wish that I may use much circumspection whom I admit into my dwelling; that as those who are to plant an orchard get the best grafts they can; so that mine house may be an Eden, the garden of the Lord, a Paradise on earth, I may (as my occasions require) look out for the choicest flowers, the best and fruitfulest trees, the holiest Christians in the country. Oh let me never make my house a pest-house, by taking in irreligious and infectious persons, and such as will bring the plague along with them. One scabbed sheep may wrong the whole flock, one putrid grape corrupt a cluster.

A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Lord, in the choice of inhabitants for my house, let my eye be not only upon my own welfare, and their fitness for my work, but chiefly on thy glory, and their willingness to work the work of him that sent them into the world, John 9:4. Let me hate the congregation of evil-doers, Ps. 16:4, 5, and 119. Let me not sit with vain persons. Let mine eyes be upon the faithful in the land. Let them that fear thee turn unto me, and such as keep thy righteous judgments. Let me dwell with them here on earth with whom I shall dwell hereafter in the house not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens.

I wish that there may be a church in my house, and all the persons in it, both morning and evening at least, employed in those holy performances which my God requireth. My house should be a resemblance of heaven above. In his greatest and most glorious house, my God is served without ceasing and without sinning. Oh that, though in his lower and lesser house natural and civil actions cause intermission of, and the body of death causeth imperfections in, holy duties, yet he might be worshipped both constantly and perfectly in a gospel and evangelical sense. I have read that amongst the worst of Turks, the Moors, it is a just exception against any witness by their law that he hath not prayed four times in every natural day. I wish that none in my family may be worse than Turks, but that both all apart may secretly, and all together may privately offer up the morning and evening sacrifice of prayer and praise to the Lord my God. Daniel would pray three times a day though he were cast to the lions for it; and shall my family neglect prayer when the omission of it will make them a prey to roaring-lions? It is the honour and happiness of my house to exalt the worship of my God in it. His service is the greatest freedom, his work is a reward to itself; why should we be our own enemies in banishing our best friends out of our family? The mercies of my God are renewed upon me and

mine every morning; his care and love is continued to us all the day long; the dews and showers of his compassion fall down upon us every evening; shall we be forgetful of him who is every moment so mindful of us? Oh let my family never be so void of grace and manners as not to bid our God good-morrow and good-night upon any pretence whatsoever.

I wish that the word of Christ may dwell richly in my heart and house, that my whole family may have their set meals every day of this spiritual food. How can I expect that children or servants, who know not the God of their fathers, should serve him with perfect hearts? 1 Chron. 28:9. Alas! how often are their ignorant hearts (like dark cellars abounding in vermin) full of sin! Oh that I might so talk of the word of God in my house, when I lie down and when I rise up, that it may be written upon the posts of my house and on my gates, (Deut. 6:7, 8,) that I may so often water the young plants in it, that their first acquaintance may be acquaintance with God, and from their childhood they may know the holy Scriptures and be wise to salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Though others' care be to instruct their servants only in their own work, let my care be to instruct mine in God's will and word. Though others labour to leave their children rich, let my endeavour be to leave mine religious. Lord, enable me so to teach them thy trade in their youth, that they may not depart from it when they are old, (Prov. 22:6,) that their young years well led may be like the sweetness of a rose, whose smell remaineth in the dried leaves.

I wish that all the voices in my house may tuneably sing God's praises; yet that they may not, like trumpets and pipes, make a sound, being filled only with wind, but have hearts fixed and prepared when they sing and give praise. Oh that all the viols in my house may be so in tune, and their stroke so true, that singing with

grace in our hearts we may make melody to the Lord. Drunkards have their songs in derision of them that are good; atheists have their sonnets in dishonour of the blessed God; why should not the voice of joy and rejoicing be in the tabernacle of the righteous? Ps. 118:15. Though my house is a tabernacle, and all the inhabitants in it travellers, yet our work is pleasant. Oh let us go merrily on, and make God's statutes our songs in this house of our pilgrimage.

Because my pattern of evil will do more hurt to my family than my precepts can do good, (servants and children being apt to be led more by the eye than the ear,) I wish that I may take heed to myself, weigh and watch over all my words and works, not only for my own, but also for the sake of them that are committed to my charge. Distillations from the head often consume and destroy the vitals; my family is like a flock of sheep, if the first leap through into a ditch or river, the rest are ready to follow. Oh that I might therefore be wary in all my ways, and be so serious in spiritual, so sober in natural actions, so righteous towards men, so religious towards my God, so faithful in every relation, and so holy and heavenly in every condition, that I may have cause to say to my children and servants, as Gideon to his soldiers, 'Look on me, and do likewise,' Judges 7:17.

I wish that my house may not only spend some part of every week-day, but also the whole Sabbath-day, in the service of my God, It is a special privilege granted me by the Lord for my family's profit, wherein I may be singularly helpful to my own and my household's everlasting happiness. Oh that not the least part of it may be lost, or profaned by any within my gate, either by worldly labour, pastimes, or idleness, but that I may be so mindful of my charge as to take care that my children and servants do forbear what my God forbiddeth, and spend that sacred day altogether in sacred duties. To which purpose I desire that all my household, both males and females, (if of

capacity,) may appear before the Lord in public, and in his temple give him praise; and that in private I may whet the word on them (as the mower doth his scythe) by going over it again and again, according to the precept, Deut. 6:6, 7. Lord, let my house on thy day be like thy house, employed wholly in thy worship; and let thy gracious presence so assist us in every ordinance, that the glory of the Lord may fill the house.

I wish that I may manifest my love to the souls in my family by manifesting my anger against their sins. My God hath told me, 'Thou shalt not hate thy brother; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him,' Lev. 19:17. If it be my duty not to bear with the corruptions of neighbours, much less of my servants and children. Should I suffer them in unholiness, I should bring them up for hell. Those deepest purple sins many times are those which are dyed in the wool of youth. Oh the sad aches which many have when they are old, by falls which they received when they were young! Let me never, like Eli, honour my sons (or servants) above my God, lest my God judge my house for ever for the iniquities which I know, because my children (or servants) make themselves vile, and I restrain them not. Lord, let me never be so fond and foolish as to kill any in my family with soul-damning kindness; but let my house be as thine ark, wherein there may be not only the golden pot of manna, seasonable and profitable instructions, but also Aaron's rod, suitable and proper reprehension and correction.

I wish that I may never expose my family to the suggestions of Satan, by allowing any in laziness, but may be busy myself in my particular vocation, and see that others be diligent in their distinct stations. The lazy drone is quickly caught in the honeyed glass and killed, when the busy bee avoideth that snare and danger. Oh that I and mine might always be so employed in the work of our God, that we may have no



leisure to hearken to the wicked one. Adam's storehouse was his workhouse; Paradise was his place of labour. Lord, since thou hast intrusted every one in my house with one talent or other wherewith he must trade, cause me and mine to labour and work in this, and to look after rest in the other world.

I wish, for the furthering of holiness and purity in my house, that I may be careful to keep it in peace. Our bodies will thrive as much in fevers as our souls in the flames of strife. Satan, by the granados of contention, will hope in time to take the garrison. 'Where strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work,' James 3:16. Oh that love (which is the new commandment, the old commandment, and indeed all the commandments) might be the livery of all in my family, that there might be no contention there, but who should be most holy, and go before each other in the path which leadeth to eternal pleasures. Because marriage is a fellowship of the nearest union and dearest communion in this world, and because the fruits of religion will thrive much the better, if cherished by the sweet breath and warm gale of love in this relation; Lord, let my wife be to me as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let me be ravished always with her love; let there be no provocation but to love and to good works; let our only strife be, who shall be most serviceable to thy Majesty in furthering one another's eternal felicity. Enable us to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ, and to dwell together as fellow-heirs of the grace of life, that our prayers be not hindered.

In a word, I wish that I may, like Cornelius, fear the Lord with all my house; so govern it, according to God's law, that all in it may be under the influence of his love, and heirs of everlasting life. Lord, be thou pleased so to assist and prosper me in the management of this great and weighty trust, that my house may be thy house, my

servants thy servants, my children thy children, and my wife belong to the spouse of thy dear Son, that so when death shall give a bill of divorce, and break up our family, we may change our place, but not our company; be all preferred from thy lower house of prayer to thine upper house of praise, where is neither marrying nor giving in marriage, but all are as angels, ever pleasing, worshipping, and enjoying thy blessed self, (of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named;) to whom be glory, hearty and universal obedience, for ever and ever. Amen.

# THE CHRISTIAN MAN'S CALLING

## PT II

### THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY

To the Worshipful GEORGE BATES, Esq. Doctor of Physic, one of the College, and Physician in Ordinary to his Excellent Majesty CHARLES the SECOND.

WORTHY SIR, that physic is honourable to the professors, and profitable to the natural body, and so to the body politic, of which they are members, is acknowledged by every one that is sanæ mentis, and doth not need hellebore. The heathen did not without reason highly commend Hippocrates amongst the Grecians, and Cornelius Celsus amongst the Latins, for being the first that ventured and waded into the depth of that mystery, and by writing transmitted it to posterity; they valued their pharmacia at so high a rate, that Apollo and Æsculapius, esteemed by some the first founders of physic, were adored as gods for the excellency of their invention. The poet doth heroically trumpet the physicians' praise:

Ιατρὸς γὰρ ἀνὴρ πολλῶν ἀντάξιος ἄλλων.—Homer. Iliad. λ.

Omnibus est aliis medicus præstantior unus.

'Of men physicians are the best,

And do by far exceed the rest.'

The word of God, which addeth real worth to whatsoever it extolleth, mentioneth physicians, (Gen. 50:2,) by way of honour, before the giving of the law, doth not only implicitly allow, (Exod. 21:19, 20,) but expressly command, if the old English translation may be credited, the use of physic. He giveth medicine to heal their sickness, Ps. 147:3; nay, the blessed God is pleased to style himself Jehovah-Rophi, the Lord the Physician, Exod. 15:26; and the holy Jesus hath his name, though chiefly in a spiritual sense, from his healing nature and property.

Health is the prince, the firstborn, as life is the king, of outward blessings. The widow in the Gospel disesteemed her substance in comparison of this jewel. The physician, therefore, which is manus Dei, as Hierophilus calls him—the hand of God to bring this pearl to us when we have lost it—may well be welcome and precious. Indeed, were it the divine pleasure to give all men a constant frame of health during their pilgrimage, as Hector Boetius saith of the isles of the Orcades, that the people live there a hundred and twenty years ordinarily in perfect health. And Paulus Jovius reports of our country, that in old time the Britons lived long without physic: this were a wonderful favour; for he liveth miserably that lives upon medicines, and who, to uphold nature, is in a continual use of art.<sup>2</sup> This made Ambrose cry out, Qui se medicis dederit, seipsum sibi negat; and Plato complain, that it is a great sign of a corrupt commonwealth where physicians and lawyers abound;<sup>4</sup> but, according to Cicero, Mortalium nemo est quem non attingat dolor morbusque. It is not more natural for man to beget a son than for his body to breed sickness.

‘Νοῦσοι δ’ ἀνθρωποῖσιν ἐφ’ ἡμέρα ἢ δ’ ἐπὶ νυκτὶ

Αὐτὸματοι φοιτῶσι κακὰ θνητοῖσι φεροῦσαι

Σίγη ἐπὶ φωνὴν ἐξείλετο μητίετα Ζεύς.'—Hesiod.

Some tell us, that in every two years there is such store of ill humours engendered in one body, that a vessel of one hundred ounces will scarce hold them. Hippocrates himself saith, *Ultimus sanitatis gradus est morbo proximus*. Sure I am with the moralist, *Ipsi ceu Deo nullo est opus*, He is commander of heaven who needeth no help. And Melanchthon doth not without cause bewail his ignorance, and indict him for cruelty, as *felo de se*, who contemned the means (physic) and the ministers (physicians) of health: *Barbara immanitate et inscitia deploranda contemnunt præcepta sanitatis, mortem et morbos ultra accersunt*. It is taxed as a piece of great folly in the Romans, who, when physicians came from Greece to Rome, banished them by the counsel of Cato, as sent by the subtle Greeks to torture the Romans.<sup>7</sup>

God and nature—that *nihil agunt frustra*—have appointed herbs not only for meat, but also for medicine, the virtue and value of which would never be found, nor the herbs made serviceable to their right ends, if some did not employ their time and talents in the search. The work, it is confessed, is full of difficulty; but that addeth—as to the ignominy of those empiries who have but one panacea for all people and all diseases, so—to the glory of the ingenious workman. The nature of simples is said by some to alter according to the difference of the places in which they grow, or the constitutions of the persons to whom they are given. They tell us that opium in Turkey doth scarce offend any; but with us, in a small quantity, it stupifieth; that *cicuta* is a strong poison in Greece, but with us hath not such violent effects. Experience acquainteth us, that what helpeth one hurteth another in the same distemper; nay, that the same patient may

receive damage or advantage by his physic as the fit season of taking it is observed or neglected. How miserable, then, are those places which are delivered up to the mercy—I should say cruelty and execution—of mountebanks, who undertake to cure all maladies with one remedy, (as their aurum potabile—or usually something worse, for this they often take—seldom give,) or at least the same sore in all constitutions with one salve. Surely the impudence and ignorance of these quacks was that which moved Agrippa to such a heat when he uttered, *Multo plus periculi à medicamento quam à morbo*; and it may be said of such a one, with the poet, none knows

'*Quot Themison ægros autumnno occiderit uno.*'—Juvenal.

The medicines they prescribe are usually as ineffectual as that of the Frenchman who gave these verses in writing to his patients for the cure of all diseases:—

'*Si vis curari de morbo nescio quali,*

*Accipias herbam, sed qualem nescio, nee quam;*

*Ponas nescio quo, curabere nescio quando.*'

They are thus Englished:—

'Your pain, I know not what, do not foreslow

To cure with herbs; but what, I do not know,

Place them well bruised, I know not where, and then

You shall be perfect whole, I know not when.'

But what a felicity is it to meet with persons both of much science and conscience in this profession, who understand and consider the cause of diseases, the nature of the ingredients, the constitutions of the patients, the difference of climates, and the proper seasons of administering physic, and accordingly prescribe and apply it with faithfulness! Such, honoured sir, through divine providence, hath been my happiness since I obtained the favour of your acquaintance. I should be sordidly ungrateful if I were not mindful how willing you have been upon all occasions—sometimes at midnight—to give your advice gratis to me or mine. But I must especially acknowledge, to the glory of the blessed God, with thankfulness to you—which I voluntarily promised to do publicly some years since, though I had not a convenient opportunity until now—your indefatigable diligence, and little less than miraculous success, about my dear consumptionate wife. The great philosopher saith, He that loseth a good wife hath lost half the happiness of his life. I must confess, to the honour of free grace, that she whom I have found a meet help was nigh unto death—a dead woman long ago in the judgment of all her friends—but God had mercy on her, and not on her only, but on me, and her many small children also, and was pleased to make you the means of very much good to her: to him, therefore, as the author and principal efficient I do publicly give the praise. For,

*'Dejicit et relevat, premit et solatia præstat,*

*Enecat et possit vivificare Deus.'*

God only can command health. Physic is only the order in which he is pleased to work. Paracelsus, who boasted that he could make others immortal, died himself before he had attained seventy years, the age of a man. To the divine majesty therefore, the lepers under the law, after they were cleansed, were to offer their gifts, and all

sorts after sickness, the ransom of their lives, Exod. 31. And I do heartily acknowledge my great engagements to you as his minister and instrument, who were as careful of her, not for your fee, for you never would take a penny, scorning to cure a consumption in the body by one in the purse, as if you would cure by friendship as much as by physic, exactly answering the moralist's<sup>4</sup> description of a tender and ingenious physician. Quare medico plus debeo? Quia ex medico in amicum transit, et me non arte quam vendit, obligat, sed benigna et familiari voluntate. Ille plus impendit, quam medico necesse est. Pro me, non pro fama artis, extimuit. Non fuit contentus remedia monstrare, sed admovit. Interea sollicitus assedit, ad suspecta tempora occurrit. Nullum ministerium oneri illi, nullum fastidio fuit. Gemitus meos non securus excepit. In turba multorum invocantium, ego illi potissima cura fui. Huic ego non tanquam medico, sed tanquam amico obligatus sum. And through divine help as successful as if you had been appropriated, according to the custom of the Egyptians, to the study of that single distemper, and predestinated, according to Paracelsus's opinion, to its cure; wherefore, with that master of moral philosophy, Nec medico in majus gratia referri potest, nec nautæ si naufragum sustulit. I cannot be thankful enough to my physician, especially such a one whose worth the whole nation is acquainted with.

The truth is, that if I had been so unjustly ungrateful, as to have studied to conceal the great debt I owe you, there are so many witnesses of it, that I had but consulted my own shame. But as a public confession of my engagements, in grati animi μνημόσυνον, I present you with this treatise, the matter of which calls for your perusal, though the author craves your pardon. The work of Christianity in every relation and condition, the subject of it, is clearly consistent with, and necessary to, your calling. The divine and physician do both convenire in uno tertio; they are both for curing:



the divine heals corpus per animam; the physician, animam per corpus. Every divine is a spiritual physician, and every physician ought to be a spiritual divine, though not by profession, yet in practice. Marcilius Ficinus was simul et semel medicus et sacerdos. Luke, ὁ ἰατρὸς ὁ ἀγαπητὸς, the beloved physician, was a divine evangelist, of whom Jerome excellently, De medico corporum factus erat medicus animarum, cujus libri quoties leguntur in ecclesiis, toties divina pharmaca hominibus offeruntur. Theology is the mistress, all other sciences and arts but handmaids; and then they know their places, and serve for the right purpose, when they are, as the spoils which David took from the Gentiles, consecrated to the temple.

All ornaments to a person void of religion are but like flowers to a dead corpse, notwithstanding which it hath neither life nor loveliness. The oracle of Apollo judged Socrates the wisest man of his time; and his scholar, Xenophon, gives him this encomium, Talis fuit Socrates quem omnium optimum et felicissimum statuam; yet his other scholar Plato acknowledgeth him a great drinker; and his master Aristotle saith he was Scurra Atticus. Demoeritus, who was esteemed a famous philosopher, an expert physician, an excellent mathematician, a profound politician, omnifariam doctus, of whom Hippocrates writes, Nihil in toto opificio naturæ de quo non scripsit. And Aristotle himself, who is styled Regula naturæ, naturæ miraculum, ipsa eruditio, sol scientiarum, mare, sophia, Antistes literarum et sapientie, are both by Lactantius clearly proved to be illiterate fools and speaking asses; Nihil, inquit, inter hos et bestias nisi quod loquuntur. Learning without grace converts the blessings of God into the provision of lusts; as the pearl which beautifieth a man is the disease of the filth that breeds it, so those parts which render a Christian more comely, are mortal many times to others, being instruments of sin, and full to their corruptions. Like

Belshazzar, they devote those golden vessels to the use of their idols, which should be serviceable to the sanctuary.

He that for parts and learning is nature's pride, and the very utmost she hath to shew, without religion, is but a learned dunce. Quia Christi non habet condimentum, vanus est ejus labor, et peritura edificatio, saith Jerome. Neque enim præstantissima naturæ et industriæ dona, aut alicujus morbi acutioris cruciatus lenire, aut inquinatæ et rugientis conscientiæ ictus et laniatus repellere, aut fugientem revocare animam, aut Gehennæ flammæ quasi injecta guttula minuere, aut denique horribilis iræ Dei excutiendo sustinendo vel oneri vel minimas vires subministrare possunt, according to learned Reynolds. No, it is godliness alone which, as the diamond to the ring, addeth real value to all natural and acquired accomplishments, and which is the only ark for a soul to be sheltered in, when a deluge overfloweth.

He is the best scholar that knoweth the plague of his own heart, and hath got it healed with the blood of Christ. There is no grammarian like him that hath learned how to decline sin in every case; no logician like him who can find out Satan's subtleties, and evade his paralogisms; no arithmetician like him who hath learned to number his days, and to apply his heart to wisdom; and no musician like him who doth by a holy life, to the tune of truth in the inward parts, sing forth the praises of his God; he is best skilled in astronomy that hath his conversation in heaven, and walketh daily in the view of those celestial beauties and glories. None is skilled in economics but he who walketh in the midst of his house with a perfect heart. He is an excellent rhetorician that, like Jacob, can plead so as to overcome and prevail with God himself. He is the famous physician that makes it his chief study to procure his vitiated nature healed by the renewing work of the Holy Spirit. And he is the only politician who is

wise to salvation. These things will appear to be truths when we all appear in the other world. Great parts without piety will bring at that day but the greater punishment. Field-officers that boast before the battle with their scarfs on their sides, and their plumes in their hats, at the head of their divisions, are glad when the army is routed, and all are taken, to throw away their gaudy feathers and gorgeous armour, and would willingly pass then for common soldiers. Oh, how glad would unsanctified scholars be, who are now cried up for sublime wits, for the quintessence of learning, for living libraries, and divine eagles, for Magistri Sententiarum, Doctores Angelici, Seraphici, if they could pass at the great day for the greatest naturals, and most ignorant innocents that ever were in the world!

Honoured Sir, I write these things, partly to shew that this tractate, though not physical, may properly enough be presented to a physician, when religion is so absolutely requisite in all; and partly to quicken all scholars to diligent endeavours after true piety, for a right management of their parts.

Though corruption cankers the greatest blessings, and makes them tributary to Satan, yet religion will reduce them to their obedience, and make them pay their homage and allegiance to the king of saints. This is in part discovered in the ensuing discourse, in that part which concerneth a saint's carriage in a prosperous condition. Indeed, extremes are dangerous, a middle estate is safest; as a middle temper of the sea, between a still calm and a violent tempest, is most helpful to convey the mariner to his haven. But the embroidered providences of God are like a curious piece of arras made up of several pieces, some whereof are crewell or thread, others silver and gold; some are cast down with loads of misery, others are loaden with extraordinary mercies; now both these conditions are great temptations, especially the latter.

The highest towers are soonest destroyed with lightning, and those boughs which are fullest laden are apt to break with their own weight. Excessive heat, as excessive cold, quickly degenerates into poison; but grace is a strong corrective that will not only preserve it from being mortal, but also make it medicinal and useful to the health of the soul.

The good Lord grant that the vessel of your precious soul, when furnished with the largest sails of prosperity, may move the more swiftly; and in the greatest storm of adversity, be so ballasted with grace as to sail safely to your port of bliss; that in your short day you may be always purging out by faith and repentance your spiritual diseases, and visited with the divine saving health; that at the evening of your mortal sickness, the great physician may administer a cordial to you of his own living water, and that at the night of death, when your sun shall set, the Sun of righteousness may arise upon you with healing under his wings, and make your soul, as his body in the gospel, every whit whole.

Medicus medicorum tibi, una cum charissimâ conjuge, liberisque suavissimis, animis in hac vita saluberrimis benedicat, et pro summa tua in evangelii ministrum pietate, salutem in futura sempiternam retribuat. Ita precatur et, dum in vivis fuerit, precabitur.

Reverentiæ tuæ in Christo obstrictissimus,

GEORGIUS SWINNOCKUS.

E Musæo meo in Magna Kimbell, 11th Nov. 1663.

# **THE PREFACE AND EPISTLE TO THE READER**

## **WHEREIN THE RIGHT CHRISTIAN IS CHARACTERISED, OUT OF THE GENERAL HEADS IN THE THREE PARTS OF THE CHRISTIAN MAN'S CALLING**

READER, knowledge is the excellency of a man, whereby he is usually differenced from a brute. The knowledge of Christ is the excellency of the Christian, whereby he is differenced from a heathen; a practical knowledge is the excellency of the true Christian, whereby he is known from the false one; knowledge without practice is like a glass eye, all for show, and nothing for use; right knowledge, like Rachel's mandrakes, is helpful to make the saint fruitful; it hath not only eyes to see God's will, but also feet to walk in his way; it is life eternal so to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. The spring of this knowledge may be in the head, and its rise in the understanding; but it slideth down into the heart, breaketh out into the life, and so floweth along in the channel of grace and holiness, till at last it lose itself in the ocean of glory. Constancy in this holy course is the crown and character of the sincere Christian. An infirm soul, like a feverish body, hath an unequal pulse; he is, as his fits are, now and then pious, when his worldly pleasures will give him leave, and his earthly profits allow him leisure; but the sound soul, like the natural sun, is always running this spiritual race. Others, like the merops or woodpecker, may have gay feathers, make a great profession, but, as that bird, ἐν τῇ γῇ νεοττεύει, they build their nests, lay up their treasures on earth; but the upright soul hath his hopes and happiness in the other

world, and therefore is always trading and sending thither: 'I have inclined my heart to keep thy statutes always unto the end,' Ps. 119:112. Observe, first, The truth of his holiness, I have inclined, not my ears, nor my tongue, but my heart; secondly, The test of it, to keep, not my own inventions, nor others' traditions, but thy statutes; thirdly, The term of it, not for a fit or a start, but alway, without intermission, unto the end, without backsliding. The time of my subjection to God's statutes is till I enter upon my eternity, and time, with me, shall be no more, unto the end. 1. His obedience is real, not verbal, to keep thy statutes; action is the life of religion; the gracious person can as soon cease to be, as cease to do; his voice is like Elijah to Obadiah, As the Lord liveth, I will shew myself. Hypocrites, as they say of the nightingale and cuckoo, are vox et præterea nihil, nothing but voice and talk; their whole work consisteth in words, as if they were lawyers, to get their living by much speaking; but though those work only with their tongues, the Christian speaketh powerfully with his hands; his works praise him in the gate. 2. His obedience is cordial as well as real—I have inclined my heart. The wheels of his actions are regular in their motion, but his heart is the spring of the watch, which sets them a-going. His heart is the text, upon which his conversation is a living exposition. His comment may fail and fall short, but the text is ever sound and true. 3. His obedience is constant as well as cordial, always, unto the end. Always, in every place, passage, and providence, every calling, company, and condition, in every action, ordinance, and relation; wherever I go, and whatsoever I do, my heart is always inclined to keep thy statutes. Unto the end; as long as I live, till death put an end both to my labour and my life. The tradesman in his particular calling, who intendeth to make anything of it, spendeth most of his time at it; he is either buying in, or selling out his wares, or casting up his books, or fetching in his debts, some way or other furthering his calling. It is not the picture of wares on the stall, or the master's

standing with his hands in his pocket, that will preserve his family, or prevent poverty from entering his shop like an armed man. The Christian in his general calling, if he will get anything by it, will have no leisure to be idle or loiter, but must be both diligent and constant at it. The great profession which some make, if religion be not their business, will never prevent their eternal perdition. How many vessels have suffered shipwreck for all their glorious names of triumph, safeguard, and good speed! The weapons of many soldiers, who pretend that they are listed under the Captain of our salvation, will, like rusty rotten muskets, recoil and fly in their faces when they come, in an hour of death or day of judgment, to use them.

Nature hath made the roots of many trees bitter, whose fruits are very sweet, signifying to us that pleasures are not to be expected without pains. The heathen poet could see and say as much.

Ἀργὸς γὰρ οὐδεὶς Θεὸν ἔχων ἀνὰ στόμα

Βίον δύναιτ' ἂν σνλλέγειν ἀνευ πόνου.—Eurip. Rhes.

The Israelites could not enjoy the land flowing with milk and honey, till they had fought with, and conquered the Canaanites, and forced their way through grievous obstacles and oppositions. The saint must pass by the angel with a drawn sword in his hand before he can enter into paradise. His work is much and manifold, his enemies are many and mighty; and it will cost him hot water before he can display his colours upon the walls of the new Jerusalem, and receive his crown. If he should, like the wasp, intend chiefly his pastime and pleasure, and filling himself with the purest honey, he would quickly grow foggy, and be easily slain by his foes. He doth therefore like the bee, of whom some write that she never loseth a day from work abroad if the air will give leave; and when the weather is tempestuous she cleanseth her hive, carrieth out the filth, and keepeth watch and

ward at her gates for fear of her enemies, and hereby she gets something to live upon when others starve.

The nature and necessity of this religious industry I have largely discussed in the first part of the Christian Man's Calling; the general heads of which treatise, as also of this second, and the third and last (which part, God continuing health and help, thou mayest see within a few months) I shall epitomise in this ensuing character of the true Christian.

The right Christian is one whose conversation is in heaven, though his habitation be on earth; he dwelleth here below, but he liveth above; religion is his mistress, to whom he hath surrendered the keys of his heart, and to whom in his life he is not a complimentary, but a real servant. The world may be in the suburbs, but God reigneth in the city. He useth the creatures, yet enjoyeth none but Jesus Christ. Heaven is the centre to which all the lines of his life tend, and in which they meet and end. Holiness is his highway, in which he daily walketh, and he thinks that day lost in which he makes not some progress towards his journey's end, eternal life. He travelleth in company with many civil and natural affairs, but he is specially watchful that they keep their distance all the way. He is one that makes, not his own nor any other's, but God's will the rule of his worship. He is careful to pay his God his due to the utmost of his power, though to do it he is forced sometimes to compound with his family or particular calling, and to pay them short, yet he dares not pay his piety to God in counterfeit pieces, or in any coin but such as hath a divine stamp, the King of heaven's image and superscription on it.

He giveth religion the right hand of fellowship in his daily conversation, causing his servants' bodily and worldly business to



wait till his Master, the blessed God, be served. He doth not mind godliness by the by, or when he hath nothing else to do, but prefer it in his practices, as well as his principles, before all other things whatsoever. He hath more manners than to let the Lord of glory wait his leisure; and more wisdom, when he is going to speak to the King of kings about matters of life and death, than to let the trifles of this world stay him by the way. He mindeth his business when he is about it, and dareth not do his holy work by halves; whether he pray, or hear, or read, or meditate, or whatsoever sacred performance he sets upon, he serveth his God with all his heart and with all his might. He so considereth the weight and consequence of his religious duties, the worthiness and holiness of God with whom he hath to do, that he believeth no labour to be great enough, no carriage to be gracious enough, for the manner of his worship; no love to be hot enough, no honour to be high enough for the object of his worship; nay, and his very all to be too too little for him. He is not only diligent in, but also constant at, this heavenly calling; when he is walking with men, he walketh with God; all the while he liveth in the flesh, he liveth after the spirit; religion is his daily and hourly companion; at his table, it is his sauce, which makes his meat savoury; in his shop, it is his scales, which makes his wares weighty; in his chamber, it is the hand that makes his bed easy; all his colours are laid in this oil of grace. His whole life, though it may have now and then a comma and a parenthesis in it, is but one continued and entire speech of prayer and praise to his Lord. He laboureth whilst he liveth, and neither desireth nor expecteth rest till the night of death bring him a writ of ease.

He is one that is persuaded religion to be the end of his creation, and of all the mercies that he enjoyeth, and so his God's end is ever in his eye, and he minds the message about which his God sent him into the world, whatsoever he omits. He is more rational than to conceive

his heaven-born soul to be given him that he might live a brute, to eat and drink, and sport and sleep; and more religious than to prefer his meat before his message, or himself before his Master. He often admonisheth himself (with Bernard in his studious cell), Soul, soul, remember for what end thou earnest hither; and is a fellow-commoner with angels in obeying the precepts, and feeding on those pleasures which flow from the fountain of his being and happiness. He cannot think of the day wherein his Master will call him to an account, how he hath done the work about which he is set, and discharged the errand about which he is sent, without fear, and therefore dares not be false or unfaithful. He sets out in earnest for the undefiled inheritance, as knowing that it cannot be attained without violence. He believeth that the gate of life is strait, and none can enter in except they strive; that he must conquer if he will be crowned, and win the weight of glory if he will wear it. Therefore he overlooks all discouragements, overleaps all impediments, puts forth all his strength, and works in this, that he may rest in the other world. He judgeth the matters of his God, of his soul, and of eternity, to be infinitely more ponderous and weighty, more excellent and worthy, than the affairs of his family and of his body, which last but for a few days, and thence he is provoked and persuaded to give them the precedency in all his actions, to pursue them with industry against all opposition, and to persevere in them with constancy to his dissolution.

He is one that doth not only use diligence himself, but also bemoans the negligence of others; his soul weeps for others' wickedness in their eager pursuit of lying vanities, and careless neglect of real and saving mercies. When he beholdeth worldlings toying with mean trifles, and playing like children—only this difference, with greater baubles—take such pains to dig into the mines of the earth for gold, and then to find nothing but their own graves; when he beholdeth

the greatest and wisest of the world, like Augustus, to play with nuts, or Alexander Severus with dogs, or Lucian's Jupiter, to spend their time in painting the wings of butterflies—to be so busy about nothing—he doth not, like Democritus, laugh at the ridiculousness of their lives, but with Heraclitus, mourn for their madness and misery. When he observeth amongst professors so much science, and so little conscience; so many Christians without Christ; so much talking of God's word, and so little walking in God's way; so many who, like trees, seem to aspire to heaven, and yet are rooted in the earth, contending vehemently, like fishes for a few crumbs that are thrown into the waters; like some resty jades, when good provender is before them, to pick at straws that lie under their feet; to ride, and run, and watch, and work for a thing of nought, for a few poor scraps that comes from the creature's table, when the flesh of Christ, which is meat indeed, and the blood of Christ, which is drink indeed, and all the dainties of the gospel are before them and offered to them,—he doth both wonder at and bewail their folly and frenzy.

He is one whose pious pulse is ever beating, and whose religious soul is ever breathing after his God and Saviour. His holiness, like the fire on the altar, comes down from heaven: and though it may sometimes abate, sometimes increase in its heat, yet it never goeth out day nor night. He is holy, as his God is holy, in all manner of conversation. Though his godliness, like a simple of a predominant quality, give a tincture to all the mixtures of his natural and civil actions, yet it gives the greatest relish and savour to his spiritual compositions, which belong to the sanctuary. He is always circumspect in his carriage, because he is ever in the view of God's eye; but he is most pious when he comes solemnly into God's presence, knowing that great princes are more curious of their near attendants than of those that are at a further distance. He considereth that holiness becometh God's house, that dead duties are no way suitable to a living God, that the

ordinances of his God are edged tools, and not in the least to be jested with, that his soul and eternal estate are at stake in every performance, and therefore, as David, he danceth before the ark with all his might; he prayeth, he heareth, he singeth, he communicateth, he doth all with heat and heartiness, with love and liveliness, as for his life, as for his soul, as for his everlasting salvation. The vessel of his soul moveth steadily, and saileth swiftly on the waters of the sanctuary, being ballasted with a holy fear, and furnished with the sails of a living faith. He goeth to duty, not for duty, but to give glory to his God in them, and to receive grace from his God through them, that he might by them be made partaker of the divine nature. He prayeth with reverence, as to a God, and with confidence, as to a father, and gets his whole living by this trade of begging. He believeth his prayer to be answered when his petition is denied, and never goeth from the beautiful gate of God's temple without some alms. As in the presence of the Lord, he gives audience to his word, and is known to be one of Christ's sheep by his ear-mark, of hearing his voice and following him. He layeth up the jewel of the word in the cabinet of his heart, and layeth it out as occasion serveth in his conversation. He goeth to the sacramental board as to his dying bed, and thinks no preparation great enough for the reception of the Lord of glory. His first question at the table, is, with the church, 'Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?' and with the Greek to Philip, Sir, I would fain see Jesus: and if Christ be absent, whoever or whatever be present, the cup, though it be gold, hath no worth, no wine in it, for he goeth from the table more hungry and unsatisfied than he came to it. He goeth to ordinances, as Zaccheus to his sycamore tree, to have a sight of his Saviour, and as Moses to the mount, commune with his God, and then only he is at ease, when he can accomplish his end. He counts that prayer the best prayer wherein he enjoyeth most of his Saviour; that sermon the best sermon that giveth the deepest wounds

to his sins, and those elements the only sacrament that are a taste and seal of this eternal salvation.

He is one that of all seasons hath the highest respect for the Lord's day, as having experimentally found that to be the day of his greatest spiritual feasts. He needeth no priest, as the Jews had to sound a trumpet the day before, and give notice of the ensuing Sabbath, for he longs for it more than lovers for the day of their wedding, and the whole week to him is but a preparation for the heavenly works of that honourable day. He emptieth his heart overnight of those ill humours which may be contracted by the world's coarse fare, that he may have the better appetite to those dainties which shall be set before him on that day. In it he cheerfully meditates on God's works, and carefully attendeth on God's word. He worketh the work of him that sent him into the world all the day long, and wisheth the day longer for the duty's sake. He esteemeth every part of this golden season precious, and doth gather up the fragments of it, that nothing be lost. At the night of this market-day for his soul, he calls himself to a reckoning what he hath got, how much he hath gained, and counts it an ill day if he be not more informed in his judgment, or reformed in his affections, and more conformed in his conversation to his Lord Jesus Christ.

He is one that frameth his kitchen, his natural actions, as well as his chapel, his spiritual, according to the rule and square of religion. He doth not feed without fear, but eat his bread before the Lord, as knowing that it doth not nourish by its own power, but by divine providence, and that it is the means of preserving his life, not the end of his living. He feedeth his flesh, but doth not pamper it, as fearing that God, who alloweth him sufficient for his need, but not provision for his lust. He keeps a strict hand on this unruly horse, his appetite, lest, if the reins lay on its own shoulders, it should run on and

wander to his ruin; yet, because his body is his soul's beast, on which it dependeth very much in its motions, he rules over it with reason, not with rashness; useth it as a servant, not as a slave, and alloweth it convenient refreshment and rest. But his recreation is not his occupation, only his sauce, which he useth sparingly, to make his meat, his work, relish the better, and go down the pleasanter.

He is one that mindeth his general calling in his particular, and tradeth with his temporal stock for the true riches. His care is to make the maid to know her place and wait on religion; and his fear lest at any time she should usurp authority over her mistress. If the world smile on him, he dares not trust it, but endeavours, when its possessions flow in upon him, that his affections may not flow out upon it. When he aboundeth in goods, he aboundeth in thankfulness to the giver, and desireth more to improve his wealth aright, than to increase it. If the world frown upon him, and he decrease in the means of the earth, he laboureth to decrease in earthly-mindedness, and rejoiceth at the taking away of the fuel, when he findeth thereby the fire to go out. Howsoever the wise God throw him, he falls like a die upon a square, having learned in all conditions to be contented, how to abound and how to be abased.

He is one that is holy at home as well as abroad, and walketh in the midst of his house with a perfect heart. His house is a little church, consecrated to the dearest Redeemer, wherein his God is praised and worshipped, and a true though small resemblance of the highest heavens. 'Holiness to the Lord' is written on all the vessels, rooms, and, in his desire and endeavour, on all the inhabitants in it. It is the grief of his soul to have a cursed Ham, or scoffing Ishmael, or profane Esau in his family; and oh, how his heart aches for fear any should drop out of his house into hell! He is a priest to pray for them, a prophet to instruct them, and a king to govern them according to

the word of God. He is specially watchful to set them a good pattern, knowing that he, like the admiral in a navy, carrieth the light for all the rest, and they are prone to imitate his practices, whether right or wrong.

He manifesteth religion in every relation, and filleth them up with suitable conversation. He is not like the earth, light in one part, and always dark at the same time in others, but as the heavens, at all times, and in all parts light. As he is a parent, he doth not, like Æsop's ape, hug his child to death with fondness, nor bring up his children to bring down his family, but bringeth them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. He desireth more to see them gracious than to see them great, and takes more thoughts for their immortal spirits than for their fading flesh. He provides for their bodies, and gives them such education as may make them serviceable to men; but he prefers their souls, and is mainly solicitous about that breeding which may make them serviceable to the blessed God. As he is a son, he labours to approve himself the most dutiful child in the country. He honoureth his parents, both inwardly and outwardly, in his language and carriage, and submitteth to them in all things in the Lord. He yieldeth obedience to his earthly out of conscience to his heavenly Father, and payeth his duty both to God and man in the same action. If he be rebuked for his faults, he is not only patient to submit, but also pious to reform, and kisseth the rod for teaching him his lesson. Though his parents be wicked and careless of his weal, yet he is tender of their welfare. He dareth not discover their nakedness, nor disobey their lawful precepts, because they themselves are profane, but he serveth them with the more care to win them to Christ; and is so affectionate towards them that he doth not only to his power supply (if need be) their poverty, but would lay down his natural life to prevent their eternal death. If he be a husband, in his behaviour towards his wife he imitateth his head in

his carriage towards his body: he nourisheth and cherisheth her as the Lord the church. She is in his eye the fairest of women, and in his judgment the fittest for him of any in the world. He chose her more for her weight in grace than in gold, and he valueth her not according to her estate in the earth, but in the covenant. Whatsoever she be, either for person, or portion, or parts, or parentage, he esteemeth and affecteth her more for her piety, and because of God's ordinance, than for any or all of them. If she err, he seeketh to draw her home with the cords of love; if she continue in the faith, he seeketh to confirm her with the bands of kindness. Love is his whetstone to provoke her to obey him; and love is his loadstone to allure her to obey God. His love is one ingredient in all compositions; and his love is her cordial in her sick and sad conditions. He loveth her outward man above all his means, and affordeth it what her necessity and conveniency require, and what his estate will allow; but he is exceeding tender of her inward man, praying with her, and for her, instructing her, and using all helps that Christ may be her husband, and heaven her jointure. If she be a wife, she is subject to her husband, as the church is to Christ. She doth not question his place nor quarrel with his power, but in obedience to God's ordinance honour his person, and obey his lawful pleasure. Though he command what is below her, or painful to her, if not sinful, she doth not complain of, but comply with his commands. Her clothing is the satin of sanctity, the purple of purity, the white linen of innocency, and the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. Her meat and drink is to do the will (under God and in subordination to him) of her husband. If he be satisfied, and her God not disobeyed, whoever be displeased, she is contented. She reverenceth him as her head, and loveth him as her heart; and as she is one with him in name and condition, so she endeavours, as much as may be, to be one with him in nature and disposition. She is faithful to his eternal, as well as his temporal estate, and more



careful to have him rich towards God than rich in this world. She is mindful of her household, as well as her husband, and is a meet help to him, not only in his personal, but also in his domestical concernments. 'The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchant's ship, she bringeth her food from far. She riseth while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field and buyeth it; with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard; she girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good, her candle goeth not out by night; she layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff; she stretcheth out her hands to the poor, yea, she stretcheth out her hands to the needy. She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness; she looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Many daughters have done virtuously, but she excelleth them all.'

If he be a master, he carrieth himself towards his servants as one that hath a Master in heaven. He knoweth that his servants are made of the same mould, and may be heirs of the same happiness with himself; that though there be a civil, yet there is no natural or spiritual distinction, and he treateth them answerably in all his actions. He commandeth them, as Abraham his household, to keep the way of the Lord; is more careful that they mind God's worship than his own work, and is more sorrowful when God is disobeyed than when his own affairs are neglected; he useth his servants, but dareth not abuse them by overworking or underkeeping them; he giveth to them what is just and equal, both in their work and reward; but he is more diligent to teach them, and more desirous they should learn, the trade of Christianity, than his own calling.

If he be a servant he liveth like the Lord's freeman, walking at liberty and seeking God's precepts. He denieth sinful subjection to any, but he yieldeth civil subjection to all whom his God hath set over him. Though his master be froward and crabbed, he serveth him with fear and conscience, as persuaded that his respect and obedience is due not to man's nature, but to God's order and ordinance. If his master be holy, he does not slight him because a brother, but counts him worthy of double honour. He honours him for his relation as his master, and for his religion as his Christian master. He is diligent in his duty whether his master be present or absent, knowing that the eye of his God is ever on him, and as having the fear of his God ever in him. Whether his master be good or bad, courteous or churlish, he is faithful in his calling, doth his work as to the Lord, hoping that of the Lord he shall receive his reward. He serveth his Maker in serving his master, and doth all in singleness of heart as unto Christ, looking at last for the inheritance of a son.

He is one that is holy in every condition, as well as in every relation, and walketh in all weathers in the way of God's commandments. In prosperity he giveth God praise, in adversity he is patient, in both pious. He suiteth his carriage not according to his company, but according to his condition; he seeth by experience that as fat bodies are most liable to diseases, and the best meat to be blown with flies, so prosperous men are most prone to profaneness; therefore though his mountain be never so strong, he is not secure; but the more wealth he hath, the more watchful he is lest it should be a provocation to wickedness; his heart is not the more lifted up for the greatness of his heaps, but in a high, wind he keepeth a low sail, because that is most safe. His substance is not the object of his confidence, for he seeth it is a sandy foundation; he trusteth not in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth him all things richly to enjoy. He is sensible of others' sufferings, notwithstanding

his own safety; and though his own drink be wine, yet it is purl-royal in which he tasteth his brethren's wormwood. He valueth himself not by the confluence of creatures, but by the unsearchable riches that are in Christ, for he believeth no other wealth will be current in the other world. He beholdeth many to be high whose lives speak them to be now under God's hatred, and in the road to hell; and therefore he rateth himself not by his houses, or lands, or temporal possessions, but by his right to the Fathers house, the inheritance of the saints in light, and his eternal portion. He giveth God the praise of all his plenty, believing that not his own diligence, so much as God's gracious providence, is the original of his prosperity. He is therefore chiefly glad of power, and riches, and outward mercies, because he may get his God the more glory and honour, and hath opportunity thereby of being the richer in good works. He doth, like the industrious bee, work hard in this summer of prosperity, and lay in provision, that he may have some honey of comfort to feed upon in a winter of scarcity and misery. He is not afraid of the snow when it cometh, being prepared for it with double clothing. In the hard weather of adversity he keepeth his spiritual health, nay, he increaseth it, and is made thereby partaker of God's holiness. He dares not murmur at instruments, much less quarrel at the efficient; but he seeth God's hand at the bottom of the warrant for his correction, and that keeps the king's peace in his breast. He knoweth that though second causes may intend evil, yet the first cause, whose will must stand, intendeth his good; and so he patiently submitteth to his punishment, because it tendeth to his profit. He justifieth God when he condemneth him; and though God kill him, yet he will love him and trust in him. He rejoiceth in the tree of his comforts, the God of all consolation, when the fruit is fallen off; and though the fig-tree doth not blossom, nor the vine yield her fruit, yet he rejoiceth in the Lord, and is glad in the rock of his salvation. When he is scourged he feels the strokes, yet not to fret at the rod, but to find out the root

whence it grew—his sin, that he may amend what he hath done amiss. Indeed, as soon as the disease sheweth itself, he inquires into the cause; as soon as the messenger appeareth, he asketh his errand, and despatcheth that as suddenly as he may, to hasten his departure.

He is not only religious in his duties to God, but also righteous in his dealings with men. Though he be married to religion, yet in this she is not like his wife, she is not a keeper at home; but wherever he goeth she beareth him company. He is not like a hypocrite, tender of the first table and careless of the second; nor like a heathen, who will not wrong his neighbour of the least mite, but robbeth God of millions; but he exerciseth himself to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards all men. He trafficketh for grace when he is trading about his goods, and laboureth that therein he may do good both to himself and others. Every place he is called to is a temple, all his works are worship, and every man he deals with is a monitor to remember him to offer sacrifice to his God.

When he is alone he is at leisure to be serious with his own soul, and to inquire into its case and condition. In his greatest company he is alone to himself, and in his greatest secrecy in company with his God. The truth is, he is never alone, for the Father is always with him; and he thinks what a holy man (Dr Sibbes) was wont to say, My God and I are good company. Yet he often sequestereth himself from the crowd, that he may enjoy the sweetest kisses from Jesus Christ. He can tell how to be solitary as well as how to be sociable, and hath many a time found the golden and silver mines in solitary places where were no inhabitants. He hath had many a good turn in his garden or private chamber, when he hath walked unseen, and Christ hath been his fellow-traveller. No bread hath been more sweet than that which he hath eaten in secret, when Christ hath been his fellow-commoner.

He is for company as well as for privacy, but he is for good fellowship; he delights only in them that are true Christians. He chooseth rather to travel alone than with thieves, wicked men, that will conspire to rob him of his precious grace, at least of his precious time. He is a companion of all that fear God and keep his statutes; he chooseth to converse with saints, though he useth sometimes, as his occasions and relations call him, to converse with sinners. He doth not, like the cameleon, turn himself into the colour of his company; nor, like liquid things, take his form from that place in which he is; but as a solid body, keeps his figure wherever he be; nay, he endeavoureth, as those that carry strong scents about them, to perfume all persons and places in which he cometh. If he be among the good he watcheth their words, their works, that he may receive some good from them, and do some good to them. He hopes that his heart, as cold as it is will get some heat by being so near such glowing coals; and he provoketh them, to his power, and in his place, to love and to good works. The communion of saints is a great comfort to him in his pilgrimage, and an article both of his creed and his practice. If he be among the bad, his work is to make them better; and he is watchful that they do not make him worse. Though he cannot avoid the company of sinners, yet he is careful to avoid the contagion of their sins. He knoweth that it is hard for sheep to be in the midst of such thorns and to lose no part of their fleece; therefore when he seeth he can do no good, he hasteneth away, lest he should receive some evil.

Godliness is his business, not only amongst all persons, but also in all seasons. He doth not put on religion, as some their best clothes, on some high or some holiday only, but it is his ordinary and his constant attire. Every week-day is with him a Lord's-day, for he liveth in the fear of the Lord all the day long. When he openeth his eyes in the morning, he lifteth them up to his Maker, both with

praise for the last night's protection, and in prayer for the ensuing day's providence. He sets out for the other world before he undertakes his worldly works, and expecteth no blessing on them till he have first begged it. He dares not venture abroad fasting, for fear of infection from those many ill fumes and vapours which he is sure to encounter. He spendeth the greatest part of the day in his particular vocation, but so that in it he is limited and directed by religion. He buyeth as one that possesseth not, selleth as one that hath a soul to save, useth the world as not abusing it, because the fashion of this world passeth away. His prudence guideth him, and his piety swayeth him so to follow his shop as not to neglect his closet, and so to take care of the bodies, as one that must give an account of all the souls, in his family. He is tender of his time all the day long, to redeem it from needless talk and vain company, and very unwilling to cut such a precious commodity to waste. He watcheth his heart through the whole day, knowing how treacherous an inmate it is, and that he walketh constantly amongst enemies, which are neither few nor asleep. He usually calleth his soul to a reckoning at night how it hath behaved itself in the day, and so makes his factor faithful, by accounting with him frequently. As God is the Alpha, the beginning, so he is the Omega, the ending of the day; for he doth not commit his body to his bed before he hath asked his Father's blessing, and commended his soul into the hands of his Redeemer. When he hath washed off the dirt that his soul hath contracted by touching and meddling with worldly things, in the blood of his Saviour, and bewailed them before the Lord, then he can lie down with comfort, and God giveth his beloved sleep.

He is one that visiteth the sick rather out of conscience than out of courtesy, and more to inquire of their spiritual than of their bodily welfare. If ever men be serious and come to themselves, it is when in their own thoughts they are dying and going from all others;

therefore he will by no means neglect such a price, but improve it to the utmost for their eternal peace. He will for the time become a physician, and so wisely considereth the spiritual state of his patient, and accordingly ordereth his prescription. If the patient be a scandalous person, one whose disease seemeth to be desperate, he giveth the stronger physic. He dares not be so unfaithful as scarce to touch his festered wounds for fear of putting him to pain, but endeavoureth to search them to the bottom. He sets before the soul the heinous evil and horrid end of sin, the unspeakable madness and unconceivable misery of sinners, and the certainty of all this under the hand of God himself. He useth the law's hammer to break the heart if possible, thereby to prevent hell. He dares not give the least cordial till he hath found his former physic to have had some considerable operation. If the person be one of a moral civil life, yet one whom he fears in a natural estate, he commends civility, but discovers its defects, and prefers sanctity in all his discourse. The substance of his speech is concerning the nature and necessity of regeneration, as the only means appointed by the God that cannot lie for the obtaining of salvation. He speaks so affectionately, with so much love to his dying friends, that you may perceive the working of his heart in the motion of his lips. He labours for life to save poor souls from eternal death. Oh how eager and earnest is he to persuade his sick friends to be holy and happy! If he meet with a patient that is pious, yet perplexed with doubts and fears, he hath his cordial juleps, the gospel promises, to preserve such a soul from fainting. He looks for some savoury expression from this dying Christian, that may stick upon him whilst he hath a being. When he heareth a dying sinner cry out of the world's falseness to him in this his extremity, though he had been a faithful drudge to it all his time, he layeth up that saying in his heart, and hopes he shall love the world the less whilst he liveth. When he heareth the dying saint commend the faithfulness of his God in owning him, now all the world leaves him;

when he heareth him tell how fast a friend, how choice a good, how vast a portion the blessed God is, how sweet his ways are, and bless the time that he spent in praying and reading, and examining his own heart; he thinks, there is somewhat for me; and when he goeth home, he beggeth that he may set the greater price upon his God, and take the more pains in holy duties till he comes to that hour.

When it comes to his own turn to go up to mount Nebo and die there, he expires, like the Arabian phoenix, in a bed of sweet spices, the exercise of the graces of the Holy Spirit. He considereth his infinite obligations to his dearest Saviour, and that he hath but a very short time now to work in, (for he is going to receive his reward,) and therefore he will endeavour, like his Redeemer, bow much service soever he hath done his God in his life, to do, if it be possible, the most by his death. Both his house and his heart were set in order beforehand, and now he hath nothing to do save to die. But oh how sweetly, if not hindered by his disease, doth this dying swan sing! He raiseth up himself with Jacob to bless his children, (if he have any,) and commandeth them with David to know the God of their fathers, and to serve him with perfect hearts and willing minds. He commits his fatherless children to God, and bids his widow to trust in him. He wisheth all his friends and acquaintance to mind the one thing necessary, and to choose the good part which shall never be taken from them. 'My friends,' saith he, 'if ye will believe a dying man, one that dares not look God in the face with an untruth in his mouth, one that speaks not by notion or hearsay, but by experience, seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof; give all diligence to make your calling and election sure; honour God in your health, if ye would have God to own you in your sickness. I have served him so many years; I have found him a good master; his ways the most pleasant delightful ways, and surely his end, which I am now going to possess, will be perfect peace. Alas! all other things are vanity and



vexation of spirit. Relations are vanity; possessions are vanity; wives, and children, and brethren, and sisters, and friends are vanity; houses, and lands, and honours, and treasures are vanity; all things jointly, everything severally is vanity. I thought them so, I used them so. I am not deceived; I find them so. No person in the world can give me the least cordial; no things in the world can afford me the least comfort. Were either the persons or the things of this world my portion, how poor, how pitiful would my condition now be! Oh turn the world off before it turn off you, as ye see it serveth me! Oh get the world taken out of you before ye are taken out of it, or ye are undone for ever! Hear the conclusion of the whole matter, Fear God, and keep his commandments. It is the time I have spent in his service, the talents I have employed according to his command, and the seasons that I have improved for his praise, which now, through his grace in Christ, as evidences of my uprightness, yield me both courage and confidence. I have been a poor weather-beaten passenger, tossed up and down in the tempestuous sea of this world, with the high winds of men and devils' rage; but how it revives me that I am in sight of my blessed harbour and eternal haven! I am going to reap the fruit of all my hearty diligent service; I would say, of my Saviour's bloody sufferings. I have many a time heard what great things God had promised, and Christ had purchased for them that believe; I am now going to see, and, beforehand, conclude that the half is not told me. I am confident, when I come to the Father's house, and enjoy those blissful mansions and rivers of pleasures which are there, I shall have cause to say to them, as the Queen of Sheba to Solomon, It was a true report which I heard in the land of the living, of thine excellency and worth; howbeit I could scarce believe the words until I came, and mine eyes had seen it, and behold the half was not told me. Thy beauty and thy glory doth infinitely exceed the fame which I heard. My dear friends, farewell; remember the words of a dying Christian. Godliness is the greatest gain; piety

will be most profitable at last. Make religion your business; exercise yourselves to godliness, be constant, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.' And thus, like some sweet perfume that is burnt, he leaves a sweet savour behind him, whilst his soul ascendeth in the flame, and is honourably conveyed by glorious angels into heaven's blessed court.

This is the substance of the whole, which I fully intended to have finished, as thou wilt perceive in the beginning, in this treatise; but the importunity of some persons, and the stationer's desire to have it in two parts, hath caused me to publish this second, and to reserve the rest for a third part.

Herein, reader, I have drawn the saint's picture, by which thou mayest perceive somewhat of the beauty of his person, and the excellency and loveliness of his life. This indeed is the true life, all other but the shadow of living. Let conscience be judge. Is it not a thousand pities that men created with rational spirits, and capable of such a noble employment, as, like those celestial courtiers, to wait always on, and to walk with the King of saints, should, like silly pismires, spend their time and strength only in hoarding up heaps of earth? By it thou mayest also behold the vast difference between the conversation of the gracious and the graceless. How the wicked, or men of this world, resemble the swan, for all her white feathers and stately neck. Though she live amongst fish, she lives upon weeds; though they live amongst the weighty mercies of eternity, the love of God, the blood of Christ, and the embroidery of the Spirit, yet they live upon the trash and toys of this present time. Now the men of the other world, like that princely bird the eagle, are of piercing sights and lofty flights, live above, make little account of things here below, not stooping to them but when necessity calls them, and then in

subordination to their chief end. Friend, if thou art a stranger to those heroic designs and noble delights of true Christians, repent speedily of thy folly, or else I must say to thee, as the bold tragedian did to Pompey, 'The time shall come that thou shalt fetch deep sighs, and therefore sorrow the more because thou sorrowedst no sooner.' If thou art experimentally acquainted with them, give God the praise, (whose free grace makes thee to differ,) and remember in thy prayers,

Thine and the church's servant, for Jesus' sake,

GEORGE SWINNOCK.

## PT II

But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself unto godliness.—1 TIM. 4:7

### **Exercise thyself unto godliness**

As the blessed God is compared to the sun, Ps. 84:12, and the dearest Jesus to the Sun of righteousness, Mal. 4:2, so godliness is frequently in Scripture compared to light, John 1:15, partly in regard of its excellency. Light is the purest and most immaterial of all bodies. Its clarity and beauty do render it lovely. Its birth is noble, from above; it is a beam darted from the sun's most glorious body; it is the great ornament of the world, without which the whole universe would be but a dismal dungeon of dreadful darkness. So grace is excellent; godliness is the excellency, and purity the comeliness of the rational creature. There is a beauty in holiness as well as the beauty of holiness, and indeed such a beauty that none ever saw it but admired it, yea, and was enamoured with it. It is of a celestial extraction, its

father is in heaven; it is the picture of God's own perfections, therefore called the divine nature, 2 Pet. 1:4; the righteous is, therefore, more excellent than his neighbour, Prov. 12:26. The godly, though poor, are gold, jewels, and vessels of honour; when their ungodly neighbours, though rich, are dross, dung, and vessels of dishonour. Holiness is the life and glory of the little world man, without which, notwithstanding all the flowers of his natural and acquired accomplishments, he is but as a body without a soul, both uncomely and unsavoury.

Partly in regard of the universality of its influence. It is said of the sun, the fountain of light: 'His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof,' Ps. 19:6. Its light is of as large extent as its heat, for light is the chariot in which heat is conveyed to the lower world; light peeps in as well at the peasant's cottage as the prince's court, and frisks up and down not only in the stately parlours, but also in the homely prisons. The sun, though locally in heaven, is yet virtually on the earth, gilding the mountains, glistening in the valleys, dancing up and down in the pleasant meadows, viewing all countries and kingdoms, enlightening all at once with his splendour, and everywhere overspreading the face both of sea and land; thus true godliness is of a universal extent. The light of holiness doth accompany the true Christian at all seasons, not only in his higher and nobler, but also in his lower and lesser actions. Whether he be in his closet or at his calling, whether he be solitary or in company, in every relation in which he standeth, and in all conditions to which God calleth him, he walketh always as a child of the day, for the light of godliness still attendeth him.

An unsound Christian, like an aguish body, hath his cold as well as his hot fits, his sick as much as his well days. As a meteor he hangs in

the air, and sometimes moveth towards heaven, and presently falleth again towards the earth. At some seasons he is very precise, at other times very profane. In some things, though they be of small consequence, he is zealous and fiery hot; in other things, which are of greatest concernment, he is frozen and key-cold, Mat. 23:23. Religion is this man's good humour, which is now and then upon him; but godliness is the constitution of a real Christian, the divine nature his second nature. As the sinner polluteth with sin, so the saint perfumeth with sanctity, whatsoever he toucheth. Godliness is the highway of the righteous, Prov. 16:17, and they are travellers always going on in their journey towards their heavenly country. Some walk in this highway a little for recreation, with some company which they are related to, or have a dependence on; but they quickly grow weary, and give over. Others are seen sometimes in this road when their ends call them, and their interests command them; and as thieves, whose constant haunts are in the woods, do sometimes cross, nay, ride in the highways a mile or two together to execute their own designs the better, in robbing the honest countrymen; but to these it is a byway, not a highway. The true saint is the right traveller, who, though in a mist he may a little miss it, and through mistake turn out of it, yet quickly discovers his error, and walketh in it from morning to night. This light shineth in upon him in his chamber, in his shop, at his table, in all other places, as well as when he is in God's temple.

How the Christian may be always running this race set before him, and wherever he be going, or whatsoever he be doing, make religion his business, hath been in part discovered in my former discourse, the substance or epitome of which I have given the reader in the preface to this; what remaineth I shall here present to thee, is reducible to these three particulars:—

First, I shall speak to the manner of exercising thyself to godliness, and that—

1. In thy special relations.
2. In all conditions, whether of prosperity or adversity.
3. Thy dealings in general with all men.
4. In all companies, whether good or bad; and therein I shall speak both to thy choice of companions and thy carriage in company.
5. In solitariness, or when thou art alone.
6. On a week-day from morning to night.
7. In visiting the sick.
8. On a dying bed.

Secondly, I shall speak to those means which must be minded by all who would drive this high and heavenly trade, and make religion their business.

Thirdly, I shall lay down some awakening motives, to quicken all sorts of persons to follow this honourable and profitable calling.

## CHAPTER I

### **How Christians may exercise themselves to godliness in the relations of parents**

First, Thy duty is to make religion thy business in thy relations.

The body of godliness parteth itself into these three principal members—our duty towards God, towards ourselves, and towards other men. The three adverbs of Paul are the most substantial nouns in religion. 'The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, and hath appeared to us, teacheth us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live righteously, soberly, and godlily in this present evil world.' Godliness is here strictly taken, and relates to the immediate worship of the blessed God; sobriety includes our carriage in reference to ourselves in particular; righteousness concerneth our dealings with, and deportment towards others, whether our relations or those that are nearer, or strangers and those that are further off. In those three channels the stream of godliness runneth.

That which I am now persuading thee to, is to exercise thyself to godliness in thy relations. Be not like the moon in her increase, lightsome only in one part, holy only in one relation, and at some times; but like the sun, lightsome in every part, holy in every relation, and at all times. Hypocrites carry religion as thieves do a dark lantern up and down for their own ends; and as the lanterns have light on one side, as much as will serve their own turns and designs, but the greatest part is darkness, so is the holiness of a hypocrite; it may shine upon a private respect in one relation, but it doth not appear at all in another; when the godliness of a sincere

soul is as a candle set up in the midst of a room, which giveth light round about, especially to them that are near it.

The excellency of a member consisteth in its fitness for, and serviceableness in, those peculiar offices to which it is designed; much of the excellency of a member of Christ consisteth in his ability for, and fidelity in, those several relations with which he is invested. Oh, it is lovely to behold a ring, which way soever it is turned, sparkling gloriously with divers diamonds—I mean a Christian acting and exercising graces suitable to every relation. Indeed, relation graces are the grace and glory of religion.

There are three relations in a family—parents and children, husbands and wives, masters and servants; in each of these Christians must make religion their business.

1. I shall begin with the first of these. Men and women, as they are parents, must exercise themselves to godliness.

I shall divide the duty incumbent on parents into these two generals:

1. In relation to the souls and spiritual estate of their children.
2. In relation to the bodies and temporal estate of their children.

First, In relation to the souls of their children. The souls of children are of infinite value, and they are committed by God to the parents' charge, therefore herein their greatest care must appear: 'Ye fathers, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,' Eph. 6:4. Many are careful to educate their children in the favour of great men, but, alas! who brings up his children in the fear of the great God? Augustine saith, his mother travailed in greater pain for his spiritual than for his natural birth; but surely there are few



Monicas in England. Most mothers are so senseless of the worth and weight of their children's souls, and so careless what becomes of them in the other world, that when their sons and daughters come to die, they may bespeak them, as Cratisiclea in Plutarch did her dying child, Ah quo, pueri, estis profecti? Ah, my dear children, whither are ye gone? Whether to heaven or hell, whether to matchless and endless mercy, or unspeakable and unchangeable misery, I know not. Mothers too too often prove monsters, and are cruel to the children of their own bodies; as the mother of King Edward the martyr, who cruelly murdered her son. 'Even the sea monsters draw out the breast to their young ones; the daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostrich in the wilderness,' Lam. 4:3. The sea-horses, or sea-calves, or seals or whales, according to different expositors, have teats, and give suck to their young, but the daughter of Zion permits her little ones to perish like the ostrich, Job 39:14, 15, 16. If it were such a crime, and caused such sad complaint, for mothers to neglect and famish the bodies of their little ones, what is it to starve their souls?

Dudilins relates a sad story of Bochna, a woman who had but two sons, that whilst she was walking with one toward the river, she heard the other cry, and hastening back she saw a knife sticking in him, which killed him quickly; and she returning to the other child, thinking to solace herself in him, but in her absence he was fallen into the river and drowned. The negligence of parents is often the cause of children's eternal death; but as the law of man hangs those mothers that kill their children's bodies, so the law of God will damn them that kill their children's souls. Some fathers also, worse than bloody Herod, murder the souls of their own children. Philip, the king of Spain, out of an unnatural zeal, suffered his eldest son Charles to be murdered in the Spanish Inquisition, for favouring the Protestant party. Woodman, the martyr's father, betrayed him to the

bishops, who put him to death. It is barbarous to deprive one's child of natural life; but oh, how bloody is it to deprive them of eternal life! If he be cruel that sends them to the grave, what is he that sends them to hell! Surely such are not parentes but peremptores. The holy apostle observeth that the wicked world, like a carcase, will every day be more unsavoury than other. In the last days perilous time shall come, that like the serpent Satan, the older it is the more wily and wicked it will be; and one argument whereby he proves it is this,—men shall be 'without natural affection,' 1 Tim. 3:1, 3. He doth not say without human affection, which is a love to men, as they are men; nor without Christian affection, which is a love to saints, as they are saints; but without natural affection, which is a love to such to whom they are bound by consanguinity or affinity, and so are taught by a special instinct of nature to be tender of. Some parents have less pity for their relations than the parable mentions Dives to have had in hell: 'I pray thee, father, send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come to this place of torments,' Luke 16:27, 28.

It is no wonder that many children, instead of being great comforts, prove grievous crosses to their parents, and bring their hoary heads to the grave with sorrow; for they were not only brought forth in sin, but also brought up in sin. How can it be rationally expected that ground never sowed with good corn should bring forth any other than weeds; or that they should not be undutiful to the fathers of their flesh, who were never taught their duty to the Father of spirits? Aristotle observeth that the raven, an unclean creature, is careless of his young, and ἐκβάλλει τοὺς νεοττοῦς, (Hist. vi. Cap. 6,) expelleth them out of his nest, so unnatural is he. But Ælian (de Animal, iii. Cap. 43) taketh notice that as this bird doth neglect her young, so the young do neglect the old ones, and sometimes set upon them when they are not able to resist, and wound them. It is most just with God

that that ground which fathers will bestow now no pains on to dress, should bring forth such thorns and briers as shall be pricks in their eyes, and pierce their very hearts with anguish and sorrow. The speediest way to turn thy children into swords to wound thy very soul, is to suffer them for want of pious education to wander from God and his word. Such parents, like Eli, bring up their children to bring down their houses, and to bring their own souls to the earth with grief.

## **Motives**

I shall offer thee two or three arguments to quicken thee to mind the spiritual good of thy children, and then acquaint thee wherein it consisteth.

First, Consider thy children's natural condition. A child in the Latin is called puer, quasi purus, as if pure (Berni. de Orig. Ling. Lat. ;) but it is not meant absolutely but comparatively. They are white paper compared with them who have blotted their lives with many sins; but children have much impurity in them; they bring a world of wickedness with them when they first come into a wicked world; and therefore in the Hebrew are derived from a word which signifieth evil, unrighteousness, wickedness, because as soon as they know how to do anything they do things that are evil. Ignorance and folly are the two cords with which Satan binds them to that stake, at which many burn for ever; like condemned prisoners, they go out of a dark dungeon to execution. They are children of wrath, because children of disobedience. Ground that is barren is nigh to cursing, and therefore hath need of manuring, but especially ground that aboundeth in weeds should be dunged and dressed. Truly such soil are thy sons by nature, and therefore there is a necessity of their religious nurture. They are trees void of good fruit, and unless they

be by pious education changed and ingrafted into Christ, they will be cut down for the unquenchable fire. Thy children are by their births more defiled in their souls than in their bodies. Ah, thou canst not conceive how filthy their inward man is, and therefore it behoveth thee to get them washed by the blood and Spirit of Christ, lest they perish in their pollution. The first receiver into which thy child is taken, and the first bed in which thy child is wrapped, are both spun and woven of sin and shame; and surely thou wantest the compassion of a father if thou dost not strive to mend that by education, which thou hast marred by propagation.

It is said, 'There was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead,' Exod. 12:30. Are there not many dead in thy house? nay, are not all thy children naturally 'dead in sins and trespasses'? What cry dost thou make to God for their quickening? What care dost thou take for their enlivening? We read of the pelican, that if her young ones are stung or bitten with serpents, she will wound herself till she bleed, and give them her own warm blood to recover them. And when thy children are wounded and stung mortally by the old serpent the devil, canst thou sit still, and never stir to recover their dying, gasping souls? Remember that young lapwings are soon caught up by every buzzard.

*Puerilitas est periculorum pelagus*, Youth is an ocean of dangers. Within, without, on every side they are beset with perils; the flesh is most strong and stirring, the world is most amiable and taking, besides, the wicked one is subtle and tempting, ever striving to hale them to hell; and what shall they do, in the midst of such enemies, if they have no defensive weapons? A blind man may easily be led into a pit. Thy children are all born blind, therefore it will not be hard to lead them to hell. Children are compared to arrows, Ps. 127:4, 5. Now we know that sticks are not by nature arrows; they do not grow so,

but they are made so; by nature they are knotty and ragged, but by art they are made smooth and handsome. So children by nature are rugged and untoward, but by education are refined and reformed, made pliable to the divine will and pleasure. They are also compared to corner-stones, Ps. 144:12, which are rough and unfit for use, as they are taken out of the quarry, and therefore must be hewn and carved before they are laid in the foundation. 'Truly thy children are averse to all good, and need much pains, and much polishing,' Ps. 144:12, that they may be serviceable to the sanctuary.

As the culture of the earth doth help to deliver it from the barrenness of its own nature, so the pious education of children is a special means, through divine assistance, to heal the viciousity of their depraved natures. Socrates confessed of himself that his natural inclination was exceeding bad, but by the study of philosophy, he altered and overruled it, (Cic. Tuscul. lib. iv. 9, in fin.) The saving knowledge of Jesus Christ will do infinitely more in young persons towards the mastering and conquering their vicious propensities. Though the best find the corruption of nature, like a simple of a predominant relish in a compounded medicine, to give too much tincture to other superinduced qualities, yet grace will cast it down, even there where it cannot cast it out.

Secondly, Consider thy affection to thy child. This near relation commandeth entire affections. Love usually, like a stream, runneth swiftly downward from parents to children. The truth is, parents must needs love their sons if they love themselves; for the child is the parent multiplied; the son is the father in a later and newer edition; a child is the father's bowels. 'Receive him,' saith Paul of Onesimus to Philemon, (ver. 12,) 'who is mine own bowels;' because he had begotten him in his bonds. A spiritual son is the bowels of a minister; a natural son is the bowels of his father; for to this the apostle

alludeth. Where there is any similitude of ourselves, either in qualities and accidents, as between some friends; or in substance, as between parents and children,—upon such naturally the beams of love do extend; and the greater the likeness is, the hotter is the love. The likeness in substance being the greatest—for children are the branches sprouting from the body of their parents—the love here must needs be hottest. The Greeks call their children φίλτατα, most dear; the Latins, cari, darlings. There is an ocean of love in a parent's breast.

Now, how wilt thou manifest thy love to thy children, if thou dost not teach them God's law? Is he a loving father that trims and adorns his children's clothes, but starves their bodies? Surely, then, they are cruel parents who feed their children's dying flesh, but murder and famish their immortal spirits. What respect dost thou shew to a pearl of great price, if thou strivest to make the cabinet glorious, and neglectest all care of the jewel? How little are thy poor children beholden to thee, if thou providest for their backs and their bellies—feeding them to the full, till they kick with the heel at thee, and clothing them above thy purse, till they grow proud and contemn thee—when thou hast no care to feed them with the bread of life, and to clothe them with the graces of the Spirit? Is it true love to be tender of thy neighbour's plants, and murder his person? Surely no more to be careful of the vegetative or sensitive faculty of thy children, that the soul may like salt preserve the body from putrefaction, and suffer the rational part eternally to perish.

Plutarch reporteth of the elephant, that her natural affection is such to her young, that if she see them fallen into a deep pit, she will, though it be present death, leap down after them. Thy children are falling into the bottomless pit; they are not yet in the place of torments; now how wilt thou shew thy love to them? God doth not

require thy perishing with them, but thy prevention of their perdition. Surely thy love should work forcibly to keep them out of the fiery lake.

Gregory the Great, seeing the merchants of Rome setting forth many beautiful British boys to sale, sighed and said, Alas! that such fair faces should be under the power of the prince of darkness. Oh, what pity is it that thy lovely and beloved children should be void of grace, and under the power of the devil!

The moralist assureth us, that such is the force of natural affection, that even vicious men desire that their sons may be virtuous; and good men that their children may be better. How strong, then, should the stream of thy affections run towards their salvation, when grace and nature both meet together in one channel! A learned writer<sup>2</sup> giveth this reason why that clause is inserted in the second command, 'Visiting the sins of the father upon the children;' because those that have not a spiritual principle to make them forbear idolatry and false worship, may yet be moved to forbear it out of a natural principle; that they who will not avoid sin out of love to God, may yet do it out of love to their children. Parents' love should move them to loathe sin for their children's sake, and to endeavour that their children should do so too. The great naturalist can tell us, that to love is to desire good things for the persons beloved, and to labour to attain them.

Thirdly, Consider the time of their youth is the principal time. 'To everything,' saith the wise man, 'there is a season,' Eccles. 3:1. Now it is a great part of spiritual wisdom to observe and improve those seasons. It is folly in a high degree to stay till an opportunity is gone; and it is the top of wisdom to wait till an opportunity is come, and then to make use of it. When the tree is small, it may be easily bent

which way you will; but when it is grown to some bigness, it will sooner break than bow. When thy children are young, thou mayest probably persuade and prevail with them to mind holiness and heaven, (while they are under the rod they are usually under rule;) but if then they be neglected, and be once grown headstrong, it will be easier with blows to break their backs, than with counsel and admonition to break their hearts. The only time to back colts is when they are young, before their mettle be too high; afterwards they are unruly and untractable. What physicians observe of natural, is true of spiritual diseases: the best way to subdue and expel them is to take them at their first rise, then to apply means for their riddance. When once diseases have corrupted the blood, and are turned into the habit of the body, it may be beyond the most able person's skill to remove them. Thy children, when little, are wax, most apt to receive impressions: then, therefore, stamp God's seals on them, lest Satan mark them for his servants and his sufferings.<sup>2</sup>

Take a bladder whilst it is wet, and newly taken out of the beast, and a little breath will fill it out; but let it alone till it is dried, and all the wind in the world cannot do it. Be diligent to fill the heart of thy child with grace and godliness whilst it is young and tender, and there is great hopes, through the blessing of God, of accomplishing it; but delay it till his heart be hardened through custom in sin, and thou mayest work long enough at the labour in vain: Prov. 9:18, 'Correct thy son betime, whilst there is hope,' saith Solomon; implying that if correction be deferred, the expectation in it will be frustrated: by losing the season thou mayest lose thy son. It is vain of servants to speak of salting their meat when it is already stinking and unsavoury. The best crop may be expected from a park when it is first ploughed up.



It is possible to turn a little stream which way you please; but when it comes to be a great torrent, it is hard work. The chief season to write God's law in the hearts of any is when they are young; then they are white paper comparatively, and fittest for any inscription; as they grow up they are quickly blotted and blurred with folly and falsehood.

It is observable that in the Gospel, of all who were possessed of the devil, the evil spirit was most hardly cast out of him whom he had possessed from his childhood, Mat. 17:15. The longer a person hath had possession of an estate, the stronger will his title be, and the more difficult to eject him. Old corruptions are like old customs, not easily parted with.

4. Consider the good thou mayest do by endeavouring the conversion of thy children. As by neglecting their religious nurture thou dost more harm than thou canst imagine, so by God's blessing on their pious education thou mayest do more good than thou canst conceive. It will be comfort to thyself. 'The father of the righteous rejoiceth,' Prov. 23:24. It is said of Charles the Great, that he had such virtuous children that he could not be well without their company, nor find in his heart to part with them, though it were to be well married. Aristotle saith that πολυγονία is no blessing unless it be εὐγενεία; that a numerous posterity is not a mercy unless it be virtuous. Many children may be a misery; but holy children are ever a mercy indeed. Jerome writeth of Paula, that she rejoiced exceedingly in hearing her niece, of the same name, sing hallelujah in her cradle. The natural parent may say, as well as the spiritual, 'I have no greater joy than to see my children walking in the truth,' 2 John 4. Old Jacob was young again almost for joy when he heard that his son Joseph was alive. Will it not rejoice thy heart to see thy children alive to God, whom thou fearest to be dead in sin?

It will be profitable to the church and state. Good children make good magistrates and good ministers. If the several members be useful and serviceable in their places, how happy would the political body be! The Lacedemonian, therefore, did not without cause inflict a severe punishment on those parents whose children were ill-conditioned. If the materials be rotten and bad, such will the house be which is made of them. When children come vicious out of their parents' hands, no wonder that they be pests and plagues to the church and state to which they belong. Some give this reason why Nero was so barbarous and bloody in his government, because his nurse made him often to suck blood in his infancy.

A wicked father in York may kill many souls in London by his vicious son that keeps house there, and poisons others with his ungodly counsels and cursed example. David at Jerusalem slew Uriah when he was many miles from him. A faithful and skilful physician may, by a receipt which he gives to some few, save many lives at a distance. A gracious father, by principling his children aright, may convert men and women that dwell far from him. Nay, when he is dead, he may be instrumental that others may live.

If the canker take the young trees in the nursery, they will never be good when transplanted. Wicked children are the original of wicked parishes, and wicked kingdoms. If the blossoms be bad, the fruits can never be good. Man and wife are the first<sup>2</sup> pair in nature, and the original of all the rest; they are the stem and stock, according to whose sprouts, whether good or bad, the whole country is like to be stored.

It will be profitable to themselves. Pious education is a good antidote against the poison of heretical opinions, carnal suggestions, and Satan's temptations. It is a good fence to a field which keeps off

cattle, which would injure it. Hereby thy children will be fore-warned of, and fore-armed against, the erroneous principles and scandalous practices of others. It is the opinion of a worthy divine, that if parents did their duties as they ought, the word publicly preached would not be the ordinary means of regeneration in the church, but only without the church, among infidels; God would pour out his grace so upon the children of his people, and hear prayers for them, and bless such endeavours for their holy education, that we should see the promises made good to our seed; and that the unthankful Anabaptists, that will not confess that the children of saints are any nearer God, or more beholden to him than pagans, should by sweet experience be convinced of their error, and be taught better how to understand that our children are holy.

Natural fathers, by doing their duties, may prove spiritual fathers, and they that have been instrumental for the conveyance of sin, may prove pipes for the conveyance of grace to their seed. Now if it be such an honour and happiness to convert a stranger, what joy will it be to thee to convert thy own child, to save his soul alive! James 5:20. Their pious education may be profitable, though not presently. The good seed thou now sowest, may yield a blessed crop, though a nipping winter should come between; however, thou hast delivered thy own soul; the master hath his quarterage, whether his scholar learn or loiter, and the physician hath his fee, whether the patient recover or die.

It may be profitable to posterity. Religion this way may be transmitted from generation to generation. Sin is propagated from father to son, from one generation to another, ever since it had a being in the world; and why then should not religion? If Satan will still have his agents, and such as will entail his malice and hatred against God and godliness on their children, and children's children,

to the end of the world; should not the blessed God have his agents, such as shall endeavour that his cause be faithfully pleaded by their posterity? What the prophet saith of the vine, 'Destroy it not, for there is a blessing in it,' Isa. 65:8, I may say of thy children, Do not, by carelessness in their education, destroy them, for there is blessing in them. One vine may yield slips and suckers for many others, and from it may vines successively be continued to many ages. One child well nurtured may help others for many generations to bring forth such fruit as shall rejoice the heart of God and man.

In reference to the souls of thy children. These several duties must be minded.

1. Thy duty is to dedicate thy children to God by baptism. As God gives them to thee by a free donation,—'These are the children which God hath graciously given thy servant'—so thou shouldst give them back to him, by a religious dedication of them to his service; sacrifice all thy Isaacs to the Lord's service. When Hannah had received Samuel from God, she presently returns him back to God. Therefore saith she, 'I have lent him to the Lord as long as he liveth,' that is, I have returned him whom I borrowed by prayer, 1 Sam. 1:28.

List thy children under the captain of their salvation betimes. It was the commendation given Goliath by Saul, that he was a soldier from his youth, 1 Sam. 17. It is the privilege, and let it be the praise of thy children, that they are the soldiers of Christ from their infancy. It is hopeful that they will fight the Lord's battles well, who are sworn soldiers to him in their swaddling-clothes.

I say, dedicate thy children to God by baptism. If thou art in covenant thyself, thy children have a right to that seal of the covenant. And saith God to Abraham, 'I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations,

for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and thy seed after thee. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you, and thy seed after thee, Every man-child amongst you shall be circumcised,' Gen. 17:7, 10. Two things are clear, from these texts—

1. That the children of godly parents were in covenant with God. Hence I would infer that the children of believers are still in covenant with God, or else there was a time when they were cast out; but none can shew any scripture which speaks that ever the children of believers were cast out of God's family and covenant. Besides, if the children of believing Gentiles are not in covenant with God, as well as the children of believing Jews, then the charter of the church by the coming of Christ is lessened in a great measure, this great privilege of having our children in covenant being taken away; when none will deny but Christ did enlarge, not lessen, his people's privileges.

A second thing I gather from the forecited place is this, that children being within the covenant, have a right to the seal of the covenant. He that hath a right to a house and land, hath a right to those deeds and evidences which relate to that house and land. If thou art in Christ thyself, hope well of thy children; they are capable of the habits of grace, of being united to, and blessed by, the Lord of glory.

Indeed, if thou art not holy thyself, thou canst have little hope in thy children; the promise is to you, first, and to your children, afterwards, Acts 2:39. Though he who is free of the city himself may make his child free, yet he that is no freeman himself cannot make any one free; thy children's admission into the visible church of Christ must be upon thy account. Their spiritual privileges, in this respect, as their temporal estate, must come by inheritance. Thy piety may be profitable to thy posterity. 'Oh that there were a heart

within them that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might go well with them and their children for ever,' Deut. 5:29. So also thy profaneness may be thy children's prejudice; the members smart for the aches and diseases of the head. Job, speaking of a wicked man, telleth us, 'If his children be multiplied, it is for the sword, and his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread,' Job 27:14, 15. Ahab's sons witness the truth of such texts; they inherited not their father's crown, but his curse.

Valerius observeth that though Dionysius after his sacrilege escaped untouched in his person, yet he was severely punished in his posterity; God visits the sins of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate him. Though in respect of the other world, the son shall not die for the iniquity of the father, Ezek. 18:17, that is, eternally; yet in respect of this world, God layeth up the iniquity of parents for their children, Job 21:19, puts the father's debts on the child's score, and suffereth his justice and judgments to arrest him for it. Even children that have been good, have suffered for their father's sins, 1 Kings 14:12, 13. The branches fare the worse for the defects that are in the root; and the branches thrive the better for the sap that is in the root. 'The just man walks in his integrity, and his children are blessed after him,' Prov. 20:7.

2. Thy duty is to instruct thy children in the word and will of God. The prince of philosophers writes of the sea-eagle or sea-mew, that ἀναγκάζει τέκνα πρὸς τὸν ἥλιον βλέπειν, She constraineth her young ones to look upon the sun. Thy work must be to endeavour that thy young ones may by faith behold the Sun of righteousness. 'Teach a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he shall not depart from it,' Prov. 22:6. Observe the precept, 'Teach a child,' &c., and the promise, 'when he is old he shall not depart from it.' The precept is, teach a child the trade, or catechise a child in the way that

he should go;3 the Hebrew reads it, teach a child at his mouth, that is, as nurses feed infants with the breast or spoon, at the mouth, so teach them by putting words into their mouths, instructing them, and thereby enabling them to give an account of the principles of the oracles of God. There are many express commands for this, Deut. 4:9, 11:19, and 6:7, 'And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children:' thou shalt whet them as one would set an edge upon a knife, by often going over the whetstone; or, thou shalt sharpen them, Shanán, acuere, Hebr., as a man sharpeneth a stake, by cutting many slivers off when he would drive it into the ground; so the same fundamental truths of religion must be frequently repeated to, and inculcated on thy children. The water of life must be every day dropping into those narrow-mouthed glasses, line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little.

These young plants must be often watered. When physicians meet with bodies very corrupt, and yet very weak, they prescribe little and often. There were in the primitive times two sorts of catechumeni, or persons instructed in the principles of religion: 1. Some that were adulti, of ripe years, as heathens converted from dumb idols to the true God. These, before they were received by baptism into the fellowship of Christ, were taught and catechised in the way and will of God. So Austin, according to ecclesiastical history, and the eunuch and Cornelius, according to divine writ. 2. Others that were infants, the children of believers, being baptized in their infancy, as they grew up were taught the meaning of baptism, of the covenant of grace, of which that was a sign and seal, &c. Of all which particulars when they could give a good account in their own persons in public before the congregation, and could make a profession of their faith, and would promise obedience to the Lord and his word, they were confirmed, by laying on of hands, saith learned Deodat. on Heb. 6:2.

It is thy privilege, reader, that thy young ones may be taught to know the Ancient of days. Do not, therefore, omit the duty, but follow that pious pattern of David: 'I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live,' Prov. 4:3, 4. The mother also minded the instruction of her son, as well as the father, Prov. 31:1–4. As both parents have a share in their children's pollution, so both must endeavour their children's conversion.

The promise is, 'And he shall not depart from it when he is old.' The cloth that is dyed in the wool will keep colour best. Disciples in youth will prove angels in age. Use and experience strengthen and confirm in any art or science. The longer thy child hath been brought up in Christ's school, the more able he will be to find out Satan's wiles and fallacies, and to avoid them. The longer he hath been at the trade, the more skill and delight will he have in worshipping and enjoying the blessed God. The tree when it is old stands strongly against the wind, just as it was set when it was young.

The children of Merindal so answered one another in the matters of religion, before the persecuting Bishop of Cavailon, that a stander-by said unto the bishop, I must needs confess I have often been at the disputations of the doctors in the Sorbonne, but I never learned so much as by these children. Seven children at one time suffered martyrdom with Symphorisa, a godly matron, their mother. Such a blessing doth often accompany religious breeding; therefore, Julian the apostate, to hinder the growth and increase of Christianity, would not suffer children to be taught either human or divine learning.



Philip was glad that Alexander was born whilst Aristotle lived, that he might be instructed by Aristotle in philosophy. It is no mean mercy that thy children are born in the days of the gospel, and in a valley of vision, a land of light, where they may be instructed in Christianity. Oh do not fail, therefore, to acquaint thy children with the nature of God, the natures and offices of Christ, their own natural sinfulness and misery, the way and means of their recovery, the end and errand for which they were sent into the world, the necessity of regeneration and a holy life, if ever they would escape eternal death! Alas! how is it possible they should ever arrive at heaven if they know not the way thither?

The inhabitants of Mytilene, sometimes the lords of the seas, if any of their neighbours revolted, did inflict this punishment. They forbade them to instruct their children, esteeming this a sufficient revenge.—(Ælian.) Reader, if thou art careless of this duty, I would ask thee what wrong thy children have done thee, that thou shouldst revenge thyself by denying them that which is their due—I mean pious instruction.

The Jewish rabbis speak of a very strict custom and method for the instruction of their children, according to their age and capacity. At five years old they were filii legis, sons of the law, to read it. At thirteen they were filii præcepti, sons of the precept, to understand the law. At fifteen they were Talmudistœ, and went to deeper points of the law, even to Talmudic doubts. As thy children grow up, so do thou go on to instruct them in God's will. They are 'born like the wild ass's colt,' Job 11:12—that is, unruly, foolish, and ignorant. We often call a fool an ass, but here it is a 'wild ass,' which is more silly and untractable than a tame one; nay, it is a 'wild ass's colt,' which is most rude, unruly, and foolish. How then shall thy ignorant children come to know God or themselves without instruction?

3. Thy duty is to acquaint thy children with the works of God. Teach them his doings as well as his sayings, 'Take heed to thyself, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen; but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons,' Deut. 4:9. God's wonders should be had in everlasting remembrance. 'He hath done his mighty works to be remembered,' Ps. 111:4. Now one special way to do this is by writing them in our children's memories, hereby they are transmitted to posterity. This was the godly practice of the patriarchs, to instruct their children concerning the creation of the world, transgression of man, destruction of the old world, God's providence, the Messiah to be revealed, and the like. The parents' mouths were large books in which their children did read the noble acts of the Lord, 'I will utter dark sayings of old: which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them unto their children; that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments,' Ps. 78:2–7. This precept is here urged upon a double ground, partly for God's praise, in the perpetuity of his worthy deeds: his works are of great weight, and therefore as curious pictures or precious jewels must in memory of him be bequeathed from father to son whilst the world continueth. If they are written in paper or parchment, they may perish, (and is it not a thousand pities that such excellent records should be lost?) but if they be written by fathers successively in their children's hearts, no time shall blot or wear them out, Exod. 12:26, 27. Therefore, as the rabbis observe, the night before the passover, the Jews (to keep God's mercies in memory to his honour) were wont to confer with their children on

this wise: The child said, Why is it called the passover? The father said, Because the angel passed over us when it slew the Egyptians, and destroyed us not. The child said, Why do we eat unleavened bread? The father answered, Because we were forced to hasten out of Egypt. The child said, Why do we eat sour grapes? The father answered, To mind us of our afflictions in Egypt. Partly for their own profit, ver. 7: 'That they might set their hope in God,' &c. Acquaintance with God's favour will encourage their faith; knowledge of his power will help them to believe his promise. Reader, obedience to this precept may tend much to thy own and thy children's profit. By teaching thy children God's actions, thou wilt fix them the faster, and they will make the greater impression upon thy own spirit. A frequent mention of things is the best art of memory: what the mouth preacheth often, the mind will ponder much. Besides, it may work for thy children's weal; the more they be acquainted with the goodness, wisdom, power, and faithfulness of God, which appear in his works, the more they will fear, love, and trust him. When David had acquainted his son Solomon how kind and bountiful Barzillai had been to him in his extremity, what respect did Solomon shew to his son (the father being then incapable of his kindness) for the father's sake! If thou acquaintest thy children with national mercies, (how he bestowed the gospel on England when it was the throne of Satan, and worshipped that prince of darkness; how he restored the gospel to England when it was overspread with popery; how wonderfully he hath wrought for the good of his church in England against their enemies; how he blew up them that would have blown up the king and parliament in the gunpowder treason; and how he sunk them in 1588 as lead in the midst of the mighty waters who came against us, &c.,) and also makest known to thy children personal mercies; how at such a time when thou wast in misery, and no human hand could help thee, then thou criedst to God, and he heard and helped thee; how at such a

time thou wast in danger, and God was thy deliverer; thou wast in wants and he supplied thee, and delivered thy soul out of all adversity: the recital of these favours to them would be an engagement to them, (as they were sharers in thy mercies,) and an encouragement to them to hope and depend on, to worship and honour so gracious a God as this God is. 'Our fathers trusted in thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not ashamed,' Ps. 22:4, 5. This was an argument with the children to rely on the same rock, and expect shelter from the same refuge.

4. Thy duty is to pray earnestly to God for them. The parents, when Christ was on earth, brought their little ones to him, that he would put his hands on them, Mat. 19:13; that is, that he would bless them, for laying on the hands was the accustomed ceremony in blessing any; as we read, Gen. 27:21, 22. And in answer to the desire of these pious mothers, he put his hands on them and blessed them, Mark 10:16. So do thou by prayer carry thy children to the blessed Jesus in the arms of faith,—he hath as tender a respect for children now as he had then,—and beseech him to bless them. Thou knowest that by nature they are cursed, liable to the curse of the law, and to the wrath of the Lord; how earnest, how fervent shouldst thou be with the holy child Jesus, that he would lay his hands upon them and bless them! How pathetically did Abraham plead with God for Ishmael, 'Oh that Ishmael might live before thee!' Gen. 17:18. How affectionately shouldst thou, who knowest thy children are naturally dead, and believest that if they be not born again, they must die eternally, cry to God for them. 'Oh that my sons might live before the Lord, that my daughters might not die for ever! Thou art the prince and Lord of life; oh speak powerfully by the Spirit to their poor souls, that these sons and daughters, dead in sins and trespasses, may hear thy voice and live.'

The poet observeth of the tiger, the most cruel of all beasts, that if she be robbed of her whelps, she lieth down in her den, sadly lamenting their loss, and licking the place where they had lain.

'Sic aspera tigris,

Fætibus abreptis Scythico deserta sub Antro

Accubat, et tepidi lambit vestigia lecti.'

Reader, wilt thou be more cruel than the savage tiger? canst thou see the devil robbing thee of thy tender babes, and dragging them before thine eyes to his dismal den, and never lament their loss, nor pour out a prayer to God for their recovery? Rachel wept for her dead children, (though their bodies were only butchered by Herod;) and hast thou never a tear for thy children dead to God, and dead in law, when their souls are like to be murdered by bloody Satan?

Some parents, indeed, instead of blessing, curse their children; but let them take heed lest God hear them, and take them at their word. Manlius (Loc. commun. 228) gives us such patterns as may make all such parents to tremble. There was a mother who would usually say, the devil take her daughter; I saw, saith he, this woman leading about her daughter possessed by the devil, and so did Luther and others see her. There was, saith he, an old man that bid his son do something, and the son not hastening, the father wished he might never stir from that place. God said Amen to it; and whilst he lived, which was seven years, he never stirred from that place, but there he stood leaning upon a desk, whilst he slept and ate very little. The prints of his feet are to be seen in the pavement in the town of Friburg in Misnia to this day, saith my author.

O friend, thy prayers are part of thy children's best portion; be therefore more careful to lay up for them a stock of prayers in heaven than to leave them a stock of goods on earth. Job sent and sanctified his children; that is, say some, he sent to them to prepare themselves for the sacrifice. Others say, he put up prayers to God to sanctify them. It is clear, 'he offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all,' Job 1:5. He poured out prayers for the acceptance of every child in particular. Job's children were saints, for he saith, 'It may be they have sinned.' His question makes it unquestionable that they did patrizare (take after their father) in piety, yet his suspicion put him upon earnest supplication to God for pardon; what petitions shouldst thou then put up, when probably thy children are openly profane! It may be thy case is somewhat like his in the Gospel, 'There came to Jesus a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is lunatic and sore vexed; for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water, and I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him,' Mat. 17:15. Thou mayest cry to Christ, 'Lord, my son is strangely possessed with the evil spirit; he falleth sometimes into swearing, sometimes into lying, sometimes into the fire of lust, oftentimes into the water of drunkenness, and I have used all other means which thou hast prescribed. I have acquainted him with the heinous nature of sin, with the grievous danger of his soul; I have instructed him frequently, reproved him sharply; I have commanded him solemnly to turn over a new leaf, and lead a new life. I have brought him to public and private ordinances, have got my friends to deal seriously with him about his eternal concernments, but they could not cure him. Lord, have mercy on my son; Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on him. Do thou speak the word of command, and he will come to himself, and this unclean spirit will depart from him.'

If thou art a mother, do as the woman of Canaan did. 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.' If he seem not to hear, and to be silent, (as he was to her,) go nearer to him by faith, and cry, 'Lord, help me; Lord, help me.' If his answer seem to be a repulse, do not desist, but gather arguments from his denial, (as she did,) and conclude that if he open his mouth, he will open his hand; if importunity prevail with an unrighteous man, then much more with a gracious God. Never leave him, till by his own strength thou hast overcome him. At last thou mayest hear, 'O woman, be it unto thee as thou wilt; and see, thy daughter made whole from that very hour,' Mat. 15:22–29.

5. Thy duty is to reprove and correct thy children as need shall require. It is said of the ape, that she kills her young ones with culling them. Austin, upon a dreadful accident, called his people together to a sermon, and told them this story: Our noble Cyrillus, a man mighty among us in word and deed, had, as you know, but one only son, and he loved him immeasurably, even above God, and let him, without correction, do what he would. Now this very day, this cockering hath in his drunken humour offered violence to his mother, killed his father, wounded mortally two of his sisters, and would have ravished another. Some parents kill their children with kindness, with fondness, which is cruelty to purpose, I would say. Witness David in his carriage or dotage towards Absalom and Adonijah. True affection will be known by seasonable and suitable correction. 'He that spareth his rod hateth his son; he that loveth him, chasteneth him betimes, Prov. 13:24. Some children have been killed with overlaying. Many a mother hath overlaid and pressed her child to death with fondness. True love, though it be inconsistent with hatred, yet it is not with anger. God himself, who is infinite in affection to his people, makes them often feel the effects of his indignation. 'Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,' Prov. 3:12. Nay, none love their children's souls so

much, as they that are most angry at their sins. As they are most loving parents that rather apply sharp and painful corrosives than suffer wounds to fester and destroy their children's temporal lives; so they are the most loving parents that apply cutting reprehensions, and, if need be, corrections, rather than to suffer their spiritual diseases to continue and deprive them of eternal life.

'Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight to thy soul,' Prov. 29:17. Those that neglected to scourge their children, have found their children to scourge them. Such children, instead of giving rest, have been a sharp rod to their parents. As Eli's children, who were reprov'd too late, and then but very little, they pierced his heart for his not punishing them. God often whips the fathers by those children that were unwhipped at first. It is said of Muleasses, king of Tunis, that he cockered his son Amida so long, till he rebelled at last against his father, and in a short space deprived him both of his sight and sovereignty.<sup>2</sup> Not to cross our children, is a speedy way to be crossed by them. But as dust is beaten out of beds or chairs with a stick, so is folly beaten out of a child's heart with a rod: 'The rod and reproof give wisdom,' Prov. 29:15. Parents in their qualities should resemble honey, though it be sweet to the taste, yet nothing is more sharp when it meets with an exulcerate sore.

Notwithstanding this, both reproof and the rod must be managed by reason. It is good when a father, in relation to his child, makes not rage, but Scripture and reason the rule of his actions. If a governor of a family lay the reins upon the necks of his unruly passions, he will endanger the overthrow of his chariot, and all the persons that ride in it.

As some men are all fondness, and err in the excess; so others are all fire, and err in the defect: thy wisdom, Christian, is to walk in the



middle way between both; as not to suffer thy children in sin, lest they be destroyed; so not to provoke them to wrath, lest they be discouraged. Grace will teach thee, though not to extirpate, yet to regulate thy natural affections; for the passions of the soul are like winds to a ship, which being moderate, carry safely to its harbour, but being tempestuous drown it. If thy anger, like fire, be not kept within its bounds, it will quickly consume all thy hopes of success in correction. A furious father many times finds his anger as fire to clay, to harden his son, and make him less pliable. Reprehensions and corrections must both be with moderation.

It was the speech of a heathen to one: *Cæderem te nisi irascerer*; I would beat thee if I were not angry. It is not good fighting when men are furious; for such, drunk with passion, stagger in their strokes, and cannot hit right. Oh let prudence, not passion, be thy guide in this. Hasty, sudden showers lay the corn, when mild, gentle ones do much refresh it. Consider the disposition of thy children; some will be won with stroking, then it is needless to strike; God doth not afflict willingly, neither should men, but in case of necessity. Some will be reformed with a frown, then it is to no purpose to fight. What wise man would make his whole body sweat, at that which he may do with a glance of his eye? Dull and stubborn horses want a whip, but meek sheep must be driven gently. How many, when they have overdone, have undone all! No physician, unless mad, will prescribe the same potions to all bodies. Consider also their faults; if small, the lesser; if great, the sorer must the reproof or correction be; for gentle maladies, a gentle medicine will serve; but where the disease is dangerous there must be stronger physic. If the distemper be habituated in the body, the fault be committed frequently, then weak lenitives, ordinary chidings, will be ineffectual. In all the bitter compositions to cure soul-infirmities let love be one ingredient, and appear to be so predominant as to give a relish to the rest. When we

put a little sugar into our vinegar, it makes the sauce more grateful to the appetite. But be sure, where the crime is a sin, not to omit this duty, lest God take his sword to kill, as in the case of Eli, because thou wilt not take the rod to correct.

6. The duty of parents is to set a good pattern before their children. It is the saying of Lumbard, The instruction of words is not so powerful as the exhortation of works. Do thou live exactly as thou desirest thy children should do; take heed lest thou set them an ill copy. It is ordinary for children to follow their fathers, though it be to the unquenchable fire. It is the expression of Polanus, (on Ps. 8:2,) Woe, woe to those parents who make their children, whom God would have witnesses of his purity and perfections, to be witnesses of their impiety and abominations. Nero would say to his wife, Some monstrous birth must be expected from such monsters as we are; if the root be a crab-stock, the fruit will be sour. What is the reason there are so many drunkards, swearers, atheists, and scoffers at godliness? truly their parents were such before them; and as Austin observes, it is the general cry, *Nolumus esse meliores quam patres*; we will be no better than our fathers: therefore be sure that thou who art a father be holy, teach thy children to pray and read, and deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts by thy example. Aristotle tells us that the old nightingale teacheth the young one to sing by singing unto her.

I have read of a child that when his vicious father checked him for some fault, telling him never parent had such a wicked child, answered, Yes, sir, my grandfather had. It is true his words savour more of wit than grace; but pare off what is rotten, and the remainder of the fruit may be profitable. Children will observe their fathers' courses and carriage, and sooner follow their poisonous patterns, than their pious precepts. It is said the most of fishes' eggs

are devoured by their males, and so they perish. Many a parent destroyeth his child by a vicious example. 'This their way is their folly, yet their posterity approveth of their sayings,' Ps. 49:13. Justin Martyr inquires into the reason why the prophet Elisha called for vengeance upon the children that mocked him, 2 Kings 2:23, 24, when they hardly understood what they did, much less did design evil to him; and answers it, that the children learned that language from their parents, therefore God sent that judgment to punish both children and parents. They that are heirs to their fathers' moral evils, God makes to inherit their penal evils.

Scandal in a parent, like leaven, will sour the whole lump of his family. Sometimes children take after their fathers in natural, but often in spiritual diseases. The children gather wood, when the fathers will kindle the fire, and the mothers knead the dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven. 'Their children remember their altars and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills,' Jer. 7:18, and 17:2. Thy child may forget thy precepts, but he will be prone to remember thy profaneness. The king of Morocco, when he read Paul's epistles, did much commend them, but said, every one is bound to worship the same God which his father did. Because children are so apt to follow the example of their fathers, therefore Lycurgus commanded the citizens to dine and sup in a common hall, whither their children did also resort, to learn temperance and gravity, and where they heard not unseemly language, but serious and wise discourse.

Secondly, I shall speak to this duty in relation to the bodies and temporal estates of thy children.

In this respect there is one thing that concerneth the mother of the child, and other things that concern both parents, though chiefly the

father.

That which concerneth the mother is to nurse her child. Sarah was a noble lady, yet she was a nurse, Gen. 21:7. They are monstrous mothers who nourish their children in the womb, but scorn to do it when they are come into the world. Indeed want of milk or weakness may excuse a mother—God doth not require it of any in such a case—but where he gives ability and strength, he expecteth the performance of this duty; for why should God fill the mother's breasts against the child's birth, if not for this, that the child might suck the bottles of milk when it was born? Not niceness, but necessity, can excuse from this duty.

Besides, it is a great wrong oftentimes to the children; for as plants follow the nature of the ground that feedeth them, and cattle of the dams that suckle them—some naturalists tell us a lamb sucking a goat changeth her fleece—so children too often follow the naughty conditions of their nurses. If therefore thy child must be put out, endeavour to get a good one. This reason is given why Alcibiades was so stout, though an Athenian, when that people naturally are fearful, because a woman of Sparta, a valiant, warlike nation, was his nurse. But I would wish all women that are able—nay, God himself commandeth them—to bring up their own children, 1 Tim. 5:10.

It is said of the cuckoo that she doth not build her nest herself, but *τίκτει ἐν ἀλλοτρίαις νεοττίαις*, layeth her eggs in other birds' nests, which hatch it up as their own—hence they are called cuckolds who bring up the adulterous seed of others. And Julius Scaliger reporteth of a certain bird, of the bigness of a hen, in Catigan, an island in the sea, which never sitteth on her eggs, but burieth them two feet deep in the sand, to be hatched by the sun. Mothers who vaunt out of pride, refuse to bring up their babes, are like such brutes, but worse

than others; for most beasts will give the young their breasts. Women see before their eyes how willing brutes are to suckle their young, and yet our dainty dames, forsooth, for fear of disturbing their rest, and because their gaudy garments would be often disordered, are more cruel than the sea-monsters, and deny their breasts to the children of their own bodies, Lam. 4:3.

The duties which concern both, though chiefly the father, are these following.

1. To provide for them. Parents who take no care to feed and clothe their children, are like those heathen whom the apostle describeth to be without natural affection, Rom. 1:32. He that provideth not for his household is worse than an infidel, and hath denied the faith, 1 Tim. 5:8. Such a person is worse than a heathen; he is so far from grace, that he hath put off nature and humanity. Beasts and birds are tender of their young; they will—at least some of them—famish themselves to feed their young: how will they encounter with them that are much stronger, for the preservation of their young! The naturalist telleth us that the eagle—a fit emblem of a Christian father—abideth ἐν τόποις ὑψηλοῖς, in high places, because there her young are safest from dangers, and that though she casteth them out of her nest when they are able to fly, yet till then she doth feed and cherish them. And the same author<sup>2</sup> saith of some fishes that they will by no means leave their young spawn, but carefully accompany them to keep them from hurt. The very bitch will be tender of her whelps. The very crocodile is so careful of her young, that she layeth her eggs whither Nilus cannot come. Men from other creatures may learn these lessons and lectures, for indeed they are plainly written in the law of nature. The bees are industrious abroad, sucking from the sweet flowers of the fields, and then carry what they get home to

their young, nay, they put their food into their mouths as oft as they need it.—Theat. of Polit., Flying Insects.

Educate them according to, but not beyond, thy ability; let them not want necessities, but take heed of delicacies. Too high breeding is sin's brooding, and too too often hatcheth pride, contempt, and disobedience to parents. Thou mayest lift them up to cast thee down, which beware of, if thou lovest either thyself or child. The Scripture will not suffer fathers to provoke their children to wrath, much less to expose them to ruin.

The Thebans made a law, that those parents should be put to death who were so unnatural as to cast out and expose their children to ruin and yet, alas! how many spend that in an alehouse which should keep their families, and, whilst they are wasting prodigally, their children want necessities. Such men sin abroad and at home at the same time, and drink in their cups the very blood of their babes! Oh inhuman cruelty! But, reader, there is one thing of weight which I must not omit. As thy duty is to provide for them food and raiment, so also to bring them up to learning.<sup>2</sup> Some for want of reading their neck-verse have lost their lives; but ah, how many for want of reading have lost their precious souls! The poor heathen, the Brahmins in India, (saith Alex. ab Alex.,) so soon as their children were capable of instruction, placed them forth to good schoolmasters, that by them they might be instructed in learning and good manners. If heathen were so mindful of giving their children learning for their temporal good, surely Christians should not be forgetful of it, when it relates so much to their children's eternal good. He that is but affected as he ought to be, with the gross ignorance of hundreds in the nation, by reason of which profaneness rageth in their lives, and atheism reigneth in their hearts and houses, and their souls are every hour next door to the eternal fire, and all

because, as they tell us, they were never book-learned, they could never read, needs not arguments to move him to let his children learn to read.

It may be, reader, thou wilt tell me thou art poor, and canst not be at the charge. I ask thee, first, Dost thou not spend more money in a week vainly than would pay for thy child's schooling a week? Secondly, Canst thou not read thyself, nor none in thy family? if thou canst, or others in thy house, time may be found morning or evening, or on wet days, when thou canst not work, or on Lord's days, to teach them. Thirdly, Is there never a neighbour or gentleman in the country so merciful whom thou canst prevail with to give six or eight pence a-week to keep three or four of thy children at school? I tell thee, didst thou but know of what concernment reading is to the soul of thy child, thou wouldst rather beg of every person in thy parish, and the next too, rather than to let them go without it.

But, reader, if God hath given thee an estate, let me beseech thee, for the Lord's sake, for their souls' sake, who cannot speak for themselves, to be really helpful to the poor in this particular. Alas! the people perish for want of knowledge. And how can they know God's will that cannot read it? Send abroad among thy neighbours, inquire who are poor and cannot, and who are profane and will not, bring up their children to reading; pity and supply the former, provoke the latter by shaming them or awing them, if thou hast authority. A little laid out this way, a little labour, a little money, may bring thee in great joy at the great day.

Secondly, To bring them up to some calling, that they may be serviceable to their country. Though their general calling must be chiefly regarded, yet their particular calling must not be neglected; nay, the latter will be a help to the former. They who are brought up

to no trade are usually brought up to Satan's black art; idle young men are loose, and so at leisure to be taken into the devil's service. A lawful calling hinders the commission of many a sin, and prevents many a temptation. Standing pools do quickly putrify. If the sea did not purge itself by continual motion, it would corrupt the air. The air, if it were not moved to and fro by the winds, would infect the inhabitants. Idleness breeds all manner of wickedness. He that is very busy at his calling doth not hear when wicked companions would entice him to folly. The idle vagrant indeed is full of vermin, of sin, is carted from constable to constable, and, after many a whipping by the way, is at last lodged in hell, his own place. How many have been carried from the jail to the gallows, and from thence, it is to be feared, to the unquenchable fire, who have acknowledged the main cause to be the want of a calling.

Thy children ought to be serviceable to the state as well as to the church. It was a notable speech of that Roman worthy, Aulus Fulvius, to his son, after he had discovered him to be one in Cataline's conspiracy, *Ego patriæ te genui, non Catálinæ*,—I begat thee for thy country, not for Cataline; I intended thee to defend, not to destroy, the commonwealth in which thou wast born. The Horatii and Curiatii, by their valour and virtue, were bulwarks to the commonwealth. Theodosius finds out Arsenius to be his sons' schoolmaster, that they might, by learning the arts and sciences, be beneficial to the empire. Nothing is created for itself, but so placed by the most wise providence that it may confer somewhat towards the public good. Look to the heavens, to the ocean, on the earth, and the several creatures in them, and see how all are some way or other helpful for the universal benefit.

Adam brought up Cain to be a husbandman, and Abel to be a shepherd. The ancient Jews were very careful that all their children



should be trained up in some calling. It is a witty observation which one hath—Jabal, that dwelt in tents, and tended herds, had Jubal to his brother, the father of music, to shew that a lawful calling and true comfort are companions, and often meet together. The industrious bee gets much honey. Some children neglect their ancient parents, and give this as the ground, they brought them up to nothing. Though the father's sin will not justify this son, yet, without question, it is a very great crime to leave a child without a calling. Idle persons are oft like unworn garments, eaten up with the moths of vices. Pride makes some parents bring up their children to profaneness; they breed them to nothing, and thereby breed them to all things that are evil. The Spanish story is turned into English. A Spanish woman went a-begging from door to door with three children, was met and pitied by a French merchant, and he offered to take the eldest of her boys into his service, but she proudly, though poor, scorned it, saying, that for aught she knew her son might live to be king of Spain.

Some parents train up their children altogether to play. 'They send forth their little ones like a flock,' as Job describes wicked parents, 'and their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ,' Job 21:11, 12. Instead of teaching their children some art or trade, they train them up to artificial dancing, as Herodias was; to trip neatly with their toes to allure others to wickedness. Though all dancing be not sinful, yet to bring up children to little else is unlawful. Music is commendable and melodious, yet for children to be brought up to nothing but dancing, singing, and music, is abominable, and will sound ill in God's ears.

But, reader, take heed what master thou providest for thy son, lest thou helpst him to one that may help him to hell. Let thine eye be more on a godly than on a wealthy master; even such an one as will

mind not only his temporal, but also his eternal welfare. Possibly thou mayest bind thyself to be the devil's apprentice when thou little thinkest it. Qualis herus, talis servus,—Like master, like man. Thy child may be sooner taught to imitate his wicked ways than to sell his wares; and what an ill bargain dost thou make to give money to a master to bring up thy son for Satan! It is commonly said of Newgate, that if a man be not a rogue before he goes in, he shall be sure to be made one before he comes out. It is too true of many families, if a servant be not vicious before he lives in them, he shall be sure to be made so before he leaves them. Their houses are like the English marshes, those that carry health into them shall hardly, if they continue there any time, come away without sickness. If thy child be bad, such a master will make him worse. Young persons are very prone to imitate their masters' evil practices, and much apter to follow them to the tavern than to the temple. When the master is one that blasphemeth God, it is seldom that the servant blesseth God; it is as usual for servants to put on their masters' sins as their old clothes. But suppose thy child be religious and hopeful, shouldst thou therefore thrust him into the midst of temptations? Because thy child is probably of a good constitution, therefore thou wilt put him to dwell in a pest-house. Is this rational? The more hope thou hast that thy trees live, the more care thou hast to keep off cattle that may crop and kill them. Thou oughtest to be very tender of the first sproutings of grace, lest they be nipped in the bud. Alas! how oft hath a great light of profession been blown out (leaving a stench behind it) with the high wind of temptation! Thou art wholly a stranger in the world, if thou dost not know that evil company is a quench-coal to Christianity. It cannot be supposed that thy child, being young, is much rooted, and then how likely may every blast shake him, and by degrees overturn him! When thou hast lived seven years in Ethiopia and not changed thy countenance, nor proclaimed to thy friends by thy colour in what country thou hast been, then bind thy child to one

of Satan's servants, that useth to cheat and cozen, to curse and swear, that hath banished God and Christ, prayer and Scripture, out of his family, and expect that he should be returned to thee at the seven years as spotless and blameless as he went from thee.

I think it not amiss to advertise the reader in the choice of a calling to have some respect to thy child's disposition; none are so excellent at any art or science as they that delight most in it. All creatures thrive best when they are in their own elements, because there they delight most. It is therefore commended for an ingenious policy of the Athenians, that before they placed out their children to any settled course of life, they brought them into a room furnished for that end, with all sorts of tools or instruments for callings, and narrowly observing with what there they were most delighted, bred them up accordingly.

Thy piety must help thee to choose a fit master, and thy prudence to choose a fit calling; but do not by no means omit the duty, lest thou do undo thy child both here and hereafter. Let them labour here, that they may rest hereafter; as thou wouldst prevent their present riot and future ruin, employ them. When bees rob their neighbour hives, a special way to divert them, and cause them to desist, is by setting them at work at home, by running a penknife through the hive, and so, opening their combs, let out their honey, which they will seek presently to stop up again, and let their neighbours' alone.

Thirdly, To dispose of them in marriage. Parents must endeavour that their children may timely and conveniently be married: 'Take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands,' Jer. 29:6. When God's providence affords a fit match, they must not shew averse minds; by denying their consents without cause, some children have been destroyed. Abraham sent his servant to provide a

wife for Isaac, Gen. 24. It is both thy dignity and duty to take a daughter to thy son, and to give thy son to a daughter. Calvin observeth that a great wrong is offered to the right of parents by the popish canons, which allow of marriages without parents' approbation. Thou hast as great a propriety in thy children as in any of thy possessions; do thou therefore improve this privilege, as may be most for thy comfort and their profit.

But thy main care must be to match thy child rather with one that is good than with one that is great. If thy child be gracious, it will be a grief to live with one that is vicious; if thy child be wicked, he will get little good by one that is as bad, or worse. Health cannot be caught from one that is sound, but a disease may quickly from one that is sick. What communion hath light with darkness? A godly husband will have little help from, or comfort in, an ungodly wife. Why should thy son for a little silver be unequally yoked? I wish that Manoah could speak so loud, saith Bishop Hall, that all our Israelites might hear him, 'Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or amongst all God's people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?' Alas! how sad will it be with thy child to marry one that hath an inheritance on earth, but no estate in the covenant, to lie so near to one that is far from God! Possibly thy child is but a little warm himself, is but inclining heavenward, now to put him so close to a quench-coal may quickly make him key-cold. Remember, it is the blessing of the Lord, not such a quantity of land, that must make thy child's life happy. Now, how can that blessing be expected when his commands are void and violated? He that grafts into a crab-stock is never like to want verjuice. If thou wouldst have God to meet thy child in mercy, it must not be in a way of sin, but in a way of duty.

Before thou lookest into the world for a wife for thy son, look up to God for his direction. Do not expect God's company at the wedding except he be invited by prayer, and also have a hand in the match. Let piety, not portion, be the first particular thou inquirest after. If yellow angels make up the match, be confident the evil angels will be at the marriage. Good Jehoshaphat gave his son Jehoram to the daughter of Ahab, but how many Benonis, sons of sorrows, were the issue of such a conjunction, 2 Kings 8:18, 27. Heathen had more sense, I mean several of them, than to suffer money to make their matches. When the rich man in Athens, who had a daughter to bestow, asked counsel of Themistocles how he should dispose her, telling him that there was a very honest man sued to her, but he was very poor, and there was a rich man that desired her, but he was unrighteous. Were it in my choice, saith Themistocles, I would prefer a moneyless man before masterless money. Alas! how often doth their affection wear as their portions waste! And indeed it is impossible that that building should stand long whose foundation is so loose. If riches be the ground of their love, when that oil is consumed the lamp will be extinguished. If outward beauty cause that flame, when a disease or old age hath removed the fuel the fire will go out. But if godliness or spiritual riches be the motive of conjugal love, it will last for ever; for the beauty of grace doth never decay, though the grace of beauty doth; and spiritual riches are durable, and as immortal as any spirits. I do not deny, reader, but it is lawful in the choice of a wife to have some regard to portion and proportion, but it should be after, not before piety. It is wholly sinful to set these in the first place, for then Hagar the servant croweth over Sarah her mistress, which God cannot endure. If, therefore, thou wouldst have thy child's wedding, like that of Cana of Galilee, honoured with Christ's company, let not wealth, nor wit, nor beauty, but grace strike the match.

Fourthly, Thy duty is according to thy ability to portion them. It is true of natural as well as spiritual parents. The parents ought to lay up for the children, and not the children for the parents, 2 Cor. 12:14. God's providence and thy own diligence will be helpful to thee herein. I must tell thee the fee-simple of thy estate is God's, thou hast at most but a lease for life; and therefore, as those that have estates for lives may not commit waste, so thou mayest not commit spoil, lest thy children be prejudiced. Nay, that God, whose the propriety is in all thou hast, doth himself in his word, under his own hand, give thy children portions out of it; therefore for thee to spend it carelessly, or withhold it covetously, is theft and robbery; God commanded the Jews to give the eldest a double portion. 'The father shall give him a double portion of all he hath, for he is the first of his strength,' Deut. 21:17.

There is a story of a father that, being deeply at play at dice, and having lost much money, his son, a little lad, standing by, and observing it, wept. Son, saith the father, why dost thou weep? Sir, said the lad, I have read how great Alexander wept when he heard that his father Philip had gained many countries and kingdoms, fearing that he would leave him nothing to win; and I weep the contrary way, fearing that you will leave me nothing to lose. If we scum off but the froth of the jest, for the son's words imply an itching hand after a shaking elbow, a good use may be made of it. Many a son hath cause to weep, to think how his father hath prodigally wasted his wealth, and left him his heir only to his beggary. The naturalists observe of the bees, that what they get by their industry they do not spend lavishly, but discreetly and orderly dispose it in their waxen cabinets, and as soon as they are full of honey close them fast with a waxen lock, both to prevent robbers, and to necessitate them to further labour as long as the season for gathering continueth. The great philosopher observeth of the eagle, that she is

very provident for her young, and layeth up the meat which they leave, lest they should want another time: Prov. 19:14, 'Houses and riches are the inheritance of fathers,' God bestoweth them on the parents, and they bequeath them to their posterity. But it is the duty of parents as well to help their children whilst they live, as to leave their estates to them when they die. They are but hoggish fathers, that are good for nothing till they come to the knife. Why shouldst thou tempt thy child to dissolute courses for a livelihood, or to wish for thy death because thou, like an earthen money-box, though thou takest in much, wilt part with nothing till broken in pieces.

Surely it is no small comfort to parents to see their children live and thrive, through God's blessing, on their portions. But many parents are like the vulture, which is so cruel towards her own birds, that if she see them thrive and grow fat she envieth at it, and beateth them with her wings and claws to make them lean. It is their pain to have their children prosper. They are sick if their children be well. They are afraid those young plants should grow so fast, and spread so fair by their house side as to darken or eclipse their glory. Heathen will condemn such Christians.<sup>2</sup> Other fathers turn their children to the wide world; whether they sink or swim it is all one to them. These deal with their children somewhat like to wolves, of whom it is written that they never see their sire or their young, for the herd of wolves sets upon, and kill that wolf which by the smell they perceive to have coupled with the she-wolf. Reader, let not covetousness make thee careless of thy children. Be sure the portion thou givest thy children be well gotten, otherwise a curse rather than a blessing will accompany it. Such bags have a hole through which all will run before thou art aware. Many parents by their injustice, instead of raising, do ruin their children.

I have somewhere read of a son, who finding after his father's death his heaps of evil-gotten treasure, cried out, O faithful drudge! and quickly wasted his hoard of wealth. Little do unrighteous men imagine, that what was forty years in gathering, comes often to be spent in forty days' revelling. Surely that proverb came from hell—Happy is that child whose father went to the devil. I cannot omit a story which I heard from an unquestionable author, whilst I was writing this chapter. There was an English knight, whom I judge not fit to name, in this present generation, whom God had blessed with a fair estate, but he was greedy by any means, whether good or bad, to increase it. A servant of his, being a bachelor, fell sick, that was worth four or five hundred pound per annum; this person being given over for dead by his physicians, made his will, and gave all his estate to his master;<sup>5</sup> the knight knowing it, seemed exceeding tender of him, and took great care that nothing, either for food or physic, should be wanting to him. It pleased God, contrary to all expectations, to rebuke the servant's disease, and to give great hopes of his recovery; upon which the knight, fearing that if he lived he might alter his will, as was suspected, gave him poison to ensure his death. But some months after his death, God, who heareth the cry of blood, and by extraordinary ways revealeth it, caused the knight to be questioned for it; upon his trial at the assize, he refused, notwithstanding the arguments and importunity of judge and ministers, to plead, but asked diligently whether he did not by this course save his land, and being told yea, then, saith he, I will be pressed to death, and take notice that my son may ride booted and spurred, in three thousand pound a-year of his own land. With this weak cordial he died, and his son now alive is thought not worth a farthing. Such patterns of God's justice may awaken all parents to a serious consideration what portions they leave their children: they wrong their children. One coarse dish that is wholesome, is better than many dainty ones that have poison with them, but the greatest wrong is to themselves. Alas!



how dear a purchase, how hard a bargain, doth he make who buyeth an estate for his son with the loss of his own soul. The greatest fool in the world cannot sell cheaper, or buy dearer.

Thus, reader, I have despatched what I promised concerning the duties of parents. Oh that thou, if called to that relation, wouldst practise them! Little dost thou think what a comfort it would be to thee, if God should so bless thine endeavours that thy children should sit like olive plants, famous for fatness, round about thy table, whilst thy wife is a fruitful vine by the sides of thy house. If thy little ones should give thee good hopes of their present holiness, and their future happiness, certainly, if thou knowest the worth of grace, such a mercy would delight thee more than if thou hadst all the world to give them. It was but a little wind which filled the wealthy Florentine's heart with joy, who, when dying, bespoke his children thus: It much rejoiceth me, now I am going to die, quod vos divities relinquam, that I shall leave you all rich. But it will be a rich cordial indeed to thee, to be able when dying to tell thy children, I begat you vicious, but this revives me, I leave you all religious.

Plutarch speaks of a Spartan woman, that when her neighbours brought out their fine clothes and diamonds, boasting of their riches, she brought forth her children virtuous and well taught, saying, These are my jewels and my ornaments. Reader, will it not be a wonderful comfort to thee at the last day, when others stand forth with their children, and all they can say is, We brought them up to trades, or we bred them gentlemen, or we left them great estates; if then thou canst say, Lord, here am I, and the children which thou hast given me. It is true, Lord, I conceived them in sin, and brought them forth in iniquity, but through thy grace I have travailed again with them, and Jesus Christ is formed within them. I brought them

to thee many a time in the arms of faith and prayer, and thou didst bless them, and, lo, here they are to bless thee for ever.

**A good wish about the duty of a parent, wherein the former heads are epitomised**

The education of my children being a business of great consequence, in reference to the honour of the blessed God, and also to their own eternal welfare, which do not a little depend upon their religious nurture, and being a work of large influence, both in relation to the people amongst whom they shall live, and to the posterity yet unborn, which may be poisoned with sin, or provoked to sanctity by their power and patterns, I wish, in general, that I may never be so great a thief as to rob and wrong so many at once; but, considering how richly these small vessels are laden, may not dare to send them to sea amidst those winds, and waves, and sands, and rocks, without their card and compass, but may be the more diligent in the discharge of my duty to steer them aright, by forewarning them of, and forearming them against, those storms and dangers and wrecks to which they are liable, that at last, by the gales of the Spirit, they may arrive with all their precious freight at a happy and glorious port. Lord, let thy blessing so accompany my endeavours in their breedings, that all my sons may be Benaiahs, the Lord's building, and then they will all be Abners, their father's light; and that all my daughters may be Bethias, the Lord's daughters, and then they will all be Abigails, their father's joy.

In particular, I wish that I may not, like Jacob, lay the right hand of my care and industry about the younger son, their bodies, and my left hand upon the elder, their souls, but that my greatest pains may be for their better part; and though I would not injure the cabinet of the outward, yet that my principal study may be for the jewel of their

inward man. How unnatural are those parents that fatten their swine and famish their sons, that toil and moil to dress dead corpses gaudily with flowers, and suffer their living children to die for want of food! More unnatural am I in carking and caring only to enrich their dying flesh when I neglect their immortal spirits. Their bodies are more worth than meat, and their temporal lives than raiments; but ah, how much are their inestimable souls, and their eternal lives worth! Though I cannot be the author to generate grace, yet I may be the instrument to promote it. Religious education is the best portion I can give them living, and the best legacy I can leave them dying. Lord, whilst others are plotting to make their children rich, let my principal design be to make mine religious, that in life they may walk according to thy law, and when death shall turn their vile bodies into rotten carcases, their precious souls may be admitted into thy royal court.

I desire that their original corruption, and their proneness thereby to all actual sins, and liableness to eternal sufferings, may make so deep an impression upon my spirit, that I may be quickened the more vigorously to endeavour their conversion. My infants are not innocents; circumcised Jews begat uncircumcised children. They are estranged from the womb, and as full of wickedness as the ocean is of waters. As Paul's viper was venomous, when being stiff with cold, it could not sting; when my children cannot act sin, even then their natures are infected with sin. How soon may the world catch these young silly birds with its dry chaff! How easily may Satan, like the kite, take and devour these little chickens! Every beast may easily crop and kill these new quicksets. Oh let the sense of their danger make me more serious for their defence, and let my heart be so affected with their blindness, that I may faithfully and skilfully apply the eye-salve of the sanctuary to them, for the recovery of their spiritual sight. If I saw my neighbour's beast falling under his

burden, it were my duty to afford it help. My poor children are falling under sin's weight into endless woe, and shall I stand still whilst they drop into hell? Lord, let their matchless misery be ever pressing on me, to be importunate with thee for sanctifying and saving mercy, and let me arise and be doing whatsoever is commanded by thy word, in order to their everlasting weal.

I wish that that, the stream of my love to my little ones, may run in the right channel, I mean chiefly, though not solely, towards their inward men. Nature will teach me to love them much, but grace will teach me to love them well, and to give the precedency to that part within them which is of greatest excellency. How poorly do I love that child, whose scratched finger I am busy to heal, but in the meantime neglect a wound near his vitals, suffering it to fester and kill him. Surely smaller affection do I shew to those near relations, if whilst I am feeding and physicking their bodies, lest sickness should kill them, I am careless of their souls, permitting, through my falseness, sin to damn them. Lord, let my love to the fruits of my body be like thy love to the travail of thy dear Son's soul. Thou feedest their flesh, but oh, what costly feasts dost thou provide for their spirits! Thou art mindful of their external good, but oh, how solicitous art thou, causing all thy providences and ordinances to work for their spiritual and eternal gain! Thy love to their bodies is like the sun's ordinary beams, refreshing; but thy love to their souls is like its beams united in a glass, burning love. Let me, as a merciful man, be merciful to the beast in them, that their bodies may never famish through my fault; but oh make me more tender of the angel within them, than of the apple of mine own eye, that their souls may never perish through my perverseness. I have read that bears which bring forth deformed whelps have so much love, as to take pains in licking them to a handsomer shape. I bring forth my children defiled with sin, like to Satan, and loathsome to God, and doth it not concern

me to bring them up in the admonition of the Lord, and to bring them to him, that he may make them comely through that comeliness which his Spirit can put upon them? If I had hurt a stranger, I should esteem it my duty to be at the cost of his cure; have not I transmitted to my posterity the seeds both of sin and hell, and shall I be careless of their help! Lord, since from me they derive that sin, that sickness which is unto eternal death, make me both faithful and successful in the use of those medicines which thou prescribest for their eternal life.

The time of my children's youth being the most probable to persuade them into piety, I wish that I may by no means let slip this opportunity, but that I may be both prudent and provident to improve it to the utmost, lest by losing this season I lose their souls. Sin, when it first sprouts forth from the root of bitterness, must be nipped in the bud, or blown off in the blossom; if it once ripen into custom it is much more hard to be conquered. Oh let me therefore be sedulous to dash those brats of Babylon against the wall, to kill those poisonous vipers in the egg, and to stop those small streams of unclean water before they swell into a river, and force me to work at the labour in vain. Clay may easily be wrought upon when it comes newly out of the pit, but if once hardened into brick, it will sooner break than bow. Why should not I take the advantage, when my children are, as metal in the furnace, soft and pliable, of casting them in a holy mould, when experience teacheth me that they soon harden, and then are sooner ruined than reformed? Clothes dyed from their native whiteness will take no colour but a sadder; children altered from their natural comparative simplicity quickly grow to be subtle in sin. Lord, help me so industriously to make use of that price which thou hast put into my hands for their profit, that I may never have cause to repent of my laziness when it is too late to remedy it.

I desire that I may frequently consider that many besides myself have a share in that stock which is committed to my care and charge, that pondering how the glory of the infinite God, the prosperity of church and state, my own peace, and the good of posterity, are all in a great degree embarked in these small bottoms, I may be the more careful to get their hearts ballasted with grace, and instruct them so to have their hands on the stern, and their eyes to the true star, that they may sail steady in the greatest storm, avoid those rocks and sands by which others are ruined, and after all their hazards and hardships, come to enjoy an everlasting calm. The fall of one house hath sometimes murdered many men; the irreligious nurture of one son hath sometimes slain a hundred souls. Ah, who can be indicted at the great assize for such and so many soul-murders without infinite horror? One vessel well set out and managed, and safe coming home, hath enriched many. Lord, make me so true to my great and weighty trust, in which so many have an interest, that my God, my conscience, my country, my children, may all bless me, yea, that the children yet unborn may arise and call me blessed. Enable me so piously and prosperously to sow this new ground with the good seed of thy word, that hereafter from it thou mayest reap a harvest of praise, I of comfort, others of profit, and they themselves of eternal peace.

I wish that I may thankfully accept of that superlative mercy, the covenant of grace, wherein God hath engaged to be a God to me and my posterity, and may testify my high esteem of that honourable privilege, and great respect of that inestimable promise, by offering my children seasonably and solemnly to be partakers of the sign and seal thereof. It is both my dignity and duty to list my children under so great a captain as Jesus Christ, and to engage them in so good a quarrel as the combat with the world, the flesh, and the wicked one. Oh let me never, as some peevish, ungrateful ones, pretend

conscience for the omission of such a gracious ordinance, but so sacredly devote them to thy service that they may, through thy strength, for ever be thy loyal and faithful soldiers. My children have the essence of a man, though they cannot do the actions of a man; my children are capable of the habits, though unable to perform the acts, of grace. Lord, thou canst sanctify them from the womb, and cause them to live spiritually as soon as they live naturally. Oh thou that of common clay didst make a precious salve to bestow outward sight, be pleased to make common water instrumental for their welfare. Lord, when I first bind them apprentices to thy Majesty, be thou surety for thy little servants; let thy Spirit so work within them, and thine eye of favour so watch over them, that they may serve thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of their lives; and when their indentures shall expire, at death be translated into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

I desire that the thoughts of my children's ignorance of God's word, and utter inability thereby of obeying it, may make me the more diligent to acquaint them with his will. Alas! how should they cleanse their (naturally filthy) ways, but by taking heed thereto according to God's word? And how can their lives be answerable to the divine law, if they do not know it? Did ever any desire Christ, that did not know him to be the pearl of price? Did ever any forsake sin, who did not know it to be rank poison? How many millions in the night of ignorance have stumbled into hell! Is not inner darkness the beaten path to utter darkness? Oh that these weighty thoughts might so sink into my spirit, that whilst others are busy in instructing their children how to pursue their pastimes and pleasures, or how to carry themselves in great company, or how they may live a few days comfortably, I may instruct my children how they may please the blessed God, by remembering their Creator in the days of their youth; how they may be interested in the dearest Saviour, and work

out their own salvation. David, though a king, would teach Solomon how he should be God's loyal subject; though much business lay on his back, he would yet find time to acquaint him with Christ's light burden. He composed the whole 72d Psalm for the instruction of his son. Bathsheba, a queen, would also as a pious mother read her son, Prov. 30, a gracious lecture. The Jewish children, some write, could as easily answer to any part of God's law as to their own names. The very heathen Persians, as soon as their children could speak, would have them taught virtue. Idolaters teach their children to kiss their images, and to bow down to idols; and shall not I teach my children how to worship the God of their fathers with perfect hearts and willing minds? Lord, help me so to season these new vessels with frequent and plain and seasonable instructions, (strong wine may break weak glasses,) that the scent and savour thereof may remain with them all their days.

I wish that the mighty, noble acts of the glorious God, in which his curious wisdom, matchless goodness, and infinite power as the sun at noon-day do shine forth gloriously, may bear such weight in my judgment, that I may talk of them often to my children, and thereby make the memorial of them immortal. When others transmit their own filthy wickedness, let me transmit thy famous works to my posterity, that they may sing when I am in the place of silence. We have heard with our ears, our father hath told us of old, what wonders thou didst in his days. I would that national mercies may be recorded in their memories, that as they share in the fruit of them, so they may return thanks for them. In special, I wish that God's signal favours to my soul may be engraven on the tables of their hearts. The kindnesses which my God bestoweth on me are my riches; how much should I wrong my children if I should not make them heirs of such precious treasures! Every favour makes me a debtor to my God, the fountain of them; how much should I wrong my God if, when I am



sure to die in debt, I should not command and charge my heirs to do their utmost, by praise and thankfulness, to satisfy those millions of eternal obligations by which I am bound to the Lord! Lord, let those vast sums which I owe to thy Majesty be ever so fresh in my mind and memory, that I may not hide them from my children, but may 'shew to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done,' Ps. 78:4.

I desire that my children's sinful and miserable conditions by nature may night and day call to me to be fervent and frequent in prayer to God for their conversion. If their bodies were dying, how should I weep and wail! Now their souls are perishing, shall I have no pity? If any of them be deprived of a temporal life, how do I sigh and sob; and when by sin they have deprived themselves of eternal life, shall there be no crying, no complaining? As the Shunammite, when her son was dead, went to the prophet of the Lord for his recovery, so, since my children are all dead in sin, let me go to the Lord of the prophets, and never leave him till he speak to them in their blood, 'Live.' Alas! though their generation is partly from below, yet their regeneration must be wholly from above: they must be converted or condemned; and they can as soon stop the sun in its course as convert themselves from their evil courses; the rocks will as easily yield crops of corn as they the fruits of righteousness. All my pains will be to no purpose unless God vouchsafe his assistance. Lord, let their sin and misery cry to my heart, that I may continually cry in thine ears, and give thee no rest till thou give them rest in thy Son. When I beg the blessing, let it please thee to bestow the blessing, and then I know they shall be blessed. O Father of spirits, who knowest that my poor children are polluted in the womb, and estranged from the womb, manifest thy grace and goodness, and wash them in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. As they bear the image of the first Adam, cause them to bear the image of the second Adam.

Let thy grace be their beauty, and the eternal weight of glory their portion. Do thou pity their dying souls. Alas! they cannot pity themselves: how can I see the death, the eternal death of their souls? Oh do thou cause them to hear thy voice and live. Remember thy covenant unto thy saints, that thou wilt be a God to them and to their seed. Do not forget thy promise, upon which thou hast caused me to trust. Oh thou dearest Redeemer, who hast said, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven,' I bring them now to thee; do not reject them. I present them to thee in the trembling arms of my weak faith; oh do thou lay thy hands on them and bless them. Blessed Jesus, who knowest fully the pollution of their natures, the difficulty of their conversions, and that boundless wrath to which they are liable, let thy bowels yearn towards them, and thy Spirit so accompany their education, that they may become thy seed, and in them thou mayest see the travail of thy soul, and be satisfied. [And, Lord, if any of thy people shall gain any benefit by this weak piece, let this be the return they make for his pains, even to pour out their prayers to thy Majesty for the author and his children, that they may all see the felicity of thy chosen, rejoice with the gladness of thy nation, and glory with thine inheritance.]

I wish that my love to my children's souls may hinder my allowing them in any sin, knowing that such favour would make us all suffer for ever. Bitter physic is most likely to purge predominant ill humours. The whole country would say I was cruel, if, when their bodies were wounded, I should, for fear of putting them to pain, refuse to lance their wounds, and let them fester and kill them. What will my God say—and my children too in the other world—if I suffer their souls to die for want of searching their spiritual sores. Oh let me not, as the queen bee, which hath a sting, yet never useth it; but shew my love to those patients, by hating their loathsome diseases, and

applying medicines proper, be they never so painful, for their cure. Jacob is said to bless his sons, even every one, when all he said to two of them was by way of cursing their sins, Gen. 49:5–7. The eagle loveth her young, yet sometimes pierceth and pricketh them. My God hath told me, 'Withhold not correction from thy child; for if thou beatest him with the rod he shall not die,' Prov. 23:13. That the rod on earth may keep him from the rack in hell, correction here may prevent his execution hereafter. Oh that I might be so prudent as first to try to draw them to virtue and godliness with the cords of love; but if that will not do, rather to prick them forward than to suffer them to flag behind, and to come short of heaven and happiness. When vipers are lashed they cast up their poison; Lord, be thou pleased so to strike in with every stroke, that the rod of correction may be a rod of instruction, and their weeping here may prevent their going to that place where is nothing but weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

I wish that my life may be without fault, that I may walk in the path of God's precepts for the sake of them that follow me. Should I run out of God's way, how likely are my children to tread in the same steps of wickedness! Nature would tempt them to imitate my wanderings, but grace alone can teach them to follow me in God's way; besides, how ill doth that cowardly commander encourage his soldiers to fight the Lord's battles, who shrinks back himself! In vain doth he command others to fall on, whilst he flieth off. Oh that I may be so pious in all my words and works, so gracious in all my dealings and duties, that religion may be written in so fair a character in my whole conversation, that strangers may be taken with it, and that my children may with comfort and credit write after my copy. Lord, whilst others, turning out of the highway of holiness, as an ignis fatuus, draw their children into those bogs and quagmires in which they sink and perish, let me, as the pillar of fire, go before mine to

the land of promise, and shine as a true light to direct them in the way to everlasting life.

I wish that my care may chiefly run towards their inward man, yet that it may not rest there, but that I may in my place and to my power, be mindful of their outward man, esteeming and befriending the servant for the great heir's sake. Their bodies depend wholly upon their souls for their well-being to eternity; but their souls depend much upon their bodies for their well-doing in time. Bad tools are a great hindrance to good work. I wish, therefore, that according to my ability I may allow my children all that breeding and learning which may in any degree be subservient to their souls, or make them in any measure more serviceable to church or state in which they live.

I wish that I may never be cruel to my own flesh, in denying them through my idleness or prodigality their necessary food. Brutes take much pains to make provision for their young. What a scraping doth the hen keep for her chickens! Some beasts will even famish themselves to feed their young; and shall I be worse than a beast? Oh let me never be in the number of them that are without natural affection; and since I profess myself to be a Christian, I may not be excelled by heathen, and deny the faith in neglecting to provide for my family.

I desire that I may not bring up my children in any degree to bring down my country; that none of mine may be plagues to the people amongst which God's providence shall call them, by living like drones upon others' hard labour, or feeding like ravenous beasts upon what they can get from others by fraud or force. Why should I leave them naked in the midst of those shot which the devil and the world will make against them? Oh give me to make conscience of thy

command in breeding them to some lawful likely calling, wherein they may be serviceable to thy Majesty, their own families, and their country; yet in the choice of a master let me choose for my Maker—I mean such a one as will teach them not only how to do his work, but also how to work the work of him that sent them into the world. And oh, let thy blessing so accompany their diligence in their callings, that they may have what thy wisdom seeth fit to bear their charges till they come to their journey's end.

I wish that, when God's providence shall offer me a fit match, I may not through covetousness or peevishness be averse to their marriage. Let me not upon any pretence, through my negligence, tempt them to disobedience. Why should I refuse a mercy which my God calls me to receive, and hinder their good, which, by the bonds of nature and grace, I am engaged to further? yet let me never judge of the fitness of a person by the beauty of the outward, but of the inner man; not by her estate in the world, but by her estate in the covenant. Why should I sell the inestimable soul of my child for a little corruptible silver, or at least the comfort of his life, for that which signifieth no more in the other world than a few brass counters? Lord, let none of mine be unequally yoked, (what communion hath light with darkness, or Christ with Belial?) but let my care be that my sons match with them that are married first to thy Son, and let me give my daughter to such Christians as are given to Christ, and shall hereafter be with him where he is, to behold his glory.

I desire that I may willingly whilst I live, if my God bless me with an estate, part with so much as prudence and piety may judge convenient for my children's portions. Why should I, like a dunghill, be good for nothing till carried forth? What I have is all my God's: I am not his treasurer to lay it up, but his steward to lay it out for his honour. Lord, keep riches out of my heart, how much soever they are

in my hand, that I may cheerfully dispose of them according to thy call and command, especially to them whom nature as well as Scripture enjoins me to favour. And let thy grace so accompany what thou enablest me to give, that, as some glorious diamond to a gold ring, it may make their estate, though it be but little, of great value. Give me and mine neither poverty nor riches; feed us with food convenient for us, lest we be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest we be poor and steal, and take the name of our God in vain.

Finally, I wish that in this relation of a father I may in all these precepts carry myself as thy child, and as may be most for thy own credit. Lord, my sons are thy sons, and my daughters are thy daughters. Thine is the propriety in them; thou hast put them out to me only to nurse and bring them up for thee. Oh let thy power so prosper my labours that now in their minority they may be prepared for that noble work which thou designest them for in the other world; and when they shall come to age, that thou shalt send thy servants to fetch them home, they may be conveyed by holy angels to the Father's house, where I and the children which thou hast given me shall love, and live, and reign, and rejoice with thee for ever and ever. Amen.

## **CHAPTER II**

**How Christians may make religion their business, and exercise themselves to**

## **godliness in the relation of children**

Having despatched the duties of parents in relation to their children, I proceed to the duties of children in relation to their parents.

Thy duty is, reader, as well to make religion thy business in the relation of a son as of a father; to shine brightly with holiness in an inferior as well as superior orb.

It is the glory and credit of children to drink in the dews of godliness in the morning of their lives. Oh, it is a lovely sight to behold those trees blossoming with the fruits of the Spirit in the spring of their age; to behold one that is fourteen for the greenness of his age, to be forty in the graciousness of his carriage. 'Better is a poor and a wise child, than an old and foolish king,' Eccles. 4:13. Observe, friend, what a garland of honour the Holy Ghost puts on the head of a holy child. He is put in the scales upon the greatest disadvantage with the noblest person (that is ungodly) in the world, and preferred before him. In the one scale is a child, in the other scale an old man; in the one scale a poor child, in the other scale an old king. Childhood itself is contemptible, and obvious to scorn and derision. Youth, which is a degree above childhood, is liable to contempt. 'Let no man despise thy youth,' 1 Tim. 4:12, intimating that much dirty filth is usually thrown on young faces, Isa. 3:4; Eph. 4:14. Reproach is so incident to youth, that the same word in the Hebrew signifies both, Job 29:4, and 27:6. But poverty, added to infancy and childhood, makes it more obnoxious to reproach and contumely. The poor is hated of not only strangers, but all his neighbours. Poor men are objects of much disrespect and prejudice: where the hedge is low every one will trample over it, hence, to want and be abased are in Scripture conjoined, Phil. 4:11. But poor children are much more slighted than poor men. A man hath some presence, and that forceth some respect;

but a child hath none. On the other side, age is honourable in itself: 'Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of old men.' The silver crown of hoary hairs calls for honour, as well as the golden crown on the sovereign's head, Lev. 19:32. The hoary head strikes an awe into young hearts; but age, joined with a crown, a kingdom, is more venerable. Yet this poor child that is wise—i.e., that feareth God, and keepeth his commandments—doth infinitely outweigh, and is exceedingly more worth than, an old king that is wicked. Thou that art young and poor, if pious, remember this for thy comfort, that God himself hath said, Thou art a better person than the greatest worldly prince, and art worth more than he that is owner of two crowns.

Shall I, or rather God, advise thee, therefore, to 'remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth,' Eccles. 12:1. Remembering implieth all the mercy God bestows on thee, Jer. 31:20, and all the duty which thou owest to God. Do not, as some write of the Syracusians, that they abstain from church till they are sixty years old, and then, being weak and unable for wickedness, they mind godliness; but remember the Ancient of days in the time of thy youth. How gloriously do their names shine in the chronicle of Scripture who listed themselves early under Christ's banner. 'I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth,' saith Obadiah, 1 Kings 18:12. Timothy from a child knew the Holy Scriptures, 2 Tim. 3:15. Josiah, in the eighth year of his age, began to seek the God of his fathers, 2 Chron. 34:3. In the time of the law God commanded his people to offer up to him the young and lusty in sacrifice, typifying that he expecteth the youth and strength of thy days to his service. Sure I am, as the titmouse in the spring destroyeth the bees sitting on the willow-trees in the sun, so doth Satan devour many souls in their youth, whilst they are securely refreshing themselves with carnal comforts.



I shall offer thee three or four thoughts to quicken thee to the subsequent duties, that thy obedience to thy father on earth may proceed from conscience to thy Father in heaven, and that thou mayest exercise thyself to godliness in this relation.

First, Consider the profit of early piety. Some fruits, ripe early in the year, are worth treble the price of fruits latterly ripe. Godliness at any time brings in much gain, but he that first sets up this holy trade, and followeth it faithfully, is sure to be the richest at last. The earlier men set out in the morning, the further they will go, supposing that they do not loiter, in the day of their lives. No calling so certain as this holy, heavenly calling. If he that begins late gets thousands, he that begins early gets millions; and according to the degrees of grace, such shall the degrees of glory be. 'He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he that soweth liberally, shall reap liberally.' One main end of grace is to prepare and capacitate the soul for glory. Now, as the bigger the bore is, and the wider the vessel is, the more water or wine it will hold; so the more holiness any one hath, he is capable of, and fitted for, the more happiness. I know that all in heaven shall be full and have enough, but who would have a pint pot full of diamonds, when he might have a quart or a pottle? Who would have the fulness of a spoon, when he might have a large vessel?

Methinks, reader, happiness should be so desirable that thou shouldst endeavour for the greatest degree. Who would have a thin crop and lean harvest by later sowing his seed? If thou art ambitious for a high degree of the exceeding and eternal weight of glory; if thou art covetous for a large portion of the treasure in heaven; if thou wouldst drink deeply of those rivers of pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore, then dedicate the morning of thy time to the Father of eternity.

Besides, thou wilt find much comfort, by a great degree of grace, in this world, which is no mean profit. Strong bodies have much comfort in their lives, which weak bodies lose, being often troubled with aches and pains. Strong Christians walk steadily and cheerfully with God, when weak ones walk as men dancing on a rope, in fear every step, being full of doubts, and much in the dark about their eternal conditions. As in a moonshiny morning, when the sun doth but peep into our parts of the world, we know not whether it be night or day; but when the sun ariseth higher, we see plainly that it is day. Those that have but a little light of holiness are full of doubts and fears; sometimes they hope it is the sunlight of grace and true godliness, and then again they fear it is but the moonlight of nature or morality; but when this light increaseth in any heart, and shineth brighter and brighter, then they see clearly it is day—it is a beam from the Sun of righteousness—and hence they walk so comfortably and cheerfully. Hereby also much sin and sorrow may be prevented. Some who have broken their bones in their youth have felt the pain of them all along, against change of weather, to their dying hour. How sadly have many saints felt and bewailed their youth sins! 'Remember not against me the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions, O Lord,' saith David, Ps. 25:7. 'I was ashamed and confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth,' saith Ephraim, Jer. 31:19. Old wounds may cause fresh woe many years after. Oh, it will be a sad greeting when young sins and old bones meet together! 'Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to inherit the sins of my youth,' saith Job, chap. 13:26. The sweet wicked ways of my youth did breed such worms in my soul, saith holy Mr Baynes in his Letters, that my heavenly father continueth my bitter worm-seed. God calls men to a reckoning often for their old debts, and suffereth his judgments to arrest them when they think they are forgotten and forgiven. Tricks of youth prove troubles in old age. Good Augustine doth much lament his coming in to Christ late;

Sero te cognovi lumen verum, sero te cognovi—Alas! Lord, it was late before I knew thee to be the true light. When sin and the soul have lived together many years as husband and wife, if ever they part, it will be as Phaltiel and Michal, with many tears.

There is a necessity of thy repentance or ruin. Now, as the longer a wound hath festered, the more torment the patient must be put to in searching it, and cutting out the corrupt flesh, if ever he be cured; so the longer thou goest on in sin, the greater will thy sorrow be, if ever thou art saved.

Further, God will take it very kindly; he loveth the first fruits, and they were ever pleasing to him. He remembereth the kindness of thy youth, Jer. 2:2; not only his kindness to thee, but also thy kindness to him at that time. Young creatures are most pleasing to men's palates, old ones are tough and distasteful; young Christians are exceeding acceptable to the blessed God. He takes the kindness of your youth very kindly. And as he remembereth youthful lusts to revenge them, so he remembereth youthful love and youthful loyalty to requite it. With what confidence may he who remembereth God in his youth cast himself upon, and expect that God should remember him in his old age. 'Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth; for thou art my hope, O Lord God, thou art my trust from my youth,' Ps. 71:5, 9.

Besides, hereby thou wilt be a comfort to thy parents. How will it rejoice their hearts to see grace bud, when nature doth but blossom in thee! Epaminondas was wont to say, *Se longe maximum suarum laudum fructum capere, quod earum spectatores haberet parentes*—that he was glad of nothing more than that his parents were alive to rejoice in his noble actions. Cornelius was the staff of his father's age, a great credit and comfort, and therefore obtained the honourable

name of Scipio among the Romans. 'A wise son maketh a glad father,' as Samuel did Elkanah; 'but a foolish son,' as Esau to Rebecca, 'is an heaviness to his mother,' Prov. 10:1. Oh, who would not rather be as Obed to Naomi, a restorer of her life, and a nourisher of her old age, Ruth 4:19. Nay, thy pious conversation may work, supposing thy parents are wicked, for their conversion; and oh, what a comfort wouldst thou then be to thy parents in begetting them to a glorious, eternal life, who had begotten and conceived thee to a miserable, eternal death! Then thou wouldst put the great question of the master of moral philosophy out of question, whether a child may not confer more benefits on his father than he hath received from him?

It is good, saith the Spirit of God, that a man should bear the yoke from his youth, Lam. 3:27—not only the yoke of affliction and misery betimes; so yoke is sometimes taken, Jer. 31:18, but also the yoke of subjection and piety, Mat. 11:30. Aristotle observeth that those pigeons are best which are hatched in the spring; those which are hatched in autumn are not so good. By early piety God is most delighted, (oh, how his heart is taken with a young disciple! his ears are ravished with the hosannahs of children;) Satan most grieved, sin and sorrow prevented, parents rejoiced, and thy own soul most advantaged. Oh, it is good that thou shouldst bear the yoke from thy youth.

2dly, Consider, delays are dangerous. The naturalist observeth that the locusts use to come in the beginning of the shooting of the latter growth, and devour herbam serotinam, the latter grown grass. Late repentance, like untimely fruits, doth seldom come to anything. To put off God till old age, is to go about to wind up the strings when they are breaking in pieces.

Three things will speak thy deferring to mind godliness to be very dangerous.

First, Life is uncertain. As young as thou art, thou mayest be old enough for a grave. How often doth death, like lightning, blast the green corn? Thou thinkest possibly of doing much when thou art old, but what if thou diest when thou art young? Doth not experience tell thee that few live to be old; nay, that though all die to be buried, yet few live to be married. Look into church-books and see if most that are written in the calendar of the dead were not such as had their breasts full of milk, and their bones full of marrow. Look into the churchyard, and see if there be not several graves of thy size and length. Look into thy own body, and see whether the foundation upon which thy building standeth be not rotten and liable every day to be blown down with a small wind of sickness. 'Childhood and youth are vanity,' not only in regard of their fickleness and inconstancy, but also in regard of their brittleness and frailty, Eccles. 11:10. Childhood is but a blossom which is easily blown off; youth is but a bud which is soon nipped. What wise man would cast a work of such infinite weight and absolute necessity as thy conversion is, upon an uncertainty?

2. God will not always be found. I have read of one that, deferring repentance to his old age, and then going about it, he heard a voice, *Des illi furfurem cui dedisti farinam*, Give him the bran to whom thou hast given the flour. When men give the devil the cream of their lives, God often suffereth them to give him the whey. 'O seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him whilst he is near,' Isa. 55:5. If thou refusest him now, he may refuse thee hereafter. Canst thou think that he will be put off with the bottom and dregs of thy time, when the devil hath had the spirits and quintessence? Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation; to-day if thou wilt

hear his voice. If thou sayest it is too soon to-day, God may say it is too late to-morrow.

Reader, because the thief on the cross hath stole away many a precious soul, who have been encouraged from his pattern to procrastinate their conversion—lest thou shouldst defer upon that example, consider, first, There is but one such example in the whole Bible; and is not he mad, that because Paul's ship run against a rock, and all the passengers were saved, should thence be encouraged to split his vessel upon a rock? Secondly, It is a pattern without a promise, and to expect anything from God without a promise is presumption. Thirdly, Christ wrought that miracle to manifest his deity, even then when his human nature was lowest; now there will never be the like reason for such an action whilst the world continueth. Fourthly, We do not read that that thief ever heard of Christ before. When God calls men late to work in his vineyard, he will certainly accept of late service; but when he calls men early, they must then labour, or hereafter it may be too late.

3. Every day rendereth thee more indisposed. Thy youth is exceeding liable and prone to evil, and so exceeding averse and contrary to good, how averse wilt thou be then to God and godliness in thy old age? The longer sin and Satan possess the fort of thy heart, the more they will fortify and strengthen it against God and holiness. The longer thou wanderest out of God's way, the more unwilling thou wilt be to come back; sin possibly now is as loathsome as physic, but when thou art used to it, thou mayest think it as pleasant as food, and then thou wilt not easily be dissuaded from it. Thy conscience, now tender, will quickly be scared; thy heart, now somewhat tractable, will quickly be hardened; temptations, now distasteful, will quickly be embraced; the faculties of thy soul will be distracted with earthly cares and cumbrances, the passions of the mind will be

impetuous and impatient of any check or curb, thy understanding will be more darkened with hellish mists of ignorance, thy will more stubborn and refractory, and then how hard will it be to make thee holy! Can the leopard change his spot, or the blackamore his skin? no more can he that is accustomed to do evil, learn to do well. When thou hast once spent the prime of thy days in Satan's drudgery, thy flesh will like thy master so well, that it will be hard to persuade thee to accept of liberty, Jer. 13:23.

Now what wise man that hath a great journey to go, of as much concernment to him as his life, and but one day allowed him for it, would set out wrong in the morning, a clean contrary way, supposing he may go it an hour before night, when the whole day is little enough for it?

Thirdly, Consider, God deserveth thy youth. When Alexander was dying, being asked who should enjoy his crown after his death, he answered, *Detur digniori*, Let it be given to him that is most worthy. Reader, wilt thou bestow thy youth, which is the crown of thine age, to him that is most worthy? Then it must be to God; his propriety in all thy time sheweth that he is most worthy of the first of thy time. All thy time is God's, not only manhood and old age, if thou dost arrive at them, but also thy youth; all the servant's time is his master's; all the child's time is his father's; all the creature's time is his Maker's; therefore, to abridge him of it, and deny it to him, is theft and robbery.

He is a great God, and therefore not to be put off with things of the least value. If Jacob send a present to the lord of Egypt, he will send the best of the land. Great princes must have the best presents. Surely, then, the blessed and glorious potentate should have that part of thy life which is of greatest price; I mean thy youth.

He is thy best friend, and therefore deserves the flower of thy age, the best of thy time. The life of man is cast into four distinct states, childhood, youth, manhood, and old age, which are frequently referred to the four seasons of the year; but youth is the spring, the glory, and beauty of it. Now the best of our lives must be given to the fountain of our lives; God thought of thee before thou hadst a being; he poured thee out like milk, and curdled thee like cheese; he clothed thee with skin and flesh, and fenced thee with bones and sinews; he granted thee life and favour, Job 10:10–12, and was tender of thee in the womb, when neither father nor mother could help thee. He brought thee into the world, and provided full breasts for thee against the time that thou wast born. Though when thou didst first behold the light he could have sent thee into utter darkness, yet he forbore thee. Though in thy infancy thou wast like a little boat in the ocean, liable to all sorts of storms, and in danger every moment of death, yet his visitation hath preserved thy spirit. When thou wast a child he loved thee, and entered into covenant with thee; when thou wast in thy blood cast out naked and filthy, and no eye pitied thee, he had compassion on thee, and washed thee in the blood of his own Son, sent thee raiment out of his own wardrobe to cover thy nakedness, took the whole charge of thy nursing and nurture upon himself, provided his Spirit to be thy tutor and governor; hath spread a table in the gospel of all sorts of dainties and delicates for thy constant diet, and hath prepared his own most glorious palace to be thy eternal inheritance when thou comest to age; and doth not this God deserve the best and flower of thy time? Doth the flesh or the world deserve the best of thy days, as the blessed God doth? Is it rational to make a feast for thine enemies, and to put off thy best friends with a few scraps which they leave? When he might justly have sent thee out of thy mother's womb into the prison of hell, he reprieved thee; and now when he calls thee presently to sue out thy pardon, that thy execution may be avoided, wilt thou deny him? A



wise man will sell his best wares to them that will give the best price. Let thy conscience be judge whether God or the flesh will pay the best for the service of thy youth. Possibly God afforded thee a large portion of outward blessings; he hath cast thy lot, as Pharaoh did Jacob's, Gen. 27:6, in the best of the land, and wilt thou deny him the best of thy life? Oh fear the Lord in thy youth, for he is a great king, a loving father, a bountiful master, and so worthy to be feared. What Saul did out of covetousness and disobedience, do thou out of conscience and dutifulness—spare the best to sacrifice to the Lord thy God, 1 Sam. 15:15.

Fourthly, Consider, God will call thee to an account for thy youth. Tricks of youth will come to a public trial. In this world God punisheth many for their disobedience to parents. How many rebellious children hath God hanged on gibbets, to make others fearful of such sins? How fully did God recompense on the head of Abimelech all the evil which he did to his father! Judges 9:24. Wicked children shorten many times their parents' lives. The heathen have thought an undutiful child an intolerable burden. Democritus Abderites, when he could not reclaim his drunken son, put out his own eyes, that he might not see his intemperance. The mother of Themistocles was so vexed at his youthful vices, that she hanged herself for grief.<sup>2</sup> Sorrow hath killed many parents for the dissoluteness of their sons; therefore God cuts off many of those dissolute ones in the midst of their days. Witness Hophni and Phinehas, Absalom and Adonijah. They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean. Their soul perisheth among the boys, and their life among the buggers, according to Beza's reading, Job 36:14. In the Hebrew it is thus: Their soul dieth in youth. The death of the body is nothing to the death of the soul; the soul's death is damnation. God gathereth these grapes, even whilst they are green, for the wine-press of his eternal wrath.

If they live, God often punisheth them in the like. A scoffing Ham is punished with a profane Canaan. But, however, God will meet with them at death, and at the great day, for all their gracelessness and disobedience. The lamp by its light and brightness enticeth the fly to embrace it, but by that means she is either drowned in the oil or burned in the flame at last. So the world with its fair shows may entice thee to wantonness; but, alas! how many at last are drowned in its sweet waters! The wise man doth seek to allay the young man's heat by this thought, 'Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thine heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee to judgment,' Eccles. 11:9. Here is a cooler for the high-flown youngster's courage. The words, after an ironical concession, express a most dreadful commination; as if he had said, Make thy lust the rule of thy life; swim down cheerfully in a full stream of carnal comforts; deny thyself nothing that thine eye can desire, or thine heart delight in; let thy senses give law to thy rational soul. But know that (notwithstanding all thy cursed courses to stop the mouth of conscience, and thy wicked designs to drown those innate principles of fear and restraint in ungodly pleasures) there is a terrible day approaching, the day of the perdition of ungodly men, wherein that God, whose fear thou now rejectest, whose favour thou now neglectest, who observeth and recordeth all thy ways of wickedness, will, whether thou wilt or no, bring thee to a strict reckoning for all thy follies, vanities, and excesses of thy youth. Believe it, then those morsels will be poison in thy belly, which now are so pleasant in thy mouth. Oh what confusion will cover thy face, and what indignation and grief will cut thy very heart, when before angels and men all the neglect of thy duty and thy secret deeds of darkness shall be brought to light! But know thou that for all these things God will bring thee to judgment.

How wilt thou answer when God shall reckon with thee for the breach of thy baptismal covenant? Hannibal's father made him take a solemn oath to maintain perpetual hostility with Rome. Thy parents caused thee in baptism to take an oath of fealty and allegiance to Christ, and to maintain continual war with his enemies. Let conscience judge whether to wear Christ's livery and do Satan's drudgery, whether to expect Christ's pay and not to fight his battles, be not a derision of thy baptism at this day, and will not prove thy destruction at the last day. If young persons would but ride sometimes upon the pale horse of death, think seriously of their latter ends, they would not, as they do, ride post in the road to hell.

Reader, these motives are not jesting matters; therefore weigh them well, unless thou art resolved upon thine eternal ruin.

I proceed to the duties of children to parents.

The first duty is reverence. There is a distance between children and parents: therefore there must be reverence from children to parents. 'A son honoureth his father,' Mal. 1:6. The difference in age commands honour. The heathen saw this by the light of nature; therefore the Spartans punished such young men as did not reverence elder persons. Hence that proverb derived its pedigree, *In sola Sparta expedit senescere*, It is only good to be old in Sparta. But where to difference in age is adjoined this relation, there the greater respect is required: 'Honour thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise,' Eph. 6:2. Even lambs will kneel (which is the posture of the greatest reverence) to their dams.

This reverence must be inward in heart. Children should have awful apprehensions of their parents as their superiors, as those to whom they are engaged, under God, both for their beings and breedings. 'Ye shall fear every man his mother and his father; I am the Lord,' Lev.

19:3. Fear is due to parents, as they are God's deputies; hence some make the fifth command part of the first table. As the first four relate immediately to God, so this fifth, though to men, yet in their politic capacity, as they are gods. Our parents, say the heathen, are our household gods; and the Scripture calls children their father's glory. Surely, then, they should honour them, Hosea 9:11. And the mother is by Moses first expressed, because she, by reason of her fondness and familiarity, is apt to be most despised; which Solomon hinteth in that prohibition, 'Despise not thy mother when she is old,' Prov. 23:22. Esau had some respect for his father, so would forbear the execution of his intended murder till his death, but takes not the least thought for his mother, Gen. 27:41. But where there is any fear of our Father in heaven, there will be a fear of mother as well as father upon earth. Many seem to honour their parents whilst they are young and rich, but when they grow old and diseased, then, especially if they be poor, they slight and contemn them. They serve their parents as men do great candles, set them in high candlesticks whilst they are full of tallow, but when all their substance is wasted, tread them under their feet. Or as birds, when they can fly and find their meat, they regard the old ones no longer.

This reverence must be outward in life, and that both in language and carriage.

1. In language. Children must speak reverently to their parents, and respectfully of their parents. First, To them. Rachel, though her father was wicked, yet speaks reverently: 'Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise,' Gen. 31:35. Secondly, Of them. It is said of parents that have their quiver full of such polished arrows, 'They shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemy in the gate,' Ps. 127:5. Their children will be tender of their father's credit, and not suffer others, much less will themselves, to cast dirt in their faces, but will,

by pleading for them, wipe it off. Oh, how bad a bird is he that fouls his own nest! Those that bespatter their parents' names, sin even against nature; and, like Canaan, for discovering their father's nakedness, they are sure to meet with a curse. Some tell us that the Jews punished all children with death who did publicly backbite their parents.

Reader, if, like Reuben, thou defilest thy father's bed, thou wilt as certainly lose the blessing, Gen. 49:4, as he the birthright. There are children that exceed in this unnatural sin, and instead of commending, curse their parents. 'But every one that curseth his father or his mother shall surely be put to death,' Deut. 20:9; Exod. 21:17. God hath severe judgment for such sinful practices. The Hebrew doctors observe four sorts of death inflicted by the judges of Israel, whereof stoning, which was the death wherewith children that cursed their parents were to die, was the worst. Ainsworth on Exod. 21:12. It is a discredit to parents, and uncomely for their children, to be saucy and clownish in their speeches. The younger son, as bad as he was, would give his father good words: 'I go, sir,' though he went not, Mat. 21:30. But how abominable is it to revile or rail at them!

2. In carriage. How respectfully did Joseph, though lord of Egypt, demean himself towards his poor father Jacob: 'He bowed himself with his face to the earth,' Gen. 48:12. It is recorded of Sir Thomas Moore, that when he was Lord Chancellor, and so superior to his father, he would go up to the king's bench, before he sat in Chancery, and there ask his father, who was one of the judges there, blessing before all the people. How reverently did Solomon, though a king, carry himself to his mother: 'The king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand,' 1 Kings 2:19. Where there is

holiness in a child, he will honour his parents, and God hath ruined them that have refused to do it.

There are three things which are dear to a man—his soul, his life, and his good name. Undutiful children that invert the order of nature, condemn the authority of God in that of their parents, prove monsters of ingratitude to their greatest earthly benefactors, have been plagued and punished by God in the loss of all the three, Prov. 20:20, and 30:17.

It is observed of the cudweed that the younger leaves overtop the elder; so many cursed children think they are never high enough unless they trample upon their parents as their footstool. It is too usual with the sons of Belial to nod their heads, to wink with their eyes, and wriggle their mouths at their parents, and often in derision to call them the old man, and the old woman, and perhaps the old doating fool; but I would have such remember but this one verse of God's word, which hundreds of such children have experienced in this world: 'The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth his mother, the ravens of the valleys shall peck it out, and the young eagles shall eat it,' Prov. 30:17. The eye, which is the offending part, shall be certainly punished, but how? truly so, as they may read their sin in their suffering. They disgrace and shame their parents, and God will bring them to disgraceful and shameful deaths. They shall be hanged in the air as spectacles of God's anger, and unworthy to live either in heaven or earth. Crows will quickly scent out such carcasses, and peck out those eyes which were wont to leer and jeer and wink at their parents. At Milan there was a vicious youth, who, when reproved by his mother, used to make a wry mouth, and to point at her with his finger in scorn, but afterwards he was condemned for felony, and being on the gallows, was observed to make the same wry mouths which he did formerly to his mother. The

very heathen were so sensible of such sins that they would sow up such children in a sack, with a cat, a dog, a viper, and an ape, and so drown them; in this manner, Publicus Malleolus was put to death by the Romans.

Secondly, Obedience. The law of nature bindeth man to this. Though it is generally concluded, civil subjection of servants to masters came in by sin, yet natural subjection of sons to fathers did not. The great philosopher tells us<sup>3</sup> it is not fit to disobey τῷ Θεῷ καὶ πατρί, God nor our father. Cicero therefore being to read a lecture of modesty and temperance to his friend Clodia, raised up her father Appius Caius from the grave, and in his name delivered those precepts to her, as judging no counsel so prevalent with children as that which is given by parents. 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right,' Eph. 6:1. In which sentence the apostle delivereth both the reason and the rule of children's obedience. The reason is, 'for this is right;' it is agreeable to righteousness that thou shouldst yield subjection to them, to whom thou hast so many and such great obligations. It is right by the law of God, of nature, and of nations. The rule is 'in the Lord,' that is, in lawful, not in sinful commands. Jonathan refused to obey his father, when he charged him to kill David, and Asa deposed his mother for her idolatries. 'He that hateth not father and mother for me, is not worthy of me,' Luke 21:14. All obedience to man must be regulated by a good conscience towards God. If a parent command his child to steal, or to profane the Lord's day by bodily labour, or the like, which God forbids, then he goeth beyond his bounds, and therefore is not to be obeyed. But in all lawful precepts children must not dispute, but obey their parents. Jesus Christ himself gives a pattern of this: he was subject to his parents, Luke 2:51. He was not only obedient to his Father by eternal generation, but even to his supposed father, and to his mother by a natural, or rather supernatural, conception. Though, as his human

nature was hypostatically united to the divine, he might have pleaded its privilege, yet he was subject to his parents.

The Rechabites, for obeying a particular command of their father, to drink no wine, have God's commendation and benediction, Jer. 35:8, 14–19. God delights in a dutiful child, and blesseth him, but he hates the disobedient, and blasteth them. He hath not only whipped such with temporal punishments, but even executed them with spiritual plagues, than which no doom is more dreadful on this side the place of the damned.

It is observable, reader, that when the apostle counteth those sins and corruptions for which God delivered up the heathen to a reprobate sense and vile affections, this one is in the list, disobedience to parents, among that herd of monstrous lusts, Rom. 1:30. Voluntary disobedience to men is punished with judiciary disobedience to God. Joseph, when commanded by his father to go to his brethren, though he knew their ill-will to him, and how dangerous the journey might prove, yet durst not disobey, Gen. 37:13.

Job, it seems, was happy in a dutiful progeny: 'Oh that I were as in months past, when the Almighty was yet with me, and my children were about me,' Job 29:2, 5. The latter phrase, 'when my children were about me,' may speak these three particulars:—

1. Their presence with him. They were as olive branches round about his table. Parents are the centre, and children are a circumference drawn about them.
2. Their protection. They were about him to defend him to their power in any danger. As the Lord is said to be round about his people, because he is their safety and protection, Ps. 125:2, so Job's



children were about their father to do what lay in them for his shelter.

3. Their obedience to him. They were about him as so many servants, to know his pleasure and obey his precepts. As the father was singular in his patience, so were the children in their obedience. Few fathers in their old age have good ground for Job's wish. Some children will not afford their parents so much comfort as their company; others are about them as ravens are about a carcase—to devour it, not to defend it. When their parents have any flesh on their back, any wealth in their hands, then they fly to them; but when they have got all, and there is nothing left but bare bones, then they fly from them. Most are about them as weeds are about the corn—to choke and hinder, not to comfort and help their parents. Ah, how many of these branches grow up about their fathers as trees about our windows—to hinder their light and darken their lives. But, reader, if thou wouldst not have thy heavenly Father's curse, be not thy earthly father's cross. The first affirmative precept with a promise is this of obedience to parents, Eph. 6:2, 3.

Especially in marriage be obedient to thy parents. Do not, like profane Esau, make an ungodly match to vex thy mother; believe it, thou wilt at last vex thyself most, Gen. 28:8, 9. By Moses' law the daughter's vow was not valid unless the father did ratify it, Num. 30:6. Hagar took a wife for Ishmael, Gen. 21:21. Rebekah took a wife for Jacob. And, indeed, children that match without their parents' consent may expect to meet with God's curse; and such men have sometimes found that their wives, instead of being guides to rule their houses, have been griefs to cut their very hearts. Judah married a Canaanite without his father's consent, and he had two such wicked sons that God slew them with his own hands. Erasmus, speaking of Levinus, that got a wife, neglecting the counsel of his friends about it,

and so proving unhappy, saith, *Res calide peracta est magis quam callide*,—wantonness and lust, not wit or wisdom, made up the match.

God giveth the parents as great a title to their children as to their goods; for he allowed that even children should be sold to pay their parents' debts. Children are their parents' greatest outward riches—far before lands, be they worth thousands—and therefore to dispose of themselves without their leave is the greatest outward robbery. If men hang them that steal cattle, surely God hath severer punishments for them that steal children.

Tertullian, writing to his wife a discourse of marriage, closeth it with this: Oh, how shall I be able sufficiently to describe the happy state of that couple whom the church hath married, prayer confirmed, angels in heaven proclaimed, and parents on earth approved?

Besides, in thy calling have an eye to thy father's choice. Elkanah and Hannah were obeyed by Samuel when they devoted him to the ministry. The papists falsely tell us that children may—a boy at twelve, a maid at fourteen years old—enter into their monkish orders without their parents' consent; but how much do they forget themselves to make children at their own disposal so soon, when in their blasphemous hymns they will not allow Christ, though God-man, freedom from subjection to his mother, after he hath been many hundred years glorious in heaven, but still cry, *Command thy Son!*

3. Submission. Children must not only be subject to their father's precepts, but also submit to their punishments. 'We have had fathers of the flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence,' Heb. 12:9. It is unseemly for a child to be striving when his father is striking; but it is abominable for him to murmur at what he doth

suffer. Parents' authority should make children endure it patiently. Some brutes will quietly bear blows from their keeper, and shall not children from their father?

Reader, if thy parents reprove or chastise thee, it is for thy profit; and wilt thou grumble at that which tendeth to thy good? Alas! they punish thee here, that thou mayest not perish for ever. Besides, they correct thee because God commands them; and canst thou be displeased at them because they dare not displease God? Canst thou be angry at them for being afraid of God's anger? Alas! who knoweth the power of his anger?

Isaac was obedient to Abraham when he bound him for a sacrifice. It is observable, saith Calvin, that Isaac, being twenty-five years old, was able to resist his old weak father, yet he yielded himself quietly both to be bound and to die. It is probable, indeed, that Abraham had acquainted his son with God's command; and with that, saith Luther, he did rest contented. To receive correction doth distinguish a true son from a bastard, Heb. 12:8. The heathen orator will inform the Christian that he should not only conceal, but also submit, even to injuries, if his father offer any to him. The Turks, though cruelly lashed, do yet, when they are well whipped, kiss his hand that commanded it, and pay the officer for his pains. The heathen saw it so equal, that going too far on a good ground, they did allow the parents' power of life and death over their children.

It is reported of Ælian, that being some considerable time absent from his father, when he returned home his father asked him what he had learned. Sir, saith he, you shall know ere long. A little after, his father corrected him for some fault, and he took it patiently, saying, Sir, you see I have learned somewhat; for I have learned to bear with your anger, and quietly to suffer what you please to inflict.

Some young persons scorn to be scourged; they will not, say they, be made such fools as to bear blows; but such must know that not their parents' heavy hands, but their own proud hearts, make them fools. 'Correction gives instruction and wisdom,' Prov. 13:1, 18. The way to be above the rod is for thee to be under rule; but thy main work, young man, must be to hear the voice of the rod, and to be the better for beating, so to let the rod in, that folly may go out. Be not like a post, nothing stirred by many strokes; much less like some beasts, to kick and be the more unruly for the spur, but as the holy child Jesus, who though he never sinned, yet 'learned obedience by the things which he suffered,' Heb. 5:8.

4. Affection. Children are bound to love their parents, and their obedience must grow upon this root. He is not a son, but a slave, that serveth his father merely out of fear; filial and servile obedience are opposite. As parents are tender of their children, so children ought to be tender of their parents. The dumb son of Croesus, when one of the soldiers of Cyrus ran after his father to kill him, with the violence of natural affection, cried out suddenly, O man, kill not Croesus! and continued speaking all his lifetime after. Thy parents should be dearer to thee than thy children; what love shouldst thou return to them who were the instruments of thy life? The greatest obligations call for the greatest affection. Though Olympias, the mother of Alexander, was very morose and severe to him in his childhood, yet he was very mild and loving to her when he came to age, insomuch that when Antipater accused her to him, he would by no means hear or heed him.<sup>3</sup> God takes great notice of children's love and duty to their parents; therefore, say some, he lengthens their lives, because by their affectionate, obsequious carriage they lengthen their parents' lives. Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and others in Scripture, eminent for their love and loyalty to their parents, had their days prolonged in the land of the living. On the other side, God hath made many

unnatural children monuments of his indignation; he hath punished them dreadfully to fright others from such practices. Absalom's miserable end may make all children afraid of such abominable ways. Nero, who killed his mother Agrippina; Turpeia, who betrayed her father to Tatius king of the Sabines; Henry the Fifth, emperor of Germany, who dispossessed his father of his empire, did all meet with such vengeance from heaven, that none would, unless mad, ever eat at their tables to pay their reckoning.

The cuckoo is worthily used by way of reproach, and may well be hooted at, for he devoureth his own dam; Orestes killed his mother Clytemnestra; Ninus killed his mother Semiramis; Alcmeon also killed his mother; but such beasts are counted by very heathens rather monsters than men.

5. Gratitude. It is thy duty to requite their care and cost upon thee; thy body, and time, and estate, should not be thought too much for them; the law of God, as well as the law of man, doth command children to relieve their necessitous parents to their power. 'But if any widow have children or nephews, let them first learn to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents, for this is good and acceptable before God,' 1 Tim. 5:4. It is observable, children's kindness to their parents is termed εὐσέβεια, piety or godliness, because it is a part thereof, and very acceptable to God. Æneas was surnamed Pius for his tenderness to his father, whom he bore on his back out of the flames of Troy. Besides, it is called a requiting them, intimating that it is not an act of grace, but of justice. It is but righteous that they should return, according to their abilities, for what they have received from their parents. Dr Taylor said to his son, when himself was going to suffer, When thy mother is waxen old, forsake her not, but provide for her to thy power, and see that she lack nothing; so will God bless thee, and give thee long life and

prosperity. Joseph maintained his father Jacob and his whole household, Gen. 47:13. The son of Joseph, the blessed Jesus, when he was dying, in the midst of all his tortures and torments, when he was assaulted both from heaven, earth, and hell, could even then find time to commend his beloved mother to the beloved disciple. Valerius Maximus relates a story of a man sentenced to die with famine, and how his daughter came daily and gave him suck, upon which act of her piety, saith another author, his sentence was reversed.

The storks and mice will rise up in judgment against many children, for such is their natural affection to their dams that they nourish them when they are old. The stork, saith Pliny, doth it with such piety, that he is called by the Latins pietati-cultrix, and ciconia, of the Hebrew sachan, to be profitable, because he is so profitable to his parents. Some derive the name stork from the Greek στοργή, love, because he hath such affection for his dam. Nay, hence we read of some laws called νόμοι πελαργικοί, which receive their denomination from the stork, providing that children should nourish and take care of their parents in their distress. Nay, the requital of children to their parents in the Greek is called ἀντιπελαργωσις, which is a metaphor drawn from the stork's kindness to her old ones, which doth not only feed them, but carrieth them on her shoulders into the meadows, and brings them back.

Our Saviour sharply reproveth the Pharisees for allowing children, under pretence of piety, to suffer their parents to perish, Mat. 15:4. Surely they are cursed children that can be thus cruel to their parents; even young lions, as ravenous as they are, will spare it out of their own bellies to feed their old ones; and yet many children are more savage than lions, and are so far from being men and women that they are worse than beasts.

The mother wasps and hornets, after they have wrought awhile, and procreated their kind, give over labouring, and are maintained by the industry and piety of their offspring; yet, alas! rational creatures make their parents' lives so bitter by their ingratitude, that they cause them to cry out, with Jonah, 'It is better for me to die than to live,' and with Rebekah, 'I am weary of my life.'

Luther tells a story of a good father in Germany, (but by the way I would advise all parents to be more wise than whilst they live to entrust their children with all their wealth; they that hang on the cradle have most commonly but short commons.) This man, saith he, gave away all he had to his children, upon condition that he should have his diet with them when he came. One day he came to one of his sons, then at dinner with a goose, which as soon as he heard his father was coming he set by; and going to take it when his father was gone, it was turned into a toad, and, leaping upon his face, could not be removed by all his striving till it had stifled him. Our own countrymen tell us of a yeoman in Leicestershire, that made over his house and land to his son upon marriage, conditionally that his son should keep him during life; but afterwards, there falling out some difference between them, the son bade his father get him out of his house, calling him bursten-belly slave, (indeed the old man had a rupture.) The next day, as the young man was walking in his grounds, Mr Goodman, the minister of the parish, riding by, asked him how he did? He answered, very well; but before the minister was out of sight, the young man's bowels gushed out, which he carrying in his hands went home, sent for the minister, acknowledged God's justice on him for his undutifulness to his father, made his will, gave his father a considerable legacy to make him amends, and died that night.

I shall conclude this head with the wise heathen's speech to his son, upon his anger at his peevish mother:—Socrates sentiens suum filium Lamprocleum, qui major natu fuit, matri suæ iratum; Die mihi, O fili (ait) cognovistine unquam homines quosdam qui appellantur ingrati? Ita prorsus inquit. Considerasti igitur quos homines, et cum quid agunt, hoc nomine appellantur? Consideravi, ait, illos qui beneficiis acceptis, non reddunt gratias cum possunt, ingratos appellari. Hos vero ingratos, cum injuriosis enumerandos esse putas? Vehementer ait consideravi, et mihi videtur, a quocunque quispiam beneficiis affectus, sive amico sive inimico, non conatur reddere gratias, injustus esse. Si igitur hæc tibi vera videntur, ingratitudo manifesta injuria profecto est. Concessit. Quanto ergo majoribus quisque beneficiis acceptis non reddit gratias, tanto injustior est. Et hoc etiam concessit. Quos igitur aut a quibus (inquit) putas majoribus beneficiis affici quam liberos a parentibus, quibus primo ut sint et vivant, deinde ut bona videant, illorumque participes fiant, quæcunque dii hominibus præbent, parentes causa fuerunt?... Mulier vero concipiens tolerat hoc onus cum gravamine et periculis vitæ, alimento suo nutriens puerum, magno multoque labore usque ad partum proveniens; Postea etiam nutrit, atque pro eo curam gerit, a quo tamen nunquam antea beneficii quicquam acceperat, quique non modo ignorat qui ei benefacit, sed neque declarare potest, quibus indigeat. Mater vero per conjecturam quæ conducunt, quæque grata sunt, ei conatur adimplere; multoque tempore nutrit, die nocteque laboribus affecta, ignorans quam istorum omnium mercedem habebit. Et non solum sufficit nutrire, sed cum videntur filii posse discere quicquam, quæcunque ipsimet parentes ad vitam utilia habent, docent.... Ad hæc adoloscensculus ait, Etsi hæc omnia, cæteraque his multo fecerit plura, nullus tamen posset profecto duritiam matris meæ sufferre. Tum Socrates, Utrum, ait, feræ immanitatem putas difficiliorem sufferendam esse, an matris? Ego quidem, inquit, matris puto quæ



talis sit. Num igitur, unquam momordit aut calcibus te percussit quem ad modum multi a feris affecti sunt? Non ista, sed ea dicit, inquit, mehercle quæ nulus unquam audire velit. Tu autem quot, Socrates ait, ei molestias tuo dicto a prima ætate die nocteque exhibuisti?... Tu itaque fili, si compos es mentis, deos ut tibi ignoscant exorabis, si quid matrem neglexisti, ne ingratum te esse existiment nec benefacere velint; ab hominibus quoque cavebis, ne sentientes quod contemnas parentes, pro nihilo te habeant, et omnibus amicis te privaveris. Si enim te arbitrabuntur erga parentes ingratum esse, nullus putabit te pro susceptis beneficiis fore in referenda gratia memorem. So far Xenophon concerning Socrates and his son, which I have been the larger in reciting, because thou mayest hereby understand, reader, how loathsome and abominable children's ungratefulness and undutifulness to parents, though they were peevish, was counted by the very heathen.

### **A good wish to the duties of a son or daughter in relation to their father and mother**

The relation of a child, speaking my great and manifold obligations to my parents, under God, for my conception, birth, and breeding, besides those many cares and fears which are incident for my sake to their tender yearning bowels; for which I am engaged by the law of God, of nature, and of nations, to be grateful and dutiful; I wish in general that I may never be so far possessed of the devil, like him in the Gospel whom no cords could hold, as to break all these bonds in sunder, but may behave myself towards my parents on earth as an obedient child of my Father in heaven. Lord, whilst others pretend much religion abroad, but manifest little piety at home, make me so conscientious of all thy commands that I may not be unmindful of my debts to others, but be sure to pay my duty, my specialties, to them.

I wish that the first of my time may be devoted to my dearest Redeemer, the Father of eternity, that the fear of my God may take such early possession of my soul that when Satan, the world, and youthful lusts shall hereafter sue for my service, they may be wholly prevented in their projects, and disappointed of my heart, that presence-chamber being taken up beforehand. Why should I spend my young days in laying by a store of guilt, and treasuring up a heap of wrath for me to live upon in my old age? Lord, let me so emulate those worthies of thine, whose names sparkle in Scripture as the morning star in the firmament, for their early shining with the light of holiness, that I may be ambitious to have my name recorded in heaven's court-rolls for a young disciple, and remembering my Creator in the days of my youth.

I wish that the loadstone of true self-love may draw me to the Lord, and that I may be so caught with that holy bait as betimes to become a true Christian. My God will be much delighted by my early devotion. If young beasts were so pleasing to him under the law, surely young saints will be more acceptable to him under the gospel. Oh, how kindly will he take the kindness of my youth! My parents will be rejoiced to see me blossom in the spring of my age with the fruits of righteousness. They have no greater joy than to see their children walking in the truth. Why should not I, who have been the occasion of bitter pangs and sharp throes to my mother, and the cause of many cares and much cost to my father, do my utmost for both their comforts? What a sword shall I prove to pierce their souls, if, when they call me Cain, a possession, and boast that they have gotten a man from the Lord, I shall testify by my ways, as he did, that I am of the wicked one! And oh, how will their hearts revive to hear that their Joseph, whom they thought to be dead, is alive to God! Surely they will say, It is enough; and whilst they continue here, live the more contentedly, and when they depart hence, die the more

cheerfully. But my early piety will bring to myself the greatest profit. How may I prevent that dishonour to my Saviour, those sins and sorrows to my own soul, which youthful lusts procure? The spiritual diseases which I contract through intemperance and inordinate affections in my youth will lie heavy at my heart, and pain me to purpose in my old age. What a proficient may I be in grace, how far may I go before others in godliness, if I set out betimes in my journey to heaven, whilst others who set out late are frightened with fears lest they should never reach that celestial palace! I may go merrily on, making God's statutes my songs in this house of my pilgrimage. Lord, let these motives be so fastened in my mind that I may give myself to thee this very moment, that thou mayest be my first love; and in this flower of my age, before I am ravished by Satan, or defiled with any known sin, I may be thine Hephzi-bah and Beulah, thy delight, and married to thee.

I desire that the danger of delay may make me more speedy in the practice of my duty. The work of conversion must be done, or I am undone for ever. Without the second birth, my God himself hath told me that I shall not escape the second death. My life is but a vapour, which may suddenly vanish: I am not master of another hour. Why may not I, as well as others, be hurried away in haste, and in the prime of my days, before I am aware, to enter into the other world? The longer I defer, the less I am disposed; the longer the house of my heart is out of repairs, the more trouble and pains it will cost, if ever it be done. Besides, my God will not always wait upon such a silly worm. If I reject him to-day, it is just with him to refuse me to-morrow. O my soul, be not so foolish as to leave a work of such indispensable necessity to such uncertainties! Lord, give me such wisdom to consider of my latter end, that I may never hang such heavy weights, as my inestimable soul and salvation, upon such weak

and uncertain wires, but may be both speedy and serious about my eternal weal.

I wish I may be so rational as to give my chiefest time and strength to him that can claim it by the strongest reasons. The Ancient of days hath the only interest in my youth. It was his mere mercy that I was not sent out of the womb into endless misery. The first tears I shed might have been in that place where there is nothing but weeping. The first swaddling band I was wrapped with might have been the chains of everlasting darkness. I was a rebel against his sacred majesty, and had traitors' blood running in my veins before I was born. As soon as I breathed in the world, I infected the air, and defiled the earth: never toad was so full of poison as my nature of pollution, yet my God spared me when he might have sunk me in the pit of perdition. Nay, he hath not only borne with me, and forborne me, but also laden me with benefits. He hath defended me from many an unknown danger. He hath delivered me out of many a distress. All his paths towards me have dropped fatness. I never was one moment out of his mind. He entered into covenant with me before ever I knew what a covenant was. My subsistence is continually by him; my dependence is every minute upon him. I cannot stir a foot, or lift a hand, or speak a word, or think a thought without him. All my happiness for this and the other world consisteth wholly in him. My life or death hangs upon his favour or fury. If I seek him early, I shall find him; but if I forsake him, I am lost for ever. Oh, of what concernment is it to me, to please him in dedicating the prime of my days to him, which will be most pleasing! Lord, let thy great love constrain me to a gracious life, and let thine early beneficence lead to speedy and hearty repentance.

I wish that the thought of my reckoning at the last day may be so prevalent with me as to prevent my rioting at this day. My sins in

youth, though they easily slip out of my memory, are registered by God. Not a thought of my heart, not a word of my tongue, not a work of my hand, but all are written in his book, and sealed up in his bag; and oh, how shall I dare to appear in his presence before millions of saints and holy angels, if I should now give myself to profaneness? With what face shall a black sinner stand before his white throne? How ugly will my deeds of darkness look in his eye, who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all? The judge is the holy Jesus; his attendants are holy angels, the justices on the bench are holy persons, the law by which I must be judged for my everlasting life and death is the holy commandment given to me; and oh, how can I stand at the bar without infinite shame, grief, and horror in my unholiness! Why should not the strictness of my examination provoke me to holiness in all manner of conversation? Lord, let me so constantly, whithersoever I go, and whatsoever I do, hear the sound of the last trump in mine ears, 'Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment,' that I may so think, so speak, and so act, as one that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

I wish that I may have awful apprehensions of them that are my elders, especially in this relation. If nature taught heathen to set a high price upon their parents, what honour should I give mine, who am taught this lesson, both by nature and the clear light of Scripture? My body from them, under God, had its being, and therefore ought to be employed, in subordination to God, in their service. How should that tongue speak for them, which but for them had never spoke! How should that knee bow to them, which but for them had never been! Lord, let my tongue sooner rot than revile them; let my hands rather fall off than fall upon them; yea, it were better that my whole body should be buried alive, than it should rise up, like Absalom, to take away his life who gave me mine. It is sinful either in name or body to injure a stranger, but how sordid is it then to wrong

my father or mother! I am bound to cover another's infirmity with the mantle of charity, and shall I publish their weaknesses to the world? If I take Ham's course, I must expect his curse. Oh let me never, like Simeon and Levi, give my parents cause to speak, as Jacob, 'Thou hast made me to stink (by revealing my infirmities) among the inhabitants of the land.' Lord, let the severity of thy threatening against such sinners make me fearful of such sins; and let thy dread so fall down upon my soul, that I may both in my carriage and language reverence them for thy sake.

I wish that obedience may be the garment by which I may be known to be my father's child, as David's daughters were known by their parti-coloured clothes; that whilst others by ungodliness cut their parents' hearts with grief, and bring them with sorrow to the grave, I may, by my dutifulness in all commands which are lawful, lengthen out my own and their lives. My God hath told me of Eli's sons, that 'they hearkened not to the voice of their father, because the Lord would destroy them,' 1 Sam. 2:25. To be a child of disobedience is a ready way for me to be marked for vengeance. If I be a son of rebellion, it is a sad sign that I am a son of perdition. Oh let me be fearful of disobeying my parents, lest I provoke my God to ruin me. Yet I wish that my dutifulness to the father of my flesh may be always regulated by my duty to the Father of spirits, that I may be sure to save God's stake before I pay my obedience to my parents. My parents are to be obeyed in the Lord, not against the Lord. It is treason to obey my immediate superior against my sovereign. Lord, let me never pretend conscience for the neglect of their righteous commands; that they may never have cause to complain of me, as thou didst once of the Jews, 'I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me;' yet if I be ever enjoined what is a sin, let me obey God rather than man. Let me in this sense

call no man father on earth, for doubtless thou art only to be universally obeyed, who art my Father in heaven.

I wish that I may with patience submit both to the rods and rebukes of my parents, as believing that they are, though not pleasant, yet profitable for me. My God hath commanded them not to bear with me in sin; their allowance of me in my disobedience would be but an ill symptom of their love to my soul. How certainly should I travel to hell, if permitted to walk in the ways of my own heart! Surely, when I am in a wicked course they are my best friends that stop and hinder me from proceeding farther; their sharpest words are curing, and their severest strokes are healing. Oh let me be so sensible of my own good, as without opposition to take down this bitter physic, which, notwithstanding its distastefulness to my body, is yet so wholesome for my precious soul. And, Lord, let thy grace be so mingled with all these means of thine appointment, that my suffering here may prevent my eternal sufferings hereafter.

I wish that affection to their persons may sweeten my subjection to their precepts; that as Jacob's seven years' hard service for Rachel seemed to him but a few days for the love he had to her, so that love may be the soft lining which may make the yoke of my active and passive obedience easy and acceptable. The wall heated by the beams of the sun reflecteth some warmth back again. Grace will teach me to love mine enemies, but it is against nature not to love a friend. Beasts have much affection for their keepers, but more for the dams and sires. How fervent and fiery is my parents' love to me! how solicitous to express itself in acts of favour! How many a time have their hearts trembled for me, and their bowels yearned towards me! Oh that I might never be so far from humanity as to live below a beast, nay, to degenerate into a devil, by rendering hatred for love, and evil for good! Lord, let my obligations to my parents make such an

impression on my spirit, that I may answer their ocean of love to me with such pure streams as may refresh and rejoice their hearts.

I wish that my love to my parents may not be like Rachel, beautiful and barren, but like the tree planted by the rivers of water, may bring forth fruit in due season; I mean, that it may shew itself to be sincere, by my devoting both estate and body, according to Scripture, to their service. My reason tells me what I received from them ought, under God, to be improved for them. Oh that this fire may upon all occasions so flame out as to cheer and comfort their chill and cold aged bodies with its light and heat! How tender was David of his aged parents! 1 Sam. 22:3. How kind was Joseph to all his kindred! The brutish eagles, though they are greedy enough of their prey, will yet spare it from themselves to feed their parents. Boughs bend towards their root. The ears of corn bow to the earth, their parent. And shall I suffer them to famish, who so many years gave me all my food, and, like the cruel kite, starve them who bred and fed me? Lord, help me to shew piety at home, by requiting my parents; and rather let my hands wear out with work, than that they through my negligence should want.

In a word, I wish that I may so imitate their gracious patterns, so submit to their wholesome rebukes, so obey their pious precepts, yield them such hearty reverence, and in all things demean myself so dutifully, that God may be my father, and own me for his son or daughter; that my God may spare me as a man spareth his son that serveth him; that I may have a name within the house of my God better than of sons and daughters; and that when all these relations (which are calculated only for the meridian of this imperfect state) shall cease, my days may be long in the land of promise which the Lord my God hath given me for possession, and I may enjoy the



glorious liberty and endless blessed life of the sons of God amongst the congregation of the first-born. Amen.

## CHAPTER III

### **How Christians may exercise themselves to godliness in the relation of husbands and wives; and, first, Of the duties which concern them both in common. And a good wish from a pious pair**

Marriage is the lawful conjunction of one man and one woman for the term of their natural lives, for the generation of children, the avoiding of sin, or the comfort of mutual society.

First, The author of it, or efficient, is God. He published the first banns, and married the first couple that ever were in the world. Their maker was their minister to join them together, Gen. 2:22.

Secondly, The form of it is the conjunction or mutual covenant (not carnalis copulatio, as papists hold) between one man and one woman, Prov. 2:18. That which is compatible to whoredom cannot be the specifical form of marriage, Mat. 19:5.

The duration of it is for term of life; death only untieth the knot, Rom. 7:1–3.

Thirdly, The ends of it are three:

1. The procreation of children, Gen. 1:26.

2. The benefit of a good companion, Gen. 2:18.

3. And since the fall a third hath stepped in—viz., the avoiding of fornication, 1 Cor. 7:2. Some add a fourth, that it might be a resemblance of the mystical union between Christ and his church.

Fourthly, The material cause, one man and one woman.

Some observe that in the creation of the world God was pleased to do it by pairs—a heaven and earth, a sun and moon, a sea and land, a night and day, a man and a woman. Marriage must be between one man and one woman, Mat. 19:5. Bigamy and polygamy are both unlawful; but death gives a lawful bill of divorce. Hence the apostle saith, 'If her husband be dead, she is free for another.' The Greek churches, because that the Scripture saith of a pastor that he must be *μίας γυναϊκὸς ἀνὴρ*, the husband of one wife, deny their ministers all second marriages, do much mistake the place, 1 Tim. 3:2.

Reader, if God hath called thee to this relation, walk worthy of it, behave thyself in it, as one married to Christ. God did not institute marriage to be a hindrance, but to be a help to religion. Good company should make us walk the more cheerfully in the way of God's commandments. It is Chrysostom's observation on Gen. 5:22, that in the same verse the Spirit of God said of Enoch, 'That he walked with God, and begat sons and daughters,' to teach us that matrimony and sanctity are not inconsistent. Enoch walked with God, even then when he walked with a wife. The Jewish Rabbis observe that in the names of Ish and Ishah is included Jah, the name of God, and that if you take out iod and he, of which that name consisteth, there remaineth nothing but Esch, esch, Fire, fire. It is certain that this relation, without God's fear, is little else but fire; conjugium is conjurgium. Marriage is the sowing of dissension oftentimes, being separated from religion. The houses of such

persons are, as one wittily observeth, but as fencing schools, wherein the two sexes seem to have met together for nothing but to play the prizes and to try masteries. The fire of passion reigneth in the man, and the fire of pride rageth in the woman; and the fire of contention between both. It is the want of godliness in this relation which maketh many married persons look on their matrimonial covenant just as a dog doth on his chain, and a prisoner on his fetters, snarling and striving to break it in sunder, and set themselves at liberty.

The heathen Romans brought the wife home to her husband's house on the marriage night with five torches, signifying the need which married persons have of five gods or goddesses, Jupiter, Juno, Venus, Suadela, and Diana. The Jews at their marriages were not unmindful of God; but from their constant custom of their wedding devotion, their very wedding house was called Beth hillula, the house of praise. What is the meaning of the apostle's expression concerning marrying in the Lord, if godliness were not to be exercised in this estate? 1 Cor. 7:29, 'Only in the Lord,' that is, say some, in the church among God's kindred. They who marry out of that line marry out of the Lord; or in the Lord, that is, in his fear and faith. They who marry without godliness marry without God. The Spanish proverb hath a truth in it, that there is more required to marriage than two pair of legs in one pair of sheets.

First, I shall give thee some motives to quicken thee to mind religion in this relation.

Secondly, I shall speak both to the common and special duties which concern this condition.

1. For arguments to conscientiousness in this state,

(1.) Consider the dignity of marriage. Marriage is honourable, and therefore thy carriage in it must be answerable. An honourable relation calls for a holy conversation. 'Marriage is honourable in all,' Heb. 13:4; not only νομιμός, but τιμιος, not only lawful and unblameable, but also noble and honourable. Some among the papists condemn it as an impure, and so ignoble state; though others of them, in the other extreme, say it is a sacrament, nay, go farther, and tell us it confers grace; but that marriage is not dishonest nor dishonourable, will appear if we consider,

[1.] This relation is of divine institution. God did institute marriage, and himself immediately made the first match. We say, all marriages are made in heaven; it is true in this, as well as other respects, that marriage itself came down from heaven. God hath as well appointed that persons should meet in this estate, as fore-appointed what persons should meet. As God married the human nature to the divine, so he marrieth human persons to each other. Now, how abominable is it to call that impure which God hath cleansed; or to make the holy God the author of a sinful ordinance, which they do that hold marriage to be unholy?

[2.] This relation was instituted in man's estate of innocency. The season speaketh much to the dignity of the action. Man struck a covenant with a woman before he broke his covenant with his God. He was married to a wife before he was marred by the wicked one. Surely those popish doctors who term it filthiness and pollution, do not consider that it was ordained before man's fall and corruption. The Saturnalian heretics held that marriage was of the devil; Jerome, whom Pope Syricius followed, in his passionate love of virginity, did make a blot in his exposition of Rom. 8:8. They that are in the flesh, i.e., qui inserviunt officio conjugali, that is, saith he, those that are married, cannot please God, when man pleased God by taking a wife,

before ever he displeased God by hearkening to his wife. God would never have said, 'It is not good for man to be alone,' if it had been evil for him to have had such a companion.

But, reader, this dignity to which thou art advanced, requireth suitable duty. They that are more honoured than others, should be more holy than others. If thy relation be a resemblance of that near and dear affection betwixt Christ and his church, surely a husband and wife should have some resemblance in it of their subjection to the Father. 'Walk worthy of the calling whereunto thou art called.' Adorn thy calling by thy gracious carriage, and do not proclaim thyself to be of his mind who said that a wife was a name of honour and no more; that marriage is a name of honour, and a work of pleasure, and nothing else.

(2.) Consider the frailty of the married. If a married life would always last, thou mightst have some colour for minding nothing but thy carnal liberty in it; but consider that death will untie this fast knot, and this relation will die with thee. That hand which dissolveth the union betwixt thy body and thy soul, will dissolve the union betwixt husband and wife; and oh, what a sad parting will that couple have at death, when thou thinkest that thou hast lived so long, merely to eat, and drink, and bed, and bring up children together, and have never minded, at least in earnest, the fear and favour of the blessed God, whereby they might have lived together for ever! 'The time is short,' saith the apostle; 'it remaineth that they that have wives, be as though they had none,' 1 Cor. 7:29. The season of married persons' abode together is short; it is rolled up, a metaphor from cloth rolled up, only a little left at the end, therefore they should be more indifferent about earth, and more diligent about heaven, more moderate about natural and civil, and more serious about spiritual and eternal concernments. Wise persons, when they are called to

places which they must enjoy for a short time, will make the most of them; he that hath an excellent book lent him for a small time, will, if wise, improve it whilst he hath it. This relation is of short duration; after a few more meals' meat, and a few more nights' sleep together, death will disjoin you, and will ye not get the most benefit ye can by it? The Jews at this day have a custom, when a couple are married, to break the glass wherein the bridegroom and bride have drunk, to admonish them of mortality.

Reader, art thou a husband? Consider that within a few days God will take away from thee the delight of thine eyes with a stroke; thy voice ere long will not be, Where is my wife? or, Call your mother, or mistress, to a child or servant; but, alas! she is dead! and like Abraham's, Where shall I have a place to bury my dead out of my sight? 'And Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.' And then if thou reflectest upon thy carriage towards her, and conversation with her, how thou didst live with her without God, often wrangling, but seldom or never praying together; often contriving how to increase your temporal goods, but never conspiring together how to further your everlasting good, then surely thou wilt have cause to cry out, Alas! my poor wife, where art thou housed in the other world? and to mourn and to weep for her indeed, and for thyself too. Will she not, thinkest thou, say to thee, when she meets thee at the great day, as Zipporah to Moses, A bloody husband hast thou been to me?

Reader, if thou art a wife, the next time thou lookest on thy loving husband, consider with thyself: This dearly beloved husband of mine, in whose company I have had such content and comfort, must ere long be separated from me; those ruddy lips, which have so often kissed me, will be pale; that countenance, which hath so often smiled on me, will be wan and ghastly; those arms, which have so often

embraced, will hang down; that whole body will ere long be food for worms, and crumble into dust; and shall I make it my business only to please his palate, and feed his flesh, and to live with him as brutes do together, minding nothing but carnal pleasure? or shall I not rather provoke him to love and to good works, meekly persuade him to mind piety, to pray with me, to provide for death and judgment, that we may live together as fellow-heirs, and at last meet together in the blessed inheritance?

It was the speech of Augustus to his wife, when he was leaving the world, *Livia, nostri conjugii memor vive, et vale*, Livia, live mindful of our love, and farewell. Oh, it is happy when a dying husband can say to his yoke-fellow, Wife, live, remember our holy conversation and sweet communion with the blessed God, and farewell, till I shall meet thee in heaven.

(3.) Consider your covenant and engagement each to other, for which God will bring you to judgment. Marriage promises must be performed. The Jews in their dowry bill, which they gave their wives, had these words: Upon the sixth day of the week, &c., Be unto me a wife according to the law of Moses and Israel, and I, according to the word of God, will honour, maintain, and govern thee according to the manner of the husbands amongst the Jews, which do honour, maintain, and govern their wives faithfully. Husbands and wives have engaged themselves each to other, of which covenants God is a witness, and he keeps the bonds, and therefore it behoves them not to break them. The marriage covenant is called the covenant of God, Prov. 2:17; Mal. 2:14: first, Because he is the author of it, as he is the ordainer of that state; secondly, Because he is a witness to it: 'The Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously; yet she is thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant,' Mal. 2:14; thirdly, Because

he will avenge the breach of it. How severely doth God avenge the quarrel of his covenant! When men are the only parties in the covenant, God will be the avenger of the breach of covenant. How sorely did Zedekiah smart for his breaking his covenant with the king of Babylon, a heathen king! 'As I live, saith the Lord, in the place where the king dwelleth, that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, even in the midst of Babylon he shall die. As I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant which he hath broken, will I recompense upon his own head,' Ezek. 17:16, 19; 2 Chron. 36:13. The papists say that no faith is to be kept with the heathen or heretics. The Turks say that no covenant is to be kept with dogs, that is, with Christians; but God made Zedekiah pay dearly for his breach of promise to a heathen. Some husbands and wives, like the old Thracians, esteem their oaths as nothing; they can as easily slip their conjugal covenants, as children do their ripe nuts. But such must know, that if they, like harlots, forget the covenant of their God, he will remember their forgetfulness, and recompense their perjury upon their own heads, Mal. 3:5, as he tells them, 'I will come near to you to judgment, and will be a swift witness against false swearers.' Such think God far off, but his fury is near them. One hearing perjury condemned by a preacher, and how it never escaped unpunished, boasted, I have foresworn myself, and yet my right hand is no shorter than my left;<sup>2</sup> but he had no sooner uttered his words but an inflammation arose in that hand, and he was forced to cut it off, lest it should have killed him. God quickly made his right hand shorter than his left. They that like men transgress their covenant, or (as Junius and Tremel. read it, *tanquam hominis transgressi sunt fædus*, make no more of breaking it than if it had been the covenant of a man), will find that it is the covenant of a God, and that God will have a controversy with them for it, Hosea 6:7, and 4:1.



(4.) Consider the crosses that attend a married condition. Sin at first turned the fruitful earth into briers, and it turneth every estate into brambles. A married condition is comfortable, but yet, like the bee, it hath its sting as well as its honey; as the rose, it hath many prickles as well as some sweetness. 'Such' saith the apostle, speaking of married persons, 'shall have trouble in the flesh,' 1 Cor. 7:28. Crosses will come: sometimes the wife is passionate, sometimes the husband is peevish, the children they are froward and undutiful, servants, they are untoward and unfaithful; sometimes their names are aspersed, sometimes their estates are diminished; now sickness attacketh some in the family, by and by death arresteth them; and how is it possible that these burdens should be borne with any comfort or patience, if married persons do not make religion their business in this relation?

Men promise themselves nothing but sweet and sugar in this condition—and, indeed, where there is love and godliness, it is a lovely, delightful conjunction—but they meet with much sourness and bitterness in it; for this cause, say some, the happy estate of the saints in heaven is set out by that, wherein they neither marry nor are given in marriage. Marriage is both honourable and onerous; as it hath its blessings, so it is not without its burdens. It is not good for man to be alone, yet it is good for man not to touch a woman. Moses calls marriage good, as it was an ordinance of God, and instituted for excellent ends; but Paul calls it, in effect, evil, not in opposition to piety, for it is not a sinful evil, but in opposition to tranquillity, for it hath in it many penal and civil evils; it is γλυκύπικρον, a sweet bitter thing. Moses speaks of marriage in general, or intentionally, so it is good; Paul speaks of marriage in particular seasons of persecution, and accidentally. 'Woe be to them that are with child, or give suck in those days,' Gen. 2:18; 1 Cor. 7:1.

How many trials and troubles did Jacob meet with in his marriage, from his father-in-law, from his wives, from his children! All brought and added some gall and wormwood to his cup, which surely he could never have drunk up so pleasantly, if godliness had not sweetened it.

Reader, as a prisoner may make his fetters more easy by lining them with soft wool, so mayest thou make the cares and crosses incident to this condition much more easy and tolerable by godliness. Some married persons have had many afflictions, yet have undergone them with much cheerfulness; but truly piety was the bladder which preserved them from sinking, and kept their heads above water. Grace alone, like the wood which Moses cast into the waters of Marah, can make these bitter waters sweet and pleasant.

Protagoras, by his natural dexterity, ordered the burden he was to bear with more ease and advantage. The Christian, by his spiritual alacrity, may lighten his heaviest loads; and through piety, which is his spiritual strength, walk cheerfully under the greatest pressures. I must tell thee it is godliness alone which can teach thee, as a bird in a hedge, to sing and be cheerful in the midst of those thorns and briers, those troubles which in this estate surround thee.

2. I shall now speak to the duties incumbent on this relation, both common to both, or special to either.

The common duties are,

First, Amity. This is the nearest relation, and therefore requireth the dearest affection. They are one in many bonds: they have one name, and therefore should have one nature; they are one in the fruit of their loins, and hence should be one in love, Job 19:17. They are one body, one flesh, and so should have but one soul, one spirit; they

have one bed, one board, one house, and therefore should be one in heart. The love betwixt Christ and his spouse, which is so fervent that she is sick of love to him, and he died for love to her, Cant. 2:4; John 15:13, is set out by the love betwixt husband and wife, to shew how great this love is, or at least ought to be. Without the union of hearts, the union of bodies will be no benefit. Where the obligation is greatest, there the affection must be strongest. The husband ought to love his wife, and she him, above father, mother, children, and all others in the world. Some write of the asp, that he never wanders abroad with his companion; and of the vipers, that they cast up their poison before they couple. Nature herein reads married persons a lecture of love. What some say of Castor and Pollux, is true of husband and wife, If they be divided, it is ominous.

The very heathen were so sensible of this duty, that in their wedding sacrifices to Juno, the maker of marriage, in their esteem, they took all the gall out of the beast and threw it away, to signify that all wrath and bitterness must be laid aside in this relation. That emblem which some give of the Netherlands, two bottles tied together floating on the waters, with this motto, *Si collidimur frangimur*, If we clash we are broken, will suit well to husband and wife. God was so tender of this, that therefore he forbade husbands newly married to go to war the first year, and commanded that they should not be charged with any business, Deut. 24:5. Not only, as some think, because such men's hearts would be at home with their wives, and so they would have little mind to fight, whereas God would have all his servants cheerful at his work, and all his soldiers volunteers in his wars; but partly that they might enjoy the great comfort of each other's company, God having appointed marriage for that end. They both leave their father's family and their nearest friends, and therefore have the more need of tendering and cherishing one another, especially at first; but chiefly that by their cohabitation the first year,

and the solace they had in each other's society, their affections might be so close knit together as to continue for ever after. It is happy where all the strife is, which shall please the other most; when the husband's care is how to please his wife, and the wife's care is how to please her husband; when their minds are divided into divers thoughts, casting this way and that way, and every way, how to give best content to each other, according to the signification of the apostle's word, 1 Cor. 7:33, 35. The saints are doves. A dove is so called περίστερα παρὰ τὸ περισσῶς ἐρᾶν, of the excessive love of the one to the other. They are so much one, that Christ calls his church unica columba, my only dove, Cant. 5:8.

Whatsoever afflictions should come, yet their love should continue. If it be fading, it was but feigned. It must not be like fire on our hearths, which a little water of adversity may extinguish; but like the fire on the altar, which never goeth out. The conjunction between husband and wife is set out by the same word by which God's joining himself to his people is set forth, Jer. 50:5, compared with Gen. 29:34, which is translated by some a gluing themselves together. So the word προσκολληθῆναι in the Greek also signifieth, shall cleave to his wife, Mat. 19:5, be glued to his wife, importing a conjunction so near as nothing can come between, and so firm that nothing can dissolve it. A table will often cleave in the whole wood before it will part asunder where it is glued. God's love is everlasting. Neither earth nor hell can abate, much less extinguish, his love to his people. Though differences should arise, yet husband and wife must not be like earthen vessels, which can never be joined together when once broken in pieces, but the falling out of lovers should be the renewing of love; and like bones when broken and well set, their love should be the stronger whilst they live together. If any discontent had happened betwixt the Roman husbands and wives, they went to a certain chapel built in the honour of a goddess called dea viviplaca, a

vivis placandis, whence, after they had been a while there, they returned friends.—Roman Antiq.

Their love must last whilst they live. No affliction must quench it, no flood drown it; nay, like the ark of Noah, it must rise the higher for these waters. When the Roman bridegroom had taken his bride, he did divide the hair of her head with the top of a spear, called *hasta cælibaris*, wherewith some fencer had been killed, to signify that nothing should disjoin them but suchlike spears or violence. True love will be insuperable, inseparable. The longer it continueth in a good soul, the greater will it grow. A prudent observation of each others' nature, and forbearance will prevent many fallings out.

A reverend man seeing a very choleric couple that were married live very comfortably, asked the man how they could so sweetly consort together? He answered, When my wife's fit is upon her, I yield to her; when my fit is upon me, she yields to me, and so we never strive together, but asunder. When there is no fuel to feed it, the fire will go out. Oh, it is a loving sight to see grace thus combating with and conquering nature! But marriage is a bitter sweet, as one saith of a wife, when the married couple are ever contending and wrangling, as fire and water never meet but they fight and strive for the mastery; when their words to each other, which should be softer than oil and healing, are sharper than a two-edged sword and wounding. The ancients, in their marriage hieroglyphics, used to paint Mercury standing by Venus, to signify that smooth and fair expressions should be the concomitants of such a condition. And indeed, if their affections to each other be not feigned, their expressions will be fair; for the tongue is but the heart's expositor to explain its mind and meaning. Surely if any in the world should, as Paul writes to his Corinthians, 1 Cor. 1:10, speak the same thing, avoid divisions, be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same

judgment, husbands and wives should. They are one, 1. Jure originis, for Eve was made of Adam's body. 2. They are one, suppositione legis; the law of man makes them one; no action is brought against the wife, for she goeth under covert-barn. 3. They are one, jure conjunctions, by God's institution; they are one in begetting a seed to God; as the plant of one tree set into another they do grow up, not as two, but one, bringing forth fruit.

Only one thing under this head must not be omitted.

Married persons must take heed of mistaking in the ground of their affections. If wit, or wealth, or beauty be the cause, when these be taken away, which some providence or other may quickly do, the effect will cease. If these be the loadstones, when they are removed, their love will remove too; but if the foundation be eternal, their affection will be immortal—the land-flood of youthful affections will quickly be dried up, but the fountain of spiritual love will send forth such pleasant streams as will refresh them whilst they live. When conscience of God's ordinance and piety in the person are the motives, their love will be lasting. That love which is grounded on lust is like the smith's bar of iron, which now is red hot, and by and by, being put into water, is colder than ever; nay, that this love caused by lust may be turned into hatred. Amnon, though dead, speaketh to us. I wish it were not true in most of both sexes what Marcia, the daughter of Cato, said of one sex, That she could not find a man that would love her more than hers, and therefore she would not marry. Most love with the eyes, (beauty,) or with the hands, (money,) hence they love not with the heart. When the root of love is wrong, the fruit will quickly be rotten; they who love not one another out of conscience, may in time be brought to hate one another.

Secondly, Fidelity. Husbands and wives must be faithful to each other. They are partners in the nearest degree imaginable; and therefore, if unfaithful, the most foolish thieves that are possible.

This faithfulness must shew itself in reference to their estates, names, and bodies.

1. They ought to be faithful each to other in regard of their estates. The husband ought to work, and the wife must see that she do not waste. The man's business is to get, and the woman's to keep and save. If he playeth away his estate abroad, he wrongeth his wife. If she be prodigal of her estate at home, she robs her husband. Both must endeavour, in their several places, by all lawful means, to increase their portions. Some, indeed, are united together, as the beams of the sun in a burning-glass, to consume and waste that which their parents have gathered for them with much labour and weariness. They pull down that house in a day which was some years in building; but God often makes such lie without doors, by bringing them to want. Many a house, like a hive of bees being prodigal of their honey, at least loiterers, in the summer, have been brought to beggary and a starving condition in the winter. Husbands and wives should not be worse than ants, but endeavour in their callings to increase their heaps, like two watermen in oars, that row and labour together on their several sides to get, through God's blessing, an honest and comfortable living. They are a pitiful pair that, like a pair of cards, are much together; but it is at play, not at work. A Christian couple, like the two hands, should both work to maintain the head and body, and not, like broken bones, be lazing on the bed of idleness.

This faithfulness is requisite as to their names. They ought to conceal each other's infirmities; it is wonderful folly for wives to publish their

husbands' faults, and for husbands to proclaim their wives' weaknesses. Hereby they disparage and injure themselves; they disparage themselves both in blazoning abroad their want of wit in making such an ill choice, and as they are sharers in each other's honour and disgrace. Joseph, a just man, would not make Mary a public example, though he thought her guilty of a great crime, Mat. 1.

They injure themselves; for such offences, proceeding from lack of love, if not from hatred, are hardliest forgiven. When breaches fall out and are concealed, they are half reconciled; but if one of the parties blab them abroad, like rankled sores, they are hard to cure. Alphonsus, king of Arragon, was wont to say, that to procure a quiet life, the husband must be deaf, and the wife blind. Sure it is, the man must not hear to declare it abroad, nor the wife see it to say it among her gossips whatever is amiss at home, if they would live in peace.

The faithfulness enjoined as to their bodies; this consisteth in giving to each the seasonable, moderate use of the other's body, and denying it to all others. None hath power of the man's body but his wife, and none hath power of the woman's body but the husband. Christians are called doves; now they are noted by naturalists to be very chaste creatures—they keep themselves to one mate, and will admit of no other.<sup>2</sup> It is abominable and brutish for them that are called Christians to embrace the beds, the bosom of strangers, Prov. 5:19; it ought not to be named, much less to be acted, amongst them that would be called saints, Eph. 5:3. The very motions or temptations to it should be rejected with the greatest dislike and detestation. Other failings disturb their comfort, but this unfaithfulness dissolveth their covenant.

The very storks are famous for their faithfulness to their mates. It is credibly reported by some that have seen it, that whole flocks of



storks, meeting in a meadow, they have set in the midst of them two of their company that have been found disloyal, and running upon them with main force, have killed them with their beaks; so that the company breaking up, the rest flying away, the two offenders only have been found dead. This fowl, saith Tostatus,<sup>5</sup> is so chaste that, as long as the female liveth, he coupleth not with any others. Certainly the fowls of the air will rise up and condemn those beasts of the earth that, like goats, are unsatiable in their lust, and still long after strange flesh. Flee fornication, saith the apostle. The bodies of saints are the temples of God, and surely ought not to be the stews of Satan. Pompey never prospered after he had defiled the temple, 1 Cor. 6:19. The houses of our bodies are not built to be styes of filthiness, but to be vessels of holiness, ver. 13. Our bodies shall be beautiful at the last day, like unto the glorious body of Christ; and shall they be deformed and defiled at this day? ver. 14. Our bodies are members of the holy Jesus, and therefore ought not to be the members of harlots, ver. 15. Other sins are committed by external objects without, but uncleanness within and against the body, ver. 16. Our bodies are purchased by Christ, and therefore the owner, not a traitor, should dwell in it. He that bought the house of our bodies deserves the service of them, ver. 20. Oh, what excellent arguments are here to dissuade from such unnatural defilements, which Solomon saith are worse than theft, and Chrysostom, than idolatry! Prov. 6:30. He is surely an inexcusable and unpardonable thief that, having money enough in his own chest, will yet steal from his neighbour.

Men must have the highest thoughts of their own wives, and women of their own husbands, and then they will not look so as to lust after others. The Persian lady, at Cyrus's wedding, being afterwards asked how she liked the bridegroom, answered, I know not, for I saw none there but my own husband. 'Let not thine heart incline to the ways of a whorish woman; go not astray after her: her house is the way to

hell, going down to the chambers of death,' Prov. 7:25, 27. Some nations have punished adultery with death; by the laws of Julia it was death among the Romans, and by the laws of Solon amongst the Athenians, and amongst them they were torn with wild horses. Aurelianus the emperor, caused such to be tied to the tops of trees, bowed together, and so to be torn in sunder. Zaleneus made a law that the adulterer should lose both his eyes; so much these heathen saw by the light of nature. The Egyptians did cut off the nose of the adulteress, and gave the man a thousand jerks. By God's law it is death—nay, death eternal. 'Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge,' Heb. 13:4. He hath unheard of pains for such unnatural pleasures. Before Moses's time it was punished with burning, Gen. 38:24; and both before and after Moses that fire of lust is punished with the eternal fire of hell.

3. To help one another both in civil and sacred things. Husbands and wives must help to make the weight of the family more tolerable; they must share in each other's joys and sorrows, like those twins which still laughed and wept together. When the husband and wife, like stones in a foundation, are close united, and join together to bear up the building of domestical affairs, there will be the less fear of the house falling on their heads. They must help one another in civil and natural things, comforting each other both in health and sickness, cheering one another both in a prosperous and adverse condition. Marriage is called conjugium, from jugum, a yoke, because married persons should draw evenly and equally, and thereby the load would be carried the more lightly. The philosopher tells us that turtle-doves sit upon their eggs by course. Christians in a married condition should join in putting their shoulders to domestical burdens. Husbands and wives should live together as soul and body. Though the soul be more noble than the body, yet it hath the chiefest care of the compound. Soul and body sympathise with each other; they

mourn and rejoice together; they conspire for the good of one another. The soul helpeth the body with its faculties; the body helps the soul with its members. The soul is the guide of the body; the body is the instrument of the soul. If the soul be sad, the body feels it. How soon doth the face speak the soul's complexion! If the body be sick, the soul is sensible, and little else than sorrow. Thus the husband and wife must be mutually assisting about their personal and their domestical concerns. As the husband is the chief, so he must take the chiefest care of things. As the wife is helped by her husband, so she must be a help to her husband. If the wife be weak, the husband must be more watchful for her, and tender of her, that she receive no wrongs; for therefore, as Lot said of the angels, is she come under the shadow of his roof. If the husband be sick or sad, the wife must endeavour to be both his physician and physic, his comforter and cordial. Some that speak of the pre-existency of souls, say, that in the beginning souls were created by pairs; and hence it came to pass that marriages were happy or unhappy. He that matcheth with the soul created with him was happy; he that missed it was miserable; though I leave this to their fancy, which is the only stock upon which they graft this opinion. Yet this is true, that couple is happy which is not only one in condition, but also one in disposition.

The swan, say naturalists, is called in Greek κυκνός, of κυεῖν, to embrace, (hence the Latin cygnus,) because the male doth embrace, as it were, the female with his long neck; and they do one defend, saith he, the other, and sit upon their nest by turns, and equally have care of their young ones when hatched. This is a fit resemblance of a religious pair, who, for their family's provision, join in their places, and in the bringing up their children piously are united in their pains. The Switzers made a law, that if a man were condemned to die, his parents, if alive, should execute him; because children's woe

comes usually from their parents' neglect and wickedness. Poor children must be plants for paradise, or fuel for hellfire. Oh, how should parents unite in their care and endeavour to make them pious, that they may never go to the place of torment! Our Saviour bid the disciples to suffer little children to come to him; and as he commanded them not to hinder, so he commandeth parents to do more, to help them to come to him. Christ loves to have little customers come to buy raiment and eye-salve, to have little patients that are sick come to him for cure; and surely if parents do not, who will send those dying children to the physician of souls? Alas! they are no more sensible of their misery than the silly sheep is of what the butcher is doing when he is whetting his knife to cut her throat.

Their helpfulness must principally appear in their care for each other's better part. If they love each other in obedience to God's command, they will love another according to God's command, that is, so as chiefly to endeavour each other's eternal welfare. Spiritual communion together with God will be the best preservative of their affection to each other. They ought to be, like Paul and Aristarchus, 'fellow-helpers unto the kingdom of God,' Col. 4:10. Oh, what a lovely sight is it to behold husband and wife, like Zachariah and Elizabeth, walking in all the statutes and commandments of the Lord blameless, and as heirs together of the grace of life. Surely when their voices join in singing divine praises, the sound cannot but be pleasing to God himself. When their sweet breath is poured out in prayer, the perfume will be acceptable and scented in heaven.

When God intendeth Adam a wife, he saith, 'I will make an help meet for man,' Gen. 2:18. They that restrain the words to generation, saith Calvin, do not understand what this conjunction is. Nay, saith Paræus,<sup>2</sup> this was the chiefest cause of a wife in paradise, that she might join with Adam in piety. The Jesuits indeed forbid women to

speak of God and his ways, and to meddle only with their distaff. Most women take their counsel, but, as they will find one day to their cost, they live as though they believed what some falsely affirm, that women have no souls. Priscilla is mentioned before her husband, some think, as the forwarder of the two in holiness, Rom. 16:3; Acts 18:18; 1 Tim. 4:12. They must be willing to hear each other's counsel, and to bear admonitions from one another; though the wife be somewhat inferior, and must not usurp authority over the man, yet, as the case often falls out, it may be a call from God: 'Hearken to the voice of thy wife,' Gen. 21:12, when she meekly and submissively seeks to amend somewhat that is amiss in her husband. How many queens, saith Chrysostom, are buried in silence; whereas Priscilla, a tent-maker's wife, being a fellow-labourer in Christ, is in every one's mouth, and that not ten or twenty years, but until the coming of Christ. Where is now the vainglory of women in tricking up their faces? Learn from this woman what are the true ornaments not sought for on earth, but laid up in heaven. Hic est ecclesiæ ornatus, ille theatrorum; hic cælis dignus, ille equis et mulis, This the ornament of the church, the other, glorious apparel, is for stages; this beseeemeth heaven, the other horses and mules.

It is sad when the wife, like Jezebel, 1 Kings 21:21, stirreth up her husband (forward enough of himself) to wickedness. Some women are the choicest arrows the devil hath in his quiver to wound the precious souls of men. Witness Eve. How many daughters hath Job's wife still alive, that provoke their husbands, not to pray and bless, but to curse and blaspheme God! If their husbands, like Moses, obey the precepts of God, they, like Zipporah, will ring a peal in their ears to make them impious or impatient. Certainly they who have met with such wives have cause enough to consent to that of Aristotle, that they have lost half the happiness of their lives. Amongst fish the males are better than the females, except the fish silurus, but it is not

always so amongst us; for even many men also, when their wives look heaven-ward, do their utmost to hinder them, and, like the pharisees, are neither willing to go to heaven themselves, nor to suffer others that would. When the wife sometimes, as Pilate's, entreats her husband, who is fiery and furious in persecuting a poor saint, to have nothing to do with that just man, yet he, against the counsel of his wife, command of his God, and conviction of his own conscience, goeth on to his own destruction.

If the husband sometimes calls to prayer, the wife calls, it may be, to work, or to some foolish pleasure. If the wife, as the Shunammite to the man of God, for the enlivening of her dead son, would go to hear the word of the Lord, for the recovery of her dying soul, and asketh her husband leave, he is as backward as the father of that child, though upon a far worse ground, possibly; Wherefore wilt thou go? to what purpose is so much preaching? I warrant you, you may be saved without so much ado, 2 Kings 4:23. Thus many that are unequally yoked, like horses in a team that draw contrary ways, are miserably hindered in their journey to heaven. But happy is that couple that, like Elkanah and Hannah, join in giving up their children to God's service, and in going themselves together to sacrifice, 1 Sam. 2:19; that pair is the blessed pair, that, as a pair of wings to a bird, help one another to fly up to God. These, if any in the world, may say, as those new married in Athens were wont to sing, Ἐφύγον κᾶκον, εὔρον ἄμεινον, I have left a bad condition, and found a better. Oh, how may such bless the day that ever they met, and at God's call be willing to part, knowing that ere long they shall meet again in honour, never to part more! This husband and wife, like Saul and Jonathan, are lovely in their lives, and after their deaths shall not be divided.

## **A good wish of a Christian couple, wherein are epitomised the mutual duties of husband and wife**

Marriage being a condition which requireth much circumspection, as it is a relation of the sweetest and nearest communion in this world, ordained by our God, both for the increase of his church, and our mutual comfort, and as it is the first relation in nature, and the original of all the rest, upon the wrong management of which the ruin of the other doth frequently follow; we wish in general that our behaviour in it may never be so void of conscience as to turn it into a cross to ourselves or a curse to others, but that our fellowship together may be such that we may both in it have fellowship with the Father, and with Jesus Christ his Son. Lord, who art the guide of all relations, and the God of all grace, be pleased to grant us affections suitable to our condition, that our whole carriage therein may be as becometh Christians, and such as are married to the Lord Christ; that as Abraham and Sarah, we may be famous for faith, as Isaac and Rebecca, we may live together in the dearest love; and that, as that pious pair, Zacharias and Elizabeth, we may walk in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord blameless, and we, walking in company, may walk the more cheerfully in the way which leadeth to everlasting life.

We wish, considering how marriage, though a human conjunction, is of divine institution; how the Father appointed it, and that in paradise, and the Son hath approved it by his own glorious presence, that the Spirit with its gracious beams may so overshadow our souls, that many Barnabases, many sons of consolation, may be the issue and effect of our conjugal relation. Oh that we might both reverence this golden relation for his sake whose image and superscription it beareth, and never by our unworthy and unholy conversations deface and defile it! Those that are honoured by a prince will seek to honour

him in their places, if they be ingenuous persons. How different is men's carriage, answerable to the difference in their conditions! Lord, since thou hast exalted us, let us never debase thee; though others whom thou hast lifted up make it their business to cast thee down, and the more helps thou affordest them to sweeten their pilgrimage, the more they abound in profaneness; yet let thy goodness to us be improved by us for thy glory, and let us be holy as thou, who hast called us to this relation, art holy, in all manner of conversation.

We wish that the meditation of each other's frailty may quicken us to greater fidelity, especially in the immediate concernment of eternity. The next arrow which death shoots may light upon one of us, and our relation will die with us; though now it shineth pleasantly and refresheth us with its warm rays, yet it will shortly set and never arise more; and then, oh then, we shall never have the least season to advantage each other's souls, or to further one another's salvation. Oh that this weighty thought might sink so deep into our hearts, that we may pray the more frequently and the more fervently for and with one another, because within a few days we shall never pray more; that we may persuade and admonish one another the more seriously and the more affectionately, because within a few days we shall never do it more; that we may in our several places work the work of him that sent us into the world whilst it is day, because the night cometh wherein neither of us can work. Lord, make us so mindful of our deaths, that we may be the more faithful in our duties; and whatsoever our hands find to do, in reference to thy praise, and our eternal peace, let us do it with all our might, because there is no knowledge, nor wisdom, nor device, in the grave, whither we are both going.



We wish that the covenant which we have solemnly entered into each with other, before God, angels, and men, may be like that which the Jews entered into with the Lord, Jer. 50:5, 'an everlasting covenant never to be forgotten.' If we forget our God, and deal falsely in his covenant, he will search it out, for he knoweth the secrets of the heart. Why should we, as young gallants, enter into bonds, never minding them more till the day of payment be past, and the serjeant of death be ready to arrest us, and haul us to the prison of hell! Should we, as the harlot, forget the covenant of our God, he would remember it to our loss and ruin; if it be dangerous to break the covenant of a man, that vengeance from heaven hath often fallen on their heads; how dreadful is it to break the covenant of a God! His curse hath broken in upon many a couple for breaking his covenant. Oh that all our action in this relation might be so answerable to the gospel, that our God may never have cause to complain of us, as once of Israel, 'What hast thou to do to take my covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee?' Lord help us, as persons in debt that are honest, to be so mindful of our bonds, that we may be careful to discharge them in the performance of the conditions, and let the consideration thereof be an impregnable bulwark, to defend us against all the assaults which the flesh or world shall make to draw us from our duties.

We wish, since by a married condition we are more remote from our parents' care, which formerly was our haven, and are launched into the ocean of this world, in which we must expect to be tossed up and down with storms and tempests, that we may be diligent to make God our guide, and Scripture our compass, to prevent our perishing. They who have trouble in the flesh, had need to live after the Spirit. If it be foul under foot, it will be but ill travelling if it be not fair overhead. How sad will it be to have storms on our heads, and no cover! to have qualms come over our hearts, and no cordial! to have

afflictions, sickness, nay death, in our house, and to have the God of all consolations, and the Lord of life, far from our house! Oh that, whatever stony or dirty ways providence may call us to walk in on earth, yet we may so walk by rule, as to enjoy a comfortable sunshine from heaven! Lord, let us so own thee in prosperity, that thou mayest own us in adversity; let us be so careful to keep good consciences, that in all estates thou mayest be our comfort, going before us as our cloud by day, and pillar of fire by night, to direct and cheer us in our passage through this wilderness, till we come to Canaan.

We wish that our affections may be as close as our relation; and since our God hath tied this knot with his own blessed hands betwixt us, we may never so much as in angry thoughts, much less in wrangling deeds, do anything which may tend to loosen it. We are one flesh, why should we not have one spirit? What a dreadful, doleful spectacle is a house in a flame! What a blessed, blissful sight is a family of love! When bells clash and jangle, how harsh and displeasing is their noise! when they keep tune and time, how harmonious and grateful is their sound! Oh that our house may be a church, and its name Philadelphia, or brotherly love, and that we especially, who are the chief in it, may be like Jerusalem—compact together, and at unity within ourselves; that all our thoughts of each other may be sweetened with love, and all our words to each other seasoned with love; and that in our actions towards each other, love, as a simple of a predominant quality, may give a relish and savour to them all! Our Redeemer, who hath given us this precept, and set himself for our pattern, is love; his name is love, his nature is love, his sacraments are seals of love, his Spirit is the earnest of love, his Scripture is his letter of love, his providences are all written in the characters of love; his ordinances are love's banqueting-house, wherein his banner over us is love. He hath commanded us, as we are Christians, Eph. 5:1, 2, to be 'followers of him as dear children, and

to walk in love, as he hath loved us.' Oh then, what love should we have each to other! how close should we cleave in our affections, who are bound together by God himself, both with the bond of religion and relation, and are provoked to it by such loving precepts, and such a lively pattern! Surely such cords should not be easily broken. Love is the bond of perfection, and the perfection of all bonds; it is the perfect bond which will tie all our duties and graces together, without which they will fall asunder. 'Behold, how good and how pleasant is it for husband and wife to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garment; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore,' Ps. 133. Oh that love may be our strength, wherewith we may bear one another's burdens; that love may be our mantle, wherewith we may cover one another's infirmities; and that love, like the fire in Elijah's trench, may lick up all the water of opposition which may ever arise between us! Lord, who art the God of love, let thy Spirit so kindle and increase this heavenly flame in our hearts, that we may be always ascending up unto thee in love of desire, and for thy sake be carried out towards each other, with unfeigned and constant love of delight. Though others, who live always quarrelling, curse their wedding-day more than Job did his birthday, and desire a divorce as earnestly as he did death, let our lives be so sweetened with love, that, from the comfort of it, we long the more for our meeting together in heaven with thyself, and amongst all thy saints.

We wish that faithfulness may be the girdle about both our loins, which may keep us close each to other, and to our duties, notwithstanding all attempts by the flesh and devil to part us asunder. Our interests are the same—we are equal sharers both in

gains and losses; neither can rise by the other's ruin, but we stand and fall together. Oh that what wealth our God hath given us through his providence may never be wasted through our prodigality; but as those that trade in a joint stock, we may be equally solicitous, and, in the use of lawful means, industrious for its preservation and increase. Why should we be so foolish as to steal from ourselves either goods or good name, when the treasure and honour of both are embarked in the same bottom? Surely it behoves us to join in our diligence; ordinary thieves are unrighteous in wronging others, but we, if unfaithful, are unnatural in robbing ourselves. Lord, make us so faithful about the unrighteous mammon, that thou mayest trust us with the true riches; but let us be more tender of each other's reputation than of the apple of our own eyes, and to imitate thy Majesty in covering and forgiving one another's infirmities. Let neither of our bodies be sinks of uncleanness, but temples of holiness; learn us so to possess our vessels in sanctification and honour, that the very thoughts of dishonesty may be more dreadful to us than death itself. Why should we make thy house Satan's harlot? Can we imagine that our Saviour, because his bodily presence was once in an unclean stable, will vouchsafe his spiritual presence in an impure body? Do not we expect that our bodies should outshine the sun in glory and purity at the last day? And shall they resemble ditches for dirt and defilement at this day! Oh that we might never, like an adulterer and an adulteress, either in soul or body go a-whoring from thee, but that all the members of our bodies may be instruments of righteousness, and all the faculties of our souls set apart for thy service, that hereafter both soul and body may be satisfied fully with thy salvation.

We wish that, as head and body, we may conspire for each other's welfare; and as we are one flesh, so we might have one spirit in seeking its real comfort, and endeavouring its lawful contentment.

Domestical burdens will be more tolerable if we put under both our shoulders; personal hardships will be more acceptable whilst we conjoin in our help; the potion which is most bitter will go down the better if each drink a part. Oh that, as fellow-commoners, we might always eat of the same dish, whether sour or sweet; and since we are fellow-travellers, cheer up one another, to make our journey the more pleasant, till we come to rest in the true paradise! The head and body do not stand out against each other in terms of defiance. Christ and his church do not rise up in arms against each other in a warlike fashion. Lord, help us in our family affairs to live as those that draw in the same yoke, and in all our civil and natural concernments to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

We wish, above all things, that we may, with the greatest faithfulness, be serviceable to each other's souls; and whilst others conspire together to indulge their flesh, and like Ananias and Sapphira, to tempt God, we may conspire together to live after the Spirit, and with the greatest advantage to exercise ourselves to godliness, that we may both, like the two cherubims, look one to another, and both towards thy mercy-seat. And oh do thou, who sittest between the cherubims, meet us, and commune with us now, that at last we may meet at thy seat of mercy. Yet a little while and the light is with us; yet a little while and we may pray together, and we may fast together, and we may read together; within a few days the shadows of the evening will stretch themselves upon us, and it will be no longer day with us. Oh that we might be so far from living like those beasts, who mind little save bedding and boarding together, that we may, like angels, always stand in God's presence, and join in admiring his boundless perfections! Lord, let us not, like Herod and Herodias, join together against thy saints; nor, as Herod and Pilate, agree together against our Saviour, lest at last we burn together in the unquenchable fire. But let us take sweet counsel

together, and go often to the house of God, and to the throne of grace in company; and do thou so assist us, that our house now maybe a Bethel, none other than the house of God; and when this fast knot betwixt us shall be untied by the king of terrors, we may be more closely united to the King of saints, in that place where there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage, but all are as angels, bathing their souls in the rivers of thy pleasures, and warming their hearts in thy bosom and embraces. Oh, if there be such a help in a fit spouse, what a heaven is there in marriage to thy dear Son! If converse with flesh and blood yield such comfort, what infinite delight, and unconceivable consolation will flow from immediate, uninterrupted, and eternal communion with thy blessed self! Oh, blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the lamb!

Lord, enable us (husband and wife) to shine as the sun and moon, and our children and servants as stars, so gloriously and powerfully with the light of holiness, that our house may be thy lesser heaven, and that when we have finished our courses, by declaring thy glory in our several relations, and shewing forth thy spiritual handiworks in our whole conversations, we may be elevated to those higher orbs, and heavenly mansions, where we shall never set, be eclipsed, or clouded; where the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun as the light of seven days; where the crosses and encumbrances of all relations shall be removed, and the true comfort only of them all remain, yea, where the light of all relations shall be swallowed up, as the lesser celestial lights in the sun, in our great relation to God through Christ. For there 'the sun shall no more be our light by day, nor the moon our light by night, but the Lord our God, our everlasting light, and our God our glory.' Amen.

## **CHAPTER IV**

## **How Christians may exercise themselves to godliness in the relation of husbands, with a good wish about the husband's duty**

I proceed from the mutual to the special duties, and I shall begin with the husband.

Reader, if God hath called thee to this relation, mind holiness in it. Thou art above thy wife in place, oh be above her in piety! The higher the air is, the purer it is; the higher thou art, the holier thou shouldst be. The highest spheres carry about with them the inferior orbs by their celerity. Thou shouldst draw thy wife and children along with thee to Christ by thy exemplary sanctity. Do not say that thy marriage hindereth thy holiness, for by it thou hast more advantage to promote religion in thy family. Indeed, thy marriage to the flesh and body of death, not to a wife, is that, if anything, which will make thee wicked.

As thou art a husband, thou art intrusted with a weighty talent; thou hast the government and guidance of thy wife committed to thee. Oh be faithful in the management of so great a trust. Let thy dominion be exercised with discretion, lest by thy foolish fondness it be liable to contempt, or by thy rigorous severity it degenerate into cruelty. Wisdom must sit at the stern of thy authority, and so guide it in an even course, that it may neither dash upon the rock of scorn, nor sink in the quicksand of slavish fear. There are two principal affections which God requireth in thy wife in relation to thee,—reverence and love. Now, thy prudence must so manage thy authority, that these two may be preserved in their due place, and not interfere and cut

each other; that her fear of thee may not, through thy severity, be turned into hatred, nor her love to thee, through thy familiarity, be turned into slighting thee. On the one hand, take heed that through thy folly thou dost not cause her to condemn thee; let not thy carriage be childish, lest she think thee fitter for a rod than to rule over her. A ridiculous husband will never command an awful fear in his wife. He that goeth in a fool's coat, or playeth antic tricks, will sooner make the spectators laugh at and deride him, than honour and reverence him. A giddy head will force the body to stumble and fall. On the other hand, beware of rigidness, lest she hate thee; do not, as a fly, seek for a sore place, some weakness in thy wife, to fasten on. It is the part of an enemy to look up and down to spy where the wall is lowest, that he may enter thereat and conquer the city. Some husbands are full of those cutting expressions, I'll make you know that I am master: Do such a thing, or you shall repent it dearly: I'll bring your proud heart down with a vengeance,—language usual to a Turkish galley-slave; but surely, if masters should forbear threatening to a servant, much more husbands to a wife, Col. 4:1, 2. It is far better to reign in her heart by clemency, than to rule over her body by tyranny. A wise soldier will choose to bring a rebellious city into subjection by terms of peace, if it may be, rather than by batteries of war. And wilt thou, as the Egyptians did over the Israelites, rule with rigour over thy wife, and make her groan to heaven by reason of her bondage? Truly such a churl, as the cramp, racks his own sinews, and makes his own body full of torment. He that screweth the string of his power too high, will break it before he is aware. To overtax subjects is the way to make a poor king. So much in general.

The special duties enjoined the husband are three.



First, Affection. Among the three worthies, this is the first and the chief of the three. It is observable that the Holy Ghost mentioneth this duty frequently and urgently, and that as it were the only duty enjoined the husband: 'Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved his church, and gave himself for it. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them,' Eph. 5:25, 28, 33; Col. 3:19. Partly because husbands are most defective in this duty. Generally men are diligent in the exercise of their dominion, but negligent in regard of affection; hence their authority degenerateth into tyranny. Partly because this duty will exceedingly help to the performance of all the rest. The husband must bear his wife's burdens, cover her infirmities;<sup>2</sup> but it is love only which hath the strong back that can do this. The husband must defend her from dangers—spread his skirt, his wing over her, Ruth 3:9, as birds do over their young to preserve them from harm; but it is love only is the shield to bear off those blows. The husband must comfort her under crosses, sympathising with her in her sufferings, and cheering her with his courteous carriage; but without the ingredient of love, no cordial can be made. The husband must provide for her body and external good, and take care of her soul and eternal good; but without the weights of love, he will not move regularly either way. Love is the key that opens the door into every duty; love is the fulfilling of the whole law.

The formation of the woman out of man, sheweth how great his affection should be to her, nay, to himself. She was not made of his head, to be his sovereign, nor of his feet, to be his slave; but of a rib in his side, to shew how near she should lie to his heart. God is so urgent for fervent love to a wife that he slights the husband's love to her when it is but little, and counts it no better than hatred. 'And

when God saw that Leah was hated,' Gen. 29:31. It is not enough, saith Calvin on the text, that a man do not hate his wife, but God expecteth that he should heartily love her. Because Jacob's love was not so hot as it ought, God calls it hatred. It is sad when the husband is so cross and crabbed, that his house is a prison to his wife, himself her jailer, and his commands little else than fetters to gall and gore her flesh. It is said of the turtle dove that he loves his mate exceedingly; when she dieth, he continually pines and moans, and will never after sit upon a green bough. It is certain the love of a husband to his wife should be above his love to all his relations. Next God and Christ, and his own salvation, his wife calls for the hottest and strongest affection. 'For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and cleave to his wife,' Gen. 2:18. A man ought to have a greater respect for his father and mother than any persons in the world; yet even these must be left, out of love to his wife. The words are not to be understood so much that he must leave them in regard of habitation, according to Mercer and the Chaldee reading, he shall leave his father and mother's bed, (it being a Jewish custom for unmarried children to lie in their parents' chambers,) but in regard of affection; yet not that he ceaseth to be a son when he once becometh a husband, for his reverence, obedience, and recompense are still due to his father—but, 1. Comparatively; he is rather to leave them than his wife, for his love to his wife must be so great that in comparison of it he may be said to leave his parents. 2. Conditionally; if his parents shall seek to draw him from his wife. So Musculus.

Therefore the Holy Ghost calleth a wife 'the wife of thy bosom,' Deut. 13:6, because of the extraordinary love which thou oughtest to have to her. Those things which we put in our bosoms are fervently affected. The disciple whom Jesus loved leaned usually on his bosom, John 13:23, with 20:2. Christ, the beloved of the Father, is

said to be 'in the bosom of the Father.' The husband must 'love his wife as himself,' Eph. 5:33; not as the phrase is used when it is said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' i.e., that he must love her with the same quality and sincerity of love; but it is meant with the same quantity and fervency of love. His love to his wife must not only be of the same nature, but also in the same measure with his love to himself. Oh, how clear is a man to himself! how tenderly, how constantly, how fervently doth he love himself! none can persuade him to be out of love with himself; if he be deformed or diseased, yet he loves himself: truly thus should his love be to his wife. 'None ever yet hated his own flesh,' saith the apostle, Eph. 5:29. We hear of some men that are cruel to themselves, that cut and tear their own flesh; but they are Baalites, 1 Kings 18:21, or Bedlamites.

Reader, if thou art one of those that abusest thy wife this way, remember that, like the man in the Gospel possessed with a devil, thou woundest thyself. Surely if Scripture will not allow thee to be bitter to thy wife, it will not allow thee to beat her. He that is bitter to his wife puts off the human nature, (to be human is to be courteous. Hence I 'will draw thee with the bands of love, with the cords of a man,' i.e., of gentleness and mildness,) and if he that is bitter unmans himself, what doth he do that beats his wife? Surely he is a monk or a madman in beating himself. Socrates could say, For a man to beat his wife was as great a sacrilege as to profane the most holy things in the world. It is said of Dr Cowper, that when his wife had burnt all his notes, which he had been eight years in gathering, for fear he should kill himself with study—for she could scarce get him to his meals—he shewed no passion, but duly uttered this expression, Indeed, wife, it was not well done.

Thy love should make thee moderate in all thy commands; nothing should be enjoined but what is both needful to be done, and fit for

her to do. Thy wife is the weaker vessel, and therefore not to be put to servile labours. If a knife, saith Luther, hath a tender edge, men will not cut hard stones with it. Oh, what will not that man do or suffer for his wife that loves her as he ought! Shechem denied not to be circumcised, because he loved Dinah. Jacob served seven years out of love to Rachel. Love beareth much, and forbeareth also. Where it is otherwise, that the husband is crabbed and churlish, there the virgin may complain, in the words of Ambrose,<sup>3</sup> My money hath sold me to misery, and is the dear price of my slavery. The dominion of a man over his wife is not that of a master over his slave, but such as the soul hath over the body; not for its hurt, but for its help, to further its welfare; or like that of the apostle over the churches committed to him by the Lord, for edification, and not for destruction, 2 Cor. 10:8.

'Let all things be done in charity,' saith the apostle. If all thy actions towards others, then much more all things that concern thy wife, should be done in love. Thy thoughts should be thoughts of love, thy looks should be looks of love; thy lips, like the honeycomb, should drop nothing but sweetness and love; thy instructions should be edged with love; thy reprehensions should be sweetened with love; thy carriage and whole conversation towards her should be but the fruit and demonstration of thy love. Oh how did Christ, who is thy pattern, love his spouse! His birth, life, and death were but, as it were, a stage whereon the hottest love imaginable, from first to last, acted its part to the life. It was a known, unknown love. Tiberius Graechus the Roman, finding two snakes in his bed, and consulting with the soothsayers, was told that one of them must be killed; yet, if he killed the male, he himself would die shortly; if the female, his wife would die. His love to his wife Cornelia was so great that he killed the male, saith Pint, in Vit., and died quickly.

The wise man tells us, 'Let her be to thee as the loving hind or roe'—the males of which, according to naturalists, are most enamoured with their mates—'and be thou ravished with her love,' Prov. 5:19. Do thou, as Christ in his spouse, Zeph. 3:17, rest in her love; desire no more; for it is not the having a wife, but the loving a wife, will make a chaste husband. Therefore the wise man presently subjoineth, 'For why shouldst thou delight, my son, in a strange woman?' Prov. 5:20; but the Hebrew readeth it, Do thou err in thy love, so as to wink at many weaknesses in thy wife; for love, we say, is blind; and so affectionately to desire her, and to delight in her, that others may think thee to doat on her. Therefore the husband among the Romans, saith Aul. Gel., gave a ring unto his wife, which she was to wear on the next finger to the little of the left hand, because unto that finger alone a certain artery from the heart proceedeth.

2. Instruction and admonition. Love to the wife's soul is the very soul of the husband's love; without this all his love is dead and unsavoury. Reader, if thy care be only for thy wife's body, what dost thou more than heathen? if thou mindest nothing but her outward comfort, dost thou not as much for thy cattle? If thy love, as it ought, be grounded on spiritual respects, it will shew itself in spiritual effects. Be sure thou dost not engage her in sin. Abraham, though a good man, did yet seduce his wife to dissemble for his sake. Gen. 20:13. What a grief would it be to thee for thy wife to die of that disease which thou broughtest home to her! Be also diligent to teach her the duty she oweth to God. Possibly she understandeth not the word of God, and may say to thee, as the eunuch to Philip, 'How can I, except some man guide me?'

Surely it is not for nothing that the apostle commandeth wives to 'learn of their husbands at home,' 1 Cor. 14:35; but, alas! how should they learn, when their husbands, through their wilful ignorance,

cannot, or, through their cursed wickedness, will not, instruct them? God enjoins them to dwell with their wives as men of knowledge, 1 Pet. 3:7; but many dwell with them as men of ignorance, or rather as brutes, as if they were met merely to graze and couple together, to bed and board together. God calleth the husband the 'guide of his wife,' Prov. 2:17, because he should instruct and direct her in the way of life; but sad it is most husbands are 'blind guides,' that lead their wives in those 'ways that go down to death, and those steps which take hold of hell.' It may be the body of thy wife is so dear to thee, that thou canst not endure to think of her disgrace, or poverty, or sickness, or death; but all this while thou never thinkest, it may be, of her soul, whether that be in bondage to Satan, or a servant to Christ—in a state of damnation or salvation. Alas! this love is merely carnal.

The husband is called the 'head of the wife,' not only in regard of his dominion, (the head is above the body,) but also in regard of direction. The head directs the body; the head directs both the feet to walk and the hands to work; it seeth and understandeth for the whole body. Possibly thy wife is ignorant or atheistical: 'What knowest thou, O man, but thou mayest save thy wife!' 1 Cor. 7:16. Thy duty is to resemble Christ; his church came out of his side, as Eve out of Adam's; but the chief care of Christ was to sanctify and cleanse his church; he came by blood to take away the guilt, and he comes by water to take away the filth of her sins. Oh, how industrious shouldst thou be, both in prayer to God, and instructions to thy wife, that her sins may be pardoned, and her soul purified, and that at last she may be presented to Christ in his own righteousness, 'a glorious spouse, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing!' How is it possible thou canst let thy beloved wife, the wife of thy bosom, to destroy her soul by wickedness, and neglect her Saviour and salvation, and not so much as tell her of it? O friend, where is thy

love to thy wife? There are husbands that will give their wives a sermon willingly when they are dead, who never eared that they should hear any sermons, or gave them the least heavenly and serious instruction, whilst they were living; but, alas! it is a sign they never had any true love to them. Such men's wives have more cause than Samson's to weep on the very day of their wedding.

If thy wife sin against God, thy duty is to admonish her, though mildly. Consider what the fault is. We do not go to surgeons for every sore; some will heal of themselves; but sin must not be suffered in any, much less in one that is so near thee. The nearer the fire is to thy own house, the sin is to thy own soul, the more dangerous. Job, that was one of heaven's worthies for the fear of God, surely was not wanting in love to his wife; yet, when she acted by the devil, twits him in the teeth with his integrity, and bids him spit his venom in the face of God for requiting him so hardly for all his holiness; mark how a holy impatience triumphs in this pattern of patience! I am persuaded her words did more pierce his soul, and make deeper wounds, than all the great artillery which Satan had discharged against him: 'Thou speakest like one of the foolish women; shall we receive good at the hands of God, and not evil? Thy speech is unsavoury, and infinitely below a saint: shall we who have received so many comforts be unwilling to bear some crosses from God? when we have had so many clear days, shall we presently curse him for sending a few cloudy days?' Thus he rebukes her, not as some passionate men do their wives, with rage, but with reason.

Two things are considerable in all admonitions to thy wife.

(1.) That they be given privately. To do it publicly before children and servants is likelier to provoke than to profit. Besides, it will make her

contemptible to her family, and thereby they will be emboldened to reject her authority.

(2.) That they be delivered patiently, not with passions. Thy admonitions may, as one saith, be warm;—such physic will work the better,—but not scalding hot. If once thou despisest her person, expect that she should despise thy reprehensions. Remember always that she is thy companion and yoke-fellow, drawing with thee, though on the left hand, and sometimes unevenly. Be sure thou do it not publicly. We dress wounds in secret, not in the market. He is but a fool that, like a fowl and full stomach, emptieth himself against his wife whoever standeth by. Nor passionately, with taunting, bitter language. If she taste thy reproof bitter, she will spit it out, not take it down.

3. Provision. The Jewish wives might challenge three things from their husbands as due debts: 1. Food; 2. Apparel; 3. Cohabitation, or the right of the bed, which they draw from Exod. 21:10, where it is said, 'If he take him another wife, her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish.' It is most wicked for a husband that hath it to let his wife, which is himself, want. 'No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, as the Lord his church,' Eph. 5:29. It is well observed by Zanchy, under these two words, ἐκτρέφει καὶ θάλπει, nourisheth and cherisheth, are properly understood food by the first, and raiment by the second; and improperly, by a synecdoche, are all things included that belong to this life. The latter word expresseth, saith Aretius, the solicitousness and tenderness of a husband in providing for his wife, it being a metaphor from a bird, that sitteth on her eggs, or hovereth with her wings over her young, to keep them warm.



Reader, thy duty is to provide such conveniences for her as are suitable to her relation, and thy quality and condition. Thy wife hath left her father and mother, and all her friends, who were tender of her, for thee, and what a loss will she be at, if she do not find these all in thee? The heathen poet, describing a husband, tells us πατήρ μὲν γάρ ἐστιν αὐτῇ καὶ πότνια μητὴρ, ἥδὲ κασίγνητος, that he should be both father and mother to his wife.

Naturalists observe of the pie, that he beats away his mate about autumn, lest he should be forced to keep her all the winter, and is fitly made the hieroglyphic of an unkind husband. 'The Lord grant,' saith Naomi, 'that each of you may find rest in the house of her husband,' Ruth 1:9. Rest, not rigour; courtesy, not cruelty; a competent maintenance, not a niggardly allowance, is expected in the house of a husband. Whilst thou livest, let her maintenance be according to thy wealth. Thou wilt not, possibly, under-keep thy cattle, and why shouldst thou under-keep thy wife? When thou diest, let her be left so that she may live like thy wife; and do not, as one saith, beat her when thou art dead, by causing her, through thy churlishness, to want, or to hang upon the cradle. Jesus Christ gave his church his own flesh, rather than she should want food, and his own robes, rather than she should want raiment. Surely that head, husband, wants wit, that suffereth the body, his wife, to go hungry or naked. Christ took great care of his spouse when he was dying; then his love shewed itself in all his colours. Friends at parting shew most kindness. The love of a husband to his wife must outlast this life. He must not, when dying, so much remember that he is a father, as to forget that he is a husband, but mind the root before the branches.

In all her troubles thy duty is to be tender of her. When Hannah was perplexed for her want of children, how affectionately doth Peninnah persuade her: 'Why weepest thou? Why is thine heart troubled? Am

not I better to thee than ten sons?' 1 Sam. 1:8. So be thou her comfort, not as many are, her corrosive.

He that considereth how uneasy the wife's yoke is—she conceiveth with much sorrow; carrieth her burden up and down in her womb, many times with great trouble; brings it forth into the world with so much pain that a mother once said, I had rather die in battle ten times over than bring forth but once only, (hence the hieron pella,<sup>2</sup> that bringeth forth with such pain that the blood trickleth out of her eyes, is the emblem of a woman in travail); and brings up her child with no small care and grief, losing many hours' sleep in the night, and much comfort in the day, to suckle and tend it; besides, how she meets with many unkindnesses and provocations from children and servants more than the man, being constantly amongst them—he, I say, that considereth these things wisely and seriously, cannot but be convinced that he ought not to rule over her with rigour, but to make her condition as comfortable as he can, both by nourishing and cherishing her whilst he is with her, and providing for her sufficiently, to the utmost of his power, when God shall take him from her. But, alas! where are the husbands that bear that affection to their wives, that pray and discourse piously with their wives, and that make that provision for their wives which God and conscience command them? Surely, if Diogenes were alive, he might take his candle and lantern again at noonday, and go into our market-places to find out a man a good husband.

Thus, reader, I have finished what I intended to offer thee in reference to this relation. Shall I persuade thee to love thy wife cordially, to instruct her constantly, and to provide for her competently, and all out of conscience to God's command? Oh, it is thy privilege that thou mayest be honouring and serving thy Maker, which is thy husband! Whilst thou art honouring and serving thy

wife, do not, as many, who, because they are married to a wife, give a bill of divorce to godliness; like him in the Scripture, who, being invited with others to a costly supper, Luke 14:20, returned of them all the worst answer, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' The other guests were mannerly: 'I pray thee have me excused,' saith the purchaser, ver. 18; 'I pray thee have me excused,' saith the other, ver. 19; but this is peremptory, 'I cannot come.' The others plead an inconveniency—they could not well attend the feast because of their farms; but this pleads an utter impossibility, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' There was in the carnal judgment of the two former some discommodity in going; but in the cursed opinion of this latter, an absolute necessity of staying away. Oh, monstrous ingratitude, to abuse that to a curse, and to turn it into poison, which God bestowed as a great comfort and choice blessing!

Reader, remember that God hath not given thee thy wife, as Saul did Michal to David, to be a snare to thee, that at last he might slay thee, but to be Milchah, a woman of counsel to thee in the best things, that he might save thee; therefore 'dwell with thy wife as a man of knowledge, giving honour to her as the weaker vessel, as heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered,' 1 Pet. 3:7.

### **A good wish about a husband's duty, wherein the former particulars are epitomised**

The relation of a husband, speaking both my dignity, that I am the head of my wife, and my duty, to study and design, as the head doth for the body, her comfort and welfare, I wish in general that I may never be so mindful of my dominion as to forget those duties which my God hath annexed to this relation; but that, as I am higher in

honour, so I may also be above her in holiness, able and faithful to guide and instruct her in the path to happiness. Lord, let me never be of their number who will be figures to stand before their wives in the concernments of this world, but are cyphers alone, standing for nothing in the affairs of the other world; but enable me to carry myself as one espoused to Christ in this relation of a husband, helping her in my place and to my power in the I things that relate to this life, but especially affording her my utmost assistance, that she may attain the inheritance of the saints in light. I wish that, as my God is ever faithful in his covenant to me, so I may be always mindful of my covenants to him. All his ways to me are mercy and truth; his faithfulness never faileth. Though heaven and earth pass away, yet not a tittle of his word shall be unfulfilled. All his words are oaths for their certainty, and all his promises are the sure mercies of David. Shall I be false to him who is so fast to me? If it be unlawful to deceive a man who deludes me, how sinful is it to be unfaithful to my God, who is thus faithful to me? If he who telleth lies shall in nowise enter into heaven, how certainly shall I, if I foreswear myself, be cast into hell? Lord, cause me so to consider that my wedding bond to my wife hath thee for a witness, and to this day is in thine hand, that I may never give thee cause to put it in suit in thy court of justice, and to take its forfeiture by my dealing treacherously with my companion, and the wife of my covenant.

I wish that the thought of my dissolution may make me the more holy in this relation, that because I must shortly die and leave her, I may therefore do the more good to her, and receive the more good from her, whilst I live and enjoy her. My life, alas! is but a small spot of time; now a flood, by and by an ebb, and then I launch into the ocean of eternity. Now I live, anon I die, and then I must answer for my carriage in this condition. Oh that the consideration of my particular reckoning may cause me to be the more religious, that I

may be the more heavenly in all my converses with my wife, because I must shortly lie down in the earth! Lord, since I must within a few days put off the garment of this relation, which is now my comfort and ornament, let thy Spirit so embroider it with grace, and enable me so to perfume it with myrrh, aloes, and cassia, that when I shall be unclothed I may not be found naked, but clothed with my house that is from heaven.

I wish that love may act its part lively in every passage of this relation, and that my heart may be seen in my hand—I mean, my affection be visible in all my actions towards her, that though I might be much bold in Christ, as Paul wrote to Philemon, ver. 8, to enjoin her that which is convenient, yet for love's sake I may rather entreat her. How sad is her condition, by reason of sin! Surely she may say, in the words of Hannah, 'I am woman of a sorrowful spirit.' she conceiveth with sorrow, bringeth forth with much pain, and in bringing up her children often misseth of desired pleasure. Her fears disquiet her in the night, and her cares disturb her in the day. Her sons are possibly Benonis, sons of her sorrows, and her servants Barabbases, sons of confusion. Through her whole life the yoke of subjection is on her neck, and shall I rule over her with rigour, Mal. 2:13, adding affliction to the afflicted, and wounding one whom God hath wounded? Should I cause her to sigh, by reason of her bondage, and to compass the Lord's altar about with tears and weeping, her cry would go up to heaven, for God hath a tender respect for oppressed wives, as well as afflicted widows, and he would bring some judgment on me to avenge the quarrel of his covenant. Oh let me never, like a Nabal, tyrannise and trample on my wife, as if she were my footstool, when God hath made her my fellow, and making her life, like the Israelites sojourning in Marah, full of mourning and murmuring, crying and complaining; but let her be to me, as Ezekiel's wife to him, the delight of mine eyes, and as the church to

Christ, Cant. 4:9, the ravisher of my heart, that I may always cheer her affectionately, and cherish her tenderly, as the Lord the church.

The comfort of my life doth not a little depend upon my love to my wife. If I, like Lamech, carry myself fiercely and furiously as a lion, if she be as meek as a lamb, my house may degenerate from a society of civil men into a den of savage and ravenous beasts. Oh what a sad resemblance of hell is a brawling, cursing house! Though my wife be as cold as a flint, for me to be always, as steel, grating on her, will at last bring forth fire, and, behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! If the chief strings in the viol jar, the music is all marred. Why should I, by my passion, turn my house, which should be a Bethel, into a Babel of confusion? 1 Kings 19:11, My God delights not to manifest himself in blustering winds, or in frightful earthquakes, but in a still, low voice. If my house be in a flame, I undo myself by forcing away my best friend; but if I live in love and peace, the God of love and peace will live with me. Lord, who hast appointed this holy ordinance, the first that ever was under heaven, to be some poor resemblance of that sweet communion which thine shall have in heaven one with another, and all, with thy dear self and Son; give me some knowledge of that love thou bearest to me, and of that delight I shall one day have in thee, by that love I bear to, and that delight I have in, her whom thou hast given into my bosom. Thou hast commanded me to love my wife as Christ loveth his spouse. My Saviour's love is chaste; there is not the least shadow of impurity in any of his commands. His love is constant. Having loved his own, he loves them to the end. Death itself could not burst asunder the cords of his love. His love is fervent; he was nothing else but a lump of love. His desire is to her, and his whole delight is in her. He passeth by all others as nettles and thorns, but she is in his eye the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys. Oh that my soul might in these things follow my dearest Saviour! My God hath told me that I must love my

wife as myself. My love to myself is hot, above that to any other in the world. How tender am I of myself under any malady! how pitiful towards myself in any misery! how patient towards myself when I discover many infirmities! My love to myself is hearty. None ever was false in his love to himself, though many be feigned in their love to others. Lord, help me, that my love to her whom I call My love may be perfect, like Jonathan's to David; that my heart may be knit to her, and I may love her as my own soul; and since she hath left father, mother, brother, and sister for me, she may find the affection of all those relations, and far more, in me. And let my love be perpetual; let not its complexion be like aguish bodies, sometimes burning hot, and at other times shivering cold, but, as the sun, let it always be going forth in its full strength; and oh that to this end it might be pure love, not for lust or lucre, but whereas others love the wealth, I may love the wife; whereas others love portions and comeliness only, I may love her person and her godliness chiefly, and that because thou, O fairest of ten thousands, whose lovely image is beautiful in her, hast commanded and commended it.

I wish that my love to my wife may be like Christ's to his church, as well in its goodness as in its greatness; I mean, that my chiefest endeavour may be that she may be sanctified and cleansed, and at last be presented to the blessed and beautiful bridegroom, a gracious and glorious spouse, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Oh how industriously did my Redeemer endeavour his church's renovation and sanctity! how affectionately doth he beseech her to be holy! how fervently doth he beg of his Father to make her holy! how willingly did he broach his heart, and pour out his blood to wash her from her unholiness! how plentifully doth he pour down his Spirit to work her to holiness! His birth was that she might be born again, and born holy; his life was to set her a copy of holiness; his death was to purchase for her a new stock of holiness. He 'gave himself for her,

that he might redeem her from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' His precepts, his prayers, his tears, his blood, his birth, his life, his death, his resurrection, his intercession, are all for her holiness and purity. His name is called Jesus, because he saves his people, not in, but from, their sins and unholiness. He doth not think himself perfect till his body be in heaven. O my soul, when wilt thou imitate this lovely, lively pattern, and work hard in thy petitions to God, and woo hard in thy persuasions to thy wife, that she may be pure! Doth not thine heart ache to think that the object of thy dearest love and favour should be the object of God's greatest hatred and fury! that the companion of thy youth, who hath lain in thy bosom, whom thou hast so often embraced, should be a companion of frightful devils, and lie in the lake of fire and brimstone for ever and ever! Canst thou see thy wife posting in the way of perdition, hastening to hell, and never warn her of her danger, or ask her why she doth so! Is this thy kindness to thy friend? Ah, where are thy bowels? Lord, since thou hast called me to be the head, help me to guide and direct, to see and speak, both to thy Majesty in humble supplications, and to her in hearty and serious exhortations, that I may be ministerially, what thy Son is meritoriously, the saviour of my body. I have found a costly feast in my Father's family; the house is not so full but still there is room; there is nothing wanting but comers and company, and shall I suffer one so near me to starve for want of knowledge where it is to be had? Oh, let thy goodness to me cause me to persuade, and let thy goodness to her enable me to prevail, that she may taste and see that thou art gracious!

I wish that I may naturally give the honey of sweetness and love, yet when provoked by sin against God, the sting of reproof, that I may bear with my wife in all things save wickedness. If I nourish her natural diseases, I kill her body; if I cherish her spiritual distempers,



I damn her soul. And shall I, through cursed fondness, flatter her into the unquenchable fire? Lord, cause me not only to wink at her weaknesses, and to hide them from the world's eye, but also to observe any wickedness she shall be guilty of, and to set it so in order before her eyes that thou mayest cast it behind thy back; yea, Lord, help me to hearken to all her holy counsels, and to hear thee speaking by her, as well as to desire her to hearken to me; but let me never submit to any wicked advice, lest thou judge me at last, as thou didst Adam at first, for hearkening to the voice of my wife.

I wish that I may not, as some husbands, who dwell with their wives as brutes, understanding nothing in marriage but the meaning of carnal desires and the language of lust, yet deal worse with the wives of their bosoms than with their beasts, and deny them what is convenient for their outward well-being; but that both my person and portion may be for her comfort in health, and for her cordial in sickness, and employed upon all occasions, though not for the pampering of her pride, or nourishment of any sin, yet in a moderate way for her service. When my God gave himself to my soul, he gave me all he had also, and thought nothing too much for me, and shall I, who have not spared myself from her, think everything too good for her? If she brought a portion, what is become of it? Was it laid out to purchase her misery and poverty? If she did not, yet she is my wife, and both nature and Scripture command me to allow her answerable to my wealth and her wants. Oh that I might be as Elkanah to Hannah, better to her than ten sons, than all relations. Lord, whilst I live make me so loving and industrious, that rather myself than my wife may lack. Let her body never want food and raiment, nor her soul the gospel feast, or the robes of thy Son's righteousness; and when I die, whomsoever I neglect, if by thy providence I am able, let me make for her a comfortable provision, that when I am happy in heaven, my other half may not, through my unworthiness, be

miserable on earth. If it be thy pleasure that I shall die poor—for my portion, through infinite grace, is not in this life—then let it please thy Majesty to grant me this mercy, that I may leave my fatherless children with thee, and bid my widow trust in thee. Let not my Lord be angry, and I will speak further on her behalf. In what want soever I shall leave this world, let me leave my wife the poor, or rather the rich, Levite's portion, that though she hath no part or inheritance here below, Num. 18:20, yet thou thyself mayest be the portion of her cup, and the lot of her inheritance. Oh, then the lines will fall to her in pleasant places, and she will have a goodly heritage.

Behold, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes. Let not my Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Do thou so adorn me with grace, suitable to this relation, as a bridegroom is decked with ornaments, that when I cease to be a husband, I may know what it is to be the bride, the Lamb's wife, Hosea 2:19, not as I do in this imperfect condition, where thou hast only betrothed me unto thyself in righteousness and judgment, and in loving-kindness and in mercy, and so whilst I am present in the body I am absent from the Lord; but in the highest degree, in that place where thou wilt marry me to thyself for ever. Kiss me with the sweetest kisses of thy lips, lodge me all night between thy breasts, where is the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the true bridegroom and the voice of the true bride; where is the voice of them that say and sing, Praise the Lord of hosts, for the Lord is good, for his mercy endureth for ever. Amen.

## CHAPTER V

**How a Christian may exercise herself to godliness in the relation of a wife, with a**

## **good wish about the duty of a wife**

I come, in the next place, to the duty of the wife, and to shew wherein the power of religion doth manifest itself in that relation.

It is observable that the Holy Ghost, wherever he mentioneth the duties of husbands and wives, doth, in the first place, always set down the duty of the wife, as Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18; 1 Peter 3:1–3; of which a double reason is given by learned Davenant: first, Because the duty of a wife is most difficult. Affection or love, which is the husband's chief duty, is pleasant; but subjection or obedience, which is the wife's main duty, is painful. Subjection is so much against the hair, that many, like untamed heifers, kick and fling if the yoke come but near their necks; though the harder their task is, the greater is their credit if they perform it conscientiously. Secondly, Because the love of a husband doth very much depend upon the subjection of a wife. Women cannot rationally expect that their husbands should affect them, unless they obey their husbands. An obedient wife is the likeliest woman in the world to command her husband.

Reader, if God hath called thee to this relation, make his word thy rule, and godliness thy business in it: 'Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised,' Prov. 31:30. Inward beauty is indeed praiseworthy: 'She shall be praised.' A gracious wife is a credit to herself, and her sex a crown; a choice ornament to her second self, Prov. 12:4. Both her holiness and her husband will praise her.

1. Her holiness: 'Her works praise her in the gate,' Prov. 31:31. When others have nothing but the black beauty-spots of sin to set them forth, pride compasseth them about as a chain, and atheism covereth them as a garment; grace is her glory, and godliness is her

comeliness. Religion buildeth her such an honourable monument, that neither age nor hell can ever pull it down. How famous are many women in Scripture for their faith! 'Some of them believed, and of the chief women not a few,' Acts 17:4. When the apostles proved cowards, many women followed Christ to his shameful cross; and the Holy Spirit records it to their eternal credit: Mat. 27:55, 'And many women were there.' The feminine gender hath sometimes done more worthily than the masculine. The weaker vessels have held out in the hottest fires. In the Marian days some women proved eminent martyrs. Though the philosopher tell us that woman is only σφάλμα φύσεως, the aberration of nature, and many vilify them as persons of no worth, yet Scripture, the word of truth, dignifieth them as consisting of the same essential parts, and capable of the same celestial perfections, with men. How highly doth God commend them when they are holy! and for aught any man can tell, a woman, next the human nature of Christ, hath the greatest place of any creature in heaven.

2. Her husband will praise her. A gracious wife satisfieth a good husband, and silenceth a bad one: 'Her children arise and call her blessed: her husband also, and he praiseth her,' Prov. 31:28. Budæus and Paræus do both speak their wives to be of extraordinary worth. Mr Whately of Banbury doth publish to the world the relative piety of his wife, how she performed her duty every day as exactly as was possible.

The wife's special duty consisteth principally in these particulars:—

First, In honouring her husband's person. The Persian ladies have the resemblance of a foot worn in the top of their coronets, in token that the top of their glory doth stoop to their husband's feet. The moon, in the sun's absence, takes upon her the government of the

heavens; but in his presence she veils herself. The wife, next to her husband, shines in her house, far above all those stars which are fixed there; but God hath appointed that she give place to her husband, and be willing to prefer him. Rebecca, when she approached Isaac, 'took a veil and covered her head,' Gen. 24:56, in token of subjection to her husband; and 'for this cause,' namely, in sign of subjection, 'ought the women to have power,' that is, a veil, 'over their heads,' 1 Cor. 11:10, saith the apostle. That this veiling the face is a token of great reverence, we find in Elijah, who, when God appeared and talked to him in Mount Horeb, he covered his face. Sulpitius Gallus is said to have divorced his wife because she appeared abroad with her face uncovered. And it was an old custom among the Romans, that the woman on her marriage-day was brought to her husband with a yellow veil, called flammeum, cast over her face. Every woman, as a woman, is inferior to man, much more as a wife; and therefore it is but natural and rational that she reverence her superior. 'Nevertheless,' saith the apostle, 'let the woman see that she reverence her husband,' Eph. 5:33. This subjection to the husband is indeed the relation grace of the wife, and therefore always minded where her duties are mentioned, Eph. 5.

This reverence must be inwardly, in her affections; she must love him as a member, and fear him as a head. Her fear indeed must not be like that of a servant to his master, nor that of a child to his father. From the former it differs specifically; for the slave fears the rod, not the person; the wife feareth the person, not the rod. From the latter it differeth gradually; according to the degree of the distance, such is the degree of reverence; the child's distance being much greater, his reverence is, or should be, greater also; but her fear must be like that of the church to Christ, an acknowledgment of his superiority over her, and an unwillingness to displease him in anything, and a dread

lest she should offend him. When the judgment consents to the husband's authority, the will resolves to own it in all her actions, and the heart hath a dread upon it, lest she should disown it; then she is said to fear him, and not before. The apostle Peter, writing to wives, wishing them so to live that their unbelieving husbands may be won; 'Whilst they behold,' saith he, 'your chaste conversation, coupled with fear,' 1 Peter 3:2. A reverent wife may possibly make a religious husband. The head may fare much the better for the good temperature of the body. Fear in her may be instrumental to work faith in him. There was one woman famous, or rather infamous, in the world for the want of this fear; but, reader, observe the sad fruit of it. Michal, David's wife, despised him in her heart, 1 Chron. 15:29. Here was her fault: instead of fearing him as her head, she despised him, and that for his holiness, in her heart. But mark also the fruit: 'Therefore Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no child until the day of her death.' God hath barren wombs for such bold, impudent women. If she slight her head, God will scourge her body. Barrenness in those days made women contemptible. Then when Elizabeth, Luke 1:25, had a child, she triumpheth: 'God hath taken away my reproach.' Now because David was contemptible in her eye, God made her contemptible in every eye. And it is further remarkable, that Michal, having no natural children, would needs have some adopted children of her sister Merab's; but God punished her in them also. He disgraced her in hanging and bringing them to disgraceful ends. Barren Michal hath many daughters, who despise their husbands; but let such consider that they shall one way or other feel God's anger. Though they will not fear their dying husbands, yet they shall find that 'it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,' 2 Sam. 6:23, and 21:8, 9.

This reverence must be outward, in their expressions and actions; Sarah called Abraham lord, 1 Pet. 3:6, not out of flattery, but to

acknowledge his authority; not as desirous to humour his pride, but as willing to know her own place. Jezebel and Zipporah are both stigmatised in holy writ, for their saucy, sinful language to their husbands, Exod. 4:25; 1 Kings 21:7. If a woman answer her husband, it must be with modesty; if she would advise him, it must be with lenity; and if she admonish him, with much humility. If she speak of him, it must be respectfully; if she speak to him, it must be reverently. The humble posture of her body upon all occasions, should speak the reverent temper of her mind. The fault of some wives is very foul, who, out of disrespect, refuse to call their husbands by their names, but have some passionate periphrasis to decipher them by—this man, or this fellow, or, it may be, this fool; as Saul in derision called David the son of Jesse, and the Jews in contempt called Christ the carpenter's son.

The woman is called the glory of the man, 1 Cor. 11:7, because it is a high honour to him that so excellent a creature as a woman should be his inferior. Surely, then, wives which refuse this reverence are their husbands' shame and disgrace. When once a woman harbours contemptible thoughts of her husband, this one evil weed will so overrun and spread in her words and actions, that no good thing will grow by it. Oh it is a most doleful living, where the wife, instead of reverencing, is always railing at, and wrangling with, her husband. There are wives that are worse than their dogs; their dogs, though they bark at strangers, will not bark at their master; but they spare not the husband, the master of the house, in their cursed peevishness and passions. Nay, the very devils amongst them have order; they will acknowledge a prince, a superior among them; but these wives will acknowledge none above them, but must rule all themselves, or else the house must quickly be made too hot for their husbands. A serpent is as good a companion as such a wife; for a serpent, if it kill, doth it suddenly; but such a wife makes her husband die lingeringly,

for his whole life is a civil death. I thank my God, I never so much as tasted those sour herbs; but truly I have from my heart pitied some husbands, whose outward beings have by such wives been made as miserable as is almost possible on this side hell. It is a thousand pities that the tongues of such shrews have not as many blisters as their jaws have teeth. It is never better with their husbands than when they are hoarse; and it were well if such blemishes of their sex, such monsters in nature, and such plagues to a family, were gagged till they had learned better language.

Some of the Rabbis give us this reason why she was made of a rib, taken from under the arms of Adam, that she might acknowledge her subjection to him, as well as that he be minded of giving protection to her. And indeed the titles given to the husband in Scripture, speak both his superiority and her subjection. He is called her lord, her master, her guide, her head, 1 Pet. 3:6; Esther 1:17; Prov. 2:17; 1 Cor. 11:3. How many reasons are laid down for this reverence?

1. Because the woman was made after the man, therefore she should not go before the man. That which was first in this sense, must not be last; and that which is last, first. 1 Tim. 2:13. 'For Adam was first formed, then Eve.'

2. Because the woman was made of man. 1 Cor. 11:8, 'For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man.' She is a branch springing from him as her root, and did receive her original and being, under God, from him. Now the effect is ever less noble and inferior to the cause.

3. Because the woman was made for man. 1 Cor. 11:9, 'Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man.' In reason, that which serveth to any end, is less than the end to which it serveth.



4. Because the woman was first in sin, Gen. 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:14. Sin brings shame; therefore she that was first in sin, must not expect to be first in honour. Since he sinned in being ruled by her, it is fit that she should be ruled by him.

5. Because the man is the head of the woman, Eph. 5:23. The members are subject to the head, without rebelling or reasoning. This duty of reverence is natural as well as necessary.

6. Because the man is the image and glory of God, 1 Cor. 11:7. In man there is a resemblance of God's dominion and authority, being lord of the world. The woman is the image and glory of God, according to her original creation, for she was made as holy and happy as the man; but not according to her personal relation to her husband; for dominion, which is the man's privilege, is God's glory and prerogative, and not subjection, which is the woman's duty.

7. Because God hath given the man dominion over his wife: 'Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee,' Gen. 3:15. 'The cities,' saith Israel to the king of Ammon, 'which thy god Chemosh hath given thee to possess, wilt thou not possess them?' Judges 11:25; so say I. The superiority which our God hath given men to enjoy, shall they not enjoy it?

Reader, if thou hast any fear of God, I know thou wilt fear thy husband, and then thy language to him, and of him, will be, not rude but reverent, and thy carriage will be, not pouting and lowering, frowning and fuming, but such as is clothed with the garment of meekness. 2. In obeying his lawful precepts; thy work is not to complain of, but to comply with, thy husband's commands; obedience will arise naturally from reverence, and is the best testimony of it. Many women are noted for questioning and quarrelling at their husbands' power, but few for obeying their

husbands' lawful pleasure. Sarah was chronicled and crowned in Scripture for obeying Abraham; but it is clear she had never a natural daughter. The Rabbis tell us that ten cabs or measures of speech descended into the world, and the woman took away nine of them. Many are indeed,—I speak not of all,—full of words, but barren of works; apter to dispute their husband's authority than to obey it. But holy women will be like Doreas, full of good works, and know the place in which God hath set them. How infamous is that family where the wife, like Jezebel, rules the roast, and the husband, like Ahab, lets her do what she listeth! If the moon get the upper hand of the sun, the wife of the husband, the next thing to be expected is an eclipse of the honour of that house. That house, saith one, is a hutch-backed house, where the man makes himself an underling to his wife. 'Wives,' saith the apostle, 'submit yourselves to your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let wives be to their own husbands in everything,' Eph. 5:22–24. In which words the Spirit of God gives women,

First, A precept to subjection: 'Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands.' The word ὑποτάσσεσθε, submit, signifieth a subordination, or orderly subjection of the wife to the authority of her husband. A commanding wife inverts the order of nature, as well as the ordinance of the Creator. A wife is made to be a help to a man, not to be the head of a man. Ahasuerus' law was written in the tables of those heathen hearts, that every man should bear rule in his house, Esther 1:22.

Secondly, The spring of this subjection, as unto the Lord. Her obedience to her husband must proceed from conscience to God. It will not be a sufficient excuse for her to say, He doth not love me, therefore I will not obey him; for not the husband's affection to her,

but her affection to God, must be the great motive to subjection. If my husband fail in his duty, I suffer; but if I fail in my duty, I sin. The former is a cross, but the latter is a curse. If the husband do not mind his duty, but is wicked, the wife hath the more need to do her duty, that she may win him, 1 Pet. 3:1, 2. Besides, it is God that commandeth this obedience, and he will requite it.

Thirdly, The ground or reason for this subjection; for the husband is the head of the wife: his superiority commandeth subjection from her. It is natural for the body to obey the head. What an uncomely sight is it to see the shoulders above the head; the wife to lord it over her husband.

Fourthly, The pattern. 'Therefore, as the church is subject to Christ, let the wife be subject to her husband.' The obedience of the church is cordial; sincerity is her glory—she doth the will of God from the heart. The obedience of the church is constant; it runneth parallel with her life. 'I have inclined my heart to keep thy precepts always, to the end:' thus should wives obey their husbands. Their hearts should accompany their hands, and their obedience should last whilst they live. As a fair, gilded glass is of little worth unless it represent the image of him that looks into it, so a beautiful wealthy wife is worth little, unless she resemble her husband's disposition in her carriage and conditions; I mean, so far as she may with a good conscience.

Fifthly, The extent: 'So ought the wife to be subject to her husband in everything'—i.e., in everything that is lawful. If the husband enjoin what is inconvenient, she may meekly desire it may be waived, and humbly offer her reasons; but if he persist, she must obey, though it be painful. If it be possible, she must set about it. And truly, though thy husband be never so peevish, endeavour to thine utmost to please him; for though he take all thy actions ill, yet thy God will take

them well, and so doing thou shalt be sure to please God, who, the harder thy task is, by reason of thy husband's untowardliness, will take it the kinder at thy hands. Only, if he command what is sinful, she may, nay, she must, refuse to obey him, for then he commandeth beyond his power. It is said, therefore, Col. 3:19, 'Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.' Mark, in the Lord, not against the Lord. As God must be loved above a husband, so God must be pleased before a husband. As thy husband is to be loved next to God, so he must be pleased next to God, but not before God. If a justice of peace command his neighbour to take up arms against the king, he is not to be obeyed. If his neighbour obey him, they are both traitors. But what a justice commands an inferior officer, in the defence of his prince, or in obedience to him, must be obeyed.

Indeed, sad are the consequences of unruly wives; as when the order of nature is disturbed, there ensue great inconveniences, as earthquakes, thunders, and deluges; so when this order of the wife's subjection to her husband is denied, there follow sad inconveniences. Their hearts tremble like an earthquake with jealousy of each other; their house is full of the thunder of brawling and scolding, and their whole lives with an inundation of weeping and bitterness.

The obedience of the wife must be performed willingly. If she do the thing commanded for the matter, and do it not in a cheerful manner, her obedience loseth its lustre, it is little worth. When a man payeth his just debts, but grumblingly, and, as we say, with much ado, because the law would otherwise seize him, it is a sign of a dishonest mind.

Truly, many that make a great profession are exceeding faulty in this particular of subjection. The geographer tells us of the Italian

women, that they are angels in the street, saints in the church, and devils in their houses. I wish it might not be said so of many English women. Sure I am, the gospel suffers by the unquiet carriage of some professors.

Some Hebrews observe that woman was made of a bone, to shew her hard and intolerable nature; and others tell us, that in the controversy of free-will, it seems without controversy, that when man lost free-will, the woman found it, and still keeps it; but they are commanded, saith the apostle, to be under obedience, 1 Cor. 14:34, as also, saith the law, even that law which God himself preached to the woman, Gen. 3:15. It is no less than a breach of God's law for a man to make himself lower than God hath set him. A king will never thank the mayor of a town for surrendering his place to his inferior, and suffering his inferior to trample his authority under his feet. God will never thank those fond or foolish husbands that deliver up that dominion which he hath given them, and suffer their wives to triumph over it, and trample on it. In permitting themselves thus to be trampled on, they suffer the image and glory of God to be trampled on. It is not kindness, but baseness, not humility, but iniquity, to be ruled by one whom he should rule. Such a person, like a cowardly captain, leaves his place and station without order to a lower officer, and must expect to be accountable for it to the Lord of hosts. But still the husband must rule, not with rigour, but with such mildness and moderation as is answerable to so near a relation.

The wife also, by taking upon her this power, falleth into a damnable error; besides, the effects of a disobedient wife are sad to the whole family. When the head commandeth the feet to walk, the hands to work, and the other members to do their peculiar parts and office, and they disobey, what will follow but the destruction of the whole body? Oh, what a Bedlam house is that, where the wife, instead of

obeying, is often scolding at her husband! When she should be as David's harp, to allay Saul's fury, to abate her husband's anger, she is the evil spirit to kindle and increase it. Some women, like the harlot, are loud and stubborn, Prov. 7:11. Though their feet are fettered when their husbands bid them go, yet their tongues are not tied, but run fast enough in reviling and reproaching their heads that own them. The disloyal wife is usually loudest, and nettles her husband out of his power; she is loud and stubborn.

Thirdly, In furthering the good of her family and husband.

1. Of the family. Therefore she is fitly termed a housewife; and the apostle chargeth women to be keepers at home, Tit. 2:5. And to the credit of Sarah, it is recorded, when the angel asked Abraham where she was, he said, 'Behold, in the tent,' Gen. 18:9. Not, as Dinah, gadding in the fields, nor like Tamar, gazing in the streets, but at her dwelling, in her tent. Phidias, when he was to draw a woman, painted her sitting under a snail's shell, signifying that she should imitate the snail, which goeth not abroad without her house on her back. Whilst her husband is careful abroad, she must not be careless at home. The Roman husbands, when they brought their wives first home, delivered the keys of their houses to them, intimating that they must take the care of domestical affairs.

The Egyptians gave no shoes to their wives, but suffered them to go barefoot, that they might stay always within-doors. The man after God's own heart compares a wife to a vine, which groweth by the house side, which doth both nourish and delight the inhabitants therein with its curious clusters of grapes, Ps. 128; and the son tells us of a harlot, that 'her feet abide not in her house,' Prov. 7:11. Nay, the apostle joineth 'chaste women' and 'keepers at home' together, Tit. 2:5. She that keepeth her house most, keepeth her chastity best;

she that goeth often without cause or calling out of her own doors, may be easily drawn to step into another's house and bed.

Women ought to take care of their husbands' affairs within-doors, to see that her servants be employed, her children and servants supplied with necessaries, and that nothing be either wanted or wasted. Some women are like a gouty leg, they love to lie soft, to be wrapped warm, to have much tendance, but in the meantime they sit still and do nothing. Some tell us the merchant must ask his factor whether he shall thrive or no. Most men may ask their wives whether they shall thrive or no. If she be lavish, though he be laborious, a great estate may quickly come to little.

The last chapter of Proverbs is an excellent looking-glass for women to dress themselves by every morning, where Solomon, or rather Bathsheba, inspired by the Holy Ghost, sets her forth in all her ornaments, in which we may observe, first her value, and then her virtues.

First, Her value, ver. 10. She is more worth than her weight in gold: 'Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.' She is, like a precious jewel, rare and seldom seen, hard to come by, but being once got off, to be esteemed at a high rate. A good wife is inestimable wealth; he that hath thousands in his trunks hath no treasure comparable to her.

Secondly, Her virtues.

1. Her prudence. She knoweth when and what to speak: 'She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and the law of grace is under her lips', ver. 26. Her words have their weight, for her tongue is like choice silver.

2. Her charity. She is no churl, but as she getteth much, so she giveth somewhat out of her earnings to others: ver. 20, 'She stretcheth her hands to the poor; yea, she stretcheth her hands to the needy.' As Placilla, the wife of Theodosius, she may be called the poor man's friend.

3. Her piety. She is not of their number who are well habited but ill hearted, but 'strength and honour are her clothing, and she shall rejoice in time to come,' ver. 25. Her great care is for gracious clothing, such as will render her glorious in the eyes of God, and angels, and all the saints.

4. Her fidelity. This is generally propounded, ver. 11, 'The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.' He may commit his estate and household affairs into her hands with confidence; he may trust her to provide food, and work for her children and servants, and to prevent waste in both. Whether he be present or absent, it is all one; for she is both prudent and provident to take care that they neither lack nor lavish, so that he shall have no need of spoil. He shall not be compelled to supply his wants by force or fraud, or any way of wickedness. The word spoil is an allusion to soldiers, who, having subdued their enemy's country, and seized the treasures and choicest things of their cities, send them home as spoils to their own families. Now he shall have no necessity of getting riches by robbery, or such indirect courses, for she will take care, and through God's blessing on her industry provide for him and his plentifully; or as some expound the phrase, his family shall be as full of goods as a camp after the sacking of a city. Her faithfulness is amplified by her care of her household.

Two things she is especially mindful of.

First, That all in it mind their work.



Secondly, That none in it have any want. Laziness and lacking she seeks to prevent; diligence and diet she counteth her duty to take care of. It is not in her house, as in many amongst us, where the inhabitants live the life of dogs, in idleness and hunger; for she will see,

1. That all in it work. The rust of idleness shall not eat them up for want of employment; for, 1. She will provide them materials to work with; the mill shall not stand still for lack of corn. Ver. 13, 'She seeketh wool and flax;' such work as is most proper for her maids, and most profitable for her house. If she see it not at home she will seek it abroad, and take pains to fetch in a stock to employ herself and servants.

When she hath provided work, 2. She herself will set them a pattern; she 'worketh willingly with her hands.' She goeth before them in diligence as well as in dignity. She is no such dainty dame as to loiter herself whilst others labour, but 'she layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands handle the distaff,' ver. 19. She counts it no blot or blemish to be seen at her sewing or spinning. Bathsheba thought it would become even the wife of Solomon; and some tell us that the wife of Augustus Cæsar did not play at cards, but work in carding and spinning. Nay, she is early and late at work; she riseth whilst it is night, before day, especially in winter, ver. 15; and 'her candle goeth not out by night,' ver. 18. She sits up as long as is convenient; and whilst she is at it, she doth not play at work. 'She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms,' ver. 17. It was anciently the manner of the Jews to wear long and loose garments, which were no small impediments to them in their walking or working; therefore when they would do anything with diligence, they did gird their clothes about their bodies close. To describe her nimbleness and activeness, how she is not slow and slothful at it, she is set forth to

gird her loins with strength, so 1 Kings 18:46. And because the strength of one lieth much in their arms, (God's arm is put often for his strength, Deut. 5:15,) therefore, to shew that she worketh her work, as the Hebrew phrase is, it is said she strengtheneth her arm; nay, as she provideth work and giveth them a pattern, so she, 3. Seeth that all in their places be employed. Early in the morning she giveth a task to her maidens, ver. 15. They shall not be tattlers, and tale-bearers, and busybodies in other matters for want of work, for she will tell them what their task is.

Further, as she appoints them their part, so she will take care that they perform it: 'She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness,' ver. 27. Though her hands are working, yet her eyes are watching to observe what is done or left undone in the family. The word used of the good wife's looking, is a metaphor from a watchman in a watch-tower, who, seating himself in that place of advantage for that purpose, looketh carefully on every side, observing who cometh, who goeth, and giving notice to the city of all approaching enemies, that none may surprise them suddenly; so must the wife have her eye upon the behaviour of all in her house.

2. That none in it want, two things are ordinarily needful; she will take care that both be provided. Food, vers. 14, 15, 'She is like the merchants' ships, she bringeth her food from afar;'—i.e., she is as careful to provide meat as work for them. And as she will see that they do their duties, so she will foresee that they shall not want diet; therefore she is compared to a merchant's ship, because she sendeth out one commodity, and fetcheth in another; she exchangeth flax for food, and she and her servants eat of their own earnings; and also because what she hath not about her she will fetch from abroad. 'She riseth whilst it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household,' ver. 15. When she hath laid in provision, she doth not lay it up to

moulder, but in the morning alloweth meat, as well as appointeth work, to her maidens. She doth neither pine nor pamper her children and servants, but afford them what is sufficient and convenient for them.

So for raiment; she gives them not only warm diet for their bellies, but also warm clothes for their backs. 'She is not afraid of the snow, for all her house are clothed with scarlet,' or double garments, ver. 21. If a hard winter come she is not much troubled, for herself and her family are clad for all weathers beforehand.

Secondly, Her faithfulness is amplified by her carriage towards her husband, ver. 12. She hath a care of all the rest in her house, that they want nothing fit for them, but she hath a special regard of her husband. The body will not wrong or hurt by its goodwill either legs or feet, but it is exceeding tender of the head; 'she will do him good, and not evil, all the days of his life.' The Holy Spirit observeth—1. Her tenderness; and, 2. The term of it; her Christian carriage towards him, and her godly constancy in it. Her carriage: she will do him good, by performing the several duties of her place, by honouring his person, submitting to his lawful pleasure, by furthering his outward wealth and his bodily welfare. And not evil: she will neither impoverish his purse nor blemish his credit, nor any way willingly grieve his spirit. 2. Her continuance in it. Her goodness to him is not like a sunshiny morning, which is soon overcast with a cloud, and so continueth lowering till night; but she doeth him good, and not evil, all the days of his life. In youth, in age, in prosperity, in adversity, she is constant in her love to him, and officious carriage towards him; in all changes and chances she cleaves to him, and clings about him as ivy to a wall, and will sooner cease to live than leave him.

In the Bohemian persecution, the mayor of Litomeritia condemned twenty-four godly citizens to death, amongst which number one was his son-in-law, for whose life his own daughter fell at his feet and begged hard; but he, harder than a rock, bade her be content, telling her she should have a better husband when he was dead. She replied, You shall never more espouse me to any; and so, beating her breast and tearing her hair, she followed her husband to the river, and when he was cast into the midst of the river, bound, she leaped in and caught him about the middle, but being unable to draw him forth, were both drowned together, and the next day were found embracing one another.

Reader, if thou art a wife, read often the prudence, charity, piety, and fidelity of this virtuous woman: look often into this glass which Bathsheba hath given thee, and labour to resemble this pattern set before thee; be a meet help both to thy household and to thy husband.

It is the observation of Ferus on Gen. 2:18, where it is said, 'I will make an help meet for him,' *Potuit simpliciter dicere, Faciam ei foeminam, &c.* God might have said barely, I will make him a woman, and no more; but God chooseth rather a periphrasis to describe the woman's duty, 'I will make an help meet for him.' Further it is observable,

It is not said, I will make a help for him—for so beasts are helps to men, therefore called *Jumenta a juvando*—but 'I will make a fit or meet help;' in the original it is as before him, that is, answering to him, Gen. 2:18. The wife to the husband, must be as the lock to the key, answerable and suitable, or else of no use. Rebecca provided such meat as Isaac loved: a wife should observe her husband's disposition, and carry herself accordingly. If he be sad and troubled,

she must endeavour to satisfy and comfort him. When Manoah was grieved, saying, 'We shall die, because we have seen God;' his wife cheered him, saying, 'God would never have told us such good news if he had intended any evil to us,' Judges 13:22, 23.

In sickness she ought to be specially careful of him, and kind to him. She that is a help at all times will be most helpful at such a time when he cannot help himself. Job's wife was as notorious for her unkindness, as infamous for her counsel to her husband: 'My breath is strange to my wife, though I entreated her, (by a motive that would have melted one as hard as a marble,) for the children's sake of my own body,' Job 19:17. The lady Eleanor, wife to Prince Edward, when her husband was stabbed with a poisoned knife by a treacherous assassin, and other means proved ineffectual, sucked out the poison when he slept, and without hurt to herself saved his life. The Christian wife of Valdaura, advised to forbear her husband's company, because of his noisome and infectious diseases, did not only refuse to leave him, but delighted in him, notwithstanding his loathsome body, and was to him friend, physician, father, mother, wife, nurse, anything, everything, to do him good.<sup>2</sup> Nay, the dogs had so much pity as to lick the sores of Lazarus; but many wives now-a-days are so far from sucking their husbands' wounds, or licking their sores, that they, like Job's wife, cannot endure their breath. Nay, when they should be pouring oil into their wounds, like her, Job 2:9, they are piercing them deeper with their poisonous words. Other women, by their proud, ambitious spirits, instead of lengthening their husbands' lives, bring them to unnatural deaths. The wives of the two Seymours, one protector, and the other high-admiral of England, caused such a deadly difference between them, that it ended in the ruin of them both, which made the English historian passionately to cry out, Oh wives, the most sweet poison, the most desired evil in the world!.... Woman was given to man for a

comfort, not for a counsellor, much less a controller. The orator<sup>4</sup> said of Sicily, A man may seek Sicily in Sicily, it was so much impoverished by the government of Verres. It is as true of wives; a man may seek a wife in a wife, many of them are so much degenerated from their duties; their husbands have the care, but not the comfort of a wife. Nazianzen saith of his mother, that she was a doctress to his father, and a great help to him in matters of piety; but many wives, if they handle their husbands' sores, whether bodily or spiritual, do, as some unfaithful chirurgeon to get more money, make them sorer, or put them to more pain. As Job's friends to him, they pretend to comfort their husbands, and to allay their heaviness; but, alas! they afflict them miserably, and increase their mourning. Surely their husbands may say to them what Job did to his friends, 'Miserable comforters are ye all;' physicians of no value! Wicked Jezebel would comfort her husband in sickness; scoffing Michal would hazard herself to save her husband's life; yet some that pretend to more affection and holiness, are less helpful to their husbands' persons.

4. In loving him above all others. Every wife must esteem highly of her husband, and then her affections will follow her judgment; let him be to thee the most precious of all persons. Some indeed tell us, if their husbands had as good qualities, and as great abilities, as such and such men, then they could love them; but I must tell such women that not the good natures or features of men, but the good pleasure of God, is to be the ground of their love. Besides, these women can love their own crooked, lame, dull, undutiful children, before the straight, quick-witted, and obedient children of others, and why not their husbands! Oh, it is excellent when the wife loves her husband as herself, and looks always upon his person and actions through the spectacles of love! It is observable, that though nature will teach a woman to love her husband, yet God doth also

enjoin it, Tit. 2:4, 'that they love their husbands;' partly because some women have put off nature, and are become wild, without natural affection. Partly because God would have the wife's love to her husband to proceed not so much from an instinct of nature as from obedience to Scripture. How exceedingly doth the church, which is the woman's example, love Christ! her expressions, her actions, do abundantly speak her affection; she calls him her love: 'I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, that ye awake not my love till he please.' Her beloved: 'Behold thou art fair, my beloved, yea pleasant.' Sometimes her voice to him is, 'O thou whom my soul loveth, tell me where thou feedest,' &c. Sometimes her voice to others, 'I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, tell ye him that I am sick of love.' Her desires are like a lover: 'Kiss me with the kisses of thy mouth; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.' And so are her delights: 'I sat under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste.' Friend, go thou and do likewise. Let thy love to him be a superlative love; forget thy own people, and thy Father's house, out of affection to thy husband. Say of him, 'He is altogether lovely,' Cant. 5:16; Ps. 45:10. Whatsoever pair of lips would be Satan's pair of bellows to blow up coals betwixt thee and thy husband, by stretching any of his words upon the tenters, or making a false comment upon the text of any of his works, let them be odious to thee; oh loathe such a stinking breath!

If the wife do but love her husband, her yoke will not be so grievous to her. As love to God doth exceedingly sweeten his service, and makes it not only more acceptable to him, but also more delightful to us,—hence that of the apostle: 'This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous,' 1 John 5:3—so love to a husband will abundantly sweeten her subjection to him, though the load seem to be heavy, when a wife

meets with a cross piece especially, yet love will draw it lightly away. A country gentleman, in the late troubles, complained much of quartering a soldier for two or three nights; the same person quartered twenty revelling gallants a whole month, and thought it no burden; love to those latter made all trouble and cost little. Some wives murmur much at their yoke of subjection, but truly they have more cause to complain of their want of affection, for love would make their yoke easy; women that love their gardens will be early in them—work hard all day to make things handsome. Women that love their children count it a play, a pleasure, to tend them, which others would judge no small punishment; so women that love their husbands would count their moderate commands, and whatsoever they did for them, both easy and delightful.

Some tell us of the palm that, separated from her male, she withers and languisheth, insomuch that one would take it for a dry tree; but as soon as she can embrace with her boughs him whom she seems to love, her branches take a vigour which visibly makes them grow young again. The comfort of a woman's life is much bound up in her love to her husband.

One special help whereby a woman may get her heart united to her husband in love is, when she is first married to avoid carefully all occasions of difference. It is very great wisdom at first, especially for a woman to use all means to endear her husband to herself, and herself to her husband. When two boards are first glued together a small matter will loosen them, but if then looked carefully to, when they are once well fastened, the glue being hardened, it will be hard to part them.

5. In endeavouring his spiritual welfare. A woman hath a treble advantage upon her husband, to draw him either to good or evil.



(1.) In regard of opportunities; she is much with him, night and day, at bed and board.

(2.) In regard of liberty; she hath freedom of speaking to him, and improving these opportunities. Servants and children may be with him sometimes, but their distance denieth them that privilege which her nearness and relation giveth her.

(3.) In regard of prevalency. The desires and petitions of a wife are very taking, because of a husband's affection to her. As we see in Esther, who obtained such favour in the sight of her husband Ahasuerus, though a heathen, that he promiseth to grant her desire, though it were to the half of his provinces. Despina, the wife of Bajazet, the fourth king of the Turks, could persuade her husband to drink wine, though it were prohibited by Mohammed their great prophet. One of the vilest Arian emperors caught the infection from her that lay in his bosom. The devil knew this, and therefore at first made use of Eve to undo Adam and all his posterity, and afterwards made a ladder of Job's wife, whereby he hoped to scale the tower of Job's soul, though without success.

Friend, be careful that Satan do not with thy hand give many a wound to thy head, thy husband. I must tell thee he will endeavour not a little to persuade thee to present that apple of temptation to thy husband, which hath death at its core, hoping that it, coming out of thy fair hands, will be the more desirable and acceptable to him. The voice of this uncircumcised Philistine is like theirs to Delilah concerning Samson, 'Entice him, that I may prevail against him, to bind him and afflict him,' Judges 16:5. Oh how sad will it be to thy soul another day, if thy husband, by lying so near thee, should catch that sickness of thee at this day which kills him eternally! Surely thou

art an ungrateful wife, if thou improvest the cords of his love to draw him to sin, and thereby to haul him to hell.

Reader, if thou art a wife, improve this privilege for the furtherance of thy husband in piety. It may be he refuseth to pray with thee, or to instruct thee; truly thou hast the more need to pray for him, and to instruct him. When the wife of Manoa had heard good news from heaven, she presently acquainted her husband with it, Judges 13:6. Possibly thou hast heard and embraced the glad tidings of salvation, and hast a carnal husband lying in thy bed and bosom, who neither knoweth nor heedeth them; oh, make it thy first task to tell him of them! Think, as the lepers, This day is a day of good tidings, and I hold my peace; if I be silent any longer evil will befall me: I will therefore now go and tell my husband. Whilst I am feasting and supping with Christ, shall I suffer one whom I love so dearly, through my carelessness, to famish? Alas! he is entangled in the world, as Israel in the wilderness,—the world hath shut him in; he mindeth nothing but his shop, or his sports, his stock, and his pleasure; he little considereth what will become of his precious soul for ever. I will arise and go to him, (first begging God's blessing,) and meekly and mildly tell him of Christ's grievous passion for sin, of his glorious purchase for penitent sinners, and what pity it is that such dunghill vanities should be so eagerly pursued, whilst such matchless mercies are ungratefully slighted. I will entreat him humbly, persuade him affectionately, beseech him earnestly; I will woo as for my life; and oh that I might win him to the Lord of life! Friend, do not defer this; thou canst not foretell the event of it. 'For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband?' 1 Cor. 7:16. The marriage of some hath been their making for ever. Oh, what a rich portion dost thou bring to thy husband, if thou helpest him to the Lord of heaven and earth for his inheritance! A prudent woman preserved the city of Abel from destruction, 2 Sam. 20:6; and truly a pious wife may

prevent her husband's eternal perdition. The head may derive life from the heart; the husband life eternal from his heart, his wife. As the woman of Tekoah was instrumental to bring back Absalom from his banishment, so mayest thou by thy earnest prayers to God, and serious submissive persuasions to thy husband, be instrumental to bring him from his spiritual captivity, and to bring him into favour at the celestial court. Surely such a kindness would give thy husband just cause in all companies, as Alphonsus king of Arragon did, to commend thee.

Some women, as the Quakers, think, if their husbands do not fear God, they may forsake them; but the apostle is clear, that though thy husband were an idolater, and was willing to live with his wife, she must not leave him. When St John had baptized Chrysippa, the governor's wife of Patmos, she would presently thereupon forsake her husband, whereupon the apostle told her that he had a commission to join her to Christ, but no warrant to part her from her husband. The more wicked a husband is, the more he needeth a pious, prudent wife.

It may be thy husband hath his face towards Zion; but by reason of his weak eyes, his ignorance, doth not walk thitherward steadily, but stumblingly. Now, if God hath indued thee with more knowledge, thy work must be, as Priscilla did Apollos, to instruct him more fully in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, Acts 12:24. For though women may not teach authoritatively, as persons that do it by office and power—1 Tim. 2:11, 12, 'Let the woman learn in silence, with all subjection. For I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man,' (the Pepuzian heresy of women's teaching, and the popish heresy of midwives baptising in case of necessity, will not prove it lawful,)—yet women may teach privately in their places; they may instruct their ignorant husbands; they must teach their children

and servants; therefore the same apostle commandeth women to be 'teachers of good things,' Titus 2:3. They must 'keep silence in the churches,' 1 Cor. 14:34, and they must speak religiously in their families, and amongst their neighbours. Women should be seen and not heard publicly, but seen by their pious works, and heard by their gracious words privately. Their lips should talk of God's law, and their lives should be shining lamps. Paul speaks of women which laboured with him in the gospel, Phil. 4:3. If thou canst, now the foundation is laid, labour with thy husband in the gospel, and help to build him up, it will add much both to thy comfort here and account hereafter.

### **A good wish about the duties of a wife, wherein the former particulars are epitomised**

The eternal and living God, who in the making of the world was pleased, out of his curious and manifold wisdom, to delight in order, (appointing all his creatures their several places, some to be inferior, others superior, and therein to continue and obey his pleasure,) having created me of the weakest sex, a woman, and called me to the relation of a wife, in both which respects I am bound to subjection by his word, I wish that I may never, by endeavouring to start from that station in which he hath set me, question his prudence, or quarrel at his providence, and pervert his end and honour in the creation; but may adorn his gospel by adorning myself, not with brodered hair, or jewels, or gold, or costly apparel, but as becometh a woman professing godliness, with shame-facedness and sobriety, in the hidden man of the heart, with that which is incorruptible, even the ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price, 1 Tim. 2:9, 10; 1 Pet. 3:4, 5. Lord, let my heart, like the heart of Lydia, be so opened to thy word, my hands, like the hands of Dorcas, be so full of good works, and my whole behaviour in this

relation be so conformable to Scripture, that at last I may be presented a chaste virgin to my Lord Jesus Christ.

I wish that the crosses incident to this condition may make me the more careful to please him in my carriage, who is the God of all consolation. Godliness only is the salt that can heal these bitter waters, which all in this estate must drink. I can never walk cheerfully in this thorny, stony way, unless my feet be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. How many are the miseries which I must undergo! I conceive sorrow, when I conceive a son, carry my woe up and down in my womb. How am I terrified to think of my approaching travail! The very thoughts of those sharp throes, threaten beforehand to overthrow me. If I continue to my appointed hour, in what danger am I of unloading my babe and my life together! When I have passed these pikes, and through many pangs and much pain have brought my child forth, what frights and fears shall I suffer in bringing him up! Possibly children prove undutiful, servants unfaithful; nay, and my very husband, which should be my greatest comfort, becomes my greatest cross. What personal, domestical, civil, natural maladies must I meet with! And how can I encounter them unless godliness be my strength and cordial? In these and the like cases, whither shall I go, if not to my God? And will he know me if I be a stranger, a worker of iniquity? I had need to know, and to be known, to that house well, in which alone I can expect harbour in stormy weather. Lord, enable me to walk so purely, that though in the world I meet with trouble, yet in thee I may have peace, and even rejoice in tribulation, whilst I may ease my heart by emptying it into thine ears, and support it in all hardships with the lively hope of heaven; for I know assuredly that I can never sink so low in these waters, as to be past the help of thy gracious and almighty hand.

I wish that I may not, like a whorish woman, forsake the guide of my youth, and forget the covenant of my God, Ps. 78:57; should my heart, like a deceitful bow, turn aside as the Israelites, and cause the arrows of my sacred promises to fly at random and miss the mark I seem to engage at, how certainly would they fall down on my head to my ruin! Oh, it is ill jesting with such edged tools. I have read that the Jews, when they took a solemn covenant, Jer. 34:18, did cut a beast in twain, and passed between the parts thereof, signifying by that ceremony that they wished, and were worthy to be so served and severed if they brake their covenant. They entered into an oath, Neh. 10:29, and a curse at the same time; and can I think to loose the bands of my oath, and not find and feel the blow of the curse! Hath not my God told me that if I break my covenant, he will not spare me, Deut. 29:20, 21, but have his full stroke at me with his almighty arm; and the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy, infinitely worse than the hottest fire, shall smoke against me, and all the curses, heavier than mountains of lead, written in his book, shall lie upon me, and the Lord shall blot out my name from under heaven, cause my very remembrance to rot as an unsavoury carcase. And the Lord will separate me unto evil, (as a beast is separated for the slaughter, and a malefactor set apart for a gibbet,) according to all the curses of the covenant (not a blessing shall fall on me, not a judgment shall fall beside me) that are written in the book of the law. O my soul! what fearful fire and fury, what dreadful death and damnation, is here threatened by the God of truth against thee, if thou break his oath! Lord, unite my heart to fear thy name, and let the dread of thy majesty be as a bridle to prevent my wanderings from thy covenant, and to preserve me in the way of thy commandments.

I wish that this fear of my God may be evidenced to myself and others by my fear of my husband; and that as the moon, though in the sun's absence she ruleth in the heavens, outshines all those

glistening stars, yet puts on her veil when once the sun appeareth, and is contented to let her glory stoop to his, that whatsoever power I have in my family over children and servants, yet I may ever acknowledge and veil to my husband's authority and place. What destruction and confusion would it breed in the body politic, if all subordinate officers should strive to be supreme? What an unseemly and uncomely sight would it be in the body natural, if the shoulders should stand as high as the head? My God hath order in his upper heavens, and shall he, when he pleaseth to come and give me a visit, find none in his lower house? Oh let me so count this relation-grace of subjection my chiefest relation-glory, that whilst others are pleasing and priding themselves that they can master their masters, trample their heads under their feet, and are climbed so high above their places, that they endanger the breaking their necks, the loss of their souls. I may reverence my husband, be clothed with humility, and be contented with that condition to which my God hath called me. Lord, enable me so to behold thy power in my husband's person, that I may submit to it in such a gracious manner, that he may be either confirmed in thy truth, or converted to thy faith, whilst he beholdeth my chaste conversation, coupled with fear, 1 Pet. 3:2.

I wish that I may not only awe him as my head, but also love him as my heart, that my fear of his authority may not in the least abate my affection to his person; but that my heart, though closed to others, may be enlarged to embrace him, and I may never give him cause to complain of me to me, as Delilah to Samson, 'How canst thou say thou lovest me, when thy heart is not with me?' If I love not mine enemy, I cannot be saved; what then will be my portion if I love not mine husband? When publicans and sinners love their friends, though nothing related, shall not I, by profession a Christian, love my greatest earthly friend and nearest relations? Oh let me never be

remiss in my love, much less, like a distracted person, hate my own flesh!

My God commandeth me to love him by his precept. Shall not his word be a sufficient warrant? Dare I disobey that order, which hath the King of kings' hand and seal to it? If I resist his law, I proclaim myself a rebel. My God calleth me to it by his providence. I am one with him by divine ordination, and shall I not be one with him in affection? I have chosen my love, and shall I not love my choice? I am joined with him in all estates, whether of prosperity or adversity, and shall I, that am partner with him in every condition, be parted from him in affection? If I deny my love, I quarrel with the Lord. My God commendeth it to me by a lively pattern. How dearly doth the church love Jesus Christ! He is her well-beloved, the fairest of ten thousands, yea, altogether lovely in her eye. She hateth all relations, and trampleth on all possessions, in comparison of him. What a glorious dunghill, and gilded, glistening nothing is this whole world to her in competition with him! And shall I be sick of my husband, when she was so sick of love to hers? Lord, let me never be so unlike the church, my mother; let me not so far degenerate from a Christian, yea, from a heathen, as to deny my hottest love to my husband, but give me to forget my own people, my father's house, and my own self, out of love to my second self.

I wish that I may manifest my love by my cheerful obedience, that as the church is subject to Christ, so I may be subject to my own husband in all things. I disobey the Lord, if I obey not my husband in all things that are lawful. The law of nature teacheth me this lesson; the body is ruled by the head. The law of nations also; those that receive protection from others, yield subjection to them. Oh that no pretence whatsoever which Satan or my stubborn heart may suggest, may ever be my cloak for disobedience. How clearly will my



nakedness appear under all the fig-leaves which I can sew together to cover it! If he hath not wisdom enough to govern well, why did I voluntarily take him for my guide? If he hath, why do I refuse his government? However it be, now I am bound, with a knot tied by my own hands, I must obey in the Lord; whilst I murmur, I do but quarrel at my Maker. If he fail in his love and duty to me, it is my suffering; if I fail in my obedience and duty to him, it is my sin. The former is a bitter potion, but the latter mingled with it, turneth it into rank poison.

Oh, let me never, as some wives, who, by rendering evil for evil, and reviling for reviling, turn their houses into a bedlam, or a bochim, a place of weeping. I could wish that he would enjoin me nothing but what is becoming so near a relation, that according to God's precept he would always be more ready to shew the goodness of his nature than the greatness of his power, and encourage my obedience to him by his tenderness of me; but whatsoever his person or his conversation be to me-ward, Lord, next to the pleasing thyself, let me make it my business to please him, and employ that time which others do in grumbling at thee for their painful servitude, in groaning for the cause thereof, my great-grandmother's sin.

I wish that I may approve myself, what my God did appoint me for, a meet help to him in everything, and a hindrance to him in nothing; that I may, in reference to my family, not be as the wife of Lameeh, Zillah, the shadow of a wife, as if he married me only for his pleasure, and with no regard to his profit; but that I may write every day, in my diligence and watchfulness about my domestical concerns, after that excellent copy which a queen thought becoming one that did wear a crown, Prov. 31. I desire to this end that I may observe the command of my God, to be a keeper at home, that whilst others, like Dinah, are gadders abroad, till they defile themselves, and are

frequenters of plays or taverns, I may, like Sarah, keep close to my tent, and therein look so well to the ways of my household, that nothing be wanted through my penuriousness, or wasted through my prodigality. Lord, since thy care is to preserve me, let my care be to please thee; and suffer me not to be distrustful of thy providence, or neglectful of those persons whom thou hast committed to my charge.

I wish that of all in my house, I may ever have an affectionate and tender respect for my head; that whilst others are Zipporahs, mourning, and Marah, bitter to their husbands, I may be Naomi, pleasant and delightful to him. My God intended me for a cordial, and if I ever, by my fierce language or frowning carriage, prove a corrosive, how directly do I thwart the end of my Maker and making! If it be my duty as a Christian, in relation to all the members of Christ, to put away all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, Eph. 4:31, 32, and to be kind and tender-hearted, surely it is much more my duty as a wife, in relation to my head.

Lord, help me, like Lydia, to be courteous to thy disciples, and, as Phœbe, to be a servant to all thy servants; but in a special manner to be serviceable to him in sickness and health, in all conditions and occasions, whom thou hast appointed to be my master.

I wish that I may be a Mary for piety, as well as a Martha for industry; that I may not be so carking and caring about many things as to neglect the one thing necessary; but in all my dealings about this world, I may demean myself, not as a servant to it, but as a mistress and commander of it, and as one that hath her hope and happiness in a better world. Let me never be as Michal, to mock at my husband for holiness, nor as Jezebel or Job's wife, to stir up my husband to wickedness; but seek with the cords of love to draw him to the Lord of glory. Oh that holiness might ever have such

precedency in my heart and life, that my carriage towards my children and servants may savour of Christianity, and my love especially towards my husband may be abundantly operative night and day in persuading and encouraging him to mind heaven! Oh God, with what heaviness do I think at this day of my carnal, unbelieving husband! and oh, with what horror do I forethink of that day when I am like to be half in heaven and half in hell! Oh, be thou pleased, who hast promised to pour out thy Spirit upon all flesh, even upon-thine handmaids and servants, that thy sons and thy daughters shall prophesy, to pardon all my failings in this relation; pour the oil of grace into thy weaker vessel, that I may, like Elizabeth, be full of the Holy Ghost; like Mary Magdalene, love thee fervently; like Eunice, instruct my children in thy fear; and as Priscilla, be able to commend to my husband the sweetness of thy favour, that whilst men prophesy, converting and confirming others by public ordination, I may preach effectually to the consciences of others, and of my husband especially, by my pious conversation. Lord, as a woman was, through Satan's subtlety, first in the transgression, so was a woman, through thy rich mercy, first in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Suffer me, I beseech thee, in no case, like the first woman, to be a messenger of damnation to my husband, but make me, like that famous penitent, a messenger of salvation.

Lord, I have heard that the true Moses is pleased to marry with a blackamore; the blessed Messias, with sinful mortals. I confess I cannot but stand amazed at the low stoop of thy sacred Majesty, in matching with so mean, and so base, and stained a family. Hadst thou married with those spotless virgins, angels, the ancientest and honourablest house of thy creatures, thou hadst matched much more like, yet infinitely below thyself. But what admiration and astonishment can answer thy boundless condescension, that thou shouldst take polluted dust and ashes into thy bed and bosom? that

thou shouldst strike a conjugal covenant with one whose person is ugliness and deformity, whose parentage is base and beggarly, and whose portion is nothing but diseases and misery? But since it is so, holy Father, because it seems good in thy sight, suffer thine handmaid, though it be not proper to her sex, rather to woo thy dear Son, than to miss so rich, and noble, and gainful a match. Yet, alas! why do I talk thus? He hath prevented me with his kindness many years ago. How importunately hath he courted me! What large costly tokens hath he often presented me with, to persuade my unbelieving heart that his offer of marriage is in earnest! Oh, help me rather to accept him heartily for my Lord and husband, and, bidding adieu to all other lovers, to cleave to him only; that all my wants and weaknesses, sins and sorrows, may be his, and all his robes, and riches, and mercies, and merits, and life, and death may be mine. Oh, do thou so adorn me with grace, as a bride is tired with her jewels, that I may be fitly arrayed for so beautiful a bridegroom. Let me love, honour, please, and obey him above all, before all, and more than all; and my husband here below, next to him, for his sake. Cause me, as a pure virgin, to keep my garments clean, whilst I walk in a dirty defiling world, and as a wise virgin, to insure oil in my vessel against the coming of my Lord, that when death shall give me a bill of divorce from my dearest husband below, I may approach nearer, and enjoy fuller, my dearer husband above, when I shall be above all frights and fears; lest those, my Saviour and my soul, whom my God hath joined together, a deceitful heart, or ensnaring world, or tempting devil, should part asunder; where my rags of misery shall be changed into robes of glory, my nakedness covered with perfect righteousness, that my beloved may bespeak me, in the fullest sense, 'Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; behold, thou art fair my love: behold, thou art all fair; there is no spot in thee.' And whereas a bridegroom rejoiceth over a bride, so shall my God rejoice over me, and I in him, for ever and ever. Amen.

## CHAPTER VI

### **How Christians may exercise themselves to godliness, in the relation of masters, with a good wish about the duty of a master**

THE third and last relation in a family, is that of master and servants; the other two relations had a being in man's estate of innocency, this was brought in by man's apostasy. Civil subjection to man came in by our sinful defection from God. We lost our liberty by casting off God's service.<sup>2</sup> The word servant is thought to be derived à servando, because those who were taken in battle, and might have been slain, were saved, 2 Kings 5:2. As servitude came in with a curse, (the first time the word servant sounded in the world, was when Noah cursed his son Ham, Gen. 9:25,) so sovereignty is promised as a blessing, Gen. 27:29, and 25:23.

There are usually reckoned three causes, or rather occasions, of service.

1. Victory; when men are conquered in war: the victor often spared their lives, but took away their liberty.
2. Necessity; when men are sold for debt. It was usual for the debtor to become servant to the creditor amongst the Romans, by the law of the twelve tables. The French were wont also to sell themselves to noblemen for debt.<sup>5</sup> And the Jews were not ignorant of this practice,

Lev. 25:39; Exod. 21:7; 2 Kings 4:1, though their usage by their brethren was much differing from the usage of strangers.

3. Utility; when one committeth himself, or is committed to the government of another for his education.

Among the Jews there were two sorts of servants. Some that were of other nations; their servitude was perpetual and hereditary, both of themselves and their children.

Others that were of their own nation, which were to serve but six years, and in the seventh to go out free, Exod. 21:2. Some reckon among them four sorts of servants.

First, The highest in that degree, as Abraham's steward; such were said to stand before their masters, 1 Kings 10:8.

Secondly, Such as waited on their master's person immediately; these are said to pour out water upon their master's hands, 2 Kings 3:11.

Thirdly, Such as were employed in inferior offices, as in dressing of meat, or reaping harvest, 1 Sam. 8:13. These were called labourers.

Fourthly, Such as did their lowest and basest work; and these were said to sit behind the mill, because they thrust the mill before them as they wrought, and this was one of the basest works about which such were occupied, Exod. 11:2; Isa. 47:2.

Amongst the Romans there were two sorts of servants.

1. Such as were taken in war; over these the master had an absolute power to dispose of them as he pleased, these were slaves for life; all they got was their masters'; they might sell them, or kill them, and

were never questioned for it. Titus Sempronius would sell his aged and weak servants as cattle, and so Cato Pollio commanded one of his servants to be thrown into his fish-ponds for breaking a glass, which he valued highly, though he had store of them; which in humanity, when Augustus Cæsar understood, he entered the place where the glasses were, and broke them all, to prevent the like cruelty for the future.

2. Such as were servants by compact; over these the master had only a conditional power. He had right, not to the persons, but only to the actions of these, to their work.

Reader, if God hath called thee to the relation of a master, remember that thou art his servant, and carry thyself accordingly; give to thy servant that which is τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὴν ἰσότητα, just and equal, Col. 4:1. Do not use him as a slave, but as thy fellow-servant of the same Lord. God teacheth us, both by his pattern and precept, to mix our authority with clemency, for he hates tyranny. Though he hath sovereign, and illimited, and absolute dominion over all the world, and might pluck up and pull down, slay and destroy without pity, and none could say to him, what doest thou? yet his mercy is over all his works, judgment is his strange work, Isa. 28:21. And as he hath committed to some persons dominion over others, so hath he commanded them to exercise it with moderation. A king is his deputy on earth; but if a prince would fix upon a sure foundation, he tells him his laws must not be written, as Draco's were, in blood: 'Mercy and truth preserve the king; his throne is established by mercy,' Prov. 20:28. A father hath authority over his child, but mark what a caution God gives him not to abuse it: 'Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath.' The husband is the head of the wife, but observe what care he takes lest any should be so unnatural and cruel to their own bodies: 'Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter

against them.' So also, because the master hath much power over his servant, God limits his commission, and appoints that it be tempered with mercy: 'Masters, do the same things to your servants, and forbear threatening.' Still God manifesteth this to be his pleasure, that the sword of power be furbished with the oil of pity; yet herein there must be care that a master's carriage do not expose him to contempt from his servants. As masters must not be fierce, so neither familiar with their servants. Cato was in both the extremes; one while he would eat and drink, and work naked with them, and when he had worn them out with work, sell them like horses in a market. So the Romans in general, at their feast called Saturnalia, did wait on their servants; the servants sat at the table, and the masters served them; yet possibly, before the year was expired, would kill them as dogs.<sup>2</sup>

But servants are most apt to be slighted; it is too usual an expression, by way of reproach, He is but a servant, or, She is but a waiting-maid. (It is free grace that thou art not a servant. I pray thee, who made thee to differ?) The Son of God himself, when he took upon him the form of a servant, was of no reputation; he was despised and rejected of men, Phil. 2:7; Isa. 53:3.

I shall lay down two or three motives to quicken thee to thy duty in this relation, and then shew thee wherein it consisteth.

First, Consider they are made of the same earth with thee; when thy proud heart esteems them vile and base, think with thyself that they have the same pedigree and parentage with thyself. 'The poor and the rich meet together, and the Lord is the maker of them both,' Prov. 22:2. There is no such vast difference betwixt thyself and thy servant, as thy haughty spirit would suggest. Thou and he meet together in the same common mother, the earth, and in the same common



Father, in heaven. Master and servant are made of the same mould, and have the same maker. Nay, a poor servant is so little thy inferior, that he is called thy own flesh, Isa. 58:7. Though there be a civil difference, there is no natural difference, for he is the same flesh, thy own flesh.

Therefore it is said, 'He that despiseth the poor, reproacheth his maker,' Prov. 17:5. He despiseth the maker of his person, and the maker of his portion. He reproacheth God for his work of creation, for making such a man or such a maid; and he reproacheth God for his work of providence, for making such a one poor, and such a one a servant and an inferior. For our civil conditions, as much as our natural constitutions, are from God. As he maketh cedars and shrubs, mountains and valleys, so also masters and servants, bond and free. This argument kept Job within the bounds of his duty; he durst not, though a master, nay, though a magistrate, (and so in no fear of punishment from man,) abuse his servant upon this account: 'Did not he that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb?' Job 31:14, 15—i.e., Should I in passion flee in his face, or through pride trample him under my feet, who is a child of the same father with myself?

Secondly, Consider, as they are made of the same earth, so they are heirs of the same heaven with thee. If there be a civil distinction, yet there is no spiritual distinction. In Christ there is neither bond nor free, Col. 3:11; he paid the same price, and bought the same purchase for both. We read under the law that all the Israelites, both poor and rich, gave the same ransom for their souls, Exod. 13:15; signifying that the same precious blood of the Son of God was to be shed for the redemption of all sorts of persons. And it is recorded in the Gospel, that 'God hath chosen the poor of the world, rich in faith, and heirs of a kingdom,' James 2:5. I may say the same of masters and

servants, as the apostle speaks of Jews and Gentiles, 'God hath given them (servants) the Holy Ghost as well as us, (masters;) and hath put no difference betwixt us and them, purifying their hearts by faith,' Acts 15:8, 9. Thy servant, if born again, is God's son; and if a son, then an heir, an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ. Take heed therefore that thou dost not abuse God's child; great heirs are tenderly used. It called for great lamentation, when the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, were esteemed as earthen pitchers, Lam. 4:2. And will it not be sad for thee to trample one of God's jewels as dirt under thy feet? Oh, how wilt thou be ashamed of it at the last day!

At present thy servants may be before thee in grace; how clearly doth thy experience teach thee that the poor receive, when the rich reject, the gospel, Mat. 11:5, &c. The Lamb is offered in sacrifice, and acceptable to God, when the lion as an unclean creature is cast by. How many a master, like Potiphar, is an enemy, a foe, when the servant, like Joseph, is a great friend and favourite in the heavenly court! God's church are called the congregation of his poor, Ps. 74:19; and to despise the poor is counted by God, and called a despising the church, 1 Cor. 11:20. Thy servant may be poor in spirit, when thou art poor in spirituals. He may be rich in grace, in good works, which is infinitely the better, when thou art possibly only rich in gold and outward goods. Thou esteemest him at a poor rate, and not worth a penny; but be it known to thee, O man! that he is, if holy, worth thousands, and millions. Thy servant, like Levi, though he hath no part in the earthly Canaan, may have the boundless God for his portion. What wise man would esteem a horse by the gaudiness of its trappings and furniture, or a knife by its gilt haft. So truly no wise man will esteem another by his fine clothes, or great estate, or any outward ornaments, but by his spiritual endowments.

Hereafter thy servants may be above thee in glory. It is taken notice of, that a contemptible grasshopper, the silliest almost of all creatures, is advanced into the chief city of England, (London,) and a principal part of that city, the Royal Exchange, when far more noble creatures are less regarded. He that took upon him the form of a servant, and was vilified and scorned as a worm on earth, is certainly the highest in heaven. A poor servant, like Lazarus, may be comforted and highly exalted, when a rich master, as Dives, may be disgraced and tormented. He that hath not a foot of land, may have a title to the inheritance of the saints in light.

Thy servant may be the Lord's freeman, 1 Cor. 7:22, and therefore must not be used as a slave. Though he be of low degree, yet he is a brother, and must accordingly be treated, James 1:9; Lev. 25:39. Though his spiritual relation do not privilege him from dutifulness and subjection to thee, yet it should prevent thy oppression of him. Do not dare to put those vessels to sordid sinful uses, which are now vessels of honour, and must shortly, according to the martyr's phrase, be scoured bright, and set on the high shelf of heaven.

Thirdly, Consider that thou hast a master in heaven. As servants are, if gracious, God's sons, and thereby may be comforted, so masters are God's servants, and thereby may be cautioned. Is thine eye upon thy servants, to see whether they do their duties faithfully? I must tell thee, God's eye watcheth thee much more, to observe whether thou carriest thyself in thy relation conscientiously. Thy servants may cheat thee, and thou never the wiser; but thou canst not cozen God, for all things are naked and open in his sight. The awe of this master kept holy Job from abusing his power to the prejudice of his servants. 'If I despised the cause of my man-servant or maid-servant, when they contended with me; what then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?' The fear of God,

not any human affection, made him faithful to the meanest in his family. Fellow-servants will not abuse and smite one another whilst their master is in presence. 'What then shall I do when God riseth up?' Oppressing and unjust masters will fall, when God riseth to judge servants' causes, and to revenge their quarrels. 'Thou shalt not rule over him with rigour; but fear thy God,' Lev. 25:43.

God delights to appear in the behalf of the afflicted poor, and such as have none to take their part. How severely hath he punished many masters for their want of pity to their servants. When the Jews were false and unfaithful to their servants, he turned their own liberty into bondage and slavery, and made them experience by the cruelty of the Chaldeans what it was to be served as slaves. When the hard yoke was upon their own necks, to the grating and goring their flesh, then they felt their servants' misery, Jer. 34:8–21. As divine, so human writ confirmeth this. The Chians, a people of Grecia, who were infamous for their inhumanity in this particular, being conquered by Mithridates, were made by him slaves to their own servants. The Lacedæmonians also were cruel to their servants, the Tenarenses, but their city on a sudden was so shaken, that all those houses wherein their cruelty had been exercised, except four, were destroyed.<sup>3</sup> God makes such men know many times here that wherein they deal passionately and proudly he is above them, but always hereafter; 'they shall have judgment without mercy that shew no mercy.'

Reader, think often in all thy dealings with thy servant, that thou hast a master in heaven, who may suddenly, but will shortly, reckon with thee; and if thou now afflictest him, when God visiteth, what wilt thou answer him? As he will not favour thy servant barely for being an inferior, so he will not fear thee in the least for being a superior. 'Forbear threatening, and do to thy servant that which is

just and equal, knowing that thy master also is in heaven; and with him there is no respect of persons,' Eph. 6:9; Col. 4:1. Oh do but consider! Thy master in heaven is omniscient, and knoweth all thy unjust dealings with thy servant. He is holy, and hates all thy oppression; nay, he is omnipotent, and his hand will reach thee, and punish thee for it.

Fourthly, Consider he is God's servant. God hath the original, illimited right to thy servants; thou hast only a derivative, bounded power over them. God commands the Israelites to treat their servants mildly upon this motive, 'For they are my servants,' Lev. 25:42. Hence some tell us that the Jews, in the infancy of their commonwealth, were very meek and moderate towards their servants. They did not put them to do either any vile office or any hard work; they allowed them the same meat, drink, and lodging with themselves, say the Rabbins; and thence arose that proverb, He that buyeth a Hebrew servant buyeth himself a master. Therefore several of them loved their service so well, that they would rather have their ears bored through, and continue in that condition, than enjoy their freedom. Sure I am, God's servants must not be used as Satan's slaves. If men should not have hard, uncharitable thoughts of others, because they are another's servants, much less may they be uncharitable and cruel in their actions towards such. 'Who art thou,' saith the apostle, 'that judgest another man's servant?' Rom. 14:4. So may I speak to thee, reader, if an unjust master, who art thou? and what art thou that abusest and oppressest another's servants? Do what thou wilt with thy own servants, if ever thou canst get an absolute dominion over any, but darest thou to wrong another's servants, and the Lord's servants too?

If a friend should, when he is necessitated to go abroad, commit his servant to thee for some time, wouldst thou not use him kindly and

courteously for thy friend's sake? And when thy God hath committed his servants to thy care and keeping for some time, to be instructed in his word, and acquainted with his worship, wilt thou abuse his servants as dogs, and bring them up as brutes? To be the servant of God was a title that the greatest masters in Israel gloried in, and well they might. Now, wilt thou abuse and abase those whom God himself doth thus honour? The heathen moralist, to dissuade a master from cruelty and rigour, can tell him that though they are servants yet they are men, and fellow-servants with us of the same supreme deity.

One thing, reader, I would in a word warn thee of, before I speak to thy duty in this relation, that thou consider whom thou takest into thy service. It is dangerous to admit diseased persons into thy house: let none wait on thee who will not worship God. It was said of Hannibal's army, that it consisted *ex colluvie omnium gentium*, of the scum of all nations; but let it not be said so of thy family. He that knowingly harbours a traitor is himself a rebel. Some servants will hinder thee from discharging thy trust in reference to their souls; but having spoke formerly to the well-choosing, I shall speak now to the well-using of servants.

Thy duty in relation to thy servant will be discovered in these particulars.

Thy duty is to endeavour the welfare of thy servants' souls. Turks mind nothing about their slaves but that they do their own work; but Christians must mind that their servants do God's work also. Some read that Gen. 14:14, 'And Abraham armed his catechised servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen.' It is clear that he commanded his household, the greatest part of which were servants, to keep the way of the Lord, Gen. 18:19. Joshua was for his whole house to serve God, Joshua 24:15. And the fourth

commandment is full for it: 'Thou, thy son, thy daughter, thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant,' Exod. 20:10.

He is esteemed a cruel master that will not allow his servant bodily food; but God counts him infinitely more savage who gives not his servant spiritual food. Shimei looked so much after his servants that he lost his life by it; but many masters look so little after their servants that it will cost them their souls for it.

Instruct thy servants in the word and worship of God. I told thee before, they are God's servants; and wilt thou not take care that they serve him? Holy Esther would not only fast and pray herself, but 'I and my maidens will fast also.' It was happy for those servants that they had such a mistress; it is likely their service, which was corporal, was instrumental to their spiritual liberty, Esther 4:16.

Take time in the evenings, and on the Lord's-days, to teach them the principles of the oracles of God. Be often speaking to them of the threefold state of man, and the three offices of Christ; with gentleness and mildness draw them towards God. Do thou frequently in their hearing commend the sweetness of God's love in Christ to sinners, the richness of that inheritance which he hath laid up for his servants, and the monstrous unthankfulness of men in rejecting that love and neglecting this life. Give others cause, that frequent thy family, to speak to thee, as the queen of Sheba to Solomon, 'Happy are thy men; happy are those thy servants, which stand continually before thee,' 1 Kings 10:8. As he is the best servant that looks most to the main of his master's estate, that, though he forget some smaller matters, will be sure to remember the principal; so he is the best master that looks most to the main, the precious soul, and eternal salvation of his servant.

Pray with and for thy servants. Possibly they have good natures, but no grace. They mind thy work carefully, but neglect God's worship carelessly; and canst thou think, without bowels and pity, of their eternal perdition? When Elisha's servant was sore distressed by reason of the Syrians, Elisha prayed for him: 'Lord, open, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw,' 2 Kings 6:17. Reader, are none of thy servants blind, not knowing, in a saving degree, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent? Canst thou let them alone in this condition, and not cry to God to open the eyes of the blind, and to turn them from darkness to light? Oh pray hard; thou knowest not but God may hear and cause them to see in their day the things of their peace.

When the body of the good centurion's servant was sick, his master went to the Lord Jesus for his cure, saying, 'Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.' so go thou to Christ: Lord, my man-servant, my maid-servant is sick; full of spiritual diseases, sick of the stone in the heart, of the tympany of pride, of the fever of lust, of the dropsy of drunkenness, of the consumption of atheism; Lord, help him, help her; for he, for she is grievously tormented. For thy comfort, consider what answer Christ gave the centurion, 'I will come and heal him.' Jesus Christ, upon thy fervent prayer, may send thee in such an answer as may rejoice thy soul, and the heart of thy poor servant for ever.

Be careful that thy servants frequent the public ordinances of God. Elkanah would go up to offer sacrifice with his whole house, 1 Sam. 1:21. When thou appearest before God, let not thy servant be left behind. It is not so safe to go alone as with company. Do not, as the Egyptian masters did, when thy God calleth thy servant to sacrifice, tell him he is idle, and wanteth more work. When they have attended



on the word, examine them what they remember. Scholars never learn their lessons well when they beforehand know they shall not be questioned about them. If thou sendest thy servant on an errand about thy temporal estate, thou wilt call him to an account how well he hath done it. Let thy conscience be judge whether thou hast not much more cause, when he is sent about his own eternal estate, to question him how he hath performed it.

Thy benefit doth not a little depend upon thy servant's piety, which may encourage thee to promote it to the utmost of thy power. The more thy servant is conscientious to please God, the more careful he will be to please thee. A wicked servant will make nothing of blemishing thy name and impoverishing thy estate; as Gehazi, he will make thee a cloak for his own covetousness; as the unjust steward, he will lessen thy stock to enlarge his own; when a godly servant, as Joseph and Jacob, will rather wrong himself than rob thee. It is observable of Onesimus, that though, before his conversion, he was as a rotten post in his master's house, threatening to pull it down, yet afterwards, as a sound pillar, he assisted to bear it up. 'I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds; who was in time past to thee unprofitable, but now is profitable to thee and me,' Philem. 10, 11. When once he became a new creature, instead of robbing and running away, he would enrich his master. There are no such faithful servants to men, as those that are faithful subjects to God. Grace will turn him who is a moth to waste, into a merchant to increase their outward stock; when a graceless servant, like Ziba to Mephibosheth, will make no bones of deluding the magistrate, so he may defraud his master.

Famous is that story of Pyrrhias, a merchant of Ithaca, who seeing an aged man captive in a pirate ship, had compassion on him, and bought him and all his commodities, which were certain barrels of

pitch. The old man considering that merely out of charity, and not out of covetousness, Pyrrhias had done this, presently discovered to him a considerable treasure hid in the bottom of the barrels, whereby he became exceeding rich.

Reader, if the redemption of one out of bondage to man through the divine providence had so large a recompense, surely thy work of redeeming thy poor servant out of slavery and bondage to sin and Satan shall receive a far greater reward. Besides thy temporal, thou mayest expect to reap an eternal reward. The redemption of a soul, as it is far more precious, so it is infinitely more profitable, James 5:20; Dan. 12:3.

2. Provide what is just and convenient for thy servants' bodies. Prefer their souls, but provide for their bodies. 'Masters, do to your servants that which is just and equal,' Col. 4:1. Some covetous wretches will overwork their servants, but underkeep them, either of which is unjust. That dealing is just towards a servant which a master from his heart would desire might be used towards himself, if he were in the condition of a servant.

Convenient food must be allowed thy servants. Thou canst not rationally expect that they should be diligent about their work, if thou deniest them convenient diet. Thou knowest thy horse must have his provender, or he cannot well perform his journey. 'The hired servants in my father's house have bread enough,' Luke 15:17. They have not what is toothsome, but sufficient of what is wholesome; bread enough; nature, not lust, must be nourished. God commandeth thee to satisfy their hunger, but not to pamper their carnal appetites. 'He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child, shall have him become his son at last,' Prov. 29:21. He that affordeth his servant raiment too costly, or nourishment too dainty,

or carrieth himself towards him too familiarly, will find him at last a young master in his house, so malapert as to equalise himself with the children, and to tyrannise over his fellow-servants. Solomon's son, Rehoboam, did, by sad experience, find the truth of this. The wise man himself saw it in Jeroboam, whom for his parts, not for his piety, he had received into his service, and preferred before worthier persons, till at last he took state upon him, and did not only endeavour to be as his son, but even aspire to be his sovereign.

But though servants' sloth and sin may not, yet their bodies must be cherished. He cheats himself who will not allow his servants, nay, and cattle too, sufficient food. The good housewife alloweth meat, as well as appointeth work to her maidens: 'She riseth whilst it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a task to her maidens,' Prov. 31:15. Work without meat would quickly famish the natural body; meat without work would feed the body of sin; therefore she mindeth both. The labourer is as worthy of his meat as his lord of his work.

The Hebrew Rabbis tell us that the first wise men among them gave their servants and beasts meat before they did eat themselves. Masters must also allow physic to their diseased servants. He was an Amalekite, an enemy to God, that left his servant, when sick, to the wide world: 'And my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick,' 1 Sam. 30:13, which act of cruelty God punished severely. He took care, by his providence, that the poor servant should be recovered, and the oppressing master destroyed. The good Samaritan will bind up the wounds of a distressed stranger, much more of a servant. Xenocrates, though a heathen, was pitiful to a poor sparrow, that, being pursued by a hawk, fled to him for succour. He sheltered her while the enemy was fled, and afterwards letting her go, said, *Se supplicem non prodidisse*, That he had not betrayed

his poor suppliant. A Christian should have more pity for a distressed Christian than a heathen hath for a bird. A master should be a physician to his servants; as careful to preserve their healths and prevent their death, as to provide them work. Ischomachus told his wife that it was part of her office, and the most grateful part of it, in case a servant fall sick, to take care of his recovery.<sup>2</sup> The centurion, though a soldier, (and their hearts usually are more obdurate and less compassionate than others,) was earnest and diligent for the help of his sick servant, Mat. 8.

Clothes or wages must also be afforded servants. Apprentices have raiment from their masters, others have money to find themselves; now in both, or either of these, thy duty is to be faithful. The good housewife minds raiment for them to whom it is due, and that neither too neat nor nasty, but such as is suitable to the season, Prov. 31:21.

Be careful to pay them their wages. It is high injustice to detain their dues. God will pay those masters who will not pay their servants. He hath wrath for them who have no wages for others. Such covetousness brings a dreadful curse: 'Woe be to him that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work,' Jer. 22:13. The mean and low servant hath the great and high God for his avenger. His eyes see such cruelty, and his ears hear the poor servant's cry. This is one of those crying sins which will give God no rest till he revenge it. Murder or blood hath a loud voice; it crieth, Gen. 4:10. As the blood of the Mediator cried for pardon, so the blood of men, unjustly shed, crieth for punishment. The souls of the good, and the blood of the bad, if their bodies be murdered, will cry for vengeance. God hath washed his hands in their blood (and thereby kept his honour unstained) who have stained their hands in the blood of others. Sodomy is another crying sin; man with man,

doing that which is unseemly. Human bestiality calleth for divine severity, Gen. 18:22. Hell shall be rained out of heaven, but that such an unnatural sin shall be revenged. This hellish fire in men shall be punished with fire from God. Oppression is a third crying sin, Exod. 3:7, and 22:23. To keep back the servant's wages is to dare the master in heaven to a duel, James 5:4. Though the poor servant be silent, yet the sin itself hath a large throat, and will cry aloud. It is cursed covetousness not to be charitable; but it is inhuman cruelty to suck out poor men's sweat and spirits, and to deny them what is their due for its reparation. This sin hath a louder voice than the sinner. The very land will cry and the furrows complain when the poor man, armed with patience, doth not, or, awed with power, dareth not, Job 31:39.

This scarlet crying sin is of a double dye. When masters pay servants less than their work, or late for their work, they are in some measure guilty of it. There ought to be a proportion between the work and the wages. Laban, by his shuffling and cutting with Jacob, was met with himself at last. It is unworthy and wicked for any master to work upon the necessities and wants of others. We have a saying, There is nothing cheap but poor men's labour. But I am confident, how cheap soever their work is here, many a griping master will find it dear enough in the other world. To delay the payment of servants is also sinful. To defer, by the law of man, is all one as to deny. When they slip the time appointed, the bond is forfeited. God would not permit the Jews to sleep with such money in their purses. 'Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land: at his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee,' Deut. 24:14, 15.

3. Command thy servant nothing but what is fit and lawful. Two things I include under this head: that thou shouldst enjoin thy servant nothing but,

1. What is agreeable to God's law; that his soul be not injured.

2. What is suitable to his natural strength; that his body be not prejudiced.

First, Nothing but what is agreeable to God's word. Thou art but a steward, and therefore to appoint those that are thy inferiors that only which thy lord directeth. They and thou also are God's servants, wherefore his pleasure must always be preferred. The Holy Ghost in thy description giveth thee a good caution. He calleth thee a master κατὰ σάρκα, according to the flesh, or a bodily master, Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22. Thou hast power to give laws to his body, but no power at all to make laws for his soul. His flesh may be at thy beck, but his spirit must only be at God's bidding. If in any command thou transgressest God's laws, thou exceedest thy limits. And I must tell thee that thy servant is not bound to obey thee, nay, he is expressly forbidden it. I shall by and by charge him in God's name not to do it, and be it at his own peril if he dare. Some masters indeed, as Absalom, enjoin their servants what God forbids, to steal, or cozen in their callings, to lie, or bear false witness, when it is for their profit and credit, and to profane the Lord's day by working; and think, as that proud prince, that their word must be an unquestionable and sufficient warrant, 'Fear not, have not I commanded you?' But such men must know that they themselves are guilty of high treason, by commanding others to become traitors. Oh be not thou called master in this sense, for one is thy master, even Christ! Mat. 23:9. It was the saying of Anastasius the emperor, that he would venture upon no design, though never so gallant and glorious, that might cost a drop of the

blood of his subjects. And wilt thou venture upon those commands which may cost the soul-blood both of thyself and servant? Abraham was careful not to trouble his steward's conscience, Gen. 29:8.

Secondly, Nothing is to be enjoined thy servant but what is suitable to his strength. Neither his inward man must be wronged by sinful, nor his outward man by cruel commands. Thou mayest use him, but thou mayest not abuse him. It is one thing to work, and another thing to rack and wear out a servant. It is thy duty to keep him from sloth, but thy sin to suck out his spirits. A tyrant and a master differ specifically; 'Ye shall not rule over one another with rigour,' Lev. 25:46. It is for wicked Egyptians to command bricks and deny straw, to make their servants' lives bitter, and their service an iron furnace; yet I fear that some families in England may be called, as Egypt, a house of bondage, wherein governors, according to the prophet's phrases, 'eat the flesh, and flay the skin, and break the bones of poor servants,' Micah 3:3.

The master should be, as the servant of Naaman called him, a father to his servants; esteem his servant, according to Seneca's appellation, as a lower or lesser friend. Satyrus in Athenæus was called Εὐδοῦλος καὶ Εὐοικοῦς, because he was kind to his servants. If a merciful man be merciful to his beasts, much more to his servant. God contemneth the service of those masters, when they worship him, who are cruel to their servants, Isa. 58:5, 6. He that overstraineth his horse at work wrongs his own purse; but he that overworketh his servant wrongs his conscience. Oh, it is a barbarous act for any man to command what may likely hazard his servant's life! He that takes such earnings drinketh his servant's blood, which holy David would not do, 2 Sam. 23:17. And some think it troubled his conscience that he had by a wish, though he never gave any word of command, occasioned the dangers of his three worthies' lives. It was said of the Massilians, it is

better to be their sheep than children. It may be said of some masters, it is better to be their swine than servants, they are so unmerciful to them.

4. Masters must be faithful in teaching their servants that trade and calling to which they are bound. As the servant is bound to be faithful to his master in obeying his lawful commands, so the master is bound to be faithful to his servant in instructing him in his calling. It is a gross and grievous fault in many masters, in taking their servants' work, and their parents' wealth, and concealing from them the mystery of their trade. This is robbery and unrighteousness. Their covetousness will persuade them to teach inferiors so much as will make them profitable servants, but their envy and avarice together hinder them from teaching them so much as may make them honourable masters. Hence it comes to pass that apprentices, when their time is expired, are still in bondage; for being ignorant how to buy and sell, or in some essential particular of their trades, they dare not take a shop, lest, through their unskilfulness, occasioned by their masters' unfaithfulness, it should in a few months fall on their heads. Ainsworth tells us that God would not have servants sent away empty, lest they should be necessitated to return to service, from which second servitude he would free his people. But these masters purposely (I mean many of them) keep close their art and mystery to continue their servants to them in a little nobler slavery, that, when their indentures are ended, their apprentice may step into a journeyman, which is but bondage in a second edition, and somewhat a fairer print. Others fear, if their servants should be made skilful in their calling, they would some way or other get away their custom; and therefore conceal their trade, hereby turning a possibility of their future suffering into a certainty of present sinning, just like one that, because it is possible somebody hereafter may give him a cup of wormwood, is resolved to prevent it



by taking a present cup of poison. But whatsoever be the root, the reason of it, sure I am the fruit is bitter and distasteful to God, and all sober men. A common robber on the road is not in so deep a degree guilty of theft as an unfaithful master. This man robs the father of his money now, and the comfort he might expect from his son hereafter; he robs the servant of his present labour and his future livelihood; he robs his country of that service which the apprentice might have done it if the master had been conscientious in teaching him his calling; and he robbeth God and his own soul most in wronging all these, and in being so false and unfaithful to his covenants, which, under his own hand and seal, will be brought out against him at the day of Christ.

I know some servants are dull and backward, and cannot easily learn; and others are untoward, and will not be easily taught; but let masters do their endeavour and discharge their duties, and then the sin will not another day lie at their doors.

But, reader, I would be rightly understood; I do not intend by teaching thy servant the mystery of his art and trade, thy instructing thy servant in the mystery of iniquity, those sly, subtle tricks which some masters have (by false weights, or rotten wares handsomely glazed or glossed, or any other sinful way) to cozen their customers. No. If thou art skilled in this hellish black art, keep it to thyself and the devil, whence it came, but let not thy servant be abused by doing thy work so many years, and then turned off like thy horse, after such hard labour, without any reward.

By that small acquaintance I have in the city, I find the urging this duty exceeding necessary, many masters being faulty herein, to the great prejudice and wrong of their apprentices; and I do somewhat

marvel that those who write of relation duties, do generally omit it—not one that I ever read of so much as mentioning it.

5. Masters ought to exercise discipline towards their servants. Reproof is due to a servant sinning, as much as his diet; nay, a servant that will not be corrected with words, must with blows, Prov. 29:19. The philosopher tells us, a servant may challenge three things, ἔργον, τροφήν, καὶ κόλασιν, work, meat, and correction; and it is clear, as the case maybe in the last, that the master in giving them all, doth no more than what is just and equal. Some servants, like the Phrygians, will do nothing any longer than they are beaten to it. But that servant who knoweth his master's will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes, Luke 12:47. The Scythians, when their servants, upon their long absence in Asia, had married their wives, and at their return withstood them, conquered their servants with whips, though they could not conquer them with swords.

The master ought to be wise, especially in this part of his duty. Correction is like physic, not to be given without good advice and caution; if it be too frequent, it works no more than our meat with us; some faults that are lesser, may be pardoned without danger, Eccles. 7:21, 22.

Every house must not be turned into a house of correction. The servants' disposition must be observed. We use a difference when we go about to hew a rugged piece of timber, and to smooth a little stick, which you can bend as you please.

A fit season must be observed. Cut your trees at some time of the year, and you kill them; prune them at other times, and they thrive much the better.

The fault must be plain. Arraignment and conviction in all our courts precede judgment and execution. Some masters in their heat and haste fly on their servants upon a supposition which is false; like those who hang men for a fact, and then examine whether they are guilty or no, and if they be found innocent, take their bodies down from the gibbet, and allow them a burial. No man was to be beaten among the Jews, say their writers, but by witnesses and evidence, and they were to examine the witnesses by inquiry and diligent search, even as they did in judgments of life and death. Joseph's master sinned in putting him into prison upon his wife's bare assertion, Gen. 39:20.

The correction must be moderate. Servants must not be wrought like horses, nor beaten like dogs. When Hagar fled from the too hard dealing of her mistress, and groaned to God, he heard her cry. Deut. 23:15, he cannot endure that our brother or sister should be vile in our eyes. Adrianus the emperor banished one Umbra, a matron, for five years, for handling her maids cruelly, Deut. 25:3, 4. Whosoever did beat his servant amongst the Hebrews immoderately, was to be beaten himself, unless there were a fine by their judicial laws, as in some cases, imposed on him. It is evident, that if the master had wronged his servant, though but in a tooth, he was to make him satisfaction, Exod. 21:26, 27. The Romans punished their faulty servants, by forcing them to carry a piece of wood called furca, in way of disgrace, up and down among all their neighbours, and the offender was called furcifer.

6. Masters ought to encourage good servants. Sometimes by seasons for lawful recreations. The naturalist, who speaketh much that servants should not want work, saith also that they must have rest and recreation, ἀπὸ ἔργου, as well as ἐργον, refreshment as

employment. Their hard meat will go down the better with a little sauce.

Horses too strait reined in, are apt to rise up with their forefeet; when they are allowed convenient liberty with their heads they go the better.

Sometimes by preferring him, if it be in thy power: 'A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren,' Prov. 17:2. God would have those that are low and lowly exalted to higher places. Potiphar, though he had no fear of God, yet having found Joseph faithful, he preferred him, a poor slave, to be over all his house. The centurion's honest servant was dear to him, ἐντίμος, of great price; a good servant is a jewel of great price, and therefore he should not always be put to mean, servile use. It is pity a gracious person should ever, much less always, stand in a low place. Oh, suffer not live coals to go out for want of blowing; let thy words and thy works shew that grace in a mean man is glorious.

Paul writes to Philemon on the behalf of his godly servant, 'Receive him not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, especially to me, but how much more to thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?' Philem. 16. It is sordid in many masters that dismiss their servants, when they have dwelt with them many years, and served them faithfully, rather as prisoners out of a jail, ragged and tattered, than as brethren out of a Christian society. God commandeth the Jews, when their servant's apprenticeship was out, 'In the seventh year thou shalt let him go free. And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty: but shalt liberally furnish him out of thy flock, and out of thy floor: of that wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee thou

shalt give him,' Deut. 15:13, 14. Heb., In furnishing thou shalt furnish him, that is, certainly do it. Some read it, Adorn him as with a chain, release him with honour, and not turn him out as a vagabond. For the quantity, the law appointeth not how much the master should give his servant.

The Hebrews gather out of Exod. 21:32, that he might not give less than thirty shekels, whether it were of one kind (of the things forementioned) or of many. Now these judicial laws, as to their equity, are still in force. But how far from conformity to the equity of this precept are those crabbed, covetous persons, who instead of good works deny their honest servant a good word at parting; nay, and when they are gone, and set up for themselves, envy them their custom, and do their utmost to hinder them in their callings; such masters degenerate into savage beasts, scrambling to have all themselves, and fighting, at least in thoughts and words, that no others may share with them:

7. Masters should set a good pattern before their servants. Masters are the looking-glass by which servants usually dress themselves. If they be false glasses, their servants will be attired but in ill-favoured fashions. Servants are as members, masters as the head; now the members accompany the head, whether through a dirty ditch, or through a cleanly path—whether to a tavern or to the temple. It is the unhappy privilege of a master to have, like Korah, a company following him in his wicked courses and worst practices. 'The eyes of a servant are to the hands of his master, and the eyes of a maiden to the hands of her mistress,' Ps. 123:2. Reader, observe it, to the hand of master and mistress; the hand is the organ of action, the instrument of working, servants' eyes are as much, often more, to their masters' and mistresses' works, as their ears to their words. Their voice to their superiors is like that of Tiberius to Justinus, If

you please I agree, if you refuse I deny also; or as the king of Judah to the king of Israel, I am as thou art; or as that scribe to Christ, 'Master, I will follow thee wherever thou goest,' Mat. 8:19; what care therefore should masters take that their race be by rule, lest poor servants should wait on, and follow after them to hell! If a governor be bad, all his servants are wicked, Prov. 29:12. Pharaoh's servants took after their master, and so did Saul's. Servants are as sunflowers, they follow the motion of (the sun) their masters, whether to good or evil. If the high priests, and the heads of the Jews, prove corrupt, they shall not want company in their evil courses, though it be to buffet and persecute, and deride the Lord Jesus Christ. Inferiors are like a flock of cranes, which way their superior, the foremost, flieth, all the rest follow. The servants of Absalom will join with him in his sin, sooner than the servant of Elisha will join with him in his sanctity. If the first sheet in the press, upon its last review, go off ill, full of errors, the whole fifteen hundred or two thousand that come after, have all the same faults; but if that go off well, the rest will resemble it; truly what the first sheet is to them that remain, that is a master to his men-servants, and a mistress to her maidens. If the master make conscience of his words, of his deeds, if he be serious in, and diligent at, holy duties, servants, at least in pretence, will imitate him; but if he be a curser, a cheater, a liar, a Sabbath-breaker, how ordinary is it for servants to take after him! The works of commanders and masters, are usually the commanders and masters of servants' works. Consider therefore, reader, how thou carriest thyself, lest those that thank thee in this world for thy pains and faithfulness in teaching them their trades, curse thee in the other world for leading them by thy wicked pattern to the place of torments.

**A good wish about the master's duties, wherein the former heads are epitomised**

The sovereign Lord of the whole world, who hath manifested his manifold wisdom in appointing such a subordination amongst his several creatures, as might be most conducive to the ends of their creation, and his boundless goodness in bestowing dominion on some for the welfare and happiness, not for the injury and hurt, of others, that the poor and weaker, as they yield subjection to, might receive protection and provision from, the rich and stronger, having out of his mere mercy, not for any merit, called me to be a master, I wish that I may never behave myself in this relation as a slave to Satan, or a servant of unrighteousness, by making my house to my servants, as Egypt to Israel, an iron furnace and a house of bondage, either to their souls or bodies; that I may not abuse my power to the prejudice of the poorest, but that I may give unto all my servants that which is just and equal, knowing that I myself have a Master in heaven.

I wish that, whenever my heart is ready to insult over them, or my hand ready to fall heavy upon them, I may consider that though there be some difference betwixt us in regard of civil condition, yet there is none in regard of natural constitution. Did not he that made me in the womb make them? and did not he form us all in the womb? Should the children of the same father with me be used like beasts by me? Our births, our beings, our lives and deaths, are the same: I am made of the same essential parts, live by the same providence, breathe in the same common air, and must shortly be buried in the same earth with them; and is here any ground for arrogancy in me, or cruelty towards them? When they are my fellow-travellers, that came out of the same inn of the womb, are willing to wait upon me as I journey, and walk with me to the same grave, shall I rob or wrong them by the way? Lord, since nature made no difference betwixt me and the meanest servant in the world, but whatsoever difference there is comes from thy free grace, enable me

to carry myself towards them righteously and mercifully, as towards my fellow-creatures, those that are of the same make and mould with myself, lest by despising the poor I reproach both their and my maker.

I wish that I may behave myself towards my servants as towards those that are God's sons. As they differ not from me in natural principles, so neither do they differ in spiritual privileges; they have right to the same God, to the same gospel, to the same Saviour, and to the same salvation. Though they are poor, yet they have an equal title here to the exceeding rich and precious promises, and hereafter to the purchased possession. What though they want those external fading accomplishments of birth, breeding, honour, estate, which others boast of, when they may have the real internal endowments of the love of God, and the blood of Christ, and the embroidery of the Spirit, which are the only things of worth and price! Good kings will not suffer their subjects to be wronged, much less their children. He that toucheth God's chosen, toucheth the apple of his eye. How sure am I to suffer, if I offend one of Christ's little ones. Oh let me never, according to the world's judgment, esteem persons by their outward ornaments; but as David shewed kindness to lame Mephibosheth for Jonathan's sake, so let me shew kindness to low servants for Jesus' sake. Lord, since thou makest not the least difference betwixt me and them in spirituals, let me make the less difference in civils; let me never be so foolish, and so much my own foe, as to oppress and abuse thy favourites, but let me use them in all respects as those that are or may be thy heirs, and partakers with me of the same holiness, and the same heaven.

I wish that the fear of my Master above may make me faithful to my servants here below. His eyes behold all my ways, his heart doth perfectly hate all my wickedness, and his hand can punish me when



he pleaseth; he will not spare me for my place, nor fear me for my power; with him there is no respect of persons. Shall not his dread fall upon me, and his terror make me afraid? If the presence and awe of a king make a judge righteous to his subjects, shall not the omnipresence and dread of a God make me just to my servants? Oh that I might never be so far possessed with unbelief as to think my Lord delayeth his coming, and thence to take liberty to beat the men-servants and maidens, (to neglect their souls, to wrong their bodies, by oppressing them with work, or not paying them their wages,) and to eat, and drink, and to be drunken, lest my Lord come in a day when I look not for him, and in an hour when I am not aware, and cut me asunder, and give me my portion with unbelievers, Luke 12:45, 46. Ah, should I be a hard master to them, how heavy would the hand of my God be on me! If an oppressed Israelite groan by reason of his bondage, God will hear his cry, and maintain his cause; and what plagues will then fall down on such Egyptian masters! Lord, though I could abuse my servant without any fear of men, let me not dare to rule with rigour, out of the fear of thee. For if I despise the cause of my man-servant, or my maid-servant, when they plead with me, what then shall I do when thou risest up? and when thou visitest, what shall I answer thee? Job 21:14, 15.

I wish that I could consider that I am but a deputy-master, that God only hath an absolute dominion, and therefore my servants must be always used answerable to their relation to him. Who am I, that I should offer to abuse the servants of another man? And do I dare to abuse the servants of the great God? If it were ground enough for Pharaoh, a heathen, to let Israel enjoy their liberty because they were God's people,—'Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness,'—surely it should be reason enough with me, a Christian, to rule over my servants with meekness and mildness, because they are God's servants; reason and civility would forbid me to oppress

the servants of a stranger, and shall not religion and sanctity withhold me from abusing the servants of my Father and Saviour? Lord, my flesh is apt to suggest that I am a sovereign, and therefore may deal with them according to my passion; but thy word hath told me that I am but thy substitute; oh, let me therefore govern them according to thy precepts!

I wish that, because they are God's servants, I may be the more careful to teach them his statutes, and the more conscientious to acquaint them with his word, and command them his worship; I hinder God of his honour, and them also, to my power, of heaven, if I mind nothing about them, but my own work. Would I be willing that poor servants should, out of my house, stumble into hell? Their souls are as precious as of the greatest earthly princes. My God in the making of them took as great pains; my Saviour in the purchasing them laid down the same price; the Holy Spirit will dwell in them, if they be pure, sooner than in the soul of the highest ungodly potentate; and shall I trample those jewels, which my God esteems at so dear a rate, as dung and dirt under my feet? Oh that I might not, as covetous wretches, ever increase my temporal goods, by being cruel to my servants' souls, and neglecting their eternal good. Within a few days they shall enter into their unchangeable estates: heaven or hell must hold their precious souls for ever; and shall I be no more mindful of my man or my maid than I am of my beasts, that when they die have a period both of their pain and pleasure? Lord, I beg it of thy sacred Majesty, that my servants may, through me, as an instrument, receive from thee saving mercy. Oh that my faithfulness might be so real, and thy favour so effectual, that none might go out of my family into the unquenchable fire.

Dearest Redeemer, who wast pleased to take upon thee, for our sakes, the form of a servant, and didst not disdain in the days of thy

flesh, here on earth, to give a visit to a poor sick servant, let it please thee to visit my sick men, my sick maids, with thy gracious and powerful presence; shew thyself a charitable, skilful, and compassionate physician in healing such poor, dangerous patients, for God's sake. They are not able to requite thee, but thou lovest freely; oh heal their backslidings, and receive them graciously, and they will render thee (what they are able) the calves of their lips, the thanks of their hearts, and the praise of their lives to all eternity.

I wish that I may be true to their bodies, though I be most tender of their souls; I ought to prefer the inward, but yet to provide for their outward man. Why should I be so unrighteous as to withhold their due, whilst I accept their duty? and so unreasonable as to expect their labour, and yet to grudge them that which maintaineth their lives? I would neither pine nor pamper them, but feed them with food convenient and sufficient. Charity bindeth me to feed and clothe others in necessity, according to my estate and ability; but justice requireth me to requite these. They earn their bread in the sweat of their brows, and should they be turned off with a knock and a bit? The ox must not be muzzled that treadeth out the corn; and is not the Christian labourer worthy of his hire? If my serviceable beast were ill, I would willingly be at the cost of his cure; and doth not my Christian servant, when sick, deserve much more care? What though he should, when recovered, prove ungrateful, or die, and thereby be disenabled to acknowledge my kindness; yet my God, who is a sure and liberal paymaster, would not fail largely to recompense my labour of love. Lord, let me never be of the number of those gallants who through their pride bring up their servants (pampering them in wantonness and wickedness) to bring down their families; nor of those muckworms who, out of penuriousness, deny them their due; but let me regard them as thy servants, both in health and sickness,

and afford them, with respect to my wealth and their wants, as those that are or may be thy adopted sons.

I wish that I may never abuse my power to the wrong of my Saviour or servant, by commanding anything which my God forbiddeth. My authority is derivative from him, and therefore must be exercised in obedience to him. It is his free grace that I am a master, not a servant, and shall I not improve his favour to his glory? How unworthy should I be if, like Jehu, I fight against my Master with his own soldiers, and use the power which he hath given me to dethrone and dishonour him? I am greatly ungrateful if I do not acknowledge his kindness by improving it to his credit; but what a monster of ingratitude am I, if I abuse the gracious commission of my king, to the robbing him of his crown! Lord, preserve me from following Sennacherib's heathenish and hellish pattern, who commanded and sent his servants to revile and reproach the living God; but let all the work I shall ever appoint them, be agreeable to thy word. Since my person is by millions of engagements bound to subjection, and my dominion is received wholly from thee, let my person and power ever be improved in subordination to thee.

I wish that I may never wrong their bodies by immoderate work, as well as not injure their souls by anything that is wicked. They are come to be my servants, not to be my slaves. I am called to be their master, not to be their tyrant. Oh, let me never be so barbarous, as, by working them like beasts, to drink their blood! If a merciful man be merciful to his beasts, what a man of blood is he that is cruel to Christians! Lord, keep me from imitating those pharisees, who bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, on the shoulders of inferiors, but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

I wish that I may be faithful in teaching them fully that trade to which they are bound. How cursedly do I cozen both parents and children if I deal deceitfully with them in my calling! With what conscience can I use them as servants, whilst I resolve they shall never be masters? And doth it not pity me to see how hard they work, and what pains they take to buy their future beggary? Do I deal with others as I would be dealt with myself? Can I imagine that such covetousness, or whatsoever be the cause of this injustice, shall escape a curse? I hinder, by my unrighteousness, their temporal weal, but I further my own eternal woe. Lord, suffer me not to raise myself by robbery, nor, as many rich persons, to build my house upon others' ruin; but let justice in all my actions run down like water, and righteousness in this relation like a mighty stream.

I wish that my servants' souls may be always dearer to me than their sins; I mean, that I may never allow them in anything that is unlawful. The human nature will help me to discourage them in that which may poison their bodies, and shall not the divine nature hinder me from encouraging them in that which will pollute their immortal souls? My frowns, through God's blessing, may famish, but my favour will too probably fatten, their body of sin. Will sin deal so tenderly with their souls if they go to the place of torment, that I should be so meek and so mild in reproofing it? How perfectly doth my God hate sin, when he inflicteth such dreadful judgments on sinners for sin's sake! What ignominy and agony, what sorrows and torture, did my Saviour undergo to make satisfaction for sin! What pains doth the Spirit take to cast sin down, even when he doth not cast it out, in any soul! and shall I allow any in sin?

Besides, I am guilty of that profaneness which I may, and do not, prevent. Their debts, contracted through my connivance, will be laid to my charge at the dreadful day of Christ. And are my own sins so

light a load that I must cry for others' burdens, and, as a man pressing to death, call for more weight? Oh that I might never wink at either wife's, or children's, or servants' wickedness; but though I love their persons, may yet loathe their vices, and so reprove them, as one that would not have his poor house removed, when they leave this world, into hell. Lord, did I never feel sin, and that I am still apt to have such favourable thoughts of it, both in myself and others. Hath not the law's curse, because of it, gone over my soul, and thy wrath pressed me very sore? and shall no learning teach me? Oh, whatsoever affliction it be thy pleasure to chastise me with, preserve me from thy curse, the permission of sin in my own or any others' soul.

I wish that I may be fit to reprove others, by living without rebuke, and being irreprovable myself. Eyes filled with dust cannot see spots in others' faces. Hands that are filthy are not fit to wash out the defilement of the other members. Besides, if I commit, and am guilty of that swearing or drunkenness, or any sin which I condemn in others, I do but, like David in condemning them, pass a sentence of eternal death upon my own soul. I wish, therefore, for my own sake, and the sake of my followers, that I may be a follower of Christ, and walk in all things as I have him for an example. How soon will my servants tread in my steps, whether right or wrong! As the body in a beast, so do servants in a house, follow the head, the master. And am I willing to make them wicked with me, and to be for ever woeful with them? Will not hell-fire be the hotter for so much fuel? Oh that, since servants are the soft wax, and my life is the seal, I might live so righteously, soberly, and godlily, as to be a pattern of piety, and a credit to the gospel, and instrumental to stamp God's image on their souls. Lord, the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man to direct his own steps. I beseech thee, therefore, to lead me in thy truth, and so to order all my steps by thy word, that the iniquity of

my heels—I mean of them that follow me at the heels—may never compass me about.

I wish that I may not only be a terror to evil-doers, but also an encouragement to those servants that do well; that I may, as a wise gardener, be as diligent to cherish the good plants, as to pluck up the evil weeds. It is infinite pity that virtue should famish for want of favour, that grace should languish for lack of countenance. Oh, how carefully doth my God encourage piety in never so mean a person! He looks on their enemies as his enemies. It were better that a millstone were hung about the neck of the greatest emperor, and he thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. They are holiness to the Lord, the first fruits of his increase; all that devour them shall offend, evil shall befall them. He makes it the character of a true Christian to honour them, poor or rich, bond or free, that fear the Lord. They are precious in his sight, and honourable, though the world judge them base and contemptible; though he be the high and lofty One, yet he humbleth himself to make these poor in spirit the habitation where his holiness dwelleth. Lord, help me, who profess myself to be thy son, to resemble thee in my carriage towards my servants, that wheresoever I behold any sproutings of grace, or buddings of godliness, I may afford those tender buds such warm beams as may cause them, through thy blessing, to ripen into fruits of holiness, and to end at last in everlasting life.

Finally, I wish that I may, in every particular of this relation of a master, carry myself as a faithful servant to Christ. Lord, if I expect such reverence, obedience, and diligence from my servants, because I give them, through thy bounty to me, a little food and wages, what reverence, obedience, and diligence mayest thou expect from me, when I owe my life and all my comforts to thy free grace, and am

bound by millions of engagements to thy blessed Majesty! Oh that as mountains overflowing with water do thereby help to fatten the valleys, my heart might be so filled with living water, that I may be instrumental to make my servants and inferiors fruitful in godliness! Blessed God, remit all my miscarriages in this relation, and be pleased so to renew my soul after the image of thy dear Son, that I may carry myself towards my servant as a vessel of honour, fitted and prepared for my master's use; and when the day of my death shall come, that servants shall be free from their subjection to me, I may be free both from sin and suffering, under which I am now sold, and enter into my master's joy. Amen.

## **CHAPTER VII**

### **How Christians may exercise themselves to godliness in the relation of servants**

The lowest relation in a family is this of servants, in which, as well as in the rest, religion must be minded. Therefore the Spirit of God giveth directions in his word how these should carry themselves; and the minister, as he is a steward, is bound to give the meanest in his master's family their portion.

Some servants in the days of the apostles thought that their spiritual freedom by Christ had exempted them from bodily and civil subjection to men. The first author of this opinion is thought to be Judas of Galilee, mentioned by Gamaliel, Acts 5:37, and he is there said to have stood up in the days of the taxing. Eusebius ascribeth this heresy to the Essenes. And Josephus saith that after them rose up the Galileans, who taught that none was to be called Dominus, lord or master, but God only; and they would suffer the most



exquisite torments rather than give this title to any man. In succeeding ages rose up the Manichees,<sup>2</sup> A.D. 273, who denied all civil authority, whether public or private. After these followed, A.D. 1296, the Pseudo-apostoli, whose ringleader was Gerardus Sagarellus de Parma, whose doctrine was *neminem subjici nisi soli Christo*, that none should be subject to any save to Christ alone. Of latter times some licentious Anabaptists did drink in the same poisonous liquor.

But the doctrine of the gospel doth not free men from their service, but fasten them to it. It freeth servants from sinful subjection to their masters, I mean in anything which God forbiddeth, but not from civil subjection in those things which are lawful. Religion doth not consume but confirm the master's authority. Hence the gospel layeth down such precepts for the carriage and usage of servants. If all service to men had been sinful, the Holy Ghost would not have laid down rules, both for servants' duties to, and dues from, their masters. Christ's kingdom is not of this world, neither is the liberty which he purchaseth for his people of this world. All are one in Christ in regard of internal and eternal salvation, not in regard of external condition. For they remain after conversion, master and servant, high and low still. Surely Paul, after Onesimus was born again, would never have turned him to his master if service had been unlawful.

Reader, if thou art called to be the servant of man, carry thyself therein as the servant of God. It is thy privilege that in thy low place thou mayest honour the blessed and glorious potentate. As 'in every nation,' so in every calling and condition, 'he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him,' Acts 10:35. Thy subjection to thy master on earth should be performed so religiously that it may be service to thy Master in heaven. Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters, not with eye-service, but with the service of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.

I shall first lay down some motives, and then speak to the servant's duty.

First, Consider, godliness will much sweeten your present subjection and servile condition. Possibly thy life is full of black lines, thy yoke is very hard, by reason of a hard master. Now, how wilt thou make it easy but by godliness? Thy corporal servitude should make thee the more desirous of spiritual liberty. Thy present disgrace should whet thy endeavours after the eternal weight of glory. Will it not be sad for thee to be slighted and despised of men for thy mean condition, because thou art a servant, and to be hated and plagued of God for thy reigning corruptions, because thou art a servant of sin? Doth not thy heart ache to think of two hells—a hell on earth, and a hell in hell? Believe it, without godliness thy present slavery is but a pledge of thy future misery. Now, it may be thy master is a Nabal, such a man of Belial that thou canst not speak to him; his looks are ever lowering, his lips are always railing at thee, and his hand is often heavy on thee. Ay, but thou wilt find Satan an infinitely more cruel tyrant. This severity is but a shadow of thy sufferings hereafter. Now thou workest hard all day, wearying out thy spirits and wasting thy strength, and art turned off with a bit and a knock, and possibly at night thy master thinks thy pains are never great enough, and thy reward is never little enough; but these things are but the beginning of thy sorrows. The devil, after all thy painful ploughing in his field, and hard grinding in his mill, in the day of thy life, will turn thee into the stable of hell, with thy galled back, at the night of death.

Do not delude thyself, that because thou art afflicted here thou shalt be spared hereafter; for thy jail in which thou now livest may be to thee, as to many others, the way to execution. Thou mayest go, as prisoners do, from this jail on earth to the gallows in hell. Believe it, God will never pity thee for thy poverty, if thou art one of the devil's

ragged regiment. It is the poor in spirit, not in purse; the lowly in disposition, not the low in condition, that are blessed.

David tells us the abjects gathered themselves together against him, Ps. 35:15. Some servants are saucy dust, that fly in the face of God and his people: but such must know that the breath of divine vengeance will blow away such dust. Oh how sad is the state of that servant who now dwelleth in an iron furnace, and must dwell hereafter in the unquenchable fire. Wicked men in a hard service are like naked hands exercised in hedging; they are sure to be pricked and pained much; but they who make religion their business in such places, are like hands armed with strong gloves, they are fenced against those thorns and briers. A godly servant, by looking to God, alters the nature of his hard service: for that bitter potion which is loathsome to him, when given him by the hand of a man, is lovely when presented to him by a loving and gracious God. Though we hate poison when it is mingled with our meat by a malicious enemy, as knowing that it may kill us, yet we take it willingly when it is sent us well tempered by a faithful and skilful physician, as hoping it may cure us.

Secondly, Consider, the holy life of a servant is a great ornament to the gospel. A poor servant may credit religion as well as a rich master. Poor servants carry lanterns and torches, whereby they direct others how to walk without stumbling. A pious servant may shine so with the light of purity as to guide others' feet in the ways of peace.

In the days of Christ the poor received the gospel, and by walking suitably thereunto they adorned the gospel. 'Let servants,' saith the apostle, 'be subject to their masters, and shew all good fidelity.' But what forcible motive doth he use to persuade to this faithfulness?

'That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things,' Titus 2:9, 10;—i.e., though possibly they shall have no thanks from their masters for all their diligence, yet this they shall do, which will bring them thanks from God, they shall adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour.

The gospel is adorned when it is rendered beautiful and amiable in the eyes of others. Poor servants, if pious, may bring their unbelieving masters to be in love with religion. As Naaman's servant, they may be helpful to cure, and to convert their masters. That dish, which before they could scarce endure the sight of, may be so neatly dressed by a cleanly servant, as may cause them both to look on it and to like it. At least, a faithful servant will take away occasions from a profane master of blaspheming God and the gospel. Sanctity will help to put him to silence, and nothing will command so much reverence as religion. Fire in a wilderness is a good shelter against the fury of wild beasts. When holiness sparkleth in a servant's life, and he is very faithful in the discharge of his trust, it preserveth religion from the rage and rancour of evil men.

On the other side, an unfaithful servant is a disgrace to the blessed Saviour. They who profess godliness, though never so low, if they fall, will have many that are high looking and laughing at them. If a saint step awry, the world will quickly spy it, and then they cry out, This is a gallant and goodly profession indeed! They will conclude the profession is not of God, if the professors walk like men.

Reader, if thou art a servant, consider the credit of the gospel is engaged in thy carriage. The gospel is thy best friend, and canst thou find in thy heart, by an unholy life, to trample it under thy feet? It is the greatest love-token which thy God hath sent thee, and doth it not behove thee to be tender of it, and to walk answerable to it? 'Let as

many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed,' 1 Tim. 6:1. Oh, how much doth the child's unruliness reflect on his father, and the servant's unfaithfulness reflect on his master, in heaven!

Thirdly, Consider, God will reward you for all your faithful service. It may be thou mayest labour hard, and serve thy master with much diligence and conscience, and for all thy work scarce receive a good word from him; but know this, thy God will give thee a rich and sure reward: he that with good-will doth service to God shall never miss of his pay. A good servant serveth God more than his master, and he serveth God in serving his master; and therefore may expect that God should give him his reward. 'Servants, be obedient to your masters, with fear and trembling. With good-will serving the Lord, and not man; and know ye, that whatsoever good thing a man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free,' Eph. 6:5–8. A good servant soweth good seed by his faithful service to his master, and God will take care that he reaps a good crop.

God sometimes gives a good 'servant a reward in this world. Jacob served Laban faithfully many years, and though his master dealt churlishly with him, yet God paid him bountifully in the end. He had full wages for all his work. 'A faithful man shall abound with blessings,' Prov. 28:20. Joseph was conscientious in his mean place under Potiphar, for which he was advanced to be his steward and chief servant, and afterwards he came to be lord of Egypt. 'A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame,' Prov. 17:2. Mordecai was faithful when he sat as porter at the king's gate, and God honours him and sets him above all the princes in the court of Ahasuerus.

But if God do not reward thee here, he will not fail to do it hereafter. Though the gratuities or gifts are uncertain, yet the salary is certain. And truly the longer men forbear the interest, the greater will the principal be. 'Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters, according to the flesh, in all things; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ,' Col. 3:22–24. Faithful servants shall have the reward of sons, nay, of heirs. 'Ye shall receive the reward of inheritance.' Heaven is an undefiled and incorruptible inheritance, which God hath prepared for all them that serve him with a pure conscience. When the children of the kingdom shall be cast out, pious servants shall be called in, Mat. 8:11.

I come now to shew wherein the duty of a servant consisteth.

1. Thy duty is to reverence thy master. The distance in this relation is the greatest, and therefore commandeth the greatest reverence. 'If I be a master, where is my fear?' Mal. 1:6. A saucy servant is a sinful servant. He hath no fear of his Maker, who doth not fear his master. 'Servants, be subject to your own masters with all fear,' 1 Pet. 2:18. 'Servants, be obedient with fear and trembling,' Eph. 6:5. Because servants enjoyed spiritual freedom, they were apt to think themselves exempted from corporal subjection; therefore the apostles of Christ are diligent to acquaint them with their duties. Their privilege by Christ, as it should make them the more cheerful in their service, so also the more awful of their superiors.

Some thought that, if their masters were believers and brethren, all were equal, and there needed not any respect or reverence to be shewed to them. Therefore, saith the Scripture, 'Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their masters worthy of all honour; and they which have believing masters, let them not despise them,

because they are brethren; but rather do service, because they are faithful and beloved,' 1 Tim. 6:1, 2. It seemeth some servants, under the pretence of Christian liberty, would have cast off the yoke of obedience. They objected, that as their masters were in Christ, so were they, and in Christ there is neither bond nor free; but the Holy Ghost answereth, that though there be no spiritual, yet there is an external and civil difference. Servants' relation to their masters is not dissolved by their relation to, and union with Jesus Christ. They are servants still, and ought to give their Christian masters double honour. They should honour them for their relation as masters, and more for their religion, as they are Christian masters.

Others could reverence their masters, they say, if they were religious and courteous; but the apostle Peter bids servants to fear and honour such masters as are froward. 'Servants, be subject to your masters, not only to the good and courteous, but also to the froward,' 1 Pet. 2:18. If the master be good or bad, courteous or crabbed, it is all one in this particular; for the honour is due, not to the man's nature, but to God's order.

2. Thy duty is to yield obedience to him in the Lord. In the civil law a servant is said to be ἀπρόσωπος, one that sustaineth no person, but is a dependent and an adjunct to his master, as one that ought to form himself to his master's mind. 'Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters, and to please them well in all things,' Tit. 2:9. *Servus non est persona, sed res*, saith the civilian. He is an instrument to be acted at his master's pleasure. The centurion describeth a servant: 'I say to one, Go, and he goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh; to a third, Do this, and he doeth it,' Mat. 8:9. The apostle also gives his true character: 'His servant ye are whom ye obey,' Rom. 6:16. He is not a servant, but a master, that must have his own way and will. Such a one putteth off the formal nature of a

servant. Servants are bound to be at the disposal of their master and mistress, both for the matter and the manner of their work; though some, like forward lapwings, run when the shell is scarce off their heads; though they be, comparatively, but boys or girls, yet their work must be done at their own time and in their own way. Job's servant was highly faulty, who was so far from acting that he refused to answer his master. 'I called my servant, and he gave me no answer,' Job 19:16. Sullenness in a servant is a great sin. Silence is sometimes a sign of consent; but when it proceeds from sullenness, it is ever a sign of contempt. Not to answer a stranger is incivility, and against the law of courtesy; but not to answer a master is a great iniquity, and against the law of justice, for the servant's tongue, as well as his hands, is his master's. Servants are too ready to answer when they ought to be silent, and too ready to be silent when they ought to answer. Therefore elsewhere the Holy Ghost forbiddeth servants to answer again: 'Not answering again,' Tit. 2:9. They may answer, but they must not answer again. They must answer when asked, but may not answer again when reprov'd. There is a twofold answering again.

1. By way of opposition; when servants say somewhat to their masters, but it is by way of gainsaying their minds. Some servants can give their master or mistress word for word, nay, two for one; this the apostle dissuadeth from. Those that are slow of their feet are swift of their tongues. Lazy and loud may be their motto. Others are nimble at their hands, and thence take liberty to be nimbler at their tongues. Few do their work well, who do not by their cutting words spoil all.

2. By way of submission. Coming, and going, and doing are the best answer to a master. Servants may answer in language of reverence, and with the carriage of obedience. A nod of the head or beckoning



with the hand should be a sufficient word of command to them, Ps. 125:2. Reader, consider how urgently thou art enjoined by thy Maker to be obedient to thy master: 'Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ,' Eph. 6:5. In which words we have,

First, The servant's subjection expressed: 'Servants, be obedient.' A disobedient servant denieth his name, his relation. Obedience should be the garment, the livery wherewith all in such places should be clothed, or otherwise they contradict their title.

Secondly, The restriction of that obedience implied: 'To them that are your masters according to the flesh.' Intimating that the master's dominion is bounded, it is over the flesh, (he hath no liberty to make laws for the servant's spirit,) and so is the servant's subjection limited. Servants are not only to suffer when they have sinned, but rather to suffer than to sin. Conscience bindeth to obedience, but not to obedience against conscience. 'Be not,' saith the same apostle, 'the servants of men; ye are bought with a price,' 1 Cor. 7:23. Christ hath redeemed servants from sinful slavery, though not from civil servitude. Joseph did obey the sinless laws of his master, but he refused to obey the sinful lust of his mistress. They are masters over the flesh or body, not over the soul; therefore so long as the soul is not wronged, the rule of the servant's obedience must be his master's will, be it irksome or wearisome, not his own. But still, if the master, as Absalom and the chief priests in their commands, oppose God's commands, servants must submit to their punishments, not obey their precepts. It is much better to suffer for forbearance than to sin in obedience. Masters may tell their servants, as that unnatural son did his, that he would excuse them, 2 Sam. 13:28. But that proud prince's word was no warrant for his servants' wickedness. Though the master be doubly guilty in commanding, the servant is not

guiltless in obeying. Whosoever be the authors, God will punish the actors of sin.

3. Diligence is thy duty. Some servants are like gentlemen, humble servants, but it is only in a compliment. They are all for words and show, nothing for works and substance. Their care is to fare well and go fine, but as gaudy pictures, rather than active persons, they are nothing for action. How many hire others to do their work, and pay them with their master's money! being hereby guilty of double theft, for they rob their masters of their time first, and then of their goods. Eliezer, Abraham's steward, preferred his employment before his natural refreshment, and refused to eat before he had done his errand. But how many servants are all for their belly, their diet, and nothing at their hands, at their duty.

There is a kind of heron called ὀκνὸς, slothful, whereupon there was raised a fable that an idle servant was turned into this bird, which is ἀργότατος, most idle. It is frequent with maid-servants to have the green-sickness, and men-servants the scurvy, both diseases which make them lazy. Jacob served Laban with all his might; though the master was churlish, yet the servant was conscientious. In the heat of the day and the cold of the night, he was careful of his duty, and his faithful pains brought him in much peace.

A slothful servant is his own torment. Laziness, like envy, eateth him up. He walketh through a hedge of thorns, because he will not take the pains to go about, and so pierceth himself with anguish. He is a grief to his master, whilst he hinders him in his estate, and disappointeth him in his hopes. 'As vinegar to the teeth, and smoke to the eyes; so is the sluggard to them that send him,' Prov. 10:26. Some servants will labour in their master's presence, but loiter in his absence, which is a clear sign they do not serve him out of

conscience. 'Servants, obey in all things your masters; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God,' Col. 3:22. Servants who look no further than their master's eye are men-pleasers; those only who set God ever before them, and thence are always diligent in their work, are God-pleasers.

4. Thy duty is to be faithful to thy master. Every servant hath some trust committed to him, to which he ought to be faithful and true: fidelity is the servant's glory, and the master's gain. 'As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him; for he refresheth the soul of his master,' Prov. 25:13.

An unfaithful servant is a rotten pillar, which breaketh under the weight laid on him, the trust committed to him. As an unsound tooth, he doth frustrate his master of his hopes; and if put to any stress, wounds him to the very heart with torment.

1. Thy duty is to be true in thy words, not lying. Take heed of Gehazi's lie—"Thy servant went no whither," 2 Kings 5:25—lest thou meetest with his leprosy. Some servants' words are like the writings of Appius, which, saith Josephus, are ψεύσματα συγχύτικα—a dunghill of shameless untruths. But such servants are the devil's sons, for he is the father of lies. A liar is Satan's picture. 'Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie?' Acts 5. The devil hath a hand in most, if not all, sins; but the liar hath the devil in his heart: he is full of Satan who liveth in lying. This practice speaketh the wicked one to have full possession. Why hath Satan filled thine heart? A lying servant hath a great disadvantage whilst he liveth, that when he speaketh truth he is not believed; though the dreadfulest when he dieth, that he is one in the list for the unquenchable lake, Rev. 21:8.

2. Be faithful in thy works, not purloining. Servants must beware of making any waste of their master's estate. It is their duty to

endeavour the preservation and increase of it, Gen. 39:8, as of their own. Servants are apt to cut large thongs out of others' hides; hence the apostle warns them, 'Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity,' Tit. 2:9. Those that give away to others, or take to themselves any of their master's goods, without his leave, are guilty of purloining.

Servants endeavour to excuse their thefts to their consciences, but cannot, by all their pretences, excuse them to God. They' think sometimes, It is but a small matter that I make bold with, for myself or friend. But let such consider—

(1.) The taking of a little, though but a piece of bread for a friend, or a peck of corn, or anything, without leave, is theft and sin, as truly as the taking of much more: a little pot of water is of the same nature with a river.

(2.) God is the less beholden to that servant that will break with him, and incur his anger for so small a matter.

(3.) He that is unfaithful in a little, will, if opportunity be offered, be unfaithful in more. A little wedge makes way for a greater; he that begins to put his finger in the money-box, will come at last to put his hands in the money-bags. They who will serve the devil for a penny, will do him much more service for a pound.

Again, some servants satisfy themselves with this: Their masters, say they, are hard men, and work them much, but do not reward them according to their deserts, therefore they may help themselves. I answer, Servants ought neither to be their own judges, nor their own paymasters. They ought not to be their own judges: servants are more fit for a bar than a bench; they are parties, and so unfit to determine such a question. Their masters may give them above their

labour, when their covetous hearts think all to be under; but if their masters be failing herein, they must not therefore be their own carvers. Because, reader, thy master is a churl, is there a necessity that thou shouldst therefore be a cheat? If he deny thee thy due, the law is thy refuge; if some overplus for thy extraordinary service, patience must be thy remedy: for both, if thou art conscientious, God will be thy reward.

Some, for their knavery in wronging their masters, plead Jacob's policy, Gen. 30:37, about Laban's sheep. But Jacob's righteousness will, according to his own expression, answer for him in time to come. For—

[1.] The counsel which Jacob had was supernatural. God revealed it to him in a dream. He referred his cause to God, (which is every servant's best course,) and God directed him such a way as requited him well for all his work, Gen. 31:9, 10.

[2.] The means he used were natural: 'He set the rods which he had pilled in the gutters in the watering troughs when the flocks came to drink, that they should conceive when they came to drink. And the cattle conceived before the rods, and brought forth cattle ring-straked, speckled, and spotted,' Gen. 30:38, 39. It is natural for vision to cause assimilation.

[3.] The contract was plain betwixt him and his master: 'And Laban said, Behold, I would it might be according to thy word,' ver. 34. Here is a clear bargain, therefore no wrong done. Laban did what he could to cozen his faithful servant, though God had, by his own confession, prospered his flocks for his sake; but God appeared on his side. Now, let servants first see that their cases be parallel with Jacob's; I mean, that they serve their masters as he did, conscientiously, with all their might, and then, when their masters,

as Laban did, deny them their dues, do nothing to right themselves but what God shall direct in his word, (for now God doth not reveal himself by dreams,) and in pursuance of a plain agreement betwixt their masters and them, and no good man will blame them. It is thy duty not only to forbear stealing, but also to further thy master's estate. Those apprentices are thieves that endeavour to rob their masters of his customers. Some, when nigh their freedom, have fine devices to call another man's pigeons to their loctiers. They will tell their master's best customers that he might afford such commodities cheaper, but he is grown rich, and cares not much for dealing, and therefore is so excessive in his gains. Many other ways they have, like Absalom, to steal away the hearts of such men. But if he that hides his master's talent, and doth not increase it, will be counted at last a wicked and slothful servant, and condemned to eternal sufferings, what will become of him that is so far from endeavouring to enrich, that he makes it his business to impoverish his master? Mat. 25:29.

The truth is, servants have degenerated so much from their duty, and there have been so few of them faithful, that the word anciently used for a servant is now used for a thief, as appears by the poet—

*'Quid domini faciant, audent cum talia fures!'*

3. Be faithful to the name of thy master. Do not reveal his nakedness who giveth thee clothing. It is ordinary for servants to be tattling to others of their master's or mistress's infirmities. Oh how glad are they when they have got a tale to carry to their fellows! But such messages, like Uriah's letters, will light most heavy at last upon the messenger; they are spies in a house to discover its weakness, and may expect the punishment of a spy from God for their wickedness. Soldiers received into a garrison for its defence, if they reveal its wants to the enemy, can look for nothing but the reward of traitors.

God hath martial-law for those servants who are taken into a family for its protection, and, by discovering the governor's secrets, conspire its destruction. He or she is unfit to be a servant, that cannot conceal the frailties of their master. Such backbiters shew little love to their superiors on earth, and less to their Sovereign in heaven. They are worse thieves that rob them of their good name, than those that wrong them of their goods. Servants, whenever they speak of their master or mistress, should represent them, as some looking-glasses do our faces, to the best advantage. He who is guilty of Ziba's act, of slandering his master, may expect Zimri's end.

4. Be faithful to the person of thy master and mistress. It was a usual speech formerly, *Quot servi, tot hostes*; how many servants, so many enemies. Some still find it true that their enemies are those of their own household. The servant of Elah slew him; that sword which he took to defend him destroyed him. The Duke of Buckingham, who had been a chief instrument of advancing Richard the Third to the crown, falling into displeasure sure at court, fled to one of his servants named Bannister, who betrayed him, and conveyed him to Salisbury, where, without any arraignment, he lost his head.

Some of the heathen have been famous for their faithfulness to their masters. Urbinius Panopian being proscribed fled, and being pursued, one of his bondmen changed clothes with him, let his master out at a back-door, lay down in his master's bed, and chose death by the hands of the soldiers to save his master's life.

The Mohammedans in the Great Mogul's country are commended for their faithful service to their Christian masters that hire them. They follow their masters on foot, carrying bucklers, or bows and arrows, for their defence. One work of servants is to defend the whole body of the families in which they are; how faulty, therefore, are they

that seek to destroy the head of it! The two chamberlains of Ahasuerus, in seeking their master's death, found their own graves, Esther 2:21, 23.

Servants also in their places must endeavour their superior's eternal peace. It may be, reader, thou hast a wicked master, one that scorneth and scoffeth at godliness; it behoveth thee to walk the more watchfully, that by thy fidelity and humility thou mayest move him to like and love it. We say of some servants that they can do what they will with their masters, they have so large an interest in them. Thou dost not know how prevalent thy conscientious carriage may be to draw thy master to Christ.

Austin reports of his mother, that she was cured of her drunkenness by her maid's calling her meribulam, a wine-bibber. I cannot justify the maid's sauciness, though it proved happy for her mistress; but sure I am, a submissive, prudent advice from a servant to a superior may, through God's blessing, tend to his eternal good. It is, without question, lawful for a servant to admonish his master or mistress, so it be done with reverence, and out of conscience. David was brought to repentance by Nathan's parabolical reprehension.

A poor contemptible child that hath his sight, may lead a man that is blind to a costly feast. As mean as thou art, if thou art holy and humble in the discharge of thy duty, thou may help thy master, though he be at present so backward to feed on the gospel dainties. Possibly thy master or mistress hath a respect for thee, and thou dost really love and reverence them. Oh, shew thy love by helping them to lay hold on eternal life! Study and contrive how thou mayest most probably interest them in durable riches, who give thee temporal rewards. Be more solicitous to preserve their souls from ruin, than to keep their estates from rapine. Those herbs which lie on the ground,



and are liable to be trampled upon by every one, have been instrumental for great cures. Blessed is that servant who is diligent to bring others into his Lord's service; it is no hurt though he be a footstool, so he can lift others nearer to heaven.

### **A good wish about the duty of a servant, wherein the former heads are epitomised**

The wise and omnipotent Jehovah, who worketh according to his own pleasure, and disposeth of all creatures for his own praise, having by his providence called me to the lowest place, I wish that I may abide in the calling to which my God hath called me with cheerfulness and patience, lest, looking enviously on those persons that are above me, or eying unworthily those things which are below me, I lose the crown which is set before me. Lord, since it is thy will that I should be mean and contemptible amongst men, help me in this relation of a servant to be so faithful that I may be honourable in thy sight. Enable me to be subject to my-master according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ, not with eye-service, as a man-pleaser, but as the servant of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart: with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men. Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free, Eph. 6:5–9.

I wish that, as Manasseh's iron fetters were far more worth to him than his golden chain, being instrumental to his spiritual freedom, so the daily labour of my body may make me more mindful of liberty for my soul; and the present pains I take, and shame I undergo, may quicken me to be more eager and earnest after the glory to be revealed, and the pleasures at God's right hand for evermore. Oh, how sad is my life if I be a servant of men, and a servant of sin! if my

outward man be in subjection to an oppressing lord, and my inward man in slavery to damning lusts! And ah! how dreadful will my death be, to exchange whips for scorpions, and to remove from a jail to a gibbet; from Egypt, an iron furnace, to suffer the vengeance of the eternal fire! Surely the curse of Ham to be a servant of servants, was a comfort, a blessing to my condition. Lord, help me so to serve thy divine Majesty with a pure conscience and faith unfeigned, (in serving my master,) that I may enjoy the liberty and privileges which Christ hath purchased; and give me thy grace so to labour here that I may rest hereafter.

I wish that the credit of the gospel may make me more holy and circumspect in my carriage, lest, by my carelessness in my conversation I should give others cause to blaspheme that worthy name by which I am called. By my profession I proclaim to the world that I live to adorn religion. If I, through unfaithfulness, sin, the gospel is sure to suffer, James 2:8. The disorders of a servant reflect on the master whose livery he weareth. If I walk like a Christian, I gain it esteem and credit. Lord, let me so shine with the light of holiness in my place, that others seeing my good works may glorify thee, my heavenly Father, and that none may ever have cause, through my miscarriages, to speak evil of the way of truth.

I wish that I may have such an eye to the recompense of reward, as to be the more encouraged to fidelity and industry in my work. Though I serve a froward master, that, after all my hard labour, will hardly afford me a good look, yet, if in serving my master, I serve my Maker, my labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. In orchards, some trees stand higher, some lower, but the husbandman esteemeth them not according to their height, but according to their fruit. My God valueth none according to the excellency of their parts, or eminency of their places, but according to the integrity of their hearts, and

sanctity of their lives. With him there is no respect of persons; but in every nation, and in every relation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him. Lord, assist me so to serve the Lord Christ in serving my master, that howsoever I shall be defrauded, or whatsoever unrighteousness I shall meet with at this day, yet I may obtain mercy at that day, even the mercy of my Lord Jesus Christ unto life eternal.

I wish that I may honour my master, as one whom my God hath made my superior. If his portion on earth be small, and his person seem never so contemptible; nay, though he be a servant of Satan, yet my reverence is due to him by virtue of God's ordinance. As I ought to honour him in the Lord, so also I ought to honour him for the Lord; for in reverencing my master, I reverence God's order. It is enough to satisfy my conscience, whatever he be in his carriage, that my God hath set him over me, and made me, not his fellow or familiar, but his servant and inferior. Lord, whilst others make themselves merry at the deformity, impiety, or meanness of their masters, let me, in my affections, words, and actions, carry myself towards him as a humble servant and holy Christian, because thou hast so commanded. Though some condemn his person, let me reverence his power, because of thy precept.

I wish that I may obey my master after the flesh, yet that I may never obey him in any fleshly command. I receive my food and wages to do his work, and observe his will in the Lord. By putting my neck under the yoke, I profess myself to be at his disposal. If I make my own will my rule of obedience, I am both unrighteous to him, and injurious to my own soul. Though his precepts be painful, if not sinful, I am bound to subjection to my power. My God commandeth me to be subject, not only to the good and courteous, but also to the froward. Lord, let me prefer thy will above all the commands of men, and be

sure to please thee, whomsoever I displease; but let the will of my master, when not opposite to thine, be the rule of my work, that I may obey him under thee, and for thy sake. If I am reviled, keep me from reviling again, that I may imitate my Saviour, who, being abused when he abased himself to the form of a servant, committed all to him that judgeth righteously.

I wish that I may not be slothful in business, but diligent in every duty that concerneth me in this relation. My time and strength are not my own, but, under God, my master's. If I, to gratify any lust, or indulge laziness, deny them to him, I am a thief, and rob him of his right. Whether he be present or absent, the eye of my God is ever on me, to record my ways, and reward me after my works. Lord, cause me so to set thee before me, that I may be fervent in spirit about my general, and industriously diligent in my particular, calling. Thou hast said, 'If a man be diligent in his business, he shall stand before kings, and not before mean men,' Prov. 22. Oh let me be so laborious in my place, that at last I may come to stand in thy presence, where is fulness of joy and pleasure!

I wish that I may be faithful in the improvement of every talent committed to my trust. He that is faithful in the unrighteous mammon shall be trusted with the true riches. If I be faithful in a little, my God will make me ruler over much. Oh that conscience to God's precepts may provoke me, and the consideration of my own profit encourage me, to shew all good fidelity in my place! I would be faithful to his estate, relations, and body, but especially in the service of his precious soul. If he be bad, by my humble counsel and holy example, I may be helpful to reform and convert him; if he be good, to rejoice and confirm him. My Saviour taught his disciples by a little child. They that could not bring gold towards the tabernacle, brought goats' hair. Lord, help me, either as Naaman's servant, to be

instrumental to cure my master of his spiritual leprosy; or make me, if he be a believer, some way or other to further his spiritual welfare. Let him be the better for such a servant, and me be the better for such a master; and both of us the better for thy righteous servant, who, by his knowledge, justifieth many.

Lord, if the service of some men be so desirable, because their natures are so kind and courteous, their work so easy and comfortable, and their pay so sure and bountiful, what a favour, what an honour is it to serve thy blessed Majesty! whose being and essence is love, whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and whose reward is above what eye hath seen, or ear hath heard, or the heart of man can conceive. Princes and sovereigns have gloried in being thy servants. Oh be pleased to put me in some place under thee, though never so low and mean! be it but to be a door-keeper in thy house, or to sit upon the threshold there. I shall esteem it above sitting on the highest earthly throne. I confess I have played the prodigal, and wasted the stock thou hast put into my hands. I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; yet, oh make me as one of thy hired servants, then I shall not disdain to do all the offices of thy commands to my fellow-servants, whom thou settest over me. Lord, enable me to serve them faithfully, for thy sake, and to serve thee truly in serving them, that I may hereafter enjoy the privileges of thy servants, in sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in thy kingdom, when the children of the kingdom shall be shut out; where the servant is free from his master, and the weary are at rest; where I shall receive a blessed welcome from thy hands, and hear that happy voice, 'Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'

## CHAPTER VIII

### **How a Christian may exercise himself to godliness in prosperity**

Thirdly, Thy duty is to make religion thy business in all conditions; gracious persons must have a carriage suitable to every providence.

As the year hath summer and winter; the natural day, light and darkness; the sea its ebbing and flowing; and as the sun sometimes shineth forth clearly, sometimes is under a cloud, sometimes is in an eclipse; so the condition of man is liable to many alterations. His life is a mixture of mercies and miseries, and often a transition from prosperity to adversity, and from adversity to prosperity. What then ought a Christian to do, but to take care that his spiritual disposition be answerable to his temporal condition?

Some men, besides their ordinary wearing apparel, have garments ready by them, both for a wedding and a funeral. If they be called to either, they can habit themselves handsomely in a meet and fit livery. The saint must not only have his everyday's gracious attire, but also, if he be called to fasting or feasting, to adversity or prosperity, put on raiment suitable to those seasons.

Some flying insects dress themselves according to the months in which they live. The forester goeth usually in green, in the same colour with the leaves of the trees, and the grass of the field, amongst which his ordinary walk is. Believers must know both how to want, and how to abound, Phil. 4:7, 8, and clothe themselves in the same

colour with the house to which they are called, whether it be the house of mourning or of mirth.

Saints are compared to doves in scripture, Isa. 60:8; Cant. 2:14. The turtles, according to the naturalists, can live and thrive both in cold and hot places; nay, in summer, they delight in a cold, in winter, in a hot climate. Christians must ever, whether the world smile or frown, be going forward in their holy course, and learn in prosperity not to be exalted, and in adversity not to be dejected.

It argueth an excellent constitution of body to be able to bear heats and colds without complaint and injury to the outward man. And truly it will speak a special frame of soul to be able to undergo the weight of mercies and miseries without wrong to the inward man. Extremes are very dangerous, whether of the one or the other; the medium between both is least perilous. Drought burieth the seed in the earth, moderate showers refresh the earth, immoderate drown it. Upon which good ground it was that Agur prayed against both: 'Give me neither poverty nor riches, but feed me with food convenient, lest I be full and deny thee, or lest I be poor and steal, and so take the name of my God in vain,' Prov. 30:9, 10. Extreme want, or extreme wealth, are both extreme temptations to wickedness. A garment that is fit, is much better than one too big, or too little for the body. If it be too big, it is cumbersome; if too little, it is uneasy and troublesome. When Giges, the most puissant king in his days, sent to the Oracle of Delphos a second time, to know who was the happiest man next to Phedius, (whom the Oracle had declared to be happy before, for dying in the service of his country,) answer was made that Aglaus was happier than he. Now this Aglaus was a plain, honest man, dwelling in a corner of Arcadia, who had a little house and land of his own, in which he employed himself, and with which he maintained

his family. A middling staff may help a man in his journey; one very little will do small service, one too big will hinder him.

Because both these conditions have their snares and temptations, they call for the greater care and circumspection. I shall therefore lay down some directions for each, and begin with prosperity.

Prosperity is a condition which consisteth in the fruition of outward good things, as health, strength, friends, riches, honours, and the like. As a constellation is a collection of many stars, so a prosperous condition is a confluence of many temporal comforts. God in his wise providence is pleased to give some persons large draughts of these sugared pleasures, their cup runneth over. They are in themselves mercies for which we may pray with humble submission, and for which we must praise God with holy affections; but through the corruption of our hearts, they often prove prejudicial to holiness. Those fires which were made to warm us, do often black and burn us. Small vessels carrying a great sail are apt to be overturned with every tempest.

A prosperous condition is called a slippery place, Ps. 73:18: 'Thou hast set them in slippery places.' Those that walk on ice had need to be wary how they set their feet, lest they slip and fall. It is observable that Elisha begged a double portion of Elijah's spirit, 2 Kings 2:9. Which petition may seem at first sight to savour of presumption, but if we weigh things well, there will appear great reason for it. Elisha saw that his master Elijah had been exercised with trials and troubles all his time; that Ahab and Jezebel had been continually beating up his quarters, and thereby forced him to keep a constant watch, and to stand night and day upon his guard; but he foresaw that himself should be a favourite at court, have the prince's eye and ear, and



therefore needed a double degree of grace to be preserved upright and vigilant in such a prosperous estate.

Of all winds, the northern, though it be cold and sharp, is most healthful. The south wind, though it be warm, is hurtful, for with its moisture and warmth it raiseth vapours which cause diseases; when the north wind with its cold drieth those vapours and purgeth the blood. Elisha knew that under this warm south wind of prosperity, his soul would go near to contract some distemper, if it were not fenced by an extraordinary degree of spiritual health beforehand. 'If thou faintest in the day of adversity, thy strength is small,' Prov. 24:10. But if thou fallest not in the day of prosperity, thy strength is great. He that is very rich, and yet religious, is richly religious.

Because it is so rare for a person not to decrease in his inward estate, when he doth increase in his outward, God giveth these bodily mercies, with many mementoes, a comfort and a caveat; a comfort and a caveat. 'Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently: when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware to thy fathers, and shall give thee houses full of all good things, and wells, and vineyards, and olive-yards, then beware lest thou forget the Lord. When thou hast eaten and art full, beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God,' Deut. 4:9, 23, 6:10–12, and 8:10, 11. These favours are delivered, as it were, under lock and key, to bind the possessor to his good behaviour. Epaminondas stood sentinel, when his citizens were at their feasts. It concerneth thee highly to use much spiritual caution when thou enjoyest many temporal comforts.

I must tell thee that God expecteth a crop answerable to his cost, that thou shouldst be the more holy because of his bounty. There is an island, called Lounda, in the kingdom of Congo, where the water,

when the ocean ebbeth, groweth brackish, but when the sea floweth, it is most sweet; if in the low water of adversity thou hast been incorrigible, it is thy sin, and to be bewailed. My work now is to persuade thee in the tide of prosperity to be profitable to thy own soul, and serviceable to the blessed God.

First for thine help herein, I shall only lay down three particulars to quicken thee to circumspection in the use of creature-comforts, and then shew thee wherein the power of godliness, or the making religion thy business in this condition, consisteth.

1. Consider what a grievous sin it is not to serve God in the enjoyment of mercies. Some indeed are the more vicious, because God is so gracious. The devil would have stones turned into bread, and they turn bread into stones, and throw them at God himself. As tenants maintain a suit at law against their landlords with their own rent; so they fight against the highest Majesty with his own mercies. The goodness of God, instead of leading them to repentance, occasioneth their riot and impenitency, Hosea 2.; like unruly horses they break those gears, and snap asunder those traces, which should hold them together; no cords of love will hold them. The moorish grounds, the more showers they have from heaven, the more toads and venomous creatures they breed; so many rich men, the more merciful God is to them, the more sinful they are against him; but the horridness of this sin should make us hate it. It is sad to sin under afflictions, (Ahaz is branded for it; 'this is that King Ahaz,' 2 Chron. 28:22,) but most sordid to sin against mercies; this will stop a man's mouth, and leave him without excuse for ever, Ezra 9:6–9, 13. It is lamentable to offend the justice of God; he who hath that for his enemy, is sufficiently miserable, Heb. 12:28; but it is abominable to provoke the love and goodness of God. If mercy be thy foe, thou hast no friend in this or the other world.

Michael Balbus is chronicled for a monster of mankind, for murdering his prince the same night in which he had received his pardon from him. Popilius Lenas is registered to be a most unregenerate wretch, because he struck off Cicero's head, who had before saved his life. Oh, what monstrous unthankful persons are they, who, like rebellious, unnatural Absalom, proclaim war, and fight against their own father, conspire and endeavour to rob and ruin that God who doth maintain and enrich them!

To abuse a friend upon whom thou hast a continual dependence, and by whom thou hast thy daily subsistence, is far worse than to abuse a stranger. The more our obligations are to any person, the more of baseness and unworthiness there is in our unsuitable practices. The unkindness of a neighbour is not so bad as of a servant; the disobedience of a servant is not so evil as of a son. It was the holy Israelites' greatest grief, that they had not served God in his great goodness, Neh. 9:35. Heathens will give that love to others which they receive from others, and do good to men who do good to them; and wilt thou be worse than heathens? Truly, if thou sinnest against the favours of God, thou sinnest against the very light of nature, Mat. 5:46. Though nature love some, yet she loathes this sin. Lycurgus, the Lacedæmonian, made no law against ingratitude, because he thought no man could act so irrationally as to be unthankful for courtesies.

Beasts manifest some respect to them that feed and tend them. The Holy Ghost saith, 'Be not like the horse and mule,' Ps. 32:9. He is too bad who resembleth a beast; how bad is he then who is worse than a brute! 'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider,' Isa. 1:3. Shall the ox and the ass, the dullest of irrational creatures, acknowledge their master, and will not thou thy benefactor? 'Hear, O heavens, and give

ear, O earth, (saith God:) for I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner,' Isa. 1:2. They live at God's charge, and yet not to obey his command, is such a grievous, astonishing sin, that even heaven and earth, those senseless creatures, seemed to abhor it, and to be amazed at it.

None sin at so dear a rate as they who sin against the riches of mercy. God is never more incensed than when his goodness is abused. When Haman wronged David's ambassadors, which he sent to him out of good-will, there ensued a deadly and a bloody war. Truly, reader, if thou abuse thy honour by making it fuel to thy pride, and thy riches by making them instruments of revenge, which God giveth thee out of good-will, expect that God should both take them from thee, (for what prince will suffer weapons in the hands of rebels? and what parent will not take away food from children that spoil it?) and also be highly provoked to destroy thee, Amos 2:13. He that is higher than others in mercy, if he abuse it, must expect to be lower than others in misery. The greatness of thy burden (be it of never such precious commodities) will sink thee the deeper into hell; the largeness of thy estate will but enlarge thy condemnation; though both be bad, yet it is much better to go to hell out of a cottage, than out of a court. It is infinitely more eligible to have Job's botches and boils, with his poverty, than, like Judas, to carry the bag, and betray the Saviour. Ah, how pitiful is that plenty which makes way for eternal poverty!

2. Consider that prosperity will try thee to purpose. The warm summer discovereth those poisonous roots which were in winter hid in the earth. As strong liquors try men's brains, and very hot climates try men's bodies; so prosperity will search and try men's souls. Afflictions are called bands, Ps. 73:4, and cords; now when men's

hands are tied down, it cannot be known what they are; the fierce, cruel nature of beasts doth not appear when they are in chains.

Cornelius à Lapide observeth, on Prov. 1:32, that the Hebrew word for prosperity is translated by the Arabic investigatio, searching, because prosperity will search men to the quick. Walking on the top of high pinnacles will try whether men's heads are apt to be giddy or no. When the weather groweth very hot, then diseases appear.

It is a remarkable expression which Elisha useth to Hazael, when the prophet had told him that his present weeping was caused by a foresight of the courtier's future wickedness: 'Because I know the evil which thou wilt do unto the children of Israel. Their strong-holds wilt thou set on fire, their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child.' And Hazael said, 'But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?' And Elisha answered, (observe it reader,) 'The Lord hath shewed me that thou shalt be king of Syria.' No more. Power in thy hands will quickly discover the pravity of thy heart. Thy heart is now a vessel full of corruption; thy prosperity and preferment will broach it, and then that poisonous matter will be discovered to thyself and others. It had never been known how evil some men were, if they had not enjoyed much outward good. When such liquors boil over a good fire, then their froth is seen at the top.

3. Consider, Prosperity most commonly is abused to profaneness. We say, It is pity fair weather should do any harm; yet it often doth, causing a famine and scarcity of food; sure I am it is a thousand pities that the mercies of God (as friends, riches, and honours) should do any hurt, yet they often do, causing neglect of God, and a famine of godliness. It was the saying of Frederick the emperor, concerning Sigimbird Flisk, afterward Innocent the Fourth,

advanced by him to the popedom, I have lost a cardinal, a friend, and got a pope, a foe. God, I am sure, may say of many whom he hath exalted, I have lost seeming friends, and got real enemies. 'Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked,' Deut. 32:15. Men, like beasts, the better feeding they have, and the fatter they grow, are the more wanton and unruly. Those that eat much food often surfeit, and are always the more unfit for use and for service. Foolish flies burn their wings about these candles of outward comforts. The camel's bunch on men's backs hindereth them from entering in at the strait gate. The Sodomites were infamous for impiety, and as one occasion of it, they were famous for prosperity. Their wickedness was grievous. 'The men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly,' Gen. 13:13. This phrase, 'before the Lord,' speaketh the high degree of their sin, it being common with the Hebrews to add the name of great when they would increase and heighten the sense. Their wealth was great. Sodom was a pleasant place, by reason of the overflowing of the sweet streams of Jordan; it is called Eden, the garden of the Lord, for its fruitfulness. Carnal hearts are ever like highways, the more dirty for the showers of heaven. Lunatics are worst when the moon is at the full. When the kidneys of beasts are overgrown with fat, they quickly die.<sup>3</sup> Cyrus therefore would not suffer his Persians to change a barren habitation for a fruitful, saying that dainty habitations make dainty inhabitants.

None throw such ticklish casts as those that bowl from some high ascent. Saints themselves have by these long garments been brought to stumble and fall, and much hindered in their journey to heaven. How few were ever the more pious for prosperity! David was tender, when hunted as a partridge; but when he prospered, he declined in piety. Ah, how much did this man after God's own heart disgrace religion, after his caves were turned into a crown, and the dens, in which he had lurked, into a diadem. We read of David's first ways; it

is recorded to the honour of Jehoshaphat, 'That he walked in the first ways of his father David,' 2 Chron. 17:3, which expression intimates that his first ways, when Saul persecuted him, were his best ways: David by rest contracted rust. The Israelites were religious in Egypt, but rebellious in Canaan. Children, when strangers abuse them, run to their parents, but mind not home when they fare well abroad. The sweet fruit-trees of Canaan bred strange worms; the Jews, in that place of dainties and delight, committed strange wickedness. The ranker the ground was, the ranker the weeds grew. The tenderest and finest flesh soonest corrupts and putrifieth. As men abound in prosperity, too too often they abound in profaneness. Severus the emperor was wont to say, That the poorest soldiers were the best; for as they grew rich, they grew riotous. Coldest airs are most wholesome; the hottest are many times unhealthy. The papist, who when he was a monk seemed very pious, and spread his fishing-net for his table-cloth, to shew his original, did, when he came to be abbot, grow very proud, and cast it by, giving this for his reason, that he had been all this while fishing for the abbot's place, which now he had caught, and therefore had no further need of his net! When men have served their ends on God, their serving of God hath an end; while the corn is growing, the field is well fenced, but when it is carried in, the field is thrown open. When men are in expectation of mercies, religion is regarded; but when they enjoy them, it is neglected.

I shall now lay down some directions for thy carriage in prosperity, and shew thee wherein the power of godliness, or the making religion thy business in that condition, consisteth.

1. Be especially watchful against those sins which a prosperous estate is most liable to. As there are sins proper to every calling, and to every constitution, so also to every condition. Anglers have their

summer as well as their winter baits; they have their distinct coloured gaudy flies for several months, with which the silly fish are caught. Satan hath his baits for prosperity, as well as for adversity; he can put himself into the livery of the season to take souls, and cast them into the eternal fire. Thy duty is to watch that door, at which he standeth to enter, and there especially to keep a strong guard. Believe it, in these worldly thickets he layeth most dangerous ambushments to surprise thee at unawares.

In general, take heed of atheism; let not earthly prosperity lessen either thy love to, or labour for, heavenly things. When there is much wool on a sheep's back, it is sometimes caught in the thorns and famished. Much wealth, much bodily mercy, hath many times so hampered and entangled a man, that his soul is starved. Ah, how hath Satan (as Delilah Samson) tied many a soul with the green withes of carnal comforts! which they being not able, as he was, to break in sunder, their spiritual strength departeth from them. It is not seldom that that proves an occasion of forgetting God, which should be a means of remembering him. How wretchedly do some thrust him out of their minds, whilst he thrusts fat morsels into their mouths; Hosea 13:6, 'According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, therefore have they forgotten me.' The sun of prosperity shining powerfully on the hearth of their hearts, did put out that fire of piety which seemed to glow there.

When the moon is at the full, then it darkens the sun most, to whom it is beholding for its fulness. When men are at the full of outward favours, they frequently obscure most the author of them. Themistocles told the Athenians, his ungrateful countrymen, that he was their oak; in a storm they would call for him, and cry to him. Who but Themistocles then! But when the storm was over, they despised him; then they could banish him, then they could cut down



their oak and burn it. Truly, thus too many serve the blessed God; if poverty, or disgrace, or sickness surprise them, then none but God. He is, say they, the best, the only friend; then they complain to him, and lament after him; but when their afflictions are removed, and estates, or honour, or health restored, then they can do well enough without him, and banish him their hearts and souls.

Job acquainteth us with the parts and fruits of some men's prosperity, Job 21:6–16. God's bounty to them is described in life and death; 1. In life, in reference to their persons: 'They live, become old, yea, are mighty in power,' ver. 7. Life is a mercy; it is the Lord's mercy that we live, saith the church, in a low estate; but they do not only live, but are lusty, so the word signifieth. Sickness doth much embitter life, but they have health, nay, live long; their life is a summer day, long, as well as clear and shining. They become old, yea, are mighty in power; they sit in the chiefest seats, and are placed upon the highest pinnacle.

In reference to their relations: 'Their children are established in their sight, and their offspring before their eyes,' ver. 8. 'They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance,' ver. 11. Children are great blessings and comforts: 'The children which God hath graciously given thy servant,' saith Jacob. Many are a greater mercy: 'Blessed is he that hath his quiver full of them.' For parents, whilst they live, to see these young plants removed into another soil, and there to thrive and prosper, is an extraordinary increase of the favour; but they enjoyed all this.

In reference to their habitations: 'Their houses are far from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them,' ver. 9. Their houses are full of outward happiness, know not what misery meaneth; their dwellings are full of outward blessings—peace and joy, not strife and grief. In

regard of men, there is no force nor violence offered to them. In regard of God, he doth not execute any vengeance on them; they are free from the divine rod, as well as human robberies.

In reference to their possessions: 'Their bull gendereth, and faileth not; their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf,' ver. 10. Their flocks are fruitful as well as their wives; both the male and the female help to increase his herds. Where there is such a constant conception, there must needs be an extraordinary multiplication.

Thus whilst they live, they spend their days in wealth. They are not pinched with want. Their whole time is spent in a serene clime, and they enjoy a perpetual calm.

When they die, 'in a moment, they go down to the grave,' ver. 13. They die quickly and quietly; as they live in much pleasure, so they die without much pain.

Here are persons who enjoy a prosperous condition in its various and largest dimensions. But what is the fruit of these favours? One would think, if there be any men in the world who will please and praise the blessed God, these are the men. It seemeth impossible but such pleasant streams should lead them to the ocean and fountain of all their happiness. Who would not expect a holy conclusion from such happy premises? Can any be so far possessed with a devil as to break these cords of love, and burst these bands of kindness in pieces? Alas! alas! bitter fruit groweth on this sweet root. 'Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve him? and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him?' ver. 14, 15. Who would not wonder at such monstrous wickedness, that such horrid blasphemy should be the child of such heavenly bounty! That illative particle 'therefore' may call and cause heaven and earth to be astonished, 'Therefore

they say unto God, Depart from us.' It had been rational, angelical arguing; therefore they say unto God, Draw near to us. If the streams are so sweet, how sweet is the fountain! If God be so good in his creatures, how good is he in his own nature! If these candles give such light, oh, what light is there in the Sun of righteousness! Surely it is good to be near him. But it is the logic of hell to conclude as they did, Because his hand is open to us, therefore our hearts shall be shut against him. Oh what mad, what Bedlam reasoning is it! Because he is so bountiful a benefactor, wherever he cometh, therefore we will expel him out of our borders.

Reader, doth not thy heart rise against this abominable ingratitude? Take heed it be not thine own case, that thou dost not fight against God with his own mercies. Naturalists observe, and experience teacheth us, that in summer, when the sun shineth hottest, then the deep springs are coldest. Be not more remiss in thy duty, because God is so intense in his mercy. Evagrius notes of Mauritius, that notwithstanding his prosperity he retained his ancient piety. This was rare, for usually the rankest corn is soonest laid. As the days lengthen, the cold strengthens. Beware, lest as the sunshine of thy prosperity increaseth, thy love to God should cool.

In particular, take heed of pride, carnal confidence, and senselessness of others' sufferings, which three sins prosperous men are prone to.

(1.) Pride. Prosperous men are apt to be proud. Poor men beg, and rich men boast, Ps. 52. Their blood and their goods rise together. Bladders filled only with wind do swell; so do men with wealth and outward mercy. 'There are no bonds in their death; their strength is firm. They have more than heart can wish; they are not in trouble like other men, neither are they plagued like other men.' But did this

heap of goodness make them humble? No: their hearts grew big with their herds. Like the peacock, they were proud of their gay feathers; 'Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain,' Ps. 73:4–6. As they were high in condition, so were they also in disposition. Men in high places grow giddy and often fall, when those that walk in low valleys are safe. Satan serveth many, as the high wind doth the trees, first lifts them up, and then throws them down; first he lifteth up with pride, and then throweth them down into perdition.

The fire shrinks and shrivels up things to nothing, when the water swelleth them. The fire of adversity makes men little, yea, nothing in their own eyes, when waters of a full cup wrung out to men (the periphrasis of prosperity) occasioneth their height and haughtiness of heart, Job 33:17; Hosea 13:6.

Those that were truly gracious and habitually humble have, in a confluence of outward comforts, manifested too much pride; as the waters of Nilus, though all the year else they kept within their channel, yet in times of wheat harvest will overflow the banks. David, who at other times was as sweet and lowly as the violet, yet when God prospered him grew proud. His inward corruption broke out in this scabby expression, 'Go, number the people from Dan to Beersheba,' 2 Sam. 24:2. If the sun fall backward ten degrees for Hezekiah, his spirit riseth higher, and goeth ten degrees forward.

Oh, it is hard to keep a low sail in a high condition, and for a child of God not to applaud his own deservings as the cause of his Father's gracious dealings. This rich wine flieth into men's brains that they know not where they are; they think themselves better men than others, because they have better means. A little of the earth makes them great (and others small) in their own eyes.

Reader, in the highest tide of earthly comforts, keep thy heart within the channel. The more mercies thou enjoyest, consider, the more thou art indebted to God; and surely it may humble thee that thou art in bonds for greater sums than millions of others. Should stage-players be proud of their borrowed robes? and why art thou of thy borrowed riches? Be thou like a vessel, the fuller thou art, make the less sound; and like the stars, the higher they are, the lesser they seem to be; and like trees, ever least at the top of all.

(2.) Carnal confidence. Man by nature relieth upon the creature; his earthly inheritance is the foundation of his confidence. The world saith to man, as the bramble to the trees in Jotham's parable, 'Come and put your trust in my shadow,' Judges 9:15. I will refresh you in scorching seasons; and men generally trust in these lying vanities. 'The rich man's wealth is a strong city, and an high tower in his conceit,' Prov. 10:15. 'A strong city.' As soldiers look upon a strong city as a good place which they may retire to for safety in times of flight, so worldly men in their distress and danger esteem their wealth the only means of relief and succour; or as a marching army expects supply, if need be, from a well-manned and victualled city, so men in their fainting fits, and under dreadful crosses, expect to be revived by their earthly cordials. 'And an high tower in his conceit.' A tower fortified by nature and art, and raised very high, is trusted to as an impregnable place. Rich men have as high conceits of their outward comforts as soldiers have of their strongest castles. Hence it is that riches are called 'strength,' Job 18:12; not only because strength is requisite to get and keep riches, Prov. 11:16, but because of the world's corrupt opinion of them. They esteem them their strength, and hence give them their hope and trust. But the world was never true to them that trusted it. 'Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God,' 1 Tim. 6:17. That which is uncertain is

no fit foundation for trust. The whole world is called a sea of glass, Rev. 4:6, because of the slipperiness of it; glass yields no good footing, nor the world to them that stay themselves on it. Trust must have a sure bottom; it must be the quiet repose of the soul, in the hands of an almighty God and an immutable good. No creature hath strength sufficient to bear the weight and stress of its fellow-creature. Men, by leaning on these thorns, as Christ calleth them, cause them to run into their sides, and thereby pierce themselves through with many sorrows.

The huntsman catcheth the elephant by sawing a tree almost quite through, which the beast leaning on falleth down, and not being able to rise is taken. Thus Satan catcheth souls by men's leaning on, and trusting to, the comforts of their bodies. Such men deny God, and therefore God will deny them. 'If I said to gold, Thou art my hope, and to fine gold, Thou art my confidence, I should have denied the God that is above,' Job 31:24, 28. Trust is the fairest respect of the creature to his Creator; it is one of the most sparkling diamonds in his crown of glory. Now to give this to any other is idolatry. As the heathen, so many nominal Christians, pay their devotion, their trust, to this goddess wealth. Reader, thy work is to keep the world at a due distance, and not to give thy greatest heap the least of thy hope. Alas! these things are called water, and are as weak as water. Water may be strong enough to drown thee, but is too weak to revive thee in thy distress, though thou drinkest it down. Thou canst never rest too little on these reeds, nor too much on the Rock of ages. To trust God in adversity is honourable, but to trust him in prosperity is heroical.

(3.) Senselessness of others' miseries. It is hard for him who feeds high to have his bowels pinching with others' hunger. When men eat the fat and drink the sweet, they are apt to forget them who feed on ashes, and mingle their drink with weeping. They that drink wine in

bowls, and eat calves out of the stalls, too too often forget the afflictions of Joseph, Amos 6:4. Those that lie on down-beds can scarce feel their brethren's cords; their robes and golden chains make them unmindful of others' rags and iron fetters. 'He that is ready to slip with his feet is a lamp despised in the eyes of him that is at ease,' Job 12:5. There is a twofold slipping of the feet; 1. A slipping into sin or corruption. 'My steps were almost gone; my feet had well-nigh slipped,' said the psalmist, Ps. 73:2; he meaneth into that grievous crime of abandoning piety upon occasion of wicked men's prosperity. Every sin is a slip, a fall, as well as the first sin, Rom. 14:21; 1 Cor. 10:12. 2. A slipping into suffering or affliction. When a man descendeth from glory to ignominy, or slideth from wealth to want, or declineth in outward favours, he slippeth with his feet. The settlement of a person in safety is set out by this, 'He will not suffer thy feet to be moved,' Ps. 121:3; and the change of a man's condition by this, 'Their feet shall slide in due time,' Deut. 32:35. The firmness of a man's feet notes the firmness of his estate, and the slipping of his feet foreshows his fall. But as we have in the verse Job describing this man's condition, 'He that is ready to slip with his feet,' so we have others' carriage towards him, 'He is a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease.' Those that are at ease condemn such as are in pain. They who enjoy a day of light and comfort scorn and laugh at a lamp, especially when its oil is spent to the last drop. Distressed David was the song of the drunkard. The same Hebrew word signifieth both to be rich and to be at ease; we translate that Job 16:12, 'I was at ease;' the vulgar Lat., 'I was rich,' to note that rich men usually mind their own ease and pleasures, not others' sorrows and sufferings.

Some observe that the Egyptian priests gave their god Apis (a deity which they worshipped in the form of an ox) water out of a pit or well, not the water of Nilus, and that, not because they thought those

waters profaned by the crocodile, but because the waters of Nilus were fattening waters, therefore Apis must not drink them, lest they should make him senseless of the sufferings of his servants, and careless of their safety. It is certain fattening waters make men secure, and unmindful of others' woe.

But, reader, consider, God's command is that, in thy greatest plenty, thou shouldst sympathise with others' poverty: 'Weep with them that weep,' Rom. 14. As it is with the strings of a viol, if one be touched, though the rest be not meddled with, yet they all quiver and tremble. So when the hand of God toucheth others in their names, or estates, or liberties, though it passeth by thee, thou oughtest to quiver, to tremble at it, and to be sensible of it. Surely Nehemiah was a nonsuch, who, though he enjoyed much prosperity, being in great favour and high honour with his prince, yet even then suffered in the church's sufferings, and was troubled with the church's troubles. Oh, how holy was that heart, which could willingly leave a rich, pleasant court for a ragged and tottered city! and forsake the company of illustrious lords for twelve years to toil and moil like a day-labourer! Blessed soul! when he delivered wine to his sovereign, (for he was the king's cup-bearer,) he thought of the water which the poor subjects of Christ drank; and though his own particular condition called him to be merry, yet the sepulchres of his fathers caused him to put on mourning, Neh. 1 and 2.

2. Value thyself, not by thy estate in this, but by thy inheritance in the other, world. Grace will teach a saint in poverty to have nothing, and yet to possess all things; in plenty to have all things, and yet to possess nothing, 1 Cor. 7:31. It is a sure sign of saint-ship when a Christian, in the greatest confluence of creatures, can rate himself only by his estate in the covenant; and a special part of godliness for a person who hath large possessions to overlook all, and esteem



himself wholly by his eternal portion. Grace is the freight, spiritual riches the lading of the vessel, outward good things are but the ballast. The mariner doth not value himself by his ballast, but by his freight. As Job's friends erred, on the one hand, in judging him wicked because afflicted, so many err, on the other hand, in presuming themselves to be pious because they are prosperous, and rating themselves for heaven according to their riches on earth. Ephraim argued, because he was rich, therefore he was righteous, Hosea 12:8. He had gotten him substance, therefore he was guilty of no sin. Dionysius, because he found after his sacrilege a favourable wind, fancied that the gods favoured his wickedness. Some are as foolish as children; they value themselves by their gay coats and gaudy clothes. A man may have a shop full of earthenware, and yet be worth little. The tenth part of that room in silks and satins will speak a man to be worth more. A great deal of earth will not prove thee to have any real worth. A little grace, one drachm of God's special love in Christ, is worth millions. 'My fruit is better than silver, and my revenues than choice gold,' Prov. 8:19. As a painted countenance is no sign of a good complexion, so neither is a fair estate of a gracious or happy condition. They may be high, and have large possessions on earth, whose portion shall be in the lowest hell. A monkey is but a brute, notwithstanding its golden collar and silver bells. God may, as men, give larger entertainment to strangers than to his children. The worst in the world have often most of the world, Job 21:7–16. Some live in a serene clime, and enjoy a constant calm here, who must dwell hereafter amongst terrible tempests, and in an eternal storm. The unclean beasts, as the bear and vulture, may be spared, when the clean, as the lamb and dove, may be sacrificed. Vessels which are empty swim at the top, when those that are full of gold sink to the bottom. Hearts empty of grace may prosper, when they which are full may perish, Eccles. 7:15. Some indeed have their

estates, as children their provision, from a loving father, but others, as prisoners, their allowance till the day of their execution.

There is a great difference between a glistering tumour in the face and true beauty, and as wide a distance between outward plenty and inward prosperity. Many say, 'Who will shew us any good?' Ps. 4:6. God may shew them much good, to whom he sheweth no good-will. 'I am sore displeased,' saith God, 'with the heathen that are at ease,' Zech. 1:15. These heathens were at ease when they had no true rest; for at the same time they were under God's wrath, Heb. 12:6.

God punisheth some in mercy, and prospereth others in fury. Jerusalem's case was never worse than when God said, 'My fury shall depart from thee; I will be quiet, and no more angry,' Ezek. 16:42. The fire of God's anger is never more hot than when it is thus kept in, and not suffered to break out. When he intendeth to use the axe or sword he spareth the rod. Prisoners escape whipping who are to be hanged or to be executed. We do not lop or prune those trees which we intend within a short time to cut down for the fire. Alas! reader, it is ill valuing thyself by the sunshine of common providence, when thousands have it who shall miss the undefiled inheritance. Many enjoy fair weather as they pass on to endless woe. The dolphin sports most before a tempest. When the air is most clear, then cometh the greatest thunder. Thou mayest be like stubble laid out a-drying to burn in hell. Marullus telleth a story how Ambrose came to a great man's house, who boasted to him that he had never suffered any affliction, whereupon the father hasted away, lest, saith he, I should perish with the man that ever prospered; but he was no sooner out of doors but the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up man and house too. God may defer thee when he doth not discharge thee; nay, as an arrow, the more drawn back by a strong hand the deeper it pierceth; so the longer it is before God reckoneth, the greater will be

the sum of wrath when he cometh to pay thee. Esteem thyself therefore so much worth, as thou art for the other world. Rate thyself by thy treasure in heaven, by the pardon of thy sins, by thine interest in Christ, and by the durable riches and righteousness. These only are the mercies which are worth thousand millions; others are but painted cards and brass counters to these. Outward mercies serve the flesh, and last for a brittle life; but these mercies concern the soul and relate to eternity.

3. Let God alone have the glory of outward mercies; do not crown thine own head with laurel, but pay thy rent of laud and praise to God alone, who is the true landlord. The merchant, for non-payment of custom, forfeits his commodities.

It is God's bounty which filleth thy heaps, and therefore his glory must fill thy heart. Art thou rich? 'The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich,' 1 Sam. 2:7. He maketh their persons; the needy and wealthy are both his workmanship. He is the maker of their portions; it is from him that some have plenty and others poverty, Prov. 22:2. He is the maker of the partition. Civil differences as well as spiritual are from God; earth drops out of heaven. The crumbs of this life are God's gift, as well as the crown of a better life. This is the blessing of his throne, that of his footstool. It is the son of Joseph who causeth the cup of gold to be put into Benjamin's sack. No man cuts out his own fortune, or contrives his own condition.

Hast thou honour? God is the author of it. 'Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south; but God is the judge; he putteth down one and setteth up another,' Ps. 75:6, 7. Not any wind from any quarters of the earth can blow one man above another. High mountains are of God's making, as well as the low valleys and mole-hills. None ever mounted into the saddle of

preferment but God's providence held the stirrup for him. It is reported of one of the kings of France, that he should say, Thousands were born the same day (in my dominions) that I was, yet none of them born to such dignity as I am; how much therefore am I bound to God! God may speak truly what Satan did falsely, of the riches, honours, and pleasures of this world: 'All these are mine, and to whomsoever I will I give them,' Luke 4:6. Now as all these comforts are from God, so the credit of them all must be to God. As golden vessels do not retain the beams of the sun which they receive, but turn them back, and double them by reflection, so men who receive from the Sun of righteousness many warm, refreshing mercies, must reflect them back in glory and praise to the author of them. Reader, if thy lot be fallen in a fruitful land, be not unthankful, do not bury God's blessings in the grave of ingratitude. Many a man is like a bucket, which being empty, and let down into the well, doth, as it were, open its mouth to receive water, but being once full, sheweth its back only to the well that gave it. Their mouths are open for mercies; as the chapped earth gapes for rain, but when satisfied, shutteth again. When they enjoy their desired blessings their hearts are shut, and they turn their backs upon God. Beware of this sin. As the beams of the stars return (as far back as they can) to glorify the face of the sun, which giveth them their beauty, so thy soul should be enlarged, as far as is possible, to praise God for his bounty. The bird, when got on a high tree, singeth more sweetly than on the ground; the more highly God advanceth thee, the more sweetly thou shouldest sing his praise and advance him.

It was a fault observed and condemned in the Carthaginians, that whereas they were sprung from Tyrus, and used yearly, when they were mean and poor, to send tithe of their incomes to Hercules, the peculiar god of the Tyrians, when they grew rich and wealthy they neglected to send. How many serve the true God as these heathen

their false god—owning him when they have little, but set light by him when they are laden with benefits! Holy David was of another carriage. When God blessed him in bestowing real mercies, he blessed God in acknowledging them to his glory. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits,' Ps. 103:2. The holy Jews, by giving fit names to persons, seasons, and things, which were monuments of God's mercies, kept his favours always in memory, Esther 9:21, 22; Gen. 41:51, 52; 22:21, 22, and 33:20; Exod. 17:15. The benefit hereby will be to thyself, not to God. As an orator by his speech addeth no real worth to the person whom he commendeth, but only declareth what is in him, so by giving glory to God thou only acknowledgest what is in God, addest nothing to God; but as the vapours which are sent from the earth, thick and foggy, are returned to it in silver showers, so thy praises of him, though imperfect, will be returned back, and much to thy profit.

It may be, reader, thou art one whom God hath exalted from a poor and low to a plentiful and high condition. Remember thy former poverty to his praise. Do as David did; he took special notice that God took him from following sheep to feed his people Israel. If God remember thee in thy low estate, thou mayest well remember him in thy high estate. God gave special command to the Israelites, that when they came into the land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey, they should bring a basket of the first-fruits, and set it down before the altar of the Lord, and say, 'A Syrian ready to perish was our father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became a nation, great, mighty, and populous: and the Egyptians evil entreated us, and the Lord brought us forth with a mighty hand into this land. And now behold, we have brought the first-fruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, hast given us,' Deut. 16:1–12. The reason of this command was, because the

acknowledgment of their former penury did enhance the price of their present plenty, and thereby tended much to God's glory.

It is storied of Agathocles, king of Sicily, that having been before a potter's son, he would always be served in earthen vessels, to put him in mind of his former meanness. But as our proverb is, The priest forgets that ever he was clerk; men usually are forgetful of what they were, and so the less thankful for what they are.

4. Love God the more for the mercies he bestoweth on thee. We ought indeed to love God principally for himself. His own perfections, not our possessions, must be the original of our affection. That servant is mercenary who worketh only for wages; and that love of a wife is spurious which is placed on the husband's portion. True love is fixed on his person; yet as fire which hath fuel enough to burn of itself, flameth out the more by having oil poured upon it, so the mercies which flow from God must increase that fire of a Christian's love, which is founded in, and abundantly fed by, those excellencies that are in God. The love of the man after God's own heart was much helped by the bounty of God's hand. 'A psalm of David, in the day wherein God delivered him out of the hands of all his enemies, and from the hands of Saul. I will love thee, O Lord, my strength,' Ps. 18, title, and ver. 1. The heat of his love was great. 'I will love thee dearly and entirely,' saith the original; 'from the very bottom of my bowels.' David's affection to God was not only without dissimulation, but also above his expressions. His heart was too hot for his tongue; it was little else but a live coal, or lump of love. But, reader, if thou wouldst know what was the bellows which blew it up into such a heat, truly God's blessings. His deliverance from his foes made him such a debtor to the fountain of it, and his heart was so exceedingly taken with it, that having little else to give, he bestoweth his highest, his hottest love. As the ear of corn, the more it is laden,

bendeth the more to the earth, the original of its fulness; so a gracious soul, the fuller it is of favours, the more it bendeth and inclineth towards God, the author of them.

Some, indeed, who have abundance of outward favours, fall in love, like children, with fine clothes, and affect them above their fathers. But as Augustine saith, That love is adulterous, and the love of a harlot, which is greater to the gift than the giver. Temporal comforts may be in our houses, but the God of consolations must be in our hearts. Bodily blessings are compared to thorns, Mat. 13. Thorny hedges are about our fields, not in them. Our estates may be about us, but not within us. Thorns may do well enough in a man's hand, but if they once pierce his heart he is in danger of death. It is observable, that all these things here below are said to be 'put under our feet,' Ps. 8:6. Why under our feet? but because they, as a stirrup, or footstool, should raise our hearts higher, and mount our minds nearer to our God. A trunk of silver, if above us, will press us down, if under us, will lift us up.

Engagements to a bountiful benefactor work much upon an ingenuous spirit. 'Every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts,' Prov. 19:7. But how should our infinite obligations to the blessed Creator work upon us! The ice, we know, which hanged on the eaves of the house, though it endure the blasts of the wind, yet it is dissolved by the shining of the sun. Though under the cold of adversity thou hast been frozen, yet let the sunshine of prosperity thaw and melt thy spirit into the love of God. As men by presents woo, and endeavour to gain the affections of maidens, so God by mercies seeketh to get the love of men and women. 'I beseech you, by the mercies of God, give up your souls and bodies a living sacrifice to God,' Rom. 12:1. The flint, though it be not broken upon the hard

pebbles, yet it is upon the soft pillow. The goodness of God should lead thee to repentance.

It is sad for thee, like the Dead Sea, to drink in the pleasant streams of Jordan, and to be never the sweeter, to receive many kindnesses from God, and not to be the more in love with God. Reader, do thou rather say, as the psalmist, 'I will love the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplication,' Ps. 126:1. That God may say of thee, as once of Israel, 'With loving-kindness I have drawn him,' Jer. 31:3. Blessings are binders. We read of cords of a man, and bands of love; let them draw and bind thy heart close to God. A pewter dish set against a good fire will reflect much heat back towards the fire again. Surely the great fire of God's love may well make thee reflect some love back to him again.

5. Do God the more abundant service. The more liberally God soweth, the more liberally he should reap. The more wages men give, the more work they expect. Where the sun shineth hottest, there are the biggest and the best fruits. Some observe, that Solomon's altar was four times as large as that which Moses made, Exod. 27:1, to teach us, that as our peace and plenty increase, so must our piety in a due proportion. 'Charge them that are rich in this world, that they do good, and be rich in good works,' 1 Tim. 6:17, 18. Those that are rich in goods and wealth, must be rich in good works. To do a little good will not be sufficient for them who have received much good. As men increase in their estates, so they advance in their attire and behaviour. The rents which men pay are answerable to the land which they enjoy. Hezekiah returned somewhat to God, but he returned not to the Lord according to his benefits; therefore there was wrath upon him from the Lord, 2 Chron. 32:25. The greater thy receivings are in this world, the greater will thy reckonings be in the other world. He that receiveth five talents, by trading gaineth five



more. If he had got but two more, as he did who received but two, his lord would not have counted, and called him a 'good and faithful servant,' Mat. 25. We look that our beasts should serve us according to their keepings; the better they are kept, the more service they should do us. Surely God may expect the same of us. Fat pastures and lean souls do not agree. Those good trees, whose roots spread farthest, and derive most of the earth's fatness, do bring forth the more fruit for it. Shall plants and beasts thrive answerable to what they receive, and man only in his work be unsuitable to his master's charge? The ship, the fairer the wind is, moveth the more swiftly; the bird, the larger her wings are, flieth the more speedily. And shall man be shamed by these?

Those who enjoy many mercies, as the father saith of rich men, have more tools to work with than others; they have more opportunities for closet duties and public ordinances; they have more influence upon inferiors, who have many times some dependence on them; they have many advantages to do good, and receive good, which others have not; when others are working hard to earn bread for their families, or they must starve, these men may go to their chambers and beg hard for the bread of life; they have more time and more talents to trade with, and must do much more work, or they will hear at last, 'Cast the unprofitable servant into utter darkness.' The man did not waste his talent, but because he did not improve it [therefore he was condemned.]

Most come short of trading suitable to their talents. As bells when raising strike thick, but when raised are set and still, so many, when in hope of outward good things, do somewhat for God, who when they are largely blest with them, will do little or nothing. Plutarch observeth that the ass hath the fattest heart, and is the dullest of all beasts. They who have the fattest possessions are generally the

dullest in the matters of religion. Like the sun, they move most slowly when highest in the zodiac. Oh, it is far better to be a low tree and fruitful, than a tall one and barren. In this, it were well if great men would resemble the sun. Though other planets are above him, for he is seated in the middle, yet he is most serviceable. Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars are before him in place, but he is before them in use.

God, in the fore-quoted place, commandeth persons who prosper, to be ready to distribute, and willing to communicate, 1 Tim. 6:17, 18. God, therefore, makes some poor, and some rich, that the one might be able to give, and the other to receive. The fuller the clouds are, the more they refresh others with their showers. The more mercy thou receivest, the more thou art to shew. Seneca calleth uncharitable rich men arcas' chests, made only to hold and take in: they are all for keeping, for laying up. 'Thou hast goods laid up,' not a word of laying out. The superficies of the earth is most barren, not capable, say the naturalists, of the least improvement, where the richest mines are in its bowels. But saints have not so learned Christ. They know it is one thing to be rich in this world, another thing to be rich for a better world, and that an opportunity to give is a favour and grace, 2 Cor. 8:1, and accordingly they improve it. David's heart was much affected with this favour, that he had ability to give anything to God. 'Our God, we thank and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee,' 1 Chron. 29:13, 14. What a mercy did he esteem it, that God should give him both means, and a mind to give them back to him.

The great luminary of the world draweth up vapours into the air, not to keep them there, but to return them to the earth for its relief, and the advantage of many.

Bernard reporteth of Pope Eugenius, that meeting an honest, poor bishop, he gave him certain jewels to present him with. Sure I am, that all that wealth which we give to God, either by poor persons, or other pious uses, is given us first by God.

We blame that gentleman, who, being nobly entertained at his friend's house, doth not remember the servants. Surely he is more sordid and base, whom God feedeth, nay, and feasteth daily, if he doth not remember the servants of God. This kindness God takes as done to himself, and puts it down in his own debt book, resolving to pay it. 'He that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord, and he will repay him,' Prov. 19:17. God paid Jonathan, in Mephibosheth, for all his kindness to David, and seemeth to say to every rich, charitable person, as Paul wrote to Philemon concerning Onesimus, If that poor man or woman owe thee anything, set that on mine account. 'I have written it with my own hand, I will repay it,' Philem. 19. Suitable to which is the form of begging in Italy, Fate ben per voi. Not as ours in England, bestow somewhat for the Lord's sake, but, do good for your own sake: giving is the best way of thriving. Wells that are drawn spring more freely. The widow's oil increased by pouring out.

6. In prosperity, prepare for adversity. Summer will not last all the year, therefore men provide for winter. The wind will not always set in one corner. The south wind of prosperity now bloweth, but expect the north wind of adversity. If thou hast two heavens, thou hast more than Christ himself had. Babylon indeed said, 'I sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow,' Rev. 18:7. She saw her state was high—a queen; and she presumed that it was firm by her posture in her place, 'I sit as a queen.' But the greater her presumption was, the greater her destruction was. Prosperity is not tied to us, as Dionysius thought his kingdom was to him, as chains of adamant. Job 3:26, 'The thing that I feared is come upon me.' There is a fear of wisdom and caution; as

also a fear of torment and vexation. Job's fear was the former; like Noah, being moved with fear, he prepared an ark before the flood came.

The atheist, by his prosperous condition, is wholly unfitted for affliction. He is so used to great fires and soft beds, that when he cometh to sharp air and stormy weather, he sickens and dieth. As Hannibal's soldiers were so much effeminated by the pleasures they enjoyed at Capua, that their bodies being used to fine raiment, could not bear the weight of heavy armour; and their heads being used to silken nightcaps, could not endure iron head-pieces. I fear that neck, saith Tertullian, which is used to pearl chains, will hardly offer itself to the sword. But Christians are better taught than in such times to neglect preparations for trial. Some observe this piece of providence in the hedgehog, that in summer she hoardeth up food in some hollow tree, where she hideth herself in hard weather. Surely the Christian should not be inferior in prudence to this creature, but lay up against a dear year. The Egyptians in time of plenty laid up abundantly against the seven years of famine, or otherwise they might have starved. The Christian must in fair weather provide for a rainy day; in health and life, prepare for sickness and death, or he will be undone eternally. Oh how cutting is affliction! how killing is death to them whom they surprise on a sudden! Sudden, extraordinary mercies have, like a great quantity of strong waters, slain some; but what, then, will sudden, extraordinary miseries do? Sudden evils are the sorest evils, the most searching evils.

He that is ready armed, and prepared for his enemy, hath a very great advantage of him who is surprised on a sudden, and when he is not aware. Some say of the cockatrice, if a man see him first, he dieth, but if he see the man first, the man dieth. If a Christian see affliction first, by a provident foresight, it loseth all its rigour and

venom: it can do a man no harm; but if that see a man first, it often killeth him. As strong physic meeting with a very foul body, it hasteneth his end.

The ship must be rigged before the storm, for then it will be too late. Cæsar cashiered that soldier who was found whetting his weapons when he should have been using them. It will be sad with thee if thy grace be to get, as it was with the five foolish virgins, when thy grace is to use, and God should call thee to a winter of affliction before thou hast laid in provision. It is very sad, but certain, many a man's work is to do when his time is done.

Naturalists observe, that whilst the halcyon bird is breeding her eggs, and bringing forth her young, there is usually fair weather, whence we call good times halcyon days. She neglecteth not any of those days, but sitteth close on her nest, and is very diligent in bringing forth, lest, if there should be a change of weather, the waters should grow high, and her young ones be in danger of drowning. Reader, now God giveth thee health and strength, and Sabbaths and seasons of grace, do not loiter, but improve them to the uttermost, in laying up a good foundation against the time of need. Alas! thou knowest not how soon the weather may alter. God may speedily call thee to great changes in thy life. He will certainly call thee to a great change at death, and how wilt thou do to undergo them, if thou dost not make preparation for them? It is preparation for suffering which will cause them to be, not mortal, but medicinal to thy soul.

As Anaxagoras said when he heard of his son's death, Scio me genuisse mortalem, I know that I begot one that was mortal. So when a Christian shall be called from wealth to want, from prosperity to persecution, if he can say, I know that Christ and his cross usually go together; I know that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus must

suffer persecution, and that I must, through many tribulations, enter into the kingdom of heaven; I know that religion might cost me my estate, my limbs, my liberty, and my life; that if I would reign with Christ, I must suffer with him. All this I know beforehand, and I resolved upon it, and provided for it. The cross will never break the back of this man. The holy apostle did believe that bonds and afflictions did abide him in every city, Acts 20:23, and being forewarned he was forearmed. He looked for those guests, and provided against their coming; hence it was that he was so pious and patient under, and so victorious over, them all. A person who now enjoyeth honours and riches, who prepareth for disgrace and want when God calleth him to it, is like one that descendeth from the uppermost room in a high house, to the cellar, the lowermost, by stairs; he cometh safely down; whereas another, who is unprepared, when he is brought from a high to a low estate, doth, as the devil would have had Christ, cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, and thereby break his neck. 'A prudent man,' saith the wise man, 'foreseeth evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished,' Prov. 27:12. Afflictions are often called falls in Scripture. A wise man when he falls, possibly from freedom to fetters, from soundness to sickness, from life to death, he falleth forwards, which is a great advantage to a man; his hands will help therein to secure his head. He falleth into those troubles he did foresee, and for which he did provide and forecast. But when a simple man falleth, it may be from glory to ignominy, from a palace to a prison, from life to death, he falleth backward, like old Eli, and breaks his neck. He did not think of it beforehand, nor prepare for it, and therefore his fall is his downfall. He, many times, never riseth more. When once he is thrown, he is overthrown for ever. To help thee herein, I shall advise thee to these two things:—

First, Be sure thy peace be made with God. When the back is sound, a man may carry a burden cheerfully, but if the back be wounded and sore, a small burden will put a man to much pain, nay, he will be ready to flinch, and shrink, and throw it off. So when the conscience is sore with the guilt of sin, and curse of the law, and wrath of God, and fear of hell-fire, what torture and torment will afflictions put this man to. A small sword with these edges will cut deep, a little potion imbittered with these ingredients will make his back and belly, his head and heart, and all to ache to purpose. But when the conscience is sound, as being healed by the blood of Christ, and thereby reconciled to the blessed God, this man may bear a great burden with courage, and bid whatever befalls him welcome, as knowing it comes from a God in covenant: Rom. 5:1–3, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' We glory in tribulation. We glory in disgrace, we triumph in troubles; καυχῶμεθα, the word speaketh the highest note that joy can possibly reach; joy with boasting, with exultation. But mark, reader, the rich wine which did thus raise the spirits and rejoice the hearts of Christians: 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.' Peace with God hath such a sweetening property, that it will make the bitterest potion pleasant. They need not fear the saddest fits, whoever carry this rich cordial about them; what dangers and deaths may not they look in the face who have a reconciled God to countenance and encourage them?

A person who hath secured his eternal life, may with courage bear any temporal losses. What is sickness of the body to him who hath a sound soul? How little are they troubled at the frowns of men, who enjoy the favour of God! The Hebrews could take the spoiling of their goods joyfully, knowing that they had a more enduring substance, Heb. 10:34. They who have all their portion and happiness in outward things, may well lay the loss of them to heart, for they are

undone; they were worth but a little, and this little is lost. But he that hath God for his friend may abide the most fiery trial without fear.

When there cometh a storm, and the ship leaketh, how can it do otherwise than sink? Friend, if a storm of some extraordinary civil danger, or of sickness or death come, and the vessel of thy soul leak, be found in a carnal, unregenerate state, having God for thine enemy, and hell for thy heritage, it is impossible but thou shouldest sink into the gulf of misery and desperation. Oh how wilt thou do to behold or undergo that danger, which for aught thou knowest may both kill thee and damn thee! Saints themselves, when they have but a little crack by some sin in their peace with God, have sounded but harshly when they have been stricken and afflicted.

Sin is the sting of every suffering; if that be taken out, trouble may hum and make a noise, but it can never harm a Christian. Get but thy sins pardoned, and thy God pacified, and thou needest not fear the wrath of men, or rage of devils. He that hath drunk poison, vomits it quickly up, or if he drinketh after it he dieth. When thou art overtaken in sin, be quick in thy repentance, and petition for pardon, that so affliction may not surprise thee before thou hast made thy peace. The great question to every affliction must be that which the elders propounded to Samuel when they trembled at his coming, 'Comest thou peaceably?' 1 Sam. 16. If it answer, Peaceably, from a God at peace with thee, all will be well; thou mayest bid it welcome, though it be death itself, for it cometh purposely to anoint thee, (as Samuel did David), to a glorious and eternal kingdom.

2. If thou wouldest in prosperity prepare for adversity, get thine affections mortified to all the comforts of this life. Though outward favours cling about thee, yet let thine heart climb above them. He who counteth all worldly gains to be small, will never count any



worldly loss to be great. Excessive love to the creature causeth excessive grief in the loss of creatures. A man may pull off his glove quickly and quietly, but not his skin, because this sticks close to his flesh. The closer the world cleaves to us, the harder it will be to part it from us.

Jacob was overmuch perplexed at Joseph's supposed death; though his children came to comfort him, he refused to be comforted. But mark the cause of his impatient carriage, he over-loved, he over-valued him, Gen. 37:35. What we over-love in the fruition, we over-lament in its amission; we never err in our actions, till we err in our affections; and we never err in our affections, till we err in our judgments. According to the price we set upon things, such is our pleasure and joy in their presence, and our pain and sorrow in their absence; they who esteem the world as their portion, may well weep and wail at parting. He who wisely rates the world according to its true worth, (vanity of vanities, all is vanity,) will neither be proud of its smiles, nor perplexed much at its frowns.

Holy Paul was ready for all conditions: 'I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus.' It was all one to him whether God called him to a prison or to a palace, to a pleasant dinner or a painful death. But what made him so indifferent, and so ready for worldly afflictions? Truly, because he had mortified his earthly affections. He was crucified to the world; as a dead man, he did neither hear its music, nor fear its furnace; as a crucified person, he was neither tickled with its favours, nor troubled at its fury, Acts 21:13; Gal. 6:14. It is easy to cut off the limbs of a dead man; whether he be used courteously or cruelly it is all one to him, for he takes notice of neither. He who is dead to the world, is the only map that lives indeed.

He may defy earth and hell, and be happy in spite of both, who hath but a heart weaned from the earth, and placed in heaven. Reader, thou wilt patiently bear the loss of that to which thou hast but little love. It will be no hard thing to persuade thee to live apart from the world, if beforehand thou hast given it a bill of divorce. Study the emptiness of sublunary things, and when God puts them into thy hands, do thou put them under thy feet; hereby thou wilt be contented to leave them at God's call.

The meteors which are caused by fogs that arise out of the earth, never imprint any real evil on the sun and stars, which are far distant; but in the lower region, by reason of their nearness to the earth, they often break out into thunder and lightning. When earthly comforts lie near the heart, they must needs cause strange storms and tempests; but when the heart is far from them, and much above them, there is no danger of evil by them. Therefore, friend, love heaven as thy paradise, and look on earth but as the place of thy pilgrimage, then thou wilt cheerfully travel in all ways, whether fair or foul, it will be enough that they lead to thy home.

What I am now writing is of no mean concernment to thy soul. Troubles will come possibly, nay, probably in the day of thy life, however in an hour of death, and what wilt thou do to meet thine enemies if thou art unarmed? Tacitus speaketh of Cæcina (Annal., lib. i.,) that he was acquainted with dangers beforehand, and therefore so provident for them, as not to be fearful of them. None feel evil more when it comes, than those who would not prepare for them.

Thus, reader, I have finished what I intended to offer touching thy godliness in a prosperous estate. Shall I persuade thee so to demean thyself in it, that thy temporal benefits may not prove spiritual

curses, but spiritual blessings? Josephus tells us that James, the son of Alpheus, was by commandment of Annas the high priest thrown down from the pinnacle of the temple at Jerusalem, and so lost his natural life. Alas! how many hath Satan thrown down from the pinnacle of their high places and preferments to the loss of their eternal lives! He catcheth those fish in a glistening pool, which he could not in a troubled sea; though he could not get Christ to turn stones into bread, yet he gets men to turn bread into stones; the mercies of God into the weapons of unrighteousness.

Plancus Plautius, hiding himself in the time of the proscription, was found out only by the smell of the sweet oils wherewith he was wont luxuriously to anoint himself, and so slain. Take thou heed, reader, lest what is given thee for meat to be nutritive, be turned into poison, and prove destructive; but consider God's end in all his gracious acts, and endeavour to answer it, 'He brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness: and gave them the land of the heathen: and they inherited the labour of the people; that they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws. Praise ye the Lord,' Ps. 105:43–45.

### **A good wish of a Christian in prosperity, wherein the former heads are epitomised**

A prosperous condition, being a sweet fruit of divine beneficence, and a strong obligation to obedience, both as it encourageth me to serve so bountiful a master, and as it affordeth me more talents and instruments of doing his work, I wish that I may never turn his grace into wantonness, nor suffer the showers of heaven's mercy to increase or ripen the weeds of my corruptions; but that as the heat of the sun putteth out the fire, so the warm beams of divine love may extinguish the fire of lust in my soul, and my heart may be so affected with his bounty as to be the more abundant in duty. Oh that, though

others feed their hellish flame of uncleanness, drunkenness, pride, revenge, and atheism, with such fuel, as if they were delivered to do all these abomination, yet I may fear the Lord and his goodness, and the goodness of my God may lead me to repentance! Lord, since the renovation of my nature, and the reformation of my life, is the message upon which thou sendest thy mercies, let me never cause thee to miss of thine end, nor them of their errand; but let thy mercies prevail with me, to present my body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, to thy Majesty, which is my reasonable service, Rom. 12:1.

I desire that I may often and seriously consider the horrid, heinous nature of sins against divine favours, the more to quicken me to caution, lest I should abuse my God's compassions. If the word of God brand Ahaz for sinning in his distress, with how black a coal shall I be marked by God himself, if I sin after deliverances! If not to hear the voice of the rod bring down such wrath, what fury will be my portion if I am deaf to the entreaties of mercy! When justice pursueth me, mercy can protect me; but if by abusing mercy I make it my foe, how can I ever hope to have justice my friend! If it be unworthiness and a high wickedness to fight against a prince, with a costly sword which he had sent his subject as a present, what is it for me to fight against God himself with his own favours! Christians must do good for evil. How contrary am I then to a Christian, if I return evil for good! Heathen themselves will requite good with good, and have abhorred the contrary; and shall I put off the nature of a man? The ox, though a dull beast, knoweth his owner, and shall I be below a brute? If my God be provoked with them that return evil for evil to their fellow-creatures, how much will he be incensed if I return evil for good, and that to himself, the infinite Creator? Great persons cannot endure that their favours should be slighted, and will my God bear it, if his mercies be abused? Lord, should I, as Benhadad against

Ahab, war against thee with that life which thou hast given me, would it not at last prove my death? And ah! how miserable would it be to be pressed to death with the weight of mercies, and to sink into hell under a load of loving-kindness! Oh let me never be guilty of such monstrous ingratitude! but since grace, and reason, and nature itself are against unthankfulness, cause me to hate it with perfect hatred, and out of thankfulness to thee, to walk before thee in holiness and righteousness all my days.

I wish that my desire to evidence my uprightness to my own conscience, may make me the more holy in my highest condition. Godliness in prosperity will best speak my sincerity. The day of light and comforts is a fitter season to discover the colour and complexion of the soul than the night of darkness and sorrows. An Ahab may walk softly when a writ is sent out against him, or upon a commination; a Pharaoh may cry for mercy when he is arrested upon an execution; but he is a Job, a rare person indeed, that can walk in a high place and not be giddy, abound in grace when he abounds in goods, and keep his heart within the compass of its duty to God and man when he is laden with comforts. Lord, though the hottest seasons discover others' spiritual diseases, and, like wild beasts, when the chains of affliction are taken off, that they enjoy their liberty, they bewray their wantonness and lusts; let me be faithful to thee, when thou art merciful to me; and the more thou discoverest thy love, the more let me discover that thy law is written in my heart, by a gracious and exemplary life.

Because prosperity is too often abused to profaneness, I wish that, as the dove, when I fare best I may fear most, and I walking in such a slippery place may walk the more warily. Bees are suffocated in their own honey, their combs being melted by the heat of the sun. How many, like those poor insects, find their death in that which they

laboured for with so much diligence! In the warmest climates men live the shortest lives. Grace, like the palm-tree, seldom groweth in hot soils. Man's corrupt nature hath ever a will to commit wickedness, but sometimes it wanteth power. Now prosperity gives him strength and opportunity, which he useth, or rather abuseth, to his ruin. The prosperity of fools slayeth them. Nay, wise men have stumbled when they have drunk of this strong drink. Noah, who had seen the whole world drowned in water, is himself no sooner delivered but he is drowned in wine. Lot is scarce preserved out of Sodom but he is polluted with sin. Yea, Solomon, the wisest king that ever the world had, was as notorious for apostasy as famous for prosperity. Lord, let others' falls make me to fear. Alas! if such torches were like to be blown out with the strong gales, in what danger is my poor rush-candle! If their load of benefits weighed them down, notwithstanding their strength, how surely will such burdens, though of precious things, break my weak back, unless thou putttest under thine everlasting arm! Though thy mercies be as the sail and wind, to further the vessel of my soul in its heavenly voyage, yet, except thy Spirit steer, they will drive another way. Oh, let thy grace to me, and thy grace in me, like the unicorn's horn, so heal those waters, which are apt, through corruptions, to poison my soul, that I may drink of them without danger, and be so refreshed thereby as with more speed and cheerfulness to run the ways of thy commandments.

I wish that I may keep a strong watch at that door at which Satan waiteth to enter; I mean, that I may be specially careful against those sins to which a prosperous estate makes me most prone. Ephraim and Manasseh, plenty and forgetfulness, are brethren. I am most apt to forget my God in my high estate, when he hath remembered me in my low estate. The more wealth, the more wanton. After good showers worms crawl; flies will settle on these sweet conserves; sin

cleaves to wealth as rust to money. Men, like apes, when they climb high, discover most of their deformities. How prone am I to be proud when I prosper, to suffer my heart to swell with my heaps, and to boast myself in the multitude of my riches! Though the more mercies I receive, the more I am in debt here, and the greater will be my account hereafter; yet, as a new-blown bladder, my heart is ready to be puffed up with every blast, and, as a beggar, to be proud of my borrowed clothes. Lord, the greater sum in thine eye, let me be the lesser in my own; keep me humble in my highest estate, knowing that thy mere mercy, not my merit, is the sole cause of all my comforts, for I am much less than the least of all thy mercies.

I wish that my trust may have a surer foundation than these things which are vain and fading. My confidence is due, not to dead goods, but to the living God. My God can brook no rival, especially in that which is his prerogative-royal. If I make an idol of creatures, he will quickly make nothing of them; by leaning on these staves I break them in pieces. Should I rely on them, I take the way to make them take their wings and fly away. Besides, if I say to gold, Thou art my hope, or to fine gold, Thou art my confidence, I deny and dishonour the God that is above. It is sinful for a wife to give that respect to her husband's picture which belongs only to his person; but it is abominable to give it to some small present which he sendeth her. I may not trust my graces, much less my riches. Lord, though I am rich in this world, preserve me from the inflammation of pride. Whilst I condemn others for their poverty, I wound thee in thy providence, who givest every one his portion. Let me not, therefore, be high-minded, or trusting in uncertain riches; but enable me to trust in thee, the living God, who givest me all things richly to enjoy.

I wish that this rich wine may never so fly up into my head, or so possess my heart, as to make me mindless of what I do, or senseless

of what others suffer. Prosperity not seldom begetteth security. They who drink wine freely, little think of others' water or wormwood. Experience of misery is a strong provocation to mercy. Israel did the more pity strangers because they were strangers in the land of Egypt; but they who live all their days in ease are little affected with others' pain. I have read that the Jews, when they build a house, will leave some part of it unfinished, in remembrance that Jerusalem lieth desolate; at least some part unplastered, wherein they write in great letters, Zecher Lechorban, the memory of the desolation. Lord, in my greatest plenty, help me to mind and feel others' poverty, and in my most prosperous condition keep me from forgetting the afflictions of thy Joseph.

I wish that I may esteem myself, not by the abundance of creatures, but by the unsearchable riches that are in Christ. All my outward comforts are but ciphers, and signify nothing of special love, or of my right to eternal life. He that was rich on earth, faring deliciously every day, is a beggar in hell, frying in those unquenchable flames. The fairest trees are soonest marked for felling. How beautiful is a field of corn one day, when it is cut down the next! Many are high in place, whose portion is in the bottomless pit. The money-changers were scourged out of the temple, as having little interest amongst God's people. The poor of the world are the heirs of heaven; the rich have commonly their portion in this life. Why should I value myself by that which God gives to his foes, and denieth to his chiefest favourites? Can I carry my earthly favours into hell with me, to bribe my flames, or corrupt my tormentors? No. As I came into this world naked, so I must go out of the world naked. Neither my glory nor my goods shall descend after me. Or can I with my possessions buy out my pardon before I come thither? No. The redemption of my soul is more precious, for all my treasure it must cease for ever. Lord, suffer me not to 'lay up for myself a treasure on earth, which rust or moth



may corrupt,' but let me provide myself 'bags that wax not old, a treasure in heaven that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth.' Let me ever esteem myself by thy favour, and not by these things which thy saints have trampled under their feet.

I wish that I may acknowledge my God to be the giver and author of all my mercies, that so I may bless him when he blesseth me. Though I reap a rich harvest, yet my God sowed all the corn; if I refuse to pay my rent I forfeit my lease. I can rationally expect the showers of blessings no longer than I continue to send up vapours of praises. Unthankfulness is the devil's sponge, wherewith he would wipe God's mercies out of my mind; but thankfulness is God's treasure and honour: 'He that offereth praise, glorifieth me.' Oh that I might never be worse than a Samaritan, in denying to praise him who prospereth me. The Philistines, upon the receipt of mercies, would offer sacrifice to their Dagon, the Romans to their Jupiter Capitolinus. When the god of this world hath his trophies erected, shall the God of heaven, who loadeth me and mine with benefits, go without? 'O Lord my God, how many are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts to me-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered,' Ps. 40:5. I beseech thee, enable me to use all thy favours to me and mine, as so many stones to rear up and raise a pillar and monument of praise to thy name, and let the name of it be written on it, 'Ebenezer, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.' Yet I desire that when I am offering this sacrifice of thanksgiving to my God, my heart may be most affected with, and enlarged for, spiritual blessings. My God is worthy of glory for giving me health, food, raiment, friends, and all temporal benefits, when many others are racked with sickness, vexed with hunger, and pinched with poverty; but oh! what thanks doth he deserve for his gospel, his ordinances, his Spirit, and his dear Son! If the favours of his left hand, which his enemies may

enjoy, call for praise, what hallelujahs may the favours of his right hand, the favours of his favourites, command? Lord, it will be the work of eternity to give honour, glory, praise, and thanks to thy Majesty for redeeming me to thyself by the blood of thy Son; help me to ply this duty beforehand, that my soul may be put in tune here, to make the better music in heaven.

I wish that my heart, under the sunshine of prosperity, may (like wood laid out a-sunning) be the sooner fired, and the more inflamed with love to my God. His mercies are love-tokens, his kindnesses are cords of love; by these gifts which he presents me with, he wooeth for my affections. I can love my father, my friends, from whom I receive some small favours; and shall I not love my God, who is the fountain and father of all my mercies? Lord, let thy great love to me, as the beams of the sun united, kindle love in me; thou lovest, that thou may be loved. Circumcise my heart, that I may love thee with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my strength. Though I love thee much for thy compassion to me, let me love thee most for those perfections in thee; for thou art altogether lovely. When I was nothing, before I had a being, thou didst love me; when I was worse than nothing, in my blood and pollution, thou didst love me; the time of loathing was a time of love. In the womb, by thee I was wonderfully and curiously wrought; in my body I have not so many limbs as tokens of thy love. But oh! in my soul, capable of thy fear and favour, of thy love and likeness, how lively doth thy love appear! From my birth to this moment, all thy paths towards me have been mercy and truth. In my infancy thou wast my nurse, to preserve me from those knocks and falls to which I was liable. As I grew up, mercy grew up together with me. The journal of my whole life is but a volume of thy love. And shall (as too much wood puts out the fire) the multitude of thy mercies lessen my love? Lord, suffer me not to be so ungrateful, but as thou art infinitely both loving and lovely, let

me think all my love too little for so worthy an object; and let my only measure of loving thee be to love thee without measure. Though others love thee only for their own sakes, because thou fillest their houses with good things, hence (as Amnon served Tamar, who was first sick for her, and having satisfied his lust was as sick of her) when they have served their own ends, they leave off to serve thee; let me love thee for thine own sake, as well for thy purity and holiness, as for thy mercy and goodness; let me love thee as my King and Lord, not only because thou art able to advance and prefer me, but also because thou dost command and purify me. Let me love thee striking me as well as stroking me: when thy hand is against me in the greatest affliction, let my heart be towards thee with the greatest affection; yea, cause my love, like lime, to be the hotter for all waters of opposition, to be always increasing, till it comes to its perfection.

I wish that I may be a faithful steward in the improvement of my talents, and that the work I do my God may be answerable to the cost and charge he is at with me. My God is the owner of all I have—the fee-simple is his; I am but the possessor to employ it for his praise. Other creatures thrive somewhat answerable to their keeping; the better the pasture, the fatter is the beasts. Hares have longer legs behind than before, and therefore run the faster up hill; why should not I, who have more helps than others, make more haste than they up thy holy hill of Sion? Those whom my God calleth to the highest places, he calleth to the greatest service. If he planteth his vineyard in his best ground, he expecteth the most plentiful clusters of grapes. Oh that the rent which I pay to him might be somewhat proportionable to the lands which I hold of him! My God hath made me to be, not a cistern to hold in, but to be a conduit-pipe to convey out, the water of his blessings; I would not therefore, as the moon, who receiveth from the sun a full light, but reflecteth only a faint light again, return less than I receive from my God; much less, as

fatted beasts, be the more unfitted for service, or like a carcase, be the more unsavoury for the hot beams of mercy. But, Lord, help me to be the more fruitful in holiness for the showers of thy goodness; let thy Spirit enable me to trade answerable to my talents, and let thy grace encourage me to be always abounding in thy work, believing that thou wilt at last recompense me with a glorious and eternal reward.

I wish that I may be so prudent and provident, as in a summer of prosperity to prepare and provide for a winter of adversity. Though the heavens are now clear and shining, yet they will be cloudy and showering. I cannot imagine that the day of my life should have no foul weather on it; there is no mountain so firm but may be moved with an earthquake. If men in policy will prepare a cloak for the wet, lay in provision for winter, shall I lay in nothing against a rainy day? This life is a valley of tears, and shall I think always to laugh? This world is a sea, and though now it be calm to me, yet I must expect tempests, and shall I not rig and fit the vessel of my soul before the storm cometh? Even silly pismires will in harvest provide for winter. The bee will gather honey whilst the flowers are in the field, to prevent her famishing in frost and snow, and some say, will foresee bad weather, and therefore go but a little way from her hive, that upon the least alteration she may return speedily home. My God hath made me their master, but I may well be their scholar, to learn this lesson from them. Oh that, whilst health, and life, and time lasteth, I might prepare for sickness, death, and eternity! To deny myself, and take up my cross, is a hard lesson; but that scholar will say it best when called to it, that cons it most beforehand. How sore will those evils be which surprise me on a sudden! like an enemy that comes behind me, and is unseen, they may easily kill me. Lord, cause me in my greatest plenty and best estate to think of and prepare for poverty, and the worst estate that can befall me.

To this end, let me be always suing out my pardon in thy gospel-office, that the evil of sin and the evil of suffering may not seize on me at the same time. How deep will the sword of affliction wound me, if sin sharpen its edge! I may bear many miseries through thy mercy, but the least sin is a burden too heavy for me to bear. Affliction without sin is physic, which, though not toothsome, I can drink, if my Father put it into my hands; but sin mingled with it, turns the potion into loathsome poison. Lord, let me, a poor condemned prisoner by the law, never be satisfied without some hope and sense of my pardon; that so, whatsoever officer of affliction thou shalt send me, I may be nothing affrighted, being confident he cannot come to drag me to execution.

That I may be ever ready for the greatest losses and crosses; I wish also that my heart may be loose to all the comforts of this life. If I give my heart to them, when they are taken from me, I may well be heartless. Alas! my estate and my comfort will be buried in the same grave. Affections unmortified will be soon wounded, as a scalded head is soon broken; the young man whose heart was set upon his heaps, could not think of parting with them without much heaviness. If I lay the stress of my affections on the things of this world, as the cripple his full weight on his crutches, no wonder if, when they are taken from me, I fall and bruise myself. When the vapours are gotten within the bowels of the earth, they may well cause concussions and earthquakes. Oh that my affections might be so weaned from all earthly possessions, and so placed on heavenly comforts, that I may be able to bless my God taking from me as fully as when he giveth to me. Lord, though I take outward mercies, let them never take me. Though I use the world, let me enjoy none but thyself. Thou madest me to be master of the work of thy hands, and hast put all things under my feet; oh let me not be their servant by laying them in my

heart. As thine apostle, when he had nothing, possessed all things; so, though I have all things, let me possess nothing.

Finally, I wish that, as a skilful alchymist, I may extract gold out of iron, improve these temporal blessings to my spiritual benefit; that whilst they are millstones to others, through their wicked hearts, sinking them into hell, they may be loadstones to me, through thy Holy Spirit, drawing me towards heaven. Lord, if the mercies of thy footstool be of such a price, how much worth are the mercies of thy throne! If uncertain riches bring such comfort, and are of such value as to answer all things, of what virtue are durable riches and righteousness! If the honour of men be so desirable, how amiable is that honour which cometh from God! If corporeal liberty be so precious, how precious is the glorious liberty of thy children! If a table spread with creature enjoyments be such savoury food, surely thy gospel dainties make a costly feast. If bodily health help me to relish these outward comforts, will not thy saving health sweeten the bitterest cup? If thou art so liberal to thy foes, how bountiful wilt thou be to thy friends and favourites! Put me not off with a portion in this life. Give me not my reward, my consolation, in this world; but whatsoever thou deny me, give me those mercies that accompany salvation. Though thou grantest me a plentiful allowance in my minority, let it not hinder me of the inheritance when I come to age. Whilst I have these things in possession, let me esteem thee only as my portion. Oh look upon me, and be merciful to me, as thou art unto them that love thy name. Amen.

## **CHAPTER IX**

**How a Christian may exercise himself to  
godliness in adversity. Containing**

## **motives to it, and the nature of it**

Adversity is a condition of life which consisteth in the want of outward good things, and presence of outward evil things, as sickness, disgrace, poverty, imprisonment, and the like.

1. The efficient cause of it is God. Whosoever or whatsoever be the rod, it is his hand that gives the stroke. Though he abhorreth the thoughts of tempting men to sin—'Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God tempteth no man,' James 1:13—yet he challengeth the power of bringing men to suffer. 'Is there any evil in the city which I have not done?' Amos 3. He created the natural light, and he formeth civil darkness, Isa. 45:7. The heathen hammered at this, that the same power dispenseth both comforts and crosses, when they painted fortune in two forms, with two faces of contrary colours, the foremost white, the hinder-most black, to signify that good and evil came both from goddess Fortune, 1 Sam. 2:6, 7.

2. The meritorious cause of it is sin. The evil of corruption doth naturally beget the evil of affliction. Sin is the vapours and wind which causeth all these storms and tempests. 'Why doth living man complain? man suffereth for his sin,' Lam. 3:39. Sin and suffering came into the world together: man had never tasted these sour herbs if he had not eaten of the forbidden fruit. Sin is the worm at the root of our tree of comforts, which, when it spreads fair, and is fully laden, makes it wither and die. And sin is the only mother that breedeth and bringeth forth all these Benonis, sons of our sorrows. Indeed, every affliction is not for sin; yet every affliction is from sin. Sin is sometimes the natural cause of affliction, as intemperance of sickness, but it is ever the moral cause of affliction, 1 Kings 13:24; Micah 7:9.

3. The formal cause of it is the absence of something necessary or convenient for us, or the presence of something troublesome or tedious to us. No affliction at present is joyous, but grievous. It is a potion which, though profitable, is not pleasant—a medicine which may be wholesome, but is not toothsome. Afflicting days are therefore called evil days, Eccles. 12:1. And those that are afflicted find and feel them to be evil, and for that cause are said to be in heaviness, and to have no pleasure in them, 1 Pet. 1:6.

4. The final cause of it is either to prove or to purify.

(1.) Sometimes God afflicteth to prove men. Some men have strong backs, and therefore God layeth on them heavy burdens, that their strength may appear to his honour. The master who hath excellent scholars desireth that they may be examined, and posed thoroughly, because their profiting doth thereby appear to his praise. The Lord of hosts hath in his army of saints some heroic spirits, who delight to jeopard their lives in the high places of the field, against the world and wicked one for his sake. Now he calleth those valiant soldiers to dangerous services, that their noble exploits and conquests might redound to their general's renown and credit. Job and Paul shall be picked out and sent upon the forlorn hope, to proclaim to the whole earth, that weak, dying man can overcome hell itself, through the assistance of Heaven. When the servant is put upon some extraordinary work, and performeth it well, both his master and himself are honoured thereby, Job 2:3; 1 Pet. 1:7.

(2.) God usually afflicteth to purify. He sendeth sharp frosts to kill the weeds of sin; Isa. 27:9. 'By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit, to take away their sin.' He useth his knife to cut out what is rotten in the fruit, and his hatchet to hew off the hard knots from his timber. As refiners of sugar take



much sugar out of a chest, some of which they melt often, and some but once, and the reason is because they intend to make the former more pure and white; so God giveth some affliction as physic, which they take but seldom, at spring and fall, when he giveth it others as diet drink, which they take constantly every day, (as in some sinners there is a legion of devils, so in some saints a legion of distresses,) and the end is to make the latter more healthy, more holy. 'He chastiseth for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness,' Heb. 12. As by black soap we make our clothes white, so doth God, by heavy afflictions, make holy persons. Affliction is like a sink, in itself unsavoury, but the whole house is the cleaner for it.

My work, reader, is to direct thee how thou mayest, like Samson, fetch meat out of this eater, and take this physic which is so unpleasing to thy flesh, for the greatest profit and advantage of thy spirit. If thou wilt take Scripture for thy rule, the wind of affliction may make the coal of thy graces to blaze the more by its blowing on them. Sweet spices, the more they are pounded, the more fragrant smell they send forth. The gold of grace shineth most brightly in the fire. The vulture feedeth and fetcheth nourishment from things of ill savour, and so may the Christian from what his God calls him to suffer. Wine will draw much good out of the flesh of vipers. The believer may gather grapes from those thorns, and figs from these thistles.

Saints in this life must look to suffer. Affliction is their portion. They must not be Christians if they will not take up their cross. It was a notable speech of Sir Horace Vere, Baron of Tilbury, when in the Palatinate a council of war was called, and a Dutch lord said that it was dangerous to fight, for the emperor had many pieces of ordnance. My lords, if you fear the mouth of a cannon, you must never come into the field. They who fear hardships must not set out

for heaven. In the world ye shall have tribulation; in this sea ye must expect tempests, John 16:33. Saints are ships richly laden, therefore will have many pirates watching for them, to rob and spoil them. Every one will have a cudgel for a tree laden with fruit. The thief striveth most to meet the traveller that hath most money in his purse. The highest and richest Christian is most eyed and envied by the enemies of our salvation.

Satan's rage is greatest against the people of God. It is the corn, not the chaff, he takes such pains to winnow. The tiger is enraged at the smell of sweet odours; so is the devil at the sweet scent of the saints' graces. If Christ's soldiers will storm heaven, and take it by force, he is resolved they shall have hot work of it, for he will raise all the powers of hell to oppose them. Many of those storms which vex the saints, as that which blew down the house of Job's children, are raised by Satan. He troubleth the waters, thinking that then it is the best fishing. The prince of the air raiseth the winds of affliction, hoping that the vessels of Christians' souls will be brought thereby to make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. Though all his winds tend, by God's over-ruling providence, to settling, yet he hopes thereby to overturn those trees that are planted in the house of the Lord. When we hear of any troubles and hardships befalling them that are holy, we may ask the question, which David did to the widow of Tekoah of Joab, Is not the hand of the devil in all this? He hath hand in most of their sins, and at least a finger in most of their sufferings. Like a dog, he barketh seldom at those of his own family, but always at strangers.

The world hateth the saints, and this is another cause why they meet with so many crosses. When the wind and tide cross each other, then are the greatest tempests. They that are after the spirit are contrary to, and therefore persecuted by, them that are after the flesh.

Contraries never meet but they fight. Saints are strangers here—'I am a stranger in this earth,' Ps. 119:19—and it is ordinary for natives to gather themselves together against, and to abuse, strangers. Even princes in disguise,—such all God's children are,—suffer many affronts.

God hath decreed the saints to distress. As he foreappointed them to heaven, so he foreappointed them to heaviness and hardships. 'Unto which also ye were appointed,' saith the apostle, 1 Thes. 3:3. The same God that appointed them to a crown as their end, appointed them to the cross as the way; and that they must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of heaven. The wilderness is the road to Canaan. Christ went by Bethany, the house of grief, to Jerusalem, the vision of peace. What was said of Christ may be said of a Christian, 'Ought not Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?' Luke 24:26. None ever yet went to heaven without combats and conflicts. Christians must therefore be always ready for, that they may be steady in, these storms. The wise man saith, 'If thou faintest in the day of adversity, thy strength is small,' Prov. 24:10. Yet it is true, he that standeth in a day of misery, his strength is great. Adversity hath strong temptations attending it as well as prosperity. Those who have conquered the world's allurements, have been foiled by its affrightments. More clothes are required in winter than in summer. Though a small candle may be kept alight in a close room, yet in the open air, in a windy night, a torch is needful.

The philosopher tells us, they are the stronger sheep that hold the frost when it falleth; those to be weak that through feebleness shake it off. He is a skilful pilot indeed that can steer his vessel aright in storms, amidst rocks and sands.

Reader, in the prosecution of this particular, viz., that thou mayest exercise thyself to godliness in this estate, I shall,

1. Propound some motives to quicken thee to caution in this condition.
2. Speak to the matter, or shew thee wherein the power of religion doth manifest itself in affliction.
3. Offer thee some means or helps for the performance of it.

I begin with the motives.

First, Consider, affliction will search whether thou art sound or no. Great troubles are great trials. Hence it is that afflictions are called temptations: 'My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations,' James 1:2—i.e., into divers trials. Grace is brought to the proof, when it is brought to persecution; as gold to the trial, when to the touchstone. A saint comes to the test, when he comes to tribulation. The soldier's knowledge or ignorance, courage or cowardice, will appear when the enemy, strong and subtle, meets him in the field.

Many trees are thought sound and fast in the earth, till a high wind turneth them up by the roots, and discovereth them to be rotten. Much scouring will manifest whether a vessel be gilded only, or all gold. The hearts of some had never been known to have been so unholy, if they had not been brought to great hardships: Mat. 13:20, 21, 'He that receiveth the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution because of the word ariseth, he is offended.'

Locusts and grasshoppers are only for the summer season, the winter killeth them. The cuckoo and lizard hide themselves the four cold months. The hypocrite, like the hedgehog, if the wind change, will alter his nest, and be sure to make it in the warmest place. As the river Novanus in Lombardy, though at mid-summer he may seem to overflow the banks, yet in mid-winter he is clean dry.

Magistratus indicat virum. Magistracy will discover the man, and so will misery. Nature vexed betrayeth itself; when the winds blow, the waters roar: 'Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth,' Rev. 3:10. Crystal looks like pearl, till it comes to the hammer. So do they that have common grace, like those who have true special grace, till they come to the trial; but when the winter is approaching, the former fall off, like leaves in autumn.

Satan, the great politician, knew that some heavy cross, if anything, would bring Job to curse God: 'Touch him, and he will curse thee to thy face,' Job 1. Do but touch him with some affliction, and like one that hath a boil or great sore, he will kick and fling to purpose. And indeed he guessed shrewdly; for had not Job been upright, the rod of God's hand would soon have discovered the rottenness of his heart. If the house of his holiness had had no higher foundation than that wherein his children were, and had been built on the sand, that touch would have thrown it down. If worldly advantages had been the weights which had caused the wheels of his soul to move God-ward, when they had been taken away, he would have stood still.

Reader, hath God brought thy soul into great sufferings? I may say to thee, as Simeon did to the pillar, which he whipped before the earthquake, 'Stand fast, for thou shalt be shaken: take heed, for now

thou art trying.' Give not God cause to say of thee, as once of Israel, 'When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria,' Hosea 7:1. God was wounding Israel, that he might heal it; he lanced their sores, and then their imposthumous matter did appear. Nay, as a physician when he gives physic to remove one disease, by the working of it discovers many; so when God, by his judgments, Hosea 6:5, would have purged away Israel's sin, they discovered many more sins, and were impatient of their physic, hated to be healed, and like madmen railed and raged against their physicians. Affliction shakes the glass, and then the dreggy settlement in the bottom appears. Affliction, as a drift rain, searcheth the house, whether the windows be well pointed, and the roof well tiled, and often discovereth many places where it leaks, which were not before thought of.

Secondly, God intendeth to sanctify thee, and to make thee better by affliction. He sendeth prosperity to quicken thee to praise, and he sendeth adversity to stir thee up to patience and prayer. He hath many ways to make his scholars learn their lessons,<sup>3</sup> and one is by the rod, which Luther calls *Theologiam Christianorum*, the divinity of Christians; 'Blessed is the man whom thou correctest, and teachest in thy law.' He forceth thee, like the ark, to sail in deep waters, that thy soul might mount the nearer to heaven. The musician hangs his viol within scent of the fire, that when played on, it might make the sweeter music. The blessed God giveth thee bitter aloes to purge away the ill humours in thy heart, and keepeth thee in an afflicted estate, that thy prayers and performances may be more upright, humble, and spiritual, and thereby the more melodious in his ears. The husbandman throweth his seed into deep furrows, and is glad of a sharp winter, because it will thrive the better.

David taught the men of Ammon by making them pass through the brick-kiln, 2 Sam. 12:31. He taught them more manners than to abuse his ambassadors, and so wickedly to despise the signs of his good-will. It may be, reader, thou art one that hast slighted God's messengers and message; thou hast taken little notice of his love-letters, his gospel, and his love-tokens, his favours of all sorts. Well, he makes thee pass through the brick-kiln; he brings thee to affliction, to teach thee to prize his ministers, and to value his mercies.

In the promontory Nimphæum, there cometh out a flaming fire, out of a rock which burneth the more for rain. God sendeth the shower of troubles to increase the heat of thy zeal for him, and love to him. Therefore do not frustrate God of his end, let not his labour be lost. If thy friend send a servant to thee, thou wilt not send him away without his errand. If a king send a messenger to thee, what a stir wilt thou make to succeed his message! Affliction is a servant, a messenger from thy sovereign, and thy best friend; do not therefore dismiss him till his business be done, especially pondering that thy God hath sent him for thy profit.

Thirdly, Many are the worse for affliction. Beasts rage the more for being chained up; so do beastly men for the restraint afflictions put upon them. It was a true saying of a martyr, in the days of Queen Mary, to the smith who was fastening the chain with which he was to be bound, Be sure you make it fast, for the flesh will have its course. The flesh, like a violent stream, roareth the more, and riseth the higher, for being stopped. Though the fire heateth the water, and makes it more serviceable, yet it wholly consumeth the wood. The same flail that purgeth the corn, bruise the stalk. Afflictions that better a saint, and make him more holy, harden a sinner. Sheep when it thundereth cast their young; and how many, when trouble

comes, cast away their faith and confidence! Aristotle tells us goats are more impatient of cold than sheep. Ahaz in his distress sinneth more against the Lord, 2 Chron. 28:22, 23. As a beast by baiting, a wicked man by beating groweth mad and desperate. Every plague on Egypt increased the plague of Pharaoh's heart; his heart, like the smith's anvil, did but wax the harder for being smitten so often. When physic doth not work kindly, but co-operate with the disease, it leaves the patient much worse than it found him. Those that by suffering, as some men by sickness, have been forced to keep their chambers, and have lost their stomachs, yet when they have recovered out of their afflictions, they have had canine appetites, fallen hungrily to their corruptions, and have committed iniquity with the more greediness.

The titmouse is a great destroyer of bees, and the better to obtain his prey, will in winter watch at the door of their hives; and if any come forth, he snatcheth them; if none appear, he will knock with his bill, and they flying out to know the cause, are taken and killed. Satan is Apollyon, the great destroyer of souls; he watcheth, especially in the winter of affliction, to seize and surprise us. He is a cunning fowler, that then especially layeth his snares and lime-twigs, wherewith he taketh and killeth silly birds. When these forementioned flying insects are benumbed with cold, then mice and rats rob and plunder them.

Physicians tell us, men are never more subject to receive infection, than when their spirits are lowest, and therefore then they prescribe cordials. Experience teacheth us, that when their conditions are lowest, they are apt to take the deadliest contagions. How many, foolishly thinking to rid themselves of their misery, have poisoned their bodies; and others, to get out of affliction, have polluted and poisoned their souls! The very sheep of Christ have lost some of their



fleece amongst the thorns. Sharp frosts have killed some flowers, and much nipped others.

Indeed the cedar of which the temple was made, was not liable to putrefaction, nor is it possible for the saint to fall finally by affliction: yet when he walketh in these stony ways, if he use not the more watchfulness, he may fall so foully as to wound his conscience, and his comfort, and to make him limp whilst he liveth.

Fourthly, If godliness be thy business, under the cross thou mayest expect God's company. The worse the ways and the weather are in which thou travellest, the more need thou wilt have of good society. Good company will be comfortable, when thou art called to journey in a dangerous road; especially such a companion will be a mercy as will bear thy charges and thy cross all the way. Truly such a friend will thy God be to thee, if thou goest therein upon his errand. He is not so unkind a master as to leave his servants in the lurch when they fall sick in his service, and even in their sickness are solicitous about his business. Ah, see thou to that, may become a wicked Jew, (when his slave is dying in his cursed cause,) but it will never come out of the mouth of the blessed Jesus, Mat. 27:3, 4. The captain of our salvation, as a faithful general, ever goeth foremost to look danger in the face, and seeth all his soldiers safe before he leaves the field. The Christian's tide of comfort hath not seldom been at the highest, when the waters of affliction have been at the deepest. If the sick child carry himself dutifully, he need not fear but his mother will bring out her sweetmeats and cordials, which were denied him in his health.

Naturalists tell us that those violets are the sweetest which grow near garlic, and such strong-scented herbs, because they draw away any noxious nourishment; sure I am the saints' inward comforts are then often greatest, when their outward conditions are lowest. Under a

shower of stones about Stephen's ears, his eyes saw the best sight that ever was seen, Acts 7:56. If God's sons be in danger of death, then his bowels yearn over them, and he thinks nothing too good for them. Israel had the rarest manifestations of God, when they were in the wilderness. On a watery cloud the sun causeth curious and beautiful colours in the rainbow. Whoever be neglected, the sick child shall be tended, and that not by the maid, but by the mother herself. Though God may leave his prospering saints to angels, yet his afflicted ones shall be sure of his presence and favour, both in the water and in the fire, Isa. 43:3, 4.

The hare is called in Greek δασύπους, of her hairy feet; this defence nature hath given her, to keep her tender, fleshly feet from galling when she is forced to much running. The only way to keep thy feet from being hurt when thou art pursued by thine enemies, is to be holy, to have thy feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. It is the godly person that, as the Irish, can tread lightly, and run swiftly over those bogs in which others sink and perish.

Reader, I would here only give thee one caution, and then proceed to the second particular. Take heed that thou dost not bring affliction upon thyself, either through thy wickedness or thy wilfulness. All men gather those rods themselves with which they are scourged; but some silly Protestants, like superstitious papists, whip themselves. The lion will beat himself (if there be none to vex him) till he be angry. Some Christians bring themselves into sufferings; every one ought to take up his cross and follow Christ, but they make their crosses either by being evil-doers or busy-bodies. That man can expect little countenance from his parents, whose prodigality and pride hath cast him into a prison; nor that person any encouragement from God, who hath put fetters upon his own legs, and then entreats him to set him at liberty. If, like turpentine, thou

drawest fire to thyself, expect to be burnt. The Lord make me so holy as to choose suffering before sin, and yet withal so wise, as to know for what I suffer. If I sacrifice a stout body to a stubborn mind, it will be but as the offering up of swine's flesh, an abomination to the Lord. Zopyrus wounded and mangled himself that he might attain his own ends. But though pirates by sea, and thieves by land, often suffer much, yet none pitieth them.

I come now to the second thing, to direct thee how thou mayest so behave thyself in this encounter, that, like Joseph, thy bow may abide in strength, though the archers should sorely grieve thee, shoot at thee, and hate thee. Nay, that every stone thrown at thee, may become a precious stone to adorn and enrich thee. Health and strong persons, saith Plutarch, concoct serpents, when weak stomachs nauseate delicacies.

As to the nature of making religion thy business in this condition, it consisteth partly in avoiding those sins which an afflicted estate is prone to, as despising God's hand, impatience, envying at those that prosper; and partly in exercising those graces which are required, and proper in adversity, as faith, rejoicing in the Lord, contentedness with thy condition, &c. But I shall propound them to thee in these particulars.

First, Be sensible of God's hand; it is a sin to faint under it, but it is a duty to feel it; 'My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him,' Heb. 12:5. A Christian must carefully avoid these two extremes of despising the chastening of the Lord, or despairing when he is chastened, and walk in the golden mean between them both. To despise God's hand is not patience, but pertinacy, and much nearer a stoical apathy, than Christian magnanimity.

When the proud Greeks had lost two castles, Zembenic, or Coiridocastron, the hog's castle, and Maditus, upon the Turk's first setting foot in Europe, they said vainly, There is but a hog-sty lost. And afterwards, when they were deprived of Callipolis, they would, in a jeering manner, say, The Turks have taken from us but a bottle of wine. But they are most undutiful children who laugh when their father is scourging them. It is an ill sign when the chirurgion lanceth the sore, and the patient is not sensible. Wounds that bleed well, do much the better. Till men be sensible, affliction will never be profitable.

Holy Job, when God rent his possessions and his relations from him, rent his garments, to shew that his heart was rent. When God humbled him with sufferings, he humbled himself with sorrow. Had his limbs, (his children which came out of his loins,) been cut off, and he not felt it, certainly he had been cauterised; but when God cast him down with the strokes of his hand, he cast himself down by sensibleness of heart: 'Then Job arose and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground and worshipped,' Job 1:20.

God cannot bear it, that his blows should not be felt: 'Thou hast stricken them, and they have not grieved,' Jer. 5:3. They are not affected with aught that hath been inflicted upon them, either by Sennacherib, Pharaoh-Necho, or the Chaldeans. Though thy rod had fetched blood from their backs, yet it hath not fetched tears from their eyes, Isa. 10:5, 6; 2 Kings 23:37, and 24:17.

It is reported of Galienus the Roman emperor, that hearing how Egypt was revolted from him, he said, Quid! Sine lino Ægyptio vivere non possumus? What! Can we not live without the hemp of Egypt? So many, when God takes some part of their estates, or one child, Let

him take all if he will, say they; we can do well enough without them: 'The bricks are fallen (say they, Isa. 9:10,) but we will build with hewn stone.' It is an unhappiness, but we know how to help it. These stocks and stones, instead of moving God to pity them, provoke him to punish them more severely. When the rod will not do, the jail must, with the stubborn servant.

Reader, doth God call thee to suffer? Bear thy cross as thy burden; do not make a fire of it. If thou fearest thy God, thou wilt feel his rod. Do not slight any suffering, like the dog, that when he gets out of the water, into which he was cast, shakes his ears, runs away, and makes nothing of it. But as thou wouldest hear the voice of the rod, do thou feel the strokes of it. The scholar will never mind his lesson, who is regardless of whipping. It is a dreadful sign for any to be, like Pharaoh, sleeping when God is thundering. Surely those that can snore when their house is on fire, as if they were no whit concerned, will be consumed in its flames.

Affliction is a messenger sent by the great God to us, about business of concernment. Now as David could not bear it, that those servants which he sent to the Ammonites out of good-will, should be despised, so neither can God endure it, that his messenger should be slighted. He that slighteth the messenger, affronts his master.

As thy duty is to be sensible of God's hand, so also to be submissive to it. Though we must groan and feel God's hand, yet we must not grumble and fret at his dealings. Obedience is due to his severest precepts, and patience is thy duty under the sharpest providence. He is too just to be questioned, too good to be suspected, and too great to be quarrelled with. Holy Eli, when he heard such news, as like a sudden clap of thunder made the ears of such as heard it to tingle, and their hearts to tremble, calmly and quietly submitted to it: 'It is

the Lord, let him do what he pleaseth,' 1 Sam. 3:18. He doth not fly in God's face in a passion, but falls down at his feet in a humble submission: 'It is the Lord, let him do what he pleaseth.' So Aaron, when God was speaking, (for his rod hath a voice, Amos 6,) had the manners and the grace to be silent: 'And Aaron held his peace,' Lev. 10:3. If we consider the greatness of the punishment, we shall find the more cause to commend the greatness of his patience. Stars shine in the night that were not seen in the day.

1. He lost his children. The loss of a man's estate is nothing to the loss of a child. The child is the father's bowels, Philem. 12. How strong is the stream of parents' love to their children! Truly so great, that the blessed God expresseth his infinite affection to his chosen by this comparison, Ps. 103:12. Therefore Satan, the arch-politician, reserved the loss of Job's children, as the great cannon, till the last onset, knowing that if any loss brought him to curse God this would do it. How sadly doth Rachel screech out, 'Give me children or I die.' It was the lack of children that Abraham so much lamented: 'Lord, what wilt thou give me, if I go childless?' Yet at the loss of children Aaron is contented: 'And Aaron held his peace.'

2. He lost two children. How pathetically doth David bewail the loss of one! 'O my son Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!' 2 Sam. 18:33. Rebekah could not think of losing both her sons without extreme sorrow: 'Why should I be deprived of you both in one day?' Gen. 27:45. Yet Aaron loseth two children in one day, in one hour, and saith not a word: 'He held his peace.'

3. He lost two sons. Sons are in themselves greater blessings than daughters. The masculine gender is more worthy than the feminine. When God would give Abraham a child to his great comfort, the

promise runs to Sarah, 'Thou shalt bear a son,' Gen. 18:10. Sons bear their father's name, and bear up their families. Parents are most desirous of sons. Elkanah's speech to Hannah implieth it: 'Am not I better to thee than ten sons?' The Shunammite's words express it: 'Did I desire a son of my Lord?' 2 Kings 4:28. And their greatest delight is in sons: 'God hath given me a son,' saith Rachel, Gen. 30:6. 'And fear not, thou hast born a son,' was thought to be a cordial strong enough to revive a dying mother, 1 Sam. 4:20. Yet Aaron loseth two sons, and is not sullen, though he held his peace.

4. He lost his two eldest sons. If two of his younger sons had died it had been a great affliction, but to lose his eldest, his firstborn, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power, did sharpen the edge of the dispensation. The greatest grief in this world, even the grief for crucifying the Lord Jesus, is set out by a parent's sorrow for the loss of his eldest son: 'And shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born,' Zech. 12:10. Yet Aaron, at the loss of his two eldest sons, is silent: 'He held his peace.'

5. He lost his two eldest sons by a sudden death. Sickness is usually the usher of death, to prepare the way before it. Had he been forewarned, he would have been forearmed. What we fear, for that we prepare. David took the loss of his young child patiently—the disease had fitted him for his death; but he took the sudden death of Absalom passionately; that serjeant arrested him before he was ready. Yet Aaron loseth his two eldest sons by a sudden death, when he might have thought they had been rejoicing in their new office, and under this sharp providence held his peace.

6. He lost his two eldest sons by a violent death. Though they had died suddenly, so they had died naturally, from some inward distemper, the cause of grief had not been so great; but they died not

in their natural beds, but by a supernatural rod. 'And there went out fire from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord,' Lev. 10:2. Though they were consumed by fire, yet Aaron was not in a fury, but held his peace.

7. He lost his two eldest sons suddenly by a violent death, in such a manner as might speak God's anger. A religious father had rather lose all his children in the favour of God, than one child in the fury of God. But the way of their suffering pointed out their sin, and gave fear that they died in their sins. Strange fire was their sin, and strange fire was their punishment, which might occasion Aaron to fear it was but the forerunner of the unquenchable fire. He might think, Surely my sons were overjoyed at their new office, the first time they were called to their honourable work; they were so unworthy as to manifest abominable wickedness, and the jealous God would not bear it, that man's will should be the rule of his worship; wherefore I fear he hath sent them from their mirth to mourning, from solace to the place of eternal sorrows. The head of this arrow seems keen enough to pierce any sensible man to the heart! Yet whatever pain he felt he was not impatient against God, for Aaron held his peace.

Reader, when thy flesh is prompting thee to passion, lay before thee this pattern of patience. Do not say, None is afflicted as thou art. Consider Job's and Aaron's trials in all their circumstances, and let thy tribulation work patience. Compare thy condition with many others on earth, and in hell, and thou wilt find infinitely more cause to extol him with praise than to wrangle with him for thy pain. Hast thou lost thy friend, thy child, thy husband, thy estate? Truly here is no loss, so long as thou hast not lost thy soul and thy Saviour. Dost thou think of them whose souls, whose God, is lost for ever? I may say to thee of thy loss, compared with theirs, what the Turk said of



his master's loss at the battle of Lepanto, compared with the Venetians' loss of Cyprus: My master's loss is like the shaving a man's beard, which will quickly grow again, but the loss of the Venetians is like the cutting off an arm, which can never be recovered. Thy loss will be made up, but theirs never.

Holy Greenham endured much torture with much content. He could lie spread upon his form, quietly looking, for the chirurgeon's knife, and bind himself as fast with a resolved patience as others with the strongest cords, and endure the carving of his flesh, and rifling of his bowels, whilst others are passionate at the pricking of a vein.

Some men are like flints, they are no sooner smitten but fire issueth out of them. If God scourge them they are full of fury, and in their wrath and rage will not spare heaven; as the Thracians, when it thundereth, impudently shoot up their arrows against heaven. But it is brutish, and the voice of an ass, to say, Why smitest thou me? and exceeding childish to strike at the thing that hurts us.

Heathen themselves have been famous for their courage under crosses, though they wanted our Christian principle. Valerius Maximus, when he heard that his mother and wife, whom he loved dearly, were slain by the fall of a house, and that his younger son, a hopeful youth, died at the same time at Umbria, never changed countenance, but went on with the business of the commonwealth as if no disaster had befallen him. When Pompey the Great, in his travels, called at Rhodes to see Possidonius the philosopher, whom he found much affected with the gout, and told him he was sorry he could not hear his lectures, he answered him, That for all his disease he could discourse; and when the torches were put to his feet he spake excellently, That nothing was good but what was honest, and nothing was evil but what was criminal; and after such discourse, at

last concluded, Oh pain, in vain dost thou attempt me, for I will never confess thee to be evil as long as I can honestly bear thee. Plato, being asked how we might know a wise man, answered: He is a wise man who, being praised, will not be proud, and being punished or rebuked, will not be passionate. Socrates said, My mind and my means are matched. Yet some Christians, when called to the cross, though they have higher hopes, and every way greater helps, are hearty in nothing but crying and complaining.

The truth is, an impatient person is his own punishment; he that murmurs at God, martyrs himself. Affliction, like the high wind, doth not hurt the stalks of corn that yield to it, but rents in pieces the sturdy oak that resists it. Massurius Sabinus tells us, that the image of the goddess Angerona, was, with a muffler on her mouth, placed at the altar of Volupiaë, to signify that pleasure will be their portion who bear sorrows with silence. But the discontented both lose the comfort of their present mercies, and double their misery. They lose the comfort of their present mercies, for, like children, because they have not that piece which they desire, they will have none at all. Because Rachel had not children, as an aguish palate she tasted no savour; she could relish neither life, nor health, nor food, nor husband, nor any of those millions of mercies which she enjoyed. The hedgehog is an apt hieroglyphic of such a person. Naturalists tell us she will gather many great apples upon her bristles, and then go to a hedge-side to eat them; but if she happen to let one fall by the way, she throweth down all the rest, and will not so much as touch them. An impatient person also doubleth his misery. The prisoner that kicks and flings about because of his chains on his feet, galls himself the more with his fetters. The bird that flutters about with his wings on the lime-twigs, is the more entangled.

Thirdly, Justify God in the greatest affliction which befaller thee. Doth God lay heavy things on thee, in the loss of thy health, or estate, or liberty? Have thou high thoughts of him. Though he condemn thee, do thou acquit him? 'Glorify the Lord,' saith the prophet, 'in the fire,' Isa. 24:15. In the fire—that is, in affliction. In the fire, God purifieth us; and therefore in the fire we must glorify him. Nay, in the fire he magnifieth us, and therefore in the fire we must magnify him, Job 7:18. It is observable that the children of God have lifted him up very high, when he hath cast them down very low. As men in a deep well or pit in the daytime have seen the stars, when they that were on the top of the earth could not behold them, so a Christian in deep waters, in deep affliction, hath many times seen the goodness and justice of God to shine forth clearly, when they who prospered could not behold them. Holy Job doth notably commend that power of God which he felt to his smart and punishment, Job 9 chap. per tot. The psalmist acknowledgeth God to be good, even then when he suffered much evil, when he was plagued very sore, Ps. 73:14. When the church was under the heaviest cross, at the lowest ebb, when God poured on her his fury like fire, even then she findeth cause to justify him, Lam. 1:18. The Lord is righteous. Her apprehensions of him were honourable when her condition was most sad and miserable. Though God dealt hardly with her, yet she would not speak hardly of him. In the darkest night of dread and terror, saints can see the righteousness of God to sparkle gloriously.

Sinners sometimes do this forcedly. Their confession, as water out of a still, is caused by the fire. 'I have sinned,' saith Pharaoh under the rod; 'the Lord is righteous,' Exod. 5. These, as persons condemned by the Dutch to die, are racked, and their acknowledgments extorted from them. Toads, if beaten, vomit up their venom; but saints do it freely. Their confessions are as water out of a spring. When the children of Israel were grievously oppressed, they acquitted God. 'O

Lord, righteousness belongeth to thee, but to us confusion of face, because we have sinned. For the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth; for we obeyed not his voice,' Dan. 9:7, 8, 14—i.e., Lord, though some may be apt to accuse thee of severity, when they hear of thy chosen's captivity, yet we acquit thee. Thou art righteous; we have not the least wrong; we may thank ourselves for all our sorrows. The pain which we feel is of our own procuring; the rods which scourge us are of our own gathering; our own sins are the spring and source of all our suffering; our own wickedness is the original of our woe; the web in which we are entangled, like the spider's, is woven out of our own bowels; we obeyed not his voice. Nay, they are so sensible of their sins that they acknowledge his dealings in regard of rigour and sharpness to come far short of their deservings: Ezra 9:13, 'And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, seeing thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve.' Mark, Ezra first confesseth their iniquities to be the mother of all their misery, and then their many afflictions to be less than the merit of their transgressions. Do we drink water? thinks he; we might have been drinking blood. Have we grievous burdens on earth? we might have been burning in hell. Our God is not only righteous in laying thus much on us, but also gracious that he layeth no more: 'Thou hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve.'

It is recorded of Themistocles, that, having invited many philosophers to supper, he borrowed all his dishes of one Amyntas, who came in the midst of supper and took away half of them. One of the philosophers asked Themistocles how he could bear such an affront. He answered mildly, He might have taken away all. So saith a Christian when God takes away part of his estate, or one of his children, and some of his comforts, He might have taken away all.

Wicked men, ordinarily, when they are tied with the cords of their own corruptions, instead of indicting themselves, arraign God; and when they should fall down at his feet, fly in his very face. 'And they (i.e., the wicked Jews) shall pass through it, (meaning the land of Judah,) hardly bestead, and hungry, and shall fret themselves, and curse their king, and their God, and look upward,' Isa. 8:21. As a pot boiling with a good fire under it (this metaphor is included in this word fret) casteth up its scum and filth, truly so do ungodly men in affliction. They rage under the rod, and instead of blessing, blaspheme the name of God, Rev. 16:9, 10. As the ravens in Arabia, when they are hungry, screech horribly, and the Syrians, when they come to die, roar dreadfully; so when sinners come into dangers and civil deaths, their spirits boil with wrath, and their mouths are black with blasphemies against the Lord. 'The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and then his heart fretteth against the Lord,' Prov. 19:3. The apostate Julian shot up his darts against heaven when he was in distress. As rusty hinges of a door, when the door is opened and shut, they shriek and make a noise, because they want oil; so wicked men in affliction fly out, and cry out against God himself sometimes; but the reason is, they want the oil of grace.

Reader, whatsoever the rod be with which thou art scourged, do thou kiss it. Though God should dishonour thee, do thou glorify him. When he punisheth thee, do thou praise him. Bless God taking from thee, as well as giving to thee, and this will turn thy blows into a blessing, the grievous cross on thy back into a glorious crown on thy head. It is easy and ordinary, as to commend a person when we are hired with large presents, so to speak well of God, when he dealeth well with us; but it is hard and rare, as to extol one who vilifieth us, so to advance God when he debaseth us. The hypocrite is in and out with God, as he dispenseth himself towards him in blessings or crosses; as men will commend the bee when they taste of its honey,

but are out of patience with it when they feel its sting. Thou art a Christian indeed, if, under the saddest dispensation, thou canst say, as the holy Emperor Mauritius, when his wife and children were slain before his eyes, Righteous art thou, O Lord, and in very faithfulness hast afflicted me—if thou canst bless him when he maketh breach upon breach on thee.

Possibly thou art the man that hast seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. God hath shewed thee great and sore troubles. Thy whole life, it may be, hath been a winter, and most of thy days accompanied with stormy weather. In this case, it will be much for thy credit and comfort if thou canst justify God under the cross.

When thy sense and reason are at a stand, that thou canst not apprehend the ground and cause of such severe corrections, set faith awork, and believe God to be wise and righteous and gracious, even then when thou canst not see him to be so. God's paths are often in the seas, and his goings in deep waters. His judgments are a great deep, which our short reason can never fathom or find out. There are as hard chapters, and as dark texts, in the provinces of God, as in his prophecies. Now, because we cannot expound them, we are apt to accuse them. Job was somewhat rash, according to some, 'Behold I cry out of wrong, but am not heard; is it good that thou shouldst oppress?' But observe the reason, 'Who is this,' saith God, 'that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge,' Job 10:2, 9:7, and 40:2. Samson's friends quarrelled with him, because they could not understand his riddle. Some of God's friends have been ready to question him when they could not find him. Pompey, when beaten by Cæsar, said, there was a mist over the eye of providence, when indeed the mist was over his own eyes. How many wrangle with God, merely because they cannot reach God; and reprehend him, because they cannot comprehend him. But herein appeareth the excellency of

Christianity, that when sense is tired; and reason nonplussed in the conflict, faith will believe God's justice, and bring the soul off with conquest. Hence Jeremiah, when he could not see God to be righteous, would say that God was righteous: Jer. 12:1, 2, 'Righteous art thou, O Lord; let me plead with thee of thy judgments.' His carnal part seemed to plead against it, but his spiritual part would be sure to premise it, and profess it. Human reason is no fit judge of divine actions; not that any of God's works are against reason, but because many of his ways are above our reason. God's actions are the highest, the truest reason, yet such reason as is above our natural reach.

As a stick in the water seemeth crooked to the eye of sense, through the refractions of a double medium, the air and water, when the eye of our understanding seeth and knoweth it to be straight; so the dealings of God with his people seem to the eye of sense many times to be harsh and rigid, as if in the ways of his providence he did tread awry; but even then the eye of faith seeth them to be right, and knoweth assuredly all his footsteps to be equal and straight. Faith believeth men may do justly, but faith is confident God cannot but do justly. Papists tell us, saith Luther, that the Pope may do what he will, none must question him. Sure I am, what they falsely ascribe to the man of sin, faith doth most truly and fitly in the darkest dispensations ascribe to the holy God. He giveth not account of any of his matters, and who may say to him, What dost thou? God's works are sometimes like a printer composing his sheets, who setteth his letters backwards. Now we feel and see the letters, but cannot read them, nor spell out the meaning of them; but in the life to come, we shall fully know the sense of them, and see infinite reason and wisdom in every passage of divine providence.

Fourthly, Wait God's leisure for deliverance. There is a twofold patience required in every Christian.

1. A patience of bearing the evil inflicted; and,
2. A patience of forbearing the good promised. God, indeed, hath engaged to deliver his people out of all their troubles; but between the seed-time of the promise, and the harvest of the performance, a sharp winter often interposeth; therefore the Christian must wait. David had a promise that he should be Israel's prince, yet, after this, he is hunted as a partridge upon the mountains. What, therefore, doth he do in the meantime? 'Truly, my soul waiteth on God; from him is my salvation,' Ps. 62:11, 5; or, as it is in the original, 'Nevertheless, my soul is silent to Jehovah;' as if he had said, Though I, who have a patent from heaven for the crown, am in lieu thereof laden with crosses; though the providences of God towards me are so grievous that they seem to contradict rather than to confirm his promises, yet my soul hath not a word to say against God, but I am contented to suffer his pleasure, and to stay his leisure, knowing that it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God. Nevertheless, my soul is silent to Jehovah.

It was a great sin in Israel, that though they had had such experience of his power, they would not take his word for a drop of water: 'They waited not for his counsel, but limited the holy One of Israel,' Ps. 78:41. God must come at their call, at their time, or else they conclude he will not come at all. It was a witty speech of a king, that he liked a circle about his head, meaning his crown, but he could not endure a circle about his feet; he would have them at liberty to go and come when he pleased. It is dishonourable to God to be limited. What an affront is it to a prince to be made his subjects' prisoner! and it is unprofitable to man. Mercies in haste, or deliverance before God's time, is like meat overdriven, which will not take salt, but quickly corrupteth and putrefieth; or like fruit that children cry for before it is ripe, which breedeth worms and diseases. Jacob had a



promise of a blessing, but he is too quick with God for it. He stayeth not God's leisure, but hasteneth its accomplishment with a lie. Now, what doth he get by it? indeed, he obtaineth the blessing, but with many blows, the smart of which he felt to his dying day. Had he stayed till the vintage, where the grapes of the promise had been ripe, he had found them sweet and cordial; but because he gathered them green, no wonder that they were sour, and set his teeth on edge so long. His sufferings for so many years are attributed to his unwillingness to wait on God some few days.

Reader, hath God laid on thee some heavy cross? be not impatient, but let God take his own time to remove it. Chirurgeons know best how long wounds must be kept open; the patients that skin them over, because they put them to pain, and heal them up in haste, do it to their own hurt. Men in misery are like prisoners in the jail, who are sure to be released, if they will but stay quietly till the assize; but when they are hasty for their liberty, and take indirect courses, breaking the prison to get out, they are taken again, fastened with more fetters, and either stay longer for their freedom, or are dismissed from the jail and sent to the gallows. If Saul in distress will turn to a witch, it doth but increase his woe.

A man that washeth himself, sometimes ventures past his depth before he is aware; now this man, being in danger of drowning, hastily catcheth at what comes next to hand, possibly on sedgy weeds, that do but entangle him and draw him deeper under water, and there keep him down from ever getting up, till he, by that whereby he thought to save himself, be drowned indeed. Thus, whilst many, unwilling to wait God's leisure for deliverance out of distress, catch at what comes next to help themselves, they do but plunge themselves further into a labyrinth of evils, out of which they never escape.

It is a true saying in this sense, I am sure, Haste makes waste, and, The more haste the less speed. Many have by woeful experience found the truth of those proverbs. Friends, God's time is the best time. 'The Lord is a God of judgment,' saith the prophet; therefore, 'blessed are all they that wait for him,' Isa. 36:18. Judgment is here not opposed to mercy, but to folly. The Lord is a God of wisdom, and can time and order all affairs to the best. Though it be a burden to wait upon a fool who maketh rage or weakness his rule, yet they are blessed who wait for the resolutions of the only wise God, to whom angels are comparative fools, Job 4:17, 18, who maketh reason the rule of all his actions, who will not let his promises bring forth to his people before they have gone their full time, lest the birth should prove abortive; and who will not let them stay a moment beyond their reckoning, but then will cause them to fall in labour, and to bring forth in full feature and favour answerable to their conceptions. O reader! thou wilt never repent of thy patience, when those vessels of the promises, which stayed so many years in the Indies, come home richly laden with their silver and golden wedges. With the sense of thy Father's love, the fruits of thy Saviour's death, and freedom from all thy fears and fetters which now affright thee, how wilt thou with the church sing victory, shout for joy, and cry up thy wise and faithful God with an Ecce of admiration: 'Lo, this is my God; I have waited for him, he will save me. This is the Lord; I have waited for him, I will be glad and rejoice in his salvation,' Isa. 25:9.

Fifthly, Rejoice in God in the meantime. Saints are compared to lilies, afflictions to thorns. The lily is fresh, and looks fair in the midst of thorns. A Christian may be cheerful under the heaviest bodily cross. He hath fair weather overhead, the sunshine of God's favour, therefore he may go merrily on though it be dirty under feet. 'The king shall rejoice in God,' saith David, Ps. 63:2, when he wandered as a poor exile in the wilderness of Keilah; when he had

neither relations nor possessions, for he was banished from both, to rejoice in, he had a God still. So, when his condition was more dangerous, and indeed seemed to be desperate, his estate was plundered, his wives and children captivated, and his own life endangered, for his own soldiers spake of stoning him. 'But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God,'<sup>2</sup> 1 Sam. 30:6. In cold weather, the blood and spirits retreat to the heart and inward parts, which are the source and fountain of them. In the hardest season a believer may retire to, and be refreshed by, the fountain of his being and blessedness. The Lacedæmonians use music in their wars; truly so may the saint in his wars with the affrightments of the world, and make the joy of the Lord his strength. There is mention made of some poor Christians banished, and one standing by and seeing them pass along said, It is a sad condition these persons are in, to be hurried from the society of men, and to be made companions of beasts. True, said another, it were sad indeed, if they were carried to a place where they should not find their God; but let them be of good cheer, God goeth along with them.

The bells ring as pleasantly at a funeral as at a wedding. The godly man may be merry in the absence, as well as in the presence, of outward mercies. When the streams are dried up, he hath the spring. The upper city of Jerusalem built on Mount Zion was called Millo—fulness or plenty—because, amongst the people of God, there is want of nothing, whilst they have him who is all things. This was the church's consolation in her most dreadful condition: 'The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore I will hope in him,' Lam. 3:24. She could not say friends were her portion; her lovers and friends were put far away. She could not say honour, or riches, or pleasure were her portion: 'The enemies wagged their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem. They that did feed delicately were desolate in the streets; they that were brought up in scarlet, embraced dunghills,' Lam. 2:15,

16, and 4:5. The Chaldeans had robbed her of all such jewels; but that which kept her head above water, and her heart from sinking, when those boisterous waves went over her soul, was this, 'The Lord is my portion.' He that hath God for his portion hath all things, even when he hath nothing. Hagar's provision and patience were both spent at once; her bottle and her hope both out together; because her water was gone she falls a-weeping, but had she seen the fountain so near she would have saved her tears. There is a witty conceit mentioned of one of the Dukes of Florence, that he should have for his arms a fair spread tree, having one branch only lopped off, with this motto, *Uno avulso non deficit alter*; intimating that, whilst the tree was well-rooted, there was no fear though a branch or two were lopped. A godly man may rejoice though he lose his estate, for he hath a better treasure in heaven; he may rejoice though he lose his children, his liberty, nay, and his life; for though those branches are lopped off, he hath his God, the root of all.

It was the speech of Paulinus Nolanus, when his city was taken by the barbarians, *Domine, ne excrucier ob aurum et argentum; tu enim es omnia*; Lord, let me not be troubled for my silver and gold which I have lost, for thou art all things.' As Noah, when the whole world was overwhelmed with water, had a fair epitome of it in the ark, having all sorts of beasts and fowls there; so he that in a deluge hath God to be his God, hath the original of all mercies. He who enjoyeth the ocean may rejoice, though some drops are taken from him. But he, indeed, who hath no god, may well mourn when he is deprived of his goods. A consumptionate man, when he cometh into a sharp, searching air, sickeneth and dieth because his vitals were not sound, but he who hath good inwards, is the better for a cold winter.

Aristippus having lost a farm, by a law-suit, to one that bewailed his loss, made this answer, I have two farms left still, and that is more by

one than you have, or than I have lost. When wicked men, though it be but seldom, pity a saint in distress, a saint with a compassionate heart may answer him, as Christ did the woman who followed him weeping, Weep not for me, but weep for thyself, and the misery that is coming upon thee, unless thou reformest thy life; for notwithstanding my sad losses, yet I have my Saviour, my soul, and my eternal happiness left still, and that is far more than you have.

The lapwing hath his name in Latin upupa, and in Greek. ἐπὺψ, because she hath always, whether she be full or hungry, a sad, querulous cry cry, Pu, pu. Every sinner hath cause to be sad, whether he be full of comforts, or be under crosses; therefore it is no wonder that in distress his heart, like Nabal's, dieth within him. Creatures on the earth are all for accumulation, as the ant and bee, and they cannot live without it; but those, as birds that mount up to heaven, neither sow nor reap, yet have their merry notes.

Saints have rejoiced in their greatest sufferings, and triumphed in their most grievous tribulations. They have gloried in their disgrace for Christ: 'And they departed from the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name sake,' Acts 5:41. Their spirits have been most enlarged, when their flesh hath been most straitened. Paul and Silas in the stocks could sing; the fetters on their feet were more precious and honourable in their eyes, than the costliest chains of gold about their necks could have been: Acts 16:25, 'At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises to God.' Wicked men, like common birds, can sing in summer; but saints, like special birds, can sing in winter.

It is a privilege to imitate Christ in his passion; the Philippians were to count it a favour that God called them to suffer, Phil. 1:29. These are God's gems and precious jewels, said Munster to his friends,

pointing to his sores and ulcers. Ignatius triumphed in his journey to Rome to suffer, considering that his blood should be found among the mighty worthies, and that when the Lord makes inquisition for blood, he will count from the blood of Abel, not only to the blood of Zacharias, but also to the blood of mean Ignatius. To die for Christ, saith Philpot, is the greatest promotion that God can bring any to in this vale of misery; yea, so great an honour that the glorious angels in heaven are not permitted to have.<sup>2</sup> It were easy to instance and shew how many of the martyrs were merrier when they were going to the fire, than ever carnal wretch was when he was sitting down to a delicate feast: Mat. 5:10–12, 'Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.' Leap and skip for joy, as wanton cattle do in spring-time, when they graze in good and pleasant pastures, so the word, σκικτᾶω, signifieth.

It is an honour to weak, sinful man to be scourged by the great and glorious God; it is a favour that he will condescend to correct us. Some saints are more famous for their crosses, than ever Cæsar or Alexander for all their victories and conquests. The rod where-with they are afflicted, is a sceptre wherewith they are adorned: 'My brethren, count it (saith the apostle) πᾶσαν χαρὰν, all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations,' James 1:2. Though the nature of affliction be evil, and so not joyous but grievous, yet the concomitants and consequents of it are so excellently good, that the Christian may rejoice in it.

The Neapolitans wore garlands, and triumphed when Pompey was sick at Naples, out of respect and honour to him. Those infidels had better thoughts of sufferings than many Christians. Two sights, saith Luther, the devil delights in—to see a wicked man merry, and a saint

sorrowful; but two sights do intolerably vex him—to see a sinner mournful for his sins, and to see a saint joyful in his sufferings. David, saith he, made psalms, and sung them; we sing psalms as well as we can to the honour of our God, to spite and deride the devil and his spouse.

Sixthly, Take heed of envying wicked men in prosperity. Men who are at the bottom of the hill, are apt to envy those that are at the top. When David was chastened every morning, and in great adversity: 'I was envious at the foolish,' saith he, 'when I saw the prosperity of the wicked,' Ps. 73:3. 'When I saw;' his sight was an inlet to this sin. The basilisk is called *rex invidorum*, because the strength of its poison is conveyed by the eye; it kills with its look. The envious man is described by his evil eye, Mat. 21:22. The bright and glorious sunshine of wicked men's prosperity did pierce and pain David's sore eyes; and the truth is, it hath been a pearl in many of the saints' eyes, Jer. 12:1–3; Hab. 1:13. Corrupt nature first looked out at this window, Gen. 4. 'The spirit that dwelleth in us, lusteth to envy,' James 4:5. Those especially who are afflicted, are prone to conceive evil at the good which others receive.

He who doth but consider the state of wicked men, will rather pity than envy them in the most prosperous condition. Alas! the devil, like an indulgent father, doth not disturb them, because they are his own children, as the crocodile, according to Aristotle, suffereth the bird *trochylus* to enter into his mouth, and pick his teeth, and then to fly away without any harm.

Reader, if thou art sick of this distemper, use David's receipt for its cure. It is a tried remedy, received out of the sanctuary. David considered that their prosperity is neither full nor fast; it is not full, it is but bodily at best, and usually but skin deep; their mirth is rather

in their brows, than in their breasts: 'In the midst of his sufficiency, he is in straits,' Job 20:22. Like the kidney of a beast, he is lean, even when he is covered with fat. All his heaps cannot cure the itch of the head, or afford one hour's quiet of heart: 'As a dream, O Lord,' saith the psalmist, Ps. 73:7. He compareth their prosperity to a dream; now we know the comfort or satisfaction which a man enjoyeth in a dream, is but fancied and imaginary; not solid or substantial. All their laughter is from the teeth outward. Haman, in the midst of all his honour and favour at court, had somewhat lay like a lump of lead on his spirit to imbitter all: 'All this availeth me nothing,' saith he. Because he wanted a bow from Mordecai, all his comforts were nothing worth. The abundance of the rich will not surfer him to sleep. A small bird sings pleasantly in his little bed of down, when the bigger birds in their great nests of briers and thorns have but harsh notes. Great men have such gnats of cares to sting them in the night that many times they cannot sleep, when the sleep of a labouring man is sweet. How many of them possess a great estate, who enjoy nothing! Eccles. 2:26. As the stag hath great horns, but no courage to use them.

Their prosperity is not fast. Their riches and honours do but shew themselves like a rainbow in all their dainty colours, and then vanish away: 'Thou hast set them in slippery places,' ver. 18. They stand on ice; are as soon off almost as on. How quickly is the beauty of all worldly blessings blasted! 'The triumphing of the wicked is short,' Job 20:5. Though their pains shall be for ever, yet their pleasures of sin are but for a season: They are rich in this world, not in the other world, 1 Tim. 6:17; 'They live in pleasures on earth,' James 5:5. The place of their pilgrimage is the only place of their pleasures. They have a time of mirth, but they shall have an eternity of mourning. God hath some work for wicked men to do, (though they observe not his precepts, yet they serve his providence,) and till that be done, his



providence will serve them; but when the building is erected and finished, the scaffold, as high and as sure as it is seated, shall be taken down: 'Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work on mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria,' Isa. 10:12. When those busy bees have done all their work, and that will be in a short time, they shall be smothered with smoke, and destroyed.

Their prosperity is fatal. Their sins are the greater, and their sufferings will be' more grievous. How certainly do their mercies, like perfume to one sick of the plague, convey the infection by its sweet smell! As the moon at the full darkens the sun most, so in the abundance of favours they dishonour God most. Vatablus expoundeth that clause in Ezek. 3:20, 'I lay a stumbling-block before him,'—that is, I will prosper him in all things, and not keep him from sin by affliction. I will not hedge up his way with thorns, but lay all common, and suffer him to wander whither he will. God strikes most heavily when he doth not strike at all: Isa. 1:5, 'Why should they be smitten any more? ye revolt more and more.' Their sufferings are the greater also. They are raised to their ruin: 'Thou hast set them in slippery places, and turnest them down to destruction,' ver. 18.

Naturalists tell us that the eagle lifteth the shell-fish very high, and lets it fall on some rock, whereby it is broken, and then devoured. Ungodly men are lifted up high on earth, to be thrown the lower into hell: 'The prosperity of fools slayeth them,' Prov. 1:32. Like the Roman monster, they hang themselves with their silken halters. As the phoenix is consumed in a bed of rich spices, so are profane men by all their hoards and heaps. Their comforts are but as a vessel of rich wine, presented to one sick of a high fever, which he drinketh largely of, whereby he is inflamed and dieth. The more wealth they

have in this world, the greater their woe will be in the other world. As a river dammed up for a time, when that which hindereth is removed, poureth forth with the greater violence; so that flood of wrath which is stopped for a time by God's infinite patience, when it comes to break forth, will rush upon thee with the more dreadful vengeance. Prosperity, like physic to an incurable disease, hasteneth death, and makes it more painful.

Who will envy a fellow that goeth up a high ladder to be turned off and hanged? Who would grieve that his enemy hath a curious, richly enamelled knife, when with it he cuts his own throat? Surely none can grudge them their sweetest morsels on earth, who believe the bitter reckoning which they must pay in hell. He is brutish in his knowledge, that can envy a beast its high and sweet pasture, when it is but thereby fitted for the slaughter. What man would not think of Theramenes rather with pity than envy, who being one of the thirty tyrants at Athens, though he escaped when his house fell down on him, yet afterwards was tortured to death by his colleagues!

It was the speech of a soldier going to execution for stealing grapes, to one that asked him, What! are you eating grapes now? Oh, saith he, do not envy me; my grapes they cost me dear, they must cost me my life. Truly so may sinners bespeak envious saints: Do not envy us our honours, our high seats; do not envy us our carnal pleasures, and our huge treasures; do not envy us our plays and our pastimes, our sinful sports, and our vain delights. Alas! they must cost us dear, they must cost us our lives, nay, the life of our very souls; they must cost us our heaven, our God, our Saviour, and that for ever. Who would envy a beast the garland and ribands with which the heathen adorned them when they went to be sacrificed? 'Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious at the workers of

iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down as the grass, and wither as the green herb, Ps. 37:1, 2.

A man may see a trade and not know the mystery of it, and the various and curious contrivances in it. A country fellow may see a picture excellently drawn, and yet be wholly ignorant of that rare art which appeareth in it. There is embroidered wisdom in God's works, which men are not aware of. 'When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever,' Ps. 92:7. When with those wisps he hath scoured his vessels, he will throw them into the fire.

Besides, the best of wicked men is infinitely inferior to the worst estate of a saint. The palest gold is better than the brightest brass; persecuted piety is better than prospering profaneness. They have but the bran, the dregs, thou hast the flour, the spirits, of outward things. Thou canst say, God is thy portion; and dost thou complain of thy part? Nay, canst thou forbear saying, Ps. 16:5, 6, 'The lines are fallen to me in a pleasant place, and I have a goodly heritage.'

It was an aggravation, and a great one, of David's sin, that being a rich man, and having great flocks, he should take away the poor man's only lamb; so it is a sad heightening of thy sin, if, when thou art rich, and hast multitudes of real mercies, (the covenant of grace, the blood of Christ, the love and image of God, which are worth thousands and millions, and which will do thee good to all eternity,) thou shouldst envy a poor sinner who hath only a little sleep, and meat, and drink, with many an aching heart, and gripes of conscience, like a condemned prisoner, till the set day appointed for his execution. Thales being asked how a man might be cheerful and bear up in affliction, answered, If he see his enemy in a worse condition than himself. His expression savours of vitiated nature,

and is contrary to grace; but if the misery of an enemy can make a heathen merry in affliction, sure I am it may preserve a Christian from envy.

Queen Elizabeth envied the milkmaid when she was in prison; but had she known the glorious reign which she was to have for forty-four years, she would not have repined at the poor happiness of so mean a person. Christians are too prone to envy the husks which wandering sinners fill themselves with here below; but would they set before them their glorious hopes of a heaven, how they must reign with Christ for ever and ever, they would see little reason for their repining. Alas! what a pitiful nothing is the portion of the world's greatest potentates, compared with the inheritance of the saints in light. Those fowls that fly aloft have so small a spleen, saith the great naturalist, that it can hardly be discerned, and he gives this reason, because those birds that mount in the air have least of that part which is terrestrial, for the spleen is the seat of melancholy, which hath an earthly quality, being dry and cold. Sure I am, those saints have least of this spleen of envy, who mount up to heaven oftenest on the wings of faith and meditation, and take a view of their future happiness.

Lastly, Study and answer God's end in thy afflictions. This indeed, though named last, is the first and chiefest of all. The errand upon which a messenger is sent from a great prince is much to be minded. It is not enough to forbear fretting at him, or to rejoice with him, but to interpret his language, to spell out his meaning, is required. A disease once known is half cured. It is a great piece of prudence to find out God's end, and a special part of piety to answer God's end when found out. God spake as truly by his ten works, his ten plagues to Egypt, as he did by his ten words, his ten precepts, to Israel. Every affliction comes to thee with a message, as Ehud did to Eglon—"I

have an errand to thee from God'—with an errand and message to thee from the great God.

Gideon took briers and thorns and taught the men of Succoth. God takes these sharp prickles of affliction, thereby intending to teach thee his statutes: Ps. 94:11, 'Blessed is the man whom thou correctest and teachest in thy law.'

I shall first shew thee what God's ends are, and then help thee to find out his end in thy particular affliction.

God's ends in afflicting are divers.

First, It may be to try and discover thee to thyself; to try the strength of grace. Thou couldst hardly have thought thy faith to have been so weak till thou wast, like Peter, walking on these tempestuous waters, and ready to sink in them. Thieves, when endeavouring to break into a house, and are prevented, do this courtesy often to the master of the house, that they shew him the weakest part of his dwelling. Satan, by the troubles he brings on saints, doth them often this kindness, that by his rough waters their leaks are made known to them. To try the truth, of grace, God therefore led Israel many years through, the wilderness, when he could have carried them a nearer way in a few days to Canaan, 'to prove them, and to know what was in their hearts,' Deut. 8:2. The Psilli, a people, saith Pliny, (lib. xxviii.,) whom no venom will hurt, if they suspect any of their children to be none of their own, put an adder to its breast; if it be stung, and the flesh swell, they cast it away as spurious. It is not affliction, but a holy enduring of it,—'if ye endure chastening,' Heb. 12:7,—which is a sign of adoption. A father will sometimes cross his child to try his disposition. I have read a story of a little child about eight or nine years old, that being extremely pinched with hunger, looked one day pitifully necessitous on her mother, and said, Mother

do you think that God will starve us? The mother answered, No, child, he will not. The child replied, But if he do, yet we must love him and serve him. Here was language that spake a well-grown Christian. For indeed God brings us to want and misery, to try us whether we love him for his own sake, or for our own sakes; for those excellencies that are in him, or for those mercies we have from him; to see whether we will say, with the cynic to Antisthenes, Nullus tam durus erit baculus, &c. There shall be no cudgel so crabbed as to beat me from thee.

Secondly, It may be to purge out some sin which thou harbourest; the stock is purged by salt water. A garment is stricken with a staff that the dust may be beaten out. Tribulation comes from tribulus, a flail, because it makes the husk fly off. Crows, when sick, take stones which make them vomit, and then they are well. Affliction doth, as a serjeant or bailiff, it comes to bring our sins, our debts, to remembrance. Joseph spake roughly to his brethren, to make them remember themselves, and repent of their sin; when that was done, he discovered himself, and spake kindly to them. So God dealeth severely with his children, to make them mindful of, and mournful for, their sins. When once he hath brought them to that, he smileth on them. David hath one psalm which he calls 'A psalm to bring to remembrance,' Ps. 38:1, which treateth of his great afflictions, because they, like Pharaoh's dream to his butler, make men remember their faults.

Art not thou in love with the world? No wonder that then God makes it an iron furnace, that thou mayest no longer value it as an ivory palace. He turneth earth into a kind of hell to thee, because thou hast made it thy heaven. God carried Israel about in the wilderness, because their hearts hankered after Egypt. He rubs wormwood on the breasts of the world to wean thee from it.

Art thou not secure? No wonder then that he applieth blisters to thy neck, cupping-glasses to thy back, and wax-lights to thy feet, to awaken thee out of thy lethargy. Shouldst thou be suffered to continue sleeping, thou wouldst sleep the sleep of death. He beats up thy quarters, to make thee stand upon thy guard. When enemies flank an army, it makes them orderly in their march, and keeps them from straggling.

Art thou not proud and conceited? If so, he gives thee a thorn in thy flesh, to prick thy bladder of pride, lest thou shouldst be puffed up above measure. He makes thee low in thy condition, that thou mayest be lowly in thy disposition. That which lessens our heaps and estates, often lesseneth our hearts. God therefore brought the Jews to great hardships, to make them humble, Deut. 6:2. The poor useth entreaties, saith Solomon.

Hast thou not dallied with mercies? Now God removes them from thee, that by the want of them, thou mayest know the worth of them. Naturalists tell us, if musk hath lost its scent, by being put into a sink, it will recover it again. Hunger and fasting will make thee relish thy food; sickness will make thee prize thy health. The spring is more pleasant after a sharp winter; harmonious sounds are much commended to us by the darkness and silence of the night; the bells sound best near the waters; no meat so delightful as those dishes wherein sour things are conveniently mingled with sweet.

Possibly thy heart is hard; thou wast hardly ever sensible of thy own sins, or others' sufferings. Now there are but two ways to cure the stone in the bladder, either to dissolve it by soft medicines, or by cutting the party. God tried mercies with thee, soft means, and could not dissolve the stone of thy heart, therefore he is now cutting thee, with an intent to cure thee. A good fire will melt the hardest metals.

In Silesia, there is Fons Solis, the Fountain of the Sun, out of which at mid-day, when the sun is nearest, floweth cold water; and at midnight, when the sun is furthest, floweth hot water. Those who have been cold in bewailing their sin when they have prospered in the world, when they have been visited with affliction, their reins chastising them in the night seasons, have been hot and fervent at it.

Possibly thou didst rely on creatures. Thy leaning on those staves hath broken them in pieces, which otherwise would have been helpful to thee in thy journey. Many a time hath our Father made the creature our grief, that it might not be our god. If any of these, or any other sin, be the end for which thou art afflicted, search it out. As the mariners in a storm inquired for whose sake it came, and never ceased till they found him out, and had thrown that Jonah overboard; so do thou search as narrowly for thy lust as for thy life—expect no calm till this be done. When thou hast found out the sin, go to God speedily, confess it thoroughly, with all its aggravations, and bewail it heartily. When the Jews had found out Paul, whom they supposed to be a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition, they cry out, 'Men of Israel, help: This is the man that teacheth everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place: and further, brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this place,' Acts 21:28. So do thou cry to God, Help, Lord; this is the sin that hath so much provoked thy majesty, profaned thy name, grieved thy Spirit, and polluted my own soul! Lord, help me to mourn for it, and help me to turn from it. Let the hatred wherewith I shall hate it, be greater than the love wherewith I have ever loved it. Help, Lord; this is the sin that hath caused all my sorrows, all my sufferings.

When God had afflicted that noble worthy, he tells God, 'Thou inquirest after my iniquity, and searchest after my sin,' Job 10:6. Now if God by affliction searcheth after thy sin, it concerneth thee to



search and try thy ways, Lam. 3:4; for if thou dost not find out thy iniquities, be confident thy iniquities will find thee out; and then thou mayest say, as Ahab to Elijah, 'Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?' for it will come to thee, as the prophet to the king, with dreadful, doleful tidings indeed.

Thirdly, It may be, the end of God in afflicting thee is to increase thy graces. Wisps scour vessels and make them the brighter. 'I will bring a third part into the fire, and refine them as silver is refined,' Zech. 13:9. The fire purifieth the vessels of gold, and makes them more meet for the master's use. True Christians, like the vine, bear the more fruit for bleeding: Dan. 11:33–35, 'And some of them of understanding shall fall to try them, and to purge them, and to make them white.' Here are the three ends of affliction. Some refer their fall to the sad afflictions which they suffered in the days of Antiochus, of which there should be this threefold use:—1. Some should be tried; 2. Some should be purged; 3. Some should be made white. Those frosts and showers should whiten and purify the faithful.

Israel in Egypt, the more oppressed, the more they multiplied. The camomile springs the more and the better for being trodden on. Pliny, in his Natural History, writeth of certain trees growing in the Red Seas, which, being beat upon by the waves, stand like a rock, immoveable, and in a full sea they are quite covered with water; these trees are bettered by the roughness of the waves. A Christian that is by faith planted into the Red Sea of Christ's blood, doth not only stand fast in, but also flourisheth the more for, the billows of afflictions.

It is reported of the lioness that she leaves her whelps till they are almost killed with crying, and hereby makes them the fuller of

courage. So God often leaveth his children till they are even ready to despair; he lets his David cry out till his throat be dry, and his moisture turned into the drought of summer, before he sendeth from heaven and saveth him, and hereby he increaseth his faith and patience. 'Here is the faith and patience of the saints,' saith the apostle, speaking of great afflictions, Rev. 13:10. Here it is exercised, and here it is increased; for frequent acts of grace strengthen the habits of grace. The fire strengthens our liquors; the better they are boiled, the stronger they are. The hottest cordial water, and strongest spirits, are distilled and extracted by fire. The fire of affliction increaseth the strength of our graces. As in winter the outward cold fortifieth our inward parts, by forcing in, and uniting our natural heat; so adversity strengtheneth the Christian, by forcing him to use and unite all his courage.

Now it is probable thou wilt say, I would willingly answer God's end, but how may I find it out? I cannot understand the language of the rod, and so cannot obey its voice.

To satisfy this query, I would advise thee,

1. To observe the kind of thy affliction. Sometimes the sin is written in broad letters on the forehead of the punishment. When Absalom killed Amnon, and defiled his father's concubines, and was afterwards slain by Joab, David might easily see his sin in the face of his suffering. Because he neglected to do justice on Amnon, therefore God suffered Absalom to murder him unjustly. Because he defiled the wife of Uriah secretly, God permitted Absalom to lie with his wives openly. Because he cockered Absalom, though the blood of Amnon required blood, therefore God let out the blood of Absalom by the hand of Joab. The Sodomites burned with unnatural fire, that was their sin, and God punished them with supernatural fire. The

Egyptians killed the Jewish children, and God slew their first-born; punishment often bears the image and superscription of the sin upon it.

Art thou oppressed in thy estate? Consider whether thou never didst oppress others, as the greater fish devouring the smaller. Art thou cheated and cozened of thy right? Look back upon thy life; didst thou never defraud others of their due, like a beast of prey, tearing away by thy power others' portions? Art thou disgraced? Examine thyself, whether thou hast not slandered others, as a cupping-glass drawing their worst humours, and revealing their faults, when thou hast concealed their virtues. So, whatsoever thy affliction be, put the question to thy soul, whether thou hast not to others occasioned the same suffering? God payeth some in their own coin. If sickness or continual pain be thy affliction, consider whether thou hast not been intemperate, and so brought thyself to the rack. The sinner sometimes reapeth the same seed which he soweth; you may read who is the father of the child, what sin begot the affliction, by the favour and features of the child's face, it doth so much resemble its father.

2. If thou canst not find out the cause of thy disease by that symptom, hearken to the voice of conscience. Look into that book, and see what debts thou owest to divine justice, for which thou art now arrested. When the debtor doth not mind his payments, the serjeant or bailiff is sent to quicken him. Is there no way of wickedness which thou allowest? Though in the day of prosperity carnal pleasures make such a noise that the voice of conscience cannot be heard, yet in the silent night of adversity conscience often obtains audience. And in affliction, like an officer, it sheweth the mittimus, which mentions the offence for which the malefactor is committed to prison.

It is possible God may be reckoning with thee for some old debt which thou hadst forgotten. Look into thy remembrance, thy register-book, and there thou mayest find it. It is observable that the patriarch's had committed a great sin in the sale of Joseph, which passed many years unregarded and unrepented. The golden dust of prosperity had so covered the looking-glass of conscience, that they could not behold in it the ugly face of their crimson fault; but when they came to be in great perplexity in Egypt, adversity did them that friendly office, as to wipe off that dust, and then conscience makes a true representation to them of their sin. As what is written with the juice of lemons, their sin was legible when brought to the fire. 'We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us,' Gen. 43:21. Affliction untieth the tongue of conscience, that it speaketh plainly to men and women—this is the sin, this is the lust, that hath brought this load of sufferings. And affliction unstoppeth the ears of men and women, that they hearken to its cry. Oh! it is true indeed, we did thus and thus, conscience charged, and God commanded us to the contrary, and we would not hear; we are verily guilty, therefore is this distress come upon us.

3. If thou hast been faithful in empannelling conscience upon the indictment, and that bring in an ignoramus, go to God, and entreat him to acquaint thee with his mind in his providence, and with the meaning of thy punishment. When the children struggled in Rebekah's womb, she said, 'Why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb,' Gen. 25:22. So now thou art in the midst of strivings and strugglings, go to God, inquire of him; possibly he may answer thee, Two parties, two princes, are within thee, flesh and spirit, Christ and Satan, and they are striving which shall be the conqueror. Or do as Job under his sore troubles, 'Lord, do not condemn me; shew me

wherefore thou contendest with me,' Job 10:2. Lord, my troubles and crosses are well known; the eyes of others see them, and my heart feels them; but the cause of them is unknown. There is a veil upon my understanding, that I cannot discern thy meaning; there is a curtain drawn between me and the ground of my crosses. Oh scatter these mists that hinder my sight, that I may know the reason of my sufferings; for though I know that I am a sinner, and am guilty of many weaknesses, yet I know also that I am not wicked. I have examined myself, and am not conscious of any ungodliness or close hypocrisy, much less of any profaneness or scandalous enormity, which should provoke thee thus severely to punish me. I do not desire to know it as suspecting thy goodness and holiness, but as suspecting my own evil heart. Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me, whether it be for sin or no; if for sin, for what sin; that I may repent of it, and return to thee. If not for sin, shew me for what end, whether to prove and try me, or to purify and strengthen me.

There is no better way for a prisoner to know the reason of his confinement, than to ask the justice or magistrate that committed him; there is no surer way to know the cause of our sufferings, than to go to that God that sends them. Every wise agent can give a rational account of his actions. Though God's will be a sufficient answer to all our queries,—'he doth whatsoever he pleaseth in heaven, and in earth, and in all deep places,'—yet he wills nothing without infinite reason, and is pleased to let his friends know what is his end in his actings. 'The secrets of the Lord are with them that fear him,' Ps. 25.

But, reader, when thou goest to God by prayer, to know why thou dost suffer, do it in a serious, solemn manner, and with a settled purpose to answer his afflicting providence. An ordinary seeking will not serve turn in extraordinary sufferings. When a famine was in the

days of David upon Israel three years, year after year, the holy king doubtless did often desire of God to know what fault in Israel had incensed him to send a famine on Israel. It is not probable he would suffer so mortal a distemper to infect the body politic so long, and never look after its cause and cure; yet he could not find it out, till at last, after the end of three years, he goeth to God, by that grand and most solemn way of inquiry, by Urim and Thummim, and then God answers him, 'It is for Saul and his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites,' 2 Sam. 21:1. Upon which he hangs up some of Saul's sons, and the judgment was removed. If thou canst not by thy daily fervent prayers find out the cause, set apart a day, or days, of humiliation and fasting. As some devils will not be cast out without fasting and prayer, so the reason of some distresses will not be found out without fasting and prayer. On such a day of prayer unbosom thyself freely and fully to God. Oh, it is sad to be hiding thy sins when God is searching for them. Entreat him to try thee; say, as the psalmist, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting,' Ps. 139:23, 24. Bewail thy original pollution, which is the grand remote cause of all affliction, though some particular corruption may be a nearer cause, as the brittleness of man's body is the natural remote cause of death, though some one disease be the next and immediate cause. Bemoan also all thy actual transgressions, which thou canst possibly remember, and accent them with their crying circumstances. After this, condemn thyself for them, and resolve, through divine help, to forsake them. If God make known to thee which is thy darling sin, that hath cost thee so much sorrow, which is the Absalom, (that had he received his due, had been hanged long before for the murder of Christ,) that now is in arms to rob thee of thy crown and life, causing such disturbance and distress unto thee. As thou lovest thy soul, entertain not any favourable thoughts of him. Do not wish, Oh that he might be spared,

and dealt gently with for thy sake; but with the greatest hatred hasten his execution. Let such a day be as the fast among the Jews, wherein all their blasphemers were put to death. Let no one malefactor be hid, like Joash, in a secret chamber, to avoid the stroke of vengeance. After this renew thy covenant with the Lord, to walk before him in holiness and righteousness all thy days. Resolve upon every known duty, and against every known iniquity. Call aloud to Jesus Christ, to stand bound for thee, and to be thy surety for thy good behaviour; and if thou art but sincere and faithful in these particulars, thy affliction may be removed. When the wound is well the plaster falls off; the messenger departs when he hath done his errand; or however it is sanctified to thee, and sanctified misery is a greater mercy than the whole creation. Now thou mayest 'rejoice in tribulation; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in thy heart.' Though thy chastisement be no infallible sign of God's love, yet thy improvement of it in this gracious manner is a sure sign of his special favour. If the philosopher Zeno, after his shipwreck, blessed fortune for his prosperous misfortune, because it made him a better scholar, having deprived him of that which had diverted him from his studies, surely thou hast more cause to bless providence for thy happy unhappiness, because it hath made thee the better Christian. Thou mayest say, 'Lord, it was good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep thy word,' Ps. 119:67.

But, on the other hand, it will be ill if, after thy afflictions, and the pains God hath taken with thee, thou art not more holy. It is sad to be put to pain to no profit, to be cut and lanced, and not to have thy bad blood let out. God complaineth of this: 'In vain have I smitten your children, and they have not received correction,' Jer. 2:30. I

gave them physic, but to no purpose; but it is doleful for a man to come out of affliction, as a sheep out of a ditch, dirty and defiled; or as a piece of iron out of the smith's hand, after it hath been first in the fire and then in the water, more hardened than it was before. It is bad not to be the better for affliction; for a person to come out of his chamber, where he was at the gate of death, amended in body but not in soul. Ephraim remembers his incorrigibleness upon the day of his repentance; 'Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke,' Jer. 31:18—rather kicking at, than submitting to, my deserved sufferings. To such a man Augustine sadly expresseth himself, *Perdidisti utilitatem calamitatis*; Thou hast lost the profit of thy physic. The cost which God was at with thee was thrown away. But oh how intolerable is it for the child to be the more froward when he is corrected for his faults! The next thing he may expect is to be turned out of doors. Not to be reformed by afflictions, speaks a child of rebellion and disobedience; but to wax worse by affliction, speaks a son of reprobation and perdition. The tree which, after dunging and pruning, is unfruitful, is for the fire. If the ten plagues do not reform Pharaoh, the Red Sea shall ruin him.

## CHAPTER X

**The means whereby Christians may exercise themselves to godliness in adversity. As also a good wish about that condition**



Having laid down the motives, and also discovered wherein the nature of exercising thyself to godliness in adversity consisteth, I proceed to the third thing promised, and that is to acquaint thee with the means which may be helpful to thee herein.

First, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness in affliction, labour to see God's hand in all thy afflictions. Do not, like the dog, snarl at the stone, but look up to the hand that throweth it. Consider, whosoever be the messenger that bringeth it, God is the master that sendeth it, and then the present, whatsoever it be, will have the more acceptance for the author's sake. 'Can a bird fall into a snare, where no gin is for him? Shall there be any evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?' Amos 3:6, 7. The bird seems to be taken by chance, but he is taken by providence. The bird did not see the snare, but the fowler set the snare purposely for him. Afflictions seem to come accidentally on men, but we are caught in them intentionally by God. Though we do not foresee them, yet God fore-appoints them, and to him we must look if we would improve such providences.

We are at least silent when we suffer from them who are much our superiors. Though, when our equals or inferiors strike us, we presently run for a writ; yet if our sovereign, whose laws we have broken, scourge us, or brand us by his officers, we submit. Boys will reverence the rod in the hand of their master, though they laugh at it in the hands of their fellows. 'Who art thou that repliest against God?' is sufficient to make a Christian both patient and pious under the heaviest cross. This consideration moved Job, instead of blaspheming, to bless God, when he received such smart blows from God: 'The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.' Had he said and thought, The Lord hath given, and the Chaldeans and Sabeans have taken away, his rage might probably have conquered his reason, and Satan might have

been gratified in what he so impatiently desired; but because Job knew that his potion was sent him from heaven, he cheerfully takes it, and pays, according to his estate, his thanks to his physician: 'The Lord hath taken, blessed be the name of the Lord.' We value and esteem our gifts according to the quality and sincerity of the giver. Jerome would persuade his friend Julian to say, upon the loss of children, Lord, thou hast taken away the children which thou gavest me; I do not murmur at thee for taking them, but I thank thee for giving them. His dominion over us commandeth submission. He giveth out of his mercy, and he takes away out of justice: may not he do what he will with his own? Mat. 20:15.

A sight of God, like the word of Christ in the ship, did allay and calm those high winds and boisterous waves which threatened to overturn the soul of the psalmist: 'I was dumb, and opened not my mouth; because thou, Lord, didst it,' Ps. 39:9. If you consider the third verse of the psalm, you will find that his heart was very hot, and the fire of his inward passion was so great, by reason of his afflictions from Saul and his courtiers, that it was like to break out into a flame to his own ruin. But this was the water that quenched it: 'Thou, Lord, didst it.' As when our lungs are exceeding hot with their motion, and ready to burn up themselves with their own heat, even then they are cooled by the air which they suck in; so the heart of the prophet, heated with anger and impatience, was cooled with this gale, that it was God's pleasure. When he once saw God's hand and seal to the warrant for his correction, he durst not open his mouth against it. The hand of an infinite, unquestionable, only wise God, is such a muzzle on a saint's mouth that he cannot murmur, 'I was dumb, and opened not my mouth; because thou, Lord, didst it.'

As men generally look not up to the author of their mercies, and thence are so unthankful, so they look not up to the author of their

afflictions, and hence are so impatient and fretful. It is observable that patience did wonderfully triumph in David's breast under Shimei's bitter railings. Though that traitor struck fire again and again, he was wet tinder, he did not take. Yet at another time, when Nabal offered him a little unkindness, that small wind raised a grievous storm of passion in his spirit: 'So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall,' 1 Sam. 25:22. But if we read the story, we may quickly see the reason. David heard God's voice in Shimei's language, but did not see God's hand in Nabal's carriage. 'Let him alone, and let him curse,' saith he of Shimei; 'for the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David,' 2 Sam. 16:9, 10. The Lord hath bidden him with a word of sufferance, though not of allowance, with the word of his providence, though not of his precept; therefore I must bear it with submission and patience; he who hears God speaking will, if he know himself, be silent.

The foolish heathen, whose understandings were darkened, could see no farther than second causes, hence acted like distracted persons under the cross. Xerxes, the Persian monarch, having received a loss by the rage of Hellespontus, caused three hundred stripes to be given it, and cast fetters into the water, as if he could make it his prisoner, and bind it at his pleasure. Darius, because the river Gynde had drowned his white horse, threatened to divide it into many channels, and so weaken its strength, that one should go over it on foot.<sup>4</sup> Those that look only at means thus murmur, and bewray their madness.

When men drink of waters far from the spring, and nigh the sea, they are brackish, and of an ill taste; but if they drink them in the fountain (*Dulcius ex ipso fonte, &c.*), they are sweet. As Solinus reports of Hypanis, a Scythian river, that the water thereof is bitter, as it passeth through Exampius, but very sweet in the spring. When men

drink the waters of affliction, in the musty vessels of instruments, no wonder that they are the waters of Marah, bitter waters, and set men, as those waters did the Israelites, a-murmuring; but when they drink them in the fountain, consider them in the blessed God, the principal efficient, they are tolerable, if not pleasant. Christians can take anything kindly from the hands of their God. It was a holy speech of that honourable Lord Duplessis, at the death of his only son, I could not have borne this from a man, but I can from my God. Beasts will take blows from their master, surely then we may from our Maker.

2. Consider, God's affection is the spring, as to him, of all thy afflictions. Thy temporal cross comes from the same love that thy eternal crown comes from. Infinite and eternal love is the root from which every rod springeth, with which God scourgeth thee. 'As many as I love, I rebuke; whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth,' Rev. 3:17; Heb. 12:5. Men will not take the pains to correct stubborn servants, but turn them out of doors; but love forceth them to chastise their sons. God out of hatred lets many a sinner go unpunished in this world. He prunes not the tree which he intends for the eternal fire. When the rope is designed, the rod is spared. The malefactor, according to our law, escapes the whipping-post that is condemned to the gallows. 'The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction; they shall be brought forth at the day of wrath,' Job. 21:30. But out of love, he afflicteth saints. 'In very faithfulness thou hast afflicted me,' saith David, Ps. 119:75; as if David had said, Lord, thou art not only righteous in giving me to drink the fruit of my disobedience to thy law, but thou art also gracious in causing me therein to taste the effects of thy love. Thy correcting severity proceeds from thine electing mercy; thou couldst not be faithful to my soul and thy covenant of salvation, if thou shouldst suffer me to wander from thy commands, and not bring me home, though by Weeping-cross. It is worthy our

observation, that God binds himself as well to give his children a rod in their minority when they offend, as the inheritance when they come to age. 'If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, then will I visit their iniquity with a rod, and their transgressions with stripes; nevertheless, my loving-kindness I will not take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. Once have I sworn by my holiness, I will not lie unto David.' How then should he be faithful to his word, if they who transgress so often should never feel his rod, much less if he should let them run on to their ruin! He visits their iniquities with stripes, that he might not take from them his loving-kindness, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. The punishments of sinners are vindictive, the fruits of pure wrath; but the afflictions of saints are corrective, the genuine product of true love. 'All his ways are mercy and truth;' not only his comforting, but his correcting ways. If he smile, it is in mercy; and if he smite, it is in mercy. God may change his dispensation towards his children, but never his disposition, Ps. 25:10.

Some write of the Russians, that their women think those husbands do not love them who do not beat them, and those husbands to love them most who beat them most. Sure I am, those that have felt most of the weight of God's hand have had the greatest room in his heart. As it was said of Asher, his shoes are iron and brass, but his feet are dipped in oil, in love; so I may say of God. When his shoes are iron and brass, when he treads hard and treads heavy, yet his feet are dipped in oil, in love, Deut. 33:24, 25. Those bands of affliction with which he binds his saints, are bonds of kindness, and those cords with which he scourgeth his chosen, are cords of love; every lash speaks love, and is laid on by love.

Now, what a sweet syrup is this for thee, O Christian, to take the bitter pill of affliction in; I cannot but think it must needs go down

the glibber, and also work the better. Doth love send it, and wilt thou slight it? Shall love present it to thee, and wilt thou be pettish and peevish at it? God's anger is more grievous than any pressure whatsoever, but his love will make amends for the want of any outward favour. Thy loving-kindness is better than life; therefore, as long as thou hast this sauce in thy dish, it may make anything go down. 'A dinner of herbs with love, is better than a stalled ox with strife.' The eye is a tender part; yet, when dim or dusky, we apply sharp powders or waters to eat out the web, or dry up the rheum, and yet love it nevertheless. Friend, God may love thee as the apple of his eye, even then when he afflicteth thee sharply; therefore, take his love-token kindly.

Gentlemen prize their hawks, and delight to feed them, yet they put wervils upon their legs, and a hood upon their heads. But why, saith Bernard, is she blinded and fettered? because they esteem her, and would have her always within call. If they have a hawk that they regard not, they will not take such pains with them, but let them fly away. Some sinners escape scourging, and are suffered to take their swing, because God doth not love nor esteem them; but his saints, whom he valueth, he will be sure to correct, that he may have them always within his call and command.

Children will take that potion willingly which a mother gives them, when, if a stranger should pour such a draught down their throats, they would cry out, We are poisoned. And what is the reason? why, they are persuaded of their parent's love, that is the lump of sugar which sweetens it. He in Terence could say, when he was in his own thoughts hardly used, *Pater est; si pater non esset, &c.*: It is my father; if it were not my father I should not take it so well. Anything is pleasing which love doth present; even blows in love are lovely, and the wounds of a friend are healing. David had much rather lose

his life by the hands of courteous Jonathan, who loved him, than of cruel Saul, who hated him, 1 Sam. 20:8. Elijah could beg death from a gracious God,—'It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life'—even then when he feared it, and fled from it, by the hands of a spiteful, malicious woman, 1 Kings 19:3, 4. Our blessed Redeemer drank off freely that cup of venom and poison, of gall and wormwood, which would have turned the stomachs of all men and angels in the world to have tasted it, when it was put into his hands by a loving Father. When sinless nature had a reluctancy, the thought of a father carried it: 'The cup which my Father giveth me to drink, shall I not drink it?' Had the Lord Jesus considered only the fury of hell, and the wrath of his foes on earth, his potion would have been much less pleasing; but when he thought of the love of his Father—how love provided it for him, and love presented it to him; how there was not the least bitter ingredient in it, but love, prescribed it, and love prepared it, he drank off his cup, thus spiced with his Father's love, cheerfully.

The truth is, our eyes are bad, and in our journey towards heaven, mountains and hills interposing, we lose the sight of the true Sun, and the sense of our Father's love; but when we come to our Father's house, we shall see grace and love displayed in all its colours. Though our Jesus now, like Joseph, acts the part of a seeming enemy, yet then we shall see that he loved us, all the while that he used, us so hardly; then he will speak plainly: I am your brother Joseph whom ye sold—I am your brother Jesus whom ye crucified.

Thirdly, Consider, God will proportion thy burden to thy back. He will not assess thee above thy estate. When any were scourged among the Jews, they fitted the whip to the person, and gave either all the stripes which God allowed, not exceeding forty, Deut. 25:3, at once, or at two several times, according to the strength of the offender; to this end, the work of one of their judges was to number

the strokes, that they might be sure not to exceed. God numbereth as well the saints' sufferings as their sins, and will not permit one stroke beyond their strength. He limits their sufferings, both for their nature and their length; he hath some strong, able servants, old men and fathers, therefore he calleth them to the harder services, that their strength might not be lost. Those that have great estates, much spiritual riches, must live accordingly, or else their wealth would be given them in vain. He hath others who are weak babes in Christ, little children; now, though he drives these towards their heavenly country, when they would loiter and play with the toys of the world by the way, yet he doth not over-drive them, but, as Jacob's ewes great with young, drive them tenderly, 'as they are able to bear it,' Gen. 33:14.

God is not like an empiric, who hath but one remedy for all persons, and all maladies, but first considers his patients, what age they are, of how long standing in Christ's school, of what strength, what proficiency they have made since they were entered, and accordingly writes his bill. Because, some bodies will bear it, he will give them physic two or three days together: 'Let us return unto the Lord: he hath torn, and he will heal us. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight,' Hosea 6:1, 2. Nay, possibly ten days together he may give a diet drink: 'Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, and ye shall have tribulation ten days,' Rev. 2:10. But because others of his children are of weak constitutions, he will purge them only one day, Zech. 3:9, or give them pills one night: 'Heaviness shall endure for a night,' Ps. 30:5. Nay, if they be very sickly, it shall work but an hour: the apostle mentioneth, 'an hour of temptation,' Rev. 3:10. Nay, as the patient may be but a moment: 'These light afflictions, which are but for a moment,' 2 Cor. 4:17. And if there be any of his weaklings, whose stomachs cannot bear it so long, they shall have it less time, (if it may



be, that this point is divisible:) 'For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee,' Isa. 54:7, 8. Well might the apostle say, 'God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able.' With which verse Latimer comforted Ridley, when they were both going to the stake, adding, Be confident, brother, God will either assuage the violence of the flames, or give us strength to bear it.

After their physic, he gives cordials to keep them from fainting, he is so tender of his faithful ones. If he knock down Paul with one hand, and strike him blind, he will lift him up with the other hand, and that to the third heavens, where he shall see such blessed sights as mortal ears cannot hear of. He sendeth snow in Salmon, light in darkness. When it showers, it shines on a saint. I thank my God for this prison, said one of the martyrs, more than for any palace; for in it I find my God most sweet to me. When Philip, Landgrave of Hesse, was prisoner a long time together under Charles the Fifth, he was asked what upheld him; he answered, I feel the divine comforts of the martyrs. The cross of Christ is sweet wood; it bears cordial spices. These lions, as Samson's, prove a hive of sweetness, and produce a swarm of comforts to the saints. When the waterpots are full of water, then the best wine is coming. It may be said of the Christian, what Plutarch speaketh of Egypt, He hath many poisons, but as many antidotes.

I have read of one that, digging under a cross, found a great treasure; saints have never found greater riches of grace and comfort than under the cross. The wine of their joy is usually most brisk and lively when they drink it in those low, damp cellars, at the head of the pipe. When Jacob halts through a blow on his thigh, the place is turned into a Peniel, that is, the face of God. It was a happy sight that was accompanied with a sight of God's face.

There are three great differences between the punishments God inflicts on sinners, and the afflictions he brings on saints in this world; 'Hath he smitten him, as he smote those that smote him?' Isa. 27:7. No; for,

1. They differ in the manner. God punisheth his enemies with joy: 'Ah, I will ease me of mine enemies,' Isa. 1:24. As if he were in pain till they are punished, and could have no ease but in their pain; whereas, when he afflicts his children, it is with much compassion: 'His soul is grieved for the miseries of Israel,' Judges 10:15. He takes the rod into his hand with tears, as I may say, in his eyes. And when he hath it in his hand, hath many conflicts with himself, whether he should strike or no: 'How shall I deliver thee up, O Ephraim? how shall I give thee up, O Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? (Admah and Zeboim were part of the Pentapolis which God destroyed; the other three were Sodom, Gomorrah, and Zoar;) my bowels are rolled within me, my repentings are kindled together,' Hosea 11:8, 9. Mark how he striveth with himself before he can strike his people. As if he had said, O Ephraim, O Israel, thou art a wicked, stubborn child, and art worthy to be whipped till thou bleedest; nay, to be whipped to death, and to be a monument of my fury, like to those cities which I consumed with fire; but though thine iniquities deserve it, and thine adversaries desire it, yet my tender mercies debate it, and implead it. How can I do it?

When God is destroying his enemies, he laughs at every lash, though it fetch blood from their backs: 'I will laugh at your destruction, and mock when your fear cometh,' Prov. 1. Their destruction is the object of his derision. He strikes them with hatred and detestation of them, as a man strikes a toad. But when he is chastising his friends, his sons, after he hath overcome himself to do it, from the necessity of it,

truly even then he doth it with sorrow, and every stroke, as it were, goeth to his very heart: 'In all their afflictions he is afflicted,' Isa. 63.

2. They differ in the measure. When God punisheth his enemies, he hath no regard at all what they can endure, and what they cannot, but strikes according as they have deserved: 'I will reward you according to all the evil of your doings, and till they be utterly destroyed,' Jer. 25. But when he afflicteth his people, he doth consider what they are able to suffer: 'As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth their frame; he remembereth they are but dust,' Ps. 103:12, 13. He observeth what weak vessels they are, and therefore will not use them to hard knocks, nor suffer them to be too near, or too long by the fire, lest they fly in pieces.

He correcteth his people, not according to the greatness of his power: 'Will he plead against me with his great power?' No; but 'he will put strength into me,' Job 23:6. Nor according to the fierceness of his anger: 'Many a time turned he away his anger, and did not stir up all his wrath,' Ps. 78:38. Nor according to the grievousness of their errors: 'Thou hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve,' Ezra 9:13. But he correcteth them in measure: 'Though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet I will not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee wholly unpunished,' Jer. 30:11. He meteth out their sufferings in a due proportion, like those that do things exactly by weight and measure, (not a drachm too much,) with respect both to the quality of the disease, and the ability of the patient's body.

As a judge, when he correcteth his child, hath respect not only to the child's wantonness, but also to the child's weakness, and accordingly whips him; but when he sits on the bench, and is sentencing a

malefactor at the bar, only considers his offence, and what the law inflicts; never whether the poor prisoner be able to endure burning on the hand, or hanging; so God deals with his children in the relation of a Father—mildly, moderately, according to their strength; but with others, in the relation of a judge—severely, yet justly, according to their demerits.

3. They differ in the end. God afflicteth his children to sanctify their polluted hearts; he punisheth his enemies to satisfy his offended justice. God cometh to his people, as a chirurgeon to his patient, pricking and cutting him to let out his bad blood, it may be, bleeding him till he is ready to faint, that there may be a spring of better; but he comes to his enemies as a creditor to his debtor, taking him by the throat, and bidding him pay what thou owest, which because he cannot, to prison he must go.

When God striketh his children, he doth, as a fencer to his scholars, now and then give them a blow with a blunt weapon, for instruction, to teach them the better how to defend themselves; but when he striketh sinners, he strikes as one of the Roman gladiators, to kill and slay; he first whets his glittering sword, and his hand takes hold of judgment, and then he renders vengeance to his enemies, and a reward to them that hate him, Deut. 31:4. His judgments on the sinners are for their punishment, as an earnest-penny of their endless misery; but his corrections on the saints are for their profit, for the preventing or purging away of their iniquities. But more of this in the next particular.

Fourthly, Consider that all thy afflictions are needful, and shall work for thy good. Nothing is intolerable that is necessary. The waters are not more needful to waft the ship, than afflictions are to carry the vessels of our souls to their port of bliss. Affliction, saith the martyr

to his friend, will scour and rub you bright, that you may be fit to be set on the high shelf in heaven: 'Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations,' 1 Pet. 1:6. 'If need be;' whilst we have diseased bodies, physic is as needful as food; whilst we have diseased souls, misery is as needful as outward mercies. The winter is as necessary to bring on harvest as the spring; affliction is as helpful to bring forward the harvest of glory as any condition. Winds and thunder trouble the air, but withal they purge it. Corrections are grievous, but withal they purify and make us gracious. There is a necessity that the patient be made sick, for otherwise he cannot be well. We hold but our arm to a chirurgeon, to lance us for our good, when if another should cut us, we would be ready to take the law of him. Christian, thou mayest well with patience undergo divine corrections, because they are for thy profit.

God and the world differ much in their ends about the saints' affliction. The world persecuteth them out of hatred; God afflicteth them out of love, the world intendeth evil in it. As Joseph said to the patriarchs, 'Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, as it is this day, to save much people alive,' Gen. 15:20. So the saints may bespeak the world in regard of those slanders and fetters, and other calamities which they bring on them: As for you, ye thought evil against us, but God meant it to good, as it appeareth this day, to save our souls alive. The physician and the leech have several ends in drawing the patient's blood: the end of the leech is to satisfy herself; the end of the physician is to better the state of his patient's body. The end which the world aimeth at in the crosses which they bring on Christians is to satisfy their own pride, and malice, and revenge: 'My lust shall be satisfied upon them,' saith Pharaoh, when he was pursuing Israel, Exod. 15:9; but God's end is to sanctify his people's souls.

One of the sharpest calamities that ever befell Israel was the Babylonish captivity, yet even this was in mercy: Jer. 24:5, 6, 'Thus saith the Lord; Like the good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good.' How! of freemen be made prisoners, and that in a strange land amongst heathen, to be removed from their own houses, vineyards, friends, nay, and from the temple of God, and all this for their good!

Possibly, reader, thou wilt be apt to say, as the unbelieving lord, Though God should work a miracle, could this be? I tell thee, God doth with his rod of correction, as Moses with his rod in Egypt, work wonders, and it shall be. As the goat, through common providence, can digest hemlock, and draw good sustenance from it, which is counted a deadly weed to other creatures; so the Christian, through special assistance, can feed on the evil of affliction, and get strength from it, as deadly as it is to profane persons.

Sometimes God prevents sin by affliction. A purge or bleeding in the spring may prevent diseases in autumn. Suffering hath many a time killed sin in the embryo, and prevented its birth. When Cato urged in the senate that Carthage might be destroyed, Scipio opposed it, saying, that the fear of Carthage made the Romans watchful, whereas, if it should be destroyed, they would degenerate into luxury. Salt marshes preserve sheep from the rot, which otherwise they would be infected with, and die of. When the waters are abated, the dove herself is apt to wander and to be defiled, therefore the continuance of the waters is for her good; it prevents her wandering out of the ark.

External hardships have hindered souls from hell, from eternal heaviness. Manasseh's iron chains prevented the chains of

everlasting darkness. 'We are chastened of the Lord, that we might not be condemned with the world,' 1 Cor. 11:31. God hath by adversity carted some to heaven, whom prosperity would have coached to hell. A corroding plaster, though it puts a man to pain, yet, by eating out the festered matter, prevents the cutting off his limb, and many times the loss of his life. Had the prodigal found his fill of husks, it is probable he had not thought of his father's house. Now, reader, is not that needful, and for thy good, which prevents sin, nay, which preventeth hell?

Sometimes God purgeth away sin by affliction. He useth the file to take away that which is rugged. Affliction, saith Chrysostom, is the shepherd's dog, which takes the lamb into its mouth when it goeth astray; not to bite it, but to bring it home. God's design in thy sufferings is not to ruin, but to reform, thee. A gardener diggeth his ground, breaketh the clods, maketh the earth as small as he can; but an ordinary capacity knoweth his end is to mend it, not to mar it: Prov. 20:30, 'The blueness of the wound cleanseth away evil; so do stripes the inward parts of the belly.' There was a time when the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen their weapons. It may be God lets wicked men loose upon thee, to detract, backbite, and slander thee; but his end is that their evil words should make thee more watchful, and help to sharpen thy spiritual weapons.

The Christian is like the Athenians, of whom some write, Non nisi atrati, they mend not till they are in mourning. Trees set in the winter thrive most; the oftener the hair is shaved, the thicker and the more it groweth. It is said of the Phrygians, they wax not wise except they are beaten to it; and one of our great statesmen observeth of us English, that we are best when we are in black. When we are merry, we are worst; when we are sorrowful, we are best.

Apollonius writes of a certain people that could see nothing in the day, but anything in the night. Saints, like those creatures that have fiery eyes, see best the sinfulness of sin, the worthlessness of the world, and the preciousness of their Saviour, in the dark night of affliction. In the day of light and outward comforts, the sunshine of prosperity doth many times so dazzle their eyes, that they are almost blind. Oh, how much doth the Christian esteem the smiles of the Lord, when he is under the frowns of the world! There are no strains in music so delightful as those in which discords are artificially bound up with concords. Dark shadows set forth a beautiful picture, and represent it more lovely and lively. Tribulation, saith Luther, is the best expositor of Scripture, without which a man can never know the will, or the goodwill, or love of God.

Quails love to fly with the wind, because of their small strength and little bodies, yet not with the south wind, which is moist and heavy, but with the cold north wind. Holiness oftener accompanieth the cold north wind of adversity, than the warm south wind of prosperity. It was observed, in the days of Edward the Sixth, when the sweating sickness raged in England, and swept away many, then the churches were thronged, and servants sent to this and that minister, You must come to my lord; you must come to my lady; they beseech you to pray with them, to pray for them; here is a bag of money they desire you to give to the poor. Since that, when the plague raged in England, and the bills of mortality swelled to several thousands in one week, in one city, how piously were fasts observed, how zealously was heaven importuned, how devoutly were Sabbaths sanctified! But as soon as those judgments were removed, piety was abated, profaneness abounded, and the Author and Father of all our mercies provoked to his face.



Men mistake often the end of God in their sufferings, hence are so unwilling to undergo them. When the taste is vitiated, as in diseased persons, they mistake their meats, and therefore nothing pleaseth them. If there be a suffusion in the eye, as in the jaundice, everything seemeth yellow; when those who have seen God's end have counted affliction a favour and an honour. Luther prayed for it, *Feri, Domine, feri*, Strike, Lord, strike, and it shall be a mercy. King Alfred prayed God to send him some sickness to keep under his flesh. Job, speaking to God of afflicting him, saith, Job 7:18, 'What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him? that thou shouldst visit him every morning, and try him every moment?'

Reader, art thou in great troubles? ponder this—thy God brings them on thee for thy profit. Thou wilt take bitter physic for the good of thy body, and shouldst thou not be as ready for that which tendeth so much to the health of thy soul? Though the whetstone grate upon, and somewhat wear the knife, yet withal it sharpeneth it. Sufferings may somewhat pain and wear thee, but they will quicken thee Godward, and sharpen thine appetite after spiritual things.

If thy God deny thee a confluence of outward comforts which he granteth to others, thou mayest be confident it is for thy good. Infinite wisdom seeth it best to keep thee short. Thy God knoweth how much the vessel of thy soul will carry, and therefore putteth no more goods aboard, lest thou shouldst sink in the bottomless gulf of perdition, as many poor barks have done out of covetousness, to take in a greater freight than they could safely sail to heaven with. Because the storms of temptation threaten danger to none so much as to those that are deepest laden, he lades thee lightly, that thou mayest sail to thy port of bliss safely.

Further, thou mayest be assured that thine afflictions shall work for thy good. God hath promised it, and he will perform it, Rom. 8:28. There is a twofold kingdom of Christ; the one is his spiritual kingdom, whereby he ruleth by his Spirit and word in the hearts of his people. In this respect he is called King of saints, for they submit to him as their sovereign.

The other is his providential kingdom, whereby he ruleth in the world, disposing of all things therein; in this respect he is called King of nations. He sits at the stern of the world, and steereth it which way he pleaseth, for the government is upon his shoulders. Now he ordereth his providential kingdom for the advancement of his spiritual kingdom; so that his kingdom, which ruleth over all, shall be disposed as may be most for the welfare of his people. Thou mayest say of thy affliction, if thou art a member of Christ, as Paul did of his, 'I know that this shall turn to my salvation,' Phil. 1:19. Though instruments intend thy destruction, yet thy God, who governeth all, will turn it to thy salvation.

Wouldst thou be angry if thy father should send workmen to pull down an old smoky cottage in which thou livest, and to build up a handsome, stately dwelling at his own charge? And canst thou take it otherwise than kindly at the hands of thy God, when he sendeth afflictions to pull down sin and thy body of death, though he thereby put thee to a little trouble, when he intendeth to build up thy soul a more pure and glorious piece? It is the observation of Salmeron,<sup>2</sup> If a man should throw a rich diamond at you, and hit you upon the hand, so you might have the diamond for it, would you count that an injury? 'All things shall work together for good to them that love God.' All things, not only thy comforts, but also thy crosses; not only the love of God, but also the hatred of the world, and the malice of hell.

Fifthly, Consider how the people of God have formerly endured great afflictions; nay, how the Son of God himself drank deepest of this cup. The best of saints have borne the worst of sufferings. Heaven's chief favourites have been trampled on as the world's filth. Thou thinkest none hath suffered so much as thou hast, but, alas! hast thou resisted unto blood? Dost thou know the racks and tortures which many of the Lord's chosen have endured? Socrates was wont to say, If all the calamities of mortal men were heaped into one storehouse, from whence every one should take an equal portion, each man would choose rather to go away with that part and pain which he hath already.

David was the song of the drunkards; Elijah fled for his life; Jeremiah was cast into a dungeon; Daniel into a lion's den; Micaiah fed in prison with bread and water; Paul's whole life, after his conversion, was, as it were, one continued affliction, till he came at last to end all with his life under Nero. Consider the patience of Job; saith the apostle, 'Take the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for examples of suffering affliction, and of patience,' James 5:10. How deep did the primitive worthies wade in these waters! Solamen miseris, &c. It is some comfort that thou hast company; thou dost not break this snowy, icy way. The road is already beaten by many who have gone before thee.

Antiochus being to fight with Judas, captain of the host of the Jews, to make his elephants fight the better, he shewed them the blood of grapes. The Romans, in the place of their Olympic games, pictured those who had been famous at that exercise, to encourage others to do worthily.

Reader, thou art compassed about with a great cloud, or pillar, of witnesses, do thou therefore run with patience the race set before

thee, Heb. 12:1. It is enough for thee to fare as the rest of thy father's children. If they drunk so much wormwood, and did eat such bread of affliction, who were so dutiful and obedient, thou hast little reason, who art so froward and stubborn, to expect better. Why shouldst thou desire God should make thee a new way to heaven, different from that wherein his people have always gone? How unreasonable is it to think that the world, which was their purgatory, should be thy paradise; that, above all thy brethren, thou must have two heavens! Remember Midas, who would turn everything he touched into gold, ruined himself by it.

Remember especially what thy Saviour suffered. Though he were without sin, yet he was a man of sorrows; all thy sufferings to his are but a feather to a mountain of lead. If God spared not his own Son, who was without sin, he hath little cause to spare thee, who art little else but sin; if he dealt so severely with the green tree, how severely may he deal with the dry.

When Alexander marched through Persia, his way was stopped with ice and snow, insomuch that his soldiers, being tired before with hard marches, were wholly discouraged, and would have gone no further, which he perceiving, dismounted, and went on foot through, the midst of them all, making his way with a pickaxe, whereat they being ashamed, first his friends and officers, and then all the rest, fell to work. Thy Saviour hath gone before thee, and given thee an example, that thou mightest follow his steps, 1 Pet. 2:21. Art thou poor? so was Christ; he had not a house to put his head in, Mat. 8:20. Art thou slandered? so was Christ; a friend of publicans and sinners, a Samaritan, one that had a devil, was the language the Jews gave him. Art thou hungry, and thirsty, and weary? so was Christ. Art thou tempted? so was Christ, Mat. 4. Is thy soul sorrowful? so was his, unto death. Do thy friends wrong thee and forsake thee? so did his.

Doth God hide his face from thee? so he did from him. And canst thou imitate a better than thy Saviour? should not his pattern be prevalent with thee? It is reported, that though the amberring were of no esteem among the Romans for a long time together, yet when the emperor did once wear it, every one followed him. How contrary soever the cross is to thy nature, yet one would think thou shouldst be ambitious to resemble the king of saints. Hath he drunk to thee in a cup of affliction, and hast thou neither the manners nor grace to pledge him?

Sixthly, Consider, thy sin is the meritorious cause of all thy sufferings. Sin is the weight on the clock which makes the hammer to strike. God may say to thee under the saddest providence, as he said to the Roman emperor, formerly a cutler, This is the sword which thou madest, and by which thou now must die; this is the cross which thou madest, and by which you now must smart. Thou complainest of thy cross, but thou mayest thank thyself for it; therefore, turn thy complaint against thy corruptions.

If sin lie heavy upon thee, all afflictions will be light. Luther gives this reason why he slighted the rage of pope and emperor, and all his outward enemies; They are all little to me, saith he, because sin is so weighty on me. The like we may observe of the blessed apostle Paul; he cried out much of his sins, and thence complained not at all of his sufferings. Though he was in great distresses, and in deaths often, yet he never bewailed them, saying, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the death of this body!' because he bemoaned sin so much. 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death!' Sense of sin swalloweth up sense of afflictions, as the ocean doth little rivers. He who hath carried a good part of a sheet of lead upon his back, will make nothing of a few bags of feathers. Truly, affliction to sin is but as a feather to a sheet of lead.

Reader, I assure thee this is an excellent receipt for the cure of thy murmuring and impatience under the hand of God. Consider, whom canst thou be angry with but thyself, when thou hast brought thy troubles on thyself? 'I will patiently bear the indignation of the Lord,' saith the church, 'because I have sinned against him,' Micah 7:9. It is as natural for sin to beget suffering, as for a father to beget a son.

It will break the violence of the stream, thy passion, by turning the water of thy sorrow into another channel—from thy affliction to thy sin. When men spit blood, or bleed too much at the nose, physicians ordinarily cure it by opening a vein, and turning the blood another way. Thy worldly sorrow is as dangerous to thy spirit as inward bleeding to thy flesh: to stop it, try but this remedy of diverting it into sorrow for sin, and I am confident thou wilt set thy probatun est to the receipt. Godly sorrow will eat up worldly, as Moses' rod did the rods of the magicians. The noise of a great cannon in the ear drowns the noise of pistols, that they are not heard at all.

Lastly, Look much up to heaven. To allay thy present sufferings, think of thy future solace. Though thou hast a hell here, where wicked men enjoy their heaven, yet thy hell shall end in heaven, and thy heaven shall never end. The meditation of heaven will much abate thy heaviness. Those birds that fly lowest mourn most. The dove hath a doleful note, but the eagle, which soareth higher, hath no such mournful voice. Moses had an eye to the recompense of reward, and therefore he 'chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season,' Heb. 11.

When Saul was anointed to a kingdom, though many sons of Belial despised him, yet he held his peace. And shall not the thought of thine eternal, glorious kingdom, to which the Spirit of God hath anointed thee, move thee to patience under all the world's calumnies

and cruelties! What the sponge is to the cannon, cooling it when it is so heated with much shooting that it is ready to fly in pieces, that is a sight of heaven by faith to a suffering Christian; it cools his heats, and quiets his heart, when it is ready to break in pieces through impatience. It is no wonder that Paul was so valiant to suffer; that whatsoever cross God laid down for him, he took it up as cheerfully as if it had been a crown—triumphing in tribulations, defying death itself, and scorning the world's most direful threatenings as bugbears to fright children with, when he had before been rapt up into the third heavens, and heard there things unutterable. That celestial music had so ravished and enchanted his ears, that they were deaf ever after to the roarings of the world's lions. Ah! what hardship will not that soul endure, that walks within the view of heaven!

The worldling, who, like the silk-worm, is wholly for the earth, may well, as they, be terrified unto death at the noise of thunder, but the Christian that can mount up to heaven may sing in such weather.

Indeed, reader, if thou refusest to suffer with Christ, thou refusest to reign with him. He who putteth off his gospel-shoe, as a suffering spirit is called, Eph. 6:17, cloth as he who put off his shoe among the Jews, Deut. 25:9, 10; Ruth 4:7, 8, disclaim any right to inheritance. But those who attend Christ on mount Calvary to his crucifixion, shall attend him on mount Tabor to his glorification. When David went to Hebron to the crown, he carried all those with him who had followed him up and down in the caves of the earth. Christ will own and honour all them in his glory who owned him in his ignominy. Solomon spared the life of Abiathar, though he had been guilty of high treason, upon this account, 'Because,' saith he, 'thou hast been afflicted in all wherein my father was afflicted,' 1 Kings 2:26. And will not the true Solomon prefer and advance them that have fellowship with him in his sufferings?

The sufferings which thou now endurest are not worthy to be named with the joys which God hath provided for thee. If we rightly consider, saith Luther, how great the glory of the life to come will be, we should not be so unwilling to suffer all manner of tribulations, which by the wicked world are put upon us. When the Son of man, our Lord Jesus Christ, shall appear to sentence the good and the bad, then we shall be ashamed, if any possibility of shame, that we so unwillingly suffered a small cross and a slight tribulation, as a wrongful imprisonment, a casting into a dungeon, &c. Then we shall say, Oh fie upon me, in that I threw not myself down under the feet of all the ungodly, to be trod and trampled upon, for thy glory's sake, which now I see revealed. Therefore, St Paul well and truly saith, 'For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.'

The apostle doth, as it were, put the cross, with all its encumbrances, into one scale, and the saint's crown, which will be the end of his sufferings, into the other scale, and tells us that our present burdens are so infinitely outweighed by our future bliss, that they are not worthy to be mentioned with it, or compared to it. I reckon, saith he, it is an allusion either to an accountant that reckons up disbursements and receipts, and at the foot of them sums up all what they amount to—i.e., I have examined strictly your layings out for Christ in this world, and have also cast up what he hath laid up for you, and ye shall receive from him in the other world, and find that your receipts do infinitely surpass your disbursements; nay, they amount to such millions that all imaginable expenses here deserve not to be named the same day with the glory hereafter. Or it is an allusion to a disputant, who seriously weigheth arguments pro and con, and afterwards delivers his judgment—i.e., I have soberly pondered all your sufferings that are possible, how much it may cost you to reign with Jesus Christ, and after all my consideration, this is



my collection, my conclusion; that the sufferings of this present life are no more comparable to the glory to be revealed, than this small drop or moment, in which narrow compass all our sufferings are contracted, is to the vast ocean of eternity.

Reader, chew that text a little with the mouth of faith, and thou wilt find it sweet.

1. Thy sufferings are little, some few drops may light on thee in thy journey, but thy glory is great. Thou shalt bathe thy soul in rivers of pleasures when thou comest home. For thy light afflictions thou shalt have a far more exceeding weight of glory. Thy cross is little, is light, but thy crown is massy, is weighty indeed. Oh what a small pain is this, said a Dutch martyr in the flames, to the pleasure hereafter.

2. Thy sufferings are outward only, in thy name, or estate, or body: neither men nor devils can hurt thy soul, or make a flaw in that diamond; but thy glory shall be both outward and inward. Thy body shall shine like the sun in its noonday dress; but ten thousand suns will be darkness to thy soul's attire. Thy soul is the chiefest seat of grace, and thy soul will be the choicest subject of glory.

3. Thy sufferings are mixed with solace; there is some sugar in the bitterest cup. *Non dantur purœ tenebrœ*. But thy glory shall be pure, there shall be not the least mixture of shame or sorrow, or any evil to allay its virtue, or abate its value. If thy condition here be like the lower heavens, foul and fair in the same day, thy condition hereafter will be like the upper heavens, always shining, never showering.

4. Thy sufferings here are generally common to mankind. Man is born to sorrow, as the sparks fly upward; but thy glory hereafter is special, as Joseph's field, 'a portion above thy brethren.' Though thou

sharest with the world in their sufferings, they shall not share with thee in thy solace.

5. Thy sufferings are due to thee; the snares in which thou art taken are of thine own laying; the cords in which thou art bound are of thy own twisting; but thy glory is free, a gift of grace. In regard of God's promise, it is called a crown of righteousness; in regard of the price paid for it by Christ, it is called the purchased possession; but in regard of the persons to whom it is promised, and for whom it was purchased, it is called mercy: 'The mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life,' 2 Tim. 4:8; Eph. 1:14; Jude 23.

6. Thy sufferings are short, only for this present time. Heaviness may endure for a night, mourning lasteth but till morning; it is but a day of adversity at most. *Hœc non durant œtatem*, These things will not last an age, said Jewel in the Marian days, Eccles. 7:16; but thy glory is eternal, an eternal weight of glory. That sun will never be clouded, will never set. Who would not suffer a while for eternal glory!

### **A good wish of a Christian in adversity, wherein the former heads are applied**

The mighty possessor of heaven and earth, who, out of his manifold wisdom, hath appointed from all eternity his providences to be chequer-work, a night and a day, a summer and a winter, an ebb and a tide, a mixture of sour and sweet in this world, as knowing that to be best for his creatures—if they felt nothing but fear, they would despair; if nothing but mercy, they would be secure,—reserving pure wrath and pure rest, pure mercy and pure misery, for the other world; and who foreordaineth his own chosen to drink deepest of the cup of affliction, and to take up their cross and follow Christ; having out of his love and grace called me to a suffering condition, which he knoweth to be most needful for my spirit, though it be painful to my

flesh, I wish that my feet may be so shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, that I may cheerfully endure hardship, as a good soldier of Christ, and be so faithful unto death, that at last I may obtain a crown of life. Lord, since thou vouchsafest me this favour and honour, as to take the pains, and stoop so low to chastise me, when thou mightest permit me to run on in sin till I come to hell, let instruction accompany my correction, that I may imitate my Saviour, and learn obedience by the things that I suffer. Oh enable me so to hear the voice of thy rod, that I may, like a torch, burn the brighter, and, as some trees, bear the better for beating. As the earth by a winter becomes the more fruitful at harvest, so let me by thy afflicting hand be the more abundant in holiness, that I may at last, through many tribulations, enter into the kingdom of heaven.

I wish that, now my God is searching and examining me, as the chief captain did Paul, by scourging, I may be found sincere. The rod of his hand will discover the rottenness of many hearts; unsound fruit falls off apace in stormy weather; sharp air trieth my body, whether sickly or no; and so will sufferings try my soul, and great batteries will prove the strength of the bulwark. The eagle proveth her young by holding them up to the sun; if they can behold it in its full glory and beauty, she acknowledgeth the birds to be her own brood. My God is examining me by the sun of persecution, whether I am a bastard or one of his children. He hath brought me to the fire to discover what metal I am, whether true or counterfeit; he knoweth me thoroughly, but would have me known to myself. 'Though I go on the left hand, where he doth work, I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him; but he knoweth the way that I take. Oh that, when he hath tried me, I might come forth like gold,' Job 23:9, 10. Lord, though others, like cranes, never fly against, but always with, the wind of the times, and if they see any alteration of weather, sit still on the ground, let me never follow a multitude to do

evil, but follow the Lamb wherever he goeth; be so ready for all resistance which the world or hell can make against me, that over all I may be more than a conqueror, through him that loveth me. My God led Israel in the wilderness forty years, to humble them and to prove them—to know what was in their hearts, whether they would keep his commandments or no. Oh that, when he trieth me, he may find truth in mine inward parts! Lord, though many, like earthen, empty vessels, break in pieces when they come to the fire, let the trial of my faith, which is more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, be found to my praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

I wish that, considering how wicked hearts naturally grow worse by afflictions, as Jeroboam by his withered hand, I may be the more watchful. Stinking weeds, the more they are bruised, are the more unsavoury. Water after heating groweth colder than before. The thief on the cross rails even on Jesus Christ. How many are more filthy under their misery! Corruption stopped in its course by affliction, as a river by a bridge, doth roar and swell the more. These waters have not seldom polluted those persons whom they should have cleansed. Not a few have been more sinful after their sufferings. Children do not shoot up more in bodily stature after an ague, than they in ungodliness after affliction. Though I am one of Christ's sheep, yet I am in danger of losing my fleece amongst these thorns and briers, if I have not the more care. Oh that I might be so watchful, that that scouring and rubbing which frets others, may make me shine the brighter, and that weight which crusheth others, cause me, like the palm-tree, to grow the better! Lord, thou knowest more ballast of grace is requisited in the vessel of my soul in this tempestuous season than in a quiet sea, to prevent my sinking. Let thy Spirit so poise this small bark, that I may be steady in all storms, and all these

high winds which threaten to overturn me, may further me in my voyage towards my eternal and blessed haven.

I wish, since my God afflicteth me, not as fathers of the flesh, merely for his pleasure, but for my profit, to make me partaker of his holiness, that I may, as a rose in the still, smell the sweeter, and as a vessel of gold, by this fire be the more purified for my master's use. Fish thrive best in cold and salt waters. The pomander becomes the more fragrant for chafing. The viper, when lashed, casts up his poison. The traitor, when on the rack, will tell the whole truth. Even a Joab, in distress, will lay hold on the horns of the altar. My God leads me through this great and terrible wilderness, wherein are fiery serpents, and scorpions, to do me good at my latter end, Deut. 8:16. Oh that his fires might burn up my dross, and his flails beat off my husks, and that this might be the fruit of affliction, even the taking away of sin! Lord, when thou layest me on my back, let me look up to thee for thy blessing; teach me, as a nightingale, to warble out thy praises the more pleasantly for these thorns at my breast. Since my affliction is a messenger sent by thee to purge out my present wickedness, and prevent my future wanderings, let it not return unto thee void, but accomplish that which pleaseth thee, and prosper in the thing whereto thou hast sent it.

I wish that I may be so patient and pious in my sufferings, that my God may not disdain to give me a visit in my sickness. Surely my God and adversity will be good company. If I go to prison, and there enjoy his gracious presence, it will be more comfortable than the most glorious court; if I be disgraced, he will be a crown of glory; if I be impoverished, he will be better than rubies, than all riches. Do I sit in darkness? the Lord will be a light unto me. Am I called to die? in his favour is life; yea, his loving-kindness is better than life. Whatsoever my distress be, I am safe whilst he is my defence. My God will supply

all my needs out of the riches of his grace in Christ Jesus. Though mine iniquities provoke him to put me into the fire, lest I should be condemned, yet his mercy will prevail with him, to pluck me as a brand out of the fire, lest I should be consumed. If he afford his help, nothing can hurt. The most heavy burden will be but light, if he please to strengthen my back; I can do all things through Christ strengthening me. Oh that these thoughts might prevail with me, to be so Christian in my carriage under the hardest cross, that whatsoever I want, I may not want the company of my God! Lord, thou hast spoken by the prophet, Zech. 1:8, 'I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood amongst the myrtle-trees that were in the bottom.' Thy saints are the myrtle-trees, low and weak plants, but lovely and of great price; their lot in this world is to be in the bottom; thy myrtle-trees delight in valleys, and sea-shores, and river-sides; thy saints here below are in mean and low estates, many of those waves go over their souls, and indeed they thrive best by those waters. But, Lord, who is that man on the red horse, that is so kind and full of compassion, as to own thy saints in their abject condition? It is much below thy majesty to take notice of such unworthy ones in their misery; yet surely it is thy Son, the Son of man, and the Son of God, for thou callest him (ver. 20) the Lord. And is my Saviour so pitiful as to be present amongst his afflicted people? Will he not only be with them in his sanctuary, but also in their sufferings? How contrary is this carriage to the course of the world amongst men! Though the rich find many friends, yet the poor is forsaken of his neighbour. And yet thy Son owns his poor afflicted, despised, persecuted saints. No wonder that thy chosen are so cheerful in their misery; and, like leviathan, can laugh at the spears which the world and hell shake at them, when they have such, good company. Oh grant me this favour, in my greatest danger to have the presence of my Lord Jesus, and then, though thou castest me with the three children into a fiery furnace, it will be more pleasant than

the stateliest palace. Lord, bring me into what distress, what danger, what dungeon thou pleasest, so I may but enjoy my Saviour's powerful comforting presence; for I know that hell itself with Christ, would be changed into heaven. 'To be with Christ is best of all.'

I have heard of some that afflict themselves with wilful famine, walking barefoot in pilgrimage, whipping themselves till they bleed. I wish that I may take up my cross which my God layeth down for me, and follow Christ, but never make my cross, and go before him. He is a bold servant that runneth before his master. My God saves me this labour, for he whips me daily with the scourge of a sickly body, the suffering of my fellow-members, and many times with the eclipses of his own gracious countenance, which is much the sorer, because it concerns the tenderest part, my soul. Oh teach me to make a right use of thy corrections, and then I shall not need to correct myself!

I wish that I may never faint when I am afflicted, yet that I may always feel my afflictions. Corrections are my God's love-tokens, and how ill would he take it if I should despise them! When physic makes not the patient sick, it is the more unlikely to make him well; he who doth not feel the smart of the rod, will never hear the voice of the rod. Besides, if a touch of God's finger will not fetch tears, I must expect the weight of his whole hand to fetch blood.

Should I, like a salamander, live in the fire here, and not feel it, I must expect a hotter fire hereafter in hell. Let me never, as some men, who, when they have been in a shower, dry themselves, and mind it no more; but feel my sufferings, so as to fear the more, whilst I live, the meritorious cause thereof, my own sin. Lord, what an undutiful child am I, if when thou troublest thyself to correct me for my frowardness, I neither see thy hand, nor hear thy voice, but add to my guilt, and to thine anger, by my senselessness! Mayest thou not

justly cast me off for a castaway, and say, Why should he be smitten any more? He revolteth more and more. How dreadful then should my condition be! Correction is the lot of thy children; but rejection is the portion of rebels, of reprobates. Oh rather, since my heart is so hard, let thy hand be so heavy, as to make it soft and sensible. Thou art a wise physician; if weak lenitives will not stir me, give me a stronger potion, rather than permit me to perish. Scourge me, strike me, lance me, to recover me out of my lethargy. Do what thou wilt with me here, so thou love me now, and spare me hereafter.

I wish that, when I feel the smart of the rod, my pain may never make me out of patience. If I quarrel with instruments, I bewray my distraction. What man in his wits ever was angry with a knife for cutting, or a thorn for piercing? The worst malefactor on the gallows will pardon the executioner. If I quarrel with the efficient, I discover the height of rebellion. Shall the clay strive with the potter, or the creature contend with his Creator! Who am I, that I should reply against God? I have a little derived propriety in my children and cattle. My son offends me, I scourge him, probably out of passion, and without reason; yet how ill do I take it, if he offer in the least to resist or repine! If he do me reverence, who am but the father of his flesh, when I chastise him for my pleasure, shall not I much more be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? My beast under me flags, I switch him forward; he still slacks, I spur him till he bleeds again and again; he bears all quietly. Shall beasts take blows from their master, and not I from my Maker? If any demand the cause why I use my child, my cattle, with so much cruelty, I answer, What doth it concern them? Are they not my own children, my own cattle? May not I do what I will with mine own? And shall not my God do what he will with his own? Hath not he a greater propriety in me, than I have in any of my children or cattle? His propriety is essential, mine derivative; his is absolute, mine conditional; his is illimited and



eternal, and mine is in trust for his use, and but for a short time. Shall I scourge, nay, possibly abuse, another's servants, (for they are far more God's than mine,) and take it ill if I be questioned, and when my God (whose I am, by all manner of titles and right imaginable) correcteth me with infinite reason and righteousness, shall I quarrel with him? Oh that I might never be so mad as to rage at instruments, much less so desperately and impudently traitorous as to wrangle with the principal efficient, but let my heart speak under the severest execution, what Eli did under a dreadful threatening: 'It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.' Further, the murmurer is his own martyr. I double my misery by despising or disputing it. He that strives with his burden, makes it the heavier. The partridge that flutters in the net, doth not break it, but her own wings. If I struggle, I do but as a fish on the hook, both fasten and torture myself the more. Lord, though others are so much their own foes, as when they are afflicted for their good to fret against thee, let me be so satisfied in thy dominion over me, and so sensible of thine affection to me, that as by faith I possess my Saviour, and by love I possess thy saints, so by patience I may possess my own soul.

I wish that I may not only submit humbly to my punishments, but also acquit my God honourably under the sharpest providences. Heathen moralists have with courage undergone heavy crosses, and without murmuring drunk down their portion of misery. And if I do no more than those, what singular things do I? Nay, a Pharaoh under torment, can utter this truth, 'The Lord is righteous, I have sinned.' And shall I, a Christian, come behind that hardened Egyptian? Oh that I might from my heart, what he did only from the teeth outward, even justify my God when he condemneth me. Men may do justly, my God cannot but do justly; righteousness is an accident in them, which may be parted from them. Sometimes they are ignorant, and

so through weakness, like David in the case of Mephibosheth, pass a wrong judgment. When the eyes are blinded, the hands strike at a venture, friends or foes. Sometimes they are wrathful, and so through wickedness, as Saul frequently, they pass an unrighteous sentence; dogs in a rage bite them of their own families, or the next that come by. But justice is the essence of my God, and inseparable from him. He knoweth vain man thoroughly, and therefore cannot err through ignorance. All things are naked and open to his eyes; he is light, and in him there is no darkness at all; he will not suffer an unrighteous person to enter heaven, much less will he suffer an unrighteous act to be done by his own hand. Alas! the least of his mercies is infinitely above my merits, and the greatest of my sufferings are infinitely beneath my sins; and shall I not justify him, who is both righteous and gracious? Lord, help me so to behold thy justice sparkling in the darkest night of my sufferings—yea, and thy goodness also, in giving me to be chastened of the Lord, that I might not be condemned with the world—that I may lift thee up when thou castest me down, and see and say, 'The Lord is holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works.' When my body is sick, I send to a physician for something proper for my distemper. He sends me a bitter pill; though my stomach loathes it, I force it down, and withal I thank and reward him. My soul is sick, I am not sensible, (the more dangerous is my disease) my heavenly Father seeth it, pitieth me, and, unsent to, (the more am I beholden to him,) sends me something that is wholesome, though not toothsome, for my cure; and shall my heart rise against the bitter physic, and repine at my physician? Oh let thy love so sweeten all my wormwood, and let the health of my soul be so precious to me, that I may receive it thankfully, drink it up cheerfully, and bless thee as well for crosses as for comforts; 'For righteous art thou, O Lord, and in very faithfulness hast afflicted me.'

I wish that, since my God is wise, and knoweth which is the best time, I may quietly wait for his salvation. Though it be a burden to attend the pleasure of a fool, who lets his opportunity slip, yet it is easy to stay for the resolutions of the wise, who do not delay out of rashness, but reason, and defer only till an opportunity is come. It is likely, now I am in trouble, I shall be tempted to rid myself out of it by any means, whether right or wrong. When a man that hath lands is arrested for debt, the usurer offereth him money if he will mortgage his lands to his loss, thereby preventing his prison at present, but making way for his future poverty. When saints are distressed, Satan offereth his help for their deliverance. If Cranmer be in fetters, he will find a way for his freedom, if he will but deny his Saviour, and mortgage his soul to him, thereby easing him of present frights and fears in his flesh, but bringing him to far worse terror and horror in his conscience. How many hath he, by his cursed counsel, helped out of a fire on earth, to help them into the fire of hell! Oh that, how greatly soever I may be distressed, though Philistines be upon me, and the Lord seem to depart from me, yet I may never, like Saul, run to a witch, or take any unlawful course for ease;—thereby I shall but, as that wicked prince, increase my pain,—but 'wait on the Lord, who hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and look to him,' Isa. 8:17. To lengthen my patience, is the best way to shorten my troubles; and to lessen my patience, is the speediest way to lengthen my pain. Women that are in labour, being impatient of their pangs, send sometimes in haste for a man-midwife, and thereby have suffered much more torture, and, it may be, have destroyed both their babes and themselves; whereas, if they had waited with patience some hours longer, they might have been delivered with more ease and safety. I am my own foe if I offer to limit God. He is sure, though, to my depraved flesh, he be slow. 'I shall reap in time, if I faint not.' My God never fails of coming at his own time, the best time, though he seldom comes at our time. 'The vision is yet for an

appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie.' Though it tarry, it will surely come; it will not tarry one moment beyond God's time. Servants wait on their masters, because of their dependence; subjects wait on their sovereign, because of their distance, and are willing, when they prefer a petition, to stay their leisure for an answer. O my soul, hast thou not a greater dependence on thy God, when thy life and all thy comforts, thy being and all thy blessings, hang every moment on his mercy? And is there not an infinitely greater distance betwixt thee, a poor worm, and heaven's glorious majesty, when the whole creation in comparison of him is less than nothing? Didst thou never see a poor beggar, that had nothing of her own to subsist on, but lived wholly on others' charity, how quietly and resolvedly she sits herself down at the rich man's door? how she begs and waits—she works and waits? Though an alms be not presently given her, she doth not limit, but wait her good dame's leisure. Nay, though she be not only deferred, but denied, yet she will wait a long time in hope. Hast thou not infinitely more reason to wait on thy God in all respects? Thy wants are more, thy dependence is greater; he is engaged to thee by promise, and will be sure to perform them in season. Those indeed that receive but small sums, as some few pounds, have ready money; but they who are to receive hundreds and thousands, are contented to take bond, and to give time, and do it cheerfully, when their estate lieth in safe hands. The men of the world, whose portion is in this life, are greedy for ready money; and their wealth being but some small matter, a little empty honour, and brutish pleasure, and earthly treasure, thy God giveth them present pay. But thy estate, thy freedom from all evil, and the fruition of all good, in the eternal, full, and immediate enjoyment of the blessed God, is of unspeakable value, worth thousands and millions; therefore thou mayest well be satisfied with the bond of the promises, and give him his own day for their accomplishment, especially considering thy wealth lieth in sure hands, and the public

faith of heaven is engaged for thy security. Besides, O my soul, by thy patient continuance in well-doing, under the evil things which thou sufferest, thy joy groweth sweeter, thy glory higher, and thy reward greater. If thou patiently waitest and sufferest the fruit, which is of incomparable worth, to hang on the tree of the promise till it is ripe, it will be both the bigger and the pleasanter. They who reap their corn whilst it is green, find it to grow, and to be of smaller price than that which is ripe. Winter corn, though it be longer between sowing and reaping, is more worth than other corn. Oh, sow liberally, both in doing and suffering the will of thy God, and be patient till the harvest! and the longer thou stayest, the more liberally thou shalt reap. Lord, though others,—like Tamar, because Shelah was not presently given her to be her husband, defiled herself with Judah;—because the good things engaged to them are not presently bestowed, commit spiritual fornication with earthly vanities, and take them into their bosom and embraces; let me never forego heaven in hope, for earth in hand; nor, as that wicked king, draw a hellish use from a heavenly doctrine, and say, 'This evil is from the Lord, why should I wait on the Lord any longer?' but 'as the eyes of servants are to the hands of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden are to the hand of her mistress; so let mine eyes wait upon the Lord my God till he have mercy on me,' Ps. 123:2. Though others are all for ready money, and therefore, like Demas, forsake Christ to embrace the present world, make me a follower of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.

I wish that, whilst I have little in possession, I may rejoice in the hope of my reversion; and whilst I am pinched with present poverty, comfort my heart with that plenty in my father's house, which is preserved for me when I come to age. He that hath store of good bills and bonds is rich, though he hath not a penny in his purse. If others have the stars, I have the sun; if they have some cities, I have the

kingdom; if they have some gifts, I am the child of the promise, and have all. 'Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all is mine.' The inventory of my estate includes all that earth and heaven are worth; and am not I a discontented, covetous wretch indeed, if the covenant of grace, the unsearchable riches in Christ, and the boundless God, will not satisfy me? Though it be a paradox, yet it is orthodox. When I have nothing, I possess all things; and will not all this afford matter of mirth? Oh that though others can only swim in a warm bath, and never sing but in a sunshiny day, I might, as Paul and Silas, sing in a prison at midnight. Belshazzar can rejoice in his stately palace, but the three children can sing in a fiery furnace. He that was hunted like a partridge in Israel, was the sweetest singer in Israel. It is both the duty and privilege of saints in all things to give thanks. A heathen can say, Be it supposed a man hath a princely court, with gallant orchards, pleasant gardens, fruitful trees, were it not an unreasonable thing for this man to repine and complain that a few leaves are blown off by the wind, when the house, the trees, and the fruit remain? And shall not I, a Christian, be contented and cheerful, though the gale of providence hath blown off some small outward mercies, when my soul is safe, and my eternal salvation secure? Lord, let me, when I receive earthly comforts, live upon thee above them, and now I want them, live upon thee without them. Enable me so to see thy goodness in calling me to suffer here, that I might not suffer hereafter; in causing me to be scourged with whips, to prevent my scourging with scorpions; that I may not only kiss thy rod, but also thank thee for this infinite favour; and under my greatest cross, stab Satan, who longs to hear me blaspheme thee, to the heart with this dagger: 'The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'

I wish that, though I am perishing in my outward condition, I may never envy those that are prospering in their profaneness. Alas! their seeming prosperity is their real misery, and calls more for heart pity than envy. The higher they are at this day, the lower they shall be another day. Their greatness is but like the swelling of a dropsy, which hasteneth their death and destruction. Their riches are but like fuel to make the unquenchable fire the hotter, in which they must fry for ever. Their pleasures are but shallow, skin-deep. They may sometimes counterfeit a smile; but if thou press these glowworms that in the night of this world make such a lightsome, fiery show of joy, thou findest nothing save a cold and crude moisture. But their pain is real; their sins gripe them many a time, and even cause their hearts to ache with the forethoughts of their future torments. What is a little giggling of the countenance, to the grumbling and racking of their consciences? or a few smiles of the brow, to that inward wolf which lieth gnawing at their breast? Their pleasures are short; their race is soon at an end; their sun soon sets; they shall soon be cut down as the grass, and wither as the green herb; but their pain is eternal. Their day of light is a winter day—short, and little heat of true comfort; but their night of darkness is long, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. Would I eat of their dishes to pay their reckoning? How unreasonable is it for one that is worth thousands, to envy him that acts the part of a lord, upon the stage of this world, for one short day of life, and afterwards is a beggar for ever in hell! What is all their wealth to spiritual wisdom? What is all their greatness to the eternal weight of glory? and what are their pleasantest gardens to the true paradise? The prosperous sinner hath some cause to envy the perishing saint; but the most afflicted saint hath cause to pity the most prosperous sinner. Besides, how dishonourable is it to my God that I should thus question his wisdom, and quarrel with the works of his providence. May not he dispose of his gifts according to his own will? Must he ask my leave

in what measure, and to what persons, to distribute his favours? Is mine eye evil because his is good? Must I needs be sick because others are well, and make their plenty the foundation of my pain? Lord, though, when I am in adversity, mine enemies are joyful, yet now they are in prosperity, let not me be fretful. Though thou hast put them into fresh pastures, yet thou art but fattening them for the slaughter. When thou hast whipped out the folly that is in the hearts of thy children, thou wilt throw thy rod into the fire. Preserve me from fretting myself because of evil-doers, or being envious at the wicked; for there shall be no reward to the evil man—the candle of the wicked shall be put out.

I wish that, as Joshua, when Israel was discomfited before the men of Ai, went and fell down before the Lord, with his clothes rent, and dust on his head, to know the cause; and when he had found out that Achan was the person, he stoned him to death; so now my God hath distressed my soul, I may with a humble, broken heart inquire into the source of my sufferings, what accursed thing hath caused my sorrows, and never be quiet till I have discovered and executed that troubler of my peace. There is some root of bitterness in me, which occasions my God to write bitter things against me. How happy should I be, if I might both find and answer the end for which my God afflicteth me. Afflictions are servants which he hath under him. 'He saith to one, Go, and he goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh:' he is infinitely wise, and never sends his servants abroad but upon weighty errands. I am sure, in general, the account upon which this messenger is come, is to persuade me to abandon and deliver up those traitors to execution, which I have lately entertained, and return to my obedience to his master. I may say to him, as the woman to the prophet, Art thou come to call my sins to remembrance? But, oh that I knew what rebel it is that hath hid himself in my house undiscerned! Sure enough there is some Sheba



in it, which hath lift up his hand against the Son of David, for whose sake he hath sent his servant to besiege me; and till the head of this traitor be thrown over the wall, he will not depart but in my destruction. Lord, help me, as the wise woman of Abel, to find out the cause why thou dost beleaguer me so closely and strictly. If my heart doth not deceive me, I would live peaceably and faithfully in Israel. I know assuredly thou seekest not to destroy any soul, much less to swallow up any part of thine own inheritance; but some son of Bichri, some enemy to the crown and sceptre of thy Christ, hath, without my knowledge, sheltered himself in my heart. Oh that it might please thee to discover him to me, and to help me to destroy him, that thou mayest enlarge me. Do not condemn me; shew me why thou contendest with me. I can never expect this swelling should decrease, or its throbbing and aching abate, unless the thorn in my flesh which causeth it, be taken out. In vain doth the sick man tumble and toss from one side of his bed to the other for ease, whilst his disease, the original of his pain, continueth. Oh that, though others are most industrious how their afflictions may be removed, I might be most industrious how mine may be improved; that mine eyes, like the windows of Solomon's temple, might be broad inwards, to find out my own provocation, and that I might not be asleep, and so lose the season and benefit of God's visitation. 'Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting,' Ps. 139

I wish that I may not only feel, but also see, the hand of my God in all the afflictions that befall me. Affliction doth not spring out of the earth, nor trouble come out of the ground. The evil of sin hath only a deficient cause, but the evil of suffering hath an efficient cause. My God challengeth it, as one of the prerogatives of his crown, to make war or peace. Is there any evil in the city, and I have not done it?

Could I but see my God at the end of all my troubles, how silent should I be under it! how submissive to it! and how sedulous to improve it! He is my Father, correcting me out of love for my fault, and therefore I must reform. He is my sovereign, punishing me according to law, and therefore I must not resist. He is my God, who doth whatsoever he pleaseth, and therefore I may not so much as repine. He is too great to be despised, too good to be suspected, and too wise to be questioned. The whole earth cannot lessen, and hell itself cannot add, one scruple to the weight which he hath allotted me. My proportion was debated and concluded at heaven's council table from eternity, and is surely beyond all exception. To this very suffering, both for the nature and measure, was I fore-appointed. His arm is almighty, and so above all opposition. Who ever contended with him, and prevailed? He that strikes me, loves me; though his hand be against me, his heart is towards me; nay, it is love that strikes every stroke, and shall I be so unthankful as to despise it, or so unbelieving as to despair under it? It were extreme folly to doubt of his wisdom, the greatest madness to oppose his power, and monstrous ingratitude to slight his love. Lord, thy servant David could say, 'Let the righteous (man) smite me, though only with his tongue; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil,' Ps. 141:5. And shall not I, when thou, the righteous God, art pleased to favour me so much as to strike me with thy hand, take it kindly at thy hands? Oh, whatsoever hatred others may return for such friendly reproofs, let me love thee the more, especially considering that by such stripes I am healed; that such wounding is an excellent oil to cure my spiritual wickedness.

I wish that I may divert the point of that anger against instruments or efficient, which I am prone to under the cross, by turning it upon myself, and the procuring cause of all my sin. The worms which pain me are bred in my own bowels; the vipers which sting me are

hatched in my own bosom; the rod which whips me is of my own making; and the dart which wounds me of my own shooting; and have I the least cause of complaining? Men and devils could not afflict me; the great God would not, if I did not afflict myself. I may well accept the punishment of mine own iniquity. Some that have more grace have fewer mercies, and that have less sin, have more afflictions than I. Besides, in vain do I, like the silly deer, mourn and bleed inwardly for the pain which I endure whilst the dart sticks in my side.

I may long enough work at the labour in vain, in seeking to dam up the stream whilst the spring is unstopped, and in working at the pump whilst the leak continueth. Oh that all my sorrow and anger might be spent upon my sins, the original of all my sufferings. That all this water, which I am apt daily to draw and spill, might be employed in helping the mill of my heart to grind and consume my corruptions. Oh what pity is it that such pearls should be cast away upon swine, that such sweet water should be cast away upon nasty sinks, which would serve for most excellent uses!

Lord, let all my anger be against myself for provoking thee to anger, and let all my sorrow and grief be for my sins, whereby I have grieved thy good Spirit, and made the soul of thy dear Son sorrowful unto death. Let mine eyes and heart be ever more towards that which dishonoureth thy name, than that which disturbeth my peace. Though the sting of sin to others be affliction, let the sting of affliction to me be sin: and when the desire of their soul is, Take away this plague, entreat the Lord to take away this death only, the prayer of my soul may be, Lord, make me to know the plague of my own heart. Take away this body of death, take away all iniquity, receive me graciously, so will I render the calves of my lips.

I wish that I may consider my God loveth me when he lasheth me; and that he therefore lasheth me because he loveth me. Though Absalom were banished for his fault, and not admitted to see David's face, yet the king's heart was towards Absalom. Now, my God denieth me his favourable presence, and makes me feel the effects of his fury, yet his heart is towards me. He is pained in my pain, in all my afflictions he is afflicted.

Whilst he is a God correcting, he is a God in covenant: 'I will bring the third part into the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them; I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God,' Zech. 13:9. Though the son of Joseph speak so roughly to me, and seem to deal so ruggedly with me, to bring my sins to remembrance, and to try my love to my brother Benjamin, yet all the while he keeps his affection and relation, and will ere long speak plainly to me, I am thy brother Joseph. Because he affecteth me, he afflicteth me; but because he hateth others, he will not take the pains to scourge them. He useth not the rod where he intends to use the sword. The whipping-post is for them that shall escape execution. It is the same love which chose me from eternity which chasteneth me in time. There is not a twig in my rod, but love fetched it, nor a drachm in my potion, but love infused it. Love was the root upon which they grew, love was the hand with which they were gathered; shall not I accept it? Pure love denieth those outward mercies to me, which pure wrath granteth to others. The father will allow his servants that luscious, unwholesome fruit which they are so greedy for, when he denieth it to his children. Oh, what an unbelieving heart have I, to think I have less love, because I have less allowance, than others! The power of my God is as great in making a little fly as in making a great ox; and his love may be as great, often greater, in giving a penny, as in giving many pounds. If I am his child, though

my portion be but a penny, it hath the image and superscription of my Father's love, which is better than life.

Lord, strengthen my inward sight, that I may behold thy love in the darkest night of affliction; be pleased to enable me, by the eye of faith, to spell and read thy love in the hardest characters—nay, when thou writest it in red letters, in letters of blood: for I know that thy thoughts are not as my thoughts, nor thy ways as my ways. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are thy thoughts higher than my thoughts.' Thou knowest the thoughts which thou hast towards me, thoughts of good and not of evil, to give me an expected end.

I wish that I could set before me those worthy patterns of constancy and courage, under the greatest crosses, which are chronicled in Scripture, to encourage me to undergo my sufferings with patience; it is some comfort in my journey, though the road be deep and dirty, to travel with much and good company. All the saints in the several parts of the world, at this day, go to heaven in the same way of sufferings; the same afflictions are accomplished in my brethren, which are in the world; they that are gone before, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and the rest, did all enter into glory through this strait gate; there is no temptation hath befallen me, but such as is common to men, to Christians. Some indeed found the path so full of serpents, that their blood was sucked out as they journeyed; they lost their lives on earth, to find them in heaven; but all found it full of thorns and briers. Some had trial of cruel mockings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; others were stoned, were sawn asunder, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. The wilderness to them all was the way to Canaan: they went by the cross to their crown. I have a threefold advantage by their examples; I see that the way to bliss (though it be deep) is passable. I do not undertake an

impossible task, when I set out for the Father's house; the noble army of martyrs waded through it, even there where it was much out of their depths. It is doleful to travel in a very bad way, that is wholly untrodden; but I may with the more delight pass on, when I see the steps of thousands that have passed before me. They had the same flesh and blood with me, they were as sensible of pain as I, they loved their relations as well as I; life was as dear to them as to me; yet they trampled upon their relations, scorned their scorers, triumphed in their tribulations, jeopardized their lives in the high places of the field, endured the shot of earth and hell, fought every inch of their way through men and devils, and at last went off the ground (though killed) conquerors, carrying with them the spoils and trophies they had gained from their enemies, as tokens of their valour and victory. Why may not my soul fight the Lord's battles with the same success? Indeed, had that power by which they prevailed been their own, I should never expect the same event; but they were of themselves as weak as I; my God can be as strong in me as in them. Oh that I might have their grace, and then what end my God pleaseth.

Again, the heroic acts of the Lord's worthies encourage me to such noble enterprises. How famous are they for their bloody combats in the cause of Christ! How brightly do their names sparkle (as stars in the firmament) in the Holy Scripture! The Roman generals were never so illustrious and honourable for their triumphs, as Christ's private soldiers for their trials; the poorest saint that is a sufferer, is more illustrious than Cæsar the conqueror. The greatest battles that ever Alexander fought and won, was but children's play with pop-guns, in comparison of the noble exploits of the soldiers of the Lord of hosts in their conflicts with, and conquests over, the world and hell. Who would not be ambitious to follow such file-leaders! Once more, I have the less reason to expect freedom from the cross, when the people of God in all ages have been afflicted. My betters have

suffered worse things than I suffer. Those that were more holy than I, have suffered more hardships than I. Christ himself, who was free from transgression, was yet fullest of afflictions. He was a man of sorrows, made up of sorrow. His whole life, from the womb to the tomb, was a circle of sorrows. When Christ himself hath drunk to me in a cup of affliction, shall I not pledge him? Should there not be a symmetry betwixt the head and the members? God had one Son without sin, but no son without suffering. There is no son whom the father chasteneth not. And would not I be used like a son? Cannot I be contented to fare as my brethren?

Lord, let me never join in that presumptuous petition of the sons of Zebedee, to desire to fare better than my fellows; but seeing I am compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, help me to 'lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset me, and to run with patience the race set before me, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of my faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.'

I wish that, now I am afflicted, I may be the more pious, because my God aimeth therein at my spiritual profit. How much do worldlings suffer to increase their heaps of earth, though death, like a passenger's foot, will trample it all down! How do they run, and ride, waste their time, wear out their strength, lose their sleep, venture their health and life, nay, and inestimable souls! Like spaniels, they follow their master, the world, through hedge and ditch, through thick and thin, and all for a few bones. How busy are they, like bees, flying to this and that field; fighting by the way with wasps and drones, to carry a little more honey to their hives, though after all their pains and toil, within a few days they must be consumed with flames and leave it! And have not I more cause to suffer any

hardship, and to take any pains for those riches which are durable, which will be current in the other world? How much do wicked men suffer for the gratifying their lusts! They lavish their estates, undo their children, dishonour their names, wreck their own bodies, and ruin their families, by gaming or uncleanness, or intemperance. How do they lackey after the devil, like pack-horses, doing his drudgery, and bearing his burdens all the days of their life, though, after all their hard service, he will turn them at the night of death, with their galled backs, into the stable of hell! And shall not I, for the sanctifying my soul, be willing to endure what my God calls me to suffer in the way to heaven? If need be, I am in heaviness. The rod of God is as needful for me as the word of God. The plough and harrow are as necessary for the earth, in order to the harvest, as the seed is. By it he openeth mine ears, and sealeth my instruction. Many blows are needful to fell a stout oak, and many strokes are necessary to subdue my stubborn heart. Resty horses will not move till they bleed with the spur. How little is corn worth, or to what use doth it serve, till it be cut down with the sickle, beaten out with the flail, ground small in the mill, and baked in the oven? And of how little use I should be to my soul, and my Saviour, without affliction, my God knoweth. Oh that self-love might make me as willing to suffer, as my God is to have me suffer!

Lord, thou comparest me to a vine; I know the best vine, if not pruned, will run out into superfluous stems, and become less fruitful; so will my soul, if thou shouldst deny me the favour of pruning, run out into luxuriant branches, and become less serviceable to thy majesty. If it be painful to bleed, it is far worse to burn. Thou art a wise husbandman, and knowest what is needful for all the plants in thy vineyard; rather prune me with the knife, that I may bring forth more fruit, than suffer me to decay and wither, and to be cut up at last with thy bill for the unquenchable fire.



I wish that the consideration of my God's wisdom and tenderness may make me more cheerful and contented in all my trials. Though his anger at sin provoke him to scourge me for it, yet his love to my soul will move him to proportion his strokes to my strength. He hath a perfect estimate by him of all my spiritual riches, and therefore I need not fear to be taxed above my estate. He never yet called any of his children to a martyr's fire, till he had indued them with a martyr's faith. If my body were distempered, and my skilful physician thought fit to purge me several days together; though I were fearful of my own strength to bear it, yet I should believe him in his calling, and being confident of his knowledge of me, and love to me, undergo it with courage. My God is fully acquainted what the diseases of my soul require, and what the strength of my soul can endure. He is the only wise God, whether he purge me much or little, once or often. Oh that I might rely on his love, and submit to his wisdom! I read indeed that the saints of God 'have been pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that they despaired even of life,' 2 Cor. 1:8. But yet I believe that, at the same time, they were corrected in measure, for they were delivered, and did escape. They were pressed above their own human strength, but not above their divine strength. How often hath the voice of their flesh been, 'I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul,' when it hath quickly been corrected with the voice of faith, 'I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!' Lord, how many a time hath this weak vessel been loaded so deep in the vast seas of troubles, that the waters have come up to the brim, and I have been ready to cry out, with thy disciples of old, 'Save me, master, I perish?' Is not this frail flesh a ship of thine own building? and is not the burden it carrieth of thine own lading? Thou knowest how deep it is already, and I know thou wilt not overcharge it. It is impossible for me to sink whilst I sail in thy love. Though a deluge overflow the whole earth, yet I need not fear drowning, whilst I am housed in that ark, if thou pleasest to shut me in. I confess he is a

presumptuous child that would choose his own rod; yet, oh that I might prevail not to be scourged with the withdrawals of thy comfortable presence! Blessed Father, by the strength and the sense of thy love, I can bear the greatest load; but if that be withdrawn, I am ready to fall, nay, to die, under the lightest. I find a wounded estate, I feel a wounded body, and if thou put a wounded spirit upon me too, who can bear it? Oh what a night of heaviness and sorrow will ensue, if thou, O Sun of righteousness, shouldst depart? Nevertheless, I yield to thy judgment, and rest on thine affection: for thou art infinitely wise, infinitely loving, infinitely faithful, and wilt not suffer me to be tempted above what I am able, but wilt with the temptation also make a way to escape, that I may be able to bear it, 1 Cor. 10:3.

I wish that the thought of my future happiness may make me joyful under my present hardships. My hope of the rivers of God's own pleasures, and of the glory to be revealed, may well bear up my heart, and counterbalance all my pain and disgrace. What though I am under the rod, whilst I am a child, and am denied those toys and rattles which others have to play with! yet I am a great heir, and shall shortly be of age and enjoy the inheritance, when I shall be above both that rod and those rattles. As I now have more sufferings than others, so then I shall have more solace than others; as I exceed them in affliction, so I shall excel them in consolation. The deeper I am ploughed, the greater will my harvest be. In all the furrows of my misery are sown the seeds of saving mercy. And the more liberally I sow, the more liberally I shall reap. It is true I sow in tears, but I shall reap in joy; I may well be contented with a wet seed-time, when I am sure of a sunshiny and joyful harvest. Oh that I had the wings of a dove, that I could fly up to heaven, by faith and meditation, and see that vast and boundless recompense of reward! surely I should then leave my mournful tone, and sing another tune. These light

afflictions, which are but for a moment, work in me, or work me for, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. For my afflictions I shall have glory. Who would not, with Joseph, go through a prison into a palace, and with Jesus suffer many things, and so enter into his glory! My afflictions are light, but my glory is a weight, a far more exceeding weight; I may well carry a little bag of thorns, when I shall be rewarded for it with a heavy bag of pearls. Who would not endure a few affronts for a large kingdom? My afflictions are but for a moment, but my weight of glory is eternal. I do but pass through a short shower to an endless banquet; and sail through the narrow seas, which are quickly passed, in a moment, to an everlasting, blessed haven. Besides, these light afflictions work and fit me for this weight of glory; as by the fire the plate is wrought into a vessel of gold for a prince's table. The boiling waters are not more necessary for clothes, that are to be cast into a pure scarlet dye, than afflictions are to prepare my soul for my God's presence. Lord, it is thy pleasure that every man shall have both a heaven and a hell; the wicked man hath his heaven on earth, his hell is to come. His hell is miserable, because eternal; his heaven is uncomfortable, because, at best, but short and uncertain. My hell is in this world, in manifold temptations; my heaven in the other world, in endless bliss. If it be ill with me in this world, it is well with me, because my hell is so little, and so short. Let me never be so covetous as to desire two heavens; only let my hell here fit me for my heaven hereafter, and let my heaven hereafter support me under my hell here; 'for I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed.'

Finally, I wish that I may gather grapes from these thorns, and figs from these thistles. I mean, that I may so demean myself, like a Christian, under the greatest cross, that I may turn these stones into bread, and these blows on my outward man, into blessings to my

inward man; yea, that my joy and obedience may be at the highest, when my worldly comforts are at the lowest. Although I want the streams, what do or can I lose whilst I enjoy the fountain? What conditions is there wherein I may not draw water with joy out of that well of salvation? Am I in fetters? the Son hath made me free, and therefore I am free indeed. Though my prison be some low, dark dungeon, yet there I may find more light than in a court, and may pity the darkness of others' liberty. They have but the natural sun to enlighten their world, which every cloud dimmeth and hideth from their eyes; but the Father of lights (in comparison of whom all the bright stars of heaven are but as the snuff of some dim candle) shines into my pit, and makes it a heaven of comfort, which the world intended to be a hell of sorrow. What darkness can be where the Father of lights shineth? Am I banished my country? If I were banished my God, I might weep and wail; but when neither earth nor ocean can separate betwixt him and me, I may well be satisfied. If heaven be my home, my God is my heaven; and so, wherever I am with him, I am at home. He cannot be said to fly that never stirs from his house, from his home. When I have all my relations by me, and all my possessions with me, I cannot be called an exile; I have all these, and infinitely more, in one God. Am I hated of the world? It is a good sign that I am not a man of the world, for the world loveth its own. It cannot hate me so much as God hates it, nor more than it hates God. What need I care to be hated of them who hate, and are hated of, God himself? Surely he is a wicked servant who would fare better than his master; and he is unworthy of God's love who cannot think it happiness enough without the world's favour. Well, let the world condemn me, I will be revenged, by requiting it with like for like. I will have as base and contemptible thoughts of it, through the strength of Christ, as it can have of me. Am I poor? It is impossible; I cannot be less than vastly rich, whilst I possess him who is the mighty possessor of heaven and earth. What though I have no

money! I have the pearl of price, worth millions; and a treasure in heaven, above all apprehensions. I have no lands on earth, but I have the inheritance of the saints in light. That is improperly called riches, which may be lost, which must be left. My estate is riches in the most proper sense, for it is durable; it is the good part which can never be taken from me. If I forego all to my skin, yet I have not lost the least part of my portion; for if he be rich that hath something, how rich is he that hath the maker and owner of all things! Am I diseased in my body? my physician is both omniscient and almighty, and therefore I cannot miscarry. My soul is sound, and I must not say I am sick when my sins are forgiven me. Although my house doth not grow, nor my cattle, nor my corn, nor my children are sure to me, yet my God hath made with me an everlasting covenant, stable in all things and sure, which is all my salvation, and all my desire. Oh, what can I want who have all-sufficiency for my supply? My God is liberty in prison, home in banishment, light in darkness, glory in disgrace, life in death, and all things in nothing. Oh make me fearful of nothing but thine anger, and careful of nothing but thy favour, which, whilst I enjoy, I shall be happy in spite of earth and hell.

Lord, help me, whilst I am here in these lower regions, amidst such boisterous winds and waters, to endure all with patience, to be a gainer by every providence, and in all things so to obey thy precepts, that when my body shall be parted from my soul, my soul may be parted from all these sufferings, and translated to thine upper region of heaven, whither those vapours which cause these storms and tempests can never ascend; where all tears shall be wiped from my eyes; where thou wilt give me beauty for ashes, the garment of gladness for the spirit of heaviness, (and, after all my grievous conflicts with the flesh, the world, and the wicked one,) a crown of glory on my head, a song of triumph in my mouth, a palm of victory in my hand, and to reign with Christ for ever and ever. Amen.



# **THE CHRISTIAN MAN'S CALLING**

## **PT III**

### **THE EPISTLE TO THE READER**

SUCH is the beauty of holiness, the excellency of divine nature, and the reasonableness and righteousness of the service of God, as also the necessity of man's devoting himself wholly to it, that were not his understanding, which is the sun in the lesser world, strangely muffled with clouds, his will, which, as the moon, borroweth its light from it, full of spots and changes, and desperately bent upon evil, his affections as stars of malevolent influence, brutishly enslaved to his sensual appetite, and his whole nature deplorably vitiated, it were impossible for him to turn his back upon the authority, commands, and threatenings of his Maker; to trample on the bowels, and blood, and entreaties of his Redeemer; to despise the motions, and persuasions, and assistance of the Holy Spirit, in order to his recovery out of that bottomless gulf of misery into which he hath plunged himself, and his restoration to a state of purity and eternal happiness; and there would be no such need of calling so frequently and fervently, and of crying so urgently and earnestly to him, to exercise himself unto godliness.

As he that is an atheist in his principles, and denieth the being of such a thing as religion, must deny his very senses, since his eyes, and ears, and taste, and feeling, do all loudly preach deity to him; so he that is an atheist in his practices, and denieth the making religion

his business, must deny his reason, and debase himself into a beast. For common understanding, notwithstanding its great loss by the fall, will inform him that he is made for higher things than the service of a brutish flesh, and the pursuit of earthly, fading enjoyments, and that the worship of his God (the fountain of his being, and wellspring of his happiness) as most suitable to his spiritual nature, as most conducing to his own advancement, interest, and perfection, is most worthy of all his heart, and soul, and strength, and of all his time, and care, and labour.

But, alas! the sad fruit of man's apostasy, in the depravation of his nature, abundantly manifesteth itself to every eye that is not stark blind. As an old disease doth not only afflict the part of its proper residence, and by its habitual abode there make a continual diminution of the strength, but also makes a path and channel for the humours to run thither, which, by continual defluxion, dig an open passage, and prevail above all the natural power of resistance; so hath original sin debauched the mind, and made it think crooked things straight, and straight things crooked; loathsome things lovely, and lovely things loathsome; perverted the will, and made it, as a diseased stomach, to call for and eat unwholesome meat against his own reason; enthralled his affections to sensuality and brutishness; chained the whole man, and delivered it up to the law of sin, and laid those strengths of reason and conscience in fetters, by which it might be hindered in its vicious inclinations and course of profaneness. Hence it comes to pass that neither the beauty of grace, nor equity of living to God, nor the absolute necessity of man's exercising himself to godliness, will prevail with him.

So great is the glory and amiableness of the new creation, that not only the saints, who are indued with wisdom from above, and can judge aright, esteem it above their honours, and riches, and



relations, and lives, and rejoice in it as their peculiar privilege and highest dignity, but even angels behold it with admiration, and look on their own purity, and conformity to the divine nature and pleasure, as their greatest perfection. Nay, God himself, whose being is the pattern, and whose will is the rule of holiness, is ravished and enamoured with it, as that which is the travail of the soul of his dear Son, the immediate work of his own Spirit, and the end, and glory, and masterpiece of all the works of his hands. Yet this heavenly offspring, this divine image, this supernatural beam of light, this resemblance and picture of God's own perfection, this royal attire of the celestial courtiers, which rendereth the poorest and meanest Christian more noble and excellent than his highest and richest ungodly neighbour, and makes him more glorious than a clear sky, bespangled with the shining stars, or an imperial diadem, sparkling with the richest diamonds, is the scorn and derision of the blind, unworthy world. That as Salvian complained in his days, *Si honoratio quispiam religioni se applicuerit, illico honoratus esse desistit; si fuerit sublimis, fit despicibilis; si splendidissimus, fit vilissimus; si totus honoris, fit totus injuriæ, &c.* If a noble person betake himself to religion, he is presently degraded, and all his former fame, and honour, and renown, turned into disgrace, contempt, and contumely, and men are forced to be vicious, lest they should be counted vile.

Foolish worms, pretended Christians, are like persecuting pagans, who could think and speak well of some of the saints, only their religion, they judged, like copperas, turned all their wine into ink, gave a dash to all their virtues and excellencies. *Bonus vir Caius Sejus; sed malus, tanquam quod Christianus*, was the heathens' voice in Tertullian's time. Blind beetles, men admire fancies, shadows, nothings, and trample on true worth and real excellency. As the Egyptians, if they met with a cat or crocodile, bowed down to it, and

worshipped it, when they passed by the great luminaries of heaven without admiration; so these, beholding the poor mean treasures and fleeting honours of this world, bow down the knees of their souls to them, and worship them, but pass by the beautiful image of the blessed God, the unsearchable riches in Christ, and the glory to be revealed, without any respect or regard.

So reasonable and righteous is man's devoting himself to the worship of the blessed and most high God, that he cannot without manifest injustice, as well as ingratitude and folly, deny the exercising himself to godliness. Unless man were his own maker, he cannot have any title to become his own master, Ps. 119:73. The Redeemer's title to us is certain, and clear, and unquestionable, whether we own it or no, and all the while we keep anything from him, or deny subjection to him, we rob him of his right: 'Ye are not your own, but bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are God's,' 1 Cor. 6:20. The slave is not his own man, but his who redeemed him, though his proud and stubborn spirit may refuse to acknowledge it. Man is not in the condition of those persons who are servants by compact and agreement, for a year, or so long as they think fit, and upon their own terms; but like those whom the Romans took in war, over whose persons and estates they had an absolute dominion, as well as a right to their works and service. Though the commands of Christ are all holy, just, and good, as profitable for man, as honourable for himself, yet he hath absolute authority over man, and all that he hath, and may command him what he pleaseth. As Laban said to Jacob, 'These daughters are my daughters, these sons are my sons, these cattle are my cattle, and all thou seest is mine;' so the Redeemer, by virtue of the price he laid down, his most precious blood, may say to every man, This soul is my soul, this body is my body, this estate is my estate, these children and friends are my children and friends, this name, and credit, and interest is mine, and

all thou hast is mine. Yet, alas! men who will give their relations their due, strangers their due, enemies their due, nay, according to their proverb, the very devil his due, and far more than his due, will not give Jesus Christ his due, but, against all justice and righteousness, rob and wrong him of that which is his own, and dearly bought too: Rom. 14:7, 8, 'For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether therefore we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.'

So absolute is the necessity of man's making religion his business, that upon his diligence or negligence herein, his eternal salvation or damnation doth depend. If any man will be Christ's disciple, he must deny himself, disclaim all title, and disown all right to himself; have nothing more to do with himself, as upon his own account, and make an unfeigned, unreserved dedication of himself, and all that he hath, to the honour and interest of his Redeemer. Sanctification is a separation from all common to sacred uses, and this must be done with all the heart, and soul, and strength, in the whole course of the life, by all that will escape the wrath to come. God commandeth men to strive to enter in at the strait gate, to work out their salvations with fear and trembling, to be holy as he is holy, in all manner of conversation; and his word is like the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be altered. He hath enjoined nothing but what his infinite wisdom saw fit, and he is resolved not to vary the least tittle, not to abate the least farthing of the price he hath set. Foolish men are so besotted by their deceitful hearts, and befooled by the devil, that they compliment with religion, and only give it an outside formal salute, instead of cordial embraces, and real entertainment. They deal with religion, as Anacharsis saith the Athenians dealt with money, using it for no other end but to number and cast up accounts with, whereas it might have served them for excellent purposes. So

they use religion only for a show, for fashion, for custom, and are satisfied with a hypocritical way of worshipping God, and think to put God off therewith, whereas it would serve them for high and honourable ends; it would, if entertained in the power and life of it, elevate the Christian above this beggarly world, enable him to combat with, and conquer, his sturdy, stubborn lusts, and the power and policy of hell, help him to a conversation in heaven, to converse and communion with the Father, and Jesus Christ his Son, and dress his soul for a blessed eternity.

Reader, if thou art unacquainted with this high and honourable, this worthy and noble, calling of Christianity, I shall appeal to thy reason and conscience, in the tender of some questions, possibly one or other of them may prevail with thee to bind thyself apprentice to it. As a fowler, according to the different nature of his game, contrives and appropriates his stratagems, that some he catcheth with light, as larks with a glass and day nets; some with baits, as pigeons with peas; some with frights, as blackbirds with a low-bell; some with company, as ducks with decoy fowl; so I shall endeavour to suit my questions to thy temper, whatever it be, that if either the light of reason, or the bait of unconceivable and infinite profit, or the frights of dreadful threatenings and comminations, or the company of Christ, the Captain of our salvation, and all his followers and soldiers, who marched to heaven in this way, will win upon thee, I may persuade thee to make religion thy business. Oh that, being crafty, I might catch thee with holy guile! To this end I beseech thee to weigh the questions again and again as thou readest them, and to dart up thy prayers to heaven for a blessing on them, that thou mayest not reject the counsel of God against thy own soul, but hearken to counsel, receive instruction, and be wise for thy latter end.

1. Is not that worthy to be made thy business, upon which the true comfort and joy of thy life, during thy whole pilgrimage, doth depend? Comfort is the cream, the top of life; joy is the flower, the honey, the life of life. Life without comfort, without delight, is a living death. If the body be disquieted with diseases, and aches, and pains, the soul, as a tender husband sympathising with his bride, though the patient be heir of a kingdom, and commander of large dominions, yet all creatures to him are unsavoury morsels, and, as an aguish palate, he can taste, can relish nothing. Job in distress speaks in such a man's dialect: 'Why is light given to him that is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul?' Job 3:20. Light is one of the most excellent things that God hath made, and is therefore used by the Holy Ghost to set out, not only the word of God and the work of godliness, Ps. 119:105; 1 John 1:7, but also Christ, and heaven, and God himself, 1 John 9; 1 Cor. 12; 1 John 1:5. Life is the apex, the highest stair, the top stone, the choicest of all temporal mercies. There is no flower in nature's garden for beauty or excellency comparable to it; therefore men, if brought to the pinch, will part with all to redeem this—skin for skin; all that a man hath will he give for his life. The loss of life is the chiefest outward loss, and esteemed the greatest satisfaction to justice or nature. The desire of life is indeed the greatest earthly blessing the most loyal people can desire for their loving prince; 'Let the king live.' But light and life, as precious pearls as they are, become burdens most toilsome and tedious to men without comfort. Joy to life is as the form to the matter, which animates and actuates it, and makes it spiteful and lively. 'Why is light given to one in misery, and life to the bitter in soul?'

Now, reader, it is religion that is the comfort of thy life, by bringing thee to him who is the life of all thy comforts. Other things can never suit, and so can never satisfy, and therefore can never truly refresh or

rejoice the soul of man. The body may sooner be fed and preserved with air and wind, as the soul filled with the whole world. They who swim down with a full stream of outward good things, who have waters of a full cup wrung out to them, and have more than heart can wish; though they be masters of hidden and bottomless mines, as the Spanish ambassador boasted of his sovereign's treasures in the Indies; though they have thousands and millions of heads bare, and knees bowing to them, and are mounted to the loftiest pinnacle of honour, and fame, and renown; though their garments are of finest silk, scented with the sweetest perfumes, embroidered by the most skilful artist, and enamelled with the richest jewels; though their food be the most choice and luscious delicates, the most mellifluous nectar, that earth, air, and water can afford, and though their bodies be in the most perfect state of health, and thereby enabled to extract the quintessence of all this, and so relish it in the highest degree; yet all this is not able to give them the least drachm of true delight, the smallest crumb of true comfort. In the midst of their sufficiency, such monarchs are in straits. They may possess much, but enjoy nothing. Their faces sometimes are featured with laughter, when at the same time their souls are in little ease. In the midst of mirth their hearts are sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness. As some plums that are sweet and luscious in the outward part, but have bitter kernels; so the most rich and honourable sinners, in the midst of their mirth, and giggling, and sports, have inward gripes, which, like leaven, soureth the whole lump of their enjoyments. Haman, though exalted to the highest seat next the throne in the Persian court, and had the command of him who commanded one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, yet had an aching heart, and a worm gnawing his inwards, that he crieth out, 'All this avails me nothing,' &c. The world's greatest darlings, whom she dandleth most upon her knees, and to whom she granteth her sweetest kisses, are but at best like a curious marble chimney-piece, glorious and shining without,

but full of soot and blackness within. God did at first, for man's fall, judge the earth to bring forth briers and thorns, and all the fruit it beareth will be piercing and paining, whatever men fancy to themselves.

But, reader, though the curse of the earth be thistles and thorns, yet the blessing of heaven is light and joy. Though the world be empty, and vain, and vexatious, yet religion is full, and filling the soul with content and comfort. Observe the very formal nature of it: 'The kingdom of God (i.e., religion) consisteth not in meats and drinks, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,' Rom. 14:17. Peace and joy is the heart-cheering wine which groweth upon this vine; a good conscience is a continual feast. Natural things must be brought to their centre before they can enjoy rest; and how can it be expected that spiritual beings can enjoy true repose but in their centre, the Father of spirits? That peace which passeth all understanding, that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory, are the true and legitimate children of the power of godliness. Outward things and forms, like glow-worms, may be glistering, but they are not warming. It is the power of religion, like the sun, that brings refreshing light, and enlivening heat along with it. The wicked is snared in his wickedness, but the righteous sing and rejoice.

2. Is not that worthy to be made thy business, in which thou hast to do with an infinite, glorious, and jealous Majesty? If men are serious about the concernments of a father, or master, or nobleman, or king, how serious should they be about the concernments of a God! I must tell thee, reader, that thou hast every moment of thy life to do with the great God. Whether thou art eating, or drinking, or walking, or buying, or selling, or ploughing, or sowing, or reaping, as well as when thou art praying, or hearing, or reading, or meditating, thou hast still to do with God. In all companies, in all thy relations, in all

natural actions, in all civil transactions, at all seasons, thou hast more to do with God than with any creature, than with all the creatures; and is his work to be slighted or dallied with, or slubbered over? Is it good playing or toying with his interests and concerns, in whose hand is thy breath, and life, and all that thou hast? Dost thou not know that his eyes are ever upon thee; that his arm is able to reach and revenge him on thee when he pleaseth; that he looks on himself as worthy to be observed and pleased, in all thy thoughts, and words, and deeds? And wilt thou dare him to his face, and provoke him before his eyes, and cast him behind thy back, as not deserving to be minded or regarded? Is his fury so light a burden, or his favour so little a blessing, that thou art so indifferent unto either? Ah, didst thou but know what a God thou hast to deal with, in every part, and passage, and moment of thy life! how sweet his love is, far better than life; how bitter his wrath is, more dreadful than death. Didst thou know how great a good, how blessed a friend, how high an honour, how choice a happiness, how rich a cordial, how vast a treasure he is to them that make his service their business! Didst thou know how powerful an enemy, how intolerable his anger is, what a lion greedy of his prey, what a consuming fire he is to them that do his work by halves and negligently! Didst thou know him as the saved in heaven know him, to be a hive of sweetness, a river of pleasure; or as the damned in hell know him, to be a sea of wormwood, meeting thee as a bear robbed of her whelps! Oh, what wouldst thou then think of making religion thy business! Speak, friend, in thy conscience; wouldst thou then live without him in the world, and leave him out as one unconcerned in the several passages of thy conversation? Wouldst thou then put him off with the skin, and shell, and carcase of religion, as if he were an idol, and had eyes, and saw not, and ears, and heard not, instead of a hearty dedication of thyself, and all thou hast, to his service? Wouldst thou then eat, or drink, or buy, or sell, or do anything without asking his leave, and



begging his blessing, and observing the rules and commands which he hath prescribed thee? Or wouldst thou not rather do all things as in his presence, according to his precepts, and as may be most for his praise, believing that he is not a God to be dallied with?

3. Is not that worthy to be made thy business, which is the end of thy being and preservation, and of all the mercies that thou enjoyest, and of all the cost and charge which the great God is night and day at with thee? For what end dost thou think the great and glorious God formed thy body so curiously in the womb, and animated it with a heaven-born soul, but that thou mightst be made capable of admiring his excellencies, adoring his perfections, and obeying his precepts. Canst thou be so foolish as to think that he created thee to despise his dominion, and break his laws, and dishonour his name, and walk contrary to him in thy conversation? Wherefore dost thou imagine God doth preserve thee in thy being, afford thee health, and strength, and sleep, and food, and raiment, and friends, and respect, and protect thee in thy outgoings and incomings, and defend thee from invisible enemies, who are continually waiting to destroy thee, and have power enough to drag thee into hell every moment, but are only restrained by his almighty arm; but that thou mightst, by these streams, be led upward to the fountain, employ these talents as a faithful steward for the honour of thy master, and by these gifts, tokens of his love, be persuaded to own and acknowledge the giver? Canst thou be so sottish as to think that he bestoweth these favours upon thee, that thou shouldst walk after the flesh, and embrace the present world, or to strengthen thee in thy treasons and rebellions against him? To what purpose dost thou imagine he bestoweth on thee his gospel, his ministers, his Sabbaths, his ordinances, many golden seasons of grace, but to help and enable thee to draw nigh to him, to seek out after him, to desire him, and delight in him, as thy only happiness and heaven? Surely thou canst not be so brutish as to

conceive that he giveth thee all this, as women give babies to children, to play and toy with; or, as the Dutch are reported to have sent powder and shot for money to the Spaniards, to fight against him with? Doth not the husbandman, who takes care by dunging, and ploughing, and sowing, and harrowing, to manure his ground, expect that it will bring forth the greater crop, and so recompense his cost, that the profit which he shall receive by it at harvest will answer all his pains? When a father is at a great charge in the nurture and education of his child, providing him tutors, or sending him first to some considerable schools for a good while, next to the university, then to the Inns of Court, is it not his end that his son may be an honour to him, continue his name with credit, and be a prop and support to his family? And canst thou think that the only wise God, to whom all men are absolute, and angels comparative fools, is at such infinite cost and charge with thee upon any other account, than that thou mayest be serviceable to his interest, advance his kingdom, and make his praise glorious, by a pious, gracious, and exemplary conversation, and by making his service thy business?

4. Is not that worthy to be made thy business, which is the elevation, and advancement, and perfection of thine heaven-born, immortal soul? The advancement and restoration of a prince, and one nobly born, to his kingdom and birthright, is much more deserving our care, and pains, and treasure, and blood, than the exaltation of a beggar from the dunghill. The soul of man is royally descended, begotten of God; holiness is its restoration to its original glory, and primitive perfection, which is lost by the fall, and therefore is worthy of all our cost, and care, and study, and labour.

Thy soul, reader, is of unconceivable value and excellency:—

(1.) As it is immediately created by God, without any preexisting matter.

(2.) As it is of an immaterial and spiritual nature.

(3.) As it is capable of the image, and life, and love, and fruition of God himself.

(4.) As it is immortal, and of eternal duration; though years, and ages, and generations, and time have an end, the soul hath no end.

(5.) As it is the bottom in which the body and its everlasting good is embarked.

(6.) As it is the standard and measure of all our outward excellencies; as friends, and health, and food, and life, and riches, and honour, and ministers, and ordinances, are more or less worth, as they are more or less serviceable to the soul. Now, grace and godliness is the honour, and elevation, and excellency of the soul; it is soul beauty, Cant. 4:1; it is soul wisdom, Prov. 4:7; it is soul riches, Luke 12:21; it is soul glory, soul comfort, soul food, soul raiment, soul rest. Oh how worthy is that form which animates and elevates the soul of man, as its subject and matter! He that addeth honour to a puissant king must be high and honourable indeed. That which is the form of our form, and the soul of our soul, that exalteth and honoureth so noble a piece, must needs deserve to be our only business.

5. Is not that worthy to be made thy business, which was the great design and end of the blessed Redeemer's birth, life, death, burial, ascension, and intercession? No man, unless worse than distracted, can possibly conceive that the glorious God, whose wisdom is unsearchable, and love to his Son unquestionable, would send his only-begotten Son out of his bosom; or that Christ, in whom were all

the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, would give himself to be born so meanly, to live so poorly, to die so painfully, to be disgraced, reviled, buffeted, scourged, crucified, for anything that was not superlatively eminent, and deserved to be the main work and business of every man in this world. The greatness of the price, the blood of God, doth to every rational understanding fully speak the preciousness of the pearl. Now, how clear and plain is it in the word of truth, that the Redeemer 'gave himself to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good work,' Titus 2:14, that 'being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve him in holiness and righteousness all our days.'

Surely, reader, that which the Son of God, who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, thought worthy the taking on himself the form of a servant, and the suffering, the spite, and malice of men, the wrath and rage of devils, and the frowns and fury of his Father, to purchase for thee, doth deserve to be minded and regarded by thee, as the only thing thou followest after, and settest thyself about during thy pilgrimage.

Alas! all the pains, and labour, and watching, and working, and time, and strength, and lives of all the men in the world, are not equivalent to one drop of the blood of Christ, or the least degree of his humiliation; and wilt thou deny to make that thy business, for which he shed so much blood, and laid down his life?

6. Is not that worthy to be made thy business, which is the peculiar work of the Holy Ghost, and for which the Spirit is infused into the hearts of men? The worth of the Father doth speak the deserts of the child. Though men, who pretend to honour the Father for his work of creation, and to admire the Son for his work of redemption,

blasphemously deride and wretchedly slight sanctification, which is the work of the Spirit, yet undoubtedly the work of the Spirit is no whit inferior to either; nay, is the beauty and glory both of creation and redemption, as being the end and perfection of both. The Father created the world in order to the new creation by the Spirit, as that choice workmanship which he resolved should bring him in the largest revenue of praise and honour. It is the new heavens, wherein dwelleth righteousness, that doth most declare the glory of God, and the firmament (of sparkling graces) that sheweth forth his most choice and curious handiwork. Sanctification is the travail of the Son's soul, a spiritual, sacred life, the great end of his death. The Son redeemed man from slavery to sin and Satan, and unto the service of righteousness, by laying down the price thereof, his own most precious blood. One of the Son's main works was to purchase the re-impression of God's image on man, the actual performance of which is the peculiar office of the Spirit; hence he tells us, John 14, 'I go away that the Comforter may come;' and again, John 6, 'The Spirit was not yet given,' (i.e., so plentifully and universally,) 'because Jesus was not yet glorified.' And therefore we read, that in few days after his ascension, to acquaint us what was one main end and fruit of his death and suffering, he poureth down the Holy Ghost in an extraordinary manner and measure. So that creation, the work of the Father, doth, as it were, provide the matter, the wax; redemption, the work of the Son, buyeth the image of God, the seal; and sanctification, the work of the Spirit, stampeth it on the soul.

Now, reader, doth not the sanctification of thy soul deserve to be thy main business, when it is the curious work of the Holy Spirit, as that which the Father's eye was chiefly on in thy creation, and the Son's in thy redemption?

7. Is not that worthy to be made thy business, which addeth a real worth to everything, and without which nothing is of worth or value? Every one will grant that what is so richly excellent, as to ennoble and add an intrinsic value to whatsoever it is affixed, and the lack of which maketh everything, be they in other respects never so precious, low and mean, must needs deserve to be our business. Truly, friend, such is holiness: it makes the word of God a precious word, 'more to be embraced than gold, yea, than much fine gold;' the ordinances of God, precious ordinances; the people of God, a precious people, the excellent of the earth. What is the reason that some, in the account of him who is best able to judge, though they be never so rich or beautiful, or high and honourable in the world, are called dross, chaff, stubble, dust, filth, vessels of dishonour, and counted dogs, swine, vermin, serpents, cockatrices, but want of holiness? What is the reason that some, though poor, and despised, and mean, and houseless, and friendless, are esteemed, by him who can best discern true worth, the glory of the world, the glory of Christ, a royal diadem, a royal priesthood, higher than the kings of the earth, more excellent than their neighbours, princes in all lands, such of whom the world is not worthy, but because they are godly persons, a holy people? Why are some angels advanced to the highest heavens, waiting always in the presence of the King of kings, honoured to be his ministers and deputies in the government of this lower world, when other angels are thrown down into the lowest hell, for ever banished the celestial court, and bound in chains of darkness, as prisoners to the day of execution, but holiness in the former, and want of it in the latter?

8. Is not that worthy to be made thy business, which will and can refresh and revive thee in an hour of death, and enable thee to sing and triumph at the approach of the king of terrors? The master of moral philosophy tells us, that it is worth the while for a man to be

all the time he lives learning how to die well. The unerring Spirit of God acquaints us, that it ought to be our great work to be wise for our latter end. Doubtless, it must be a rich, costly cordial indeed, and deserves not a little time and pains and charge to prepare, which can keep a man from fainting in such a day of extremity, wherein our honours and treasures, friends, wives, children, nay, our flesh and hearts, will fail and forsake us. That cannot be of mean worth, which can make a man encounter his last enemy with courage and conquest, at the sight of which kings, and captains, and nobles, and the greatest warriors, have trembled, as leaves with the wind, and their hearts melted as grease before the fire.

Now, reader, godliness is that wine which will cause thee to sing at the approach of this Goliath, and enable thee, as leviathan, to laugh at the shaking of his spear; when whole hosts of others, without godliness, fly like cowards before it, and would give all they are worth to avoid fighting with it. Hark, what a challenge the godly sends to his adversary, daring it to meet him in the field! 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ,' 1 Cor. 15:55–57. The naturalists tell us of a precious stone called Ceraunias, that glisters most when the sky is cloudy, and overcast with darkness. Godliness, friend, will cast the greatest lustre on thee, and put the 'greatest comfort in thee, when thy time of trouble and day of death is come. This, this is the friend that is born for the day of adversity. Therefore, the sweet singer of Israel having this with him, promiseth, 'Though he walk in the valley of the shadow of death; he will fear none ill,' Ps. 23.

9. Is not that worthy to be made thy business, which will help thee to comfort and confidence at a dreadful day of judgment, and cause

thee to lift up thy head with joy, when thousands and millions shall weep and wail? The day of judgment will be a terrible day indeed. The judge will come in flaming fire—a fire devouring before him, and behind him a flame burning. His tribunal will be a tribunal of fire. Out of his mouth did proceed a fiery law, and by that law of fire he will try men for their eternal lives and deaths. The earth at that day will be consumed with fire, and the elements melt with fervent heat. If the cry of fire, fire, in the night now be so dreadful, and doth so affright and amaze us, though it be but in one house, and possibly not very near us, how dreadful will that day be, when we shall see the whole world in a flame, and the judge coming in flaming fire to pronounce our eternal dooms! 'Who can abide the day of his coming? or who can stand when he appeareth? Then 'the kings, and captains, and nobles, and mighty men will call to the rocks to fall on them, and to the hills to hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb,' Rev. 6:15, 16.

O reader, of what worth is that which will help thee, as the three children, to sing in the midst of so many flaming fiery furnaces, and preserve thee from being hurt, or so much as touched therewith! Truly, godliness will do this for thee. It will turn this day of the perdition of ungodly men into a day of redemption to thee. As true gold is not consumed by the hottest fire, and the salamander can live in the greatest flames, so the godly man, in the midst of all those fires and flames, will live and flourish, though millions of ungodly ones are scorched and tortured. As he is a king now, reigning over his stubborn lusts and unruly passions, that will be his coronation-day, wherein he will appear before the whole world in all his glory and royalty. As he is a husbandman now, sowing to the Spirit, that will be his harvest-day, wherein he shall reap the fruit of all his prayers, and tears, and watchings, and fastings, and labour, and sufferings. As he is compared to a virgin, betrothed to Christ, now, keeping his



garments white and clean, and devoting himself to the service and honour and commands of his Lord, that will be his marriage-day, wherein he shall be arrayed in fine linen, the righteousness of the saints, adorned with the jewels of perfect graces, and solemnly espoused to the king of saints, the heir of all things, and the fairest of ten thousands, the Lord Jesus Christ. As he is a servant now, doing not his own, but the will of his master in heaven, and finishing his work, that will be the day wherein his indentures will expire, and he shall enjoy the glorious liberty of the sons of God. As he is a son now, yielding reverence and obedience to the Father of spirits, that will be the day wherein he shall be declared to be of full age, and enjoy his portion and inheritance. As he is a soldier now, fighting the good fight of faith, warring a good warfare, enduring much hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, that will be the day wherein he shall be called off the guard, discharged of those tiresome, toilsome duties, incumbent on him in this life, and receive his garland, a crown of everlasting life.

Little dost thou conceive, reader, the worth of godliness at that day. Godliness will then be honoured and admired, not only by them that have it, and rejoice in it, but also by the most profane and carnal wretches, and those who now despise and deride it. Then the blind world, who now shut their eyes and will not see, and the atheistical world, who harden their hearts, and will not believe, shall return, and discern, and see, and believe a difference between the godly and ungodly; between them that fear the Lord, and them that fear him not. O friend, what wouldst thou give at that day, that godliness had been thy business at this day! Godliness will make the judge, the Lord Jesus Christ, thy friend; the Father, by whose authority he sits the king of all nations, thy friend; the justices who will be upon the bench,—for he shall come with thousands of his saints,—thy friends. Godliness would make the law, by which thou art to be tried, thy

friend; godliness would make thy conscience, which is to be brought in as the evidence, thy friend. Godliness would strike dumb all thy accusers, Satan, thy corruptions, and suffer none of them to hurt thee as thy foes. And is not godliness worthy to be made thy business, which will do all this for thee?

10. Is not that worthy to be made thy business which will do thee good to eternity? The fool is for goods for many years, but a wise man is for goods that will last to eternity. In worldly matters, we value those houses and goods highest which will last longest. We will give much more for the fee-simple or inheritance for ever of a dwelling or lands, than for a term of few years, or for a lease for life, though we can enjoy them but during life. Oh, why should it not be thus in spirituals? Why should we not set the greatest price, and take the most pains, for that which is not for years, or ages, but for ever? for that which we may enjoy, and have full, solid comfort in, to eternity? No good that is eternal, can be little. If it be but a human friend whom thou lovest, to enjoy him for ever, or a bodily health, to enjoy it for ever, or near relations, to enjoy them for ever, will infinitely advance the price and raise the value of them; but to enjoy a God for ever, the blessed Saviour for ever, the comforting Spirit for ever, fulness of joy for ever, rivers of pleasure for ever, an exceeding weight of glory for ever, a crown, a kingdom, an inheritance for ever, which is the fruit of godliness, what tongue can declare, what mind can apprehend the worth of these? Alas! frailty is such a flaw in all earthly tenures, that it doth exceedingly abate their value, and should our affections to them. Who would esteem much of that flower, which flourisheth and looks lovely in the morning, but perisheth and is withered at night? How little are those things worth which are to-day mine, and to-morrow another's; which make themselves wings, and, as birds, fly away; are no sooner in sight, but almost as soon out of sight! Though all the works and creatures of God are excellent, and

admirable in their degrees and places, yet some are of far more worth than others, because of their nearer relation to our spiritual souls, and their eternal duration. When I look upon honours, and applause, and respect in the world, methinks its worth is little; for I can see through that air. It is but a breath, a blast that quickly passeth away. When I look upon houses and lands, and silver and gold, I may well judge their price low; for there is a worm that will eat out and consume the strongest-timbered dwelling; and gold and silver are corruptible things. Riches are not for ever. When I look upon my wife and children, in whom I have, through mercy, much comfort and contentment, yet their value, as natural relations, is small; for so they shall not be mine for ever; and therefore 'they that have wives' are commanded to be 'as though they had none.' But when I look upon grace, upon godliness, upon religion, upon the image of God, oh, of what infinite worth, and price, and value are they, because they are lasting, they are everlasting, they are mine for ever! When honours, and crowns, and robes, and sceptres are but for a few days; when stately palaces, and costly manors, and treasures, gold, and pearl are but for a short time; when the most lovely and loving wives, and husbands, and sons, and daughters, and friends are frail and fading; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever. Godliness is the good part that, when thy relations, and possessions, and all the good things of this life shall be taken from thee, shall never be taken from thee.

Reader, what an argument is here to provoke thee to spend and be spent, to employ all thy time, and strength, and talents, to sell all for this pearl, when it is of so great price; that when all other privileges, excellencies, royal or noble births, high breedings, preferments, favours with great men, riches, pleasures, will only, as brass or leathern money, be current in some countries, in this beggarly earth, it will enrich thee and enliven thee, refresh and rejoice thee, for ever.

11. Is not that worthy to be made thy business, which all men, even the greatest enemies to it, will, sooner or later, heartily and earnestly wish had been their business? We have a usual saying, that what one speaketh may be false and light; and what two speak may be false and vain; and what three speak may be so; but what all speak and agree in, must have something of truth and weight in it. And again, we say, *Vox populi est vox dei*, The voice of all the people is an oracle. Though as Christ said of himself, so I may say of godliness, God himself beareth witness of it. and his witness is true, and it needeth not testimony from man. Yet as he made use of the testimony of John to convince the Jews of their desperate wickedness and inexcusableness, in not submitting to his precepts, and accepting him as a Saviour; so may I improve the witness of the whole world on the behalf of godliness, to convince thee, reader, of thy folly and sinfulness in neglecting it; and to shew thee how inexcusable thou wilt be found at the day of Christ, if thou dost not presently set upon it, and make it thy business.

It is evident that many men, whose hearts are full of opposition to the ways of God, and whose lives are a flat contradiction to his word and will, do yet in their extremity seek him early, and cry to him earnestly, and fly to godliness as the only shelter in a storm, and fastest anchor in a tempest. The most profane and atheistical wretches, who have in their works defied God himself, and in their words blasphemously derided godly men and godliness, when they have been brought low by sickness, and entered within the borders of the king of terrors, and have some apprehension upon their spirits that they must go the way of all the earth, then, as naturalists observe of the dying cuckoo, they change their note; send for godly ministers, godly Christians, desire them to pray with them, to pray for them, hearken diligently to their serious instructions; wish with all their hearts, and would give their highest honours, and richest treasures,

and imperial diadems, and kingdoms, if they have any, and all they are worth, that they had made godliness their business; and promise, if God will spare them, and lengthen their lives but a few days upon earth, that they will have no work, no calling, no employment, no design, but how to please God, and obey his counsel, and submit to his Spirit, and follow after holiness, and prepare their souls for heaven. Oh, then godliness is godliness indeed, and grace is grace indeed! Then they call and cry, as the foolish virgins to the wise, 'Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.' Oh, give us grace; give us godliness in the power of it; for all our formal, outside, lazy, serving of God is come to nothing. The serpent that is crooked all her lifetime, when dying, stretcheth herself straight.

As Dionysius on his death, when he heard Thales discoursing excellently about the nature and worth of moral philosophy, cursed his pastimes, and sports, and foolish pleasures, that had taken him off, and diverted him from the study of so worthy a subject; so these lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, whose lives are little else than brutish delights in a circle, or a diversion from one pleasure to another, whose business now is to mock at piety, and persecute the pious; when they come to be thrown by a disease on their beds, and their consciences begin to accuse them for their neglect of godliness, and to convince them of its absolute necessity, and they have some fears to be overthrown by death; then they curse their hawks, and hounds, and games, and cups, and companions, and sensual delights, that hindered them from making religion their business. Experience testifieth this frequently in many parts of the nation, where the consciences of dying sinners are not seared with a red hot iron.

Some wish this whilst they live, either under some great affliction, or on a dying bed; nay, I am persuaded that most wicked men that live under the gospel, in their prosperity even, when they have the world

at will, in the midst of their sensual delights, have inward conviction that the course they take will prove cursed in the end, and have some velleities or weak desires, (though overruled by carnal, headstrong affections,) that they could leave those vanities, and make religion their business. But all wicked men after death, when they come into the other world, will wish in earnest, with all their hearts and souls, that they had minded nothing but the service of God, and exercising themselves unto godliness. There, there it is, that the whole world that now lieth in wickedness, and will not believe the word and wisdom of their Maker, will all set their hands and seals to the truth of that which I am now endeavouring to evince.

When God sends his officer, death, to arrest sinners for the vast sums which they owe to his justice for their breach of his laws, and this serjeant, according to command from the King of kings, executes his writ, and delivers his prisoner to the devils, God's jailors; and they seize, as so many roaring lions, on the poor trembling prey, and hale them to their own den, hell; that dungeon of eternal darkness, where sinners see and are assured that all their meat must be flakes of fire and brimstone, and all their drink a cup of pure wrath without mixture, and all their music howling, and weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; and all their rest torments day and night for ever and ever; and all their companions frightful devils, and a cursed crew of damned wretches, and all this to come upon them for not making religion their business whilst they were on earth; then, oh then, they will wish with all their souls and strengths, again and again, that they had minded the Christian man's calling, and made religion their business whilst they were in this world, though they had been slaves, or beggars, or vagabonds, and had lived in poverty and disgrace, and prisons, and fetters during their whole pilgrimage.

Now, reader, if the witness of one enemy be a double testimony, what is the witness of all the enemies of God and godliness, on the behalf of the Lord, and his ways, against themselves! shall it not prevail with thee to set speedily and diligently about the work of Christianity? Ah how dumb wilt thou be struck another day, if thou wilt not believe either God, or good men, or thy conscience, or thy companions, or all the world!

12. And lastly, Is not that worthy to be made thy business, upon which thine eternal life or death, salvation or damnation, doth depend? Consider it, friend, here is salvation and damnation before thee, eternal salvation and eternal damnation, and they depend upon thy making religion thy business or neglect of it. Oh what weight is there in these few words! Make religion thy business, and thou art eternally blessed; be formal and careless about it, and thou art cursed for ever; upon the one and the other turneth thine eternal estate. The almighty God hath, under his own hand, set down this making religion thy business to be the only terms upon which heaven shall be had, and it is impossible to alter or abate his price, John 6:27; Mat. 6:33; Phil. 2:12. Canst thou be so foolish as to think that Christ, and happiness, and eternal life can be obtained upon easier conditions, when he must make God a liar, and the gospel a lie, (which the devil himself is not so wicked as to think possible,) who arriveth at the port of bliss without exercising himself to godliness? The promises, ever since the world was, had the same conditions, and ever will whilst the world shall endure. The gospel is therefore called the everlasting gospel, because it will continue, without the least change or alteration, the same for ever. Thou mayest be confident that God doth not, as some indiscreet citizens, ask much more for his eternal glory and life of men than he intendeth to take.

I say again, ponder it, for this argument hath more in it than thine understanding can possibly conceive or imagine. Is not that worthy to become thy business, and main work in this world, upon which thine everlasting weal or woe, thine endless estate in the other world, doth depend?

Reader, if that doth not deserve all thy time, and pains, and soul, and heart, and infinitely more, upon which unchangeable joy or eternal torments hang, then, I am sure, nothing doth. Alas! all the things of this world, whether about food, or raiment, or houses, or lands, or wives, or children, nay, and life itself, are but toys, and trifles, and shadows, and nothings, to an everlasting condition in the other world. Oh that thou wert but able to conceive what it is to be eternally in fulness of pleasure, or eternally in extremity of pain—to be frying in flames for ever, or bathing in rivers of delight for ever! To enjoy God in his ordinances, though it be but imperfectly, and in a low degree, one hour, one day, how sweet is it! His tabernacles are highly amiable upon that account: 'One day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.' But to enjoy God fully, immediately, and for ever too, oh how superlatively, how infinitely pleasant and delightful will it be! To be in God's lower house, though but a little time, under some pious, powerful minister, how reviving and refreshing is it! But to dwell in his upper house for ever: 'O blessed are they that dwell in that house, they always praise thee!' The eternal presence of God will cause an eternal absence of all evil, and an eternal confluence of all good.

O reader, who will not work hard, labour much, exercise himself to godliness night and day—do anything that God commandeth, suffer anything that God inflicteth, forbear anything that God forbiddeth, to be saved eternally, to be infinitely blessed in the fruition of God for ever? Surely it is worth the while to obey the counsel of God in order



to eternal salvation. On the other side, eternal damnation, how dreadful is it! if it be but the scratch of a pin for ever, or a little ache of the head for ever, it would be very doleful; but a violent headache or toothache, or fits of the colic, or stone, for ever, oh how intolerable would they be! But ah, how terrible is the wrath of God for ever, darkness of darkness for ever, the fire of hell for ever, to which all the racks and torments in this life are next to nothing! Ah, who can dwell in everlasting burnings!

I suppose thou wouldst avoid thy wicked companions, and forbear thy sinful courses, do anything thou couldst, rather than to boil in a furnace of scalding water for a thousand years, nay, one year; and wilt thou not make religion thy business, when otherwise God himself hath told thee, thou shalt boil in a furnace of scalding wrath, infinitely worse than scalding lead, for ever, ever, ever? Consider what thou hast read, and the Lord give thee understanding, that thou mayest be wise to eternal salvation!

Reader, these twelve questions being proposed, I desire thee to answer them to him, before whom thou shalt answer ere long for all the motions of thy heart, and passages of thy whole life; and I shall not detain thee longer in the passage, though it be much larger than I intended when I first put pen to paper about it. If thy soul receive any profit by it, I shall not repent of my pains, only beg thy prayers; that thou mayest, is the desire of

Thine and the church's servant in the blessed Saviour,

GEORGE SWINNOCK.

# THE CHRISTIAN MAN'S CALLING PT III

But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself unto godliness.—1 TIM. 4:7.

## PREFACE

And exercise thyself unto godliness

THE life of man is not seldom in the word of God compared to a walk, Ps. 39. The womb is the place whence he first, in the morning of his age, sets out, and his actions are the several steps by which he is always hastening to his journey's end, the grave, that common inn of resort. The life of a Christian is called a walking in the light, 1 John 1:6, a walking in the law, Ps. 119:1, because his motion is regular, and his whole race by rule. He must have a divine word for all his works, and a precept from God for all his practices. Scripture is the compass by which he steereth, and the square by which he buildeth. Hence he is said to walk with God, because he walketh according to his commands and his example; he doth not walk κατὰ ἄνθρωπον, as man, 1 Cor. 3:3, but κατὰ Θεὸν, according to his measure, as God willeth, and as God walketh. Further, the holy life of a saint is compared to an orderly walking in these two respects.

First, In regard of his gradual proficiency. He doth not stand still, but gets ground by his steps: 'They go from strength to strength,' Ps. 84:4; 'From faith to faith,' Rom. 1:17. He is ever going forward in heaven's way, and never thinks of sitting down till he comes to his Father's house. Sometimes indeed he is so straitened that he can only creep, at other times he is enlarged that he can run; but at all times

he is going on towards perfection. The light of his holiness, though at first but glimmering, is always growing, and shines brighter and brighter till perfect day, Prov. 4:18.

Secondly, In regard of his uniform perseverance. It is not taking a step or two in a way which denominateth a man a walker, but a continued motion; it is not one or two good actions, but a good conversation which will speak a man to be a right Christian. A true believer, like the heavenly orbs, is constant and unwearied in his motion and actings. An expositor observeth of Enoch, that it is twice said of him, 'He walked with God,' Gen. 5:22 and 24, to shew that, as he first began to walk and profit in God's path, so he always continued profiting to the end. No man is judged healthy by a flushing colour in his face, but by a good complexion. God esteemeth none holy for a particular carriage, but for a general course. A sinner in some few acts may be very good. Judas repenteth; Cain sacrificeth; the scribes pray and fast; and yet all were very false. In the most deadly diseases there may be some intermissions, and some good prognostics. A saint in some few acts may be very bad. Noah is drunk; David defileth his neighbour's wife; and Peter denieth his best friend; yet these persons were heaven's favourites. The best gold must have some grains of allowance. Sheep may fall into the mire, but swine love night and day to wallow in it. A Christian may stumble, nay, he may fall, but he gets up and walks on in the way of God's commandments: the bent of his heart is right, and the scope of his life is straight, and thence he is deemed sincere.

It is the character of the Christian to be constant in his gracious course. If you would speak with the tradesman you may meet him in his shop. The farmer's usual walk is in the fields. He that hath business with the merchant, expecteth him in his counting-house, or amongst his goods; and he that looketh for the Christian shall not fail

to find him with his God. Whether he be alone or in company, abroad or in his family, buying or selling, feeding himself, or visiting others, he doth all as in his God's presence, and in all aimetli at his praise. As the sap of a tree riseth up from the root, not only to the body, but also to the branches of the smallest twigs; so grace in a saint springeth up from his heart, and floweth out, not only in his spiritual and higher, but also in his civil and lower actions.

How the saint may make godliness his business in religious actions, (as in praying, hearing, receiving the Lord's supper, and sanctification of the Lord's day,) in natural actions, in his recreations, in his particular calling, and in the government of his family, I have largely discovered in the first part of the Christian Man's Calling.

The second part will help believers in the relations, (of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants,) and in the conditions of prosperity and adversity.

Reader, the design of this treatise is to direct thee further in this continual exercise of piety. It divideth itself into these particulars. I shall herein,

First, Endeavour to discover wherein the nature of godliness consisteth—

1. In thy dealings with all men.
2. In all companies, whether good or bad; and therein I shall speak both to thy choice of companions and carriage in company.
3. In solitariness.
4. On a week-day, from morning to night.

5. In visiting the sick.

6. On a dying bed.

Secondly, I shall offer thee some means which will be helpful to thee in this business.

Thirdly, I shall annex some motives to stir thee up to this high and gainful calling. I begin with the first.

## CHAPTER I

### **How a Christian may exercise himself to godliness in his dealings with all men. As also a good wish about that particular**

First, Thy duty is to make religion thy business in thy dealings with all men. True godliness payeth its dues to men, as well as its duty to God; nay, it cannot do the latter without the former. Upon these two poles all religion turns, and upon these two feet it walketh. That man's holiness is lame which always keeps home, and doth not walk abroad and visit his neighbours. It is a sign of a sickly temper for a man to sit always brooding in a chimney-corner, and not to dare to stir out of doors. Sure I am, thy religion is of a sad, distempered constitution, whatsoever hopes it may give of healthiness in family duties, if it goeth no farther, and doth not appear in the open air of thy converses with strangers. Religion bindeth the Christian to his good behaviour towards all men. True holiness will provide things honest, not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men, 2

Cor. 8:21. The king's coin hath his superscription without the ring, as well as his image within it. The saint's civil as well as his spiritual actions have divine impression stamped on them, and he is walking with God in his trading with men. As thy heart must be pure, so thy hands must be clean, or thou canst never reach heaven: Ps. 24:3, 4, 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart.' To be void of conscience in thy civil actions speaks thee to have no right to the beatifical vision; he that comes short of heathens must needs come short of heaven. And truly to be careless in making godliness thy business in them will very much hinder thy progress in holiness. If all the passages of the body be not open, there is no thriving in health.

The ostrich is very swift, and said to outrun the horse: 'He mocketh the horse and the rider,' Job 39:18; but what is the reason? Truly this, he hath two helps of speed, his wings and his feet, whereas other creatures have but one. The hawk hath wings, the hare and horse have feet; but he hath and useth both wings and feet, and hence is so nimble in his flight. The right Christian maketh haste, and runneth the way of God's commandments, because he doth use not only the wings of religious performances for that end, but also the feet of his ordinary actions. When some are only for holy duties, and others only for honest dealings, he outstrips them all, marrying them both, together, and making them like husband and wife, serviceable each to other. It is true, his piety is the husband, which hath the command and dominion; but his dealings with men, as a dutiful wife, further his weal by their obedience and subjection. No Christian ever made more haste in heaven's way than Paul: 1 Cor. 15:10, 'I laboured more abundantly than they all,' saith he; but how came it about? Why, through divine assistance, he exercised himself to keep a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards all men, Acts 24:16.

The stream must needs be the swifter for the meeting and uniting of the waters of grace out of both those channels. The bark which covereth the tree seemeth to be of little worth compared with the body of the tree, yet if that be peeled off the tree dieth. Though righteous dealings seem to be but the bark and outside of religion, yet if once thou castest them off, thy religion, as thriving as thou thoughtest it to be, will quickly wither and come to nothing. The heart-blood of thy godliness may be let out by a wound in thy hand.

I shall lay down a motive or two to quicken thee to conscientiousness in thy dealings with all men, and then acquaint thee wherein it consisteth.

## **SECTION I**

First, Consider, it is a sure sign of hypocrisy to be unrighteous and careless in civil dealings, how conscientious soever thou mayest seem to be in sacred duties. He that seems righteous towards men, and is irreligious towards God, is but an honest heathen; and he that seems religious towards God, and unrighteous towards men, is but a dissembling Christian. To make conscience of one duty and not of another, is to make true conscience of neither. The soul that ever had communion with God above, comes down, like Moses out of the mount, with both tables in his hands, the second as well as the first, and the first as well as the second. One stone in a mill, one oar in a boat, will do little good; there must be two, or no work can be done. A perfect man consisteth of two essential parts, a soul and a body. Though the soul be the principal, and doth specificate the compound, yet the body is so necessary, that without it none can be a complete man. A Christian that is (evangelically) perfect, is also made up of these two parts, holiness and righteousness. Though holiness be the

chief, as that which doth difference the saint, yet righteousness is so requisite that there can be no true Christian without it. The holy apostle argueth the purity of his conscience from the honesty of his conversation: 'We trust that we have a good conscience in all things, willing to live honestly, 'Heb. 13:18. The goodness of the fruit will commend the tree.

1. Their honesty was visible, 'to live honestly'; not only to mean well, and think honestly, or to talk, but to live honestly.

2. Their honesty was universal. 'In all things' (not in one or two particulars) 'willing to live honestly.' Visibility and universality are popish marks of a true church, and Protestant marks of a true Christian. A hypocritical Jehu may do some things; a murderous Herod may do many things; but an upright Paul is in all things willing to live honestly. A ship that is not of the right make cannot sail trim; and a clock whose spring is faulty will not always go true; so a person of unsound principles cannot be constant and even in his practices. The religion of those that are inwardly rotten, is like a fire in some cold climates, which doth almost fry a man before, when at the same time he is freezing behind. They are zealous in some things, as holy duties, which are cheap, and cold in other things, especially when they cross their profit or credit; as the Mount Helga<sup>2</sup> is covered with snow on one side, when it burneth and casteth out cinders on the other side; but the holiness of them that are sound at heart, is like the natural heat, which, though it resort most to the vitals of sacred performances, yet, as need is, it warmeth, and hath an influence upon all the outward parts of civil transactions. It may be said of true sanctity as of the sun, 'There is nothing hid from the heat thereof,' Ps. 19:5. When all the parts of the body have their due nourishment distributed to them, it is a sign of a healthy temper.



As the saint is described sometimes by a clean heart, Ps. 73:1; Mat. 5:8, so also sometimes by clean hands, Job 17:9, because he hath both; the holiness of his heart is seen at his fingers' ends. He is as the ark, pitched within and without with the same; as he is sometimes characterised by sacred duties, Ps. 24:6, and 119, Rev. 1:3, so at other times by righteous dealings, Ps. 15; Isa. 58, because he mindeth both. If either be separated from the man, you kill the Christian; for though he may be a man without either, he cannot be a Christian without both. The Greek word for sincerity, εἰλικρίνεια, is very elegant, and signifieth (quasi ἐν εἰλῇ κρίνειν) such a trial as is made of things by the sunlight. As the eagle, according to Aristotle, bringeth her young to the sun to try whether they are spurious or legitimate, so the actions of a sincere Christian will endure the open air, the light of the sun. He is as the street of the New Jerusalem, transparent glass—all one without and within, you may see through him. He dares appeal both to God and men for the holiness and righteousness of his conversation: 'Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly we have had our conversation in the world,' 1 Thes. 2:10.

Reader, never please thyself in the name of a Christian, if then hast not the nature of Christianity, which giveth God and man their due. It is not the great sound of a professor, nor the loud noise of holy performances, that will speak thee sincere, if thou makest not conscience of thy carriage towards thy neighbours. The Sadducees derive their name from Zeduchim, or Zadducæus, a just man; but the worst men, saith the historian, got the best names. The Alcoran of the Turks hath its name from brightness, (Al in the Arabic being as much as Karan in the Hebrew, to shine or cast forth a brightness,) when it is full of darkness, and fraught with falsehoods. It will be little comfort to thee, though the world commend thee for a holy man, if God condemn thee for a hypocrite. Doth not the word of

truth tell thee, that they who are partial in the law have no part in the gospel, and that none are justified by Christ but those that are just towards Christians? Do not think thy spiritual constitution to be sound, if plague-sores break out on thy body. The gods, saith Aristotle, do not so much respect the costliness of the sacrifice as the conversation of the sacrificer. Sure I am, the true God rejects those prayers, seem they never so glorious, where the petitioner is unrighteous. All thy oblations will be vain if thy conversation be vicious; the sweetest incense is unsavoury if the hands that offer it be filthy. 'Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination to me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your solemn feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear.' But what is the reason that all these ordinances, which were of God's own appointment, are thus rejected? 'Your hands are full of blood,' Isa. 1:13–15. An unclean hand tainteth whatsoever it toucheth.

Secondly, Consider the credit of religion is engaged in thy public dealings. More eyes are upon us when we walk abroad than when we are at home, and therefore it concerns us to be handsome in our habits, and very circumspect in our carriage. A professor may be rotten-hearted in holy duties, and the world never the wiser; they are ignorant of it, and so do not disgrace religion for it; but if he be once unrighteous in his dealings, the whole country will quickly ring of it, and cry him up for a cheat, and his religion for a cozenage. God indeed looks most to our hearts, whether they be sound, and accordingly esteemeth of our performances; but men look only to our hands, whether they be clean, and accordingly judge of our profession. If the servants of religion behave themselves unseemly,

their mistress shall be sure to bear the blame. When David had defiled Bathsheba, the name of God was blasphemed. A saint cannot do evil before men, but he occasions sinners to speak evil of God. If there be any spots on a Christian's coat, the world will soon spy them, and be ready in scorn to ask Christ himself, as the patriarchs did Jacob, 'See whether this be thy son's coat or no.' To look high by thy profession, and live low and basely in thy practices, will betray both thyself and the gospel to scorn and derision. Augustine confesseth there were many such in his time, who, professing the Christian religion, did by their licentious lives give great scandal, and with them the Manichees were wont to reproach the whole church of Christ, though the church did disown them; and though she could not reclaim them, she did disclaim them.—Aug., *De moribus Ecclesiæ*, cap. 34.

The wicked first watch for a godly man's fall, and then are big with blasphemy against godliness. Like miners, they work hard, though unseen, to blow up a saint's name. The psalmist tells us, 'They compassed us in our steps, they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth,' Ps. 17:11. It is an allusion to hunters, who go poring on the ground to find the print of the hare's claws, when their dogs are at a loss in their scent; so Satan's agents go with their eyes bowing down, marking the saints' footsteps, to find out if it be possible where they have slipped or stepped awry, that their bloodhounds may follow both their persons and their profession with loud cries and fresh noise. The baggage world is both desirous and industrious to scar that face, and to spy the least blemish in it, that is fairer than herself.

If the Christian be once defiled, Christianity itself will quickly be defamed. Though sins in secret duties have their aggravations, yet sins in our public dealings do in a threefold respect exceed them.

1. These are scandalous to the good, which those are not. The children of God weep bitterly when they hear that others walk disorderly. Their hearts bewail their brethren's wickedness; now wouldest thou sadden the spirit of a saint? Alas! they have grief enough from their enemies, and shall they be wounded in the house of their friends?

2. They are infectious to the bad, which secret sins are not. Thy sins are like St Paul's in London, on high for the gaze of the world; but thy virtues, as St Faith, under ground, they do not note them. How soon will the world plead a Christian's sinful act, to excuse and justify their own sinful habits! They are like ravenous birds, that fly over sweet and pleasant flowers, and pitch only upon unsavoury carcases; they take little notice of thy graces, but will be sure to mind thy vices. The philosopher saith that the fleeces of such sheep as are killed by the wolf are most apt to breed lice; one of Christ's sheep, foiled by Satan in the eyes of men, doth much mischief. Now, will it not trouble thee that these unclean fowls should pick that from thee which will feed and nourish their filthy nature? Alas! they move fast enough towards hell with the tide of their own evil hearts, and shall the wind of thy example make them sail more swiftly?

3. Thy open sins occasion the wicked to speak ill of God, which secret sins do not. The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, saith the apostle to the Romans, Rom. 2:24. Christians ought to be shields, to ward off those blows of reproach which would fall on the name of God. How unchristian are they, then, that are swords in the hands of the wicked, wherewith the name of God is wounded. Truly, an unrighteous professor is such a one. If thou studiest to do thy God disservice, and to bring on his blessed name dishonour, thou canst not do it sooner than by unjust actions under the livery of a high profession. The devil himself cannot dress a man

in a more ridiculous habit, to make both him and his Master the scorn of the company, than by putting on him a coat patched up of divers pieces and contrary colours—a glorious name of a saint, and the unrighteous works of a reprobate. Friend, beware how thou behavest thyself in the world. The snow makes a fair show to the eye, but, being melted, it makes a dangerous flood. They who make a fair show in the flesh, by walking offensively, may cause such a deluge as may drown the souls of others, and give many a dash at the name of God himself. The Indians would not hear of heaven, when they were told that the Spaniards (whom they had found to be barbarous and bloody) went thither. The Jews are hardened in their enmity against Christ by the evil lives of pretended Christians. Epiphanius saith, that in his days many avoided the Christian's company because of the looseness of some men's conversation. When some beasts have blown on grass, others will not eat of it for a good while after. It is no wonder that religion finds so few greedy of her service, when her work is so much disparaged by those that already seem to be her servants. Men will easily be discouraged from travelling in that road which is haunted with thieves and robbers. Either walk up to thy calling, or lay thy calling down. Why shouldst thou give conscience cause to say to thee truly, (what Michal did to David falsely,) Thou hast made thyself like one of the vile and base fellows of the earth.

## SECTION II

As to the exercising thyself to godliness in thy dealings with all men, it consisteth partly in the manner of thy dealings, partly in the principle of thy dealing, and partly in the end thou propoundest in thy dealings.

First, Be careful in thy carriage towards others as to the manner of it, that it be righteous, meek, and courteous.

1. Be righteous in thy dealings with all men. Righteousness strictly taken is a virtue, which guideth and ordereth the whole man for the good of his neighbour, as the understanding to conceive, the will to choose, the affections to love and desire, and the whole man to act and do what may tend to the welfare of others. This righteousness is of so great concernment to godliness, that it is sometimes put by a synecdoche for the whole of religion: 1 John 3:7, 'He that doeth righteousness, is righteous;' so Rom. 6:17. And the Christian is denominated from this part of Christianity: Gen. 7:1, 'And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark, for thee have I seen righteous before me;' so Ps. 5:12, 'For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous.' The moral philosophers tell us that justice is the sum and epitome of all virtues; the divines will inform us that righteousness, largely taken, is the string upon which all the graces hang; if that be broken or snapped asunder, they all fall off and are lost. I must tell thee, Christian, that civil righteousness is as really necessary as sacred. He that seemeth righteous towards God, and is unrighteous towards men, is unrighteous both to God and man. I say, be righteous in thy dealing with all men,—viz., let thy righteousness be real and universal, commutative and distributive. Be righteous in thy actions, expressions, and towards all persons.

(1.) Be righteous in thy works or actions. Deal with men as one that in all hath to do with God. If thou art a Christian, thou art a law to thyself; thou hast not only a law without thee, (the word of God,) but a law within thee, and so darest not transgress. Thy double hedge may well prevent thy wandering. Alas! what do those unruly beasts get, whom no fence can keep in, but a more speedy slaughter! It is said of an unrighteous man, 'his own counsel shall cast him out,' Job

18:7. Unjust men think by their craft to cast others down, but their own counsel will cast themselves out. Out! out of what? Out of their houses; for such dwellings are built upon powder, and a spark of wrath sooner or later will blow them up, Ps. 37:9, 10. Out of their lands and possessions, for some providence or other (as Flavius Vespasianus served his prowling officers) will press such sponges hard, and squeeze out all their impure water which they have so greedily sucked in. Out of their shops and all earthly comforts; for such wealth is but like the flesh which the eagle fetcheth from the altar with a coal in it, which fires and consumes the whole nest, Hab. 2:9. And, which is worst of all, their counsel will at last cast them out of heaven; God himself hath locked the gate of bliss against them, and with all their craft and counsel they shall not be able to pick it open: 1 Cor. 6:9, 10, 'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?' It was a true saying of Bishop Latimer, when one told him the cutler had cozened him, in making him pay as much more for his knife as it was worth. No, saith he, he hath not cozened me, but his own conscience. That knife cut deep into the poor cutler's soul, and made wider gaps than he was aware of. Oh, how foolish is man to conceive that by fraud he shall keep himself up, when God himself saith that his own counsel shall cast him down!

Reader, if thou art one that, like Balaam, lovest the wages of unrighteousness, bethink thyself speedily; for thy wealth, unjustly gotten, will, like Achan's wedge of gold, cleave thy soul in sunder. Righteousness in thy works must appear both in buying and in selling.

Be righteous in buying. Take heed lest thou layest out thy money to purchase endless misery. Some have bought places to bury their bodies in, but more have bought those commodities which have swallowed up their souls. Injustice in buying is a canker which will

eat up and waste the most durable wares. An unjust chapman, like Phocion, payeth for that poison which kills him, and buyeth his own bane. A true Christian will, in buying as well as selling, use a conscience. Augustine relates a story of an histrionical mountebank, who, to gain spectators, promised, if they would come the next day, he would tell them what every one's heart desired. When they all flocked about him at the time appointed, expecting the performance of his word, he told them, This is the desire of every of your hearts, to sell dear and buy cheap; but it is a sign he was an empiric by the falseness of his bill, for a good man would buy as dear as he selleth. His buying and selling are like two scales, that hang in an equal poise.

In buying do not work either upon the ignorance or the poverty of the seller. Do not take advantage by the seller's ignorance. This would be as bad as to lead the blind out of the way: 1 Thes. 4:6, 'Let no man go beyond, or overreach another in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such.' Mark, reader, those that overreach men are within the reach of a sin-revenging God. Some persons will boast of their going beyond others in bargains, but they have more cause to bewail it, unless they could go beyond the line of God's power and anger. It is an ordinary saying, but sinful, a man may buy as cheap as he can. Augustine tells us, a certain man (himself I suppose he meaneth) was offered a book by an unskilful stationer, at a price not half the worth of it; he took the book, but gave him the just price, according to its full value. Sure I am, those wares which are half bought, through a cunning chapman's outwitting the silly tradesman, are half stolen: 'It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth,' Prov. 20:14, but hath more reason to weep, for his subtle words, how cheap soever he buyeth, will make it a hard pennyworth in the end. He makes the best market that, like holy David, payeth



the full just price: 'Nay, (saith he of Ornan's threshing-floor,) but I will buy it for the full price,' 1 Chron. 21:22, 24. Ahab never bought a dearer purchase than Naboth's vineyard, for which he paid not one penny.

Do not work upon the seller's poverty. This is to grind the faces of the poor, and great oppression. It is no mean sin in many rich citizens, who take advantage on the necessity of poor tradesmen. The poor man must sell, or his family starve; the rich man knoweth it, and will buy but at such a rate that the other, with all his labour, shall not earn his own bread. God made the rich to relieve, but these (I must be bold to say) rob the poor. It is an ill way for any to raise themselves higher in the world, by trampling poor men under their feet. God hath sometimes made their houses, as high and as firm as they were, to fall down upon their heads, who have thus sucked out the blood of poor men's hearts. Some will tell us, they do no wrong herein; for if poor men will not take their money, they may let it alone; they do not force them. Reader, if thy soul be dyed with this crimson sin, I shall only ask thee this question, Is this to love thy neighbour as thyself? If thou hadst a wife and several small children, and the providence of God had called thee to this poor man's condition, wouldst thou be contented to work hard a whole week, and when thou wast compelled to sell thy wares to buy food for thy family, to receive (the money for materials deducted) but sixpence or twelvecence for all thy pains? Let thy own conscience be judge in this case. Is not this for men to live like fish, the greater devouring the lesser? I have heard a country mercer say (who is now in heaven) that several times, when poor men have brought lace, or ribands, or other ware to him, he hath tried how low he could beat the price, and because of their necessities, he hath brought them to allow their commodities for less than the very materials cost them; but after he had so done, he durst not but give them a just, equitable price; his

conscience would not suffer him to make them suffer, because their poverty necessitated them to sell. And truly, where men act otherwise, though their consciences may be quiet, because asleep, yet they have no true rest, and the time will come that conscience will awake to their woe. When some of the Jews had bought lands and vineyards of their brethren at an under rate, they being forced to mortgage them to get bread, Nehemiah rebukes them severely for working upon others' extremity, and desires God to shake every man out of his possession who did not make restitution, Neh. 5:2–4, 12, 13. Such wealth to a man, is like Jonah to the whale; though he swallow it down, yet he will find it too hard a morsel to digest, and have no ease till he hath it restored, and vomited it up again.

Be righteous in thy payments. Pay what thou agreest, and pay it in good money.

Pay what thou contractest for. If thou buyest wares with an intention not to pay, thou stealest them; and truly such wealth will melt away like wax before the sun. Such ill-gotten goods will, as commodities in a damp cellar, moulder and come to nothing. He that hath any such riches, saith Chrysostom, must speedily away with it, or else he locketh up a thief in his counting-house, which will carry all away, and, if he look not the better to it, his precious soul also. He is notoriously unrighteous, that, like the harpy, (which hath its name in Hebrew from injustice,) seizeth upon all he can meet with as prey. Mark, reader, how pious honest Jacob was in this particular; when the patriarchs had bought corn in Egypt, and given their money to them that sold it, yet when upon their return he found the money in their sacks: 'Take (saith he) the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hands: peradventure it was an oversight,' Gen. 43:12. How many would have concealed the money, stopped the mouth of their consciences with the first

payment, and have kept it now as lawful prize; but Jacob's conscience was more tender-mouthed.

Let thy payments be in good money. It is treason against the king to make bad money, and it is treason against the King of kings knowingly to pay brass money. If thou dischargest thy debt in adulterate coin, thou contractest a greater debt on thy soul, and defilest thy conscience. He that putteth God off with false service, is a spiritual hypocrite; he that puts men off with false silver, is a civil hypocrite. Such a man's conscience is farther from being current than his coin. 'And Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant,' Gen. 23:16. He that makes light payments may well expect heavy judgments.

### **SECTION III**

Be righteous in selling. Be careful, whilst thou sellest thy wares to men, that thou dost not therewith sell thy soul to Satan. Believe it, thou wilt follow thy calling to sad purpose, if thou foregoest thine inward peace for a little outward profit.

Be righteous in the substance of what thou sellest, and that in regard of its quality and quantity.

In regard of its quality: put not bad ware for good into any man's hand. God can see the rottenness of thy stuffs, and heart too, under thy false glosses, and for all thy false lights. Thou sayest, caveat emptor, let the buyer beware; but God saith, caveat venditor, let the seller be careful that he keep a good conscience. To sell men what is full of flaws and defective, for what is sound and sufficient, will make a greater flaw in thy conscience than thou art aware of. If thou

partest with thy goods and thy honesty together, though for a great sum, thou wilt be but a poor gainer. Thou wilt ask, possibly, whether every man be bound to reveal the faults of what he selleth, supposing that he knoweth them. I answer, That every man is bound, either to discover them, or else to take no more for his wares or beasts than they are worth, at a market-price, with those defects. It is clear that it is sinful to use tricks and arts to hide those faults from the eyes of the chapman; for such deeds are done purposely to deceive. I would also know reader, whether thou dealest herein as thou wouldst willingly be dealt with. Wouldst thou be glad to pay double, or half as much more, as a commodity is worth?

Be righteous in the substance of what thou sellest, in regard of its quantity. We have a common saying, Weight and measure, are heaven's treasure. It is certain, 'A false balance is abomination to the Lord; a just weight is his delight,' Prov. 11:1. 'The righteous Lord hateth unrighteousness, but his countenance beholdeth the just.' They wrong themselves most who rob others of their right; he hatcheth a cockatrice egg, who sits brooding on ill-gotten goods, and, like Agrippina to Nero, bringeth forth and gives life to that which will be his death. The jealous God is very punctual in this particular: "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have; I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt," Lev. 19:35, 36. God is pleased to count up all in his command, that they might not have the least colour of excuse for cozening in anything. Nay, he loatheth so much false weights and measures in their hands, that he will not allow them to be in their houses: 'Thou shalt not have in thy bag diverse weights, a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in thy house diverse measures, a great and a small. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have,' Deut. 25:13–15. Thou shalt not

have in thy bag diverse weights; in the Hebrew it is a stone and a stone, because the Jews did not make their weights of iron or lead, or any metal that would canker and wax too light, but they made them of the clear stony rock, or of glass. They might not have an unjust weight or measure in their houses, because some, not knowing them to be defective, might use them, and deceive others.

The face of Ephraim's sin was visible, under all the masks which he used to hide it: 'He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress. And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance; in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin,' Hosea 12:7, 8. Here is,

1. His calling, that was honourable: 'He is a merchant.' When some accused a young gentleman for staining his family by his employment, and dishonouring the noble house of which he descended, Apollonius stood forth in his defence: Ye talk, saith he, of a dangerous trade, and truly, such is the life of merchants; they travel into foreign parts, run great hazards, make many ill bargains, and sometimes are bought and sold themselves, and all this they venture to serve their country, and ought they not to be highly esteemed? Ephraim was a merchant; but how unsuitable were his practices to his high and honourable profession; for observe,

2. His cozenage, that was abominable: 'The balances of deceit are in his hand; he loveth to oppress.' When a buyer comes for a commodity, he weigheth it out fairly in the balance, but he hath a deceitful bag of weights, or a deceitful beam. He dares not cozen openly for shame, but he doth covertly, with the sleights and mysteries of his calling; but to rob by fraud, in a shop or warehouse, is as bad as to rob by force upon the road. Both are thieves, and the former, in some respects, the greater, as more dissembling in their

dealings, and more frequent in their thefts. These cheats that do it cunningly, as rabbits, making holes under ground, and so think themselves secure, will at last be ferreted out and slain.

3. His case and cover of his sin: 'I am become rich, I have found me out substance; in all my labour they shall find none iniquity,'—as if his riches did prove him to be righteous, and his prosperity had argued him free from all impiety. Whereas God suffereth many, like ravenous birds, to build their nests on high with stolen materials, intending at last, by some fierce blast of providence, to bring them down, and destroy the whole brood. Thieves seldom find joy in their new purchases, but never stability. Geese, say some, if they chance to take hold of a root with their bill, they will bite and pull so long to have it, that many times they break their necks before they leave their hold. So unjust men, by their greediness to enrich, usually ruin themselves; such goods are like the fox which Plutarch mentions the Lacedæmonian boy to have stolen, and rather than he would be discovered, put it into his breeches, but it quickly did tear out his bowels.

Be righteous in the manner of thy selling. The seller may not exact upon the buyer's necessity, but sell by the rule of equity. I am not bound to sell cheap, because I buy cheap; neither may I sell dear, because I buy dear. Not my buying or selling, so much as the price of the market, should be my standard. Though I conceive a market rate to be most righteous, yet it is wicked, by keeping in commodities, to raise the market: 'He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him,' Prov. 11:26. Such a man, like a corrupt, imposthumated member, would draw all the nourishment to himself, and cares not though the other parts of the body perish; but the people shall curse him. This oak, which will suffer no small trees to thrive near it, will in time fall with the breath of so many curses. Probably you would

know whether a tradesman, that knoweth such and such commodities will fall very much, by letters which mention several ships coming home laden with them, or some other way, may not sell off his own wares at the present price, and hide his news from his country customers. Reader, I shall answer it with a question not much unlike it in a heathen author, expecting that Christians should not be excelled by heathen. A man brings a ship of corn from Alexandria to Rhodes, saith Cicero, in a time of great famine; he may have for it what price he pleaseth. He knoweth of many more ships which will be there the next day; may he conceal this from the Rhodians? No, saith the orator; and what sayest thou, reader?

In all thy contracts, purchases, and sales, cast an eye upon that golden rule, mentioned by our Saviour, Mat. 7:12, 'Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.' This is the royal law, the golden rule, the king's highway, and the standard of all righteousness. Whatsoever, in a well-ordered judgment, thou wouldst have others do to thee and thine, do the same to them and theirs, supposing conditions alike; for this is the sum and epitome of all that is delivered in the law and the prophets concerning thy carriage towards others. Jerome commended this saying to a holy woman, to be written on her heart, as an abridgment of all righteousness. Lactantius saith, It is the root and foundation of all equity. Severus the emperor had often this saying in his mouth, and caused it to be proclaimed by the crier as often as he punished a soldier for injuring any other. It is very profitable for a Christian, in his dealings with others, to make frequent appeals to his own conscience. Would I be dealt thus with, were I as this man is, or as this woman? Would I be willing to have this measure measured to me or mine? Would I be glad to be served so as I serve others? Is this to love my neighbour as myself? Reader, such serious soliloquies

may prevent much unrighteousness. Though charity begins at home in regard of order, yet not in regard of time; for a man no sooner loves himself aright, but he loves his neighbour as himself. That proverb came from the devil, Every man for himself, and God for us all. For God saith, 'Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth,' 1 Cor. 10:24. And again, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' Gal. 5:24. He is but a beast that preyeth for himself alone. Inanimate creatures are beneficial to others. Fire, air, earth, water, are all serviceable to others besides, and more than to themselves. How soon would the frame of nature be dissolved, if everything should be confined within the narrow compass of self. Water moveth downward, fire upward naturally; yet both will cross their own nature to prevent a vacuum, and preserve the universe.

Besides, I must tell thee that the subject's house, as well as the king's throne, is preserved by righteousness. That speech of Nevessan the lawyer is contrary to Scripture: He that will not venture his body, shall never be valiant; and he that will not venture his soul, shall never be rich. Righteousness, not robbery, is the way to riches. He goeth the farthest way about that endeavours to increase his strength by sucking others' blood, or to get an estate by injustice. Nay, he takes a contrary course; for he pulls down on his head the divine curse, which, like a hectic fever, will cause an irrecoverable consumption of all his comforts, both temporal and spiritual. Such treasures and owners are like the Canaanites to the land; the land will groan till it spue them out: 'Treasures of wickedness profit nothing,' Prov. 10:2. Observe, reader,

1. The excellency of these comforts in themselves. They are treasures—that is, heaps of outward good things. The word includeth a multitude, for one or two will not make a treasure; and a multitude of precious things, for a heap of sand, or coals, or dust, is not a



treasure; but of silver or gold, or some excellent earthly things. It is here in the plural, treasures, noting the greatest confluence of worldly comforts. Note,

2. The impiety of the owners: they are treasures of wickedness. The purchasers got them by sinful practices. They were brought into his house slyly at some back-door. He was both the receiver and the thief. Treasures of wickedness, because gotten by wicked ways, and employed to wicked ends. There is an English proverb, which too many Englishmen have made good, That which is got over the devil's back, is usually spent under the devil's belly. When sin is the parent that begets riches, it many times hath this recompense, that they are wholly at its service and command.

3. The vanity of those treasures: they profit nothing. Treasures of wickedness profit nothing. They are unable to cheer the mind, to cure the diseases of the body, much less to heal the wounds of the soul, or to bribe the flames of hell. Alas! they are so far from profiting, that they are infinitely prejudicial. Such powder-masters are blown up with their own ware. These loads sink the bearers into the unquenchable lake. The philosopher tells us of the sea-mew, or sea-eagle, (called in Greek ἀλιόετος, because she seeketh for her prey in the waters,) that she will often seize on her prey, though it be more than she can bear, and falleth down headlong with it into the deep, and so perisheth. This fowl is a fit emblem of the unrighteous person; for he graspeth those heavy possessions which press him down into the pit of perdition: 'They that will be rich (that resolve on it, whether God will or no, and by any means, whether right or wrong) fall into temptations, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition,' 1 Tim. 6:9. 'They that will be rich.' Men that scrape an estate together unjustly are frequently said in the word of God to get it in haste—'To make haste

to be rich'—because such will not stay God's time, nor wait in his way till he send them in wealth, but must have it presently, and care not though it be unrighteously. But, as we say, matches made in haste are repented at leisure; so, truly, riches got in haste are often lamented for ever. It is most true here, The more haste, the less speed. Food hastily eaten is seldom so well digested as what is eaten leisurely. 'He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent. He that maketh haste to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him,' Prov. 28:20, 22. Sometimes God suffereth a cruel hand to pluck the stolen feathers of this unclean bird, and then he is left bare whilst he liveth. Sometimes he is hurried away in the prime and pride of his age to hell, from his goods which he got in haste: as the lizard's eggs are hatched in six months, and yet the old one never liveth to see them, saith the naturalist.

Fair and softly goes far. None thrive so well as those that stay God's leisure, and expect wealth in his way. Titus Vespasian stamped in his coin a dolphin and an anchor, with this impress, *Sat cito, si sat bene*, Soon enough, if well enough. A dolphin outstrips the ship, that is soon enough; and an anchor stayeth the ship, that is well enough. So both together make soon enough, if well enough. And of this prince it is reported, *Abstinit alieno si quis unquam*; if ever any was free from injuring others, he was the man. None are more guilty of unrighteousness than those that huddle up riches in haste. They are most harmless who are contented to live in hope, and to wait patiently on God. That wealth which is gotten well enough, is gotten soon enough. All other is worse than an abortive birth, that comes before the time. That fruit which is soon ripe will be soon rotten. 'An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning, but the end thereof shall not be blessed,' Prov. 20:21. As honey, over-liberally eaten, though it be sweet and pleasant at first, yet afterwards, causeth strange vomitings and sad gripings in the stomach and belly;

so an estate over-hastily gotten, though it may cause a smile in thy countenance, and rejoice thy carnal part at the beginning, yet will afterwards cause dreadful gripings in thy conscience, be a vulture gnawing at thy heart, and its latter end be cursed to thee and thine. I have read of a philosopher who bought a pair of shoes upon trust, the shoemaker dieth, the Pythagorean rejoiceth, and thinks his shoes clear gains; but a while after, his conscience twitches him, and will allow him no rest, because of his robbery. He repairs to the house of the dead, and casts in his money, saying, There, take thy due. Thou livest to me, though dead to all besides. He that carrieth such luggage on his back all day, must expect to find his conscience galled to purpose at night.

O friend, take heed of setting thine inestimable soul to sale for a little corruptible silver. If it will not profit thee to gain the whole world and lose thy own soul, surely it will not advantage thee to gain a small pittance of it, and lose thy soul. Thou rakest, and runnest, and it may be cozenest and cheatest, to leave thy child a considerable estate. I must tell thee, thy son is little beholden to thee for leaving him a gay knife to cut his throat with; a gaudy suit with the plague in it; a great, stately dwelling haunted with devils; a large portion with the curse of God. No man in his wits would give one hair of his head to be made thine heir, wert thou worth thousands. The devil himself, though he will thank thee for getting it so unjustly, yet he would not thank thee if thou shouldst bequeath him all thy ill-gotten goods. No; he doth not love the curse of God so well. Thou wouldst shew thyself a more loving father in leaving thy son a bottle and a basket, to beg with from door to door, than the greatest heap of such riches.

Besides, what comfort will it be to thee, for thy son to live in honour, and bathe himself in carnal pleasure, with that wealth which thou hast unjustly scraped together, when thou art frying in unquenchable

flames for thy injustice. Thy children are rejoicing with thy silver, and the devils are revelling with thy soul at the same season. Canst thou think that the contentment of thy posterity will in the least abate thy torments? It may be thou pleasest thyself with an intention of giving somewhat in thy will to the poor, and so to pay thy debts to God with the devil's goods, with that coin which hath the image and superscription of the prince of darkness on it; and art thou so mad as to think that it will be acceptable? I tell thee, God hates robbery for a sacrifice, and thy stolen goods for a burnt-offering, Isa. 61:8. The great sultan, as giddy as he was with the noisome fumes of Mahomet's Alchoran, was yet so well in his wits as to tell his bashaw, who persuaded him to build an hospital with the wealth he had unjustly taken from the Persian merchants, That to dispose his money to relieve the poor would not please God; but to restore it to the right owners would be acceptable. Will a king thank that man who robs his honest subjects of a hundred pound upon the road, and then thinks to make amends by paying half-a-crown out of it towards his service. Thou canst not groundedly hope that thy unrighteousness should be remitted, until thy mammon of unrighteousness be restored by the law of God, as well as of men. Debts must be paid first, and then legacies; justice must be first minded, and then charity. It may be thou cheerest thy heart with the thoughts of an honourable burial. It delights thee to think, how, when thy will is open, people will applaud thee for the large provision thou makest therein for thy children; with what a great company thou shalt be attended to thy grave; and what a costly monument shall be erected to thy memory. Well, since thou art so much joyed with a curious tomb, I shall take the pains to write thine epitaph, and if thou hast a spark of true love to thy soul, thou wilt think of it whilst thou livest, Here lies interred one that, to make his children gentlemen on earth for a few days, made himself a beggar in hell to all eternity. He was one that, to gain a little earthly treasure, of

which he hath now taken an everlasting farewell, sold his precious soul, and the endless, blissful fruition of the blessed God. Did ever fool buy so dear, or sell so cheap? Oh, look on him, and learn to be righteous.

## SECTION IV

Secondly, Be righteous in thy words and expressions, as well as in thy works. The Christian's tongue should be his heart's interpreter, and reveal its mind and meaning; and the Christian's hand should justify his tongue, by turning his words into deeds. Though the right Christian is not a worshipper of Mercury, to whom tongues were only offered in sacrifice, yet with the Athenians he doth speak well, as with the Lacedæmonians do well. The burgess of the new Jerusalem is known by this livery: 'He walketh uprightly, worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart; he sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not,' Ps. 15:2, 4.

First, He speaketh the truth in his heart. His speech is the genuine and natural offspring of his heart; there is a great resemblance between the child and the parent. That language, which is confused, and not to be understood, speaks not a citizen of Sion, but a builder of Babel or Babylon. When the words are spurious, and not the heart's own, like Abimelech, they destroy the family of which they descend; sometimes that tongue cuts the owner's throat: 'The getting of treasure by a lying tongue, is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death,' Prov. 21:6. The deceitful tongue seeketh death, though not intentionally, yet eventually. The saint's words and thoughts are univocal, they speak as they think, and are like clarified honey, clear to the bottom; his heart is the mine, his mind frameth the matter, and his tongue is the shop that exposeth it to public view.

Secondly, He sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. His hand will make good his lawful promises, how much soever they shall be to his prejudice. There is a symmetry between his hand and his tongue; he is slow to promise, not hasty to enter into bonds, but being once engaged he will be sure to perform. He dares not falsify his word, knowing that his God was an ear-witness.

It was the saying of Lysander, that if the lion's skin would not serve (to cozen with) the fox's must be sewed to it; and that children were to be deceived with toys, and men with oaths; but this fox himself was at last taken in a trap, and slain at the foot of the Theban walls. The justice of God will some time or other seize upon such unjust men; false conceptions are as dangerous to the souls of men as to the bodies of women.

The Romans built a temple to the goddess Fidelity, and offered sacrifice to her image, so highly did they esteem of faithfulness. Attilius Regulus, their general against the Carthaginians, being taken prisoner and sent to Rome with conditions of peace, upon his word to return, if the terms were not accepted, judging the conditions dishonourable, he dissuaded the Romans from embracing them, and went back to his enemies according to his promise, though he knew beforehand, that upon his return they would presently put him to death. The prisoner that got from Hannibal by eluding his oath, was by the senate apprehended and sent back again, saith Livy. Attica fides, was free or sure hold; and Atticus testis, one that keeps touch, because the Athenians were so faithful to their words. What a shame is it then for Christians to regard their promises and oaths no more than their old clothes, which they throw by, when they have made what use of them they desire. Such men do much wound their credit, (that after a little knowledge of such Nullifidians none will trust them,) but much more their consciences. The deceitful and bloody

are joined together, Ps. 5:6. He that is deceitful to others is bloody to himself; he may raise others' skin, but he wrongs his own soul, and draweth his own heart-blood. Machiavel, as bad as he was, would not allow fraud to lodge save in soldiers' tents.

The jealous God hath made himself known to be a God of truth in accomplishing his threatenings on those that have affirmed and attested such lies. One Ann Averies, widow, (in the days of Queen Elizabeth,) having bought six pound of tow in a shop in Wood Street, falsely said that she had paid for it, and swore to it; but she presently fell down and died, to the terror of all such unrighteous and perjured persons. The trade indeed of lying hath crept almost into all trades, as if it were the only way to get a livelihood, when it hath deprived some of their lives, Acts 5:7, 8. A lying tongue is one of the six things which the Lord hates, Prov. 6:17. The Scripture speaks of such persons, that their own tongues shall fall upon them, meaning to destroy them, as Benaiah fell on Joab, and David's soldier on the Amalekite; for so the phrase is frequently taken, Ps. 64:8; 1 Kings 2:29, 30; 2 Sam. 1:15.

Reader, Be so true to thy own soul as to put away lying, and to speak the truth to thy neighbour, Eph. 4:25. Do not delude thyself with mental reservations, or Jesuitical equivocation, but let thy words and thoughts join in concert. A Christian should be like crystal, the same all over, and visible throughout. As our clothes represent the proportion of our bodies, so should our words the proportion of our minds. It was an unpolitic precept which Louis the Eleventh of France gave his son, when he charged him to learn no more Latin than what would teach him to dissemble. Deceit is a gin that men set often to catch serpents, which, when they have caught, sting themselves. Cleomenes, king of Lacedæmonia, who, making truce with the Argives for seven days, and fell upon their quarters in the

night, was repelled by the Argive women, and afterwards banished into Egypt, where he miserably slew himself. Promises are, as it were, the connexion and ligaments of the several parts in the body politic; if they be once broken asunder and loosed, the whole will quickly be dissolved. Such men are like to some fruits, which by their luscious smell, and delightful colour, invite a man to eat, but prove unsavoury and unwholesome. He that had only nature's moonlight to see by, could say, *Perditissimi est hominis, fallere eum, qui læsus non esset, nisi credidisset*; none but the most villainous will deceive him, who had been safe if he had not trusted, saith Cicero.

Thy righteousness must extend to all, according to their several places and relations. That righteousness which is real, will be universal. 'Render, therefore, to all their due: tribute to whom tribute is due: custom to whom custom: fear to whom fear: honour to whom honour,' Rom. 13:7. He that is just in his actions, hath a due respect to all persons, whether superiors, or equals, or inferiors. He who is righteous to his fellow-subjects, and wrongs his sovereign in his custom or tribute, is a rebel against the crown and dignity of Jesus Christ. He is undutiful to the king of nations, who payeth not his due to the king of that nation in which he liveth. Render, saith Christ, to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's. Jerome, on that place, doth well observe, that the name of Caesar is not proper, but appellative, because from the first Roman emperor, Julius Cæsar, all his successors were so called. Hereby Christ intimates that tribute belongs to every person clothed with the supreme power. And Gerrhard, in his Harmony, saith, that our Saviour doth particularly in that text understand Tiberius, that monster of men, enjoining payment of tribute to that persecuting prince. How great, then, is their crime, who cheat a king that is a Christian! Such unnatural members must expect to fare the worse for impoverishing their head. The wealth of a political father, is both a



credit and support to his children. If the root be kept without water, the branches must needs wither.

The ancients emblemed a just man by one with a pair of balances in one hand, a sword in another, and both his eyes shut, to dispense impartially to all justice, both commutative and distributive; a magistrate must distribute justice to every one alike. He may see a difference in causes, but no difference in persons. When righteousness reigneth, it is said to run down like water, and as a mighty stream, Amos 5:24. Now water is as free for the poor as the rich, the stream runs down by the meanest cottage as much as by the prince's court. Righteousness must be as common as water, as universal as a stream: 'David reigned over all Israel, and executed justice and judgment to all his people,' 2 Sam. 8:15. His righteousness was as large as his realm; to all his people.

## SECTION V

Secondly, As to the manner of thy dealings, thy duty is to be courteous as well as righteous. Some men soil the lustre of their justice, and hinder the honour it might bring to the gospel, by the crabbedness of their carriage. A rugged, unhewn piece of timber disgraceth, when a neat, smooth one crediteth the building. One end of our dealings with men (as I shall shew by and by) must be to gain them to mind godliness, which end will be much furthered by an affable conversation. Men delight not to walk in rugged ways, nor to deal with rugged men. As curious flowers draw the eyes, and rare music the ears, so doth courtesy allure the hearts of men after it. He that pleaseth all men in all things (indifferent) is the likeliest to save some, 1 Cor. 10:33. It was the affable carriage of Titus, amongst other things, which made him the delight of mankind. It is said of Julius

Cæsar that he overcame their affections by his humanity, whose persons he had before subdued by his power and policy. He gloried in nothing so much as in pardoning his enemies, and gratifying his friends, saith Augustine.<sup>2</sup> They who durst speak to Cæsar, saith Marius, were ignorant of his greatness, and they which durst not, were ignorant of his goodness. We may gain their love by soft words, who would hate us if we went about to ravish them, or to lay violent hands on them. Alexander won the love of his soldiers by calling them fellow-footmen. Courtesy, like the loadstone, will draw even iron to it. Pharaoh, a heathen, was full of courtesy, and, though a king, condescended much in his carriage towards Jacob. Abraham is noted not only for his faith in God and holiness, but also for his discreet familiarity and affable behaviour towards men, Gen. 42:8, 9, and 23:7. Our blessed Saviour is therefore said to come eating and drinking, because of the sweetness and attractiveness of his conversation. This Lord of glory, in all his converses, had a comely and winning grace. They who are truly noble are ever affable. Those that, like the Persian, keep up state, are but, according to the French dialect (of their haughty upstarts) gentle villains. Contempt or arrogancy is a weed that ever groweth in dunghills. It is from the rankness of the soil that it hath its height and haughtiness. They are but windy spirits that bubble thus above others; it is the froth only that gets always to the top of the water.

It is a divine command, 'be courteous,' 1 Pet. 3:8; the word signifieth friendly-minded, studious to do such things as are grateful to others. Obedience to this command is cheap, and costeth nothing, which whosoever denieth will certainly never obey those precepts which will put him to charge. He who denieth men a good look, will not at God's call lay down his life for the gospel.

The Romans, because they would not have any defrauded of civil respect, retained admonitors, called nomenclatores, who should suggest the name and quality of every one they encountered, that so he might be saluted in a conformable style.

We read in Scripture frequently of salutations sent to and from the saints, Rom. 16. God never intended that when men put on Christianity they should put off civility. Those Quakers who, like idols, have eyes, and see not, mouths, and speak not, are so far from being invested, above others, as they pretend, with the divine nature, that they are even divested of the human nature. The very Turks' salutation to him they meet is, Salaum aleek, Peace be to thee; and the reply is, Aleek salaum, To thee be peace also. When Boaz came into his field, 'The Lord, be with you,' saith he to his reapers; 'The Lord bless thee,' say they to him, Ruth 2:4. Indeed, Christ commands his disciples, 'Salute no man,' Luke 10:4. But the occasion of this prohibition is considerable. The disciples were sent about business of importance and expedition; and the salutations Christ speaks of, are in the nature of those which we call compliments, a filling up of precious time with needless toys and trifles. As if Christ had said, Your work is of weight, and requires haste, do not therefore loiter by standing to talk with any by the way, but mind your business. It is not intended by a master who gives his servant such a charge, that therefore he must not put off his hat, or bid any good-morrow, or ask their neighbours how they do, for ever after. The same law-giver doth command salutations by his own mouth: 'Into what house ye enter, say, Peace be to this house,' Luke 10:5, 6; and also commends it to us by his ministers, 1 Cor. 16; Col. 4:10, 14. We may not bid them God-speed, whom we see employed about the devil's designs, lest we be partakers of their evil deeds; but if we know not their actions to be bad, our charity must hope the best. He that hath but common humanity must needs be a civilian. Though nature be a crab stock,

yet if she be but grafted by education, this will be part of her sweet fruit.

3. As thy duty is to be righteous and courteous, so also to be meek in thy dealings with men. Courtesy is a good servant, to wait upon meekness as its master. Both together are no small credit to a professor. He that is highest in godliness is fullest of meekness. The purest gold is soonest melted, and they are usually the best blades that will bend well. The lion of Judah for courage, was a lamb for condescension. The saint must learn of his Saviour to be meek and lowly in heart. The passionate man is one of Lucifer's disciples, and followeth him in his fall from heaven. This meekness (I speak of it in relation to man as its object) is a virtue by which we moderate our passions, and keep them in subjection, lest we should wrong our neighbours. Patience is sister to meekness, and humility is its mother. The passions of our minds are like the winds in the air; if they lie still, the ship must lie still too, or at least make but small speed; if they be too boisterous, they endanger the dashing the vessel upon a rock, or casting it upon the quicksands; but when they blow moderately, between a still calm and a violent storm, they are most helpful to the mariners. Our affections are of no use if they be suffered to sleep, and do not rise at all; for then, though the name of God himself be shot at, they will not hear the murdering piece. Such meekness is worse than mopishness. God did not give the soul these wings in vain.

On the other side, if our affections are tempestuous, and rise too high, they threaten to overturn both ourselves and our neighbours. A passionate man is, like the torrid zone, too hot for any to deal with him, or to dwell near him. The work therefore of meekness is to keep the affections within their bounds; so to moderate this fire that it may warm, not flame out to burn itself and others. He that is

inebriated with passion is unfit for any action; like Samson's foxes, he scattereth firebrands abroad, to the hurt of all that are near him. Alexander, in his anger, flies upon his best friend; Parmenio himself must perish by that wild fire; Cato's best emperor was he qui potuit imperare affectus, that could keep his own passions in subjection. When one said he was a wise king that was kind to his friends, and sharp to his enemies; another said, he was a wiser prince, that could retain his friends in love, and make his enemies like them. The Spirit of God gives us a mark to know a wise and noble man by: 'Who is a wise man and indued with knowledge amongst you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom,' James 3:13.

Two particulars offer themselves to our view out of this verse.

1. That meekness is a sign of a wise man. The world counts them only the brave spirits, that scorn to suffer the least affront, and who will repay a single injury with double interest; but these in God's accounts are fools. What a fool is he that suffereth (his passion) that which should be his servant to become his master, and to tyrannise over him? What a fool is he that, perceiving a musket discharged, will not stoop a little, or fall down a while to avoid the bullet, but keep his place and height to the loss of his life? Truly, such a fool is he that will never yield to another's wrath. Is not he a fool that, seeing a fire in his neighbour's house, anger in his neighbour's heart, is so far from helping to quench it by the water of mildness, that he throweth more fuel on it, and increaseth its flame, even to the burning down of his own? is not he a fool that ventureth his inestimable soul at every trifling cast, and runneth headlong upon the greatest hazards? Surely it is not without reason the wise man speaks so often of a fool's wrath, and that anger resteth in the bosom of fools, Prov. 27:3, and 17:12, &c. 'A wise man deferreth his anger, lest it burn with too hot a

flame,' Prov. 29:11. He will draw back the brands, lest the fire exceeding its bounds should consume him. How many have been thrown, nay, utterly overthrown, by laying the reins upon the neck of their brutish passions, when their persons would have been safe, had but their passions been curbed! Charles the Sixth, king of France, was mad for anger and desire of revenge on the Duke of Brittany. Excess of wrath cost Ajax his life, if the poet may be believed. Sylla, in the height of fury, vomited up his blood and his breath together, saith the historian.<sup>2</sup> When such winds blow, they raise black and dark clouds. A furious man hath few friends; like Ishmael, his hand is against every man, and every man's hand is against him. The heron's name in Hebrew signifieth to be angry, and it is observed scarce any fowl hath so many foes; the eagle preyeth upon her, the fox catcheth her in the night, the hawk destroyeth her eggs. How foolish is the bee, that loseth her life and her sting together! she puts another to a little pain, but how dearly doth she pay for it!

The greatest conquest is to overcome ourselves, and the vilest bondage to be our own slaves, Prov. 16:32. He that is most mild, is most manly. It sullied the glory of all Cæsar's valour and victories, that he was his own vassal. It is the glory of a man to pass by offences. Those dogs which were presented to Alexander, by the king of Albany, were counted the best in the world, and upon this account, because they were so noble as not to stir at all, when small beasts were brought to encounter them;<sup>2</sup> and through an overflowing of courage would never fight, save with lions and elephants. Those men, without question, are far from true worth, and most ignoble, who upon every supposed petty wrong, fly to the common law, or civil war, for revenge. By the laws of England, a nobleman hath this privilege, that he cannot be bound to the peace, because it is supposed that a noble person will scorn to engage himself in quarrels, but keep the peace without a bond. It is the base and vile

bramble, the fruit of the earth's curse, that teareth and renteth what is next it.<sup>4</sup>

Plutarch reports of a falling out between two famous philosophers, Aristippus and Æschines, and how, after some time, Aristippus went to Æschines, saying, Shall we not be friends before we be a table-talk to all the town? Yea, with all my heart, saith Æschines. Remember then, saith Aristippus, that though I am your elder, yet I sued for peace. True, replied the other, I acknowledge you the better and worthier man; for I began the strife, but you the peace. In this pagan glass, many Christians may see their own deformities; for even heathen agree with Scripture in this first particular, that they are most wise and prudent who are most meek and peaceable.

2. The other which floweth from the forementioned verse, is, that the Christian's meekness must be mixed with wisdom. The apostle calls it meekness of wisdom; meekness opposeth fury in our own quarrel, not zeal in God's cause. The same Spirit that appeared in the form of a dove, appeared also in the form of fiery tongues. It may be my duty to be silent when I am wronged, but it is sinful not to speak when God is reproached. Though I may compound for my own debts, yet I have no power to compound for another's. It is a singular mark of a saint, to be wet tinder when men strike fire at himself, and touchwood, when men strike at God. The meekest man upon the face of the earth, was the fullest of fury in the cause of heaven, Num. 12:2; Exod. 32. A skilful musician knoweth when to strike a string of a lower sound, when of a higher. A wise Christian knoweth when to abate, when to increase, his heats.

Naturalists observe of bees, that they will ordinarily suffer any prejudice when they are far from their hives, and their own particular is only concerned; but when they are near their hives, that

their commonwealth is engaged in their combats, they are furious, and will lose their lives, or conquer. Thy work, O Christian, is not to abate the least of God's due, but to pocket up many private injuries, and to forgive thy personal debts. Be not like some, as cold in God's cause as if they had neither sense nor life; and as hot in their own, as if their work were to make good the opinion of Democritus, that the soul is of the nature of fire, nothing else but a hot subtle body, dispersing itself into fiery atoms. Excess of fury is a spiritual frenzy, and it is ill for them who come within the biting of such mad beasts.

I have read of Themistocles, that, having a house to let, he pasted on the door, Here is a house to be hired, that hath a good neighbour. It is a great comfort to dwell by a pious and meek person, but no small cross to live near the peevish and passionate. A meek man is a good neighbour in these respects. For,

1. He is so far from wronging others, that he will forgive those that wrong him. He is not only contrary to them who, like furious curs, fall upon every one that passeth by, without the least cause, but also if he be wronged, he never studieth revenge, though he may seek sometimes for justice. The world hath learned of the devil to offer injuries, and he hath learned of God to suffer injuries. He dares not usurp God's throne, but leaves his cause to the judge of all men, Lev. 19:18. He knoweth also that good men must have their grains of allowance; and children of the same father are too prone to quarrel, therefore he beareth both with the bad and the good; with the former for Christ's sake, with the latter because they are Christ's seed. Now such a one is a good neighbour. Calvin said, though Luther should call him Satan, yet he would honour Luther as a faithful servant of God. It is reported of Cato, that when a rash, bold fellow struck him in the bath, and some time after came to ask him pardon, he had forgot that he had been injured, *Melius putavit non agnoscere, quam*



ignoscere, saith Seneca. He scorned to approach so near revenge, as acknowledge that he had been wronged. It is below a generous moralist to take notice of petty affronts; he kills such slimy worms by trampling on them. The Christian, upon a better consideration, destroyeth those vermin with the foot of contempt. He hath experience what millions of pounds are forgiven him by God, and therefore out of gratitude cannot but pardon some few pence to man: 'Forgiving one another, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you,' Eph. 4:32. He knoweth that he needeth favour from others for his offences against them; he doth not always walk so carefully, but some time or other he hath bespattered those that went near him, and it is but just that he should allow that pardon which he expecteth:3 Eccles. 7:21, 22; Tit. 3:2, 3, 'Shewing all meekness towards all men; for we ourselves were sometimes foolish, living in malice, and envy, hateful, and hating one another.' The Lacedæmonians were wont to pray in their public service, that the gods would enable them to bear private wrongs with patience.

2. A meek person will part with much of his right to buy his peace. Where he may not wrong his family too much, nor dishonour his God, he will yield far to preserve or purchase a friend. Though his privilege be superior, yet he can be contented to hold the stirrup to others, and give them place. Abraham was the elder and the nobler man, yet he offereth Lot his choice of the country, and was willing to take what he would leave.

## SECTION VI

Secondly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness in thy dealings with all men, look not only to the manner of thy dealing, but also to the principle. Thy righteous, courteous, and meek carriage must

proceed from obedience to God's command. Many of the heathen, as thou hast heard, were just in their contracts; they would as soon die as deceive. Now, how wouldst thou know whether thou exceedest them, but by a principle of conscience from which thou actest? If pagans and Christians be found travelling in the same path, the only way to difference them, is to inquire whence they both set out, and whither they are going; what is the principle from which they act, and what is the end of their journey. According to the principle of a man, such is his end. If the barrel of the musket be crooked, it will never carry the bullet right; therefore thy principle must especially be minded. There be many things that move orderly, and yet their motion is not from a principle of life; as a mill moveth by reason of the water, yet is no living creature. An outward principle of custom, or fashion, or glory, may make a man just and patient in his actings; many do the things commanded, not because they are commanded, but upon some sinister account. Morality and Christianity differ especially; the moralist worketh from nature, a little refined by study or education; the Christian from nature, thoroughly renewed by the Holy Ghost. Where this spring is wanting, no motion can be true; be the fruit never so fair to the eye, if the root whence it groweth be not good, it will be unpleasant and distasteful. Laban at the last was just in his agreement with Jacob, but shame, not conscience, was the curb that held him in. Such dealings, like fruits which are ripened by art and force, are not kindly, neither be they acceptable to the heavenly taste. Indeed, all such righteousness is unrighteousness, and all such persons, though they are just to men, and do them no wrong, yet are unjust to God, and deprive him of his right.

The true Christian's righteousness towards men proceedeth from the fear of his God: 'The former governors (saith Nehemiah) were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, besides forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over

the people: but this did not I, because of the fear of God,' Neh. 5:9, 15. The dread of the Most High was the hedge which kept him within his bounds.

Look therefore, friend, to the ground of thy dealings. Nothing will be commendable in God's eye, which doth not flow from his awe; if the desire to keep up thy name, or to please thy neighbour, whose good word thou valuest, be the main reason of thy righteousness, thou servest thyself, but not thy God. He is a false servant who payeth the debts his master appointeth him, but more in his own name, and lest he should be counted a cheat, than because of his master's command. Thou art a true servant, if therefore thou darest not deceive men, because thou darest the just and jealous God. Joseph encourageth his brethren to expect fair dealings from him upon this ground: 'Do this and live, for I fear God,' Gen. 42:18—i.e., Ye need not fear unrighteous actions at my hands, since the fear of God is in my heart. As long as this guard is set upon me, I shall do violence to no man. It was a pretty answer of Xenophon's, when Lælius told him that he was a timorous fellow, because he durst not play at dice with him. Very timorous indeed, and fearful to do evil.

Thirdly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness in thy dealings with men, let thine end and aim in thy dealings be good. Have an eye in them, not only to thine own temporal good, (this is low and mean,) but chiefly to the glory of God, and the spiritual good of thyself and others. Christians must not deal together as Indians, merely for trade and outward advantage. It is but a beggarly calling to trade only for the dirt and pebbles of worldly profit; but it is high and honourable to be a merchant for the diamonds and pearls of spiritual riches. The heathen and the Christian both may meet in the manner of their dealings, but they part in their ends. The thief and the honest countryman are both found riding in the same road, but

they have different ends therein, and that distinguisheth them. He is a dwarf indeed, and looks very low, whose eye in such actions is wholly upon earth. True saints soar aloft, and have more noble designs in their ordinary dealings, Mat. 5:16. Like the moon, they enlighten others with their borrowed brightness, and endeavour to their power to reflect their beams back to the sun, the fountain of their light.

How ungratefully doth he slink away, that dieth and returneth no glory to his Father, neither raiseth up any seed to his elder brother: 'I seek not mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved,' saith St Paul, 1 Cor. 10:33. He hath cause to fear his own going to heaven, who would go thither alone; true favourites desire their king may have many loyal subjects. Every creature almost is of an assimilating nature: fire turneth what comes near it into fire, earth changeth what we commit to it into earth, water moistens what it meets with, stones grow and spread in the veins of the earth, even flowers and herbs will be scattering their seed for the increase of their kind. Good men cannot but desire and endeavour that all they converse with might be like themselves in goodness. The first blessing which God bestowed on man after his creation was this, 'Be fruitful and multiply.'

How industrious are Christ's enemies to spread their poison, and draw men from their allegiance to him! I have read of a Jew who turned Turk, how, shortly after, in buying grapes, he fell out with a Turk and beat him soundly, whereupon a certain Jew asked the abused Turk why he would suffer himself to be so much wronged. The Turk answered, You shall beat me as much if you will turn Mussulman. It is too visible that Rome's agents are also sufficiently active to make proselytes to their idolatries, and wilt thou sit still and do nothing towards the gaining of subjects to thy Lord and Saviour?

Holy David was more diligent to enlarge the borders of Christ's than of his own kingdom: he would blaze God's honour and power before the highest, and not shrink for shame, Ps. 119; and the success of his industry is considerable. Though great fish are seldom caught by such angles, yet king Hiram came to be converted to God by his converse with David.

It is likely, reader, thou dealest with sinners; thy first care must be that thou mayest not partake of their sins. It is reported that at Belgrade in Hungary, Danubius and Sava, two famous rivers, the one pure, the other filthy, meet, and yet their waters mingle no more than water and oil; not that either float above the other, but both join unmixed, so that near the middle of the river, saith my author, I have gone in a boat and tasted the Danow as clear as a spring, and, putting my hand an inch farther, I have taken of the Sava, as troubled as the street channel, tasting the gravel in my teeth; thus they run together unmingled sixty miles. So shouldst thou in thy contracts and dealings with the wicked keep thyself pure and undefiled. Thy next care must be to make them better; a meek, gracious carriage may win them to Christ. Some fish have been caught with a golden hook; sometimes by parting with a little of thy right, by losing a little silver, thou mayest gain a precious soul. He that always stands strictly and stiffly upon his right, may thereby wrong both God and his gospel. Heavenly-mindedness, shining in a Christian's dealings with profane men, hath such a beauty in it, that it attracteth at the first sight the eyes of every beholder, like the sudden appearance of a candle in a dark room. 'As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men,' Gal. 6:10. An opportunity to do good to others is a great mercy to ourselves. The oil of grace, like the widow's, 2 Kings 4:6, increaseth by pouring out; an opportunity is a special season which God affordeth us for the benefit of our own and others souls. When time and helps meet and marry, their offspring is opportunity. Thou

dealest with those at one time whom thou mayest never see again; possibly their hearts being big with sin, they bring forth in thy presence either swearing, or slandering, or mocking at holiness. Now God gives thee an opportunity, by a prudent, affectionate reproof, and by serious savoury advice, to kill those brats of hell as soon as they are born, and to make the parents barren in regard of such a cursed brood for ever after, which if thou neglectest thou shalt never have again. The bird of opportunity is usually upon the wing; she flieth away of a sudden, and we never see her again; therefore, whilst thou hast her, make the best use of her. Thou thinkest, it may be, that thy counsel to such men would be but cast away, as pure water in a nasty sink; but do thy work, which is to endeavour their conversion, and leave the success, which is God's work, to him, Benhadad's soldier drew a bow at a venture, and his arrow pierced within the joints of the harness and slew Ahab; the man shot the arrow at he knew not who, but God levelled it at the king amongst all the company. Do thou draw the bow according to thy duty, and God may so direct the arrow of admonition as to make it enter the sinner's heart, and let out the very life of his sin. Sometimes things are done best on a sudden; Tiberius was happier in his extempore speeches, than those which he made upon study and premeditation. Thou mayest, as Philip to the eunuch, fall in with a person on a sudden whom thou never sawest before, nor shalt ever see again, and by seasonable counsel be instrumental to his eternal comfort. It may be thou meetest with such as do believe, then thy care must be to build them up; saints must be landmarks to direct others in the way to life. Apollos was a stranger to Aquila and Priscilla, but coming into his company they expounded to him the way of God more perfectly, Acts 18:25. The members of the mystical body must be helpful to one another. Christians, with whomsoever they converse, ought to endeavour either their gaining to, or growing up in, Jesus Christ. Alexander's body was of so exact and rare a constitution, saith the

historian, that it perfumed every place where he came. The gracious soul, being itself filled with spikenard, and calamus, and cassia, and all sweet spices, may well leave a sweet savour among the persons with whom he converseth; they are dead and withered grains of corn, out of which there doth not one ear spring up.

**A good wish of a Christian in relation to his dealings with all men, wherein the former heads are applied**

The living and eternal God, whose I am, and whom I am infinitely bound to serve, whose unquestionable dominion over me calleth for universal subjection from me, having commanded me in his word to be holy as he is holy, in all manner of conversation, and to walk by rule in my commerce with men, as well as in my immediate converse with his glorious majesty, I wish in general that I may make religion my business, not only in my sacred duties, but also in my civil dealings; that I may trade with God in divine performances as if men saw me, and traffic with men in human affairs as knowing that God beholdeth me, and herein daily exercise myself to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards all men, Acts 24:16. I wish, in particular, that my earthly actions may never clash with, or encroach upon, my heavenly calling; that I may not endanger the loss of religion in the throng and crowd of outward dealings, but may be so limited and directed therein by God's law that all my works may be worship; and when I am labouring for my body and family, I may be furthering the good of my soul and my eternal felicity; that as my chief natural quality, reason, commandeth in my lower actions of eating and drinking, so my supernatural excellency, religion, may bear sway in every passage of my life. Lord, who hast given me a perfect rule, and appointed me to order my life in all things according to it, be pleased to write all the laws in my heart, that I may be tender of both tables—love thee with all my soul

and strength, and love my neighbour as myself, for thy sake. If one link of the golden chain of thy commands be broken, the whole is dissolved; they love one another too well to part company: where one precept is wilfully despised, all are disobeyed. Thou hast said it, He that breaks one is guilty of all. Oh, enable me to be as universal in my conformity and duty as thou art in thy mercy and bounty, for then shall I not be ashamed, when I shall have respect to all thy commandments! Ps. 119.

I wish that the soundness and integrity of my heart may appear in the cleanness and purity of my hands. The sound will speak what metal the bell is of; the flowers that shew themselves above ground will declare the nature of the root which lieth hid. How often doth the face discover the faults of the vital parts! If my tongue and speech be double, my spirit cannot be single; if my actions be unrighteous, my inward man must needs be irreligious. How grossly do I delude myself, if I presume that I am holy because I mind the first table, if I be dishonest and live in the breach of the second! When there is so much religion in the duties of the second table that there can be no religion without them, my deceitful heart is apt to suggest that it is but a small matter if I should supplant my brother, and that there is no such need of care in my ordinary outward carriage. But my sovereign, to whom I have sworn allegiance, hath told me in the word of truth, Mat. 23:23, that justice and mercy are the weighty matters of the law, and hath commanded me, Micah 6:8, to do justly, and to love mercy throughout my whole life. Oh that I might never allow myself in the breach of those precepts, which in the world's blind judgment are the least of his commands, and by my pattern teach men so, lest I be found at last the least in the kingdom of heaven! Lord, thou hast enjoined me to keep thy law as the apple of mine eye, Prov. 7. I know a small thing will pain, a little dust will offend mine eye, but thy law is infinitely more tender; thy word forbids and



condemneth the smallest wandering; the very conception of sin in a vain thought, much more its birth in an unrighteous action, is abominable and odious to it. Thou hast commanded me to keep thy precepts diligently. Oh that my ways were directed to keep all thy commandments! Though I abound, and am never so strict in thine ordinances, if I be careless and loose in my contracts with men, thou canst espy the evil constitution of my soul notwithstanding such painting. Thou canst see the rottenness of my heart in the rottenness of my wares, under the false gloss I put upon them; and if thy moral precept find not obedience with me, my spiritual performances will never find acceptance with thee. The pie, a speckled bird, whose feathers were white and black, was unclean. Should I seem pious in those duties which concern thy worship, and yet be perverse in my dealings with men, I am in thy judgment a wicked person. Thou hast said of such, 'Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?' Micah 6:11. If there be iniquity in my hands, there is hypocrisy in my heart. How clearly doth a person that picketh and chooseth his food, (liking this, and loathing that, though never so wholesome,) prove a foul stomach! and how fully do I demonstrate secret filth in my inward parts if I pick and choose amongst the food of my soul, the precepts! When the soul is clean and sound, every command will be sweet; if my heart be sincere, all my dealings will be square. Oh, let me never be like those Pharisees, who made long prayers for a cover, that they might prey the more closely upon their neighbours; but let thy Spirit in my heart send up the sap of grace into every branch of my life, that all the passages thereof may abound in the fruits of righteousness, and I may esteem all thy precepts, concerning all things, to be right.

I wish that the glory of religion may be so dear to my heart, that I may render it amiable to the eyes of others, by walking every way suitable to my profession. The name of my God is holy and reverend,

and shall I offer it to reproach? Some write that the Jews would not foul their mouths with that unclean word of blaspheming God, but always expressed it by a contrary word of blessing God. If it were so execrable that they hated to speak it, shall I be so vile as to act it? It were a sin to wrong a man of his good name; what is it, then, to rob my God? If I dress myself in the livery of Christ, and in that habit wallow in the mire of unrighteous dealings, I give up the blessed Redeemer to the scorn and derision of the world. Every one that nameth the name of Christ should depart from iniquity. The colours of Christ, which I wear, cause many to look upon me; every professor is like a city on a hill, visible to all. Spots are sooner seen in scarlet than in sackcloth; blots appear fouler in a strict professor than in a loose and profane person. None wonders to see swine dirty; but to see the ermine's beautiful skin bemired is prodigious. How watchful are the wicked to observe my wanderings! All my familiars watch for my halting; they mark my steps when they watch for my soul. If they can find the least tincture of falseness in my words, or colour of unfaithfulness in my works, they soon make it much greater, looking on it through the spectacles of malice. How quick do they post it abroad, and publish it amongst their companions! 'I hear the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it.' What a shame was it, that the great Turk should take the violated covenant of the Hungarian king out of his bosom, and present it to the blessed God as the act of those that wore his livery, and professed themselves his servants! When those that should be the beauty of Israel are slain in the high places, and those that, by their profession, are the mighty, fall in the streets, they soon tell it in Gath, and publish it in Askelon; the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, the sons of the uncircumcised triumph; then the banks of blasphemy are broken down, and the floods of scoffs and scorns come pouring in. Ezek. 36:20, 'And when they went among the heathen, they profaned my holy name, when they said to them,

These are the people of the Lord.' How doth the world conclude? Surely the parents are very bad whom their own children discommend so much! Certainly there is little love, or power, or faithfulness in their father, when his own sons dare not trust him for a little food, but go up and down to steal and filch from others. Oh, how ordinary is it for the profane to throw the dirt of professors' sins on the face of their profession! None give such wounds to the credit of the blessed God, as some who pretend to be his own children. The higher the place is whence a stone falls, the deeper it pierceth; no blows more mortal than those of a thunderbolt. My profession is high; if my practices be vile and base, I strike religion to the very heart. Oh, let me never be so vile a traitor, as by my sordid courses, like Judas, to betray the holy Jesus to the buffetings and mockings of his adversaries! Why should I harden the bad, by my sinful shifts, in their wickedness? Shall I be the devil's broker, to put off those rotten wares for him, of cozening and cheating, which otherwise might lie upon his hands? Why should I sadden the good? Shall I cause them to hang down their heads with sorrow, as the patriarchs did theirs, when the cup was found in Benjamin's sack? Lord, thou art tender of the reputation of thy chosen, and hast many a time wrought wonderfully for their renown and credit. When the wicked world hath blown upon their names, endeavouring to blast them and make them unsavoury, thou hast magnified thy power to vindicate their honour; and shall I make thy glorious name contemptible, when thou makest my vile name honourable? Can I be so void of love to thy Majesty, as to tread upon that name of thine, that is more worth than heaven and earth? Besides, many a season I have pleaded thy name in prayer, and that with success. My voice hath been in the behalf of my own soul: 'For thy name's sake, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great. Thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore, for thy name's sake, lead me and guide me;' Ps. 35, and 31:13. When thou hast answered me, 'Behold I, even I, am he that blotteth out thine

iniquities for my name's sake; I will defer mine anger for my name's sake, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off,' Isa. 48:9. Oh, how many a blessing hath thy name been—both the orator to procure, and the messenger to bring! when many others have treated to little purpose that that hath been the undeniable ambassador to prevail for peace and pardon. Thy name hath been my shelter in many a storm, and my supply in many a strait; and shall I be an enemy to that which is so great a friend to me? Can I be so unworthy as to cause others to trample this great favourite at heaven's court under their feet? Hath not the polluting thy name been the argument which I have sometimes used for the perdition of thine enemies. I have cried to thee, 'Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O Lord, and that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name;' and shall I be guilty of that which I plead as a reason for others' ruin? Again, my daily prayer is, 'Hallowed be thy name;' and shall my practices give my prayer the lie, and profane it? Should I cheat and cozen, as the men of the world, my great profession would cause my sin, like a cart heavy laden, to make deep furrows, into which many might trip and fall. How ordinary is it for Egyptians to follow the dark side of the Israelites' pillar to their perdition! Foolish man that I am, is not the burden of my own sins already intolerable, and shall I add to them by being partaker of other men's sins? Is the river of wrath due to me so slow, so little, that I must invite streams from every place to swell it into an ocean? Oh that for my own sake, for the sake of other men, and especially for thy sake, I may order all my ways by thy word! Lord, preserve me by thy Spirit, that I may never lay a stumbling-block before the wicked, nor, as the unbelieving spies, by my distrust of thy providence, and using indirect courses to relieve my family, bring an ill report upon the good land. Assist me, that I may look not only to the power of religion, but also the honour of religion; let thy grace ever accompany me, and enable me to keep a conscience void of guile

before thee, and a conversation so void of guilt before men, that whereas they speak against me as an evil-doer, they may be ashamed at this day, and may, by my good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

I wish that I may look to the righteousness of my actions, as well as to the righteousness of my person, and never think that my house can be firm, if it be built upon the rotten foundation of injustice. My God hath said, 'Woe be to him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong.' As high as my house is raised, and as sure as it is seated, the breath of this curse will blow it down. Though my estate seem never so fair, yet how easily and how speedily may this scorching curse cause it to fade, and to wither in my hands as a flower. Have not mine eyes beheld the ruins of some stately dwellings, which have been built upon rapine? Unrighteousness, like rabbits in some countries, hath undermined the foundations, and overturned the buildings; and shall mine escape? Whether I will believe it or no, my God hath spoken, that unjust gain will prove my own loss, and he will see it accomplished. Whatsoever fine terms I may call my cheating by, as an art in my trade, or the mystery of my calling, yet my God counts it theft, and me for it but a thief. Though I may put a fair colour upon my false dealing, yet he forbids it under the plain censure of stealing: 'Thou shalt not steal.' And oh, how great a thief am I, if I be guilty of this in my ordinary dealings! I wrong my neighbours that trade with me, and that most hypocritically, under the pretence of doing them right. To kill a man in the field by force is wicked; but to poison him at my table by fraud is worse, because in this latter I pretend friendship. To rob on the highway by open power is grievous; but to rob in my shop by this hellish policy is more odious, for I wrong one that is my friend, and in such a way, that he hath no means to help himself. The righteous God saith, 'My hands are full of blood,' Isa. 1:15, not only

when I murder a man's person, and take away his life, but also when I injure a man's portion, and take away his livelihood. Such unjust persons must expect sore punishments. The law of man punisheth cheats in some measure; but the law of the jealous God is more severe to such jugglers as endeavour to unglue the whole world's frame, knit together only by commerce and contracts.

I rob my own family as well as my neighbour's. He that is greedy of gain, troubleth his own house. False dealing, like fire, consumes what comes near it. My children were better be left beggars, than heirs of those riches which I have got by robbery. What is well-gotten will fare the worse for the neighbourhood of my ill-gotten wealth. This, as a rotten sheep, will infect the sound flock. Whilst I am digging deep, to lay the foundation of my house sure, I do but lay in barrels of powder to blow it up.

I rob my own soul most of all by my unrighteousness. How ill is that gain which causeth the loss of my God! How cheap do I sell those wares with which I buy endless and intolerable woe! How dear do I buy that silver for which I sell my inestimable soul and salvation! Ah, what an ill market doth he make, that puts off his soul at any price! If it be unprofitable to gain the whole world and lose my own soul, what a fool, what a madman am I to set my soul to sale for a very small part of the world! Into what a miserable dilemma doth my deceitful dealing bring me! Either I must repent and vomit it up, which will tear and rack my very heart, or else I must burn for ever in hell. Oh that I might never be so bereaved of my wits, as to touch or meddle with such distracting wealth! Lord, thou hast informed me that, 'A little which the righteous man hath, is better than the possessions of many wicked,' Ps. 37:16; that 'better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right,' Prov. 16:8. I know that the comfort of my life doth not depend upon a confluence of

outward good things, but upon thy love and goodwill towards me. Let me rather choose the greatest want, than riches from Satan's hands, and in hell's way. Be thou pleased to sparkle my little with the precious diamond of thy love, and then it will be better indeed than the riches of many wicked, yea, more worth than all the world.

I wish that, in my buying and selling, I might ever have an eye to the balance of the sanctuary. My person must be tried by Scripture at the last day, for my everlasting life and death; and shall not my actions be squared by it at this day? How sad a bargain should I make, if I should buy my own bane! What a dreadful trade should I drive, to sell, like that son of perdition, the incomparable Saviour for a little corruptible silver! Is that wealth worth getting, which will make way for eternal want? Though my heaps swell never so much by unlawful means, yet it is but like the swelling of the dropsy, a presage of death. O my soul, what will it avail thee to be rich here, and to be a beggar hereafter, and that for ever? Thou pretendest to purity, but thy God tells thee that holiness and righteousness are like husband and wife, joined by him together, and none may part them asunder. Thou art unsound in all thy sacred duties, if thou art unrighteous in thy civil dealings. When the unjust dealer is cast into the unquenchable fire, what will become of the great professor? 'What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God shall take away his soul?' Job 27:8. When the thief is taken and carried to the jail, all the money he hath stolen is taken from him. When death seizeth thee, and sendeth thee to the prison of hell, all thy ill-gotten goods must be left behind. When thou art lost eternally, what will become of thy unjust gains? Thy children may be ranting with it on earth, and thou art roaring for it in hell. Ah, what dear contracts dost thou make, to sell thy present peace, and thy future endless joy, for a little perishing pelf! The comfort of thy life now consisteth in communion with thy God; but he that saith he hath fellowship with God, and

walketh in darkness, is a liar, 1 John 1:6. Thy God hates to taste of those waters which run out of such musty vessels; much less will he suffer any of such rotten hearts, and stinking breaths, to draw near to him in heaven. 'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?' 1 Cor. 6:9. No such cattle shall ever come into the celestial court. Unrighteous heathens shall be shut out of heaven, and surely, then, unrighteous Christians shall be cast into the lowest hell. Oh, let the fear of thy God ever possess thee, that the love of this world may never pollute thee! Manifest thy love to thy Saviour, by loving thy neighbour as thyself. Blessed God, who lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity, the sceptre of whose kingdom is a righteous sceptre, who will render unto every man his righteousness, and who hast appeared to me by that grace which teacheth me to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live righteously in this present evil world, let thy good Spirit fill me with all the fruits of righteousness. Do thou so lead me in the paths of equity, for thy name's sake, that I may follow after righteousness, and inherit a sure reward.

I wish that I may be righteous in every relation wherein I stand, and towards all persons with whom I deal, that I may give to superiors the things that are theirs, to inferiors the things that are theirs, lest by denying either I rob all. My God is no respecter of persons, but just in all his ways, and righteous in all his works. When shall I imitate his blessed Majesty? He tells me, 'Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doth righteousness at all times,' Ps. 106:3. If I expect the blessing propounded, I must mind the righteousness enjoined, and that is to be righteous at all seasons. O my soul, what encouragement hast thou to do justly upon all occasions! Thy righteousness shall have a large recompense. Thy children may fare the better: 'The just man walketh in his integrity, and his children are blessed after him,' Prov. 12:7; nay, thy whole family. The voice of joy



and salvation is in the tabernacle of the righteous. Whereas thou mayest fear that thy plain dealing may bring thee and thine to poverty, thou hast his promise, that he will make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous, Job 8:6. Above all, thou thyself wilt have the greatest solace. Thy righteousness shall answer for thee in time to come; and whereas the dishonest wealth of others is a corroding worm to gnaw their consciences, thy justice will afford thee present comfort. 'In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare; but the righteous doth sing and rejoice,' Prov. 29:6. Ah, who would not sow righteousness, when he shall certainly reap so much mercy! Though others, as if they had pitchy hands, take to themselves whatsoever they touch, to the defiling of their own souls, and, like whirlpools, suck in all that comes near them, to their own destruction, do thou mete out all thy dealings by that royal measure: 'Whatsoever thou wouldst that men should do to thee, do the same to them; for this is the law and the prophets.' When thou art buying or selling, or about any bargain with thy neighbour, reflect upon thyself: Would I be glad to be thus dealt with? Were I in this man's case, would I be willing that he should serve me as I serve him? Am I as plain-hearted, as true, as just in my carriage towards him, as I would desire him to be in his trading with me? Would I be contented to be defrauded? Should I take it well to be defamed? Is this action of mine such as I could be contented to receive the like? Do I in this business love my neighbour as myself? Lord, who hast promised that the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance in this world, and shall shine as the sun in the other world, and who hast put the unrighteous, and lovers of themselves, in the front of that black list which is for the unquenchable fire, 2 Tim. 3:2, do thou deliver me out of the hands of mine enemies, that I may serve thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life, Luke 1:75.

I wish that I may mind righteousness in my words, as well as in my works, and not dare to hide deceitful and foul intentions under fair and fawning expressions. To say what is true, and to be true to what I say, is the property of a true Christian. My God is a God that cannot lie, Titus 1:2; his people are a people that will not lie, Isa. 63:8. If I therefore be found a liar, how unlike am I both to God and his people. 'Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but they that deal truly are his delight,' Prov. 12:22. Though lying lips may be perfumed with sweet words to men, yet God smells the stench, and loatheth the ill savour of those rotten inwards whence they proceed. And though truth may beget hatred from men, such sweet breath is his love and delight. He is the God of truth; his law is the truth, Ps. 119:142; his gospel is the word of truth, Col. 1:5; his Son is the true and faithful witness, Rev. 3:14. Oh that truth of heart, truth of words, and truth in deeds, may be all in me, which are so agreeable to the true God, and so acceptable to the God of truth! Can that tongue lie so loud to men, which even now called so loud on God? Shall those hands be filching in my neighbour's pocket, which were so lately lifted up to heaven in prayer? Is my speech given me for my glory, and shall it be the drivelling of a devil, that father of lies? Lord, let me in all my dealings choose rather to be a loser than a liar; and let that be my character which thou hast given of the citizens of Zion, that I may never lift up my soul to vanity, nor swear deceitfully, but walk uprightly, work righteousness, and speak the truth in my heart, Ps. 24:3, and 15:2.

I wish that I may be courteous, as well as righteous, towards all with whom I converse. Humanity is a debt which I owe to all mankind; why should I therefore, as some proud men, dam up and contract my civility into so narrow a compass, that it shall swell into flattery towards my superiors, and not suffer one drop to descend towards inferiors! I would not, as formalists in fashion of habits or outward vesture, discover the lightness of a carnal mind; nor like hypocrites,

by composed actions, or artificial gesture, manifest the looseness of a frothy spirit; but as a prudent, yet serious Christian, be so affable in my carriage, that I may be the more acceptable in my counsel for the good of others' souls. Humanity doth cast a lustre to attract the eyes and hearts of others. Courtesy is commendable, and an adorning adjunct to sanctity. Holiness is honoured by the attendance of this handmaid. Grace is rendered more lovely, when it is accompanied with a kind nature. It is pity that jewel should not ever be in this soft velvet cabinet. One end of my trading must be to commend to others the excellency of spiritual wares, and to encourage them to buy the truth; but if my behaviour be morose and unkind, I shall fright men from being my customers, and inflict on myself part of Nebuchadnezzar's penalty—separate myself from amongst men, by forcing them to withdraw from me. If my language be fierce, and my looks frowning, I may deter men from my company, but shall never allure them to Christ. Where the carriage is sour and pouting, the counsel will never be sweet and prevalent. Oh that I might never disadvantage religion by any rugged disposition, but by the kindness of my nature may do a real kindness to grace, and become all things to all men, if by any means I might save some. Yet I would not be so courteous to others, as to be discourteous to myself; I mean, be so courteous to sinners, as to comply with them in their sins. It is far better that the world should count me uncivil, than the Lord should esteem me ungodly. Let me be an enemy to their corruptions, when I shew myself most friendly to their persons, and never be so much a courtier as to forget that I am a Christian. Lord, who hast commanded thy people to be kindly affected one towards another, teach me to shew the true affection of my heart in the kindness of my tongue and hand. Courtesy is as salt, and drieth up these ill-humours which are distasteful to others, and will make my counsel the more savoury. Thine angels themselves used salutations in their occasional converses with mortals. Give me to do thy will on earth, as it is done

by those noble courtiers in heaven; for I believe that they were in heaven when they were discoursing with thy chosen on earth. Grant me so much gracious good manners, as by my prayers to send the next man I meet, even all I deal with, to thee. Let me bestow the alms of some hearty ejaculation, as well as the outward expressions of The Lord be with you, upon them. Yea, let me, for thy sake, be kind and gentle to all men, that I may draw them to thyself: yet suffer me not to be so friendly in my words, as to have fellowship with any in their wickedness, but help me to dispense even my civilities by a standard measure, lest what I intend as shy net to take other souls, prove Satan's trap to catch mine.

I wish that I may be both so just as not to offer injuries to others, and also so meek as to suffer with patience what others offer to me. The world will never leave its old haunt of persecuting them that are holy; it is natural for wolves to hate and devour sheep. If I were of the world, I should be one of its darlings, for the world loveth its own. My God hath called me from it, and chosen me out of it, therefore it hates me. I need not marvel at its malice, when it did spit its venom at the author of its being, and took away life from him who gave life to it. The servant is not above his master, nor must the disciple look to fare better than his Lord. If the soft pillow of meekness be not laid on my back, I shall never bear the burdens of their calumnies and cruelties with the least comfort; what pain doth such vinegar cause when it meets with the raw wound of an impatient spirit! The more mad the world is, the more meek I had need to be, if I would enjoy myself; besides, there may be fallings out amongst the best friends. Good men are not all of the same stature, nor all of the same temper; some are like broken bones—if but touched, they fret and fling. How full are some of jealousies and suspicions, which would soon be increased by my passions; and that spark which might be extinguished by my lenity, is blown into a flame by my fury. Some

are sickly and in constant pain, others are under some smarting providence; some offend me upon mistake, and though others should do it out of malice, yet even they also call for my pity more than my passion. The best have need of pardon from man as well as God, and shall I, who want it more than others, not allow it to others? Alas! what harm do I get by others' heats? The air when beaten is not injured, no, not so much as divided, but returns to its place, and becomes thicker than before. The sharpest words cannot wound me, if I do not put my hand to the weapon. All those tongue-squibs of reproach which the malevolent world throw at me, will go out alone, and die of themselves, if I do not revive them. My well-grounded patience will, as a walking-staff, preserve me from many a fall whilst I travel in rugged ways.

The distracted world indeed judgeth him the bravest fellow that will not pocket up the least affronts; but the wisest man that ever was, nay, the only wise God, tells me, 'The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit,' Eccles. 7:3. O my soul, whom wilt thou believe?—the world, that long since hath lost its wits, and must ere long, for its frenzy, be fettered with the chains of everlasting darkness in the bridewell of the bottomless pit, or that God to whom angels themselves are comparative fools, Job 4:18. Oh be not hasty to be angry I for anger resteth in the bosom of fools, Eccles. 7:4. What a fool art thou to break thy own bones, to give another a smart blow! A furious man is like Tamar, who, to be revenged of her father-in-law, defiled him and herself with incest. Revenge is a thief that steals away a man's estate from the lawyers. It is of the nature of the viper, and eats out the bowels of that wealth which gave it birth. What a fool am I to defame myself! That rancour and spleen which I spit at others, is like his that spits against the wind, driven back into my own face, to the besmearing of my credit amongst all that are judicious. What a fool am I to destroy my own grace, my own peace!

What flowers of holiness will grow, where such locusts abound.? what fruits of righteousness can thrive in such a scorching climate? what good work can be done within-doors if the house be in a flame? How unfit is a man in a passion to go to God in prayer? surely no more than a person that comes reeking and sooted from a kiln is for the presence of his prince. I must not expect to meet God in a duty, if my spirit be in a fury. A righteous man fallen down before the wicked is like a troubled fountain, Prov. 25:26. I seldom fall down more foully before wicked men, than when I render reviling for reviling, and revenge for revenge; but then how unfit am I to fall down in holy duties before my God, for I am as a troubled fountain; and if men will not drink of the water of a fountain, though in itself pure and wholesome, when it is troubled and muddy, can I think that my God will drink of that vessel that runs thick. Oh that I might never, because others are my enemies in defaming me, become my own enemy, in defiling my own soul, and hindering it of that comfort which it might have in divine communion. Lord, who art the God of peace, let me be known to be one of thine, by being a son of peace; enable me to pass on, like a wise traveller, in the way of thy commandments, and not to be stirred at the barking of those dogs that pursue me with open mouth. My confident neglect will soonest make them quiet; let me never break the peace but in the quarrel of truth. Give me, for peace sake, sometimes to part with my right, but never with my righteousness. Let the same mind be in me which was in Christ Jesus; teach me from him to be meek and lowly in heart, and yet to be eaten up with the zeal of thy house. Make me willing to suffer, but not to have thy name suffer. Grant me to follow peace with all men, and holiness. Oh bestow on me that wisdom from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and though hardly provoked, yet easy to be entreated.

I wish that those beautiful children of righteousness, courtesy, and meekness in my carriage, may have the Spirit of God for their parent; I mean, that the fear of my God may be the principle from which they flow. I shall lose the race, how well soever I run, if I do not set out at the right place. Men look only to my practices, and accordingly judge of my principle; if my life be without fault, their charity tells them that my heart is without fraud. But God's eye is on my principle, and accordingly he judgeth of my practices; if my affections be not gracious, he knoweth that my actions cannot be righteous. My God knoweth me through and through; he spieth the rottenness and crawling vermin that are in the bowels of a painted sepulchre. If I be like a peach, with a craggy stone in my heart, under the cover of a velvet coat, he understandeth it altogether. I may cozen the dark eyes of men, who, when they behold the inoffensiveness of my life, and the height of my profession, are ready to cry out of me, as Samuel of Eliab, when he saw the comeliness of his countenance, and the height of his stature, 'Surely the Lord's anointed is before him,' 1 Sam. 16:6, 7. But I cannot deceive God; he seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. Alas! if I have no more to shew for my title to heaven than a fair outside, what have I more than a hypocrite, nay, than some heathen! A few flourishes in a paper or parchment is but a poor evidence for an inheritance. How many be there in the world, who, as some revelling gallants, by their gay clothes, and gaudy attire, speak that they are worth thousands, when they have not a penny in their pockets; who, by their outward conversations, seem to be rich in grace, when indeed, like Laodicea, they are poor and miserable, and blind and naked! Oh that all my fruits of righteousness might grow upon the root of holiness, and spring from a renewed nature! Then, and not till then, they will be acceptable to my Saviour; then my beloved will come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits. I would be mindful of these moral duties, because my God commandeth

them, and as knowing that I cannot be religious if I be not righteous. Though the sensitive soul may be without the rational, as in beasts, yet the rational soul is never without the sensitive. Though righteousness towards men may be without holiness, yet holiness before God is never without righteousness before men. Lord, thou expectest and commandest that I should act both for thee, and from thee; thou valuest the vessel, not by the ballast of a few good actions, which a heathen may gather up at any port, but by the freight of a sanctified heart, which is peculiar to thy chosen. Let my obedience to the second table arise from my conscience of the first table; that whilst the righteous, friendly, and meek carriage of others, that runneth along amongst those with whom they converse, is little better than puddle water in thine esteem, because it proceedeth from the sinks of their natural and defiled hearts, justice may not only in my actions run down like water, and meekness in my conversation like a mighty stream, but be so fed with, and flow from, the spring of thy Holy Spirit dwelling in my heart, that it may be delightful, and of worth in thy sight.

I wish that I may design somewhat for my God in all my dealings with men, and carry myself the more sweetly and circumspectly, that I may gain their affections, and thereby win them to the greater love and liking of religion. Christianity is my calling, and wherever I go, my duty bindeth me to be always furthering it. It was one article which I sealed to, when I first entered myself Christ's servant, to endeavour the making others proselytes to his service; and if I neglect it, I am unfaithful to my Master, and forfeit my indenture. My pattern may with some be very prevalent. If I shine with a virtuous life, I am as a lighthouse set by the seaside, whereby mariners sail aright, and avoid dangers; but if I pretend high, and walk loosely, as a false lantern, I shipwreck those that trust me. My holy life is a good lecture of holiness to others, which, if written in a



fair character, will invite those with whom I converse, both to read it, and to learn it; my advice may to others be very advantageous. If in the morning I sow the seed of some savoury counsel, and in the evening withhold not my hand, though carnal reason tells me it is cast away upon barren earth, which will make no return, yet my God can cause it to spring up richly. Possibly other particular callings may depend on mine, and thereby many persons for their livelihoods, under God, on me; now what an opportunity of doing them good, of serving my Lord, and of furthering my own account, is put into my hands! How willing are those who have their dependence on me, to model themselves to such a form as will best suit my temper! Though they are as hard as rocks to others, they are as soft as wax to me; and shall not I labour to imprint the image of my God upon them! Oh that, by those cords which bind their civil interest, I might draw them to a consideration of their spiritual estates, and let them know that there is but one way of approving themselves to God and me! How false am I, if I do not improve the ground I have got in the hearts or hands of any for the honour of my Master! Enlightened souls are all liberal to disperse their rays for the good of others. How busy are most men to propagate that quality which is predominant in them! The scholar would have his companion learned, the courtier his associate handsome in his carriage, the soldier his comrade valiant; and shall not I endeavour that my friends be virtuous? Nay, how diligent are the devil's agents to spread the poison of vice amongst all with whom they converse! Though they find sin already thriving, yet they think it not enough to nourish those ill weeds which grow so fast of themselves, but even sow new seeds of oaths, and cozening, and profaneness, as if their mutual commerce did oblige them to diffuse their venom to each other, and as if it were a dishonour to the tradesman to go to hell without his customers and chapmen. O my soul! dost thou not blush at thy own backwardness in bringing souls to thy God, when the emissaries of hell are so

forward? Do they devise wickedness continually? Prov. 6:14; search out iniquity; yea, accomplish a diligent search? Ps. 64:6; leave no means untried, no ways unattempted, but study and search narrowly for fit seasons, when they may convey their infections to others, and communicate their plague-sores with the greatest success? and wilt not thou, as a liberal man, devise liberal things, sit down and contrive how thou mayest give counsel to poor sinners, administer comfort to poor saints, to the best advantage of their souls? Shall Satan go about, seeking whom he may devour, and wilt not thou go about seeking whom thou mayest recover out of the snares of the devil? Though grace sets bounds to thy conscience, yet it doth not to the love of thy God. If the love of thy God be without limits, will not thy desires and endeavours to exalt him be as large? It is his favour to trust thee with any talents for his honour. Opportunities of doing him service (which now and then he affordeth thee) are precious; the stump of time remaineth, when the branches of opportunity are lopped off. In times of scarcity, men pick up all the grains of corn, that none be lost; he that in a dearth gives his corn to his beasts, is himself a brute.

Seasons for the advancement of thy Saviour, and the soul-advantage of thy brother, are rare, and wilt thou throw them away upon vain talk and needless toys? David could say, Is there none left of the house of Saul, to whom I may shew kindness for Jonathan's sake? And mayest not thou say, Is there none left of the household of faith, or belonging to it, though now aliens from it, to whom I may shew kindness for Jesus' sake? Ah, Lord! whence is it that my soul is so backward in sending beggars to thy gate? Am I ashamed to let the world know how much I am indebted, and what bountiful alms I have there received? Art thou so bad a Master that I should blush to tell others to whom I belong, or afraid that, if I should commend thee to them, and send them to thee, they would find me false? Surely to

sit at thy feet, and to wait at thy gate, is infinitely more honourable and comfortable than to sit on the highest worldly throne, and to be waited on by the greatest earthly princes. What, then, are the fetters that hinder me from running to invite others to thy gospel feast? Do I fear that thy house will not hold us all, or that the inheritance of thy saints, being divided amongst so many, the lesser share will fall to me? No, I believe that in my Father's house are many mansions, that there is room enough and to spare for all thy righteous ones, and that my sight of thee, the true Sun, will never be the less pleasing and refreshing though millions of worlds should enjoy thee. If ever it be true, it will be there, The more the merrier. An innumerable company, which all thy creatures cannot number, may draw water with joy out of the well of salvation, and yet there not be one drop the less. Where still is the fault that I am so unfruitful, and do not encourage others to enter themselves in thy family? Am I the fig-tree which thou hast cursed, and said to, Never fruit grow on thee more? or is it not rather my wicked heart of unbelief that tells me, Godliness is grown with most but a dead commodity, and if I offer to put it into my chapman's hands, my own wares will go off the worse? How often hath it suggested to me, that to commend truth to my customers will be the way to lose my trade; that I must not follow holiness too close at the heels, lest it dash out my brains; that it is to no purpose to persuade men to godliness, and that I do but lose my labour in all my counsels and admonitions to others! This unbelief, Lord, is the traitor which is such an enemy to the crown and sceptre of thy dear Son. Oh, let it please thy Majesty to execute it speedily! Why should this worm lie gnawing at the root, and hinder my soul from glorifying thee, by bringing forth much fruit? Is not my soul a vine of thine own planting? Thou broughtst her out of Egypt, a state of bondage and slavery to sin and Satan, and she is come up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved. Why doth this boar of the wood waste her, and this wild beast of the field devour her, even this evil heart of

unbelief, whereby she departs away from the living God? Return, I beseech thee, O God of hosts; look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; fence it by thine almighty power, prune it by thy providence, water it with the showers of thy grace, and so quicken it with the beams of thy favour that it may bring forth much fruit to thy glory.

I wish that I may, like Enoch, walk so with my God in all my actions, whilst I walk amongst men, that in thy good time my soul may be translated, and I may not see death, either as the wicked in this world do, with terror, or as the damned in the other world do, in torment, to their everlasting woe. Lord, thou art Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord my righteousness; be pleased to clothe my person with the robe of thy Son's imputed righteousness, that my nakedness may not appear before men and angels, to my eternal shame; let all my actions be covered with the garment of thy Spirit's imparted righteousness, that they may be acceptable and amiable in thine eye. Let thy grace so fill my heart that godliness may be visible in my hands, and I may thereby draw others towards heaven. Thou hast said, Behold, I make all things new; what wilt thou then do with this old corrupt nature of mine? Oh, renew that, or nothing will be new to my comfort. O God, create a clean heart, and renew a right Spirit within me. I know the time will come that thou wilt create new heavens and new earth, wherein shall dwell righteousness. My body is the earth, and my soul is the heaven which thou hast already made; but might thy servant prevail with thy Majesty to create my soul thy new heavens, and my body thy new earth, wherein may dwell righteousness, how infinitely should I be bound to thy distinguishing mercy! Thy hands have made me and fashioned me; oh give me understanding, that I may keep thy commandments! Were my soul bespangled with the glorious stars of thy graces, and my body embroidered and curiously wrought, so as to be the temple

of thy Spirit, then indeed thou mightst reflect upon what thou hadst made with complacency; for, behold, it would be very good. Hast thou not made the great world for man, and the little world, man, for thyself? When shall I be so pure as to invite thy presence, and so sanctified as to be set apart from all others, and to be only for thy service? Oh, make it appear that I am thy workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which thou hast before ordained that I should walk in them. If thou pleasest to set forth this heaven and earth, this little epitome of the creation, in a new edition, I know it would be done in so fair a character as to delight thine eyes, and to ravish the hearts of all that behold it. It is confessed the copy was perfect when it came out of thy hands; there was no unrighteousness or impatience, not the least blot or blemish in it; but my parents, who transmitted the book to the world, through their unfaithfulness, filled it from the beginning to the end with errors. Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image, Gen. 5:3. The first sheet went off the press, through his cursed falseness and negligence, imperfect, and full of faults, and the many millions that followed have still retained the same defects. Yet, Lord, since thy Son was at the cost of a new impression, let it please thee, for his sake, to be at the pains of correcting this volume so effectually, that those who look into it may read righteousness, courtesy, meekness, faith, humility, patience, heavenly-mindedness, printed in so large a letter, free from the former errors, that they may so like it as to embrace and imitate it. Oh then I shall be assured that, at the general resurrection, when thy last hand shall pass on me, and I shall be published in the newest and last edition, none of those blots and blurs wherewith I have defiled it shall be found in it, but thy image shall be printed on me in such a lovely character, and in so perfect a manner, that thou wilt delight in me, and I in thee, for ever and ever! Amen.

## CHAPTER II

### **How Christians may exercise themselves to godliness in the choice of their companions**

Secondly, Thy duty is, to make religion thy business, and to exercise thyself to godliness, in relation to thy company. Man, saith the great philosopher, is ζῷον πολιτικὸν, nature's good-fellow—as one Englisheth it, A creature in love with company. Cosmographers observe, that the farthest islands of the world are so seated, that there is none so remote, but that from some shore of it another island or continent may be discovered, as if nature hereby invited countries to mutual commerce. God never intended that the world should be a wilderness, nor the chief inhabitants thereof, as barbarous beasts, to live alone, lurking in their dens. Monks, and nuns, and hermits, who, under pretence of sanctity, sequester themselves from all society, are so far from more holiness, and being better Christians, than others, that they seem to have put off the very human nature, and not to be so much as men. Unclean, nasty persons, love to be always private, and by their good will, would neither see, nor be seen of others. Birds of prey fly always alone, and ravenous brutes come not abroad till others are retired, Ps. 104:23. Our very senses speak that God would have us sociable; nay, it is the natural voice of our tongues; for our speech, and hearing, and sight, would be in a great degree lost, and our Maker's end in giving us those organs and instruments for converse much frustrated, if every man should immure himself in his own cell. The graces and spiritual riches of saints would, in some measure, be useless, if they did not deal with some to whom they might distribute them. The law of man

condemneth engrossers of external goods; and the law of God condemneth engrossers of spiritual good things. They who study to monopolise all to themselves, undo others. As the world shall never want poor men, that the wealthy may always have objects of charity, and opportunities of laying out and improving those talents which are committed to their trust; so the world shall never be without needy Christians, that those who are rich in grace may have fit objects and occasions of employing their gifts. The moralist's axiom is right, *Omne bonum quo communius eo melius*; Every good thing is so much the better, as it hath many sharers in it. In this sense, there is a truth in that, It is not good for man to be alone; not that it was a formal evil, but inconvenient. Infinite wisdom hath so dispensed his gifts and graces, that no man is so sterile, but he hath something wherewith to profit others, nor any man so furnished and fruitful, but he standeth in need of others' help. The head cannot say to the foot, much less the foot to the head, I have no need of thee. The king himself, who seemeth to have least want, cannot subsist without the meanest workmen, even them that grind at the mill: 'the king is served by the field,' Eccles. 5:9.

Company is both comfortable and profitable. The pelican avoideth other birds, and keeps alone, but her tone is always sorrowful. Christians walk more merrily in the way of God's commandments, when they have many fellow-travellers; Christian discourse doth so enchant the hearts of the passengers, that God's statutes are their songs in the house of their pilgrimage. A partner, though it be in misery, is a mercy; and to have one to sympathise with us in our sufferings, is no small ease. The way to prevent the flying in pieces of these vessels, filled with the most piercing sorrows, is to give them vent, by opening ourselves to others. This made David bewail the want of such friends: 'My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore, and my kinsmen stand afar off.' Haman sings, or rather sighs,

to the same doleful tune: 'Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness,' Ps. 38:11, and 88:18. Besides, there is as much profit as comfort in companions. The Vulgate read that which we translate company, Job 16:7, the members of my body, because associates, as members of the same body, are serviceable to one another; as the several parts of the same building, they help to bear up each other in their proper places, which, if divided, would all fall to pieces. They never walk long, being soon weary, whoever walk alone. Many houses in the city have such weak walls, and are so slightly built, that if they stood several in the open fields, they would not stand a year; a high wind would easily tumble them down, which now, standing in streets together, receiving support from, and returning it to others, continue many scores of years. Thus many Christians would be easily overthrown by the storms of temptations, were they single and solitary, who resist them with courage, and come off with victory, being assisted with their companions. But this benefit ariseth not from every companion; some are like coals, which, instead of warming us, do black, nay, burn us. It is better to travel alone, than with a thief. Better is a blank than an ill filling; bad humours infect the blood, and evil men infect the soul. It is better, though it be melancholy, to travel alone, than with them who lie in wait for our blood. He is no better than distracted, who knowingly goeth with them that will lead him into by-paths, to his ruin. Though God did not like that Adam should be alone, but intended him a companion, yet it was such a one as was a meet help. Beasts were no fit companions for Adam, nor those whom God calleth and counteth beasts, for Christians. Cato, being desired by a voluptuous wretch, that he might live with him, answered, *Cum eo vivere non possum, qui palatum magis sapit quam cor*, I care not for living with him that hath more skill in his meat than in his mind. Therefore, reader, I shall—



1. Speak to the choice of thy companions.

2. To thy carriage in company.

In order to the first particular, I would offer thee some motives, that I may quicken thee to care in thy choice, and then direct thee about it.

## SECTION I

First, Consider of what concernment the choice of thy companions is to thee. They will either be great helps, or great hindrances, according as thy choice is right or wrong. Antisthenes wondered at the folly of those who were curious in buying but an earthen dish, to see that it had no cracks, and careless in the choice of friends, to take them with the flaws of vice. A friend is called the friend of our bosom. A companion is taken into our bosom; and surely men had need to be wary and wise what they take into their bosoms, whether saints or serpents, a disciple or a devil. We can converse frequently with nothing, but it is insensibly assimilating us to its own predominant quality. Waters vary their savour according to the veins of the soil through which they slide. Brutes alter their natures answerable to the climates in which they live. Men are apt to be changed for the better or worse, according to the conditions of them with whom they daily converse;<sup>2</sup> the election therefore of our companions is one of the weightiest actions of our lives, our future good or hurt dependeth so much upon it. It is an excellent speech of Chrysostom, If men, good and bad, be joined together in a special band of society, they either quickly part, or usually become alike. This made the mother of Alexander, the twenty-sixth emperor of Rome, keep a guard of men continually about, that no vicious persons might come to him to corrupt him.

If thy choice be bad, thou art in a double danger, of sin and suffering.

1. Thou art in danger of being drawn to sin. They who dwell in Ethiopia quickly change their skins into a black colour. It is ill and unwholesome for our souls to breathe in an infectious air. Looking-glasses that are very clear and clean, are quickly obscured and dimmed with the foul breath of such as blow upon them. The river Hypanis, famous for the sweetness of its water, by receiving the bitter waters of the fountain Erampes, is poisoned. Joseph learned the court phrase, to swear by the life of Pharaoh, by his living amongst them whose tongues were tipped with such language. David was brought to feign himself frantic, and to dissemble, as if he could have fought against God's favourites, and sheathed his sword in the bowels of his friends, by associating with uncircumcised Achish. If Peter needlessly thrust himself among the high priest's servants, how soon is he taught, even with a curse and an oath, to deny his Master! Men, like children, come in time to speak the wicked language and cursed dialects too of the country and company in which they dwell. 'Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go,' saith the wise man. But mark, reader, his reason, 'lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.' The love of friends may quickly breed a love to their faults; and so, by getting a friend, thou gettest a snare to thy soul, Prov. 22:24, 25. If thou wouldst avoid the contagion of sin, avoid all needless communion with sinners. He who walks much in the sun is tanned insensibly. Wicked men will be likelier to make thee worse, than thou to make them better. Israel could not bring Egypt to worship the true God, but Egypt brought Israel to offer sacrifice to their false god. It was from them that the Jews sucked that poison which cost both them and their posterity so dear. The golden calf was first fashioned in the iron furnace. The tyrant Mezentius tied the living bodies of the captives to the dead;<sup>2</sup> the dead stunk up the living, but the living could not

quicken the dead. Lewd men are continual weights, pressing down others to wickedness. How few live in Venice but grow lecherous? or in Spain, but become proud? or in France, and are not fantastic? or among the Dutch, and do not drink in both their deceitfulness and their drunkenness? It is natural for men to put on the fashions, be they never so wicked, of the country or company wherein they abide. It is said of Rome, He that goeth thither once, shall see an evil man; if he like so well as to go a second time, he shall gain his acquaintance; but if he go a third time, he shall bring him home with him. The mind, like Jacob's sheep, receiveth the tincture and colour of those objects that are presented to it. Sin is a gangrene, which, if it seizeth one part, quickly spreadeth and infecteth the other parts which are near it, 2 Tim. 2:17. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump, whether it be the leaven of error, or of scandal, 1 Cor. 5:7; Gal. 5:9. Sinners are plague-sores, as the LXX read λοιμοὶ, pests, Ps. 1:1, which we translate scorers, that convey the contagion to all their companions. A little wormwood will embitter much honey, and one sinner destroyeth much good, Eccles. 9:18. Of a certain prince of Germany it is said, *Esset alius si esset apud alios*, He would have been a better person, if he had but been with better companions. An unclean, leprous person under the law, tainted whatever he touched; therefore God would have him distinguished by his bald head, his torn habit, and his habitation apart, that all might avoid him. And what is the gospel of it, but that men should avoid the scandalous, infectious sinner, lest they be defiled with his sin. The Nicopolites so hated the braying of an ass, that for that cause they would not endure the noise of a trumpet. Reader, if thou hatest every false way, according to thy duty, if every sin be loathsome to thee, I doubt not but thou wilt be far from loving the cup in which this cursed potion is, I mean the sinner's company. Those that company much with dogs, may well swarm with fleas. God tells Israel, 'Thou shalt not make a covenant with them, (meaning the Canaanites.) They shall

not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me,' Exod. 23:32, 33. There is great prevalency in evil patterns. Evil precepts persuade, but evil patterns compel men to sin; 'lest they make thee sin against me.' The Pelagian error is, that no sin came in by propagation, but all by imitation; but it is an experienced truth, that sin is much spread and increased by example. It is common to sin for company, and that cup usually goeth round, and is handed from one to another. At least, evil company will abate the good in thee. The herb of grace will never thrive in such a cold soil. How poorly doth the good corn grow which is compassed about with weeds! Cordials and restoratives will do little good to the natural body, whilst it aboundeth with ill-humours. Ordinances and duties are little effectual to our souls, whilst Christians are distempered with such noxious inmates. It is said of the mountain Kadish, that whatsoever vine be planted near it, it causeth it to wither and die. It is exceeding rare for saints to thrive near such pull-backs. It is difficult, even to a miracle, to keep God's commandments and evil company too; therefore, when David would marry himself to God's commands, to love them, and live with them, for better for worse, all his days, he is forced to give a bill of divorce to wicked companions, knowing that otherwise the match could never be made: 'Depart from me ye workers of iniquity, for I will keep the commandments of my God,' Ps. 119:115. As if he had said, Be it known unto you, O sinners, that I am striking a hearty covenant with God's commands; I like them so well, that I am resolved to give myself up to them, and to please them well in all things, which I can never do unless ye depart; ye are like a strumpet, which will steal away the love from the true wife. I cannot as I ought obey my God's precepts, whilst ye abide in my presence; therefore depart from me ye workers of iniquity, for I will keep the commandments of my God. Sometimes saints are ashamed to shew themselves whose servants they are; sometimes they are afraid of giving offence to their friends or neighbours of the synagogue of

Satan; some snare or other the great soul-hunter catcheth them in, when he finds them amongst his own, that they shall refrain their mouths from all good, while the wicked is before them, Ps. 39:3. They who touch the fish called torpedo, lose their senses, and find their members so benumbed for a time that they cannot stir them. How often hath spiritual sense been taken away and grace been, as it were, in a swoon by the noisome vapours, and filthy exhalations, that have arisen from ungodly companions! How many of them, like the pine-tree, with their shadow, hinder all other from growing near them! A conjurer in Tindal's presence could not shew his cheats, but confessed there was some godly man in the room that hindered him. A Christian who thrusteth himself into vain fellows' company cannot do the good, shew the grace he should, and may acknowledge ungodly persons to be the cause. A tender person used to warm chambers, coming into the open air, finds his members chilled and unfit for action. Oh what a damp hath many a Christian found to come upon his spirit, by his conversing with those that are wholly carnal! Antisthenes would frequently say, It was a great oversight in men that would purge their wheat from darnel, not to purge their commonwealth from lewd persons.

2. Further, thou art in danger of suffering, as well as of sinning with them. The wheat hath many a blow for being amongst the chaff. The gold would not be put into the fire, if it were not for the dross with which it is mingled. God loves his saints so well, that he sometimes saveth sinners temporally for their sakes. Holy Paul was the plank upon which all that sailed with him got safe to shore; the grass in the alleys fares the better for the watering which the gardener bestoweth on his flowers in the banks. Israel is a blessing in the land of Assyria, Isa. 19:24. The whole world will stand the longer, because Christians bear up the pillars thereof. But God hates sinners so much, that even his own people, being amongst them, have suffered temporally with

them. Lot chose wicked Sodom for a pleasant habitation; but what did he get by it, when he was captivated with its inhabitants, and afterwards forced to leave that wealth, which drew him to love it, to the destroying flames? Josiah, though peerless for his piety, was not spared when he joined with the Assyrian, but his league with them cost him his life. When two are parties in a bond, though one be the principal, both may justly be cast into prison. It is ill being in a felon's company when the officer of justice overtakes him; he may come to suffer for the treason, who harbours and abetteth the traitor: 'A companion of fools shall be destroyed,' Prov. 13:20. The apostle St John, saith the ecclesiastical historian, finding Cerinthus, a blasphemous heretic, in the bath, and some others as bad as he, departed away presently, lest divine vengeance should find them together. Nay, the very heathen had some sense how unsafe it was to associate with vicious men. When Bias was in a ship amongst a wicked crew, and a storm arising, they cried aloud for mercy; he bade them hold their peace, and not let the gods know they were there, lest the ship should be sunk, and all perish for their sakes.<sup>2</sup> When the great ordnance of wrath shattereth a wicked man in pieces, the force of it may strike down those that are next him. 'We command you, brethren,' saith the apostle, 'in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother who walketh disorderly,' 2 Thes. 3:6. The word withdraw is an allusion to mariners' heedfulness to avoid rocks and sands, lest they should be ruined by them. They who would not shipwreck themselves, must decline both sinners' courses and company. The psalmist would not eat of their dish, lest he should pay their reckoning; 'let me not eat of their dainties, nor drink of their cup.' He durst not be so familiar as to feed with them, lest he should afterwards fare as they. Friend, as thou wouldst not suffer with sinners, take heed of sitting with them.

It is enough to bring a man into suspicion at court to be intimate with one whom the king hates. Entireness with wicked persons, saith one, is one of the strongest chains of hell, and binds us to a participation both of sin and punishment. When the deer, pierced with the arrow, and pursued by the hounds, runneth to the herd for shelter, they will not admit her amongst them, out of a principle of self-preservation, lest the dogs, in fetching her out, should fall on them. If thou wouldst not have, divine judgments to attack thee, beware of being found amongst them who are marked out for vengeance: 'Come out from her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues,' Rev. 18:4. It was dangerous being near those who were to be cast into the fiery furnace which Nebuchadnezzar had made. The men that took them up were scorched to death. Clemens Alexandrinus tells it as the world's saying, If a fish that is taken break the snare, and get away, no other of that kind is taken that day. How many that, through mercy, have been given to ill company, and broke the snares, have told us the mischief thereof afterward. Let their example make thee fearful of such snares. Some tell us that swallows would not fly into Thebes, because their walls were so often beleaguered; and wilt thou run into that company which is always besieged with God's thundering curse? Oh take heed with whom thou strikest friendship, for when the breath of God's anger overturneth the house of the drunkard or swearer, the houses of their next, though best, neighbours, may fare the worse for its fall. Let me give thee the same advice which physicians do their friends, touching persons infected with the plague,—Cito, longe, tarde: speedily shun their company; fly far away from them. Let it be long, even till their sores be healed, before thou returnest to them again, for it may be truly said of evil companions, what one saith of Romney Marsh, It is bad in winter, hurtful in summer, good never.

If thy choice be good, it will redound very much to thine advantage. It is no small happiness to have him for thy friend who is a favourite in heaven's court. Elisha offered it as a great kindness to his courteous host, 'Shall I speak for thee to the king?' This favour thou mayest expect in a greater measure from thy Christian friend. He will speak for thee to the King of kings, and send many a rich venture for thee into the other world, whence the return will be certain, and the gain superabundant. Oh it is good to have an interest in that heart which hath an interest in heaven! The great apostle begs hard, as upon his knees, for a share in the saints' prayers. Seldom hast thou heard a starving beggar so importunate for a piece of bread, as he is to be a partner in their joint stock: Rom. 15:30, 'I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together in your prayers to God for me.' And what is the reason? Truly Paul knew that united force was stronger, that such persons' prayers would be prevalent ambassadors to obtain the errand they were sent about. The father who denieth or delayeth a single child, when several of them together desire favour, granteth it speedily. It is hard to turn stones into bread, to fetch meat out of the eater, affliction; yet the saints' prayers have been helpful to do it. 'I know that this,'—i.e., great tribulation,—'shall turn to my salvation through your prayers,' Phil. 1:19. A good companion is a rare jewel, and of great value. It is observable that Moses, proceeding by degrees, ascendeth at last to the highest step of persons that may win upon us, and nameth friends as the top of all, and dearer than all relations: 'If thy brother, or son, or daughter, or wife, or friend, which lieth in thy bosom, which is as thine own soul,' Deut. 13:6. A godly friend is a choice book, out of which we may learn many excellent things, and a precious treasure, whereby our souls may be enriched with virtue: 'He that walketh with the wise shall be wise,' Prov. 13:20. They who walk with them that are strong-scented with grace, must needs receive somewhat of its savour. The very sight of



that holiness which shineth brightly in their works will kindle thy spirit, and enlarge thy mind with an honest emulation of their worth. If,—as some credibly relate of Persina, the Ethiopian queen, by seeing the fair picture of Perseus and Andromeda, she was delivered of a fair child,—the frequent view of a fair picture hath such an operation upon the body, as to cause an Egyptian woman to bring forth a beautiful child, surely thy constant beholding the amiable image of the blessed God in thy pious companion, may have such an energy on thy soul, as to assimilate thee to its own nature, and help thee to bring forth a lovely issue, a Jedediah, whom the Lord loveth. The ground is the more fruitful which is near such trees of righteousness, for the dunging and dressing which the good husbandman bestoweth on them. When a friend of Phocion's would have cast himself away, Phocion suffered him not, saying, I was made thy friend for this purpose.

Reader, if thou hast any truth of grace, thou wilt, above all things in the world, value God's presence; but if thou wouldst find him, it must be amongst his people; they are his habitation, where he always resides. Joseph and Mary sought Jesus amongst his kindred. If thy soul have any longing after the holy Jesus, the best way to find him is amongst his disciples, for they only are his kindred. He stretched forth his hands towards his disciples, saying, 'Behold my mother and my brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother,' Mat. 12:50; Luke 2:44.

Secondly, Consider, the choice of thy companions will discover thy condition. It is a Spanish proverb, Dime con quien andis a dezirte he quien eres, Tell me with whom thou goest, and I will tell thee what thou art. Sylla shewed the vileness and viciousness of his disposition by his companions, which were, Roscius, a maker of common plays;

Sorax, a prince of scoffers; and Metrobius, a singing man. It is easy to know to what house some persons belong, by their usual walking with those of the same family, either children or servants. It will be manifest to others, whether thou appertainest to the household of God, or the synagogue of Satan, by those with whom thou delightest to associate. The sheep of Christ do not love the company of unclean and unsavoury goats. Augustus Cæsar found out the temper of his two daughters, by observing their company at a public show, where much people were present; at which time his daughter Livia discoursed with grave and prudent senators, and his daughter Julia joined with loose and riotous persons.<sup>2</sup> The Lacedæmonians, inquiring after the dispositions of their children sent abroad to school, only demanded of their masters to what playfellows they were linked, whether those who were studious and serious, or such as were wanton and vicious, not doubting but they were suitable to them in their natures, whose fellowship they fancied. Many, if they walked alone, would be thought, by reason of their rich clothes, men of better estate than they are, and others meaner than they are, by reason of their mean attire, who yet both are discerned of what rank they be by their companions.

"Dulce quidem dulci se adjungit, amaraque amaris,

Acre perinde acri accessit, salsum quoque salso."

It is said of the apostles, that being dismissed from the council, they went πρὸς τοὺς ἰδίους, to their own, or to their proper and peculiar friends, so the original; we translate it, to their own company, because saints are a select corporation by themselves; their privilege or charter is peculiar, and so are their companions, and the persons interested in it. The citizens of Zion are a distinct company from the rest of the world; and when they can get loose from their persecutors,

they go to them of their own livery. The disciples were amongst the high priests and wicked men by constraint, and to their grief; but amongst their own only out of choice, and with their good-will. Birds of a feather will flock together. Servants of the same Lord, if faithful, will join with their fellows, and not with the servants of his enemy.

'Abraham sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles, (not with the Canaanites, the natives, though he dwelt amongst them, but,) with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise,' Heb. 11:9. When a man comes into an inn, you may give a notable guess for what place he intends, by the company he inquires after. His question, (Do you know of any travelling towards London? I should be heartily glad of their company,) will speak his mind and his course. If he hear of any bound for another coast, he regards them not; but if he know of any honest passengers that are to ride in the same road, and set out for the same city with himself, he sends to them, and begs the favour of their good company. This world is an inn; all men are in some sense pilgrims and strangers, they have no abiding place here; now the company they inquire after and delight in, whether those that walk in the broad way of the flesh, or those who walk in the narrow way of the Spirit, will declare whether they are going towards heaven, or towards hell. A wicked man will not desire the company of them who walk in a contrary way, nor a saint delight in their society who go cross to his journey. Can two walk together except they be agreed? They who walk together are supposed to have one will, because they are seen to have one way, Amos 3:3. When Elihu would prove Job to be bad, this is his argument: 'He goeth in company with the workers of iniquity, and walketh with wicked men,' Job 34:8. If Job did not follow their ungodly calling of working iniquity, or acting sin with art, as the word signifieth, you would not find him so much in their company. His doctrine was true, though his application of it was

false. A godly man may fall into wicked company by chance, but he never walks with such out of choice. He may be necessitated to dwell with them, but he cannot delight in them. To associate with the profane, is proper to the profane. As soon as Paul was sanctified, this was almost one of the first signs it appeared by: 'And Paul assayed to join himself to the disciples,' Acts 9:26. He that before was for the company of the high priests, and persecutors of the saints, when once converted, is for the company of the saints, though persecuted. He who before, as one mad with rage, breathed out nothing but prisons and slaughter against them; being now enlightened to see the beauty of their persons, and the excellency of their communion, assayeth to join himself to them.

The young partridges hatched under a hen, go for a time along with her chickens, and keep them company, scraping in the earth together; but when they are grown up, and their wings fit for the purpose, they mount up into the air, and seek for birds of their own nature. A Christian, before his conversion, is brought up under the prince of darkness, and walketh in company with his cursed crew, according to the course of the world; but when the Spirit changeth his disposition, he quickly changeth his companions, and delighteth only in the saints that are on earth.

He that would not be found amongst sinners in the other world, must take heed that he do not frequent their company in this. Those whom the constable finds wandering with vagrants, may be sent with them to the house of correction. Lord, said a good woman on her deathbed, when in some doubt of her salvation, Send me not to hell amongst wicked men, for thou knowest I never loved their company all my life long. David deprecates their future doom upon the like ground, and argueth it as sign of his sincerity: 'I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. I have hated the

congregation of evil-doers; and will not sit with the wicked. O gather not my soul with sinners,' Ps. 26:4, 5, 9—i.e., Lord, I have not loved the wicked so well as to sit with them for a little time, and shall I live with them for ever? I have not lain amongst them rotting on the earth; and wilt thou gather my soul with those sticks for the unquenchable fire of hell? Lord, I have been so far from liking, that thou knowest I have loathed the congregation of evil-doers. Do not I hate them that hate thee? Yea, I hate them with perfect hatred; and shall thy friend fare as thy foes? I appeal to thy Majesty, that my great comfort is in thy chosen. I rejoice only to be amongst thy children here, and shall I be excluded their company hereafter? Oh do not gather my soul with sinners, for the wine-press of thine eternal anger! Marcion the heretic, seeing Polycarp, wondered that he would not own him. Do you not know me, Polycarp? Yea, saith Polycarp, Scio te esse primogenitum diaboli; I know thee to be the first-born of the devil, and so despised him.

## SECTION II

Thirdly, Consider that there can be no true friendship betwixt a godly and a wicked person; therefore it concerneth thee to be the more wary in thy choice. He that in factions hath an eye to power, in friendship will have an eye to virtue. Friendship, according to the philosopher, is one soul in two bodies. But how can they ever be of one soul that are as different as air and earth, and as contrary as fire and water? All true love is, *Motus animi ad fruentum Deo propter ipsum; se et proximo propter Deum*,—A motion of the soul towards the enjoyment of God for himself, himself and his neighbours for God's sake; so that he can never truly love man who doth not love his Maker. God is the only foundation upon which we can build friendship; therefore such as live without him, cannot love us in him.

That building which is loose, without this foundation, can never stand long. A wicked man may call that profession he maketh to his brother by the name of love, but heathens can tell us that virtue alone is the hand which can twist the cords of love; that other combinations are but a confederacy, and all other conjunctions in hypocrisy. It is impossible that vitiated nature should move any other way than the principle of self carrieth it, which is directly opposite to true friendship.<sup>2</sup> Unfeigned love, saith Aristotle, is a benevolent affection, willing good to another for his own sake. How, then, canst thou expect the comfort of a friend from him who steereth wholly by the compass of self? He saith he loves thee; I am sure his lust hath more of his heart than thou hast. Either then thou must love the dog, his brutish lust, or he will tell thee shortly thou dost not love the master. If ever thou happenest to touch on his sore place, to tell him of his fault, (which thou art bound to do, if thou wilt be faithful to God, to him, and to thy own soul,) he will soon kick up thy friendship, and publish to the world that thou art an uncivil, saucy, and intolerable person. Such are like unwholesome meat, which can neither be detained in the stomach without danger of diseases, nor cast up without pain. By patching up a friendship with a carnal man, thou bringest thyself to this miserable plunge; either thou must turn caterer for his flesh, purvey for his sensual appetite, and provide the air of flattery (a more hellish wind than any the Laplanders sell) to feed theameleon of his pride, or else snap the bones and ligaments of friendship in sunder, which will not be done without some pain and regret on each part. Cardan tells us that he would never rend a false friendship in pieces, but fairly pick the threads by which it was sown together; but this is hard to do. Oh what folly is it to make choice of him whom thou canst not keep for thy friend without God's disfavour.

Reader, if thine end be good in desiring companions, thou wilt be wholly frustrated in it, unless thou art wise in thy choice. Canst thou think that he can love thee sincerely who is hypocritical in his love to his own soul?2 Jonathan was a true friend, and loved David as his own soul. So it is said of Basil and Nazianzen, *anima una, inclusa in duobus corporibus*,—a wicked man [will] quickly love thee as his own soul, but not in Jonathan's sense. He loved David as his own soul, according to a renewed and spiritual light, as one that saw the worth of his soul, and his eye affected his heart; but a wicked man hath no love to his own soul in this sense; he loveth (or rather seemeth to love it, by carking and caring to please and pamper it, for indeed he hateth) his dying flesh, but he careth not at all for his ever-living spirit, mindeth not whether it sink or swim for ever. Now is it likely that he should be a faithful friend to thee, to direct thee in thy doubts, reprove thee for thy faults, who is such a cruel enemy to himself? Such a one may scare birds, but he will never secure a Christian. As the dolphin, in a calm sea he is never from the sides of the ship; but if a tempest arise, he is gone. He may indeed shroud his private aims under the cloak of friendship, but this the very moralist will tell you, *non est amicitia, sed mercatura*, is only to make a trade and merchandise of one another. There may be fire in the pan, when there is none in the barrel of the piece; there may be a profession of love in his words, but there is no love in his heart. I cannot more fitly compare such a man's friendship than to some plants in rivers, which have broad leaves at the top of the water, but scarce any root at all. He may make a great show of love, and tell thee, You shall never know what I will do for you, and then he speaks true; but his high building hath no basis, his great profession hath no root, and therefore is rotten.

To be brief, reader, thou wilt easily grant that there can be no true friendship betwixt a man and a beast, their natures being so

differing. I must tell thee, it is more impossible for true friendship to be betwixt a true Christian and a carnal person, for their natures are more differing. The beast and a profane man differ indeed, yet are not contrary, nay, they are so much alike, that the sensual appetite is the predominant quality and commander-in-chief in both; only beasts are innocent subjects to it, as breaking no law thereby; but man, by being a slave to that usurper, is a traitor to his supreme Lord, and to his viceroy within him, reason. But a saint and a wicked man are contrary; consider them from head to foot, they stand both in defiance against each other. Their understandings are contrary; the one is light, the other is darkness; the one judgeth sin to be the greatest and most abominable evil, the other judgeth it to be a pleasant, eligible good. Their wills are contrary; the one is a resolved soldier under the captain of his salvation, fully set to lose his life before he will give up his cause, or leave his colours, the other is a sworn officer under the prince of the powers of the air, (an implacable enemy to the former general,) and stoutly bent to die, nay, be damned, rather than desert him. Their affections are contrary: the affections of the one, as fire, ascend upward, are set on things above; the affections of the other, like earth, tend downwards, and are set on things below. What the one loves above his life, the other hates unto death; what the one forsakes as worse than poison, the other followeth after as his only portion.

Are these two, reader, like to agree, and to be, as friends should, of one heart and of one soul? *Idem velle et idem nolle est vera amicitia*, saith the orator: It is true friendship to will and nill the same things. What kind of friendship must it be, then, between those that always will and nill contrary things? Let thy own reason be judge. If likeness be the ground of love, what love can there be amongst them that are wholly unlike? Oh, let not any carnal interest sway thee to choose Sodom for the place of thy habitation, much less to accept of God's



foe to be thy bosom friend: 'For what communion hath light with darkness? or what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?' 2 Cor. 6:14, 15. Like as the elements, according to Empedocles' opinion, are always at strife together, but specially those that are nearest, so godly and evil men are always at odds, but those especially that are nearest. The horse hath a natural enmity against the camel, and the camel against the horse; therefore Cyrus being to fight with the Babylonians, who excelled in horses, used as many camels as he could get. The sinner is like the horse, altogether unclean; the Christian is like the camel, (that cheweth the cud, though he divideth not the hoof,) is partly clean, partly unclean. Now, there being an enmity betwixt these, there can never be any society. The feathers of eagles, say naturalists, will not mingle with the feathers of any other fowls. Many complain of the treachery of their friends, and say, as Queen Elizabeth, that in trust they have found treason; but most of these men have greatest cause, if all things be duly weighed, to complain of themselves for making no better choice. He is right served, in all men's judgments, who hath his liquor running out which he puts into a leaking vessel or riven dish.

### **SECTION III**

I come now to shew wherein the power of godliness consisteth, or how a man maketh religion his business in the choice of his companions.

First, Be as careful as thou canst, that the persons thou choosest for thy companions be such as fear God. The man in the Gospel was possessed with the devil, who dwelt amongst the tombs, and

conversed with graves and carcases. Thou art far from walking after the good Spirit, if thou choosest to converse with open sepulchres, and such as are dead in sins and trespasses. God will not shake the wicked by the hand, as the Vulgate read Job 8:20, neither must the godly man. David proves the sincerity of his course, by his care to avoid such society: 'I have walked in thy truth; I have not sat with vain persons,' Ps. 26:5, 6.

There is a twofold truth—

1. Truth of doctrine. Thy law is the truth, free from all dross of corruption, and falsehood of error.

2. Truth of affection, or of the inward parts. This may be called thy truth, or God's truth, though man be the subject of it, partly because it proceedeth from him, partly because it is so pleasant to him, in which respect a broken heart is called the 'sacrifice of God,' Ps. 51:6. As if he had said, I could not have walked in the power of religion, and in integrity, if I had associated with vile and vain company; I could never have walked in thy precepts, if I had sat with vain persons. Observe the phrase, I have not sat with vain persons.

1. Sitting is a posture of choice. It is at a man's liberty, whether he will sit or stand.

2. Sitting is a posture of pleasure. Men sit for their ease, and with delight; therefore, the glorified are said to 'sit in heavenly places,' Eph. 2:6.

3. Sitting is a posture of staying or abiding, 2 Kings 5:3. Standing is a posture of going, but sitting of staying. The blessed, who shall for ever be with the Lord and his chosen, are mentioned 'to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven,' Mat.

8:11. David in neither of these senses durst sit with vain persons. He might, as his occasions required, use their company, but durst not knowingly choose such company. They could not be the object of his election, who were not the object of his affection: 'I hate the congregation of evil-doers,' saith he, in verse 7. As sitting is a posture of pleasure, he did not sit with vain persons. He was sometimes amongst them to his sorrow, but not to his solace. They were to him, as the Canaanites to the Israelites, pricks in his eyes, and thorns in his sides. 'Woe is me, for I dwell in Mesech, and my habitation is in the tents of Kedar!' Ps. 120:5. It caused grief, not gladness, that he was forced to be amongst the profane.

Again, he might stand amongst them, but durst not, unless necessitated, as a prisoner kept by force in a prison, sit with them. A godly man may go to such persons, as we do sometimes to felons in a jail, about business, but he likes not to stay in such a nasty place. It is said of the lizard, an unclean bird, that she liveth in graves, and such places of corruption; but the dove, a clean creature, loves to build and lie clean. Though the sinner, like Satan, delights in herds of swine, the saint disesteemeth 'a vile person, and honoureth them that fear the Lord,' Ps. 15:4. The burgess of the new Jerusalem, saith one upon that text, reprobos reprobant, et probos probant, he rejecteth the vicious, and though they may be great and high, counteth them but vile. Elisha was so far from bestowing his love, that he thought an evil king not to deserve a look. 'As the Lord liveth, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look towards thee, nor see thee,' saith the prophet to the king of Israel, 2 Kings 3:14. That unerring pattern, our blessed Saviour, did not judge wicked Herod worthy of one word: 'Then Herod questioned with him in many words, but he answered him nothing,' Luke 23:9. But the true Christian honoureth them that fear the Lord, though he disesteemeth the wicked. Saints are God's jewels, and

therefore must needs be of great price with them that have any judgment. Ingo, an ancient king of the Draves, at a feast, sets his pagan nobles in his hall below, and entertained a company of poor Christians at his own table in his presence-chamber, in the most royal manner, and with the costliest cheer that might be; and when this different dealing was wondered at by his peers, he gave them this reason: I do this act, not as king of the Draves, but as king of another world, where these poor men shall be my companions and fellow-princes. David was a great sovereign, yet the saints only were his associates. 'Let them that fear thee, turn unto me, and such as keep thy righteous judgments.' 'They who but touched the carcasses of men,' and wicked men are but moving carcasses, 'were unclean seven days,' Num. 19:11. 'The flesh that toucheth any unclean thing shall not be eaten,' Lev. 7:19. God commanded the Jews, 'Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind. Thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed: neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woollen come upon thee,' Lev. 19:19. This, indeed, taken literally, was ceremonial to them, and is vanished with their commonwealth; but taken mystically, there is something in it which is moral, and binding to us—namely, that God abhors mixtures of good and bad persons more than of different things, and the apostle applieth it to the same purpose.

Reader, if God hath opened thine eyes, thou seest that saints are lovely, though low, and precious, though poor. 'I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar,' Cant. 1:5. Kedar signifieth black, and the tents of Kedar were of haircloth, made of goats' hair, wherein they dwelt. Here the church, which elsewhere is called the 'tents of Jacob,' Jer. 30:18, is for her persecutions, and pilgrimage, and poverty compared to the tents of Kedar, saith Ainsworth; but I suppose there is one thing more in it, and that is, as the church did resemble the tents of Kedar in her

outward condition, so also in her inside. The tents of Kedar were stored with gold, pleasant odours, and jewels within. Oh, how glorious is the king's daughter within! Her inward ornaments are infinitely more worth than wrought, than choice gold! Dost thou not behold the saints' virtues under their veil? their beauty under their black cypress? How they are a crown of glory, a royal diadem, princes in all his lands, higher than the kings of the earth, more excellent than their richest, wisest, and most honourable neighbours; the Lord's portion, his peculiar people, his privy councillors, his children, his love and delight, and doth not thine understanding prize them, thy will choose them, and thy affections cling and close with them? Surely, such persons are worthy to be thy companions. Christians must resemble the loadstone, to attract that only to them which is of some worth, and not, like the jet, draw stubble, and hay, and straw, to which wicked men are compared: 'To the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight,' saith that man after God's own heart.

Further, it is thy interest to choose them only for thy friends; others will one time or other prove false; those men will stick closer than a brother. 'Greet them that love us in the faith;' such love will be firm, Titus 3:15. Ungodly men may be about us as mice in a barn, whilst something is to be had, but when all the corn is gone, they are gone too; if thou cease to give, they will cease to love. When the weather is foul—as swallows, though they chattered about our chimneys, and chattered in our chambers—they will take their flight, and leave nothing behind but dirt and dung, as the pledge of their friendship. Haman's friends, who, when he was in favour, were ready to kiss his feet, no sooner saw the king incensed against him, but they are as ready to cover his face, and help him to a halter. There is no faith in that man who hath no fear of the great God.

## SECTION IV

Secondly, If thou wouldst manifest godliness in the choice of thy companions, thy care must be, not only to choose such as are godly, but also to choose them because they are godly. As godliness must be a ruling quality in them that are chosen, so it must be the ground of thy choice. A man may keep company with godly men because they live near him, or because they are related to him, or because they are wise, learned, or ingenious persons, or because they may do, or have done, him a courtesy, and yet not put forth the least grain of godliness in it. When God's grace in them is the only ground of our choice, and God's image on them the chief loadstone of our love, then we exercise ourselves to godliness in the choice of our companions. If I love my neighbour, and like his company, because he resembleth me in his feature or in his nature, or because he is a mild, meek, peaceable man, or because I expect some kindness from him, herein I shew my love to myself, but none to my God, and therefore nothing of godliness. Laban delighted to have Jacob with him, and would by no means hear of his departure; he sets him to be chief over his flock, he bendeth and boweth to him, he flattereth and fawneth on him, though his servant and underling, and who so much as Jacob in his books!—but mark the ground of all: 'And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thy sight, tarry; for I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake,' Gen. 30:27. He loved Jacob for himself, or rather loved himself in Jacob; he courted him, not because he was a good man, but because he was a good servant. Herein was nothing of religion—as the Jews followed Christ, not for the miracle, but for the meat, John 6. Such men love others for the outward goods they bring to them, not for the grace or godliness they see in them; for if they were not holy, they would desire their company. This is feigned, and not the love the apostle

speaks of, 1 Pet. 1:22, εἰς φιλαδελφίαν ἀνυπόκριτον, 'the unfeigned love of the brethren,' or 'love without dissimulation.' The voice of a worldling in the choice of a friend, is much like that of Joram to Jehu, 'Is it peace, Jehu?' Is it wealth? is it honour? is it power? then be thou my friend. But the voice of a Christian is like that of Jehu to Jonadab, 'Is thy heart right, as mine is?' Is there the fear of God, truth of grace, in thy heart? then give me thy hand, come up into the chariot, be thou my friend.

The choice of a Christian must flow from another fountain than worldly profit—namely, the amiableness of the image of Christ in the person. The heat and light of a wicked man's love, as a lamp, is fed with, and floweth from, some earthly substance, and is extinguished when that is denied; but the heat and light of a saint's friendship, as the solar rays, springeth from a heavenly cause, and therefore will continue. The apostle speaketh of love out of a pure heart, 1 Tim. 1:5; that is, pure love, a pure stream, which ariseth from a pure heart, a pure spring—that is, not only the grace of God, secret in a Christian, but the grace of God, seen in his companion whom he loveth. It is clearly visible that many associate with Christians, not for their virtues, but at a venture—they were possibly the first they fell in league with, or upon some other respect—for they know others as high in holiness whom they slight, nay, possibly hate; whereas he that loveth grace in one, loveth grace in all. It is an infallible sign of a crooked nature, saith Cicero, to be affected with none but prætors and great men. It is little sign, I am sure, of grace, to join only with those saints that are rich or high in the world. If thou admirest holiness in scarlet and robes, and contemnest it in sackcloth and russet, I must tell thee thou art grossly deceived; for thou admirest the scarlet and honour, not the holiness at all.

I do not deny but amongst Christians a man that hath the opportunity may choose out some, rather than others, to be his most intimate companions. Christ, though he loved all his disciples, yet had one especially, the beloved disciple, who leaned on Jesus' bosom. Amongst all the apostles, he vouchsafed to three only the favour of his extraordinary friendship. When he raised up the ruler's daughter, he suffered none to go in, save Peter, James, and John. When he was transfigured, he took up with him only Peter, James, and John; in his bitter and bloody agony, these three were taken out from the rest, Luke 8:51; Mat. 17:5, and 26:37.

But if I might advise thee, reader, in such a choice, I would give thee these two cautions:

First, That thou prefer those whom God prefers; I mean, such as have most grace. It is a sign of a coward to choose a weak enemy, and it is a sign of little grace to choose the weakest Christian friends; he that hath most of God's heart, deserveth most of thine. I am ready to think that Peter, James, and John, that had more of Christ's love than the rest, had more of his likeness and image than the rest. I confess, some respect in the choice of a bosom friend ought to be had to his prudence. Some men, though holy, are indiscreet, and in point of secrets are like sieves—can keep nothing committed to them, but let all run through. A blab of secrets is a traitor to society, as one that causeth much dissension. It is good to try him whom we intend for a bosom friend before we trust him, as men prove their vessels with water before they fill them with wine; if we find them leaking, they will be useless as to that purpose. Too many are like the Dead Sea, in which nothing, saith Aristotle, sinks to the bottom, but everything thrown into it swims at the top and is in sight. Nakedness in mind is as well a blemish as nakedness in body. It is wonderful folly which some persons manifest in stripping themselves naked before every



one, and unbosoming themselves whoever stands by. Pictures that have no curtains before them gather much dust, and so do those minds that are ever open and exposed to every man's view. Others are like the sea, full of wealth and worth, of great abilities in spiritual things, but there is no coming at it; they are so concealed, that none is ever like to be the better for it. Those golden mines that are never known enrich none.

There are a middle sort of Christians between these, that, like a secret box in a cabinet, is not seen without some difficulty, but, as occasion is, it is opened, and then many jewels of rare value appear. The bow that is hardest to bend doth the most service, for it sendeth forth the arrow with the greatest force. The nut that is hard to crack hath the best kernel. These Christians may, as likely as any, be thy bosom friends, though some respect, I confess, may be had to suitableness of disposition in him whom thou choosest for an intimate friend. As in marriage, so in friendship, it is best when there is some equality and likeness in pairs, as of tongs or gloves there must be a parity. Such friendship, founded both in grace and nature, is like to be lasting.

2. That in preferring some, thou castest no contempt upon others. The smallest piece of pearl is worthy of esteem; the little violet is pleasant. The poorest Christian, he that hath the least grace, deserveth our love and observance. Christ takes notice of two mites, of a little strength, of some good thing, and shall not we? Mat. 12:43; Rev. 3:8; 1 Kings 13:14. Babes in Christ, being unable to help themselves, have most need of good nurses; weak saints, who can hardly go alone, do most want a helping hand. A saint that is mean, as well as a mean saint, must be countenanced. It is good to countenance godliness in the rich, but it is evil not to encourage it in the poor. Our love must, like the ointment poured on Aaron's head,

which ran down, not only to his beard, but to the very skirts of his garment, be drawn out to the highest, and fall down on the lowest saints; David by this shewed the life and truth of his love: 'I am a companion of all that fear thee, and keep thy statutes,' Ps. 119:63. Of all; none that hath thy fear but shall find me their friend: though I am their king, and above the highest, yet for thy sake I can cheerfully be companion to the lowest.

## SECTION V

Thirdly, In thy choice, have respect to spiritual ends, and accordingly improve it. Attend and intend thy own and thy companions' soul good in it. Friendship hath a key to the heart which it may use, not only to let itself into its secrets, but also to introduce its own conceptions. He hath a great advantage of persuading another to, and encouraging him, in holiness, who is already entertained as his friend into his heart. Where the person is so acceptable, the instruction will be the more welcome. We carry others sometimes along with us to our friends' houses, and they are kindly entertained for our sakes. Now, to improve this interest any other way than on God's behalf is sacrilege. How abominable were it then to use this key for the bringing in of thievish lusts and murderers upon him! There is no nearer union than of intimate friends; they are one soul. He then that loves himself, and knoweth grace to be his own greatest perfection, must needs endeavour that his friend may have a large portion of it. Persons of quality have a great delight to adorn and beautify the places where they inhabit, and loathe to live in dirty styes or nasty dungeons. True friends dwell in each other. The soul is, saith one, not so much where it liveth, as where it loveth; how delectable then must it needs be for them to seek the embellishing and embroidering those hearts with holiness, in which they have taken up their abode!<sup>2</sup> Love is apt to transport us, so far as to imitate the errors of those whom we affect, like unskilful painters, who express only the wrinkles and blemishes of a face, not being able to reach its beauty. Without question, this love, if rightly improved, would be more prevalent to make thy friend ambitious to resemble thee in virtue, in regard to the amiableness of virtue in itself, and its great advantage above error. It is clear that grace hath a much more

ravishing and delectable appearance than vice, in all her paint and daubery, even when she is looked upon through the devil's optics.

A good friend in this respect is of much worth; therefore Alexander, when one desired to see his treasure, shewed him, not ἀργυρίου τάλαντα, but τοὺς φίλους, not his talents of silver, but his friends; and Menander counted him a happy man that had but the shadow of one. Though fortune hath shewed me many favours, saith Plutarch, that deserve I should be thankful to her for them, yet there is none that maketh me so much bound to her, as the love and good-will my brother Timon doth bear to me in all things.

God hath caused many wants and weaknesses in us, that we may be needful to one another, and purposely given diversity of gifts and graces, that we may be helpful to each other. No nations have all the commodities they use of their own growth, but need trading with others for their supply. Believers cannot keep house well without borrowing from their neighbours. There is 'that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part,' Eph. 4:10. If our Christian communion be not employed for this end, we are slothful servants, hiding our talents in a napkin; if to a contrary end, we are miserable alchymists, and extract poison out of a cordial. Countries that are joined together in a strict league, often grow rich by mutual traffic. Christians have found, by experience, that mutual commerce well employed hath brought them in very great gains. Paul himself, that was of a great spiritual estate, and much given to hospitality and feeding hungry Christians, yet expected sometimes to be entertained at his poor neighbours' tables. He writes to the Romans that he hopes to be filled with their company, Rom. 15:24—filled or feasted with some heavenly repast by their company.

Oh it is lovely and happy when two friends are like Moses and Aaron: 'He shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou to him instead of God,' Exod. 4:16; where their love is shewn by edifying and building up one another in holiness. This were some prelibation of heaven, where those lines of love, which stretch themselves to every part of the circumference, do all meet in God as their centre. But I shall speak more to this in the fourth chapter.

I shall conclude this particular with an answer to two objections.

Obj. 1. Christ commandeth us to love our enemies, Mat. 5:45; Gal. 4:10; and what love do we shew if we turn our backs always upon them, and banish them our company? Besides, we are commanded to do good to all. I am bound to seek my wicked neighbour's salvation, and to love my neighbours as myself, Lev. 19:18, which how can I do if I always shun him? Again, if I should avoid all that are carnal, I must untie the bonds of my relations, which God and nature forbid, and cast up my calling, which I am commanded to mind.

Ans. In answer to these things, I shall first lay down one or two distinctions, and then some positions.

1. Distinct. There are sinners of several forms in Satan's school. Some that learn too much the lesson he sets them, but quarrel not with the, scholars of a contrary master; though they are ungracious, yet they are not outrageous. These are wild beasts in a cage, or in chains, that a man may sometimes take notice of without any hurt. Others do not only study the lectures he sets them, be they never so full of blasphemy and debauchery, but seek to make proselytes, and cast scorn and contempt upon all piety, and rail at those that will not learn their black art; these are in his upper form, and have proceeded from standing in the way of sinners, to sitting in the seat of the scornful, and will be ready in a short time to be sent to hell, the only

academy to which he prefers his scholars. These are worse than the dogs of Egypt; they, when the Israelites marched towards Canaan, did not stir their tongues, but these bark at all that sets out for heaven. Many who had risings and spots in the skin of the flesh, were not to be judged unclean, and shut out of the camp; but those that had the scab spreading much in the skin, (typifying those whose sinful courses were gaining and growing upon themselves or others, Lev. 3:3, 4, 8,) they were to be thrust out of the camp.

2. Distinct. It is one thing to come into wicked men's company, as a man's occasions or relations require, and it is another thing to choose such company. David was frequently amongst the bad, but his delight and joy was only amongst the good. An acquaintance is one thing, and a companion is another thing: acquaintance is the herd, a companion is the particular one culled out of it for a special friend. It is one thing to have intimate familiarity, and another thing to have common and civil commerce with such men.

1. Position. To love my neighbour as myself, doth not infer an equality, but the quality of my love. A Christian must love all men truly, but is not bound to love all men equally. The greatest degree of our love is limited by God himself (next to his blessed Majesty and ourselves) to these two objects, the household of faith, and our own household—not excluding others, but preferring these. For even within ourselves there is a difference in our love; we love our head, and heart, and other vital parts, with a closer affection than those outward integral parts that are not of so great concernment to us. I may therefore love every man as myself, and yet love some above others, and my own soul above all. Exemplar potius est exemplato, The example is before the thing exemplified. If a man is bound to love another as himself, he must needs love himself first, and more than another. Thy love to them may cause thee to hope that thou

mayest convert them, but thy love to thyself should make thee fear lest they should pervert thee.

2. Position. A Christian is bound to avoid all needless society with wicked men. Mark, I say needless; when our relations command it, as amongst husbands and wives, and parents and children, or our vocations call for it, then it is necessary. Those precepts that enjoin us to forbear their company, are to be understood when we have no call to it. We may trade with wicked men, we must perform all moral duties to our kindred, and acts of courtesy and charity to the worst of our enemies, so we be careful to keep ourselves from their corruptions, and use their company no longer than the discharge of those duties doth require. When by admitting their persons, we cannot avoid their vices, we must deny both.

3. Position. Christians should, as God gives them opportunity, if there be any hope of doing good, endeavour to reform men, before they wholly reject their company; nay, and pray for their welfare after they have refused them for companions. It is small kindness to shut up a man that hath the plague, lest he should infect others, and to use no means for his own cure. If I find that a man is desperately bent in wickedness, that religion is the object of his laughter, and to give him any serious counsel is to cast pearl before swine, I must judge such Ishmaels and Esaus unworthy of human society; but it is a very hard case to shut a man up in a coffin, and bury him before he be quite dead. Sometimes vicious men are in distress, and a godly man hath a call from God to do him some charitable office; here the Christian may have less fear of receiving hurt from them. Afflictions are bonds, and these beasts in chains are not so unruly. Paul's viper, benumbed with cold, did not sting him. Here a Christian hath also more hope of doing good to them. The hard metal, when in the fire,

may receive impressions. Men will take that physic willingly in their sickness which they refused in health.

4. Position. A Christian may love a wicked man sincerely, though he wholly shun his society. He may affect him with a love of pity, though not of complacency; he may shew his love by pouring out his heart in petitions to God for him. Though a saint deny a scandalous sinner his presence, yet he doth not deny him his pity nor his prayers; nay, our non-communion may be a means of their conversion: 'If any obey not the word, have no company with him, that he may be ashamed,' 2 Thes. 3:14. Shame and confusion is a good step towards conversion. A wicked man's presence burdens a saint, and a godly man's presence hardens a sinner. Surely, thinks he, I am, if not praiseworthy, yet tolerable, and not very bad, since such a good man is so much with me. They who did eat and drink in Christ's presence on earth, wondered much to be excluded from his heavenly banquet, Mat. 7:23. Hymeneus and Alexander were excluded Christian society, that they might learn not to blaspheme, 1 Tim. 1:20. This wounding is the way to healing; it makes profane men bethink themselves, when sober persons avoid their presence.

Obj. 2. Did not Jesus Christ accompany with wicked men? Can I follow a better pattern? or can any pretend to more purity? Is not Christ upon this account called a friend of publicans and sinners?

Ans. 1. I answer, more generally, All our Saviour's actions are for our instruction, but all are not for our imitation. Christ indeed hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps, 1 Pet. 2:21, but not in all the prints of his feet. Christ did nothing amiss; but he that shall undertake to do in all things as he did, will follow him too close, and do many things amiss. It may be commendable to imitate my sovereign, but it is possible enough to do it so far as to be guilty of



treason by it. Some of Christ's actions were done by him as man, others were done by him as mediator, or God-man. In many of these latter we cannot imitate him, in others we may not. Who can work miracles, forgive sins, &c., as Christ did? Who may appoint apostles, constitute laws for the church, &c., as Christ did?

Ans. 2. More particularly, Christ had a call, which all others have not, to go amongst wicked men. Where should a physician be but amongst his patients? To deal with such is his calling. Christ came to call sinners to repentance, to heal their vitiated natures; and therefore it was necessary he should associate with them. He went amongst them, not as a friend to their sins, but as a physician to their souls. How should he otherwise have cast out devils, cured their sicknesses, and proved his deity to their faces? An ambassador, being commissioned by his prince, may do that which, if an ordinary subject should do, may cost him his life. Abraham might, having liberty from God, stand still and behold Sodom flaming, when Lot might not so much as cast an eye, or have a glance towards it. Christ was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and so he went to them in discharge of his errand and mission; he had also a commission under his Father's hand and seal, Luke 4:18; John 6:27.

Ans. 3. Christ had no tinder about him to take fire, being conceived without sin; but we are little else than dry tinder, and therefore have cause to avoid the least spark. 'The prince of this world cometh,' saith Christ, 'and findeth nothing in me,' John 14:30; he cometh with his baits, but there is nothing in me that will be nibbling at them. Besides, his deity was a perfect antidote against all infection. As the beams of the sun, he could be in filthy places, and amongst defiling persons, and not receive the least pollution; when we have such infectious souls, that we are ready to receive the contagion from the

least infectious breath. Our corrupt nature is like fire, which, if there be any infection in the room, draweth it straight to itself.

Ans. 4. Christ did not choose the company of publicans and sinners, though he was often amongst them. A physician is not in a pest-house with delight, though his own pity, and their misery, may call him thither. Sinners were the guests, saints only the delight of Christ; wicked men had his company, but the disciples only were his companions. He was intimate with none but believers; others were his care, they his comfort. It was to them he said, I have not called you servants, but friends; 'for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of the Father I have made known unto you,' John 15:15, 16.

To conclude, reader, be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them: charity forbids the former, and Christianity the latter. Love to them must preserve thee from envy, but love to thyself must keep thee from keeping them company. Whenever providence calleth thee amongst them, make them thy fear, not thy familiars; 'For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief,' Prov. 24:1, 2.

1. Society in evil we may not hold; no, not with the best men, Eph. 5:7, 11. Si cum malis, non tamen in malis, Ps. 141:4.

2. Society in good, (i.e., in sacris,) in the worship of God, we may hold with the worst men, Mat. 23:1, 2, and 21:12, 13.

3. Society in things indifferent we may have with all men, as in civil commerce and offices of humanity, Gen. 23; 1 Cor. 10:27.

**A good wish of a Christian about the choice of his companions, wherein the former particulars are applied**

The blessed and glorious God, the Father of mercies, and foundation of all communion, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, who hath sufficiently evidenced the good of companions in saying, It is not good for man to be alone, and who hath sanctified society by his own example in creating angels and men, not only for mutual comfort in the fruition of each other, but also that his sacred Majesty, and those heaven-born spirits, might have fellowship together, as intimate friends, and especially in that infinite complacency which he had in his beloved Son, and his Son in him from all eternity, who was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; having made me rational, and thereby meet for converse with men, religious, and thereby capable of communion with Christians, I wish that I may never abuse his kindness by shutting up myself, as monks and nuns, in cells or cloisters, or as some melancholy persons, in a closet or chamber; but may know both how to be alone, and how to be in company, and be so sensible of his love in affording me fellow-travellers, that my journey to my Father's house may be the more pleasant, that I may accept it thankfully, and improve it faithfully to his own praise. My God suffereth my spiritual wants, that I may look for help, under him, from others' wealth; and he affords me spiritual riches, that I might be able to supply others' poverty. It is his pleasure that none of his children (though to some he gives liberal estates, to all a competency) should be able to live without being beholden to their neighbours. Though privacy hath fewer incitations to evil, company hath more provocations to good, by so much as doing good is better than not doing evil. Let me prefer society before solitariness; yet, Lord, let me never be a good fellow in the world's sense, to join with all sorts, but let my fellowship be with them that have fellowship with thee. Though I may have bad acquaintance, let me not have a bad companion; whatsoever commerce I may have with sinners, let my communion be only with

thy Majesty and thy saints. Oh, let them that fear thee turn unto me, and such as keep thy righteous judgments, Ps. 119:79.

I wish that the consideration of the great influence which companions will have upon me, to hinder or help me in the way of holiness, may make me the more prudent in my choice. Though there be some quicksets of grace in the soil of my heart, yet these evil weeds may endanger their death, at least will prejudice their growth. How often hath ill company, as an east wind, nipped and destroyed those buds which gave hopes of becoming in time good and wholesome fruit! If the fire of my godliness be not extinguished, (no thanks for that to myself,) yet it is sure to be abated, by these waters. My spiritual life is maintained only by that provision which my God is pleased daily to send me in; and can I expect that he should send supplies into his enemy's quarters? What man will send goodly furniture into his house until the dust and rubbish be cast out? With what reason can I look for succour from heaven, when I run myself into the jaws of hell? Though others that are found out by their grand foe may receive help from God, and come off with conquest, yet if I go to seek out the tempter (for where can I sooner find him than in his house?) amongst his own children, I shall have little pity, and may well expect to be foiled in the fight. Again, how doth familiarity with what is evil make it less frightful! Children are much startled at some creatures, which, when they are accustomed to, they are not at all afraid of. Possibly my anger against sin at present is very hot; but evil company is a drug that will much allay the heat of that simple. The filthiest disease is not so loathsome in a wife or child as in a stranger, nor in an intimate friend as in another. If there be not a due distance betwixt the visive faculty and the object, there can be no true sight. If the sin be too near me, (in a friend that lieth in my bosom,) I cannot behold its ugliness and deformity, its heinous, hateful nature. I doubt not but that poisonous apple, which had

eternal death at its core, would have been far more loathsome and detestable in Adam's eyes (much less would it have been so lovely and acceptable) had he seen it in any other hands than of his dearest and only companion on earth. Oh that, since he was wounded by the hand of his nearest and most intimate friend, who had the breastplate of complete righteousness and perfection of grace for his shield, I might never dare to thrust myself amongst such enemies, who am, compared with him, wholly naked and unarmed! I am apt to think that I can secure myself against their shot; but, alas! the long and often playing of the cannon will batter the strongest wall; a continual dropping will pierce a stone. Doth, not experience tell me, that it is no hard matter to give such a weakling as I am a fall? And is it likely that I should stand fast in so slippery a place? My God asketh me, Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt? Can one go upon coals, and his feet not be burnt? My clothes, notwithstanding all my care to the contrary, will smell of the coals, and my feet will blister with the fire. My God tells me that sin is a canker, a gangrene, and experience teacheth how spreading and infectious sinners are, 2 Tim. 2:17. I may think to make them better, but they are more likely to make me worse. Sickness is catching, but not health; the rotten sheep infect the sound, but the sound sheep do not cure the rotten. Solomon's bosom companions drew his heart from his God; but I read not of any one of them whose heart he drew to his God. If pitch be but touched, it defileth; but fuller's earth doth not so soon cleanse. If Israel once join themselves to Baal-peor, they quickly eat the offerings of the dead, and bow down to their idols. It is as ordinary to put on other men's faults as their outward fashions. One Korah did but kindle the fire of rebellion, and presently two hundred and fifty captains brought wood to increase its flame, to their own destruction. If I know of any that have infectious diseases, love to my body will not suffer me to drink of their cup, or to sit at their table; and when I know of them that have such contagious

spiritual sicknesses, shall not love to my soul move me to forbear their society? Lord, my prayer hath often been, Lead me not into temptation; shall I run into temptation? Thou knowest how prone I am, should I walk with wicked persons, to walk in their wicked paths, and hast therefore laid thy strict command upon me, 'Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away,' Prov. 4:14, 15. Keep me from hazarding this frail potsherd (my flesh) upon the rock of evil company, from venturing amongst those vipers, lest I be stung. Enable me to avoid the congregation of evil-doers, and keep me from going with the wicked, lest I learn their ways, and get a snare to my soul.

I wish that I may be the more fearful of joining with sinners, lest my God join me with them in their sufferings. It is evil and woeful to be found in that house which is all over in a flame. The anger of my God is worse than a consuming fire, and shall I associate with them that are always under his fury? When a city is taken by storm in the night, the sword makes no difference, amongst the inhabitants, betwixt friends and foes. What safety can I expect in being near them that are far from God's law and love? Wicked men are dross, they have no good metal in them; they are neither fit vessels to serve, nor current money to enrich me. But though I be gold, if mingled with such dross, I must look to be melted. If the stork accompany the cranes, it is no wonder if she be taken in the same net. Jehoshaphat was a good man, yet for joining with the wicked, wrath came upon him from the Lord, 2 Chron. 19:2. If I follow him in his sin, shall I be free? All that sailed in the ship fared the worse for one disobedient Jonah; his company cost them the loss of their lading, and was like to have cost them their lives. The whole body of Israel fell before their enemies, because wicked Achan stood amongst them. O my soul! dost thou think, then, to afford such thy presence, and not to share in their

punishment? Consider with seriousness what thy God saith: 'Depart from the tabernacle of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in their sins.' Wouldst thou, for any carnal profit, be found amongst those persons who are every moment in danger of the bottomless pit? The earth clave asunder that was under them, and swallowed them up—their houses, goods, and all that appertained to them. Oh what man, unless bereft of his wits, would be one hour contentedly in the company of these Korahs, that are always liable to God's curse? Let the great use thou makest of such dreadful doctrines be, not to partake of their sins so much as by thy presence, that thou mayest not partake of their plagues. 'And they that were round about them fled at the cry of them; for they said, Let us be gone quickly, lest the earth swallow up us also,' Num. 16:26, and 31:34. Lord, thine enemies enjoy many mercies, through their neighbourhood to thy friends. Thou art so loving a Father, that the servants of sin, whom thou countest no better than dogs, do fare much the better for that bountiful table which thou keepest for thine own children. The dogs have eaten the crumbs which fall from the children's table. The tares continue the longer in the field, and the sickle of thy justice doth not yet cut them down for the unquenchable fire, because the wheat is amongst them; but thy saints have suffered much outward misery for their nearness to sinners. Thou art such a holy jealous God, thine hatred of sin is so infinite, that when the fire of thy wrath hath consumed unbelievers, some sparks of it have lighted on their best neighbours. When the hand of thy fury hath fallen heavy on the workers of iniquity, thy chosen sitting by them have been sensible of the blow. My prayer hath often been, Remove thy stroke away from me, and my complaint, for I am consumed by the blow of thine hand. I tremble to think of the frowns of thy face, but surely the weight of thy hand would sink me indeed. Oh guard thy servant so powerfully by thy grace, that I may avoid all appearance of evil. As I would avoid thy batteries, let me avoid the

camp of thine enemies, and keep me from giving them the least countenance, that I may not be wrapt up in their vengeance.

I wish that the great gain which I may get by good companions, may make me the more diligent to find them out. Though it is no small unhappiness to be joined to them that are ever standing under the spout of the Lord's fury, yet it is blessed to be near them that are always under the droppings of divine favour. Christ is always present with his people, and therefore I may say with Peter, 'It is good to be there.' When a king comes to visit one of his peers, all the family oftentimes tasteth of his bounty, but the nobleman's relations of his grace and love; he converseth with them, and they with him. If sinners are the better for the neighbourhood of the saints, and for their sakes God lets his enemies experience his goodness, surely believers shall be the better for the neighbourhood of their brethren, and shall have experience of special good-will. I cannot conceive the kindnesses which may be done for me by these friends at court. Their interest is great in the blessed and glorious potentate. The King is not he (as was once said in another sense) that can deny them anything: Whatsoever they ask the Father in Christ's name, he will do it for them. When guilt flieth in my face, and I dare not appear, or when, through the prevalency of temptation, I cannot pour out a prayer, they will appear for me, put up my suits, and that with success; if I be dull, they may quicken me; if I am in doubts, they may resolve me; if I wander, they will be faithful in acquainting me with my faults to reduce me; if I walk uprightly, they will be helpful, by administering heavenly cordials, to encourage me. A faithful friend will be my second self, and love me as his own soul. When I faint, he will endeavour to revive me; when I fall, he will do his utmost to recover me; he will rejoice with me in my joys, and sympathise with me in my sufferings; in every condition, to his power, be a suitable consolation. Oh that the value and virtue of this pearl may make me



esteem it at a high price, and the more wary that I be not cheated in my choice! Lord, thou hast ordained the communion of saints to be for mutual comfort and counsel, let me choose those for my friends that will be faithful to their own, and to my soul.

I wish that I may manifest to my own conscience the truth of my conversion by my companions, and that I am passed from death to life, because I join with, and love the brethren. Beasts flock together, sinners join hand in hand, and saints are of the same heart, and walk together towards the same heaven. My associates will discover my nature, whether virtue or vice be my master. My comrades will speak to what captain I belong. If I join with the black regiment of the prince of darkness, it is a sign I am an enemy to the Lord of hosts. The members of Christ's mystical body go in company. It is presumed they are unchaste women who company with known harlots, and it is supposed they are dishonest men who are familiar with thieves. If Christ and grace be predominant in me, I cannot like and love their enemies. A holy soul cannot delight in profane sinners. Melted gold will unite itself with the substance of gold, but not incorporate with dross. A heart truly good cannot brook those that are evil. All creatures desire to join with such as are of the same nature. Fish, fowls, birds, beasts, all, every one strive to be with them that are of the same species. Confederacy in sin is the livery by which the black guard of hell is distinguished from the rest of the rational creatures. True friendship is the cognisance of true Christians: 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.' Love is the badge of the household of faith, which witnesseth to what lord they appertain. Where love is in truth to their persons, there will be a delight in their presence. For what is love but a motion of the soul towards, and its complacency in, the object beloved. In vain do I pretend myself a disciple, without sincere love, which is the life of a disciple. Love to my God is the soul of religion,

which keeps it in being, in motion; without this, the whole body of it decayeth and dieth. All my performances, if this be lacking, are but as an unsavoury corpse, without either loveliness or life. Love to my brethren is the sign of religion, which ever sheweth itself at the door, where the substance is within. He that loveth him that begetteth, must needs love him also that is begotten. The child is acceptable for the father's sake. The picture is amiable, because of the person it representeth. Oh, how grossly do they delude their souls, that think they love the head, when they hate and despise the members! that say they affect and prize Christ above their lives, when they reject and persecute Christians to the very death! Lord, thou hast told me, 'He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.' All thy children are my brethren; they have the same father, the same mother. Oh, suffer me not to give conscience cause to witness against me, that I am in a state of death, of damnation, for want of this brotherly affection; but grant that the hot beams of thy love may so warm my heart, that I may be always reflecting back love to thyself and thy saints, as an evidence of my eternal salvation.

I wish that I may consider whom I choose for my companions, lest I be disappointed in the ends of company. My God intendeth society to be helpful to his people in the best things; but they are never likely to further me in holiness, who walk in the broad way that leadeth to hell. Satan's servants will not teach me to do the Lord's work. That friendship is ill made which is soon broken: no band can hold him who is a stranger to religion. Where there is no fear of God in the heart, there can be no true friendship. They who are two in disposition will searee be one in affection. Where there is no true likeness there can be no true love. Can two walk together unless they be agreed? Grace is the only cement which conglutinates hearts, and maketh two friends. A brutish sinner and a believer are contrary each to other. An unjust man is abominable to the just, and he that is

upright in his way is abominable to the wicked. The eagle hath perpetual enmity with serpents, and dragons, and their seed; so hath the eagle-eyed Christian with the seed of the serpent. Beasts hate fire, and so do those whom God calleth foxes, and lions, and bulls, the fire of grace that burneth in a saint's heart, and flameth out in his life. Lambs and wolves, doves and ravens, cannot unite. Jerusalem and Babylon, Zion and Sodom, can never be compact and at unity together. Can I expect love from that person that hath none for his own soul, nor for the blessed God? Can contraries meet and not fight? Is there any hope of an amicable conjunction betwixt them that are not only differing, but opposite? I am born of God, he is of his father the devil. My work is to do the will of my Father in heaven, his work is to do the lusts of the wicked one. Self is the bias by which he moveth, Scripture is the compass by which I sail. I am travelling towards heaven, he is hastening to hell; and is it possible for us to have one heart? Oh that no worldly advantage might make me ever strive to strike a covenant with them to whom I am thus contrary! They must needs be false to me, that are made up of unfaithfulness. A true friend is another self. A vicious man cannot be a true friend, because he is never himself. Sometimes he is drunk with passion, and so loseth his guide, and leaveth the dictates of reason; those servants are often in rebellion, and then, like the troubled sea, he casteth up mire and dirt. In his fury he will strike at friends or foes, and discover what he knows, and more many times. Passion is a high fever, wherein men talk idly; therefore the wise man gives a special caution against such companions: 'Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go,' Prov. 22:24. Sometimes he is overcome with wine, and then the beast in him puts the curb into the mouth of reason, and hath the command of it. A drunken man hath Nebuchadnezzar's brutish heart, and is fit only to graze with cattle. Clitus is killed by his drunken master; and such a one speaketh and doth, he knows not what. He speaks what he

should forget, and forgets what he hath spoke. The drunkard's mind and stomach are alike, neither can retain what they receive. Solomon likewise sets a brand at this man's door, to discourage every sober man from coming there: 'Be not amongst winebibbers, amongst riotous eaters of flesh.' Always he hath some lust or other lording it over him; and according as their interests lead him, so he acteth, that his friend must expect no more of him than they can spare; and is such a person like to prove a cordial friend? He may abound in frothy words, but I must expect no faithful deeds from him, if ever I come to sufferings. Like a drum in a battle, he may make a great sound, but will act nothing for my succour. Like a cipher, though now in my prosperity he stands for thousands, in my adversity he will stand for nothing. Such a friend will be like a familiar devil, which forsakes the witch when she is in fetters. How much shall I miss of my expected help from him, when I am brought into hardship! As a lemon, he may be hot without, but is altogether cold and cooling within. Oh that I might never manifest so much folly, as to choose him for my friend whose principles will teach him to be false! He so often changeth his dwelling for his own end and interest, that I shall not know where to find him when I stand in most need. As a fly, he will tarry no longer in the kitchen than there is grease to feed him. I am but his pond, which he will use whilst there is any water, but when dry, I shall hear no more of him. Lord, how far would thine end of society be frustrated, and my hopes of comfort in companions be disappointed, should I choose him who is ruled neither by religion nor reason? I beseech thee, let my lot fall amongst those persons that are filled with the fruits of thy Spirit, for they only will be faithful to the true and holy ends for which thou hast ordained friendship. Preserve me from walking in the counsel of the ungodly, and standing in the way of sinners, lest, being found in their company, I come to inherit their curses.

I wish that I may, like Paul, join myself to the disciples, and be in league only with them who are joined to the Lord, in an everlasting covenant, never to be forgotten. I profess myself to be a follower of God; my God hath set apart him that is godly for himself, Ps. 4:3. If the godly man be the object of my God's choice, he may well be of mine. If he be separated for his service, he is without question worthy of my society. Surely there is some value in those vessels which are meet for the master's use. Common and ordinary things are not fit for a prince's table; neither is every person meet for a king's presence. They are specially qualified with parts and abilities that stand before great men. Pharaoh would have none but men of activity to serve him in tending his cattle. Nebuchadnezzar would have children in whom was no blemish, but well-favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding sciences, and such as had ability in them, Dan. 1:4, to stand in the king's palace. What manner of men are those, then, whom the glorious God hath chosen to wait upon him? There cannot but be rare perfections in them that are set apart to shew forth all his praise. He is infinitely wise, and would not honour them so much that are not of eminent worth. O my soul, what a loadstone is here to draw forth thy love towards the saints! Thy constant, thy loving, thy best friend, sets a high price upon them. All the world besides is a wild wilderness to him; they only are his garden, wherein he delights, and wilt not thou walk there with him, amongst such fragrant flowers, and pleasant fruits? He esteems others but as dust; they are his jewels. Observe what he tells thee: 'The heart of a wicked man is little worth, but the tongue of the righteous is as choice silver.' The heart of man includes the understanding, will, and affections, the soul, and all its faculties, and is the noblest part of man; it is the fountain of life, the spring of motion, the feet of his empire and regiment; nay, the commander-in-chief, that ordereth and disposeth of all at pleasure. Yet this heart, which is the most excellent part, in a wicked

man is of small price, it is little worth—nay, is worse than naught; but the tongue (a far inferior member) of the righteous, is (no mean metal) as choice silver, and makes a most delightful sound. Wilt not thou join thyself to these excellent ones? If their tongues be as choice silver, surely their hearts do infinitely excel fine gold; nay, are more precious than rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal them, neither shall they be exchanged for jewels of fine gold. Who would not be greedy of acquaintance with men of such surpassing eminence? It would bewray extreme want of wisdom not to be ambitious of communion with persons of such worth. Besides, should I join with others, I choose them that are my God's enemies. It is not only ingratitude, but treason, to countenance them that are traitors against the crown and dignity of Jesus Christ. It was a sharp and cutting reproof which Jehu gave to king Jehoshaphat. I wish I may never give cause for the like to me. Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? My God counts my enemies his enemies, and hates them that hate me, and shall I esteem his enemies my friends, and love those that hate him? Wicked men are a generation of vipers; they hiss at godliness, and spit their poison at God himself: 'They stretch out their hands against God, and strengthen themselves against the Almighty,' Job 15. I shew but small kindness to the God of all my comforts, if I take his foes to be my friends. Once more, I disgrace my birth, my breeding, I dishonour my profession, my prince, if I accompany with wicked persons. It is below a great heir to company with beggars. It is a discredit to a king to be taken up with porters: 'A companion of riotous men shameth his father on earth,' Prov. 28:7. A companion of vicious men shameth his Father in heaven: it speaketh his education to be very mean, and his expectation to be low, both which reflect upon his father. Oh that I might never disgrace my God's goodness, in the cost and charge he hath been at with me, by choosing the scullions and filth of the world to be my companions, nor disparage

my own judgment in refusing the excellent of the earth, and them that are princes in all lands. Lord, thy people are thy portion: 'Jacob is the lot of thine inheritance; they are precious in thy sight, and honourable, for thou hast loved them: they are fair in thine eyes, and altogether lovely.' Help thy poor servant to resemble thy Majesty. Give me spiritual eyes to see their beauty; and let my soul be so ravished with that comeliness in them, which thy Spirit hath put upon them, that those which are a royal priesthood, a chosen generation, a peculiar people, higher than the kings of the earth, the glory of Christ, and a royal diadem in thine hand, may be the delight of mine eyes, the joy of my heart, and my fellow-travellers towards that house not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens.

I wish that the commands of my God may be the warrant of my election; and the beautiful image of my God may be the only motive of my affection to his chosen. Should I shew favour to the saints, and not with respect to the fear of my God in them, I manifest no sanctity. It is possible for me to love the man, and yet hate the Christian, in the same person. How frequent is it to love men that are godly, and yet not to love godliness! Potiphar respected Joseph, a good man, but not for his goodness' sake; he preferred him as a good servant to him, not as a good subject to God. The children of Heth honoured Abraham for the sake of his riches, or courtesy, not upon the account of his righteousness and piety. Abimelech struck a covenant with Isaac as a good neighbour, not as a believer. It is one thing to love peace, and another thing to love purity; this latter is proper to a Christian, the former compatible to heathen. Oh that my love might never, as Laban's to Jacob, be mercenary—carried out towards any of God's people, more for the good I get by them, than for the good that is in them! How unsuitable is such a love to the divine nature, and how unworthy of my profession! If I love them for their wealth or their bounty, I love their riches, not them; or rather, I

love myself, and neither them, nor anything of theirs. This is self-love, not saint-love. If their persons were stripped of those ornaments wherewith they are now clothed, such love would languish and die. Should these be the wheels upon which my love moves, when they are wanting, my love will stand still; such friendship is but like a fire of straw, which burns brightly whilst it hath matter to feed upon, but that being neglected, it is extinguished, and turned into ashes. O my soul, consider what foundation thy love is built on, lest it appear to be feigned. If thou lovest men for their parts, or for thy own profit, thou dost not love thy Saviour in them, but thy carnal self, and thereby dost evidence thine hypocrisy more than thy sincerity. It is not all kindness to saints, nor all joining with Christian society, which is an act or sign of sanctity. The Baptist had fair respect from Herod, and yet the king could take off his head. The barbarians shewed great courtesy to Paul and his companions, but not the least Christianity. Thy God commandeth thee to love the brotherhood, that is, to love them as brethren, not as kind, or wise, or great, or wealthy; and to love the whole fraternity and brood of thy Father, not this or that brother. Oh do thou, in the choice of thy familiars, look over those natural or civil excellencies which infinite wisdom bestoweth only upon some, and mind chiefly that supernatural quality which is truly praiseworthy, and inherent in all. Thy God hath chosen the poor of the world, and he is no respecter of persons. Oh do thou follow his honourable pattern, and let the poor, the mean, the lowest members of Christ, be lovely and amiable in thine eye! Choose godliness in all, and then thou wilt refuse none, but choose all that are godly. Though the holiness of some be but as the smoking flax, do not thou choke, but cherish it. Lord, thou hast a tender respect for thy little children and babes in Christ, Mat. 18:6; it is thy pleasure that thy little ones should not be offended, that such as are weak in the faith should be received, Rom. 14:1. Cause thy servant to love all thy saints, and to be able to say, with that man



after thine own heart, 'I am a companion of all that fear thee, and keep thy statutes,' Ps. 119:63.

I wish that my end, in the choice of my companions, may be principally to further my own and their everlasting peace. If I use any company upon other accounts, I frustrate my God, I cozen my own soul. For me and others to unite in sin would be a conspiracy against heaven, and too lively a resemblance of those governors of hell, whose only work is to draw others to, and to encourage them in, wickedness. For us to join in gratifying the flesh, and purveying for our appetites, and passing away the time that it may be less tedious, would be a confederacy against the Spirit, and but a more cleanly and neat acting of the part of beasts, who understand no other happiness than to feed and sport together. For us to accompany only about worldly employments, to get an insight into commodities and callings, that we might be wiser to buy and sell, or to hear and tell news, this would become a Turk, and were but a cutting time, the most precious commodity of all, to waste. For us to associate, barely to increase our knowledge, and widen the windows of our understandings, or to quicken and raise our fancies, and enlarge our natural parts and endowments, even this would be but a transcript of the lives of the most refined heathen, who were ignorant of the true weight and worth of eternal concernments; but to meet together, as Christ did with his apostles, to discourse about the things appertaining to the kingdom of God, to provoke one another to love and to good works, to admonish, advise, encourage, and comfort, and to build up one another in the most holy faith, this is a work worthy of a Christian, and becoming them that are called to be saints. Oh that my God's end may be much in my mind, when I converse with any of his chosen, that all our conjunctions may be fruitful in holiness! Christians are choice tutors and rare masters, by whom many precious things may be learned; my God hath lent them

me for a little while, and intendeth shortly to send for them home; why should I loiter or trifle with them, when such excellent lessons are given me by them? Lord, I know within a few days I shall be deprived of these and all other helps. Oh help thy most unworthy creature, in that little time that he doth enjoy them, to make the most, the best improvement of them, to love them as my own soul, and to do them the greatest service I can; enable both them and me to be fellow-workers and fellow-helpers unto thy kingdom, that when we come thither they may bless thee for me, and I may bless thee for them, and all of us may bless thee for thy dear Son, and thy blessed self, for ever and ever.

Finally, I wish that I, who am a pilgrim and stranger in this earth, may join myself, not with the natives, the men of the world, whose portion is in this life, by whose company I am sure to contract either guilt or grief, but with my fellow-sojourners, who are travelling with me towards the same heaven. Though I love the wicked with a love of pity, I would love only the saints with a love of delight. Let my choice be of them now, with whom I would choose to be for ever. Oh let me join with those on earth, and that in discoursing of thy gracious word and glorious works, with whom I hope to join in heaven in admiring thy boundless perfections, and giving thee everlasting praise. Lord, if there be such comfort in thy chosen, and their voices be so lovely, and their faces so comely here below in the estate of their minority, when they are blacked with the world's calumnies and cruelties, and besmeared with their own corruptions, what delight will there be in them above, when they shall come to their full age, be parted from all their defilements, and be perfectly adorned with thine image! How lovely will their voices be, when they shall join with thy celestial choir in singing hallelujahs, and in running division on thine infinite attributes and excellencies! How comely will their faces be, when they shall be freed from all the freckles and spots of sin, and so see

thee as to be fully like thee! Oh if grace in its infancy be so ravishing, what will it be in its maturity! If the morning of holiness be so glorious, how glorious will it be in its noonday lustre! Lord, if my soul rejoice so much in thy saints, who shine only as stars in their several orbs, with a borrowed light, what joy may I have in thyself, the true Sun! Oh, cause thy servant so to glorify thee in my choice of companions, and in my carriage in all companies, that I may come at last to enjoy immediate communion with thy beautiful saints and thy blessed Majesty, world without end. Amen.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **How a Christian may exercise himself to godliness in evil company**

Having spoken to the choice of companions, I proceed, reader, to thy carriage in company; and, first, in evil company.

Though evil men are not to be the object of a Christian's choice or delight, yet he must sometimes fall into their company, or go out of the world, 1 Cor. 5:10. Our relations, or vocations, or offices of charity, which we owe to the worst of men, will command our presence now and then amongst them. Civil commerce with them is lawful, though intimate communion be sinful. It is certain, the less we have of their society, the more of safety; but because civility and our necessities require us sometimes to be with them, Christianity must help us, as a glass window, to let in the light, and keep out the rain, to get what good we may, and to prevent the hurt they intend. God, in the first creation, separated the light from the darkness, and

so must the godly man amongst wicked persons. Swine will be cleanly in a fair meadow; sinners civil, sometimes, in the society of saints; but Christians must keep their garments unspotted when they walk in dirty places, and amongst defiled persons. Godliness will be thy best armour to ward off those blows, and hinder those wounds, which those sons of violence and villany would cause in thee. A wise physician, whatsoever diseased patients he goeth amongst, will take some preservative; but if he be to go into a pest-house, an antidote. It will be a sign of an excellent complexion, if thou canst walk, as occasion is, in the sun, and not be tanned. The Romans had a law, that every one, wherever he went, should wear a badge of his profession, or trade, either on his garment or in his hat, that he might be known. Christianity must be owned in every company, as that which is our great and worthy calling. The nobleman carrieth his garter or George with him in all places, because he esteems them his glory and honour; and if he be of the blood-royal, he desireth that all may take notice of it. Oh, what an honour and happiness is it to be a Christian, to be related to Jesus Christ! and how willing shouldst thou be to own and acknowledge it as the badge of thine honour, amongst all persons! He is a base servant that is ashamed of his lord's livery. It is said of the teal, a certain wild beast in Ethiopia, that he hath two horns of a cubit long, which he moveth as he pleaseth—either both forward, to offend his enemy, or both backward, to defend himself, or one forward, and the other backward, to both uses at once. A Christian in evil company should be as wise as a serpent, that he do not bring himself into suffering, but yet as innocent as a dove, that others do not draw him to sin. Walk as prudently as thou canst, only walk piously. Use as much caution as thou wilt, but be sure thou keepest a good conscience.

The apostle gives a special precept for our pious carriage in such company: 'Walk wisely towards them that are without,' Col. 4:5; in

which words the qualification of the act, and the specification of the subject, are considerable.

1. The qualification of the act; 'Walk wisely,'—that is, graciously. Grace is wisdom: 'To fear God is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.' He who walketh in the law of the Lord, and according to the rule of the word, is the wise walker, Job 28:28; Ps. 119:1; Gal. 6:16. Whatsoever our company be, we must walk by precept, not by pattern; he may be a good courtier, but he is a bad Christian, that alters and orders his carriage according to his company. If, like musicians, we play no lessons but what the company calls for, and what pleaseth them, our music will be harsh and jarring in God's ears: 'If I please men,' saith Paul, 'I am not the servant of Christ,' Gal. 1:10. He walks foolishly that, to please a few weak, dying men, displeaseth the jealous and almighty God; he walks wisely who will be sure, whoever be offended, to please him upon whose favour his life and all his comforts depend.

2. The specification of the subject: 'Towards them that are without.' Wicked men are said to be without;

1. Because they are visibly without the church. Scandalous sinners proclaim to the world that they are not so much as visible members of Christ: 'What have I to do to judge them that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? but them that are without God judgeth,' 1 Cor. 5:12, 13.

2. Because they are really without God and Christ. God may be in their mouths, and they may call him Father, but he is far from their hearts, and will never own them for his children. 'That at that time ye were without Christ, and without God in the world,' Eph. 2:12.

3. Because they shall go at last without heaven. This followeth from the former; they being visibly without the church, and really without God and Christ, must needs be without heaven. Without are dogs, children only are within-doors, Rev. 22:15; Luke 13:25. The manner of the apostle's expression is worth our observation. He saith not, Walk with them—no, they ought not to be our companions—but walk wisely towards them; let them be the object of your caution. As if he had said, I know your callings, or relations, or some occasions or other will bring you into the company of many that are not members of the church militant, and shall be excluded the church triumphant; but take heed to yourselves that ye keep good consciences in such company, that ye defile not your own souls by being partaker of their sins; be watchful that ye give no offence to them, and that ye take no infection from them. Walk wisely towards them that are without.

## SECT. I

Friend, to quicken thee to the greater caution, I shall offer thee these two thoughts.

First, Consider that evil company is very infectious. Wicked men, like the crocodile, slime the way to make thee fall, and when thou art down, suck out, as it were, thy blood, and with it fatten their insulting envy. Thy experience tells thee, that they are industrious to make men wicked and wretched. Such is the corruption of our nature, and the nature of our corruption, that we are sooner polluted by the wicked than they purified and amended by us, as the good corn is rather soiled by the bad, than the smutty made bright by the good. The fresh waters run into the sea, yet they do not sweeten, but are made brackish by it. Our sinful hearts, as onions, if there be any infection in the room, are apt to draw all to themselves. We may

hope to save them, when they may destroy us. How many have leaped into the waters to save others from drowning, and been drowned with them! Wholesome plants, if in conjunction with those that are malevolent, are of bad influence. It is recorded by the Holy Ghost, concerning the Israelites, 'They were mingled among the heathen, and learned their ways,' Ps. 106:35. They who join with wicked persons are prone to learn their wicked practices. Evil men are as mildew to the good corn, which makes it black. It is an encouragement to men to walk in bad and byways when they have company with them. Sinners are compared to dust, that breeds vermin in houses; to sepulchres, which send forth noisome vapours; and to thorns and briers, that pierce and pain such as meddle with them. Can they be too wary, then, that handle them? Luke 15:8; Rom. 3:13; Heb. 6:8. The owl is a night bird, and altogether for darkness; but they that hawk for birds, make a stale of her, and whilst the silly birds are wondering at her, catch and kill them. The devil, who makes it his work to take and destroy souls, doth often make use of ungodly men as stales to further his designs. Samson was too hard for the Philistines when they opposed him by force; but when they procured Delilah, a wicked companion, to tempt him, by that fraud they prevailed against him. The reason, according to some, why our Saviour forbade the disciple to go and bury his father was, not out of averseness to civil, much less to natural respect, but lest his corrupt kindred, who might be present at the funeral, should corrupt him again, and so he should die with them. When the raven went out of the ark, it returned not again, meeting, as is supposed, with some dead carcasses by the way. The caprimulgus, or goat-sucker, flieth upon the goats, and sucketh them, that their milk drieth up, and they are afterwards blind.<sup>2</sup> I write these things, reader, to make thee more careful in such company. If thou wouldst keep thy graces lively and flaming amongst such damps and waters of wickedness, thy watchfulness must be more than ordinary. The

more stones lie in thy way, the greater must thy caution be if thou wouldst not stumble. A common pilot may serve in a calm sea, but he that would steer a vessel right in a tempestuous ocean, amidst rocks and quicksands, had need to be eminent both for skill and care.

Secondly, Consider, it is possible for thee, not only to keep thyself from waxing worse, but to be the better for evil company. I speak not this to encourage thee to cast thyself into temptations, but to quicken thee to the more care when God calleth thee among them. The weasel is an unclean creature, and many ways hurtful, yet it devoureth mice, (whence it is named in Latin *mustela*,) and so is useful. Unclean sinners, that are intentionally pernicious, may be providentially profitable to the saints. Some creatures can draw nourishment from hard bones. A saint may suck honey out of dry and bitter herbs. The wise God would not send evil things, (as afflictions,) but for the good of his chosen, nor suffer evil persons, but for their profit. 'Pluck not up the tares, lest the wheat be pulled up also,' Mat. 13. The good husbandman makes a hedge of unfruitful plants, as briers and crab-trees, and other barren trees, to defend the vineyard from cattle, and the good trees in it from harm. The lion, as cruel as he was, defended the old prophet's body. God left some Canaanites amongst the Jews, lest the beasts of the field should overrun the country, Exod. 23:29. God leaves some wicked ones amongst his chosen in this world, to keep under their brutish lusts, which otherwise might undo them. The lees are helpful to preserve the wine, and the chaff is useful to preserve the corn; vermin are good against the jaundice. The taunts and scoffs of evil men have sometimes been instrumental to cure good men of their spiritual diseases. The sword of an enemy may let out thy rank blood. Jason had his imposthume opened, and so healed by a blow that he received in the wars from his enemies, which his friends the physicians could not cure. Those tongues which have been as sharp as razors, piercing the Christian's good name,



have proved instrumental to heal their depraved natures. The more the wicked twit thee with thy weaknesses, the more they may quicken thee to watchfulness. Thou wantest, possibly, a faithful friend to admonish thee, therefore God sendeth thee furious enemies to cast thy faults in thy teeth, and if now thou dischargest thy duty, thou mayest hope that their malice shall be a medicine to increase thine inward health and welfare. A fool loseth the improvement of his friends, but a wise man can make an advantage of his enemies. As the herb called Ros solis, though the heat of the sun lie upon it all day, yet the hotter the sun is, the moister it is; so the Christian is the more softened and tender, when others are hardened and bitter against godliness.

## **SECTION II**

I proceed now to shew wherein the exercise of godliness in evil company consisteth.

First, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness in evil society; labour to keep thyself unspotted from their sins. Ungodly men are called filthy, and compared to swine, that are apt to defile all that have to do with them. They, as the night, are dark, and full of unwholesome vapours; it concerns thee, therefore, to be well fenced, that thy spiritual health may not be impaired by them. Be careful that they hurt thee not, either inwardly or outwardly. Thou art in a double danger amongst sinners; thou art in danger of having thy soul wounded, and also of having thy name and estate blasted. There is a necessity, therefore, of a double guard; of a guard upon thy soul, that it may not be wronged, and of a guard upon thy tongue, that thy outward comforts may not be ruined. I say,

1. Be watchful over thy soul, that thou contractest no guilt. It is hard to be near those that are dirty and defiled, and yet to keep our garments unspotted and clean. Wicked men, as dyers and painters, who use colours, are usually besmeared themselves in their hands and habits, and they also besmear others. The Lake of Sodom is called Asphaltites, or the Dead Sea, because of the venomous vapours which arise out of it, insomuch that birds which fly over it fall down dead, and beasts that drink of it sicken and die. Some men have found evil society as poisonous to their souls, as brutes have found the Dead Sea to their bodies. Pope Nicholas the Third's concubine, by looking on a bear frequently, was brought a-bed of a monster. Thy frequent vision of their wicked actions may cause too great a likeness in thy conversation. But the saint should resemble the carbuncle, which being cast into the fire, is no whit defiled or impaired thereby, but therein shines most brightly. If it be closed fast, say some, in a ring of lead, and cast into the fire, we may see the lead molten, but the carbuncle not so much as mollified, or in the least blemished.

Thy watchfulness, friend, must be great, if thou wouldst keep thyself unspotted from the world, James 1:27. Rust will fret into the hardest steel, but not into the emerald. Sin will find speedy acceptance with a profane sinner, but not with a precious saint. Joseph kept his chastity, though often in the company of his wanton mistress. Lot did not lose his sanctity, though he dwelt amongst ungodly Sodomites. The archangel disputed with the arch-devil, yet was not infected by his poisonous breath. Satan did set upon the blessed Saviour, but could not fasten the least sin upon him. Naturalists tell us that the diamond, if true, will lie in the fire and not consume. The herb Narcissus, or Yellow Crowberries, flowereth in February, and keepeth its flower under the snow. The olive-tree, in the midst of the flood, kept its branches green. The Christian ought so to converse with the wicked, that his grace may neither waste, nor his conscience

be wounded. Thy duty is, as clothes well dyed, to keep thy colour in all weathers; and, as a good constitution, to retain thy spiritual health in the most unwholesome airs. The apostle writes to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 5:11, 'Not to company with any that are called brethren, and are fornicators, or covetous, or idolaters, or railers, or drunkards, or extortioners.' The word in the original is συναναμιγνυσθαι, both in the ninth and eleventh verses, which signifieth, not to mingle with them. They may be amongst them, but they may not mingle with them. That which mingleth with any filthy thing, receiveth of its filth; and though it were pure before, is polluted thereby. The people of God ought not in this sense to mingle with the world, but to keep themselves, though not untouched, yet untainted. It is storied that the rivers of Peru run into the main sea twenty or thirty miles, and yet are not mingled with the sea, but continue fresh water. So the river Rhodanus is said to run purely through the lake Lemanus, without mixture of waters.<sup>2</sup> It is also reported of the river Dee, in Merionethshire, in Wales, that runneth through Pimbe Mere, it remaineth entire, and mingleth not with the waters of the lake. Thus should the people of God, those crystal streams, though they are necessitated sometimes to meet with, keep themselves entire, and not mingle with the puddle water of unclean persons. Pliny reports of a family near Rome, that could walk on live coals, and not be burnt. It is honourable to keep thyself pure among them that are evangelically perfect; but to preserve thyself from pollution amongst them that are profane, is heroical. It is the excellency of a Christian to hold on his course without slipping or falling, when many rubs and hindrances are laid in his way; and it is the glory of grace to keep its beauty and lustre, notwithstanding the attempts of the world and the wicked one to soil it. It was a notable speech of the soldier that Erasmus speaks of, who, being told of a numerous army coming against him, answered, Tanto plus gloriæ referemus, quanto sunt plures quos superahimus, The more famous

our opposition, the more illustrious our conquest. That great commander had never been so renowned, if he had not eaten his way over the Alps, that were supposed inaccessible. The greater our difficulties, and the more grievous our enemies, the greater our valour, and the more glorious our victory. That expression concerning Asia hath some worth, Though it be no praise never to have seen it, yet to have lived soberly and temperately in it, is praiseworthy indeed.

The Holy Ghost giveth thee wholesome counsel: 'Be not partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure,' 1 Tim. 5:22. It may be, reader, thou art called sometimes amongst swearing, drunken, and ungodly persons. Well, thou art in more danger than in a pest-house; therefore, look well to thyself. Satan thinks, though he could not conquer thee amongst the saints, that now he hath caught thee amongst a company of venomous serpents, one or other of them will sting thee, and then he hopes to overthrow thee. Watch thyself narrowly, if thou wouldst be safe: 'Be not partaker of other men's sins.' It may be as bad to have communion with others' sins, as to commit sin in thy own person. He that is surety for another, is as liable to the debt as the principal, and we count him most foolish that takes another's debt upon himself. Indeed, Satan hath this for his comfort, that hereby he hath the more in bonds to the law's curse.

Three ways thou mayest partake of those sins which are committed in thy company. I shall not speak of thy commanding men to sin; so David was guilty of Uriah's death, though the sword of the Ammonites slew him, 2 Sam. 12:3. Nor of counselling men to sin; so Jonadab was guilty of Amnon's incest, 2 Sam. 16:21. Nor of commending others for sin; so a man may be accessory after the fact, Rom. 1:32; Ps. 10:9. Nor of setting others a bad example; so Jeroboam was guilty of the idolatry of the Jews; but of those ways

whereby Christians are usually guilty of others' sins when they are amongst the wicked.

1. By compliance. If, when thou seest or hearest others sin, thou dost inwardly approve it, thou art partaker of it. He that consents, though but in his thoughts, to another's fraud, is before God a felon. Paul, before his conversion, was consenting to the death of the proto-martyr, Acts 8:1; and after his conversion, pleads guilty of the murder, Acts 22:20. It may be, reader, when thou hearest lascivious stories, or sinful, witty jestings, or tales of sly, subtle cheats, or the like, thou dost secretly applaud and approve them. I tell thee, thou art partaker of them. If thou hast a heart in the sin, thou hast a hand in the sin. Thy affecting it makes thee as really guilty as if thou didst act it. Nay, I must tell thee, the greatest guilt ariseth from the fullest consent of the will. It is possible for the approver to be more guilty than the actor.

2. By silence, or not reproving sin. A man may sin by speaking, and he may sin by silence. This silence, when sin is committed, speaks thy consent to it. It was a speech of a heathen, that he had often repented of speaking, but never of holding his peace; but there is a sinful holding the peace, as well as a sinful speaking. It is bad to hold the breath long. Nicodemus, though he was at first fearful, and wore the badge of his profession under his cloak, out of sight, yet when he was amongst the enemies of Christ, he took courage, and would not, by his silence, betray his Saviour, and wrong his own soul, John 7:50, 51. It is a sign of little love to see men wounding, by oaths and blasphemies, or scoffs and jeers, our best friend, and not to wish them to forbear, and do our utmost to take them off. Dion writes of Severus, that he was careful what he did, but careless what he heard; but the good Christian is careful of the latter, as well as the former, knowing that sin may enter in at that casement, and remembering

that the cannon bullet, which split the vessel in which all the hopes of mankind were embarked, was shot in at that port-hole. The crocodile, because he hath no use of a tongue, living always in the waters, hath none; but God hath given man a tongue, and calls it his glory, Ps. 16:9 with Acts 2:26, partly because speech is one thing wherein men excel beasts. Brute creatures can make a noise, but man only articulate his voice, partly because it is given him to glorify God withal. It is pity he should ever open his lips, whose mouth will not shew forth God's praise. Thou canst usually no way better clear thyself, than by condemning the sin to the very face of the sinner. As the world thinks of God when he is silent, and doth not destroy them with the breath of his mouth, so the wicked think of the godly when they are silent, and do not open their mouths to reprove them: 'These things thou didst, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself,' Ps. 50:21. Silence in the presence of sin implieth a liking of it. Though thou sayest not euge, saith Augustine, yet if thou sayest not apage, there is a mutual approbation. Nay, he goeth farther, and saith, *Pejor es tacendo quam ille convitiando*,—Thy silence is more dangerous to thee than his sin to him. But I shall speak more largely to this duty of reproof before I conclude this chapter.

3. Thou mayest be partaker of others' sins by provoking them to sin. Our Lord is said to be crucified at Rome, Rev. 11:8, because he was sentenced by a Roman judge, executed by Roman soldiers, and put to death by authority of the Roman empire; yet the murder of Christ is all along in Scripture charged on the Jews. Peter, preaching to them, saith, 'Whom by wicked hands ye have taken and slain;' and Stephen expressly, 'Of whom ye have been the betrayers and murderers;' because, though the execution of it was from the Romans, yet the provocation to it was from the Jews, Acts 2:23, and 7:52. That which is committed by our instigation, is ours by just imputation. I fear

many good men are partakers of others' sins in this sense, either by stirring up others that are passionate to anger, or by inciting some that have been guilty of handsome—in the world's judgment—cheats, to relate and boast of them; for it is little difference whether men hold the sack open or fill it—both are guilty.

## SECTION III

Secondly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness in evil company, do not needlessly expose thyself to sufferings. He is but a fool that will lay his life in another's lap without a call. Christ did not commit himself to the Jews, because he knew their hearts, and we are not lightly to commit ourselves to any, because we know not their hearts. Set a watch before thy tongue, lest it make thy throat thy sepulchre—a grave to bury thy estate and outward comforts in. It is a sin in many Christians that they know not when to be silent. The wise man tells us, 'There is a time to speak, and a time to keep silence,' Eccles. 3:7. This is a great part of Christian prudence, to understand when to keep silence. It is much harder to learn to be silent than to learn to speak. Though we must not, as some Turks, be always dumb, *perpetuum silentium tenent ut muti*, Yet we ought sometimes to hold our breath in: 'Therefore the prudent shall keep silence, for it is an evil time,' Amos 5:13.

1. Their cross was weighty; it was an evil time, a time of much danger and difficulty. Sin abounded, sinners were enraged, God was provoked, and the godly oppressed.

2. Their carriage was wise; they shall keep silence. The words may have a twofold exposition:

(1.) If they be taken in relation to God, as some think, they speak the patient submission of the faithful, in that evil day, to the divine providence and pleasure.

(2.) If they be taken in relation to men, as others expound them, they speak the prudent conversation of the gracious in that day of persecution; they shall not causelessly throw themselves into greater miseries, but shall keep all due silence, to avoid needless sufferings. Indeed, thy care must be to own Christ ever, and to profess him publicly when thou art called to it; but as thy policy should not eat up thy zeal, so thy zeal must not eat up thy wisdom. I would not discourage thee from confessing the Lord Jesus, yet I must tell thee that thou art not bound to proclaim in all companies of what judgment thou art, nor what church government thou wouldst choose, nor what society thou meetest in, &c.; nay, thou art bound to the contrary. He that hath a good mixture of zeal and prudence, is like a fire on the hearth, of much use and service; but zeal without discretion is like fire on the top of the chimney, which often doth much mischief. Zeal to a Christian is like a high wind filling the sails of a ship, which, unless it be ballasted with discretion, doth but the sooner overturn it. Abdias, a bishop, raised a dreadful storm of persecution by his intemperate zeal. I doubt not but the whole company of believers in some nations have suffered through the indiscreet heats of some particular persons. Zeal in a man is like wings to a bird, or mettle to a horse; but the bridle of discretion is requisite, as the poets fable that Minerva put a golden bridle on Pegasus, lest he should fly too fast. Bernard hath a good saying, Discretion without zeal is slow-paced, and zeal without discretion is heady; let therefore zeal spur on discretion, and discretion rein in zeal. Paul was full of heavenly fire. It is said of him, when he came to Athens, and beheld their idolatry, that his spirit, παρωξύνετο, was stirred within him, Acts 17:16; yet it is worthy our observation,



though he preached much against idols in general, yet he pleads not at all against Diana in particular, the goddess of whom the Athenians were so foolishly fond. His zeal moved him to oppose idolatry to his power, but his prudence directed him to forbear particular invectives against Diana, and to do it in such a way as might be, in probability, most profitable for them, and least dangerous to himself. The rash zeal of some godly persons hath set others at a further distance from piety. When every unskilful Phaeton takes upon him to drive the chariot of the sun, it is no wonder that the whole world be in a flame.

Geese, say some, when they fly over Taurus, keep stones in their mouths, lest by their gaggling they should discover themselves to the eagles which are amongst the mountains, waiting there to take them. It were well for some persons if they could keep their mouths with a bridle, whilst the wicked are amongst them, who wait and watch to destroy them.

Reader, I would be understood rightly; I do not intend, by anything I have written, to incite thee to take all courses, good or bad, to avoid suffering, but to dissuade thee from bringing thyself into suffering. Grace may teach thee not to choose sin, and both grace and nature teach thee not to choose suffering. Follow the lamb wherever he goeth, and whithersoever he calleth thee; but take heed of going before him, lest he leave thee to suffer at thy own charges. He that will take a bear by the tooth, or a mad dog by the ear, may thank himself if he be well bitten.

It is too ordinary for some Christians, when wicked men give them a few good words, and pretend a little goodwill, to open their minds fully and freely to them, even to the hazard of their own liberties and lives; but such do not consider the counsel which God gives them: 'Trust ye not in a friend, (much less in an enemy, as every wicked

man is to the godly,) put ye not confidence in a guide, (though he may be full of power, and policy, and promises:) keep the door of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom,' (lest, as Samson's wife, she tell all to thy undoing,) Micah 7:5. Every smooth face and smiling countenance is not to be trusted; kisses do sometimes betray us. When the tongues of some cry Ave, they threaten a Væ, saith Augustine. They come, Ps. 118:12, about me like bees, with honey in their mouths, and a sting in their tails. As butchers, they claw the ox about the ribs, that they may have the fairer blow at his head. The pelican swalloweth shell-fish, and warmeth them in her stomach, but it is to make them gape, that she may pick them out of the shells (where they are safe whilst they are shut) and devour them. Thus some ungodly men frequently warm Christians with flatteries, to make them (κεχηνότες, according to Aristophanes's expression of a fool) gapers, and to utter all they know and think, that they may make a prey of them. Friend, do not only look on wicked men as gins to entangle thy soul, but also as snares to entrap thy livelihood and life. It was the complaint of Luther, *A falsis amicis plus est mihi periculi quam a toto papatu*: That he was in more danger by reason of false friends, than by the pope and all his hierarchy. As conies, those unclean creatures, are dangerous about the places where they lurk;—the island Majorica was overthrown, according to historians, by the digging of conies;—so unclean men, even by their crouching under thee, may undermine and overthrow thee. Consider their hatred of thee, notwithstanding all their show of love, is real and inward; and of all wounds, those which rankle inwardly are most to be feared. The devil confessed Christ, yet hated him to the death; and his children do all take after him. It is said of Antoninus Geta that he would always shew most love where he intended to bereave of life; therefore men were more afraid of his favour than of his anger. Antigonus kept a priest on purpose to pray and offer up sacrifice to the gods, that they would preserve him from his seeming friends.

There may be some profit of that Italian proverb, The Lord deliver us from our friends; we will watch ourselves over our enemies, that they do not hurt us. Solomon gives thee a good caution in his character of a fool and a wise man: 'A fool uttereth all his mind, but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards,' Prov. 29:11. And those words of Hugo Victorinus have much weight in them, and are somewhat near Solomon's: There is a time when nothing is to be spoken, there is a time when something, but no time when all things are to be spoken. Especially if thou hast found a man false once, beware of him the second time. He deserves to break his shins that stumbleth twice at one stone. That proverb of the Italians is worthy of consideration, If a man deceive me once, it is his own fault; if a second time, it is my fault. He had need to sit sure who backs that horse which hath once cast his rider.

Thirdly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness in evil company, be sure thou dost not disown thy profession, and deny Jesus Christ. Though it behoveth thee to walk wisely, because sinners lie in wait to destroy thy life, yet be careful thou dost not walk wickedly, for sin lieth in wait to destroy thy soul. It may consist with grace, not always openly to proclaim thy profession, yet it is a graceless part at any time to deny it. It was a blot to Nicodemus that he was a night-bird. If the honour of Christ be engaged, and by thy silence the gospel will suffer, then not to publish what thou art is a sin. The light of religion ought not to be carried in a dark lantern, and to be shewn only when thy own interest will permit, and at other times to be hid. Christ tells us, 'Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven,' Mat. 10:33. Not to confess Christ openly when thou art called to it, is to deny him; and expect the same measure from Christ in the other world which thou givest to him in this. How justly will he be disowned for a servant hereafter, that was ashamed to own so noble a Master here! And how dreadful will his

condition be whom Christ shall deny before his Father! All thy happiness depends upon his confessing thee. If he disclaim thee, devils will lay claim to thee, and theirs thou shalt be for ever. It concerns thee, therefore, to confess Christ, how dear soever it may cost, and to own religion in all companies; for thou mayest truly say, what an honest man did, being occasionally in a pirate's ship when it was searched, and the pirates cried out, Woe be to us if we be known; he said, Woe be to me if I be not known.

There are a sort of men that, like Mercury, the good-fellow planet, are according to their company—good if with the good, bad if in conjunction with bad; but the true Christian hath not so learned Christ. He who, like the mariner, changeth his course upon the change of the weather, is but an unsound professor. We read of some that feared the Lord, and served graven images, 2 Kings 17:41. They divided themselves between the true God and idols, as the Jewish children, which spake half Hebrew, and half in the language of Ashdod, Neh. 13:24; and as some gentlemen, that speak Italian when they are amongst Italians, French amongst Frenchmen, and order their language answerable to their associates. So some, that would be called Christians, change themselves, both for words and deeds, into the nature of their companions. Amongst the godly they own God, but amongst the wicked they deny him. They alter their colour as the sole, say naturalists, according to that which is nearest, and expose the name of God, rather than their own, to contempt. Beza said of Baldwinus that he had religionem ephemerem, a religion for every day. Some men have a deportment suitable to all with whom they converse, resembling such as are sinful, and dissembling with them that are holy: these are either ashamed or afraid of Christ, both which are unreasonable.

1. Some will not own him out of shame, though he be the glory of his people Israel. The paint of women in some countries is the dung of the crocodile, and their sweet powder the excrement of a cat; yet people can esteem these their honour. The drunkard can boast of his strength to drink, the cunning cheat of his deceitful doings; and, alas! many Christians are ashamed of Christ. Oh how unworthy is it, that wicked men should glory in their shame, and good men be ashamed of their glory! that the scum of hell should be prided in, and the sovereign of heaven be esteemed a disgrace! that some should with brows of brass boast of the ugly monster, begotten of Satan, and others not dare to own the fairest of ten thousands, and the only begotten of the Father! It is reported of Aristotle's daughter, that being asked what colour was best, she should answer the blush colour. Diogenes was wont to say, that blushing was the colour of virtue. However this colour may be commendable on other occasions, it is abominable in the cause of Christ. David saith, 'I will speak of thy judgments before kings, and will not be ashamed,' Ps. 119:46; neither the greatness of their power, nor the brightness of their splendour, shall make me bashful and ashamed to own thee. Shame doth excellently become sin, but it is wholly unbecoming the blessed Saviour, Rom. 6:21; Mark 8:38.

2. Some will not own Christ out of fear; as an owl peeps at the sun out of a barn, but dares not come near it, so some peep at the Sun of righteousness, but stand aloof, as if they were more afraid to be nigh God than the devil. This made Peter deny his master. How daunted have many been to look danger in the face; he who had sometimes courage enough to take a lion by the beard, lost his colour, and changed his behaviour, before wicked Achish. Slavish fear is a great foe to godliness. The great philosopher gives this reason why the chameleon changeth colour so frequently; he being a fearful creature, swelleth by drawing in the air, hereby his skin is pent in and made

smooth, and more apt to receive the colour of those objects that are next him. They who are fearful of suffering will easily, if their company require it, change their colour, and disown their Saviour. Timorous creatures will run into any unclean places for shelter, when a magnanimous spirit, in a good cause, will defy death itself. He who fears his skin is no friend to his soul, but will defile the latter to defend the former. Fear surprising the heart takes it away, and makes the Christian weak; and then it is no wonder if the smallest blow conquer him, and, like a reed, he bend with the least blast of wind; but how unreasonable is it that any should be afraid to own the blessed Saviour, when in sticking close to him is their only safety! Nothing can hurt thee but sin; it is that alone which exposeth thee to injuries and miseries; if thou fearest that, thou needest fear nothing else. What a foolish bargain dost thou make, by denying Christ, to make wicked and weak men thy seeming friends, and the jealous God thy real enemy! Is not he distracted, who, to avoid the scratch of a pin, layeth himself open to the shattering of a cannon? And art thou not worse, if, to avoid the fury of poor mortals, thou incurrst the wrath of the Almighty? Remember that the fearful are the first in the black list for the eternal fire, Rev. 21:8; and do not play the coward, as Furius Fulvius, to sound a retreat, when thou shouldst, as a man of courage, sound an alarm. The mulberry tree is esteemed the wisest of all trees, because it only bringeth forth its leaves after the cold frosts be past; but in Christianity, he is a fool who dares not profess himself a Christian till dangers be over. St Augustine, in his Confessions, relates a story of one Victorinus, who, being converted, because he had many great friends that were heathens, durst not own Christ publicly, but went to Simplicianus, and whispered him in the ear, I am a Christian; but Simplicianus answered him, *Vix credo, nec deputabo te inter Christianos, &c.*; I do not believe it, nor will count thee a Christian, till I see thee profess it openly. Victorinus at first derided this answer, but afterwards, considering the words of

our Saviour, Mark 8:38, he acknowledged it openly. It is very dangerous to walk in the dark. Saints are children of the light, and should have their light shining before others. Louis the Eleventh of France was better at carnal politics than real piety, who desired his son might learn no more than this, He who cannot counterfeit, must not wear a crown.

## SECTION IV

Fourthly, Labour to get some good by such as are evil. The precious stone amianthon, being cast into the fire, is made the more clear and pure. A skilful naturalist will make some use of the most venomous herbs and serpents. A gracious person may improve the vilest sinner's company to his own spiritual profit. As wicked men are helpful to the temporal good, so often to the eternal good, of God's people. Like leaves, though they are nothing worth in themselves, yet they keep the good fruit from blasting, and hereby are instrumental to its further growth and ripening. Ismenias, the Theban musician, taught his scholars, not only by shewing them such as struck a clean stroke with, Do so, but also by shewing them such as bungled at it with, Do not so. Antigenidas thought men would like better, and contend the more for skill, if they heard untunable notes. Satan intendeth wicked men as dirt and earth, only to besmear and defile them; but God outshoots him in his own bow, and makes them as fuller's earth, to purge and purify them. As poisonous as they are in their own nature, through the correctives of the Spirit they become not only not hurtful, but helpful, to the believer. Ungodly men are compared to dung and filth, which we know, being applied to the good trees, makes them more fruitful. That slime and mud which the overflowing of Nilus carrieth along with it in the summer solstice, causeth Egypt to bring forth abundantly. The graces of saints have

increased, even by the abominations and oppositions of sinners. Lot's hatred of sin was the greater by viewing the unclean conversations of the Sodomites. The serpent Tyrus, saith Brittenbacchus, is so venomous, that there is no remedy against its bitings but by cutting off the member; yet even of this there is a treacle made which serveth for excellent purposes. Though the flesh of the vulture, saith Pliny, be unwholesome and unmeet for meat, yet it is most medicinable; an ointment made of the fat of it is specially strengthening to the sinews. Though ungodly men are ill food, and not fit to be our ordinary constant diet, yet they may be good physic, and profitable, when necessity compelleth us to use them. A debauched, lewd master may teach a scholar many good lessons. If God send us to school to the beasts of the field, Job 12:7, 'ask the beasts, and they shall teach thee,' I know no reason but much good may be learned from these brutes in the shape of men. Some tell us that gold was extracted out of Ennius's dung. Thou mayest, reader, through the help of the Spirit, get that which is better than gold out of these noisome and loathsome persons. The smell of trefoil is often stronger in a moist and cloudy dark season, than in fair weather; so should the savour of a saint's graces be most fragrant amongst evil companions.

1. Let thy zeal be the more inflamed. Zeal is the heat or intension of the affections; it is a holy warmth, whereby our love and anger are drawn out to the utmost for God and his glory. Now, our love to God and his ways, and our hatred of wickedness, should be increased, because of ungodly men. Cloudy and dark colours in a table, make those that are fresh and lively to appear more beautiful; others' sins should make God and godliness more amiable in thine eyes. Thy heart should take fire by striking on such cold flints. David, by a holy antiperistasis, did kindle from others' coldness: Ps. 119:39, 'My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy word.'



Cold blasts make a fire to flame the higher, and burn the hotter. A true child, hearing others speak faintly, is the more fervent in the commendation of his father: 'Because the wicked forsake thy law; therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above much fine gold,' Ps. 119:127. Do others in thy presence declare their loathing of God's precepts? do thou love them the more. Do they trample them under their feet? do thou prize them at the greater rate. Truly, the more they dishonour God by their swearing and scoffing at godliness, the more reason thou hast to honour him. Phinehas is sainted in God's calendar for being zealous in God's cause. As varnish addeth a lustre to all colours, and makes them amiable, so zeal addeth a beauty to all our services, and makes them the more acceptable. The Spirit of God works like fire, and if it dwell in thee, it will make thee fervent in spirit. How little sign have they of their saintship, who can hear sinners belch out their blasphemies against God, and tear the precious body of Christ in pieces with oaths, and yet are as senseless as stocks and stones, as if they had no relation to God and Christ!. The redeemed of the Lord are a zealous people, Tit. 2:14. Thou art but false in thy profession of friendship, if thou canst behold others abusing thy friend, and sit still. Ah, what true Christian can see hellish lusts embraced publicly, and the glorious Lord disowned openly, and not loathe the former, and love the latter the more for it! The Grecians would bring their children to hate drunkenness, by shewing them drunkards wallowing in their vomits, what loathsome persons they were in such conditions. Good examples are provocations to holiness, Mal. 3:8; bad examples may work a detestation of vice, Deut. 18:9; Eph. 4:17. Wise men have more to learn of fools, than fools of wise men, said Cato. That trumpet which is filled only with wind, may encourage and awaken a living man to the battle; that person who is dead in sin, may rouse up a sleepy yet living Christian, and raise his affections more towards God.

2. Let thy heart be the more enlarged in thankfulness. Dost thou behold the profane glorying in their pollutions? Dost thou see sinners abusing God's creatures? Dost thou discern ungodly ones making a mock of sin, jeering at holiness, and riding post to hell? How should thy heart be raised in thankfulness to thy dearest Redeemer, that thou dost not run with them to the same excess of riot, and in the same road of eternal ruin! Every time thou comest into such company, and observest their wicked courses, thou mayest well pity such deluded souls, and praise thy gracious Saviour. Mayest thou not think thus with thyself: Lo, here are those that play with the eternal fire, and sport with the Almighty's fury; that dance merrily over the bottomless pit, and take pleasure in the way to endless pains; that are wholly regardless of God, and Christ, and heaven, and their unchangeable estates in the other world. I was as bad as the worst of them, or at least I had slipped as deep into that mire of profaneness, and equalled or exceeded them in all manner of impiety, if free grace had not withheld and prevented me. I have the same root of bitterness, and had doubtless brought forth the same cursed fruits, if the hand of mercy had not new grafted me. What thanks do I owe to my Redeemer, who makes me to differ! and what cause have I to love and laud, to please and praise him, world without end! Oh, friend, if the Israelites blessed God for their preservation from those waters in which the Egyptians were drowned, hast not thou cause to give thanks for preservation from that wickedness in which others are damned?

3. Thy care and watchfulness should be the more increased. The falls and failings of others should be sea-marks, and give thee warning to avoid those rocks and shallows, if thou wouldst avoid shipwreck. Thou hast the same poisonous seed, therefore take heed lest thou committest the same sin. 'These things,' saith the apostle, 'were written for our example, to the intent we should not lust after evil

things,' as they did, 1 Cor. 10:6, 16. All these things happened unto them for examples, and they were written for our admonition. As the sins and sufferings of others are recorded for our instruction, so God lets them be acted before our eyes for our admonition. If he that walketh before me falleth and breaketh his neck, I have the more reason to ponder the paths of my feet. If a fire break out in one house, every wise man will look the more to his own. If enemies be near the walls, the garrison will be the more diligent to keep watch and ward. Ah, how foolish is that mariner, who beholdeth a ship before him, cast away upon some rock, and doth not steer his course with the greater care!

Thus the sword of Goliath may be serviceable to a David, and those weapons of unrighteousness, which are designed for our destruction, may be helpful to our preservation. Those kites that destroy chickens, do also eat up offals of beasts, and many noisome things, which otherwise would infect the air; whence, say some, it is a law in England, that near a market-town they should not be killed. Unclean beasts are serviceable to men, and unclean men may be helpful to Christians.

## **SECTION V**

Fifthly, Endeavour their reformation. Thy duty is, as a good physician, to loathe the noisome disease, but to pity and strive to recover the patient. What difference is there betwixt thee and a carnal person, if thou sufferest him to die, and offerest not thy help for his cure! Thy Father doth good to all; he causeth his sun to shine on the just and on the unjust. Oh, remember that thou art his son, and that his pattern is worthy of imitation. That piece of iron which is rubbed with the loadstone, will draw another piece of iron. We

read of magnetical rocks in some islands, that draw all ships to them which have iron pins, and hold them so fast that they are not able to stir. Shew that thou hast been touched with the Spirit, that the Spirit of God dwelleth in thee, by thy endeavours to draw others to God. Christ never sat at table with any sinners, but he made better cheer than he found. If he sat with the profane, he did convert them, if with the pious, he did confirm them, Luke 7.

Be not discouraged at the weakness of thy gifts, or the small degree of thy graces, but consider that the event of the enterprise depends upon him who sets thee a-work, and that it is all one to him whether ye have great means, or small means, or no means. A poor contemptible fly may hinder an elephant from sleeping; a poor upright Christian may awaken great sinners out of their spiritual sleep and lethargy. A little boat may land a man at a large continent; a weak believer may help a soul to heaven.

Endeavour to reform them these three ways:

1. By wholesome counsel. Every place thou comest into should be like Libnah, in which the Israelites pitched—a place of frankincense, perfumed by thy presence. The breath of a man serves him both to cool his broth when hot, and warm his fingers when cold. The breath of a Christian should serve to put some warmth into them that are cold heavenward, and to cool and slake them that are hot hellward. 'A wholesome tongue is a tree of life,' Prov. 15:12. Thy tongue should be like the tree of life in Eden, of which he that did eat was to live for ever, Gen. 3:22; or like that tree of life in the midst of the street, which bare twelve manner of fruit, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations, Rev. 22:2. I have read of a person who led a dissolute life, and was so wrought upon by the counsel of a good man, that he turned over a new leaf; and when his companions asked

the ground of that change, which they soon observed in him, and why he would not walk along with them in his old wicked ways, he answered them, I am busy, meditating and reading in a little book, which hath but three leaves in it, so that I have no leisure so much as to think of any other business. In the first leaf, which is red, I meditate on the passion of my Lord Jesus Christ, and of that precious blood which he shed for the remission of my sins; in the second leaf, which is white, I meditate on the unspeakable joys of heaven, purchased for me by the death of my Redeemer; in the third leaf, which is black, I meditate on the intolerable torments of hell, provided and kept in store for the wicked and ungodly. Prudent and pious advice may bring wandering sinners home to Christ's fold. There is a special art in baiting the hook aright, so as thou mayest take sinners ere they are aware: 'I being crafty, caught you with guile,' 2 Cor. 12:16. It is possible thou art amongst men that are moral and civil, yet unsanctified; by commending civility, yet discovering its insufficiency, thou mayest beat them out of their rotten holds, and cause them to run to Christ for help, Mat. 5:20. It may be thou meetest with those that are openly profane; by bringing in wisely an example of God's judgments on such persons, thou mayest fright them from such lewd practices. Sometimes thou mayest turn earthly discourse by degrees into heavenly, and spread a table, and set a running banquet before them, which they never thought of. Do they ask, for want of other discourse, what news? After some prudent preface, answer them, that thou canst tell them good news from a far country, which is worthy of all acceptation—namely, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Do they ask how such and such do? acquaint them concerning their bodily welfare, and, if it may be done conveniently, that the health of the soul is most to be inquired after, as that which is of greatest weight and worth. Do they ask into the price of commodities? thou mayest thereby raise their hearts to the wine and milk which is to be

bought of Christ, without money and without price. This is true alchymy, and will turn all into gold. What heavenly fruit did our Redeemer gather from such earthly trees! When the Pharisees spake of eating with defiled, that is, unwashen hands, he told them of inward defilements, and what danger there was in unwashen hearts, Mat. 15:20. When the woman of Samaria came to draw water, how soon doth he lift up his discourse to living water, of which whosoever drinketh shall never thirst! John 4:21. When the multitude followed him for the loaves, he improves that occasion to quicken them to labour for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life, John 6:25–27. Thus thou mayest, reader, distil cordial water out of dregs and lees.

2. Endeavour to reform them by thy gracious carriage in their company. A Christian is God's jewel, Mal. 3:17, and should always cast a radiancy and lustre before the eyes of others, but especially amongst them that are wicked. He is double guilty who walks disorderly amidst his Master's enemies. Saints should, like diamonds, sparkle graciously in a ditch, and as stars, shine the brighter in cold nights: 'Be blameless and harmless, without rebuke, shining as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation,' Phil. 2:15. Believers should, like lights hung out in the city, shine so brightly as to prevent others wandering and stumbling; the word is φωστῆρες, such lights as the sun, moon, and stars are, which do not keep their light to themselves, but communicate it to others. This gracious conversation is often profitable to the conviction of others. They who, as the Atlantes, are ready to curse the sun, because it scorcheth them with its beams, to hate the light, because it discovereth their deeds of darkness, may nevertheless in their consciences be so convinced of its beauty and glory, that they may turn Persians, to admire and adore it.<sup>2</sup> 'Shew thyself a pattern of good works, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed,

having no evil thing to say of you,' Tit. 2:7, 8; 1 Peter 3:15, 16. Grace doth powerfully, though silently, oppose and overthrow profaneness; it forceth reverence from its bitterest enemies. The righteousness of Noah condemned the old world; the holiness of the Baptist did obtain respect from wicked Herod. How did the magnanimous sanctity of the three worthies triumph in the conscience of Nebuchadnezzar! and the innocence of Daniel in the soul of Darius! Many a sinner hath been struck dumb by the exemplary and heroic faith and patience of the saints. Such a gracious carriage is sometimes helpful to the conversation of others. They who stood out against the word of God, have been won by the works of men. Sanctified actions are unanswerable syllogisms, and effectual demonstrations. Though the ears have been shut against pious precepts, the heart itself hath been opened to a gracious pattern: 'Abstain from fleshly lusts, and have your conversations honest; that whereas they speak evil of you as evil-doers, they may, by your good works which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation,' 1 Peter 2:11, 12. Good works are a means, not only of silencing, but even of sanctifying evil workers; and hereby those who spake evil of the children, come to glorify the Father. A holy life is a real confutation of unholy lusts; and whereas counsel may persuade, this compelleth the sinner either to embrace sanctity, or to live condemned of himself. Louis the Twelfth of France, hearing ill of the Waldenses, sent some to observe and pry into their lives, who returning, told the king that they were free from all scandal, sanctified the Sabbath, baptized and catechised their children; whereupon the king, their enemy, swore that they were better men than himself, or any of his subjects. The church of God is compared to a vineyard, Luke 20:9. Pliny tells us, that the smell of a vineyard is such that it drives away all serpents and venomous creatures. The lives of God's people should be spotless and exemplary, that their enemies, as in Tertullian's clays, may honour them for their holiness. Of Bucer it

was said, he so lived that his friends could not sufficiently praise him, nor his enemies justly blame him; so should every child of God.

## SECTION VI

3. Endeavour to reform them by faithful reprehension. Reprehension is like a dam, which, though it cause the waters to swell, stops its violent course; as thunder, it purifieth the air, which otherwise would putrify. When thou comest amongst vicious persons, thy spirit, as Paul's amongst the idolatrous Athenians, must be stirred within thee, and thy zeal must appear in reprovng the offenders, or else, as a pearl in a toad's head, it will be of no use. Servetus condemned Zuinglius for his heat and harshness; but he answered, In other things I will be meek and mild, but not in blasphemies against Christ. Good blood will not belie itself, but when occasion is offered, shew itself: the zeal of God's house did eat the Redeemer up, and he whipped the buyers and sellers out of the temple. In the cause of God, saith Luther,<sup>3</sup> I am, and ever shall be, stout and stern; herein I take upon me this motto, *Nulli cedo*, I give place to none.

That expression of Augustine hath weight in it, *Qui non zelat non amat*; He hath no love to God, who hath no zeal for God, and truly he hath little love to his neighbour: 'Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him,' Lev. 9:17.

First, Here is no privilege as to persons either reprovng or offending.

1. Reprovng: 'Thou shalt rebuke.' It is to be done in our own persons, and not by a proxy.



2. Offending: 'Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour.' All our neighbours, made of the same earth, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, capable of the same heaven. God excludes none, but offers both his grace and glory universally: 'Whosoever will, let him,' &c., Rev. 22:17.

Secondly, No dispensation granted as to crimes: 'Thou shalt not suffer sin upon him.' If it be a sin, it must not be suffered.

Thirdly, No pleading of any excuse: 'Thou shalt in any wise rebuke him, and not hate him.' To suffer any in unholiness is a sign of hatred, and such seeming charity is the greatest cruelty. Besides, whilst we let such men alone in their profaneness, we provoke God against ourselves. John the Baptist rebuked Herod, Nathan reproved David, and Latimer, Henry VIII. Though the offenders were potent and high, yet the ministers of God would not fear their faces, but freely tell them of their faults. Nay, some heathen have had courage enough to check the greatest for their crimes. How plain was Seneca in reproving Nero, Diogenes in reproving Alexander, and Zeno, Nearchus!<sup>2</sup> It is said of Suetonius, that in writing the lives of the twelve Cæsars, he took the same liberty in declaring their vices which they took to commit them. And shall not Christians be as bold to check sin as others are to act it?

Reader, what love dost thou shew to thy neighbour, if thou seest him wounding and piercing his inestimable soul, and thou dost not endeavour, though against his will, to hold his hand? If thou shouldst see him take a knife to stab himself at the heart, thou wouldst not stay to ask his leave, or fear his anger, but do thy utmost to hinder him; and canst thou see him destroying his soul, and not seek to prevent him? That pity, without question, is the best, which relateth to the better part. There was a barbarous law among the

Lacedæmonians, that no man should tell his neighbour any ill news that befell him, but every one should be left in process of time to find it out himself. Alas! what will become of poor sinners, if none should tell them what they are doing, whither they are going, till they come to find it in the place of torments? Were love burning in our hearts, (as fire was in the temple,) or were our faces towards one another, (like those cherubims which covered the mercy-seat with their wings,) we should not only not lie in sin ourselves, but also endeavour that others should not die in their sins. That person who refused to smite his neighbour, when commanded in the name of the Lord, was slain by a lion, 1 Kings 20:35. If we refuse to smite sin, God's wrath will smite us.

Because this duty is of such concernment, I shall give thee some few brief directions.

1. Be sure that which thou reprovest be a sin, and not a lawful, or indifferent thing. Some shew much heat, but little holiness, in keeping a great stir about nothing. The Israelites raised a great army to fight against their brethren, upon a supposition that they had built an altar for sacrifice, Joshua 22:16. Eli was mistaken in chiding Hannah for drunkenness, and thinking she was not sober, because she was almost overwhelmed with sorrow, 1 Sam. 2. It is dangerous to apply corroding medicines, upon supposition that the person hath a festered sore, or to cut a man for the stone who is not troubled with that distemper. It were better by much to be silent, than to cry out against that which we cannot by Scripture prove to be sin. He that reproves the deed, will do more hurt than good, if he be not able to convince the doer, Tit. 1:9. To some it may be said, as Job to his friends, who accused him of hypocrisy because of his calamity, as if the stick could not be straight because it was brought to the fire, 'How forcible are right words! but what doth your arguing reprove?'

Job 6:25. Right words have great weight; naked truth will be too hard for armed error; but what power have mistaken or misapplied arguments? what doth such arguing reprove? Such arguings seldom reprove any but the arguer, and him they always reprove.

2. Reprove seriously. Reproof is an edged tool, and must not be jested with. Cold reproofs are like the noise of cannons a great way off, nothing affrighting us. He that reproves sin merrily, as one that takes a pride to shew his wit, and make the company laugh, will destroy the sinner instead of the sin. There are those that spit out their friends with their tongues, and laugh them into enemies. Sharpness and acuteness doth ill in sportful festivals, but it becomes purging potions. Lightness is commendable in nothing, but worst in things that are weighty. A vain jesting admonition is like rubbing a person with a poisoned oil, which spreads the more for being put into such a fleeting suppleness. The Areopagites banished Stilpo for proving, by his sophistry, that Minerva was no goddess, alleging this for their reason, that it was not safe for any to dally with things that were divine. Reproof is strong physic, and worketh many times to purpose, and therefore is not to be given in jest. Sin, which is the object of it, is not to be played with; nor hell, its consequent, a jesting matter, Titus 1:13. The apostle enjoins Titus to reprove sharply; the word is ἀποτόμως, cuttingly, ἵνα ὑγιαίνωσιν ἐν τῇ πίστει, that they may be sound in the faith. He that mindeth his patient's health, will not toy, or trifle, or play with his mortal diseases; the flesh must feel the plaster, or it will never eat up the corruption in it. Shouldst thou apply a healing plaster to skin the wound aloft, when there is need of a corrosive to take away the dead flesh, thou wouldst be false and unfaithful to thy friend. When the water was bitter, and the ground barren, Elisha cast a cruse of salt into it, and it healed both. Reproof, like salt, must have in it both sharpness and savouriness. Alas! how fierce is that wrath, how hot is that fire, to which poor sinners are

liable! And wilt thou sport with their souls, and join with them in making a mock of sin? Saints must be zealous, not only in good works, but also in reproofing evil workers. The command is, 'Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sin,' Isa. 58:1. This belongs in some sense to every member, as well as to the minister. They must reprove sin powerfully: 'Cry aloud, lift up thy voice as a trumpet;' particularly, 'shew my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sin.' Admonition, without serious application, is like an arrow with too many feathers, which, though we level at the mark, is taken by the wind, and carried quite from it.

Some men shoot their reprehensions, like pellets through a trunk, with no more strength than will kill a sparrow. Those make sinners believe that sin is no such dreadful evil, and the wrath of God no such frightful end. He that would hit the mark, and recover the sinner, must draw his arrow of reproof home. Reproof must be powerful: the hammer of the word breaks not the heart, if it be lightly laid on; if the flesh doth not feel the plaster, it will hardly be healed by it. It must also be so particular, that the offender may think himself concerned. Some, in reproof, will seem to aim at the sinner, but so order it, that their arrows shall be sure to miss him. As Domitian, when a boy held for a mark afar off his hand spread, with his fingers severed, he shot his arrows so, that all hit the empty spaces between his fingers. Be the reproof never so gracious, the plaster never so good, it will be ineffectual if not applied to the patient, 2 Sam. 12:7; Acts 2:36, 37.

3. Reprove seasonably. Reprehension is not necessary or convenient at all seasons; admonition is like physic, rather profitable than pleasant. Now, the best physic may be thrown away, if a fit time of giving it be not observed. Some unskilful physicians have wronged

their patients in administering suitable potions out of season. It is a great part of Christian prudence to discern the fittest time of lancing spiritual sores; if they be taken when they are ripe, the corrupt matter may be all let out, and the party be the healthier whilst he liveth; but if before they be ripe, it will not be so well. A fool will always be talking, and is ready to burst if he may not have vent; but a wise man will keep a word for afterward, Prov. 29. He will neither run before an opportunity, nor neglect to follow after it. Many a fair child is spoiled by an untimely birth, and good duty prejudiced by an unseasonable performance.

Sometimes a sudden reproof, upon the commission of the sin, hath reformed the sinner; but this is not always safe. When men are rebuked before their companions, their hearts are usually enraged against the reprover, suspecting him to intend their disparagement rather than their amendment.<sup>3</sup> Besides, when their spirits are hot, and their minds drunk with passion, they are apter to beat the Christian than to hear his counsel. When a person is in a violent fever, it is not good to give him physic; it is safest to stay till the fit be abated or over. Abigail would not tell Nabal of his danger till he was sober. Some small fish are twitched up with the violence of a sudden pull, when the like action would break the line whereon a great one hangs.

But I would not be understood, reader, to encourage thee in the least, under pretence of deferring it till a fitter day, to omit the duty; if there be no probability of a better season, nor any hope of doing good, after some ejaculations to heaven for assistance and success, take the present opportunity. Fabius conquered by delaying, but Cæsar overcame by expedition. Though it is not ordinarily so good to sow corn when the wind is high, yet the husbandman will rather do it in such weather than not at all, or than to want his harvest. As the

bird often flieth away, whilst the fowler still seeks to get nearer and nearer her; so doth a season of advantaging our brethren's souls, whilst we wait still for a fitter. It is thy duty, therefore, to take hold of the present, where thou hast no likelihood of another, and to improve the first good opportunity, rather than to adventure the loss of all, by expecting a better.

4. Reprove prudently. A Christian's wisdom in the matter of his reproof will very much further its working: 'As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover to an obedient ear,' Prov. 25:12. A wise reprover is a credit to the reproved; it is an honour to be wounded thus by one that is wise. Some men would receive blows with more patience, if they were given them with more prudence. None so likely to find an obedient hearing, as they that are wise in reproof; the best ear will hardly brook foolish speaking; there is a way to make men take down their bitter potions before they are aware. The recovering of a fallen sinner, is the setting of a bone in joint, which requireth much skill and dexterity. Every mountebank is not fit to undertake this task.

First, Have respect to the person whom thou reprovest.

Secondly, Have respect to the crime for which thou reprovest.

First, Respect is to be had to the person, both as to his condition and his disposition.

1. To his condition and quality. Though the sins of superiors may, nay must, be reproved, by those that have a call to it, yet not in that bold manner which is allowable to our equals, nor without some acknowledgment of that reverence which is due to their callings and conditions: 'Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father,' 1 Tim. 5:1. When Daniel was to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and to

acquaint him with his danger, observe with what respectful language he clothed his dreadful message, Dan. 4:19, 24, 27. The prophets that spake so boldly to their princes, were commanded and commissioned by God what to say. Though superiors ought to be reproved, yet they ought not to be reviled.

Paul, as I conceive, acknowledged his passion, when he had spoken irreverently to the high priest: 'I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest;' I did not consider, as I ought, to whom I spake, Acts 23:5. It will not excuse us to give ill words, though we receive ill wounds from magistrates: 'Is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked? and to princes, Ye are ungodly?' Job 34:18. Though this text doth not silence all from acquainting kings with their faults, much less justify any that shall daub them with their flatteries, 1 Kings 18:18; 2 Kings 3:13, yet it proves that princes must be spoken to respectfully, because of their places. Superiors may be amended by exhortation, equals by friendly admonition, inferiors by severe reprehension.

Secondly, Respect is to be had to the disposition of the offender. Some, in their fainting fits, are recovered easily, with throwing some cold water in their faces; others must be beaten, or rubbed very hard. Some men are like briars, you may handle them gently without harm, but if you grasp them hard they will fetch blood; others as nettles, if dealt with roughly, do the less wrong: Jude 22, 23, 'And of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear.' Some are like tiled houses, that can admit a brand of fire to fall on them and not be burnt; yet some, again, are covered with light, dry straw, which with the least touch will kindle and flame about your ears. By screwing strings moderately, we may make good music, but if too high, we break them. All the strings of a viol are not of equal strength, nor will endure to be wound up to the same pitch. We may soothe a lion into bondage, but sooner hew him in pieces than beat

him into a chain. A difference ought to be observed between party and party. An exhortation will do more with some, than a severe commination with others. The sturdy oak will not be so easily bowed as the gentle willow. Elisha recovered the dead child with a kiss, but Lazarus was restored to life with a loud, strong voice. Reproof must be warily given, for it is like a razor, whose edge is keen, and therefore the sooner rebated. It is dangerous to give a medicine stronger than the disease and constitution of the patient require. A gentle fire makes the best distilled waters.

Respect is to be had also to their faults. Wise physicians will distinguish between a pimple and a plague-sore. Those that sin of infirmity, are to be admonished more mildly than they that sin obstinately; who would give as great a blow to kill a fly as to kill an ox. Old festered sores must be handled in a rougher manner than green wounds, Phil. 3:15; Tit. 3:10. Ordinary physic will serve for a distemper newly begun, but a chronical disease must have harsher and stronger purges. Some offend ignorantly, others out of contumacy. Some offend out of meekness, being overborne by a sudden passion; others of premeditated, contrived wickedness and perverseness. Some sins are of a lower nature, of lesser moment and influence upon others; other sins overthrow the foundations of Christianity, and devour the vitals of religion. Now, according to the nature of the disease, and constitution of the patients, must the prescription be for their cure. Though all sins have one price for their satisfaction, yet not one way for their reprehension. If the linen be but a little foul, ordinary rubbing may serve; but if it be dyed with dirt, it must have the more. Our Saviour called Herod, fox; the master of the synagogue, hypocrite; the scribes and pharisees, vipers. St Stephen calls the Jews, traitors and murderers. Cutting reproofs are for notorious offenders. A weak dose will but stir up, not purge away, their noxious humours.<sup>2</sup>



5. Reprove compassionately; soft words and hard arguments do well together. Passion will heat the sinner's blood, but compassion heal his conscience. Our reprehension may be sharp, but our spirits must be meek. The probe that searcheth the wound will put the patient to less pain, and do the more good, if covered with soft lint: those who oppose themselves are to be instructed in meekness, 2 Tim. 2:25. There is a rigid austerity, which is apt to creep into, and corrupt our reproofs. Mollifying ointments are often instrumental to abate great swellings. The iron of Napthali's shoes were dipped in oil. Reproofs should be as oils or ointments, gently rubbed in by the warm fire of love. The chirurgeon that setteth the bone stroketh the part. If love do not play its part in this scene, we do but act a tragedy. The more thou canst persuade him of thy affection, the better will he take thy reprehension. The sweetest kisses of an enemy are rejected with disdain, but even the wounds of a friend are received with applause, Prov. 27:6. Such as, in reproofing, shew their anger more than their love, rather exasperate than heal. Of all seasons, the chirurgeon had need to be sober, and farthest from being drunk with passion, when he is to cut off a gangrened member. The reprover should have a lion's stout heart, or he will not be faithful; and a lady's soft hand, or he is not like to be successful. Holy Paul, speaking of his coming to reprove some delinquents amongst the Corinthians, tells them, 'And lest when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many who have sinned,' 2 Cor. 11:21. He that would gather fruit, must pluck the bough gently towards him; if too hard, he may break it. A reprover is like one that is taking a mote out of his brother's eye; now this must be done very tenderly. For this purpose it would be convenient (where it may be) that reproofs be given privately. We administer physic to persons in their chamber. He that proclaims another's crimes up and down the country, wrongs his own soul, in walking contrary to the command, 'First tell him his fault between him and thee,' Mat. 18:15, 16; and he wrongs his

neighbour in hardening him hereby in his sin; for this man thinks the sinner designeth to reproach, not to reform, therefore he throweth the reproof with indignation back in his face. Socrates, at a banquet, falling out with one of his friends, twitted him with his faults; How much better had this been done in private? said Plato. And had you not done better to have told me so privately? said Socrates. Qui peccant coram omnibus, coram omnibus corripiendi sunt, ut omnes timeant. Qui secreto pecavit in te, secreto corripe. Nam si solus nosti, et eum viscoram aliis arguere, non es corrector, sed proditor.—Aug. De Verb. Domini. 'If thy brother offend thee,' saith Christ, 'tell him of it between thee and him,' Mat. 5. Other crimes are not to be cried at a market. Private reproof is the best grave to bury private faults in. The plaster should not be larger than the sore. Our Saviour did not tell the woman of Samaria of her wickedness whilst the disciples were with him, but when he had sent them away, John 4.

For this end it is also fit that reproof be given with as little reflection as may be on the person reproofed. If there be anything in him worthy of praise, do not pass it by. We take pills the better when they are well gilt; children lick up their medicines the more freely when they are sprinkled with a little sugar; a faithful historian will relate men's virtues as well as their vices. They are of a dunghill brood, that fasten only upon galled backs, and ulcerous sores, and take no notice of the sound flesh. Wise commanders, when their soldiers are making a dishonourable retreat, do not presently upbraid them with cowardice, but often, by mentioning their former heroic courage, or their ancestors' noble carriage, inflame them with a desire to continue their repute and credit. Good nurses, when children fall first, help them up, and speak them fair, and then chide them. This were an excellent art to draw them to God whom thou couldst not drive; shame will not let such be angry with those that deal so equally the rod and crown. Sometimes indirect reprehension hath wrought

much good. A man may, by a parable or a history pertinent to the purpose, convince a sinner's conscience, and not openly injure his credit. Paul, in his sermon to Felix, seemed to shoot at random, not naming any, but his arrow pierced that unrighteous prince to the quick. The sun keeps the world in good temperature by moving in an oblique circle, not directly with the highest heavens, nor directly contrary, but fetching a compass a little over-thwart. The saint may keep the sinner from that heat and rage, which is apt to boil under reproof, by fetching a little compass about. The reproof may sometimes be given in our own persons, and declaring how ill it would have been for us to have run into such riotous courses; so the apostle Paul reprehended the sect-makers in Corinth, by transferring it to himself and Apollos, 2 Cor. 4:6. A wise reprover in this is like a good fencer, who, though he strike one part, yet none that stand by could perceive by his eye, or the carriage of his arm, that he aimed at that more than the rest. We esteem it a singular commendation in a chirurgeon, when he can cure a wound in the face, and leave no scar behind. Indeed, some wounds are so great that this cannot be done; yet a good chirurgeon will always endeavour it, and leave as little a scar as possibly he can. Pliny tells us of one Martia, who had the child in the womb killed by lightning, and yet she herself was unhurt. It is excellent when a Boanerges can so cast forth lightning, as to kill sin in his conscience, and not hurt the sinner in his repute. To avoid this, it was ordained among the Lacedæmonians, that every transgressor should be his own corrector; for his punishment was to compass the altar, singing an invective made against himself. It is a singular credit to the Christian, if he can open, and so heal men's sores, as not to leave any brand upon their persons. We read that God appointed snuff-dishes, as well as snuffers, for the lamps of the tabernacle, and both to be of pure gold, Exod. 37:23. The snuffers noted, that those who check any fault in others, should be free themselves; the snuff-dishes noted, that those crimes which we

reprove, we should forgive and remit. The Rabbis say, that those snuff-dishes were filled with sand, to bury the snuffs in. He who snuffs a candle, and throws the snuff about the room, gives offence to more by the ill savour he makes, than content by his care and diligence.

There is hardly any work of Christianity which requires more wisdom than this of admonition. The temper and quality of the persons, the nature and difference of the crimes, the manner and way of delivering the reproof, the fittest season for it, ought all to be seriously and diligently considered. The rebuke of sin is aptly resembled to the fishing for whales; the mark is big enough, one can hardly miss hitting; but if there be not sea-room enough, and line enough, and a dexterity in letting out that line, he that fixeth his harping-iron in the whale, endangers both himself and his boat. Reproof strikes an iron, as it were, into the conscience of the offender, which makes him struggle, and strive to draw the reprover into the sea, to bring him into disgrace and contempt; but if the line be prudently handled, and not pulled too strait, nor too quick, the sinner may be drawn to the reprover, and saved.

I confess this duty of reproof is a hard and unpleasing task, because truth ordinarily begets hatred; but it is far better that men should hate thee for the discharge of thy duty, than that God should hate thee for the neglect of it; it is much easier to endure their rage for a short time, than the Lord's wrath for ever. If the persons reproofed have any true love to themselves, they will love thee; and truly that man's love is little worth, who hath none for his own soul. Therefore, reader, obey God's precept, and leave the event to his providence: 'Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them,' Eph. 5:11. If thou canst advantage and gain their souls, they will give thee thanks; if not, thy

God will; and surely his thanks are not to be esteemed at a low rate. It hath many times been experienced, that faithful reprehensions have procured, though present ill-will, yet respect afterwards. Dean Colet, for delivering his conscience by way of reproof, before Henry the Eighth, at the siege of Tournay, was questioned by the Privy Councillors, but within a short time he got a large interest in the king's heart, by the discharge of his duty. 'He that rebuketh a man, shall afterwards find more favour than he that flattereth with his tongue,' Prov. 28:23. The sick patient, who at present wrangleth with his physician for his bitter potions, doth afterwards, when he findeth the happy effect of it in his health and recovery, both thank and reward him. Though thou meetest with an ungrateful return in his passion, yet thou mayest, when that cloud is dispersed, expect a more serene and pleasing requital; however, the best way to lose a friend (if thou canst not keep him and a good conscience too) is by seeking, by thy love and faithfulness, to save him.

Sixthly, Mourn for those sins which thou canst not amend; those sins which thou canst not beat down with a stream of truth, do thou overcome with a flood of tears. When others kindled a fire of lust, David drew water, and poured it out before the Lord: 'Rivers of tears run down mine eyes, because the wicked forsake thy law,' Ps. 119:135. Mark the intension of David's passion upon the disobedience of wicked persons. Sighs are an ordinary sign of grief, but tears a far greater. What sorrow was then in David's heart, when not only tears, but rivers of tears, ran down his eyes! Surely the fountain of sorrow was very full and deep, when the streams did run so fast and freely. Others' guilt calleth aloud to thee for grief. Do they wound their souls by sin? do thou wound thy own soul with sorrow. Alas! how is it possible thou canst be amongst them that dishonour the blessed God, grieve his holy Spirit, and break his righteous commands, and not have thine heart broken? Lot vexed his righteous

soul with the unclean conversation of the Sodomites, 2 Pet. 2:8. Unless thou hast lost thy spiritual scent, thou canst not endure the stench of their filthy, unsavoury breath, without much perplexity and trouble. 'I remembered the transgressors, and was grieved, because they kept not thy law,' Ps. 119:158. He that hath any part of the new man in himself, must needs be offended at the old man in others. It is presumed he is of a dishonest mind, who is not offended at the cheats and thefts of others. Every creature is disturbed at that which is contrary to its own nature. If grace be the object of my joy and delight, sin must needs be the object of my grief and sorrow. 'My soul shall weep in secret for your pride,' saith Jeremiah, chap. 13:17.

Reader, if thou lovest thy God with all thine heart, thou canst not but mourn that others should hate him, and walk contrary to him. We grieve as truly for wrongs done to those whom we sincerely affect, as for injuries done to ourselves. When one of Darius's eunuchs saw Alexander the Great setting his foot and trampling upon a table that had been highly esteemed by his master, he fell a-weeping; of which, when Alexander asked the reason, he answered, 'I weep to see that which my master esteemed at so high a rate made thy footstool, A gracious person cannot hear or see the Son of God, the word of God, and the people of God, which his God prizeth at a high rate, vilified, trampled under foot, and slighted by wicked men, but he falls a-weeping. 'My tears have been my meat day and night, while they say unto me continually, Where is thy God?' Ps. 42:3. The dishonour of his God went nearer to his heart than his own distress, though David's condition was very sad at that season. Because others did eat the bread of violence, and drink the wine of deceit, he did eat his bread with tears, and mingle his drink with weeping. As when they were sick he fasted, so when they sinned he prayed and mourned.

Hasten out of evil company, if thou hast no hopes of doing good. That company may well be to thee as the torrid zone, where wickedness sits in the chair, and religion is made a footstool. Though thou mayest pass through such a climate as thy occasions require, yet it is not safe to dwell in so unwholesome an air. Men that are forced to walk by unsavoury carcases hold their breath, and hasten away as soon as they can. It is ill being an inhabitant in any place where God is an exile. A little before the destruction of Jerusalem, there was a voice heard in the temple very terrible: *Migremus hinc, Let us go hence.* That were a good motto for Christians in ill company, *Let us go hence.* Let such men know, as Manlius Torquatus told the Romans, that as they cannot bear thy strictness, so thou canst not endure their looseness. Take heed of staying in any place needlessly, out of which thy God is gone before thee: 'Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge,' Prov. 14:7. Running away was the means Joseph used against the wicked allurements of his mistress. It is not cowardice, but true courage, to turn the back upon sin and sinners. It doth often reflect upon our credits to be amongst wicked men, (*Æschinus the comedian blushed when he saw his father knock at the door of an infamous woman,*) but it will reflect upon our consciences to continue amongst them when our business with them is done.

The apostle Peter, with many words, did exhort and testify, saying, 'Save yourselves from this untoward generation,' Acts 2:40. It appears to be a business of no small concernment and weight, that the apostle should use so many words about it. Wise men will not spend their time or breath in vain; they do not send more messengers about any work than the consequence and worth of it requireth. Besides, as Beza observeth upon the place, he interposeth God's authority, and chargeth them in his name to save or guard themselves from such ill companions. What hast thou to do with

them that scorn to have anything to do with God? The king may well frown on those, and deny to converse with them, that converse with traitors in no relation to his service. Rebekah must leave her father's and brother's house if she will be joined to Isaac. 'Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty,' Ps. 45:10, 11.

### **A good wish concerning a Christian's carriage in evil company, wherein the former heads are applied**

The mighty possessor of heaven and earth, who governeth the world with infinite wisdom, and allotteth to all the children of men their several callings and habitations; having permitted the chaff to continue amongst the corn, and appointed the tares to remain amongst the wheat till the great harvest day; and calling me sometimes, by his providence, to deal with profane and vicious persons; I wish I may be so sensible how difficult it is to be safe amongst such defilers and destroyers of souls, that I may walk with the more caution, whenever I walk in such company, and make them my fear, not my familiars, and rather my care than my companions. I know that I must go out of the world, if I will go away from the wicked. Ill humours will be amongst good in the body; sins will be amongst graces in the soul, and sinners will be amongst saints on this earth. I am but a stranger here; they are men of the world; I must therefore expect, as Lot in Sodom, to be both vexed with their unclean conversations, and tempted to their violent corruptions. My God calleth them foxes for their craft, lions for their cruelty, and a generation of vipers for their rage and venom. In what danger therefore is my soul of being deceived and devoured by them! How certainly will these ravenous beasts tear me in pieces, unless I stand upon my guard, and the keeper of Israel undertake my protection!



Lord, since it is not thy pleasure to free me from their company, grant me such help from thy good Spirit, that I may be free from their contagion. Though I may sit at the same table with them, as my occasions or relations require, let me never eat of their dish, nor feed on their dainties. I pray not that thou shouldst take me out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep me from the evil: 'Keep me from the snares which they lay for me, and from the gins of the workers of iniquity,' Ps. 141. Let the wicked rather fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal escape.

I wish that the sense of my danger may keep me from being secure, and make me the more sedulous in the discharge of my duty. Sound eyes are apt to fall a-watering, by beholding and looking on sore eyes. Dry flax is not more apt to take fire, than my vicious nature to be inflamed; the wet sheet of watchfulness is a good preservative. He had need to have much grace, who would not learn others' vice. It is hard to touch pitch and not be defiled. Ungodly men are Satan's bloodhounds, with which he hunteth my soul. How many hath he drawn into the pit of perdition by such cart-ropes! They are his strongest chains, wherewith he binds men now to his own work, and at last, as their wages, hales them to hell. Fruits of hotter countries, transplanted into colder climates, do not seldom die, through the chilling nips of the air, and the unsuitableness of the soil wherein they are planted; there may be grace in my soul ready to flame heavenward, which may be soon quenched by the putrid fogs of evil companions. I know my God can keep me, (as he did the three children in the fiery furnace,) amongst them that are set on fire of hell, from being singed, or so much as having the scent of the fire on me; but I know also, that then I must keep his way, and be watchful. Oh that I might keep my heart with such diligence, that, as the crystal, I may touch those toads, and not be poisoned; yea, that as a true diamond in a ditch, I may sparkle with holiness, and shine

brightly amongst defiled persons! How natural is it to resemble their faults, whose faces I am wholly unlike! I am apt, like a snowball, to carry away the dirt I am rolled upon; and as an ape, to imitate those amongst whom I am, in their folly; and to sin for company, rather than to be singular. But though the loadstone can draw iron, yet it cannot draw gold; lightning may smite the dead oak, but not the green and fresh laurel; though corrupt nature follow a multitude to do evil, yet grace, through the help of the Spirit, is invincible. Why may not my soul, like Moses's bush in the midst of fire, be kept from consuming; and as Gideon's fleece, be moist, when all the earth about it is dry? Oh that I might, as fish, retain my freshness in the saltiest waters; and never savour others' vices, or follow their steps, who depart from the commandments of my God! Lord, whose promise is to thy disciples, 'They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them,' Mark 16:18, is it not thine own handwriting? and canst thou fail of fulfilling it? Oh let thy powerful presence accompany me, whithersoever thy providence calleth me! Let thy preventing grace preserve me from receiving harm, and thy quickening mercy enable me to do good, that whereas thine enemies are apt to speak evil of me as an evil-doer, they may be ashamed who falsely accuse my good conversation in Christ, 1 Pet. 3:16.

I wish that I may be so far from receiving prejudice, that I may be profited by the worst of those with whom I associate. As my God created nothing in vain, so he permits nothing but to some good purpose. It is true, wicked men are dogs, Mat. 7:12, prone to fawn on me, that they may defile me; but even of dogs there may be a good use; the flock is the more safe from wolves, and the house from thieves, through their watchfulness. They are dust, apt to breed vermin, but some creatures live upon it as their aliment, and in it as their element, and the basest rubbish may be serviceable about the

foundation of a building; the guts and garbage of some beasts are food to others. Doth not experience teach us that many fowls draw nourishment from unclean and filthy carcasses? Why may not my stomach be so good, and my spiritual constitution so strong, as to concoct such unwholesome food? Lycurgus taught the Lacedæmonians virtue, not only by the pattern of their sober Ephori, but also of the drunken helots, their slaves. Poisons are as necessary as the best diet, if they be in the hands of him who is able to improve and prepare them. Beer is the better, the more lively and brisk, for the grounds that are in the same vessel with it. Oh that my graces might be the more quick and active for the lees of others' vices, that their sins might increase my sanctity, both in making me more thankful to him who maketh me to differ, and more watchful over myself, lest I fall from my own steadfastness! The mariners are directed in their sailings by rocks and shelves, as well as by the northern star; my God instructeth Jonah by the shadow of a weed. Go to the pismire, thou sluggard; consider her provident ways, and be wise to follow them. Observe the men of this world; O my soul, consider their wicked ways, and be wise to avoid them! Ask these beasts of the earth, and they will teach thee, nay, shame thee. How unwearied are they in the pursuit of the world! how diligent about their works of darkness! how often do they lose their sleep to do mischief, and neglect their food and callings to indulge their fleshly lusts! whilst thou, whose master is the Lord of glory, whose service is the only freedom, and whose recompense will be infinite, art loitering and lazing upon the bed of security! Oh that thou mayest learn industry about the concernments of heaven and eternity, from others' industry about the affairs of this earth for a few days; and take shame to thyself, that Satan's servants should be more forward to gratify their soul-destroyer, than thou art to please the blessed Saviour! Lord, it is thy prerogative to cause light out of darkness, and to bring good out of evil; teach thy servant to gather figs from these

thistles, and to be the better because others are so bad; because the wicked forsake thy law, therefore let me love thy commandments above gold, yea, above much fine gold.

I wish that, though in pursuance of my calling I do afford my company to sinners, I may never bear them company in their sins. True gold will not change its colour or nature for the hottest fire; the rock keeps its place, and is immovable, notwithstanding the continual dashing of the water; the earth is not hurt either by the heat of summer or cold of winter; though much dirt be flung at a post well oiled, it will not stick. My God hath enjoined me, 'Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness;' whence I learn these three things:—

1. That sin is a work of darkness. The prince of darkness is its father; it is his natural offspring, therefore called the work of the devil, John 8:44. A dark heart is its mother; there it is conceived, thence it is brought forth. In dark holes these vermin breed and swarm, Eph. 4:18; Hosea 4:1–3; 2 Cor. 4:4; its portion is utter darkness, blackness of darkness for ever; all its inheritance lieth in darkness and the shadow of death.

2. I learn that the works of darkness are unfruitful. The sinner makes a sad market of all his wicked wares; he soweth vice, and reapeth vanity; promiseth himself much pleasure, and findeth it wholly unprofitable. 'What fruit had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.' Oh what a frightful monster is this miscreant! It hath fruitlessness in the beginning, shame in the middle, and death in the conclusion.

3. I learn that I ought not to have fellowship with these unfruitful works of darkness; indeed I have little reason, if I consider the two former particulars; yet how prone am I to it, either by my silence

when they sin, or by my secret compliance with them in their sin! My corrupted heart is like touchwood, ready to take fire by the least spark. When others are bold to blaspheme God, I am apt, through an ungodly bashfulness, to hold my peace, little considering that I must one day answer, as well for my sinful silence as for every idle word. It is my duty to hold the jewel of my faith, fast, lest Satan steal it from me; to hold my profession to the end, lest by leaving my colours, I lose my crown; but not to hold my peace in the quarrel of truth, lest by suffering sin in others, I wrong my own soul. Where is my love to others, if I stand still whilst they destroy themselves? It may well break the strings of my tongue, as of the son of Cyrus, when sin, like the Persian, is ready to kill my father, or brother, or neighbour. Evil men are like traitors, with whom if we act, or conceal, we are guilty. Where is my love to myself, if I take others' intolerable burdens on my own back? Sin is a load too heavy for the stoutest, for the strongest, to carry. Should I by my silence give consent to others' oaths, or lies, or jeers at godliness and godly men, I become a party in their bonds, and liable to make satisfaction for their debts, and may expect every moment when divine justice should arrest me for them. O my soul! what answer dost thou give to these arguments? Wouldst thou for all the world be one moment under the guilt of the least sin? Didst thou never feel its weight, and water thy couch with tears by reason of it? Hast thou not sighed out mournfully to God, There is no rest in my flesh, because of thine anger, nor quiet in my bones, because of my sin? And wilt thou, for fear of men's displeasure, incur the infinite God's anger? and to avoid, at most, a raze in thy flesh, admit a wide gash in thy conscience? Oh that I might have more love to myself, and more respect for my neighbour, than to suffer sin upon him through my cowardly silence, or to join with him by any inward compliance, lest both be involved in the same vengeance! Lord, the supplies of thy Spirit is the only preservative against all infections; be pleased to afford it to me, that I

may keep myself pure in the most profane society, and no way be partaker of other men's sin.

I wish that I may always make the choice of Moses, rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; yet that I may never, through my rash zeal, or indiscreet meddling with others' matters, or imprudent opening my mind to every seeming friend, bring myself into suffering. I have trials and troubles enough from others; I need not be the procurer of any to myself. I am every way surrounded with foes, and shall I not be my own friend? The world is my professed and dangerous enemy, for his sake who hath chosen me out of the world; because it cannot reach the Master, it wrangleth with, and abuseth his servants. He that is not its child, but born from above, must not expect to be its darling, but rather to be assaulted with its rage and revenge. The devil is my sworn and deadly adversary, always ready to put forth his utmost power and policy for my ruin. His empire is large, his subjects all at his service, and all his forces shall be used to make me suffer. Besides, my God is pleased sometimes, for the trial of my graces, and the purging out my corruptions, to cast me into manifold tribulations; since I have then so many assaults and afflictions from others, I have small cause to afflict myself. I desire that I may try before I trust, and not unlock the cabinet of my heart before all, lest some prove thieves. It is too ordinary for wicked ones, like executioners, with one hand to embrace a man, and with the other to pluck out his bowels. They may creep, and cringe, and fawn, and flatter, and as crows, peck out my eyes with praises, that they may afterwards more securely make a prey of me. They, as the spies sent by the scribes to Christ, feign themselves to be good men, that they might entrap him in his talk, Luke 20:20. Should I believe all that may pretend love, I may quickly be bereaved of my livelihood and life. Companions of my secrets are like locks that belong to a house:

whilst they are strong and close, they preserve me in safety; but weak and open, they expose me to danger, and make me a prey to others. My foolish freedom of declaring my mind, may, like the devil in the possessed person, cast me sometimes into the fire, and sometimes into the water. Though many seemed to believe on Christ, he did not commit himself to them, because he knew all men, John 2:21. Though many seem to affect me, I may not commit myself to them, because I know no man. They who, as Moses's rod, seem at present to be a staff to support and stay me, may by and by prove serpents to sting me. Oh that I might imitate my Saviour in his politics, as well as in his piety, and not, through my folly, put my outward comforts into the hands of them that hate me, and lay myself at their mercy. I would, as my God calleth me, own my Saviour in every company, and never deny him, who witnessed before Pontius Pilate a good confession for me; but I desire that the feet of my zeal may always be directed by the eyes of knowledge and discretion, lest the faster and the farther they carry me, the more I wander to my woe. My God tells me, 'He that keepeth his mouth, keepeth his life; but he that openeth wide his lips, shall be destroyed,' Prov. 13:3. Bees, though engaged in hot skirmishes with other insects, use not their stings ordinarily; but when they are transported with rage, and blinded with passion, then they use them, to their own certain ruin and destruction. No less injurious is the fire of zeal to myself and others, where it is not bounded by wisdom. I fear many servants of God have felt the wrath of some men, (in a greater degree than they otherwise would,) through the immoderate heats of some few saints. If, under colour of hatred against sin, I fall foul upon persons, or instead of reproving sin, the work of the devil, revile magistracy, and the ordinance of God, I may expect to suffer, and with little comfort, because as an evil-doer. Zeal is like grenades, and other fireworks, which, if not well looked to and ordered, they do more hurt to them that cast them, than to the enemy. Oh that I might behave myself wisely in a

perfect way, and behave myself prudently in the path of piety, that I may never be so foolish, as, with the silly fly, to burn myself in the candle of wicked men's power, nor yet so unfaithful, as to forsake my captain when he calleth me to fight the good fight of faith. Let my ambition be, to be high in my God's favour, and to have a large share in that eternal weight of glory above. Let my care be here below to study peace, and to meddle with my own business, (oh how much lieth upon my hands every day in reference to my everlasting concernments!) to affect rather quietness from the world, than acquaintance with it, and to pass through it as a pilgrim and stranger, with as little noise and notice as I can. Lord, whatsoever tribulation I meet with in the world, give me peace in thy Son; make me as wise as a serpent, as innocent as a dove, that those who watch either to defile me in spirituals, or destroy me in civils, may be disappointed. Let me not trust in man, whose words may be softer than oil, when war is in his heart, but let my whole confidence be fixed on thyself. How freely may I unbosom myself to thee, without the least fear! How willing art thou to hear! How able to help! How true to all that trust thee! Thy faithfulness never faileth; thou art good, a stronghold in the day of adversity, and knowest them that trust in thee.

I wish that I may confess Christ, whatsoever it may cost me, and though not thrust myself into danger, yet never betray my cause, or break through any command, to avoid the cruellest death. It is common with the hypocrite, as the snail, to look what weather is abroad, and if that be stormy, to pull in his horns and hide his head. The hedgehog alters his hole according to the wind. The swallow changeth his nest according to the season. The bird *piralis* takes the colour off any cloth on which she sits. There is a tree, say some naturalists, which opens and spreads its leaves when any come to it, and shuts them at their departure from it. The flies will abound in a



sunshiny day, but if once it be cloudy, they vanish. When Christ rides to Jerusalem in triumph, many cry Hosanna, who, when he is taken and tried for his life, cry, Crucify, crucify. The jacinth is changed with the air; in a clear season it is bright, but if the air be overcast, it is darksome. The unsound Christian is often suitable to his company: if they own godliness, it shall have his good word; if they disrelish it, he can spit in the face of it. But pure coral keeps its native lustre, and will receive no colouring. The upright soul is constant in his profession, and changeth not his behaviour according to his companions. Oh that I might never, through shame or fear, disown him who hath already acknowledged me! Alas! I have that in me, which he might well count a disgrace to him. I am his creature, and so infinitely his inferior. The vilest beggar is not near so much below the most potent emperor, as I am in this respect to the great God and my Saviour. The whole creation is to him as nothing, yea, less than nothing, and vanity; what then am I, poor silly worm, that lie grovelling in this earth? I am a sinner, and thereby his disparagement and dishonour. If a sober master be ashamed of a deboice, drunken servant, much more may the Holy Jesus be ashamed of me, an unholy wretch, and traitorous rebel against his crown and dignity; yet for all this distance, for all this difference, he is graciously pleased to acknowledge me, and shall not I own him?

If I be ashamed of him, I am a shame to him. But why should I be ashamed of Christ? The object of shame is some evil which hath guilt or filth in it; but he knew no sin, though he was made sin for me, that I might become the righteousness of God in him. He was a lamb without spot and blemish. None of his malicious enemies could convince him of sin. He is so far from being the object of shame, that he is infinitely worthy to be my boast and glory. He is the prince of life, the Lord of glory, the King of kings, the fountain of all excellency and perfection. The highest emperors have gloried in being his

vassals. Angels count it their honour to serve the meanest of his servants; and shall I think it a disgrace to be one of his attendants? Oh that I might be ashamed of my sins, loathe myself for all my abominations, be often confounded, because I bear the reproach of my youth; but in no company, be it never so great or profane, be ashamed of him who is the blessed and only potentate, and the glory of his people Israel!

Again, why should I out of fear disown my Saviour? Is there any safety but in sanctity? Whilst I travel in the king's highway, I have a promise of protection, but if I leave that upon any pretence, I run myself into peril and perdition. Those that, when called to fight, fly from their colours, die without mercy. What can I expect if I leave the captain of my salvation, but martial law, even eternal death? I may, possibly, by my cowardice, keep my skin whole, but I wound my conscience; I sink my soul to save my body; as Lot, prostitute my daughter, my dearest offspring, that will abide with me for ever, to save my guests, which lodge with me for a night, and will be gone from me in the morning. What is it I fear, that I should be guilty of so heinous a fault? Is it the world's frowns and fury? Why, its kindness is killing, and therefore its cruelty is healing. If my God see it good, he can and will defend me from the world's cruelty, without my denying Christ, and in direct courses; and if it be his will that I suffer for well-doing, I may commit the keeping of my soul to him, as to a faithful Creator. Certainly there is nothing to be gotten by the world's love, and nothing worth ought to be lost by its hatred. Why then should I seek that love which cannot help me, or fear that hate which cannot hurt me? If I should be so foolish as to love it for loving me, my God would hate me for loving it. Do not I know that the friendship of the world is enmity against God? If I loathe it for hating me, it cannot injure me for loathing it. Let it then hate me, I will forgive it; but if it love me, I will not requite it; for since its love is

hurtful, and its hate harmless, I may well condemn its fury, and hate its favour. Lord, thou hast commanded me neither to love the world's smiles, nor to fear its frowns. I acknowledge that its allurements have been too prevalent in gaining my love, and its affrightments too powerful in causing my fear. Oh that thy exceeding rich and precious promises might make me despise all its glorious proffers, and faith in thy threatenings stablish my heart against all its childish bugbears. The fear of man bringeth a snare, but he that trusteth in thee is sure. Let the dread of thy majesty swallow up, as Moses' rod the Egyptians', all fear of men. And since thy truth hath no need of my lie, thy power hath no need of my sin to preserve me safe, let me never break over the hedge of any of thy precepts, to avoid an afflicting providence, but in a way of well-doing, commit my ways unto the Lord, and my thoughts shall be established. Suffer me never to say, A confederacy, to them, to whom thine enemies say, A confederacy; neither to fear their fear, but to sanctify thee, the Lord of hosts, and to make thee my fear continually.

I wish that, since my God intends, in all his providences, my spiritual and eternal good, I may gain something by those that are most graceless; and though Satan purposeth my defilement in my converses with them, yet they may prove my profit and advantage. That blowing which seems to disperse the flames and trouble the fire, doth make it burn the more clear; the waters of others' opposition may increase my spiritual heat; a dull whetstone may set an edge upon a knife; a mean, vile porter may bring me a considerable present; black coals may scour and make iron vessels bright; ashes cast upon fire put it not out, but are helpful to preserve it all night against the morning, which would otherwise be consumed. Why may not my soul find some pearl in the heads of these toads, and get some spiritual riches by trading with them for temporal? Naturalists tell me it is wholesome for a flock of sheep to have some goats amongst

them, their bad scent being physical to preserve the sheep from the shakings. Surely, then, the presence of ungodly men may sometimes be profitable for me, and prevent that lightness and vanity which I am too apt to discover in every company. Though I am loose amongst my friends, and it be my sorrow, I had need to be serious amongst mine enemies, lest I become their scorn. Frankincense put into the fire giveth the greater perfume. Civet doth not lose its savour, but is the sweeter, in a sink. Oh that my soul might draw the nearer to God, because others depart further from him; and do him the more service, and be the more diligent at his work, because they are so unworthy and wicked. Executioners and hangmen are helpful to a country, to free them from those felons and murderers that would destroy the inhabitants. My sins may receive their death's wounds, through the hands of them who have no true love to me. My pride may well be abated, because of their profaneness. Free grace alone makes me to differ. I had been as bad as the worst of them, if infinite mercy had not preserved me. I shall be as bad, if boundless love do not prevent me: to God alone, therefore, belongs the glory. Possibly they may sometimes twit me with my faults, and herein they may prove my friends. Every man hath need of a monitor. My friends too often are cowardly, and afraid to tell me my errors, lest they should give offence. My enemies will speak their minds freely, if they know anything amiss by me, and so do me a great kindness. Myrrh, though bitter, may heal wounds, and preserve from putrefaction; so may the taunts and gibes of ungodly men cure my inward sores, and make me watchful against future wandering. It was a worthy speech of the Macedonian King Philip, when he was told that Nicanor spake evil of him, I believe he is honest, and I fear I have deserved it.

I may also be the better for wicked men's counsel, as well as their carping, if I have but the wit to follow it so far as it is good. Evil Joab gave good counsel to David, and had he desisted upon it from

numbering the people, it might have saved the lives of some thousands. It is ordinary indeed to value the advice by the person, and thereby it becomes unprofitable. But is silk the less precious, because it is spun by vile worms? Are roses the less sweet, because they grow amongst briars and brambles? Silver and gold are not the worse by being taken out of the lowest element, the earth. That wine may strengthen and refresh my nature, which is drawn out of a wooden or worm-eaten cask. Oh that I might take the counsel of the worst in that which is good, and refuse the counsel of the best in that which is evil! Lord, thou canst command that these stones of wicked men be made bread to nourish my soul. Teach me by their falls to walk more humbly with thee, and to cleave more fast to thy Son, through whose strength alone I stand. Blessed be thy justice, which hath made them examples to me; and blessed be thy mercy, that hath not made me an example to them.

I wish that, whilst my God calleth me among them, I may do good to them, as well as receive good from them; that I may, as musk, cast a fragrancy amongst such coarse and foul linen. Though I hate their sins, yet I am bound to love and pity their souls. It is true, they are vile and vicious, they work iniquity, they walk after the flesh, they walk contrary to God, and bid him depart from them. But may I not say, 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do'? Did they know him, they would not, by their sins, crucify afresh the Lord of glory. It is no wonder that blind men should wander out of the right way, that those who have been kept in dungeons all their days should be contented with the poor rush-candles of creature comforts, and never desire nor inquire after the Sun of righteousness. Alas! the god of this world hath blinded their minds, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. He knoweth that, did they but see the grace they abuse, the love they despise, the excellency and certainty of that salvation which they

neglect, and the extremity and endlessness of that misery which they are hastening to, they would quickly turn about, and mind the things which concern their everlasting peace; therefore he holds his black hand over their eyes, and so they are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them. Oh what pity should I have for such ignorant persons as are running hoodwinked to hell! If to him that is afflicted pity should be shewn, what pity doth he call for who is all over infected with sin, and every moment in danger of everlasting death! Can I be troubled to behold the blind, or the lame, or the sick, and have I no bowels for those souls that lie weltering in their blood! Besides, the time was that I had as low thoughts of God and his ways, and as high thoughts of the flesh and the world, as they. I was once in their condition, a servant of sin, an heir of wrath, and therefore I owe them the more compassion. Those that have been sensible of the stone, or gout, or toothache, are the more pitiful towards them that are affected with the same pain. My God bids me to be gentle, shewing all meekness towards all men, Titus 3:2, 3; because I myself was sometimes disobedient, deceived, and serving divers lusts and pleasures. When I was wallowing in my uncleanness, and priding myself in my pollutions, the heart of my God was turned towards me, and the hand of mercy open to me. O my soul, shall not that infinite perdition to which thou wast obnoxious, and that infinite compassion of which thou hast tasted, prevail with thee to pity others! Oh that thou wert so affected with the misery thou hast deserved, and that rich love and grace which thou hast received, that thou mightest seriously and studiously endeavour, by thy affectionate counsel, pious carriage, and prudent admonition, that others may be partakers of the same mercy and grace! If my carriage be unblameable, my counsel and reproof will be the more acceptable; wholesome meat often is distasteful, coming out of nasty hands. A bad liver cannot be a good counsellor or bold reprover; such a man

must speak softly, for fear of awaking his own guilty conscience. If the bell be cracked, the sound must needs be jarring.

I desire that I may be as bold to reprove, as others are to commit sin; yet that I may be so prudent as never to reproach the sinner when I reprove the sin, lest I break their heads instead of their hearts, and make them fly in my face, instead of falling down at God's feet. Bone-setters must deal very warily, and physic is given with great advice, and in dangerous diseases, not without a consultation. I would distinguish between crimes, and not fall upon any, as the Syrians did on Gilead, Amos 1:3, with a flail of iron, when a small wand may do the work, nor, as Jeroboam threatened Israel, chastise them with scorpions, who may be reformed with whips. It was not the heat, but the cool of the day, when my God came down to reprove Adam. The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. It is in vain to undertake to cast out Satan with Satan, or sin with sin. I must turn anger out of my nature, but I must not turn my nature into anger. Yet let me be serious, not light in all my admonitions. It is ill playing or jesting with one that is destroying and damning himself. Would it not stick close to me another day, should I laugh at them at this day that are going into the place of weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth? My frothy carriage would, as Hazeal's cloth dipped in water, instead of recovering, stifle my brother to death. Physic works best when it is warm. I must love my neighbour as myself. True self-love will throw the first stone at its own sin. I may not suffer sin in myself, therefore not in my neighbour. Lord, thou hast commanded me in any wise to rebuke my neighbour, and not to suffer sin upon him. I confess it is an unpleasing work to rake into sores and ulcers. If I lance festered wounds, I make the patients angry by putting them to pain; and oh, how averse is my wicked heart to such a task! I am prone to fear their ill-will more than thine, and rather to let them rot in the honey of flattery, than preserve and save them by faithful

admonition. How backward is my cowardly spirit to undertake the work! how many excuses will it plead for its neglect! When through grace I have overcome those lets and hindrances, how flatteringly and unfaithfully do I go about it! rather stroking the sinner than striking the sin. Oh pardon my omissions of this duty, and all my falseness in the performance of it! Let thy Spirit so encourage me, that I may not fear the faces of men; so direct me, that affectionately, prudently, and zealously I may admonish them that go astray; and oh do thou so prosper and bless, that I may bring them home to thy flock and fold.

I wish that I may unfeignedly bewail others' wickedness, and lament that dishonour to my God, which I cannot hinder. It is an ill sign of my sonship, for others to blaspheme the name of my father, and me to be insensible. Adoption is ever accompanied with filial affection. If I expect the privileges, I must ensure the properties of a child. Nature will teach me to be troubled for affronts that are offered to the father of my flesh, and will not grace enable me to be grieved at the dirt which wicked men throw in the face of the Father of spirits. Again, I must not look for freedom from others' sufferings, unless I lay to heart their sins. The mourners in Zion are those that in a common calamity are marked for safety, Ezek. 9. The destroying angel will take me to be as guilty as others, if it find me without grief, and so wrap me up in their punishments. My God himself judgeth me infected with those sins for which I am not afflicted; and can I then think to escape? Oh that my head were water, and mine eyes fountains of tears, that I might weep day and night, for the iniquity and misery of dying, gasping sinners! Lord, thou canst fetch water out of this rocky heart, and open the sluices of my eyes; break my heart, because others break thy commands. When others kindle the fire of thine anger, help thy servant to draw water, and pour it out before thee. Let me be so far from seeing others provoke the eyes of



thy glory without sorrow, that whenever I remember the transgressors I may be grieved, because they forsake thy statutes; let rivers of tears run down mine eyes, when the wicked forsake thy law.

I cannot for my life so carry myself, but I shall sometimes fall amongst wicked men. Whilst I am amongst them I endanger my soul, either by complying with, or conniving at, them in their evil actions. There is no safety in evil society. Such pitch is apt to defile my conscience. Who can expect to come off without loss from such cheats and jugglers? It is the peevish industry of wickedness to find or make a fellow. Besides, they are children of the world, whose friendship is enmity against my God; they are children of disobedience, therefore contrary to my new nature, and so must needs be uncomfortable to me; children of the devil, therefore traitors against Christ, and so abominable to my God. I cannot be certain not to meet with evil companions, but I will be careful not to be their consorts. I would willingly sort myself with such as should either teach me virtue, or learn of me to avoid vice. And if my companion cannot make me better, nor I him good, let me rather leave him ill, than he should make me worse. Though, if I depart from them, the world will judge me proud, yet, should I stay with them needlessly, my God would count me profane; and is it not better that men accuse me falsely, than God condemn me justly? What need I care what men think, so God approve? It is to his judgment that I must stand or fall for ever. It is likely that those who cannot defile my conscience will injure my credit, and publish to their fellows that I am a precise fool. But this is my comfort, there is a time coming when innocency will cause the greatest boldness, and freedom from sin will do me more service, and be infinitely more worth, than the highest renown that ever mortal acquired. Lord, thy people in this world are as lilies among thorns; the Canaanites of the land are thorns in the eyes, and pricks in the sides of thy true

Israelites. 'Woe is me, that I dwell in Mesech, and my habitation is in the tents of Kedar! My soul hath long dwelt with them that hate peace.' They like not me, because I am not like them, and count my company not good, because it is not bad, and I dare not sin with them. They are mine enemies, because I follow the thing that good is. Oh how black are their tongues with railing, and their hearts with rage, against them who dare not provoke thee as much as themselves! I am ready to say now, upon the view of their abominations, and the hearing their oaths, and curses, and blasphemies, Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce, and their rage, for it is cruel. O my soul, enter not thou into their secrets; mine honour, be not thou united unto them, for in their anger they seek to destroy souls, and in their self-will they dig pits to cause others to fall. Because they cannot defile the brethren, they defame the brotherhood, and disgrace them whom they cannot deceive. Let the heat of their lust increase my longing after that place where there is no Judas among thine apostles, no Demas among thy disciples; where all the society will be of one mouth and mind, of one heart and way; where all the company will join in concert, and the whole celestial choir tune their strings, and raise their voices to the highest pitch in sounding thine excellencies, and singing thy praises without sin or ceasing. There will be no Tobias to indict thy children of treason against men for their faithfulness to thee; there will be no Ahab to accuse thy best servants as troublers of the state, for reproving the idolatries and enormities of the church; there will be no Balaam trying his hellish tricks, to make thy people a prey to their bodily foes, and a provocation by their sins to thy Majesty; there will be no tares in that field, no straw in that barn, no vessels of dishonour in that house; into it can in nowise enter anything that defileth or is unclean. The company there will be, not tempting me to wickedness, or taxing me with preciseness, but part of my felicity. Oh what a happy day will it be, when all profane Esaus, and scoffing

Ishmaels, shall be cast out of the house, and I shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and with none but the holy of the Lord, in the kingdom of heaven! Holy Father, let the skirt of thy mercy cover all my iniquities and failings in evil company; and grant that my carriage amongst such persons (whilst I am, through thy providence, forced to be amongst them) may be so pious and gracious, that at that great harvest-day, when thou wilt separate the chaff from the good corn, and burn it up with unquenchable fire, I may be wholly free from their vicious infections, and vexatious presence, and associate with the spirits of just men made perfect, an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and church of the first-born, and enjoy them all in, and with, thy blessed self, for ever and ever! Amen.

## CHAPTER IV

### **How Christians may exercise themselves to godliness in good company, with a good wish about that particular**

Having despatched the Christian's carriage in evil, I proceed to his behaviour in good company.

The communion of saints is the most desirable and delectable society that the whole creation affordeth. God himself is pleased to delight in the assemblies of his people: 'He loveth the gates of Zion (where they met together) above all the dwellings of Jacob,' Ps. 87:2. The evil spirit is for solitariness; he walketh in solitary places, seeking rest, Matt. 12. But God is for society; he dwelleth among his children, and bestoweth his choicest comforts upon the congregations of his poor. The Father provideth the greatest cheer, and maketh the best feast, when many of his children come together to wait upon him, though each coming singly is welcome to his table. The Spirit of God fell down in an extraordinary measure upon the primitive Christians, when they were gathered together in one place, and with one consent, Acts 2:1, 2. Naturalists tell us that strife and quarrelling among the bees, is a sign that the queen-bee is about to leave the hive and be gone. It is plain that, when the disciples were scattered every man to his own home, the Lord Jesus was leaving them; but when they were met together with one accord, then he came unto them, and said, 'Peace be unto you; receive ye the Holy Ghost,' John 20.

God cannot affect contentious spirits; he would not appear in a blustering wind, or in an earthquake, but in a still, low voice. When

the difference between Abraham and Lot was over, then God appeared to Abraham, Gen. 13:14.

As God delights in the company of his children—Isa. 62:4, 'Thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah,' i.e., My delight is in her—so the saints delight in communion with one another. Things of like nature desire to be joined together. Love, the consequent of likeness, hath an attractive power, and covets the presence of the party beloved. Balm put into the bee-hives, causeth the bees to come together, and others to come to them. Grace, like fire, solders together those that before differed; hence saints are like doves, they fly in troops to their windows, Isa. 60:8. Though the pelican be a melancholy bird, and naturally inclineth to deserts, yet when they remove their places, they go in companies, and the first stay for the last, as they fly over the mountains, Isa. 34:11; Eph. 2:14. Though saints love sometimes to be solitary, as having secret business with their God, yet they do not forsake the assembling themselves together. That verse, Ps. 84:7, which we read, 'They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appearing before God,' Junius reads it, and so it is in the Hebrew, 'They go from company to company.' As they went up to Jerusalem, they went in troops and companies. Possibly we translate it strength, because much of our safety consisteth in good society. He that travels alone is easily made a prey, εἰς ἀνὴρ οὐδεὶς ἀνὴρ, One man is no man. Even counties that have been large, have drawn themselves into associations for mutual and common defence.

Hebron, which was a type of the church, takes its name from cabar, to accompany, and thence Chebron or Hebron, a pleasant or delectable society. The saints are all one family, one household, Gal. 6:10; one body, Eph. 3:6; one sheepfold, John 10:4, 16; one brotherhood, 1 Pet. 2:4, 5; one building, one vineyard, one army, one spouse, Eph. 1:20–22; to shew that oneness which ought to be in

affection among them. Christ tells us of his spouse: Cant. 6:9, 'My dove is one, the only one of her mother;' hence the primitive Christians, though some thousands, are said to be of one heart and of one soul—of one heart in unity of affection, and of one soul in unity of judgment, Acts 4:32. In Tertullian's time the heathen admired the Christians for their love, saying, Look how the Christians love one another. Jerusalem is a city compact together, at unity within itself, Ps. 122:3; Phil. 2:2; 1 Cor. 1:10. Babel was confounded by diversity of tongues; and the citizens of Zion are confirmed by being of the same mind and mouth, by speaking all the same thing. Oh how many arguments doth the Spirit of God use to persuade them to oneness and unity! He tells them they have one Father, Rom. 8:14; one mother, Gal. 4:26; that they are begotten by the same immortal seed, 1 Pet. 1:23; and nourished by the same milk, 1 Pet. 2:2. He calls them co-workers in the same labours, co-heirs of the same life, Rom. 16:3, and 8:17; stones of the same building, than which there cannot be a more firm connexion; and branches of the same vine, than which there cannot be a more inherent inoculation. How pathetically doth the loving Redeemer exhort his disciples to love and oneness! He giveth them his precept: 'A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another;' not but that it was an old duty, but because envy and malice had prevailed so much among the Jews, that to love was a new thing. Again, 'This is my commandment, that ye love one another,' as if there were nothing else that he required but this, or as if this, of all the commandments, was that which Jesus loved best. He sets before them his own pattern: 'As I have loved you, so ought ye to love one another.' The love of Christ should prevail with Christians to lay down their lives for him, and shall it not prevail to lay down their strifes among themselves? Further, how affectionately doth he pray to his Father to bestow this blessing upon them: 'That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. And the glory which thou hast given me I have given them;

that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me,' i.e., Father, did we ever fall out? Was there ever any discord between us? Why, then, should they that are thine and mine disagree? John 17:21–23.

Mark these three particulars about this prayer:

1. The petitioner, that is, Christ, who was the wisdom of the Father, in him dwelt the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He fully understood what request would be most advantageous for his people. Besides, he was the head and husband of his church, naturally caring for her welfare as his own, and so his love would prompt him to desire what his wisdom saw most conducing to her happiness.
2. The repetition of his petition. He begs the same boon of his Father four times in three verses. He had the Spirit without measure, and so could not be guilty of vain tautologies. Surely then that which Christ, whose wisdom was unsearchable, and whose love to his beyond all compare, doth press with so much earnestness and instance, must needs be of very great weight and consequence.
3. The particular season of this petition, for unity, or the subject of it. He had in the former part of his prayer confined himself within the narrow compass of the apostles; but in the 20th verse, having made a perfect transition from them to all believers, to all that should believe on him through their word, he is importunate with his Father for their union and unity. When the dearest Redeemer puts the whole company of believers together, both Jews and Gentiles, that were at that present, or ever should be in the world, he pitcheth upon this as the most eminent petition he could put up for them. It is not that they all may be enriched, or honoured upon earth; nay, it is not that

they all may be adopted, sanctified, and saved; but that they all may be one as we are one; as if the whole kingdom of grace and glory did consist in this, and as if this once obtained, all were done that was needful for them. Besides, he makes this the visible character of their Christianity, that badge which would publish to all they met their relation to Christ: 'By this shall all men know ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.' This is the livery which will speak to what master ye belong. By this, not by casting out devils, but by casting out discord; not by relieving one another occasionally, but by loving each other fervently, shall all men know ye are my disciples.

The differences, amongst Christians can never be sufficiently lamented. That they who are all near to God should behold one another afar off, and they who are all acquainted with Christ should be unacquainted among themselves. Job laments this fault in his three friends: 'These ten times have ye reproached me; are ye not ashamed that ye have made yourselves strange unto me? Job 19:3. That they who are brethren, begotten of the same father, born of the same mother, fed at the same table, educated under the same tutor, attended with the same servants, arrayed with the same garments, and heirs of the same inheritance, should be strange to one another, is a great, a gross shame. Many hundred devils can agree together in one man, and yet in some parts not ten Christians can agree together in one house. One of the fathers was so much affected with the divisions of Christians, that he professed himself ready to let out his heart blood to cement them together. Both the honour of religion and our own interest do both command us to unite. It was no small reflection on Christians that Mohammed's great champion should have cause to say, I shall sooner see my fingers all of a length, than Christians all of a mind. It is true, till we have all one eye, we shall never in all things be of one judgment. But must a small difference in opinion cause such a distance in affection? Must we make the devils



and enemies of Christ music by our discords? When the foes of God and our own souls are in sight of us, shall we be fighting to make them sport, and to give them an opportunity to destroy us? The wicked of the world warm themselves by that fire of division which the heats of some weak Christians kindle. It is observable that the Spirit of God, mentioning the contention between the herdsmen of Abraham's cattle, and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle, immediately subjoins, in the same verse, 'And the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt then in the land,' Gen. 13:7; some think to shew the occasion of the difference betwixt them, their cattle increasing so much, and those nations dwelling among them, they had not sufficient room, and therefore wrangled; others think that latter clause is inserted to shew the heinous aggravation of their sin. It had been bad enough to have quarrelled where none but saints had been in company, and spectators of their strife; but it is much worse to fall out in the midst of their enemies; hereby they expose their profession to derision, and their persons to destruction. Plutarch observes, that Dion calmed the boisterous spirits of his mutinous soldiers, by saying, Your enemies yonder, pointing to the castle of Syracuse, which he then besieged, behold your mutinous behaviour. And shall neither the eyes of men nor angels, nor of God himself, which always observes the strifes and contentions amongst his children, prevail with them to put away envying, and variance, and emulation, and wrath, and persuade them to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? The foolish cranes, by fighting, beat down one another, and so are taken. Civil dissensions make Christians a prey. Neither men nor devils, which God hath used as his officers and constables to punish them, had ever had such power over them, had they but kept the King of heaven's peace. Surely, for the divisions of Zion there ought to be great searchings of heart. Oh, when shall we see the day that those glorious gospel promises and prophecies shall be accomplished! 'The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down

with the kid; the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together: and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall cat straw with the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand to the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord,' Isa. 11:6–9, and 65:25. One would think that heart-sprung pathological exhortation of the apostle should sound a retreat, and call Christians off from their violent and virulent pursuit of each other: 'If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind,' Phil. 2:1, 2.

Reader, I shall give thee two or three motives to quicken thee to mind and frequent the company of good men, then acquaint thee wherein the exercising thyself to godliness in such company consisteth.

## SECTION I

First, Consider the extraordinary good of Christian society. The children of God are like ambergris, sweetest in composition. When flower is added to flower, and many tied together, the posy is the more pleasant.

Company is in itself eligible; banishment is esteemed a civil death, and counted a punishment but one remove from a natural death. Hence, how much hath it been bewailed, not only by a Cain, 'Thou hast driven me this day from the face of the earth,' Gen. 4:14, but even by a David: 'I am like a pelican of the wilderness, I am like an owl of the desert; I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the

house-top,' Ps. 102:6, 7. But how much worth is the society of the saints! Christian society is like an arch building, wherein every stone upholds its fellow, which, if it should not, the whole would suddenly fall. One hand, saith Euripides, can make but weak defence; but, as our Latin proverb is, *Multorum manibus grande levatur onus*,—Many hands make light work. Several horses may draw that weight with ease which one is not able to stir. Saints help each other, as the several parts of the building. The foundation bears up the walls, the walls bear up the roof, the rafters bear up the laths, the laths bear up the tiles. Hence it is esteemed a privilege to a town or city to be made a corporation. And merchants manage their callings, not only more orderly, but also more successfully, when they are once made a company. Surely Paul would never have sent some hundred miles for Timothy, if his company had not been of great value. Dr Taylor blessed God that ever he came into prison, to be acquainted with that angel of God John Bradford. One sinner is a devil to another, tempting and provoking each other to wickedness. Therefore the philosopher, seeing two vicious persons together, cried out, See how the viper is borrowing poison of the asp! But one saint is an angel to another, persuading and encouraging one another to holiness. They take sweet counsel together, and go to the house of God in company. The patriarchs removed their habitations for the benefit of watersprings. Every saint is in some sense a well of living water; and did men but know their worth, they would delight more to be with them. Sure I am, he that hath such a good neighbour shall never want a good-morrow. As a pomander ball cast into a censer will fill the whole house with its pleasant savour, so a Christian will endeavour to perfume all that come near him. How pleasant, then, is the savour arising from many Christians in company together!

The society of the prophets is able to make even a Saul to prophesy. The Pleiades, which are the seven stars joined in one constellation,

('Canst thou bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades?' Job 38:31,) help one another in their work, which is to bring on the spring, the best season of the year. Christians in consort are an abridgment of heaven, shining like a firmament of bright stars, not one malevolent aspect among them; and they all conspire together to further a spring and new shoot of grace, the best of blessings, in each others' hearts. As sincerity is the heart of religion, so society is the breath of religion; it helps to preserve it alive. The spiritual life of the Philippians did, upon their first quickening, appear by this, and it was also very helpful for their continuance and increase, Phil. 1:5.

No Christians are so full but they stand in need of their fellows. He that had as large a stock of grace as any since Christ, yet could not live without commerce with others, Rom. 15:24. The goodliest house may want a shore. The Shunammite, though she told the prophet she dwelt among her own people, and therefore needed not any to speak for her to the king, was glad to receive that kindness by the hands of the servant, which she denied to accept from his master.

I shall mention the advantage of good company in five particulars:

First, By good company sinful souls have been converted. A crooked bough, joined to a straight one, groweth straight. Latimer was converted from popery by the good company and conference of Master Bilney. The daughters of Jerusalem came to be in love with the bridegroom by being in company with his bride; by being acquainted with the church, they became enamoured with Christ. At first they wondered at her fondness of him, that she was so impatient till she had found him, Cant. 5:8, 9; but they had not been long with her, before the heat of her love had warmed them with the same earnest desire and longings: 'Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside, that we

may seek him with thee?' Cant. 6:1. They that come where ointments and sweet spices are stirring, carry away some of the savour. One live coal may set a whole stack on fire. Evil company, like the river Melas in Bœotia, makes all the sheep that drink of it black; but good company, rather like Clitumnus in Italy, makes them that drink of it white. Saul, by being in company with a wise servant, was brought to hear of a kingdom: 'He that walketh with wise men shall be wise,' Prov. 13:20. This made Algerius, the Italian martyr, say, I had rather be in prison with Cato, a wise man, of whom I might learn some good, than in the senate-house with Cæsar.

As one circle caused by a stone thrown into the water begets a second, and that a third; and as one rainbow begets another, and they two together beget a third; so one Christian helps to beget another to Christ, and they two joining, turn more from the errors of their ways. Holiness, like an elixir, by contraction, if any disposition in the metal, will render it of the same property. The Indians were brought to embrace the Christian faith, by the holy conference and company of Edesius and Frumentius, two private Christians.

Secondly, By good company, pious souls have been confirmed. Whilst Latimer and Ridley lived, they kept up Cranmer by intercourse of letters. Christian conference is a great help to perseverance. The staff of bonds was the Jews' beauty and safety, Zech. 11:14. Company causeth courage: the beams of joy are the hotter for reflection. *Ipse aspectus viri boni delectat*, saith the moralist, The very countenance of a good man makes us cheerful; our sight of him is reviving to us. When Paul saw the brethren he blessed God, and took courage, Acts 28:15. When many mariners pull at a rope together, they strive with the more alacrity; therefore Christ sent his disciples by two and two, Mark 6:7. When Jonathan went against the Philistines, he would take his armour-bearer along

with him. The blessed Jesus, going into the garden to his bitter, bloody agony, chose Peter, James, and John to accompany him. The great apostle expected comfort from the Romans' company, and hoped to confirm them by his. 'For I long to see you, that I might impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established.' The closer the stones of the edifice are joined together, the stronger is the building: 'That I might be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me.' Grace is the oil of gladness; and the more of this oil, the more of gladness. When Paul's faith and the Romans' met in one channel, such a river of oil would be a river of pleasure. The union of such flames could not but become a good fire, to refresh and rejoice their hearts. As it is said of leviathan, Job 41:16, that his scales are his pride—i.e., his strength in which he boasteth; and the reason of it is rendered, one is so near to another that no air can come between them. They are joined one to another; they stick together, that they cannot be sundered. So it may be said of the people of God, their unity will be their security. When one is so near to another that no enemy can come between them, when they are joined one to another, and stick together that they cannot be sundered, then it may be said of them as of him, 'In their neck remaineth strength, and sorrow is turned into joy before them,' ver. 21.

Thirdly, By good company, erring saints have been recovered. Holy David lay sleeping in his sin till his good friend Nathan jogged and awakened him. Many a one hath been roused out of his spiritual lethargy by private admonition. Hence, saith Solomon, 'Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up,' Eccles. 4:9, 10. Men that are troubled with the falling sickness, are sometimes carried away and die with their distemper, it seizing upon

them when none is with them; but when they fall amongst company, by rubbing and chafing them, they often come to themselves again. Every scandalous sin especially is a kind of falling sickness, very dangerous to the soul. It is ill, therefore, for them that are overtaken with it, and have none with them, by serious admonition to recover them out of it.

I have read of a minister, that in the night had a sudden motion to go visit a certain neighbour, and though he argued with himself the unseasonableness of the time, and his ignorance of any cause for such an action, yet the impulse upon him was so strong that he could not withstand it; so going to that friend's house late in the night, he found none at home save the master of the house. Truly, saith the minister to him, I am come to your house thus late, but I know not to what end, nor for what purpose. Yea, saith the man of the house, but God knoweth; for I have made away, through my profaneness, so many children's portions, and here is the rope in my pocket with which I was going to hang myself. But what, replied the minister, if I can tell you of one that made away with more portions, and yet was saved? Who was that? said the neighbour. Adam, saith the minister; who, as a public person, was entrusted with the stock of all his posterity, and prodigally wasted them, yet was saved. Thus, by his serious and seasonable counsel, he stayed the man from his purpose, and was, probably, instrumental for much spiritual good to him.

Fourthly, By good company, dull Christians have been quickened. Two cold things, steel and flint, smitten together, send forth fire. When two lie together, they have warmth, but how can one be warm alone? Eccles. 4:11. When David was old, and his natural heat decayed, they got a young damsel to lie near him, and to put some warmth in him. Cold Christians have been heated by being near others that have been glowing coals. When Silas and Timotheus

came from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in spirit; before, he was warm, but then in a light flame, Acts 18:5. Some men of weak stomachs have fed the more for seeing others fall so heartily to their meat: 'As iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend,' Prov. 27:17. Some interpret the words thus: Rub iron against iron, and it giveth an edge unto it; so if a man lie often grating upon his friend, by unkind usage, it will sharpen his countenance to discontent, and make his spirit keen and angry. And to make good this exposition, they observe that the wise man doth not say, so a friend sharpeneth, &c. but, so a man; because by his unworthy carriage he puts off the nature of a friend, and therefore doth not deserve the name. But I rather incline to the other interpretation: 'As iron sharpeneth iron.' Rub one file against another, and though before they were dull and blunt, they both become thereby bright and sharp. So friends that are heavy and backward, and overrun with rust for want of use, by mutual conference and communion, they become lively, quick, and keen about spiritual things. Christian society, like rubbing iron against iron, takes away that rust which made them so dull and inactive, and sets a spiritual edge upon them. Urbanus Regius, an eminent Dutch divine, meeting with Luther about Coburg, he spent a whole day in conference with him, of which himself writeth, that he never had a more quickening, comforting day all his lifetime.

Fifthly, By good company, much sin hath been prevented. Christian society is like the pulse, which ariseth from the heart, and hath a double motion of contraction and dilatation, both for the expelling of noxious fumes, through the insensible pores of the flesh, and for the drawing in of cool air to refresh the heart and vital parts. It is useful to increase grace: southernwood groweth best in gardens where it is first planted; grace shoots up most in God's vineyard, amongst his plants; the outlying deer, that leave the herd, seldom thrive; those



parts die that are severed from the body. It is useful to prevent vice: that deformed harlot hath been ashamed to appear in such honest company; the Romans durst not call for their obscene plays in Cato's presence.

When David was like to be slain, Abishai came and rescued him. Good company hath prevented the Christian's falling from Christ. Peter confessed Christ among the holy apostles, though he denied him among the ungodly servants of the high priest. 'If one prevail against a man, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not easily broken,' Eccles. 4:12. Two streams united into one channel may bear up a vessel of some burden. Junius being much tempted to atheism, professed himself very much helped against it by discoursing with a plain countryman near Florence.

Naturally, saith Chrysostom, a man hath but one head to advise him, one tongue to speak for him, two hands to work, two feet to walk, and two eyes to see for him. Now, saith he, had a man that skill and cunning to make that one head many, and that one tongue many, and so his eyes, and feet, and hands many, he would hardly be circumvented by any carnal policy. Good company doth this: it makes that one head many, that one tongue many, those two hands, eyes, feet, many; for saints study for others' good as well as their own; their eyes, their tongues, their hands, and feet, are always employed for the benefit of their companions. Now, in many counsellors there is much safety. He that hath many eyes to watch for him, is likeliest to be kept from falling. No vessels are in such hope of security, and to be defended from pirates, as those that sail with so strong a convoy. As God hath set conscience to watch over the inner man, and by reason of that help we avoid much unholiness, so God hath set Christians to watch over one another's outward man; and

truly these eyes being over us may prevent the commission of much evil.

The society of saints is sometimes in Scripture compared to a garden. It hath fruits and drugs in it of all sorts—some for food, some for physic, some for corrosives, some for cordials, some to warm the frozen saints, some to cool the fiery sinner; some are profitable for one purpose, some for another. 'For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we being many, are one body in Christ, and we all members one of another,' Rom. 12:5, 6. A company of Christians is a great fair, where all sorts of provision, both for necessity and delight, is to be had. Hence Satan is so busy and diligent, if it be possible, to prevent Christian communion: 'I was coming once and again, but Satan hindered me,' 1 Thes. 2:18. And his servants have learned this of their hellish master. Julian the apostate, and the heathen emperors, banished Christians into islands where they could not have access one to another, being suspicious that their mutual communion would tend much to their mutual comfort and confirmation. Bradford was accused to do more hurt in prison by his letters and speeches than in the pulpit by his preaching. One Christian cometh to another, as Paul to his Romans, with the fulness of the blessings of the gospel of Christ. Therefore, as Cato would often make division amongst his servants, judging their union to tend to his disadvantage, so Satan soweth discord amongst Christians, knowing their concord would tend to the throwing down his kingdom.

Surely, of all fellowships, this is the only good fellowship. Next to communion with God, there is no communion like the communion of saints. The world doth but catachrestically name their rabble of drunken, swearing, and riotous wretches, good fellows; no otherwise than the atheistical popes are termed Pii, the greedy cormorants

called Innocents, and the earthly muckworms Cælestines. The conjunction of sinners is a combination with devils. The prince of darkness is the head of their league, and they all wear his black colours; but the communion of saints is a fellowship with God; he is the foundation of their union. 'These things write I unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and Jesus Christ his Son,' 1 John 1:3. What fellowship can in any respect compare with theirs who have fellowship, not only with Christians, the highest and most excellent of men, or with angels, the noblest and most honourable of creatures, but even with God himself, the fountain and ocean of all honour and perfection! Oh how happy is that company which hath his presence! how amiable is that council which hath such a president! and how desirable is their amity, who are united under this blessed and glorious potentate! May it not be said of such companions, what Zebah and Zalmunna spake of Gideon's brethren, 'Each one resembled the child of a king?' Judges 8:18. Their parentage is so great, their society is so gracious, and their privileges are so glorious, that if a man purchase his freedom of a company in one of our cities at so dear a rate, what should he not give or do to be free of this corporation! He that hath but an eye of faith to see the glory and magnificence of this society, may well express himself, as Titus the emperor when he saw the remainder of the Sanctum sanctorum, Now I well perceive that this is none other than the house of God, and the dwelling of the God of heaven. Neither was it for nought that the Jews stood so earnestly in the defence thereof; for great is the glory of the temple; the splendour thereof is without compare.

## **SECTION II**

Secondly, Consider, wicked men join together to advance the kingdom of Satan, and to provoke one another to lewdness and wickedness; and shall not saints unite to exalt the interest of Christ, and to provoke one another to love and to good works? There is so much monstrous enmity in the hearts of carnal ones against God and holiness, that when the tide of their own lusts, and the stream of their headstrong passions, would carry them swiftly towards hell, yet, as if this were too little, they hoist up sail, and help one another forward with the strong winds of provocation: 'They encourage themselves in an evil matter; they commune of laying wait privily,' Ps. 64:5. As Samson's foxes, they join tail to tail with their firebrands to burn up the good corn; as Simeon and Levi, they are brethren in iniquity, the instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. Shall they, as Ananias and Sapphira, agree together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord, and shall not saints agree together to please the Spirit of the Lord? Surely if sinners have their 'Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us all have one purse,' saints may well have their 'Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord; come, let us walk in the light of the Lord,' Isa. 2:5; come, let us join ourselves to the Lord in a covenant not to be forgotten.

It is considerable, that though sinners differ never so much amongst themselves, yet they can unite against the Lord and his chosen. Herod and Pilate, before at odds, can comply as friends, and join together against the Lord Christ. As dogs of differing colours, disagreeing bigness, and of several kinds, that sometimes for bones and scraps fight, and mangle, and tear one another, can with one voice, and cry, and consent pursue the poor innocent hare; so the kennel of Satan's hell-hounds, though sometimes they quarrel among themselves about the honours and riches of this world, and are ready to rent one another in pieces, yet can, with open mouth and full cry, all join to persecute the harmless lambs of Christ.

We read of such different metal, such a speckled rabble gathered together against Israel, that one would think the diversity of their countries, constitutions, customs, languages, lusts, should have kept them from melting and running into one piece; yet, lo, they all unite against God's people. 'They take crafty counsel against thy people; they consult against thy hidden ones. They have said, Come, let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee: the tabernacles of Edom and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes; Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines, and the inhabitants of Tyre; Assur also is joined with them; and they have holpen the children of Lot,' Ps. 83:3–9.

Shall such a cursed crew agree together to pull down Zion, and not the blessed company of God's children unite to build it up? Oh, how shameful is it, that Satan's black regiment should with one consent watch for us, as the dragon for the man-child, to devour us; and as Herod for the babes of Bethlehem, to destroy us; and that we should not watch over one another for our safety and defence! It may well be our grief that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.

It is true, the combination of wicked men is no true union; but rather a conspiracy against God, and against their own souls. Satan serving them by drawing them into this league, and making them to be of one hellish heart, infinitely worse than Scyron and Procrustes, famous robbers in Attica, served the poor travellers, who, by cutting short the taller, and stretching out the lesser, brought all to an even length with their bed of brass; yet such a confederacy may well move us to pity such distracted ones, and doth too much reflect upon us for our dissensions.

Thirdly, Consider the backwardness of our own hearts to any good, and the need we have of all helps to quicken them towards heaven. How averse are our souls to anything that is spiritual! How many excuses, pretences, delays will they make! To sin man needs no tutor; he can ride post to hell without a spur; but how backward to do that work which he must do, or be undone for ever! The stone is not more untoward to fly, nor lead to swim, than our carnal hearts to exercise any grace, or perform any duty incumbent on us. Our headstrong passions hurry us, our worldly interests bias us, and our desperately wicked hearts draw us from God and heaven. If the wood be green, there is need of constant blowing, or the fire will go out; when the iron is so dull, it must go often to the whetstone, or little work can be done with it. It is no wonder that the Spirit of God useth precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, and there a little, when man is like the wild ass's colt, so blockish and dull to understand God's way, and so backward and heavy to walk in it.

How much are we in the dark about the ways, and word, and truths of God! and how apt, through mistakes, to stumble and fall, calling evil good, and good evil! and do we not want their company who carry a light, a lantern, with them? How often do we flatter ourselves that we are rich in grace and in the favour of God, when it is little so, looking on ourselves through the false spectacles of self-love! And doth it not behove us to be much in their society who will set before us a true looking-glass, wherein we may behold the native countenance of our souls without any fraud or falsehood? We are full of doubts, and want counsel; and physicians that are able themselves, will in their own cases ask advice of others. We are liable to many sorrows, and want comfort; and who can give it us better than those who fetch all their cordial waters out of Scripture? We are apt to slumber, and nod, and neglect our spiritual watch; the flesh is drowsy, and the cares of the world fume up into our heads, and

incline us to sleep; what then will become of us, if we have none to jog and awaken us? It will go but ill with the new man, if, whilst he hath so many enemies to hurt him, he hath never a friend to help him. 'Exhort one another daily, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin,' Heb. 3:13.

I have somewhere read of a king, that having many servants, some wise, some indiscreet, some profitable, some unprofitable, was asked why he would keep those foolish, unprofitable fellows. To which he answered, I need the other, and these need me, and so I will have them all about me. I am sure weak Christians need the strong; it is ill for a tottering house to have no prop; and strong Christians may need the weak. That knife which is best metal, may sometimes need a dull whetstone. The smallest wheel, nay, pin, in a watch is necessary; and so each needing the other, there is great need they should hold together. While there is flesh and spirit combating within us, and the worse so potent and likely to conquer, we shall want all manner of auxiliaries to relieve the better part.

Fourthly, Consider the evil of neglecting Christian communion. I know the children of God must sometimes be solitary; there are some duties which cannot otherwise be performed, and some callings which cannot otherwise be followed; but as there are seasons for solitariness, so also for society. To forbear the society of saints without a necessary cause is a sin, and bringeth great disadvantage both upon ourselves and others.

1. Upon ourselves. We lose those helps which God hath afforded for the edification of our souls. Fire laid abroad, quickly abateth, nay, goeth out; when, if it be raked up together, it continueth and increaseth. I suppose the Spirit of God is so exact in registering the absence of Thomas from the apostles' company, when Christ

vouchsafed them his personal and gracious presence, and the sad fit of unbelief which he fell into upon it, partly as a warning to all Christians that they lose not such seasons, as they love their immortal souls: John 20:24, 25, 'But Thomas, one of the twelve, was not there when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.' 'Had Thomas been present when the Lord appeared, how strongly might he have withstood Satan's assaults against his faith! His senses had been sufficient to have confuted the father of lies, and helpful to have quenched his fiery darts; but by his absence, how dangerously was he shaken in that fundamental truth!

Satan hath a wonderful advantage of that person whom he meets, without any warrant from God, alone. If I travel alone between sun and sun, I have the law for my protection, that if I be robbed, I may recover my loss of the country; but if at other times, it is at my own peril. If I be alone at the call of my God, either when secret duties or my particular calling require it, and my grand enemy set upon me, I may expect help from him whose work I am about; but if, when he commandeth me to associate with his people, I needlessly wander from them, and any hurt befall me, I must thank myself, and look for no reparation at his hands. It is observable that the house of Job's eldest son, which was the grave wherein all his children were buried, stood alone, otherwise the wind from the wilderness could not have smote the four corners thereof. Oh, it is dangerous to be solitary, when God requires thy company amongst his chosen!

There is a woe to him that is alone: such a man shall be sure to have Satan for his companion. He is ever ready to assault when none is near to assist. Eve was tempted with too much success when she was



alone, without her husband; Dinah, gadding from her father's house, was defiled; Joseph was then assaulted, when the whole family was gone, save the instrument of the assault. How soon are stragglers snapped up, when those that march with the body of the army are safe! Pirates lie skulking to find a vessel sailing alone, when those that sail in company are a convoy to each other. They who separate are soon seduced. The cormorant, or sea-eagle, hath this property, that she will not seize upon the fish in the water when they are in shoals; but when single, she makes them her prey. Solitude is not more hurtful to the body than to the soul, and to nature than to grace. When David was an exile from the society of the Israelites, and wandered abroad, he fell into diffidence and distrust, nay, into hard and blasphemous thoughts of God, as if he had forgotten to be gracious, as if he himself had cleansed his heart in vain. He then said, in his haste, that all men, even Samuel, who had anointed him to the kingdom, and promised him from God that he should be king, were liars.

It is a disadvantage to others. When saints do not meet together, their love cooleth, nay, contentions frequently follow, to the hardening of the wicked, and the discouraging of the weak. The temple or body of Christ is not built up with blows and schisms. The parts of the temple were framed and squared in Lebanon; at the rearing of it up in Zion, there was no noise either of axe or hammer. Babel itself could not be built by divided tongues, much less Zion by divided hearts. When Christians divide and separate, weak beginners know not what to do, whom to follow, but are ready to say with Cicero, when Cæsar and Pompey were at odds, *Quern fugiam scio, quern sequar nescio*; I know whom to fly, but I know not whom to follow. Oh, how dreadful are the consequents of such civil wars! Discord is not without cause described by the great Italian to be clothed with a garment of divers colours, made up of patches, and

they rent, cut, and torn, her lap full of writs, citations, processes, and arrests, attended only with clerks, scriveners, attorneys, and lawyers; but she was followed with bitter clamours and dismal howlings.

Melanchthon, persuading the Protestants in his time to peace, tells them a parabolical story of the dogs and wolves, who were meeting to fight one against another. The wolves sent out their scout, to know the strength of their adversaries. The scout returns, and tells the wolves that indeed the dogs exceeded them in number, but they need not fear them, for he had observed they were not like one another; besides, they marched as if they were offended rather with themselves than their enemies, grinning and snarling, yea, biting and tearing one another; therefore, let us not be discouraged, but march on resolutely. Dissension amongst men, brings destruction on men: 'A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand.' They who embodied together may be able to overcome thousands, divided and taken singly, may be overthrown by a very few. The hardest adamant, if once broken, flieth into such small dust that it is scarce discernible, and so cometh to nothing. The people of God have not seldom made themselves a prey to persecutors by their heart-burnings and divisions. When the town is once set on fire by the grenades shot in from them that besiege it the enemies hope to take it with the more case.

Naturalists tell us that a pumice stone, cast into the waters, though it be never so big, whilst it remains entire, and the parts hold together, it will swim above the water; but break it once in pieces, and every part sinks to the bottom. Truly, such oftentimes is the state of the faithful. They who, holding together, are safe, and as a bundle of staves, not to be bowed, when parted and taken singly are easily broken. It is the shepherd's observation, that when sheep butt one against another, it is a sign of foul weather, and of an approaching

storm. We have too much cause to fear that the schisms and contentions in the church of God at this day do portend some heavy judgment to hang over our heads.

## SECTION III

I shall now direct thee, reader, how to exercise thyself to godliness in Christian company.

First I must give thee a word of caution. Take heed of those sins which Christians, when they accompany together, are most prone to. Saints are apt to be secure, as thinking themselves safe, when they are, as they imagine, among none but themselves. But, truly, seeming honest men may deceive us sooner than known cheats, because we are apt to confide in the former, when we fear and take heed of the latter. The plague may soonest be conveyed through perfumed linen. Satan tempted Eve in the form of a serpent; but when he sets upon Christ, whom he knew hard to be conquered, he sets upon him in the shape of a dove. None so fit as a Peter to persuade him to pity himself. As God can send us a pearl in a toad's head, bring light out of darkness, and enable us to get good by polluted persons; so Satan, like Hannibal, can convey poison through a gold ring, bring darkness out of light, and make us the worse for the company of the best Christians. The society of the godly is like the shop of an apothecary, in which there are many cordial juleps, purging potions, and wholesome drugs, but also some poisonous, which need strong correctives, and therefore they must be the object of our caution as well as of our choice.

There are two or three things which Christians, when they meet together, too frequently err in, against which I would advise thee—in misspending time, censuring the good, and backbiting the bad.

1. Take heed of misspending that season. Time is in itself of great price, and ought to be redeemed; but opportunity is of greater value, and it is infinite pity to cut such a precious commodity to waste. It is ordinary, even with good men when they meet, though it relate nothing to their callings or concernments, to be talking chiefly of corn, and cattle, and markets, and fairs, and foreign transactions, as if they had not a God, a Christ, a soul, an eternal estate to be minding each other of. Our words are the servants of our reason, and to send more than will perform our business, or to send them upon unnecessary and trifling errands, argueth vanity and folly. Have we not the country to which we are all travelling, the purity and pleasantness of the way thither, the excellency and certainty of our reward there, to talk about? St Bernard complained that in his time Christians were faulty in this particular, *Nihil de Scripturis, nihil de salute agitur animarum, sed nugæ et risus, et verba proferuntur in ventum*; Not a word of the Scriptures, nothing of your eternal salvation, but trifles and laughter, and words as light as the wind, take up the time.

Some spend their time in nice questions, as what Christ disputed of amongst the doctors? where paradise stood? in what part of the world is local hell? what became of Moses' body? how many orders and degrees of elect spirits? These curious persons, the further they go, the nearer they approach a sun that blinds them. Others in circumstantial controversies, when, in the interim, the essentials of religion are laid by. Such talk is but a wasting time, and those that sweat at it are but laborious loiterers, like those that take great pains to crack or cleave a date-stone, which, when they have done, affords them no kernel. Would it not be counted a piece of great folly for a man that had a wound near some vital part, to be very busy in laying a plaster upon his scratched finger, while the other lay unregarded? Were it not a piece of strange madness, when the enemy is at the

walls, and the town every moment in danger of being stormed, the bullets flying thick about the streets, for the people within to be sitting still, and consulting whether a musket would carry further than a trunk, or whether more are killed with bullets or arrows? Truly, such folly, such madness is it to employ ourselves about needless discourse about the world, or superficial circumstantial things, when our inestimable souls are continually in danger of being surprised and slain. The apostle reproveth such as spent their time about fables and endless genealogies, (that is, things frivolous, and besides our work of Christianity, though not false or directly opposite to it,) which minister questions rather than godly edifying, 1 Tim. 1:5.

To prevent this, reader, offer some serious discourse, either by way of position or question. Thy profit by good company doth very much depend upon thyself. Thy question or position is the fire, which draweth out either the quintessence or dregs of things. It may be there is one in thy company rich in grace, in gifts—these are the treasure of the soul; but if ever thou wouldst be the better for it, thou must open it by the key of some savoury question or sentence. An ordinary person, by some practical question, may lay the foundation for a goodly fabric of rich and excellent discourse. A little water poured into a pump, may fetch up many buckets full. A small lackey may call us to a costly banquet.

Ferus on Matthew affirmeth, that it was the practice of the monks to meet together once in a week, and to acquaint each other with their temptations, the means of resistance, and the issue thereof. I believe, if Christians were more open-hearted in declaring to one another the state of their souls, their experiences in point of loss or gain in spirituals, and sense of God's favour or anger, &c., it would much tend, not only to the honour of God, but also to the defeating of our great enemy, and our own mutual advantage. Satan hath many wiles

wherewith to wrong and destroy souls; he proceedeth many times in the same method with several Christians. Now, when one acquainteth another with the snares he laid to catch him, and the way he took to avoid it, hereby the other is forewarned and forearmed; forewarned to expect that such a trap should be laid for him, and forearmed how to avoid it. An almanac calculated for London, without any sensible error may serve the whole kingdom. That which hath been one saint's condition or temptation, may be any saint's; and that way which one hath taken to escape a peril, or improve a providence, may be useful and helpful to any of the saints.

Some tell us the art of medicines was thus perfected: When any one met with an herb, and discovered the virtue of it by any accident, he did post it up in some public place, and if any were sick or diseased, he was laid in some common passage, that every passenger might communicate the best receipt he knew for that distemper; and so the physician's skill was completed, by a collection of those posted experiences and receipts. I cannot but think that our souls would be more safe, and our spiritual sicknesses less dangerous, if Christians were more free in revealing what means have, through the assistance of the Spirit, been instrumental for their recovery out of their inward distempers, and the preservation of their health.

2. Take heed of censuring the good. This is another sin, that even good men are guilty of when they meet together. Some no sooner creep into the cradle of profession, but immediately they leap out of it into the chair of censure. If a Christian do stumble, he saith he falls, and so carrieth it up and down; he always greatens others' and lessens his own sins. Things in a mist seem bigger to us than in a fair day, by reason of the indisposedness of the air or medium. He looks on the sins of others through the mist of envy, and so makes them bigger than they are; he beholds his own sins, as God doth himself,

afar off, or as things on a steeple, which seem small and little. Because some persons are not of his party, therefore they are in the bond of iniquity, saith the censorious man. Thus the Romans judged others not saints, because they were not exactly of their own size, Rom. 14:3. If good men are brought to the fire of affliction, it is, saith he, because they bear not good fruit, and are fit for nothing but fuel. Thus Job's friends judged him a hypocrite, and without armour of proof, because he was the mark at which the arrows of the Almighty were levelled, Job 4:5–7. If a good man step awry, he tells others positively that his whole way and course is wrong. From his failing in one action, the censurer condemneth his whole conversation as feigned and fraudulent; as if the best gold did not need some grains of allowance, and the brightest burning taper had not some smoke with it. He judgeth according to appearance, and doth not judge righteous judgment. When an action is doubtful, and admits of a good or bad construction, to be sure he will take it in the worst sense. He never meets with an ambiguous text, but he makes a bad comment on it. If Christ associate with Zaccheus, though not for communion with him in his sins, but for the conversion of his soul, he will presently cry him up for a winebibber, a glutton, and a friend of publicans and sinners. In this, and in all the rest, he judgeth without judgment; for indeed, it is from want of judgment that the heaviest judgment comes. Oh, how sad is it, that those who believe in a day of judgment, should walk so contrary to the rule of their judge! Mat. 7:1; 1 Cor. 4:5; James 3:1. The dogs were kinder than such men, for they licked the sores of honest Lazarus; but these rub and fret the sores of godly men, by publishing them to others. It is our duty to mourn for the sins of good men: 'Lest, when I come, my God will humble me,' saith Paul, 'for them that have sinned.' How contrary are they to Christianity, that are glad they have somewhat to talk of! I cannot esteem them Christians, that think their feast wanteth music, unless the Baptist's head be brought in a charger at the first course. A

desire to disgrace others never sprang from grace. It is ill to inquire into others' actions, that we might have matter to draw up a bill of indictment against them; like those who, in reading books, mark only the faults, or such as take more pleasure in beholding a monster than a perfect man, such is a censorious person. But it is a swinish property to feed upon excrements; they have too much affinity to the old serpent that can pick nourishment out of poison. Have not all men business enough of their own, without raking into others' graves? but as the fish sepia darken the waters, that they may escape the net, so they darken the credit of others, that they may escape the net of censure which is due to themselves.

These men are usually eagle-eyed abroad, but as blind as moles at home; the most vicious are ever the most suspicious. As Galileus looked through his prospective-glass to find mountains in the moon, so these examine others' lives, and search their actions as narrowly as Laban did Jacob's stuff, to find matter of accusation. But as it is fabled of old Lamia, that she had eyes like unto spectacles, which she might take out and put in at her pleasure, and that as soon as she came into her house, she always locked them up in her coffer, and sat down to spinning as blind as a beetle, and that when she went abroad, she put them into her head, and would very curiously behold what other men did; so the censorer is so quick-sighted abroad, that he can see the motes in others' eyes, but so blind within-doors, that he cannot see the beam in his own.<sup>2</sup>

Some of these men have a fine way of censuring and condemning others, by commending them, that you will not easily discern their envy or ill-will, because of the throng and press of their subtle praises. They will set forth a Christian, eminent for grace, with many and large flourishes of commendation; but after all, in two or three words, dash out all they had spoken, and leave a blot in the room. As



the Holy Ghost saith truly of Naaman, 'He was a mighty man, captain of the Syrian host, but a leper.' So they of a saint, whose worth they cannot for shame deny, He hath great parts, many excellent gifts, large abilities, but I wish the root of the matter were in him; or, But he knoweth them too well; or, But he is covetous or proud. As the smith that shoeth a horse, and pretendeth therein to do him a kindness, but pricks him in shoeing him, and therefore had better have let him alone. This one fly of but, &c., mars the whole pot of ointment. The censurer with that short knife stabs his neighbour's fame to the heart.

Reader, I beseech thee, both for thy own sake and the gospel's, to be tender of the repute and credit of saints. A good man's name is like a milk-white ball, which exceedingly gathers soil by tossing, and therefore is to be sparingly talked of. Words reported again have another sound, and many times another sense; besides, one dog sets many others a-barking. Talk of his failings as low as thou wilt, the world is quick of hearing, and they take the size of all Christians' clothes by the measure of the weakest. Thy charity should clap a plaster, supposing there to be a real wound, and cover it with the hand of privacy, to keep it from the open air. The Egyptian, who carried something wound up in a napkin, answered discreetly to him that asked what it was: It is covered, to the end that no man might see. Truly, if we know of others' failings and infirmities, we should hide them with the mantle of love, and not shew them to any but in relation to the offender's good and recovery; for why should a fallen brother have cause to complain, I am wounded in the house of my friends; had it been an enemy I could have borne it, but it was thou, O man, my friend, mine equal, and my acquaintance! Apelles drew Antigonus, who had but one eye, half-faced, whereby that blemish was hid, so should Christians their brethren.

The wise man tells us, the worth of a good name is above all wealth: Eccles. 7:1, 'A good name is better than precious ointment.' What a great thief is he, then, that robs his neighbour of it! Our rash judging others, like the ram's horns before Jericho, may blow down that with a blast, which we cannot build up again while we live. An ill report is soon raised, but not so soon laid; it usually, like the crocodile, groweth whilst it continueth. Our tears should be the grave to bury our neighbours' failings in, and not our mouths a grave to bury their names in. That one act of Alexander merits eternal memory, who, having read a letter with his favourite, Hephæstion, wherein his mother calumniated Antipater, he presently took his signet from his finger and oppressed Hephæstion's lips with it, conjuring him, as it were, to seal up his lips, and not once to open them in revealing another's disgrace. Suppose the person I censure be really evil, yet my duty is to do what I can to amend, not to divulge his errors; but if he be good, I dishonour God by disgracing his friend, and shall be sure to pay for it, either in tears or torment. How shall I be able to stand in that day, when men shall give an account of all their hard speeches? and what shall I answer, when God shall ask me, as once he did Aaron and Miriam, 'Wast thou not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?'

3. Take heed of backbiting the bad. When men speak evil of others that are absent, before many, purposely to defame and disgrace them, this is backbiting, and condemned by God, though what we speak of them be true. Doeg spake nothing but truth of David and Ahimelech; yet the Scripture calls him a lying and deceitful tongue, Ps. 52. Sometimes it may be a duty to reveal others' deeds of darkness, as when these two things concur:

1. That we have cause for it. When what we mention is naked truth, and the sin not any ways rendered more ugly and deformed by

misconstruction or aggravations; and,

2. When we have a call to it, as when we are desired to mention what we know of others by them that have good ground to inquire after them; or when, through ignorance of such things, others may be deceived in them; or when we are lawfully required before a magistrate to testify our knowledge of such persons or actions. I may add a third, and that is,

When our desires and ends are purely to get our hearts affected with the dishonour that is done to God by their wickedness, and the danger and misery of their own souls. This is supposed to be the subject-matter of the saints' discourse, Mal. 3:16, when in evil days they spake often one to another. But for men to make it their business to publish others' profaneness, this is profane: 'Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people,' Lev. 19:16. The word for tale-bearer in the Hebrew is Bakel, and signifieth a pedlar, which fitly sets forth the property of a backbiter. The pedlar goeth up and down the country offering his wares at every door, very willing to put them off; he takes them up at one place, and never ceaseth travelling till he hath sold them at another. So the backbiter catcheth up an evil report of a man at one house, and cannot rest till he is at some other house to tell it again, offering to vend it at a very low rate to any man that will take it off his hands. Nay, he is so full that he is ready to burst, if none will allow him vent. He is big with child, and can find no ease, till another's ears be the midwife to deliver him of such a deformed monster. But this is opposite to the rule by which we should walk, Titus 2:3. Our God commandeth us, 'Speak evil of no man.' Not of good men, for they are God's portion; not of bad men, for so is God's precept. This unchristian course of some professors hath procured them many a mischief, and brought up an ill report upon them all. The sinner is apt to say of such, as

Ahab of Micaiah, 'I hate him, for he never speaks well of me.' And thus, instead of saving their neighbours' souls, which ought to be the work of every Christian, they harden them in their sins, and help to deepen their condemnations. Without doubt, that time which men spend in reporting others' wickednesses would be far better employed in confessing and bewailing their own. It will prove at last but an evil means to raise our own names higher, by pulling down others, and building on their ruins; and to relate their vices as a foil to render our virtues more beautiful and glorious. 'Let not the evil speaker be established in the earth: evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him,' Ps. 140:11. He that plotteth to pluck up others' names, doth it with an intent to plant his own the surer; but he shall not be established in the earth, saith God. He judgeth himself safe, because others cannot stand before him, or are disabled, by reason of the disgrace he hath brought on them, to oppose him. But evil, like a pack of ravenous hounds, shall, with open mouth, hunt this butting stag, and sooner or later overthrow him.

It was wise counsel which Diogenes gave the emperor. Take heed, saith he, of two sorts of beasts in thy court, both which bite dangerously—the tame beast, the flatterer; and the wild beast, the backbiter. Well might he call them beasts, for a man-like spirit scorns to be so brutish, as to claw the itching ears of others with flatteries, and hates to be so currish and cowardly, as to bite them behind their backs; David would have no such to be his servants, Ps. 101:6, 7. The backbiter hath this sad unhappiness, that he wounds three with one arrow of his viperous tongue—himself, his hearer, and his neighbour he speaks of.

1. Himself; for such weapons recoil and fly upon him that discharged them. The Holy Ghost compareth a backbiting tongue to a sharp sword; and, indeed, like Saul's sword, it may be the death of the

owner. God joins this sin with murder, Lev. 19:16, to note, saith one, that the backbiter is a man-slayer; and surely such a one shall not escape vengeance.

2. His hearer; the receiver is as bad as the thief. If there were no tale-hearer, there would be no tale-bearer; some are fitly compared to brass pots, though they are great, you may carry them by the ears, which way you please. It is an excellent expression of Solomon, 'As the north wind drives away rain, so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue,' Prov. 25:23. It is a memorable saying of Bernard, The detractor, and willing hearer of it, do both carry the devil about them; the one carrieth him in his tongue, the other in his ear. It was the wish of Plautus, that there were a law for the hanging of tale-bearers by the tongue, and tale-hearers by the ears.

3. The person he speaketh of; he that takes away a man's name, leaves him little for this world worth keeping. This evil tongue is fitly compared to an arrow, for it wounds a man even afar off. As secret poison works incurable effects many times before it is discerned, so doth a backbiting tongue. A man were better, like him one of the ancients mentions, carry a stone in his mouth three years, to prevent much babbling, than be guilty one hour of backbiting.

## **SECTION IV**

Secondly, If Christians would exercise themselves to godliness, they must be serviceable to the good of each other. The temple was built in Solomon's time by men of all sorts; there is not the meanest Christian, but may do somewhat in his place towards the building of the spiritual temple. The communion of saints consisteth in three things.

1. In a mutual communication of their graces and gifts. Grace is given us, not only for ourselves, but also for the good of the saints: 1 Cor. 12:5, 6, 'There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; differences of administration, but the same Lord; diversities of operation, but the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.' The water of life is like a common stream, for the benefit of many.

2. In a mutual joining in the ordinances of God, Acts 2:43. The servants of the same Lord wait upon him, sometimes singly, sometimes in company. There are set seasons, wherein they all meet together to attend him, though when they are parted they are all about his business: 'And the same day there were added to the church three thousand souls; and they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and breaking of bread and prayer.'

3. In mutual serviceableness each to other. Every man is a steward to manage his abilities for others' good, and to improve his talents for his Master's glory. Now, if our stock were our own, that we were the proprietors, to let it lie still would argue us guilty of much folly; but when it is altogether another's, and we are but factors for him, to neglect the improvement of it, speaks us arrant thieves, and guilty of unfaithfulness: 'As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God,' 1 Pet. 4:10. It is but an ill property of the swan, that she cannot endure the goose should come near her, to take part of her food. Though it might be a fault in the church of Syracuse, what Hilary mentions, that by a law there was a community of outward goods; yet I am sure it is none, that there should be a community of spiritual gifts. Wicked men are said to be of the night, but saints of the day; now as the day enlightens and warms all it shines on, calls them to their work, to their walk, and helpeth to prevent their falls and

wandering, even, so should the saints in love serve one another, Gal. 5:13. Such a man is of the earth (is right earth, that standeth on its own centre) who is wholly for himself. All things that have affinity with the heavens, move upon the centre of another which they benefit. The bramble, which receiveth all good, and keepeth it to itself, piercing instead of pleasuring those who come near it, will be cast ere long into the fire. It is said of one, as all the encomium could justly be given, *Sibi natus, sibi vixit, sibi mortuus, sibi damnatus*; He was born to himself, he lived to himself, he died to himself, and he was damned to himself. We have a common saying, He that is not good to himself, is good to nobody; and it is as true again, He that is good only to himself, is as good as nobody. It was the voice of a cursed Cain, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' The voice of the blessed apostle, 'Consider one another, to provoke to love; exhort one another whilst it is called to-day; let no man seek his own, but every one his brother's good to edification,' Phil. 2:4; Heb. 10:34.

A company of Christians, like the plants in paradise, should impart an aromatical savour each to other: 'A friend must shew himself friendly,' saith Solomon, Prov. 18. But how? by endeavouring to make his friends better. It was a commendable property which some mention in Socrates, that he always studied how he might better the minds of his familiars. And Seneca, when the scholars of Theophrastus had shewed him two men that were intimate friends, whereof the one was very rich, and the other very poor, he said to them, If they be friends, how comes it to pass that the one is so poor and the other so rich?—intimating that, had there been any true friendship, the rich man would have imparted of his goods to the poor man. As true love cannot stand without communicating of our temporal riches, so neither without imparting of our spiritual for the supply of others' necessities. If there be love in feasting one another's bodies, there is much more in feeding each other's souls; and if to

distribute and communicate of our earthly treasures we must not forget, for with such sacrifice God is well pleased, then to distribute and communicate of our heavenly treasures we must be more forward, because with such sacrifice God is better pleased.

Besides, it is an encouragement to Christians, that they do not diminish, but increase their spiritual stocks by trading. He were not a man that would not do another a courtesy, when by doing it he should do himself no injury. How bad is he then that will not benefit his neighbour, when thereby he doth a real kindness to himself? Money laid up, rather wasteth with rust than increaseth; but money laid out, brings in considerable profit: 'To him that hath shall be given.' When the servant that had received five talents, traded and gained five more,' Take the talent,' saith Christ, 'from the unprofitable servant, and give it to him that hath gained five;' our communication to others is no diminution, but an addition to ourselves. Live coals are made the hotter for those near them, which they enlivened. The truth is, there is no usury so lawful as of spiritual riches, nor is there any so profitable. Our use upon use, which almost doubleth the principal in seven years, is nothing to this. O Christians, therefore lose not a tide, a market, an opportunity, if possible; hereby, though your beginnings be small, your latter end shall wonderfully increase. Many that have begun with very little, have by trading thus, come to die worth thousands.

Before I come to shew wherein Christians should be serviceable each to other, I must a little explain myself, lest I should seem to allow that which the word of God forbids—namely, that every private Christian ought to be a preacher; such a tenet would cut asunder the nerves and ligaments of this society, which is order. Every star must give light in its own and proper sphere.



1. There is an authoritative, public counselling, admonishing, &c., which belongeth only to pastors lawfully called. Observe what the Holy Ghost saith, 'Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all pastors? are all teachers?' No, all are not gifted for it. It would much reflect upon the King of heaven to send servants upon such weighty errands that were unfit for them, and did rather render their business ridiculous. It is no easy thing for a person to be qualified for a public preacher. The great apostle crieth out, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' though the voice of ignorant men is, Who is not sufficient for these things? Besides, all are not called to it. It is not gifts and parts that will make a subject an officer at home, or an ambassador abroad, but a commission from his prince: 'Let no man take this honour upon him, unless he be called of God, as was Aaron.' There be many works which private Christians may not meddle with, as to consecrate things, to constitute ecclesiastical laws, to excommunicate, to receive in those that are cast out, to administer the sacraments, &c. But those works which they may and ought to do, as to exhort, advise, admonish, comfort, &c., they must do them as private members, not as public officers in the name or stead of Christ, and to private members, not to the church.

2. There is a private charitable counselling, comforting, admonishing others: this may belong to any Christian, so he keep within his own place, and carry himself therein according to divine commands; for God hath made no man a treasurer, but every man a steward, of those talents with which he is intrusted. Hence the apostle frequently commandeth believers to mind these duties, Gal. 6:1; Heb. 3:13; 1 Peter 4:11. But in these Christians must keep within their bounds, as fixed stars give light to others, continuing still in their own orbs, and not as planets, according to some, wander up and down out of their places. The members of the body do not intrude into each other's office. Uzzah's upholding the ark when

shaken, though unquestionless out of a good design, yet was the cause of his death, and instead of furthering it, hindered its march towards the place of its rest.

Private Christians ought to be serviceable to each other in these particulars:

1. In instructing the ignorant. Among Christians there are many who have but ignorant heads, though they have holy hearts; though for the time they have enjoyed the means, they might have been teachers of others, yet themselves had need to be taught the first principles of the oracles of God. Now the work of knowing men must be to instruct such; though they be dull and heavy, we should bear with them, and condescend to them. St Augustine said he would speak false Latin, if his hearers understood it better than true. By many blows we make a nail enter into a hard board; by precept upon precept, and line upon line, we may beat truths into the heads of them that are very dull. Job's friend tells him, 'Behold, thou hast instructed many,' Job 4:3. In this sense Job was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; eyes to prevent their wandering in a wrong way, and feet to prevent their stumbling in the right way. David was no priest, yet he would teach others God's precepts. When he had once tasted God's love, others should taste some honey dropping from his lips: 'Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee,' Ps. 51.

It is a noble work for Christians that have abilities and understanding to take some pains to teach and instruct them that are ignorant. They cannot worship God as they ought, because they are unacquainted with his word and will. How can a servant please his master, that doth not know his pleasure? They cannot do the good they should, because they know not their duty. They who are almost

quite blind will do but little work; they are more open to temptation, both from evil men and the evil one, because of their ignorance. It is as easy to give a child poison as wholesome milk, because it hath not wisdom to discern the difference. It is not hard to put the poison of error into their mouths, who are but babes in understanding. When the quick-sighted walk steadily, these dark-sighted persons walk stumblingly in the way of God's commandments. Oh do what thou canst, reader, to inform such poor creatures in the truths of God; for as the eunuch said to Philip, 'How should they understand, unless some one guide them?' We count it worthy and honourable to teach others some curious art or high calling; sure I am there is a day coming, when to have taught one poor Christian how to serve God better, and to honour him more, will cause more comfort and bring more credit than the instructing thousands in the greatest and deepest mysteries of nature or art.

2. By quickening the slothful. The eagle loveth her young, yet when they are ready for flight, and lie lazing in their nest, she will pierce and prick them with her claws, to make them fly abroad. Love to others' souls should stir us up to rouse drowsy Christians out of their spiritual slumbers and lethargies. One bellman that is stirring at midnight, by crying fire, fire, awakens hundreds that were fast asleep in a short time; one lively active believer, acquainting men with the jealousy and justice of God, and his severe proceedings against secure persons who neglect their spiritual watch, may quickly call them from their beds to their watch and work. 'Consider one another,' saith the apostle, 'to provoke one another to love and to good works,' Heb. 10:24. The Greek word εἰς παροξυσμὸν, is, consider one another into a paroxysm, a violent heat of an ague or fever, to make each other fervent and fiery in love and good works. Consider one another's backwardness and dulness, and provoke one another to your duties, and that with diligence. Consider one

another's states and conditions, and provoke one another to a suitable seriousness in working out your salvations. Consider one another's hindrances, and temptations, and weaknesses, and provoke one another to love and to good works. Christians should say to one another, as Judah to Simeon his brother, 'Come up with me into my lot, that I may fight against the Canaanites, and I will go up with thee into thy lot:' help me by jogging and awakening me if I sleep, and I will do as much for thee, Judges 1:3. And encourage one another, as Joab his brother Abishai: 2 Sam. 10:11, 12, 'And he said, If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me; but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will come and help thee. Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and the cities of our God: and the Lord do that which seemeth him good.' Thus the children of God should bespeak each other: If the world be too hard for thee, I will endeavour to assist thee, by discovering the vanity of its shallow allurements, and the foolery of its skin-deep affrightments; if the devil or flesh be too hard for me, thou shalt do thy utmost to succour me in withstanding their batteries, and repelling their poisonous and fiery darts. Only let us be of good courage, let us watch, stand fast in the faith, quit ourselves like men for our God, and our Redeemer, and our souls, and our eternal salvations, and the Lord will be found faithful, who hath assured us that he will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able.

3. By comforting the sorrowful. Christians should have a cordial in store for them that are fainting; a cup of wine for the heavy in heart, and be able to speak a word in season to him that is weary: 'Comfort the feeble'—i.e., the sick at heart, such as are ready to sink under the weight of sin, and are frightened with the apprehension of the eternal fire, 1 Thes. 5:14. Amalek is branded with a mark of infamy, and was followed with a curse and slaughter from God, for falling upon the faint and feeble ones of Israel, Deut. 25:18. God cannot endure it, he

cannot bear it, that his weak, sickly ones should be wronged. He is tender of them himself; he carrieth his lambs in his arms, Isa. 40:11; and others must do so too, or he will make them rue it. The world doth as the herd, push the wounded deer out of their company; but saints endeavour to bind up the broken in heart, to comfort them, as Paul commands his Corinthians, lest they be swallowed up of too much sorrow, 2 Cor. 2:7.

The husbandman doth mind his young tender trees in a special manner above them that are grown up and strong, because such are in more danger of breaking, and bruising, and other hurt, than grown trees; so that, besides the wall or common fence about the orchard, he makes a special fence with bushes and stakes about these, and gives them more choice nourishment, and more frequent watering. God is most choice of his little ones, his weak children. 'When Israel was a child, I loved him: I drew him with the cords of love, and with the bands of a man,' Hosea 9:1–3. Christians must imitate God in this, and be followers of him as dear children: 'Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees,' Heb. 12:12. The martyrs in prison, by discoursing on the promises, shook off their carnal fetters. Holy Bradford made his dark dungeon by this means lightsome to his fellow-prisoners. Luther professed Melanchthon very helpful to him against his inward doubts, as he was to Melanchthon against his frights about the public state of the church. A friend is born for the day of adversity, Prov. 17:17: and it is pity he was ever born, that denieth to do that for which he was born. It appertains especially to the office of a friend, saith Seneca, to assuage his friend's grief by speech; to drive away his sadness by cheerfulness; and to refresh him with his very presence. When women travel, they carry frequently with them strong waters, and if one fainteth or is sick, she that hath those cordial waters prayeth her to take some for her ease and comfort. The apostle prepareth for the

Christian choice and rare cordials in 1 Thes. 4, about the last six verses, and then wisheth them to make use of them for their mutual good: 'Wherefore comfort one another with these words.'

4. By admonishing the sinful. Saints, like clocks, made up of curious wheels and engines, are soon discomposed, and therefore often want some workman to set them in order again. A good man, if his friend follow virtue, will be a father to encourage him; if he be full of doubts, will be a minister to direct him; but if he follow vice, will be a magistrate to correct him. Christians must allow one another for their infirmities, but not allow one another in their infirmities: 'If a brother be overtaken with a fault, restore such a one with the spirit of meekness,' Gal. 6:1. Which words are very emphatical, and point to us;—

1. The nature of his fall. He is overtaken with a fault, he doth not overtake the fault; he is rather passive of it, than active in it. A sinner, like Ahab, sells himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord; but a brother, like Paul, is sold under sin. It is proper to the wicked to be volunteers in this unholy war against God; saints fight not except they be pressed. The Christian is drawn to iniquity by cords of vanity, the other draweth iniquity with cords of vanity.

2. The duty of his friend: 'restore such a one.' It is καταρτίζετε, an allusion to surgeons, who set bones out of joint, though they put their patients to pain, and make them angry at present; so must Christians endeavour the jointing of their brethren, whose souls are out of order, though at present they have little thanks for their labour. This courtesy we owe to our brother's ox or ass, much more to his soul, Exod. 22:4. It is a strict command, 'Warn the unruly,' 1 Thes. 5:14, though most men draw back, when they are called to this burden, that fallen brethren lie under the same misery that travellers

do, to find many hosts but few friends, and may cry out, as Louis the Eleventh of France, I have plenty of all things, but such as will tell me my faults.

3. The manner how this friendly part must be performed: 'with the spirit of meekness.' The bitterness of reprehension is much sweetened, by the pleasingness of our expressions; gentle sores are but anguished with too hard a pressure. Though swine are driven with violence, yet children that wander are gently led home. According to the wound must the plaster be more or less searching. Christ reproves Martha mildly: 'Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things;' but he rebuked Peter sharply, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.'

The apostle, writing to the Romans, commendeth them highly, that they were able to admonish one another, Rom. 15:14. They had piety and grace enough to perform the duty, notwithstanding the arguments of ill will, or loss in estate, or other evils which the flesh suggested to the contrary; and they had prudence and discretion enough to perform the duty, so as it might most probably be profitable. But how unlike are Christians in our days to those in the primitive times! Admonition is a lion which few dare come near, for fear it will tear them in pieces. We carry ourselves rather like Machiavel's scholars, who taught his followers, if their friend were up to the knees in water, to lend him their hand to help him out; and so if he were up to the waist; but if he were up to the chin, then to lay their hand on his head, and duck him under, that he rise no more. How many, that should reprove others, have their mouths stopped, as the dog's by the thief, with a piece of bread—some kindness or other! Or else, as Erasmus saith of Harpocrates, They hold their finger in their mouths, and are afraid of giving offence; they are rather like the reflection of a looking-glass, ready to imitate others'

sinful gestures and actions, than rebuke them for them: 'There is no reprover in the gate.'

Nay, heathen exceed in this many of us. The great philosopher tells us, that is true love which, to profit and do good to us, feareth not to offend us; and that it is one of the chiefest offices of friendship to admonish. Euripides exhorts men to get such friends as would not spare to displease them, saying, Friends are like new wines—those that are harsh and sour keep best, the sweet are not lasting. Phocion told Antipater, Thou shalt not have me for thy friend and flatterer too. Diogenes, when men called him dog, for his severe kind of reproving, would answer, Dogs bite their enemies, but I my friends, for their good; and are we so hardly drawn to this duty? Oh how justly might the Lord reprove us cuttingly, and set our sins in order before our eyes, to our condemnation, for our backwardness to reprove others to their humiliation! We have most of us cause, with Reverend Mr Robert Bolton,<sup>3</sup> to confess and bewail our neglect herein.

## SECTION V

Fifthly, By bearing each other's infirmities. Christians, like the clearest fire, will have some smoke, whereby they are apt to offend each other's eyes, and to cause anger. The best and most pious may sometimes be peevish; those brethren that love sincerely, may too often quarrel; true members of the same body may, by some accident, be disjointed; though contentions argue them to have flesh, yet they may arise where there is spirit. Therefore the Holy Ghost commandeth, 'Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.' Here is the commandment enjoined, and the argument whereby it is enforced, Gal. 6:2.



First, The precept: 'bear one another's burdens.'

There is a threefold burden that Christians must bear for each other.

1. The civil burdens of their miseries and sufferings; have a fellow-feeling with them in their afflictions. 'Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is afflicted, and I burn not?' saith holy Paul, Rom. 12:15. Herod and his men of war will set a persecuted Christ at nought; the chief priests and elders will mock him when he hangs upon the cross, Luke 23:11; Mat. 27:4. Edom rejoiced in the day of Jerusalem's trouble; they cried, 'Aha, so would we have it;' but the true seed of Jacob sigh for others' sorrows—they weep with them that weep. 'Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them, and them that suffer adversity,' Heb. 3:3. If one part of the natural body be in pain, the other parts are sensible of it; when one branch of a tree is torn and mangled in summer, the other branches are affected with it, and out of sympathy, as it were, will not thrive so well as formerly. If one person of a family be sick, how much do his relations, from a principle of nature, lay to heart his pain and illness! Christians are all members of the same body, branches of the same vine, children of the same family; and it would be monstrous and unnatural for them not to feel each other's miseries, and suffer in each other's sufferings.

2. The spiritual burden of their iniquities and sins, whether more immediately against God. Though we must not bear with them in their sins, yet we must help to bear their sins with them. We ought to sit on the same floor with them that are fallen down, and to mourn with them, and for them, and to bear some of the weight. This temper was so eminent in Ambrose, he would so plentifully weep with the sinning party, that a great commander under Theodosius, beholding it, cried out, This man is only worthy the name of a bishop.

As stags, when they swim over a river to feed in some meadow, they swim in a row, and lay their heads over one another's backs, bearing the weight of one another's horns, and when the first is weary, another taketh his room, and so they do it by course; so Christians must be willing to bear each other's weight, whilst they are passing through those boisterous waters, till they land at their glorious eternal harbour.

Or whether their sins are immediately against ourselves. If the teeth bite the tongue, that seeketh no revenge; when the feet, through their slipping, throw the body upon the ground, it riseth up, and all is well. Some Christians are of such weak stomachs, that they can digest nothing that looks like an unkindness or injury; but it is the glory of a man to pass by offences. Cyprian saith, to bear with affronts is a ray of divinity. A noble-spirited man will disdain to take notice of petty disrespects; he will overcome contempt by contempt; but a heaven-born Christian hath higher principles, and more sublime motives to forgive his offending brother. 'I Paul, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love,' Eph. 4:1, 2. 'And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you,' ver. 32. It is reported of Cosroes, the Persian king, that he caused a throne to be made for him like heaven, with the sun, moon, and stars artificially placed above it, and under his feet thick and black clouds, and high winds and tempests. He that would have a heaven here—I mean, enjoy God and himself—must of necessity trample these under his feet.

It is good advice which Bernard gives in such a case: Dost thou hear that a brother hath said or done somewhat that reflecteth upon thee, or is injurious to thee? then, saith he,

(1.) Be hard to believe it. He should have a loud tongue that can make thee to hear such a report. I would give him little thanks, in case the honour of God were not concerned, that were the messenger to bring me such a sour present; his pains would deserve but a poor reward, that brought me tidings of a discourtesy to rob me of my charity. The evidence shall be very clear, or I will write Ignoramus upon his bill of indictment. But if the thing be so plain that it cannot be denied, then, saith he,

(2.) Excuse his intent and purpose. Think with thyself, Possibly he had a good end in it; he spake as he heard, or he did what he did upon some good ground and account. Though the action seem to savour of injury, yet certainly, in his intention, there was no evil; had I his eyes, I should see his end was right and honest. But if there should be no reason for hope that his purpose was good, then, saith he,

(3.) Think he did it ignorantly; that had he known the consequence, he would not have been guilty of such a crime. Surely the man thought no hurt, he spake on a sudden; such words came out of his mouth before he was aware, or he would never have spoken them; I myself, in a heat, might have been as harsh. When high winds blow, storms will follow.

(4.) If thou canst not be persuaded but the injury was wittingly offered, then think, He was overcome with some great temptation; there were extraordinary fumes at that instant flying up into his head, which made him talk idly, and of which now he may be repenting before the Lord. The strong man was too hard for the weak Christian; flesh and blood was easily conquered by principalities and powers. I may well forgive him; his sin will cost him sorrow enough before his Father smile on him.

3. The natural burden—as I may call it, though it hath a relation to spiritual, but not fully in the former sense—of their infirmities. Some, by reason of bad instruments, are but bunglers at their work; they have naturally understandings very dull to receive, and memories very slow to retain spiritual things; they have ill constitutions of body, and thereby the worse frames of soul, and the more apt to be peevish and fretful. 'Now we exhort you, brethren, that ye support the weak, and be patient towards all men,' 1 Thes. 5:14. All the persons in God's family are not of the same height and strength; though some are old men and fathers, and others are young and strong, yet some are little children, babes in Christ; some can go alone, or with a little help, if you hold them but by their leading-strings; but others must be carried in arms, and will require much love and patience to over-come their childish frowardness. Christ winks at their weaknesses, who hath most reason to be moved with them; though his disciples were raw, and dull, and slow to believe and understand, yet he bears with them; nay, though when he was watching for them, and in his bloody sweat, his whole body being in a gore-blood, under the weight of their and others' sins on his back, and they lay sleeping and snoring, and could not watch with him one hour, he doth not fall fiercely upon them, but calmly asketh them, 'Could ye not watch with me one hour?' and afterwards excuseth it for them.

First, From the natural cause. Their heads were full at that time of fumes; their eyes were heavy with sorrow. They were full of grief for their dear Master, and their sorrow hindering the digestion of their food, filled them with vapours, which, ascending to their brains, inclined them to sleep.

Secondly, From the moral cause: they would, but they could not. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Their better part would

move more swiftly, and do anything at my call and command, but their flesh draweth back, and makes them drive heavily. It is no wonder that their pace is so slow, when, like the snail, they have such a house, such a hindrance upon their backs; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Who can think of this infinite grace of the blessed Redeemer in making such an apology for them whom he had such cause to be full of fury against, and not be incited to imitate so admirable a pattern?

There is another famous instance, in the Old Testament, and that is God's patience towards peevish Jonah, by which all may see how much he bears with his froward children.

First, Jonah runs from his business; God sends him to Nineveh, he will go to Tarshish. Here was plain rebellion against his sovereign. One would have expected that the jealous God should have given him a traitor's wages, and when he was at sea, have suffered the ocean of waters to have swallowed up his body, and the ocean of fire and wrath his soul. But lo, he cannot permit his Jonah to perish; he will rather whip him to his work, than let him wander to his ruin. But how gentle is the rod! God cannot forget the love of a father, though Jonah forget the duty of a child, but will rather work a miracle, and make the devourer his saviour, than Jonah shall miscarry. It is true he was tossed with a violent tempest, and thrown overboard, but God provided him a shelter before the storm, and prepared a whale to swallow him down, not for his destruction, but his deliverance: 'And the Lord spake to the fish, and it vomited up Jonah upon the dry land.'

Well, now the child is brought home, you will look that he should make some recompense for his former disobedience, by his faithfulness and diligence for the future; that the danger he had been

in, the death he had so narrowly escaped, the miracle which had been wrought for him, and the extraordinary mercy he had so lately received, should have melted him wholly into God's mould, and have made him, like Abraham, to have come up wholly to God's foot. But, alas! he addeth sin to sin, and neither mercy nor misery prevail with him to know himself. Indeed, he undertakes the journey and message he was called to upon a second command, but as unwillingly as the bear goeth to the stake. After he had pronounced a sentence of death upon the Ninevites, and shewed them a warrant under the high God's hand and seal for their speedy execution, how ill doth he take it that, upon their humble petition, a reprieve should be granted them! He frets inwardly against God, and, through the exceeding heat of his heart, his tongue blisters with casting God's mercy in his teeth. He was wroth for that in which he had cause to rejoice. His love to his brethren might have made him glad of their escape, and his love to his God should have quieted him in all his wise and holy proceedings: 'But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry, and he prayed unto the Lord, O Lord, was not this my saying in my country? for I knew that thou art a gracious God, &c. Therefore, O Lord, take away my life.' He quarrels with God's providence, and he doth, as it were, twit God with (that which is the glory of all his attributes and actions, and the best friend the poor children of men have) his grace and pity, desiring rather the destruction of above six score thousand persons, than that himself, by the blind ignorant world, should be reckoned a false prophet. Behold impatience in its largest dimensions! Jonah will die, because so many thousands are allowed, out of infinite kindness, to live. Oh what a nest of vermin was in the womb of this disobedience! Here is pride, both in preferring his own will before God's, and in his unwillingness to suffer a little in his repute in the eye of the people. Here was passion to the height, and that against God himself. Here was murmuring against sparing mercy and the divine pleasure. Here

was unbelief, as if God could not repair his name, and repay him for the loss of his credit. Here was uncharitableness and want of love towards the poor Ninevites, whose condition called for the deepest compassion. What answer can be judged tart enough to such a passionate prayer? What language can be too harsh, what carriage can be too heavy, towards such a cross-grained child? It is abominable for any man to contend with his Maker. It is bad for servants to strive with their master, or children to resist their father, though both these are their fellow-creatures; but for any to contend with God, whose dominion over us is unquestionable, and their dependence on him indispensable, between whom and them there is an infinite distance, is infinitely worse. But for Jonah—not only a man, but a new man, a child of God, a prophet of the Lord, that should have taught others, by his precepts and by his pattern, to submit to the severest divine pleasure, one that had been signalised, above others, with eminent and distinguishing favours both for this and the other world—to fly thus in God's face, is worst of all. Surely no punishment can exceed the desert of such peevishness, such passion. Some dreadful thunder cannot but be expected as the consequent of such, hot weather. But hear, O heavens, give ear, O earth, and be astonished at the calm mild voice of the great God: 'And the Lord said unto Jonah, Jonah, dost thou well to be angry?' Mark what love sounds in this language. Such an affectionate voice, after such gross disobedience, might make even marble to weep; and, as that voice from heaven, turn a Saul into a Paul. Could the fondest and most indulgent father in the world be more meek, more mild in his expression? He appeals to Jonah's conscience whether such behaviour was answerable to his oath of allegiance: Dost thou well to be angry? Is this passion suitable to that submission which thou owest to me and my providence? Eli said as much to his wicked sons: It is not a good report which I hear of you, my sons, &c, when God was so incensed against him for his mildness, that he sends him an

ear-tickling and a heart-trembling message. And yet God himself is so favourable and compassionate to one whose sin admitted of greater aggravations in some respects than those of Eli's sons, (Jonah sinned after such a miraculous salvation, and that against choosing, calling, pardoning, saving love, which Eli's sons did not;) nay, and when the malefactor, upon the reading of this gentle indictment to him, instead of pleading guilty, and begging a psalm of mercy, had stubbornly and obstinately justified himself, God, who might have awarded judgment against him, according to law, still forbearth him; and when his pathetical words would not reclaim him, he trieth if a miraculous work will reduce him to his allegiance. Oh the tenderness of God towards his froward children! I have sometimes wondered at his infinite patience towards so disobedient a prophet; but, alas! I experience it daily in his superabundant grace and goodness towards my own soul, notwithstanding my greater provocations.

Reader, by all this thou mayest see what cause thou hast to bear with thy fellow-Christians, when God beareth with his creatures, notwithstanding those multiplied affronts and disrespects, which they offer to his glorious, holy, and infinite Majesty.

Secondly, We may observe in the foregoing text, the prevailing argument to this precept: 'And so fulfil the law of Christ.' This was the great law which Christ commanded so frequently, so affectionately, and the apostle mentioneth it here, as if it were the only law, or all the law, because this love is the fulfilling of the whole law. As if he had said, 'O my Galatians, if ye have any love to Christ, and would evidence it to yourselves and others, let there be no bitterness, nor envyings, nor heart-burnings amongst you, but love your neighbours as yourselves, suffer with them in their sufferings; let their sore eyes and tears for sin, set your eyes a-watering; pardon



them, though they may offend and provoke you; bear with them, notwithstanding their passion and peevishness, for hereby ye will obey that great law, which is indeed the whole law containing your duty toward your brother, or that law which the heart of Christ was so infinitely set upon, that he will have it called his law, the law of Christ. This is my commandment, that ye love one another. Though he was the church's only lawgiver—and so all the commandments enjoined her were his—yet as amongst all the disciples there was one that had most of his heart, and was called the disciple whom Jesus loved; so possibly amongst all the commandments, that of love had most of his heart, and may fitly be called the commandment which Jesus loved. 'My commandment, the law of Christ.'

Oh, how sweet is the music, when saints join thus in concert! and how harsh is the sound of jarring strings! A mutual yielding and forbearance is no small help to our peace and safety. There is a story of two goats, which may excellently illustrate the benefit of this duty. They both met on a narrow bridge, under which a very deep and fierce stream did glide; there was no going blindly back, neither could they pass forward for the narrowness of the bridge. Now had they fought for their passage, they had been certain both to perish; this therefore they did, they agreed that the one should lie down, and the other go over him, and by this means both their lives were preserved. Whilst Christians are fighting, like some small chickens, they are a prey to kites and other ravenous creatures: 'In quietness shall be their strength,' Isa. 30:15, is true in this, as well as other senses.

## SECTION VI

Thirdly, Christians ought in good company, not only to do what good they can to each other, but also to receive what good they may from each other. God sets up such candles, not for us to play, but to work by. The strongest Christian may gain by the weakest. A small brimstone match may help to light a great torch. A servant may sometimes think of a way to enlarge his imprisoned master, when his master dreams not of it. Every loop or pin was helpful to the tabernacle. A homely digger that is poor, doth sometimes discover rich mines, which wealthy merchants took no notice of. Apollos, one mighty in the Scriptures, is content to learn of a handicraft man. Cordials are not to be refused, because brought to us in a wooden spoon. Who ever sent away silver or gold, because brought to him in a bag of leather? The moon, though she be but small, and seated in a lower orb than the stars of the first magnitude, and though she hath her spots and imperfections, yet she lends a useful light to men, prevents their stumbling and wandering out of their way, and produceth here and there a motion subordinate and obedient to a heavenly influence; when those luminaries that are above her in place, are below her in use and service. Proud men disdain to take poor saints' advice, as if wisdom had forsaken all commerce with inferior persons, and taken up her abode only in stately palaces. Upon this score Darius, instead of the thanks which he owed, paid Charidemus with no less than death for his good counsel. But it is the folly as well as the arrogancy of some, rather to ascend to a dangerous height, than descend at the call of one below them, Prov. 29:1. Oh, how mad is he that will rather run on in hazardous paths to his ruin, than turn back and retreat at the desire of one that is his inferior! And such proud Christians have this usually for their reward of God, that when the humble that will stoop to take up jewels at the feet of the meanest are enriched, they get nothing by godly conference. We give no relief to them that go gorgeously attired, and brag of their own large revenues.

There lieth a great deal of wealth and worth in some obscure and neglected Christians; men do not more usually trample upon the golden veins of earth in America, than conceited persons trample on the spiritual riches in poor Christians; but a wise man will better himself by his enemies, much more by his godly friends, both in taking their counsel and receiving their admonition, if occasion be.

1. In taking counsel. It was said of Demosthenes, that he was better at praising virtue, than practising it. We must write by that copy which we set others. It was the speech of a philosopher, that it is the easiest thing in the world to give good counsel, and the hardest thing to take it. Job's friends, though falsely, taxed him as guilty of this crime: Job 4:3–5, 'Behold, thou hast instructed many, and strengthened the weak hands. Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled.' Dr Preston confessed on his death-bed, that he found it difficult to take that physic which he had often administered to others. But all Christians must and will endeavour it; Solomon makes it the mark of a prudent man: 'The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he that hearkeneth to counsel is wise,' Prov. 9:15. When out of self-conceit we refuse others' advice, we bewray our own pride and folly. Quintilian said of some, they might have proved excellent scholars, if they had not thought themselves so already; this is true of too many in our days. They might have proved excellent Christians, if they had not thought themselves too good to learn. He that every day layeth up something, though but little, will in time have a good stock.

2. In receiving admonition. The stomach of man naturally riseth against this bitter physic, though it conduceth so much to his health. Faithful reproof is the awakening of man out of sleep, and such are

very apt to be angry. The hedgehog bristleth up her prickles, and will pierce, if it be possible, those that come to take hold of her.

There are two things that cause men to rage against reproof.

1. Guilt of the sin objected. Guilt makes men angry when they are searched, and, like horses that are galled, to kick, if they be but touched. They hate, saith the Holy Ghost, him that reproveth in the gate. The easiest medicines and mildest waters are troublesome to sore eyes. Praxaspes having reproved Cambyses for his drunkenness, did so exasperate him, that he shot the son of the reprover through the heart, to confute the father by shewing the steadiness of his hand. Though you stir one that hath a boil never so gently, yet he will fret and fume. Ahab, conscious of his own filth and wickedness, hates Micaiah for telling him the truth. There is scarce a more probable sign that the crime objected is true, than wrath and bitterness against the person that chargeth us with it. Children that have cankers will not suffer honey to come near their mouths, as sweet as it is. Though men are bold to sin, even to the face of God, yet they are so proud, that they would not have it visible to the eye of a man; therefore, when by their admonitions they find that they are discovered, they wrangle and quarrel.

2. Love to sin makes men impatient under reproof. It was David's fondness of Absalom that made him so strict in his charge to his captains concerning him, 'Deal gently with the young man Absalom for my sake.' It is love of lust that makes us so desirous it should be spared, and so passionate when it is pierced by a reproof. A man may gather that sin to be his Delilah, which he will suffer none to hurt. Eglebert, king of West Saxons, slew Earl Cambra for telling him of his faults, but it was because his sin was dearer to him than his soul. When a person's sin is to him as the apple of his eye, no wonder if he

be offended at any that shall touch it. Solomon calls reproofs earrings. I am sure they are ill bestowed on such uncircumcised ears, Prov. 25:12.

But grace will teach a Christian contentedly to take those potions that are wholesome, though they be not toothsome. It is holy David's expression, 'Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, it shall not break my head,' Ps. 141:5. Faithful reproof is a token of love, and therefore may well be esteemed a kindness. Such wounding of a friend is healing, and so David might well call it an excellent oil. And he did not only say so, which is easy and ordinary, but acted accordingly. He did not as the papists, who highly commend holy water, but turn away their faces when it comes to be sprinkled on them. When he had by sin, and continuance in it, so gangrened his flesh, and corrupted himself, that he was in danger of death, he suffered his sores to be thoroughly searched without regret. Nathan was the chirurgion whom God employed to search that wound which had divers months been festering in his soul; and truly he did not dally with his patient, though he were a prince, but thrust his instrument to the bottom; yet whatever pain it put him to, he took it patiently, and was so far from being angry with the prophet, that he made him one of his privy council. It is a sign of a polluted nature for a man, like a serpent, if he be but touched, to gather poison, and vomit it up at the party. 'Rebuke a scorner, and he will hate thee; rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee,' Prov. 21:24.

Pride scorns a corrector, and thinks it a disgrace to amend upon another's desire; hence it hates him that endeavours it. Amos, for reproving the golden calves, was accused by Amaziah, the chief priest of the idols of Bethel, and struck by Uriah, the son of that Amaziah,

with a spear on the head, whereof he died, saith Buntingus, Itinerar. Sacr. But reprove a wise man, and he will love thee.

Austin notes it as a sign of grace in his friend Alipius, that he received his reproof so well. Paul rebuked Peter sharply, and that before a considerable company of Peter's friends, yet he loved not Paul the less for it; for in his Epistle, which was written some time after that contest, and after the Epistle to the Galatians, which records it, he makes honourable mention of Paul's writings, and of that very epistle among the rest, 2 Pet. 3:15, 16, and calleth him his beloved brother. As they who love their sins hate the reprover, so they that hate their sins love him. When Isaiah had declared from God a dreadful threatening against Hezekiah for his pride, he doth not fly out into a passion against the prophet, but submits with 'Good is the word of the Lord, which thou hast spoken.' It is said of Gerson, the great chancellor of France, that he rejoiced in nothing more than a friendly reprehension. And it is storied of our Richard the First, that he would be admonished by a poor hermit. Alphonsus, king of Arragon, being asked what company he liked best, answered, 'Books, for they (saith he) without fear and flattery, will tell me my faults faithfully.' 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful,' Prov. 27:6. A loving reproof is a wound in love, the wound of a friend; and therefore we must bestow our anger upon our faults that deserve the reproof, not upon our friends that give the reproof. How foolish is he that breaks his own head, and then rageth at his friend for endeavouring to cure it. Ahab quarrels with Elijah, as the incendiary of Israel, for reproving their idolatries; when alas, like Etna, that flame arose out of their own bowels, which threatened to reduce them to ashes. Some of the heathen were so sensible of their proneness to err, and to be partial in their own cases when they had erred, that they both kindly accepted reproofs, and earnestly desired a reprover. It is reported of Alexander, that, having had a

philosopher a long time with him, he should say to him, Recede a me, prorsus consortium tuum nolo, quod cum tanto tempore mecum degeris, nunquam me de vitio aliquo increpasti, Be gone from me, I will have none of thy company, for thou hast lived long with me, and couldst not but observe some failings in me, yet thou hast not reproved me of any. And Augustus Cæsar for this cause did much lament the death of Varro, because thereby he was deprived of one that would deal faithfully with him when he offended.

Yet, as they say, some roses are too tender to endure the strength of the smell of wormwood; so some Christians that it is hoped are sound, cannot, without wry mouths and angry faces, drink down this bitter liquor. Asa was a good man, yet time was when he imprisoned a prophet for bringing him an admonition from God. One would have thought that the king would have bid the servant welcome for his Master's sake; but, truly, a prison was all the reward he had for his pains. It was the speech of a wise and experienced Christian, that he never was acquainted thoroughly with any one, but first he displeased him by admonishing him of his faults. But as light stuff and rubbish kindleth sooner than solid and more substantial wood, so they are the weaker and less wise Christians that are so soon fired into a pet and passion, if but told of their errors. It is childishness to be unwilling to take bitter medicines. A prudent person will rather permit cupping-glasses and corrosives to be applied to his body, than suffer his distemper to reign and kill him. The sharpest fruit is most profitable and wholesome. The lemon is more tart, yet is more excellent than the orange, which delighteth the taste.

Reader, is it not better to be awakened by a rousing reproof, than to sleep the sleep of death? and wilt thou be angry with thy friend for doing thee that courtesy? Is it not better for thy familiar companion to tell thee meekly of thy miscarriages, and call thee to repentance,

than for God to reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thine eyes? When God uttered his voice the heavens thundered, the mountains smoked, and Moses himself trembled. 'The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of majesty; the voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars, yea, the cedars of Lebanon; the voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness, yea, it shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.' How wilt thou then endure the thundering of such a cannon, a reproof for hysins from the Almighty God, at whose rebuke the earth quakes, the rocks are rent in pieces, and the foundations of the world are moved? The Israelites said unto Moses, 'Speak thou to us and we will hear; but let not God speak lest we die,' *Exod. 20:19*. Truly, so mayest thou say to thy companion, 'Speak thou to me of my offences, deal plainly with me about anything that thou seest amiss in me, and I will hear thee; but let not God speak to me lest I die, lest his voice strike me down, strike me dead. There is an absolute necessity of thy sense of, and sorrow for thy sins. This ordinarily must be wrought in thee, either by admonition from man, or by some severe rebuke from God. Consider seriously, therefore, whether it be not easier to take a faithful check from thy fellow-creature, than to be called to repentance by some dreadful judgment from the jealous God. Oh, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; for our God is a consuming fire.

One thing more, reader, is considerable; it is not enough to take a reproof with patience, but also to be awakened by reproof to repentance. It is a dreadful aggravation of sin, to continue in it after thou art convinced of it. Such impudence is followed with fearful vengeance. 'He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his heart, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy,' *Prov. 29:1*.

Fourthly, Christians, if they would exercise themselves to godliness in good company, must rejoice in each other's grace and good. True



love will rejoice in the welfare of another, as its own; Peter beholding those eminent graces in Paul, did not repine that a brighter star was risen which would eclipse his splendour, but glorified God in Paul, and gave him the right hand of fellowship. It is a profane Esau that hates a Jacob for having obtained his father's blessing beyond himself. Envy is from the evil one. Saul who was without God, eyed and hated David for slaying more of God's enemies, and obtaining thereby greater renown than himself could. Yet, alas! the spirit which dwelleth in the best, lusteth to envy: corrupt nature will shew itself, if it be possible, at this window. There are some countries, as Candia, that have, naturalists tell us, no poison; but there is not any Christian without a spice of this sin. Joshua is ready to envy them that seemed by their light to darken his master.

Cantharides, a venomous worm, usually breedeth in wheat when it is ripe; the highest Christians, as the greatest favourites at court, are usually the greatest objects of envy. But oh, it is a sign of a weak eye, not to behold the sunshine of others' holiness without pain. The holy apostle is enlarged in thanksgiving to God for the faith, and love, and patience of the Thessalonians, and their grace was a strong cordial to revive him in his sorrows and distress. We give thanks to God for you all; remembering, without ceasing, your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. We were comforted over you, in all our afflictions and distress, by your faith. Nay, he was so far from grieving at others' graces, that he professeth the joy of his life did very much depend upon their perseverance in piety: 'For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord;' as if he had said, 'Our life will be but a death in regard of sorrow and grief, it will be so doleful a being, that it will not deserve the name of a life, if ye should once be loose and wandering from the Lord,' 1 Thes. 1:2–4; 2 Thes. 3:6–8; 1 Cor. 12. Grace cannot but desire and delight in its like. He that truly loves his God will rejoice in his brother's graces, because

they tend to his Father's glory; and he that truly loves his brother will be glad at his grace, because it tends so exceedingly to his brother's good. Pedarethus, when he could not be admitted to be one of the three hundred among the Spartans, went home rejoicing that his country had three hundred better men than himself. Surely, then, Christians, when they behold others sparkling with grace, and shining as lights in the world, should rejoice that the blessed God hath some that can do him more service, and bring him more glory than themselves.

**A good wish about a Christian's carriage in good company, wherein the former heads are applied**

The Father of mercies, and only wise God, who hath appointed the way in which I should walk during the time of my pilgrimage, and understandeth the multitudes of rubs and hindrances that I shall encounter with, the power and policy of those enemies which will beset me therein, as also how weak I am, and unable to hold out; how weary I shall soon be, and ready to give over if I should travel alone; having out of his boundless grace and goodness called me to the communion of saints, that I might be directed by their counsel and encouraged by their company, notwithstanding all opposition, to run the ways of his commandments; I wish that I may esteem his precept herein as my glorious privilege, improve their society to the greatest advantage, both for my own welfare and my God's honour and delight, to converse with those brethren here, with whom I hope to dwell in my Father's house for ever. What an inestimable dignity doth my God invest me with, in imposing on me so sweet a duty! How wretchedly ungrateful should I be if his paths should not be the more pleasant to me for such companions! The worth and riches of this society may well invite me to trade with them, and give me hopes of profiting by them. All the companions on earth of the highest

callings, are but a rabble of kennel-rakers to this noble society. The prince of this senate is the heir of all things, the blessed and glorious potentate; such a sovereign whose dominion is universal from sea to sea, whose kingdom is eternal throughout all generations, and even the highest have gloried in being his subjects. The charter and privileges of this society are the inestimable covenant of grace, exceeding great and precious promises, wherein pardon of sin, peace of conscience, new natures, adoption, justification, the love of the blessed God, and eternal life are granted to them, and entailed on them for ever. The servants of this corporation are all the creatures in their several places, striving which shall do them the greatest kindness. They are in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field, though never so ravenous by nature, are at peace with them. The glorious angels pitch their tents about them, and count it their honour to wait upon them, both living and dying. The livery in which this company is attired is the royal robes of Christ's righteousness, which renders them without spot or wrinkle, and far more beautiful and amiable than Adam in his estate of unspotted innocency. Their garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, and for their richness infinitely surpass that clothing which is of wrought gold. Their food is hidden manna, such meat as endureth to eternal life, the bread that came down from heaven, the flesh of the Son of God, which is meat indeed, and the blood of the Son of God, which is drink indeed. Their inheritance is a kingdom that cannot be shaken, a crown of life, rivers of pleasures, an eternal weight of glory. Some societies have boasted that kings and lords have been free of their company; the King of kings, and Lord of lords, is both free and head of this society; they are his Hephzibah, his delight; his Segullah, his peculiar treasure. Ah! who would not have communion with them whose communion is with the Father and Jesus Christ his Son! Lord, let my ambition be to be enrolled a citizen of Zion, and to walk amongst them, worthy of that vocation wherewith thou hast called

me, since the communion of thy saints here is some weak resemblance of heaven, where all thy chosen shall glorify and worship thee without fault and faintness; teach me to hallow thy name by doing thy will on earth as it is in heaven.

I wish that the gain which I am sure to reap by joining with Christians in their common stock, may make me more diligent at this spiritual trade. The greatest privileges are granted to corporations, not to particular persons; the greatest victories are obtained by regiments and brigades, not by soldiers engaged singly against their enemies. That ointment which yielded so grateful a savour as to delight God himself, was compounded of several spices, *Exod. 30:23–25*. My God hath ordained the communion of the faithful, for the building up one another in their most holy faith; and if I expect his blessing, it must be in his own way. The body thrives best when all the members concur to perform their distinct and proper offices, for the good of the whole. Men make the most ravishing music, when many join in concert. The two disciples travelling together found the blessed Jesus to make a third, and to warm their hearts with the fire of his heavenly doctrine. How many vessels going in company have returned in safety, richly laden with the unsearchable riches in Christ! If I am in doubts, good companions will advise and direct my feet in the ways of peace. If I sit in darkness, and see no light, by their counsel and comfort I may learn the way out of the mist. If I am perplexed in any labyrinths, they may help me to untie that knot of which I have been labouring long in vain to find an end; if I be falling, they will be props to support me; if I wander, they will be guides to reduce me; if I be dull, they will be whet-stones to quicken me; if I do well, they will be fathers to encourage me; whatever my want be, they will endeavour to supply me; and whatever my condition be, they will be like-minded, both weeping with me in my sorrows, and rejoicing with me in my joys; besides, if I expect the

presence of my God, who is rich in mercy, and the God of all consolations, where can I find him sooner than in his temple? They are the temple of God, and I will dwell in them. His saints on earth are his lesser heaven, wherein he takes up his abode. O my soul, what an argument is here, to persuade thee to fellowship with the saints! Theirs is the only good fellowship; their communion is a conjunction in the service of thy God, and tendeth abundantly to thy spiritual advantage and edification; thy Redeemer calls them the light of the world, and they will guide thee in the way which he hath cast up; the salt of the earth, and they will preserve thee from corruption; their conversations are living commentaries upon that word which is thy rule, and so will both plainly teach thee thy duty and powerfully provoke thee to do it. Their expressions will be savoury, and help thee to learn the language of Canaan. The tongue of the just is a tree of life, and beareth excellent fruit. The lips of the righteous feed many; besides, amongst these children, thou mayest be sure to meet with the everlasting Father. 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I will be in the midst of them.' Though but two or three, that the wicked despise them for their paucity; though two or three, never so low and mean, that the world scorns them for their poverty; yet if gathered together in his name, they shall not fail of his presence. Surely nothing will prevail more with a faithful spouse to join with any company than this, she shall meet with her beloved husband amongst them. Oh, of what great price is this one promise, I will be in the midst of them! His presence, like the nearer approaches of the sun in the spring, will refresh their hearts with the warm beams of his love when they are chill, and almost dead with the cold of frights and fears, and cause in their souls a new shooting of grace, that notwithstanding any foregoing winter of barrenness, they shall now abound in the fruits of righteousness. What can they, or thou, O my soul, want, which his presence will not supply? Art thou laden with sin? he can give thee rest. Art thou full of sorrows? he is the

consolation of Israel. Art thou poor in grace? with him is durable riches and righteousness. Art thou dull and dead in spirituals? he is the Lord of life, and can quicken thee; he hath power enough to subdue all thy lusts, he hath wisdom enough to resolve all thy doubts, he hath grace enough to pity all thy weaknesses, and mercy enough to pardon all thy unworthiness; he is able to save to the uttermost; nay, thou hast not only his promise to meet thee in his garden, amongst his people, but thou hast also his performance of it, for thine encouragement: 'Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you; and when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side, then were the disciples glad when they had seen the Lord. Then said Jesus unto them again, Peace be unto you; as my Father hath sent me, so send I you; and he breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.' Oh the value of those jewels which are locked up in this cabinet! All the crowns and sceptres of the world, had they been thrown in amongst the disciples, could not have caused the thousandth part of that comfort, nor have brought any degree of that profit, which the disciples had by the presence of the holy Jesus. Consider his words, Peace be unto you, peace be unto you. Never did sweeter words, or more melodious music, ever sound in human ears. What tidings could be more welcome to them that had known the terrors of an angry God, and felt the curses of his righteous law? Didst thou never see a poor debtor arrested by severe Serjeants, and haled to the jail, (in which nasty miserable place he was like to continue whilst he lived,) with wringing of hands, and watering of cheeks, and doleful screeches, and afterwards upon the payment of his debts by some loving surety, with what clapping of hands and gladness of heart he was enlarged! If so, thou hadst some poor resemblance of that exuberancy of joy which the disciples felt when they saw the Lord,

and heard those blessed words, 'Peace be unto you.' They were all liable every moment to the arrest of divine justice for those vast sums which they owed to the holy and jealous God, and in continual danger to be hurried by devils, his officers, to the prison of hell, whence they could never have come out. Now, his appearance to them did evidence that the law was satisfied, that all their debts were discharged, in that the surety, who took upon him the payment of them, was by order of the judge released. What news could find more acceptance with those that dreaded the fury of the Lord more than death, and esteemed his favour far before life, than that which did speak him reconciled to them! And further, observe the work of the blessed Redeemer, and he breathed on them, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost,' as if he had said, I know your unbelieving hearts will think the news of a reconciled God, and of peace with him, too good to be true; behold, therefore, his love token, receive the earnest of his favour, his Holy Spirit, who knoweth his mind fully, and was at the council table of heaven when all your names were engrossed in the book of life, and all the methods of grace and good-will towards poor sinners were debated and concluded, and is sent to you on purpose to reveal them to you, and assure you of them, and, therefore, is an unquestionable evidence that he is at one with you. This, O my soul, was the blessed heavenly banquet which the Redeemer entertained his disciples with when they met together, and wouldst thou miss such a feast for all the world? Lord, thou lovest the assemblies of thy saints. They are the habitations of thy glorious majesty, and the place where thine honour dwelleth. There thou makest the largest discoveries of thyself, and grantest the fullest communications of thy grace. Oh let me take sweet counsel with thy people, and go to serve and honour thee in their company.

I wish that the confederacy of the wicked in sin may provoke me to a league with the Israel of God, for a free trade and commerce in

holiness. Shall they, whose lusts are often contrary, and set them at variance, unite against God and his holy ways; and shall not we, whose graces are ever alike, and of a cementing nature, not join together for God and his worship? Do they conspire to defile and destroy each others' souls, as if vitiated nature did not lead them fast enough to sin, or as if they could not run singly quick enough to hell; and shall not we encourage one another in the worship of the living God, and provoke one another to love and to good works? Oh, how much do the servants of Satan, by their conjunctions in evil, shame the children of God for their backwardness in good! Their master is the prince of darkness, a cruel tyrant, a roaring lion, that goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Their work is far worse than any Turkish slavery; it is bondage to corruption, the service of unrighteousness, the diversity and contrariety of their lords, their lusts tearing them as it were in pieces, for the promoting of their particular interests. Their wages is the vengeance of the eternal fire, the worm that never dieth, and the fire that never goeth out. After all their vassalage to their barbarous masters, and hardships which they have been put to in making provision for, and gratifying such opposite furies, they are recompensed with extremity and eternity of torments; yet they can unite their hearts, and hands, and heads, for the advancement of so hellish a lord, about the prosecution of so base and devilish a work, and to earn so miserable a reward, when the soldiers of Christ, whose captain is the Lord of hosts, the most courteous and compassionate general, whose combats and contests, which they are called to, are noble and heroic, and whose crown and garland will be beyond all comparison and apprehension blessed and glorious, do rather fight against themselves than against their enemies, or for their endless happiness! Ah, foolish Christians, who hath bewitched us! May we not well blush that Satan should even outboast the living God in the unity of his subjects, that the children of this world should be wiser in their generation than the children of



light! Alas, is it a time for mariners to be quarrelling, when their enemies are joined in discharging their cannons against them, and the bullets fly thick amongst them? Is it a time for Christians to be wrangling, when their adversaries are united in a confederacy to destroy them all? Lord, thou hast promised that thy people, in the days of the gospel, shall no more envy one another, that the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock, and dust shall be the serpent's meat, that they shall not hurt nor destroy in all thy holy mountain. Thy dear son, when leaving an ungrateful world, left peace as one legacy to his children, not only peace with thee, but also among themselves; thou knowest how much his heart was set upon it, when he begged so hard, so earnestly, so affectionately of thee this blessing, a little before he went to lay down the price of it. Let it please thee for thy promise' sake to make all thine of one heart, and one way; for, because thou hast spoken it, therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer before thee this day. Let it please thee, for thy Son's sake, whom thou hearest always, to take away all envyings, and wrath, and emulation, and strife out of the hearts of thy people, and heal thy Zion in its breaches, for thou seest it shaketh.

I wish that the injury I do myself by unnecessary solitariness may make me the more in love with good society. My God hath told me, Woe to him that is alone. David was alone, when Satan drew him to defile his neighbour's wife. Whilst the sheep flock together they are safe, as being under the shepherd's eye; but if one straggle from the rest, it is quickly a prey to the ravenous wolf. It is no hard matter to rob that house that stands far from neighbours. The cruel pirate Satan watcheth for those vessels that sail without a convoy. The order is observable in the narration of Demas's apostasy: 'Demas hath left us, and hath embraced this present world.' He first left the company of the faithful, and then openly denied the faith. Christian

conference is a good help to perseverance; but they that forsake the communion of saints will quickly disown the profession of sanctity. If rabbits keep within the pales amongst their fellows, there is law to secure them against the violence of strangers; but if any wander from the warren, they are a lawful prize for any man, and prey to any dog. What an ill case is he in, that, travelling in a dark night, falls, and hath none to help him up; that wanders, and hath none to shew him the right way; that is set upon by thieves and murderers, and hath none near him to defend and secure him! Such is the condition of those that neglect the communion of saints. Hence it is that our great and sworn enemy raiseth the dust of dissension and strife amongst Christians, to make them keep aloof from each other, knowing that much of their welfare and safety doth depend upon their keeping together. He knoweth it is best fishing in troubled waters. O my soul! now thou beholdest in these wicked days the high winds of divisions and passions amongst the children of God, how ready they are to martyr one another's names, and it is to be feared to murder one another's bodies, if infinite power did not overrule and prevent it, thou mayest gather assuredly that Satan was the conjurer to raise them. I have read of a tree, that if some of the boughs of it be cast into a ship, they cause a mutiny betwixt the passengers and mariners, to the ruin of both. Dost thou not think that Satan hath cast some such branches into the vessel of the church at this day, that instead of uniting their strength against him and his kingdom, and instead of joining their power to improve every gale for their furtherance towards their blissful haven, they might fall together by the ears, destroy one another, and save their enemies a labour? Oh that for the divisions of Zion I could have great searchings, great sorrows of heart! Lord, thy saints in the primitive times were famous for their love to each other. Their very enemies would with admiration cry out, See how the Christians love one another! Thy Jerusalem heretofore was a city compact together, at unity within

itself. Why is it now divided, and the walls broken down, and the inhabitants all in all in an uproar, that all that go by waste it, and laugh at it, saying, Is this the beautiful city! Is this the church of Christ! Aha! so would we have it. Oh look down from heaven, and pity mount Zion, where thou wast wont to dwell. Should thy children fall out by the way, to the gratifying thine enemies, dishonouring thy name, and wounding their own souls? Should the members of the same body cut, and lance, and tear each other? Though dogs and wolves, the wicked of the world, tear out one another's bowels, yet the sheep of Christ should live together in love. How long shall it be before thou biddest, with a word of power, thy people return from pursuing their brethren? Shall the sword devour for ever? Thou knowest it will be bitterness in the end. For thy name's sake unite the hearts of all thy chosen, not only by faith to thy dear Son, but also by unfeigned and forbearing love, each to other.

I wish that my great coldness and backwardness to what is good, may invite me to associate with them who will warm and quicken me. How averse is my flesh to every work of Christianity! how weak is my spirit in their performance! how untowardly doth it enter upon them! how formally doth it go through with them! my carriage in them is wholly unsuitable to their weight and worth, and what need then do I stand in of help from others! As in a material house the walls need support from the strong timber, and the timber needs even the nails and spikes to fasten it together; so in the spiritual temple, the weak Christians need the strong to support and uphold them, and the strong need the weak, if for nothing else, yet to call forth those gifts of counselling, and that grace of pity and compassion which they owe to them. If the strongest want each other, that the eye, the most knowing Christian, cannot say to the hand, the most active, I have no need of thee; much more do those that are weak want supply and support from others. Nature teacheth

me this lesson. The weakest creatures amongst fish, or fowls, or beasts, go usually in flocks and companies. The ivy, and vine, and hop, not being able to bear up themselves, will, by a natural instinct, cling about the tree, or pole, or hedge, or wall that is near them. Were I but as sensible of my own weakness as I ought to be, I should both earnestly desire, and heartily accept, the assistance of others. It is the wisdom of my God to let none of his children have all things about them, or a sufficiency to live of themselves, without being beholden to their neighbours; to invite and necessitate them to mutual commerce. Those that are very able to advise others, do yet in their own cases take advice from others. The lawyer will not trust himself in a case of his own estate, nor the physician in a distemper in his own body, but will both desire counsel and direction from their friends. A stander-by doth many times see more than an actor, and is more fit to judge the action than the agent. We are too near ourselves to see our own doings, and to be right in our judgments of ourselves; those that stand at a due distance from us see more clearly, and judge more truly. Self-love so blinds us, that we judge those diseases not unpleasing in ourselves, which we loathe in others. Oh that I might be so affected, both with my ignorance of the right way, and my proneness to allow myself in my wanderings, that I may make use of those guides which free grace affordeth me! Lord, give me such sense of my unskilfulness in the wiles and devices of Satan, of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of my own heart, and of my inability to steer the vessel of my soul aright amongst those shelves, and sands, and storms which I am sure to encounter, that I may take up those pilots which thou providest for me at every port, and so at last arrive in safety at thy glorious city.

I wish that I may watch myself amongst the godly, as well as amongst the wicked, lest Satan do me that injury by a friend, which he could not by an enemy. David's familiar friend conspired his ruin; the Son

of David was betrayed with a kiss from his friend; and though my charity to my friends forbids me to think them as bad as either, yet my charity to myself commands me to stand upon my guard. Anglers for fish do frequently catch one fish with another, as the greater with the smaller. Sure I am, Satan is subtle enough to bait his hook with that which is most likely to take, and hath too often caught one Christian with another. The best friends are but men, and have flesh in them as well as spirit; and what know I but the wicked one may tempt them to tempt me, as not ignorant of their prevalency over me? None was so likely to deceive the prophet of the Lord as the old prophet, that pretended a commission from the same power, and himself a servant of the same Master. Who can so probably persuade me to a work of darkness, as he that is, or at least transforms himself into, an angel of light? Besides, I am apt to be the more careless, when I am amongst them that I judge true Christians. In a crowd, where cheats usually resort, and execute their hellish trade, I look to my money; but when I am amongst them whom I suppose to be honest, I think that care needless, and so may the easier be deceived. Lord, thou hast commanded me to keep my heart with all diligence; I acknowledge I have been too secure when amongst thy saints, I as believing their work to be only to advance thine, not Satan's, interest in the world. Oh give me to consider, that when the sons of God gather together, Satan is also amongst them, and he is both politic and active to defile me that he may destroy me; that I may even amongst them, 'watch and pray, and so not enter into temptation.'

I wish that I may never spend my precious time amongst Christians, as the Athenians, who never understood the worth of that commodity, used to waste it, only in telling and hearing of news; but as Christ amongst his disciples, in discoursing of things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Oh what pity is it, that a thing of such infinite value should be spoiled and laid out to little purpose! I should befool

him that should throw down pails of Bezer-water to wash common sinks or gutters, which would serve for such excellent use as to comfort our vitals, and to refresh and revive drooping and fainting spirits. Who would not abhor that vanity of Nero, in shoeing his horses with precious gold, and causing that costly metal to be trampled under foot in the dirt, which was worthy to be the materials of a crown for the highest head on earth! Am not I a greater fool than the former, and more vain than the latter, if I spend that time—which is infinitely more costly than gold or Bezer, as having relation to eternity—wholly in worldly talk, which might be employed in declaring and admiring the boundless perfections of the blessed God, in furthering that curious work of grace in my own and others' souls, and in preparing us for our unchangeable bliss in the other world? My God hath not only a book of remembrance for every good word, but also a book of observance and account for every idle word. Lord, within a few days I shall go the way that I shall not return; thine angel may say concerning me, that time shall be no more; thou wilt never trust me with another life, nor afford me another day of grace; this is the only time that I shall have to provide against the coming of my Lord. Nay, whilst I live, thou mayest part me from thy people, and deny me that happy privilege of their society that I now enjoy. For the Lord's sake, help me to 'work whilst it is day, and to walk whilst it is light, because the night is coming wherein I can neither work nor walk.'

I wish that my tongue may never be so set on fire of hell, as to speak evil of those that are the heirs of heaven. It were better for me to be sick and solitary in my bed, than to be censuring or reflecting upon the Lord's servants. The devils themselves, though for their own ends, could sometimes speak of righteous ones with a seeming awe and reverence. 'These men are the servants of the most high God, and shew unto us the way of salvation;' and shall I at any time be

worse than a devil at some times? Such impotency in my tongue would be too great a sign of impurity in my heart. Those that have a blemish in their eyes, judge the sky to be ever cloudy. Caligula, who was a monster of obscenity and uncleanness, thought there was never a chaste person in the world. It is usual with the wicked, measuring others by themselves, to judge all to be ungodly; they render others to be deformed, that their own faces might be esteemed the more fair. Or as the lapwing, they hope, by their false cries against the godly, to divert strangers from finding the nest of their own filthiness. They would have all good men thought to be evil, that themselves, who are fullest of evil, might be thought good; but though the seed of the serpent spit their poison against the seed of the woman, should I do so, who am one of their brethren? How bad is that bird that defileth its own nest! How foolish, as well as sinful, is that child that disgraceth and defameth his own family! If I speak evil of any of the saints, I speak evil of myself, and of the Master whom they serve. Though Christ was not upon earth in Enoch's days, yet he tells me that he will judge the slanderers of the saints as blasphemers of himself: 'Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince them of their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him,' Jude 15. It is Satan's title to be the accuser of the brethren; and my God calleth such men as are guilty of it by no better name than devils, 2 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 3:2. Would I be willing to resemble the prince of darkness? or can I do it, and escape punishment? Oh, it is dangerous to abuse the King of heaven's favourites. Such arrows of slander and censure, shot out of Satan's bow by my hand against the saints, would, as a shaft shot against a stone, rebound upon me, and hurt not the stone or saint, but him that shot it. He that snuffeth a candle with his bare fingers doth foul, if not burn, his fingers, but makes the candle to burn the more brightly. If I censure the children of God, I defile my own conscience, but do not make them the less

glorious. O my soul! consider what thy God hath said, 'Cursed is he that smiteth his neighbour secretly; and all the people shall say, Amen.' Thou mayest smite thy neighbour as really and as dangerously with thy tongue as with thy hand. The wages of both is a curse from God, from all the people; surely the breath of so many would blow down the strongest person, the strongest dwelling. Though the causeless curse shall not come, yet when God and men both see cause for it, and say amen to it, there is no way to avoid it. I may build upon my profession, as if that would secure me against such a stormy wind; but it will prove a rotten foundation. My God hath told me, 'What hast thou to do to take my covenant in thy mouth? thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit; thou sittest and speakest against thy brother, and slanderest thine own mother's son.' No pretence whatsoever can prevent my punishment; but 'I will reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thee.' If God once undertake to reprove, it will be cutting, it will be killing. Oh, let me tremble to think of tearing the names of any of God's people, lest my God tear me in pieces, when there is none to deliver me, Ps. 50:16, 17, 21, 22. How irrational, as well as irreligious, is it for me to spend my time in censuring others. If they be guilty of erring, they do but shew themselves to be men, not angels. Am I so foolish as to expect heaven upon earth, perfection in a polluted and polluting world? If I myself were without sin, then I might throw the first stone. The actions of the best are but a miscellany of good and evil. Moses himself, like the pillar that conducted him, had his dark side. The cleanest corn, even after threshing and winnowing, will have some soil in it. There is a tincture of corruption that stains all mankind, otherwise there are some graces that would rust for want of use, and be given in vain. What wise man will despise or deny a mine to be gold, because it hath some dross or bad earth with it? or will throw away a beast, and say it is not good meat, because it hath guts and garbage in it? The vermin of sin may sometimes crawl in a



cleanly, holy person, though they be not allowed there. One act will not prove a habit, nor a few bad actions a bad person. If every sin unsaint a man, Satan will challenge the whole race of mankind as his own peculiar. When I see the course rather good than evil, my charity commandeth me not to think the man other than a Christian. Besides, how frequent is it for the malicious world to lay down false reports of the saints, and shall I be their pedlar to take them up, and cry their rotten, deceitful wares up and down the country? The priest under the law was not to judge presently of the plague of leprosy, but to shut the person suspected up seven days, and then to view him; and if the case were not clear, to shut him up seven days more; and after that, seven days more, before he was condemned; and what is the gospel of this, but to condemn rash censuring of any, much more of the godly? Hath not my God told me, 'He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is a folly and shame to him'? Prov. 18:13 Lord, thou understandest what an unruly member my tongue is, how hard to be kept within the bounds of sobriety towards myself, or charity towards others. Oh, be pleased to undertake for me, and keep thou the door of my lips. It is not good to speak evil of those whom I know bad; but it is much worse to speak evil of those who may prove good. Should I declare others' failings upon certain knowledge, it sheweth some want of charity; but should I publish their faults upon a bare supposition, it would argue a want of honesty. Oh, let me rather err on the right hand, in my charitable thoughts of those that are bad, than on the left, in my censorious opinion of those that are good; for though he may be evil that speaks good of others upon knowledge, yet he can never be good himself that speaks evil of others upon suspicion.

I wish that I may be so far from speaking ill of them that are good, that I may rather be silent than, without a just cause and call, speak ill of them that are evil. Though the wicked, like dogs, fall upon the

sheep of Christ with open mouth, and strive to bury their good names in the open sepulchre of their wide throats, yet the sheep of Christ do rather suffer their rage with patience, than render reviling for reviling. My God hath commanded me to bless them that curse me, and to pray for them that despitefully use me; and how contrary am I to his precept if I pay them in their own coin, and open my mouth in backbiting them, because they are forward to slander me! It is enough for them that have not a God to undertake their cause, and revenge their quarrels, to do it themselves. If I be one of Christ's members, he reckoneth all the wrongs offered to me as done to himself, and he will one day vindicate his own honour and mine to the full, when the sinner shall answer for all his treasonable expressions, with hell-flames about his ears. The tongue that now is blistered with blasphemies against God and his people, at that day will be in a light flame, and beg in vain, with Dives, for a little water to cool it. I may therefore be quiet in all such cases, and commit my cause to him that judgeth righteously. He that is robbed may not seek for reparation from the country, if the felon at the assizes be convicted and executed. I need not fear but the judge of the whole earth will, at the general assize, do justice upon those thieves that steal away my credit and good name, and so in the meantime may well be contented. He that is sure of double interest hereafter, may with the more comfort forbear his money at present. Besides, by declaring his faults, only to fill up a void space of time, I injure both him and myself, whether my report be true or false; if my report be false I wrong him, by slandering and murdering his name undeservedly, and I wrong myself by contracting the guilt of so great a sin. If the report be true, I walk contrary to God's command, 'Speak evil of no man,' and so defile my own soul, and set him at a further distance from religion—hardening his heart against any future reproof, as judging it to proceed from malice; and so I do what lieth in my power to destroy his soul. Besides all this, I may injure my

hearers, and make them accessory to my sin. Lord, thou hast given me my tongue that it might be a trumpet to sound thine honour, and that therewith I might speak good of thy name, and not to speak evil of others. 'Oh let my glory sing of thee, and not be silent; open thou my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise;' but let me prefer an unprofitable silence before sinful speaking. 'Help me to take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue, and to keep my mouth with a bridle, that I may not wander from thy commandments.'

I wish that I may, to the utmost of my power, be serviceable to the souls of my fellow-members. The members of the natural body are not idle or unprofitable, but give and receive nourishment for the increase of the whole body. They do not seek themselves, or their particular interests apart, but the good of the whole, and their own profit in relation thereunto; nay, the eye watcheth for all the members, and helpeth to adorn them, and not itself. The hands work to maintain and cover the whole, remaining themselves naked. Why should it not be thus in my Saviour's mystical body? My God hath given me and others graces and gifts for that purpose, and commanded me, 'Occupy till I come.' And should I suffer them to rust, for want of use, I should be found at last but an unprofitable servant. The several creatures, whether superior or inferior, do all instruct me by their patterns in this lesson of improving my talents, and forbid me to bury them in the grave of idleness. If I look up to the highest heavens, I may see, with an eye of faith, those sons of God, angels, his diligent servants, and putting forth those abilities which they have received, both for the glory of their Creator, and the good of their fellow-creatures. Though they are the eldest house, and, compared with us, the firstborn of the creation, yet they do not, as the eldest sons of some men, plead that privilege to patronage and cloak sloth and idleness; but as they have higher and more noble natures, so they are more active and industrious than others, as

appears both by bearing their parts in the celestial choir, and in being ministering spirits for the good of them that are heirs of salvation. If I look to the natural heavens, there, with an eye of sense, I may see the great candle and luminary of the world, not folding up those rays and cherishing virtues which he hath received, but communicating them freely for the warming and refreshing terrestrial bodies, though he gains nothing by it, but is many times requited with the darkening his glory by earthly vapours. If I look lower, I may observe the earth even wasting and wearing out herself to nourish and enrich others. She hath received a power of fructifying, and giving sap to that which groweth upon her; and lo, like a tender nurse, how liberally doth she give that milk to all that hang on her breasts, though it tend to her own weakening! The various inanimate and irrational creatures that are upon the earth, are serviceable one to another in their places, and are in continual and regular motion to those ends for which they were designed. The most venomous creatures are useful, not only to their fellows of the same rank, but to man, their master. Nay, if I descend lower, and look into hell, I may believe the devils not to be idle and unprofitable to each other, but to conspire together in one, and to be at all times busy and stirring for the propagating of their poison; they go to and fro in the earth, seeking how they may dishonour the name of the glorious God, and destroy immortal souls. O my soul, what sayest thou to these patterns, to these precedents? Shall irrational creatures advantage others, and wilt thou monopolise all to thyself? Dost thou not see how they are all in their stations profitable to man, even to the worst of men? The fish and fowls, and some beasts feed him; the sheep, and worms, and beaver clothe him; the horse and mule carry him; and wilt thou be worse than the horse and mule, which have no understanding? Shall inanimate creatures be helpful to others, and wilt thou live only to thyself? The fire consumes itself to warm others; the candle destroyeth itself to enlighten others; salt wasteth

itself to season others; the fountain sendeth forth its streams to refresh others; the sun, moon, and stars exercise those powers with which they are endowed, to direct and enliven others; and shall these creatures, which have neither reason nor sense, rise up in judgment to condemn thee? Do the best and highest of the creation count it no disparagement, but an honour and preferment, to serve the spouse of Christ, and wilt thou shrink back, and not wait on her in thy place? Surely thou art dull indeed, if so many masters cannot teach thee this lesson. Thou art blind to purpose, if thou dost not see thy duty, when it is printed in so large a letter, in so many volumes. Thou canst not open thine eyes, but thou beholdest this precept, and that in the likeliest way of learning it, examples. Look upwards, the heavens are thy tutors: they are unwearied in their motion for the good of the universe; look downwards, and the devils will teach thee not to jar with thy fellows, but to unite with them, and endeavour their comfort; look inwards, and the parts of the body may be thy masters: they conjoin for the good of each other. The eye seeth, the ear heareth, the mouth eateth, the stomach digesteth, the hands work, the feet walk, for the welfare of the whole. Look outwards, and the earth may be thy monitor—that is fruitful, not for its own, but others' benefit; and art thou not ashamed to be barren? Lord, it is thy will, that as I have received the gift, even so I should minister to others, as a good steward of the manifold grace of God, 1 Pet. 4:10. Keep thy servant from ingrossing those spiritual riches to himself, which thou hast given him for the relief of thy poor. Oh, let me never eat my morsels alone, but, according to my estate, clothe thy naked ones, and feed the hungry with good things. When I was blind, thou didst send an Ananias to me, saying, Brother, the Lord Jesus, that great physician, hath sent me unto thee, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost; and immediately the scales fell from mine eyes, and I saw the things that concerned my peace: and shall not I pity others' ignorance, and with meekness instruct

them in the way of life? How dull was I of understanding! how slow to conceive and believe spiritual things! yet thou didst bear with me patiently, and didst give me precept upon precept, and line upon line. Why should not I bear with my fellows, since thou didst bear with one infinitely thine inferior? Thou hast enlivened me when I was dead; enlightened me when I sat in darkness, and saw no light; supported me in my weaknesses, and supplied me in all my wants and necessities. Oh strengthen me, that since I am acquainted with the sweetness of thy love, and the greatness of thy power, I may communicate my experiences, and improve my gifts for the counselling, quickening, and comforting of others.

I wish that my God would so strengthen my back, that I may bear with patience the burdens of my brethren. I know unkindnesses will happen between the nearest relations, and between the dearest friends. Whilst there is flesh in us, there will be failing and fallings out among us; till we come to that place where there is perfect purity, there can be no hope of perfect peace. But how contrary am I to my God, if I do not forbear and forgive them that offend me! Am I better than God? Is unkindness to me, in any measure, so heinous as unkindness to God? Their engagements to me are nothing comparable to their engagements to God; and therefore the least wrong to God is infinitely greater and more heinous than the greatest that can be done to me. Yet my God winketh at the weaknesses, and passeth by the peevishness, of his people. He seeth no iniquity in Jacob, nor transgression in Israel; though they offer daily affronts and disrespects to him, and that after their sorrow for former miscarriages, and promises of amendment, yet he doth not destroy, but is patient towards them; and shall not I be merciful, as my heavenly Father is merciful? Besides, I have offended God much more than my brother can offend me. I need not say, according to the worldling's vain pleas and pretences, The injury is great, therefore I

cannot pass it by. My offences against my God are of a higher nature, and a more bloody colour, yet I hope he forgiveth me. Or, This is not the first time; he hath often abused me thus. How often have I sinned against my God! My sins are more than the hairs of my head, they are more than can be numbered, yet he forgiveth me freely and frequently; he multiplieth pardons, as I multiply transgressions. Or, But this is expressly contrary to his duty. And is not my disobedience against God contrary to that which I ought to do? is it not expressly against his dominion over me, and that allegiance which I owe to him? Or, I am his superior. Surely God is mine much more; oh the infinite distance that is between the boundless Majesty of heaven, and a poor slimy worm! If the whole creation be nothing to him, what, then, am I to him? Or, But I will have nothing to do with him; I value not his favour; I live by him, not upon him. Doth thy God live upon thee? hath he any need of thee? is he any debtor to thee? wouldst thou be glad he should, upon this reason, say he will have nothing to do with thee, to protect, or preserve, or pardon, or save thee, because he can live without thee? When for all thy iniquities and offences against him, and his sovereignty over thee, and independence on thee, he beareth with thee, and forbeareth thee, oughtest thou not to forbear and forgive others? Again, thou mayest put this question to thyself, Have not I wronged others? Doth not the righteous God now pay me in my own coin? May I not say, as Adonibezek, 'As I have done to others, so God hath requited me'? Nay, possibly, others offend me ignorantly, unawares, or through some violent temptation; but I have offended others knowingly, wilfully, and upon weaker inducements. Oh what cause have I to forgive, who am so prone to offend! Lord, teach me to obey thy precept, in forbearing my brethren that offend me, and so to imitate that blessed pattern of thy Majesty, who art pleased daily to requite evil with good, that I may be able comfortably to pray, 'Forgive me my trespasses, as I forgive them that trespass against me.'

I wish that I may, according to my poor ability, be helpful to the weak and tender members of Christ, by administering cordials suitable to their conditions. My duty is, not only to counsel the doubtful, but also to comfort the sorrowful. If I saw a body fainting and drooping, I were bound to afford it what assistance I could, and not to hide mine eyes from mine own flesh; doth not my neighbour's soul, as far more precious, call for more pity, and command my help to my power? If one sheep be sick, many others will flock about him, and in a hot day, after their manner, refresh him, by keeping the scorching sun from him. The sheep of Christ should have more sense of others' misery, and more knowledge of the means relating to their recovery; and shall they be less diligent for others' health? To him that is afflicted, pity should be shewn; if I deny this, I forsake the fear of the Almighty. How tender was my Redeemer of broken bones and sorrowful saints! When he arose from the dead, he appeared first to mournful Mary, and then takes special care that penitent Peter have speedy notice of that blessed news; 'Go, tell my disciples and Peter that I am risen.' They that have smarted with inward wounds themselves, have the more reason to compassionate others in their sorrows. Lord, the time hath been that thou didst cast me into the deep, into the midst of the seas; thy floods compassed me about, all thy billows and thy waves passed over me; I roared by reason of the anguish of my spirit, under the sense of thy wrath, and the curse of thy law. The weight of my sins lay heavy upon my conscience, and I was even sinking under them into the bottomless pit. The sorrows of death compassed me about, the pains of hell gat hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow. I knew not which way to turn, nor whither to go for any ease or relief. If I said, My friends should help me, or my possessions abate my grief, I soon found them all miserable comforters, and physicians of no value. If I said, My bed should comfort me, and my couch ease my complaint, then thou didst scare me with dreams, and terrify me with visions. All the creatures were



unable to afford me any succour; when I lay thus half dead, they all, as the priest and Levite, passed by on the other side; they had neither pity enough for such dreadful wounds, nor power enough to work their cure. Then called I upon the name of the Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul out of the belly of hell, cried I unto thee, and thou didst hear my voice; for thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. Thou wast the good Samaritan that hadst compassion on me, that didst bind up my wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and undertake my cure. Thou didst send a Barnabas, a son of consolation, to me, to proclaim liberty to me, a poor captive, and the opening of the prison to me that was bound. How beautiful were his feet that brought the glad tidings of peace to my poor soul! Oh that I might be able to support the weak, and comfort the feeble-minded, with the same comforts wherewith I myself have been comforted of God!

I wish that I may be both faithful and wise to recover a fallen brother out of his sin and error. Jonathan, a true friend to David, promised to tell him if there were any danger, and accordingly warned him, whereby he saved his life. I profess myself a lover of my Christian companions, but I am false in my profession if I suffer sin to lie upon them; yet I confess it is a difficult work to perform this duty in a right manner. The best plaster may be ineffectual if it be not fitly applied. I can seldom, with Moses, seek to unite quarrelling Christians, but one of them, with the Hebrew, is ready to quarrel with me, and say, 'Who made thee a ruler or a judge over us?' Men are seldom more touchy than when their sores are searched; and therefore he that would not have their wounds to bring them into a fever or fury, must handle them with much wariness. I desire that wisdom, courage, and love may be the ingredients of which all my medicines may be compounded;—wisdom, that I may observe the quality and temper of the offender, the nature of his offence, and the fittest season and

manner of administering the reproof; the quality of the person, if he be my superior, that I may do it with reverence; rather exhorting and beseeching, than plainly rebuking; the temper of the offender, if he be of a fierce nature, that I may so manage my work with meekness, as, when I am endeavouring to heal his distemper, I may not increase it; the nature of the offence, if the sin be small, that I may not make it great by giving stronger medicines than the disease requires; the season of reproof, that I may not give open rebuke for private offences, but observe my Saviour's rule, 'If thy brother offend thee, tell him his fault between him and thee.' The presence of many may make him take up an unjust defence, who in private would have taken upon him a just shame. The open air makes sores to rankle; the more public rebukes are for magistrates and courts of justice to give. Possibly it may be my suspicion more than any real fault, as in the case of the blessed Virgin and Joseph, and then what wrong should I do him to accuse innocency before a multitude! The manner of delivering it, that I may give him his due praise, as well as his deserved reproof. This will somewhat allay his passion, and make my reproof the more prevalent. The iron, when heated red hot in the fire, is bent and beaten afterwards, without breaking, which way the smith pleaseth. When I have heated him hot with the fire of commendation, I may then beat upon him with reproof in greater hopes of success. I would desire courage also, that I may deal faithfully, and not skin over a wound that hath dead flesh at the bottom. Should I dally, I destroy the patient. If the offender be so bold as to dare God, why should I be so bashful as to fear him? Love, that he may discern my affection to his soul in my detestation of his sin. If he suspect me to bear ill-will in my heart, he will throw my potion in my face: what man will take physic from an enemy? Lord, shouldst thou suffer me to go on in sin, and not call me back, though by a severe admonition, it were a sign thou didst hate me. Thou didst never strike Ephraim worse than when thou didst forbear to strike at

all, but saidst, 'Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone.' Should I not seek to pluck my brother out of the fire of sin into which he is fallen, but suffer him to lie there, I hate him, and am in thine esteem a murderer. Oh, deliver me from such blood-guiltiness, thou God of my salvation! Let thy good Spirit so strengthen and direct me whenever thou callest me to this duty, that I may do it with zeal to thine honour, not daring to jest with such an edged tool as sin is, and with love and wisdom, that if by any means I may bring back a wandering sheep to thy fold.

I wish that I may receive as well as do good by all my converses with those that are good. Christians are trees of righteousness, planted in God's vineyard, and it is my own fault if I gather not some good fruit from them. My God tells me, 'The lips of the righteous feed many.' If, then, I rise hungry from the table, it is a sign I am sullen, and will not eat. My Father delights to see his children distributing their spiritual food (as the disciples the loaves and fish to the multitude) amongst their brethren, till they all are filled. He hath acquainted me that it is an argument of wisdom to receive, and folly to refuse counsel: 'Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning,' Prov. 9:9. The holy apostle, though high in the school of Christ, and in the uppermost form, yet hoped to learn somewhat from those that were far meaner scholars. He writes to the Romans that he hopes to be filled with their company. They that are dwarfs in religion may do service to the tallest, if they be willing to accept it. A rush candle may give me some light, if I do not wilfully shut mine eyes; a brazen bell may call me to prayer as well as one of silver, if I do not stop mine ears. The smallest and meanest creatures were serviceable to the great God against the Egyptians; and shall my proud heart refuse the help of mean Christians against the enemies of my salvation? Did a damsel possessed with a devil bring her master much temporal gain, and may not a poor servant,

filled with the Holy Spirit, bring me much spiritual gain? What, or who am I, that none must teach me but those that are eminent in grace and gifts? I am sure I have nothing that good is, but what I have received, and this pride of my heart is too great an evidence that I am but poor in holiness. Those branches that are fullest laden bend most downward. Those trees that abound in clusters of fruit, do not disdain to receive sap from the mean earth which every beast trampleth on. It is no wonder if a soul decline in strength, that refuseth its food because it is not brought by the steward, but by some inferior person of the family. If Satan can keep me in this proud humour, he doth not doubt but to keep me in a starving condition, and to hinder the efficacy of all means for my growth in grace. When this dropsy once seizeth upon my vitals, I may expect a consumption of my whole body. Lord, it were my duty to hear thy voice, though it were through the mouth of a Balaam; thou hast sometimes conveyed the water of life through these pipes of lead, and sent considerable presents to thy chosen by contemptible messengers. Oh, suffer me not to be wise in mine own eyes, and thereby to turn away mine ears from the words of them that are indued with spiritual wisdom; but cause me to hear counsel, and receive instruction, that I may be wise for my latter end.

I wish that I may be so much my own friend, as to esteem a bitter admonition better than the sweetest flattery, and never quarrel at any for waking me out of my spiritual lethargy. The world indeed is full of them that rage at such as would prevent their ruin, choosing rather to have their wounds fester, though they kill them, than be searched thoroughly to recover them. Their words to their neighbours are like the Jews' to the prophets, 'Prophecy not unto us right things, prophecy unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits,' Isa. 30:10. And their works are like theirs too; if a Stephen deal but faithfully with them, and tell them of their faults, they are presently

cut to the heart, and gnash at him with their teeth; their bones are so out of order, that the smallest disturbance makes them fret and fume. Like owls, if any offer to lay hold on them, they soon make him feel their claws; rebuke a scorner and he will hate thee. But I have not so learned Christ. Though toads are no sooner touched but they swell, and are ready to spit out their poison in the face of him that handleth them, yet sheep will be felt and shorn, and suffer their sores to be dressed with patience. Though fools hate him that reproveth in the gate; yet, 'rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee,' saith God, Prov. 9:8. Oh that I might never be so void of love to my fallen brother, as not to give him a serious reproof, nor so void of love to myself, as not to receive a serious reproof! The nipping frosts, though not so pleasant, are as profitable as the summer sunshine. I deceive myself if I judge no liquor wholesome but what is toothsome. There is no probable way of curing some diseases, but by blisters, and cupping-glasses, and painful medicines. Is it not better for me to accept an admonition and amend, than to walk on in a wicked way to my destruction? Will it not be much easier for me to bear a rebuke given in love, and with meekness, from my fellow-creature, than to provoke the jealous God, with eyes full of fury, to take, me by the throat, and ask me what I am doing; how I dare thus slight his laws, and contradict his will? Oh, how can my heart endure, or my hands be strong, in the day that he shall deal with me! Well might my God say, 'He that hateth reproof is brutish.' Lord, let me never be so much a beast, as to lie snoring in a nasty kennel of filth, and when any come to wake me, fly in their faces; but let me prefer a sharp admonition, before the smoothest deceits. When any praise me for the good in me, cause me to suspect myself; when any reprove me for the evil in me, let me accept it with thanks. Make me able to say, with that sweet singer of Israel, 'Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, and it shall be an excellent oil, it shall not break my head.'

I wish that I may by no means repine, but always rejoice at the gifts and graces of others. If the other members of the body thrive, the heart doth not grieve, but is glad at it. It is ordinary for younger brothers to boast and glory in the large estate and great possessions which their elder brothers have left them by their fathers. Why should not my soul be joyful at the great share of spiritual riches which the only wise God hath given some of my brethren? If a man love sweet smells, the greater degree of them he observeth in any place, the more he is refreshed with them. He that delights in pictures, if he see one in a room, exactly and exquisitely drawn above all the rest, that shall have more of his eye and his heart. Is not grace compared to sweet ointments, and shall not I be comforted the more for the greatness of its savour? Is not the image of my God amiable in mine eye, and ought I not to delight most in that copy which is nearest the original? Surely, if I envy any their spiritual excellencies, I shew myself too like a child of the devil. There is hardly any worm that gnaweth that unclean spirit more painfully than the grace which God gives his children; their sins are his utmost joy, their graces are his extreme grief. Would I be found in Satan's livery at the last? Oh that I might be so far from murmuring at that double portion of the Spirit which my God bestoweth upon some of his people, that I might bless God heartily for it, and beg of God to add to it a hundredfold, how great soever it is! The pretty birds sing the more merrily, the higher the sun mounteth in the heavens. I have cause to be the more cheerful, the nearer any ascend to heaven, and the higher they mount in holiness. My love to my God, to my brother, nay, to myself, all command me to it. My love to my God; he that loves his sovereign will rejoice that he hath any subjects eminent above others for duty and loyalty. They that have much spiritual strength will do my God much spiritual service. The more grace they have, the more glory they bring to God. It is an honour to the Father of spirits when his children keep open house, according to their estates, clothing the

naked, feeding the hungry soul, and relieving liberally such as are in want; I am no Christian if I be not tender of my God's honour? and joyful when that is exalted in the world. Besides, love to my brother should quicken me to this duty. If I love him as myself, I shall both grieve at his soul-losses, and rejoice at his spiritual gains. Love delighteth in the welfare of the party loved; the hotter the beams of grace are in the party beloved, the more they rejoice the heart of the lover. Why should any man's eye be evil towards his brother, because God's is good to him? Have others the less because some have so much? Or is it not my own fault, that I am not as holy and gracious as he? God is a fountain of grace, always running over, but he derives it to us according to our capacities; if I go to the well of salvation, and receive but little of the water of life, I may know the cause—my vessel was no bigger. Nay, love to myself may make me glad at others' gifts and graces. The greater the saint's estate is, the more he will relieve others; as the earth, though it sucketh in so much water as will give herself a competent refreshment, conveyeth many springs through her veins for the cherishing and refreshment of others; so the saints do not only advantage their own, but also others' souls. Lord, though, in hell there be little else but murmuring and repining at the good of thy chosen, yet in heaven there is no emptiness in themselves, no envying at others; every saint there hath his joy doubled for another's joy, and is glorified in another's glory. Suffer not thy servant to make his heart a little hell, by filling it with grief at the good of thy chosen, but oh make it thy lesser heaven; be thou pleased to dwell in it, and then I shall begin the work of eternity in time, magnify and bless thee for thy love to them, and praise and bless them for their likeness to thee.

Finally, I wish that I may so carry myself in all my converses with the children of God here, that I may meet them in the Father's house, and sit down with them at the supper of the Lamb. Lord, if

communion with thy saints be so pleasant and delightful on earth, how pleasant and delightful will it be in heaven! Here my communion with them is imperfect; my flesh will not suffer me to receive the good I might from them, nor their flesh allow them to do the good they might to me. But there shall be no evil, no occasion of evil, no appearance of evil; no sin shall clog the chariots of our souls, no flesh shall fetter us from running to embrace and delight in each other; but all shall be free to rejoice and refresh one another. Every saint shall be, as it were, a fountain of communion in the sweetest manner and fullest measure; from every one shall flow rivers of water of life, and every one enlarged to relish and receive. If Jonathan, beholding a little grace in David on earth, loved him as his own soul, how doth he love him in heaven! Here our communion is much lamed by the defects in our bodily organs; we cannot impart our minds without our members, which, being defective, make our communion so. But there we shall be as angels, seeing each other without eyes, hearing each other without ears, and embracing each other without hands. Here our communion is interrupted; our particular calling, our eating, our drinking, our sleeping, our many occasions, call us from it. But there is no calling but our general calling of worshipping and enjoying our God; no feeding but on the tree of life, that groweth in the midst of paradise; no drinking, but of the rivers of God's own pleasures; and no night, no sleeping, but that rest which remaineth for the people of God. Oh, what darkness, what night can be there, where all the righteous shall shine infinitely brighter than the sun in his noonday lustre? Here our communion is hindered by the differences that frequently arise; like children of the same father, we quarrel and wrangle; but they will all be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, and one judgment. There indeed Jerusalem is a city compact together, and at unity within itself. There Paul's desire is granted—that they all speak the same thing; they are one in affection, one in opinion, and one in



expression. There Christ's prayer is granted—Father, that they may be one as we are one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us. If it be so good and pleasant a thing for brethren here to dwell together in unity, and it be as a precious ointment, and as the dew which descended upon the mountains of Zion, where the Lord commanded his blessing, even life for ever; how good and pleasant will it be for those to dwell together in perfect unity there, where the consolation of Christ is perfect, the fellowship of the Spirit entire, the comfort of love complete! No crying, no complaining, no angry word, no frowning look, no suspicious thought; but as old Gryneus said, There Zuinglius and Luther are well agreed. Our communion here is but with a few, we are acquainted but with few; and our communion is not so large as our acquaintance, we have seen but few, we have heard but of few, and we have discoursed with fewer. There are but few in the counties, in the kingdom, where we live, and many of them are wholly unknown to us. But there is a glorious company of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, a noble army of martyrs, a numberless number of saints, of all countries, callings, conditions, relations; a thousand thousand are before him, and ten thousand times ten thousand minister to him. If Peter, when he saw but two of the children of God in glory with Christ on earth, cried out, 'Master, it is good to be here;' how good will it be to be there, where there shall be 'a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and crying with a loud voice, Salvation unto our God that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever,' Rev. 7:9, 10. Oh what a blessed time, or rather eternity, will that be, when I shall fully understand what the communion of saints meaneth! If Solomon could say of militant saints, 'As ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel;' how much better

might he speak it of saints triumphant? What is the sweetness and joy of that society, where every soul is a bed of spices, an orchard of pomegranates, a cabinet of perfumes, for their mutual delight and refreshment! If David was so taken with the beauty of the church in this world, notwithstanding her blackness, by reason of corruption and affliction, that he saith, 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem before my chief joy.' How much is he taken with the spouse of Christ there, where it is granted unto her to be arrayed in fine linen, pure and white, which is the righteousness of the saints, not only imputed, but also inherent; to be clothed with the embroidered graces of the Holy Spirit, perfect knowledge, perfect love, perfect joy, and all the beauties of holiness, without the least spot or wrinkle, or any such thing! There, indeed, he prefers Jerusalem before his chief joy, whilst he beholds her all fair, completely conformed to Christ, with such a peculiar resemblance of his glory, as if the name of Christ was written on her forehead, and her spiritual affinity and kindred manifested thereby. Surely it is a lovely communion, when saints sit down together at the Lord's table in this world, and partake of his last supper; when they see, and hear, and taste the true pledges of their Father's infinite grace, and read their Redeemer's boundless love written by himself in his own blood. Their hearts have many a time been so ravished therewith, that they have wished the ordinance might have lasted longer, and that Christ would have lain so all night between their breasts. But oh, how infinitely short is this communion of that which they shall have in glory, when they shall be called to the marriage supper of the Lamb; when they shall eat of the hidden manna, and drink of the new wine in their Father's kingdom! Then, then, indeed, every one may say, 'I sit under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet unto my taste.' Without question, that communion which Adam had with Eve, that short time which they

continued in innocence, was exceeding sweet. She was to him as a crown of glory, a meet help, and the delights his eyes. What a fair bride was she, whom God himself dressed and decked with all the ornaments of grace! What joy must there needs be at that wedding which was celebrated in paradise, covered with the curious tapestry of those pleasant trees, which the very hand of the Most High had planted, and delighted with the ravishing notes of those pretty choristers, which infinite wisdom had taught to sing at the marriage feast, where there was a perfect likeness and love between the married persons, where there was not the least evil, or show of evil, to allay their joy, and especially where the God of all consolation was fully and favourably present, as Master of the feast! Adam could not but esteem her his loving hind and pleasant roe, his sweet yoke-fellow and pleasant play-fellow, the partner and sweetener of all his comforts; he could not but be satisfied with her breasts, and ravished with her love. But even this is far inferior to the communion of the saints above. There, in heaven, are more glorious bands and sweeter knots of loving fellowship than that of marriage; the attire of the bride is far richer, the beauty of the bride far greater; the wedding-chamber is the heavenly paradise, the melody made there will be by celestial courtiers, angels themselves; and there the fountain whence all joy floweth will run more freely, and he will turn that water which Adam had below into the richest wine. Lord, I acknowledge to thy glory, that I have sometimes been refreshed with the company of thy chosen in this world—I have seen thee in them, and heard thee by them; yet how little good have I got by them, in comparison of what I might and ought! Pardon all my weaknesses, and do thou so supply my spiritual wants, that I may both love more, and improve better, the society of thy saints here, that so when thou callest me from this imperfect communion with some few, I may be carried to Abraham's bosom, and enjoy perfect fellowship with those thousands that are before thee, where thou art visible in all, every one being thy temple,

and every heart being the altar upon which the fire of thy love is ever burning. Oh let me praise thee in that great congregation, and my glory sing of thee before much people; for there shall those that mourned for Zion be filled with comfort, and rejoice for ever with Jerusalem; they shall be borne upon her sides, and dandled upon her knees; they shall suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolation; they shall milk out and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. Amen.

## **CHAPTER V**

## **How a Christian should exercise himself to godliness in solitariness. As also a good wish about that particular**

Thirdly, Thy duty is to exercise thyself to godliness in solitude. A gracious person is not only conscientious in company, but also when he is alone; his whole life is nothing else but a walking with his God. 'When I awake I am still with thee,' saith David, Ps. 139:18. He no sooner opened the eyes of his body in the morning, but he was lifting up the eyes of his mind to heaven; when he was alone in his bed, he was in company with his God. As God was still with him, so he was still with God: 'Nevertheless I am continually with thee,' Ps. 73. True sanctity is visible in secrecy to him that is omniscient. The saint is many times most busy when he hath nothing to do, and may say more truly than Scipio the African, *Nunquam minus solus, quam cum solus*, I am never less alone than when alone. The pulse of the body beats as well in solitariness as in company, and so doth the pulse of the gracious soul towards his God and Saviour. It is said of Domitian, that he did one hour in a day sequester himself from all persons to no purpose, for it was to catch flies, which was the original of that answer to one that asked, Whether anybody were with the emperor? *Ne musca quidem*, No, not so much as a fly. A believer hath business of great weight, when he withdraweth from the press of the world—it is that he might draw nearer to the Lord. Isaac goeth into the fields to meditate of God; Christ goeth into the mountain apart to pray to God; Daniel to the river's side, Peter to the house-top, the church to the secret place of the stairs, and all to enjoy communion with their God, Gen. 26; Mark 1:35; Cant. 2:4; Dan. 8:2, and 10:4; Acts 10.

A saint, therefore, sequestereth himself from the noise and clamour of company, and worldly businesses, that he might have the more free and intimate converse with his Redeemer. A forced banishment from men, to dwell among beasts, hath been bewailed as a great misery; but a free retirement from creatures, to enjoy more of the blessed God, is a great felicity. Woodruff, an herb of an extraordinary pleasant smell, delighteth in dark and shadowy places; so the Christian, who in company refresheth others with the fragrancy of his graces, loveth sometimes to be obscure and in secret.

Many of the heathen were so affected with the vanity and vexation of the world, that they willingly left their pleasures and preferments in courts, to live privately in the country. Sylla Felix laid aside his dictatorship to lead a retired life. Dioclesian's two and twenty years' reign could not make him out of love with a solitary life, but he voluntary left the empire, and could not be prevailed to reassume it, though he was threatened to it. Demosthenes would shave his beard half off, and all his hair from his head, to necessitate his stay within-doors, and his abode amongst his books. Thales left the affairs of state, that he might have time for contemplation. Cato, in his old age, withdrew from Rome, to live, as he used to say, out of the crowd of the world; and the Romans were so much convinced of his prudence herein, that as they passed by his house to which he retired, they would ordinarily cry out, *Iste solus scit vivere*, This man alone knoweth how to live. Old Similis having lived long in the wars, and afterwards for seven years devoting himself to solitariness, when he died left this epitaph behind: Here lieth old Similis, yet one that lived but seven years. Hiero, the tyrant of Syracuse, gave over his kingdom to live a solitary life. Others, out of a deep melancholy, have avoided all society, and delighted only, like the shriek-owl and bittern, in desolate places and monuments of the dead, Zeph. 2:14. Socrates, in his Ecclesiastical History, lib. iv. cap. 18, speaks of some, so strangely

averse to all correspondence with men, that they have immured themselves in cells and silence, for sixty and ninety years together, even as long as they lived.

But, reader, I would not advise thee to such continued retirement, nor to any at all, upon such low, mean grounds. Those voluntary sequestrations of deluded votaries amongst the papists from human society, are, I daresay, as unacceptable to God, as uncomfortable to themselves. Such solitary persons bring little comfort to their own souls, little honour to God, and do no good at all to others. By how much as doing God great service, is better than doing him little, as doing good to many, is better than doing good only to myself, so much is company before solitariness. But the most public Christians have their times for privacy. It is no mean misery to be either always alone, or never alone. He that is always crowded with company, can neither enjoy himself nor his God as he ought.

## **SECTION I**

I shall first lay down some motives, and then shew wherein we should exercise ourselves to godliness when we are alone.

1. To quicken thee to exercise thyself to godliness in solitude, consider the benefit of solitude; well improved solitude is a good opportunity for godliness. Seneca was wont to say, that he seldom went into company, that he came not home worse than he went out. Society, as it hath much gain, so much perplexity. Solitude is a release to the soul that was imprisoned in company. To be much in company tires and wearies us; we are prone to count it a bondage, and the persons we associate with our fetters. Retiring seasonably from them, sets us at liberty, and giveth us freedom to mount up to heaven at our pleasure. Scipio would tell his friends, I have never

better company than when I have no company, for then can I freely entertain my own thoughts, and converse with all the learned that have been in former ages. Jerome speaks better, *Sapiens nunquam solus esse potest; habet enim secum omnes qui sunt et qui fuerunt boni ... et si hominum sit inopia, loquitur cum Deo*; A wise man can never be alone, for he hath ever with him all the good men that are, or have been; and if he find any want of men, he can converse with God. It was a custom among the Indians, when their king went to bed, to pray with piping acclamations, that he might have happy dreams, and withal, consult well for the good of his subjects; as if the silent, secret night had been a friend to wisdom. One of the best kings that ever the world had, tells us: 'My reins instruct me in the night season,' Ps. 16:7. The sensual worldling is a stranger to such secrecy. It hath in some respects an advantage of society; it hath not those clamours nor distractions with it, which hinder us in our heavenly trade. As it hath fewer allurements to good, so it hath fewer impediments of good, and fewer suggestions to evil; and truly the grand argument to good, which is *instar omnium*, is not wanting to it. It hath the presence of God. Every godly man may say in a sense, as Christ did when his disciples were to leave him alone, 'I am not alone, because the Father is with me,' John 16:32. It is reported of Numa, that after the death of his wife Tatia, he left the city, and gave himself wholly to walk in fields and woods consecrated to the gods, and thence was said to enjoy the goddess Egeria, and that she made him her husband.—Plut. in Vit. Num. Though such stories are fabulous, yet it is true of the Christian, that he enjoyeth much of his God when he is out of the world's crowd. Lovers give and return the sweetest kisses and embraces, when they are together in secret. Isaac and Rebekah thought themselves in secret, when they sported together. David had his sweetmeats and heavenly junkets in the night, when the eyes of others were closed, and saw not the charger which was sent from above for his spiritual refreshment. His solitary



meditations brought him more solace and comfort than the whole creation could afford him: 'When I meditate on thee in my bed, and think of thee in the night watches, my soul is filled with marrow and fatness,' Ps. 63:6. Communion with God in secret, is a heaven upon earth. What food can compare with the hidden manna? Some persons have excellent banquets in their closets. That bread which the saints eat in secret, how pleasant is it! Ah, what stranger can imagine the joy, the melody, which even the secret tears of the saints cause. Believers find rich mines of silver and gold in solitary places; they fetch up precious jewels out of secret holes, out of the bottom of the ocean, where are no inhabitants. Naturalists observe that those fish are sweetest which lie hid. Saints have often sweet joy and refreshment in secret; they have meat to eat which the world knoweth not of. The fig-tree, olive, and vine, would not leave their sweetness, fatness, and cheerfulness, to be kings over other trees, Judges 9:11–13. They that know what it is to enjoy God in secret, would not leave it or lose it to be kings or commanders over the whole world.

One place where the Israelites pitched in their passage to Canaan, was called Jothatha, from Jatab and Batha, a pleasant wilderness, or delectable desert. A Christian hath many such stations in his travels to the heavenly Canaan. When he is in a wilderness alone, out of the noise of Pharaoh's court, and free from the clamours and complainings of God's Israel, by reason of Egyptian taskmasters, he hath the pillar, the extraordinary presence of his God, which abundantly satisfieth and rejoiceth his soul. The highest princes sometimes give their largest gifts to their favourites in private, to prevent that envy which public notice or knowledge of them might occasion. Some saints give their largest alms in secret, that their left hand scarce knoweth what their right hand doth. The great and holy God sendeth many a rich present, giveth many a large alms to his

indigent friends, when there is none by to witness his bounty and charity. In the dead time of the night, when deep sleep seizeth on men, the earth receiveth many pleasant, refreshing showers. The children of God have many costly collations, and much curious music, when no eye but their own seeth or tasteth the former, and no ear save theirs heareth the latter. The prophet Hosea represents God thus, speaking of his people: 'Behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her,' Hosea 2:14. God's method is marvellous; he brings his church into a wilderness, and then turns it into a Canaan, causing it to flow with milk and honey. By wilderness some understand a sorrowful, and others a solitary, condition; but then God appears to her, the God of all consolation, for he speaks comfortably to her. He that chid her when she was in the crowd of the world, saying as they said, and doing as they did, when he hath her alone, reflecting upon her sins, and recollecting herself, will speak friendly and comfortably to her. In the Hebrew it is, I will speak to her heart; and surely his powerful, satiable speech will banish all her heaviness.

This invisible trade brings in visible profit and comfort. Secret correspondence with allies is most difficult, but exceeding gainful and delightful. Some curious mysteries are like mines sprung underground, the less they are known, the more efficacious and effectual they are. The open air or breath of men would soil the beauty and lustre of exact pictures. Christ calls his spouse out of the world's view and light, when he intends her the fullest seals of his love: 'Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the fields; let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards; there will I give thee my loves,' Cant. 7:11, 12.

Mark, there in the fields, where no eye beholdeth the sweet meeting of our lips, the close embraces of our arms, the intimate conjunction

of our hearts—there I will give thee my loves. Kings do not unbosom and open their hearts before a multitude. The favourite is acquainted with the richest secrets of state in private. 'Oh that I were (saith Job) as in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was with my tabernacle,' Job 29:4. As if he had said, according to some, Oh that I were as in my former days, when God was secretly in my family, and gave me familiar visits, which the world took no notice of; when I had many reviving soliloquies about God, and refreshing colloquies with him. The Egyptian laws placed the image of Silence in all those temples where the image of Serapis, their god, stood, as if they might expect most of her favour when they approached her privately, with as little noise as might be. Addresses to the true God in secret have been accompanied with great success.

2. Consider, if thou dost not exercise thyself to godliness in solitude, thou wilt be in great danger of running into sin, and contracting guilt on thy soul. The benefit of solitude rightly improved, may afford us comfort, but the danger of it commandeth our caution. A man in solitariness may be secure, because he seeth no visible enemies, but he is not therefore safe. We are no sooner alone, but armies of evil thoughts present themselves to us, and they will by force quarter with us, if the lodging-rooms of our hearts be not taken up beforehand. When the virgin is alone, then she is in most danger of being ravished. In our solitude we should not be without fear of spiritual rapes. Our danger will appear if we consider three particulars.

(1.) Our minds are restless, and will be employed either upon what is good, or upon what is evil. The mind of man is as a millwheel, continually turning about, and drenching in the waters. Our hearts are as a stirring child, that cannot endure to sit still. No virgin hath so many suitors for her love, as our minds for their thoughts. The sun

may as soon be stopped from his race, as the heart from its thinking. We are all in this respect like the sea, which cannot rest, ever in motion. Is not he a foolish miller, that turns the water which should grind his corn into the highway, where it doth no good? And is not he a foolish Christian, that employeth those thoughts about needless toys, which should help to provide him spiritual food? As the natural heat will be ever working, if it have not food to digest, it will prey upon the spirits, and destroy itself; so the mind of man will be always busy, if not in thinking of the excellencies of God, or the love of Christ, or the beauty and necessity of holiness, then in speculative wantonness, or contemplative wickedness, in ambitious fancies, or revengeful desires. We are like a boat swimming against tide, there is no standing still. If the oar be left that we go not forward, the tide will carry us strongly backward. If the ground be not sown with good seed, it will of itself bring forth evil weeds.

(2.) Satan is subtle, and will not be wanting to fight us, when he finds us alone, and without any seconds to assist us. The raven, which is called the devil's bird, is observed to haunt deserts and solitary places. When the Spirit of God would speak of a city desolate and without inhabitants, he tells us, 'The raven shall dwell in it,' Isa. 34:11. When Satan was to enter the list against Christ, and would try his utmost power and policy to overcome him, he takes him to a mountain alone, Mat. 4:8. The scripture, to shew the valour and strength of Christ, sets out his conquest and victory over the devil on his own dunghill in the wilderness. When Christ's lambs are in the desert alone, they may soon be a prey to this roaring lion. Satan is a cunning suitor, and will be sure to watch the time when the parents are from home, to woo the daughter, and steal away her affections. He that takes his leave of men to withdraw himself, may be confident the devil will come, though more bold than welcome, and sit with him. When we know of the coming of so bad a guest, is it not good

policy to forestall him by filling the house beforehand with loving and beloved friends?

(3.) Our own carnal hearts will strive to improve our solitude to draw us to sin. The wife that lieth in the bosom, takes the opportunity of the night, when she is alone with her husband, to draw him to her mind, and to bend him to her will. Though she were afraid or ashamed to mention or motion her evil desires before others, yet in secrecy she hath courage enough to do it, and often with success. Our flesh is nearer to us than our wives—more intimate with us, more powerful over us; how frequently doth it draw us to those sins in secret, which it dares not be so bold as to whisper to us in public! 'They devise mischief on their beds,' Ps. 36:4. When the goodman is from home, and gone a journey, then the whorish woman commits adultery with strangers.

Reader, thou canst no sooner be alone, but thy corrupt heart will send thee many, in wanton and thievish thoughts, to bear thee company. They will come, as Lot's daughters to him, in the dead time of the night, and defile thy soul, and thou shalt, like Lot, not know when they came in, nor when they went away. Thou little thinkest how subtle thy wicked thoughts are—how easily they will wind themselves into and out of thy mind, without giving warning, or being taken notice of. As the serpent crept into paradise secretly, so do sinful thoughts into our hearts. They conspire together against us, as the adversaries of Judah, and do as good as say, 'They shall neither know, nor see, till we come in the midst of them, and cause the work (of exercising themselves to godliness) to cease,' Neh. 4:11. As God's Spirit hath filled his prophets with excellent revelations and visions in the night or day, when they have been alone; so our flesh filleth us with loathsome, atheistical, blasphemous thoughts, oftentimes when we are by ourselves. Children never dirty their

hands and faces, or defile their clothes more, than when they get alone, from parents and servants. When thou art in solitude, thou hast no human friend to watch over thee, and therefore hast the more need to watch narrowly over thyself. No town hath such need of a warder, no peer's gate of a porter to keep out nasty beggars, as thy heart hath of watch and ward to keep out wicked thoughts.

## SECTION II

Thirdly, Consider, the exercising thyself to godliness in solitude will be a probable evidence of thy uprightness. Men are withheld in company from doing evil by the iron curb of fear or shame, and provoked to do good by the golden spurs of praise or profit; but in solitariness there are not such rubs in the way of lust to hinder our passage, nor such baits in the way of holiness to encourage our progress. The naked lineaments and natural thoughts of the soul are best discerned in secret. The darkest night may afford us light enough to see ourselves by, when outward objects and occasions do not interpose to hinder our sight, or discompose our souls. No man's temper can be discovered by his carriage in a crowd of affairs, no more than his countenance in a troubled water. When the mind is stated in a due repose, it bewrayeth her truest affections, which, in the midst of business, she either doth not shew or not observe. If many servants and several masters be together, busy and active, we can hardly tell to what masters the particular servants belong; but when the masters be alone, and walk singly, their servants attend on them, and are known. Our affections are the servants of our souls, both rational and sensual; whilst both these masters are employed, as in company it sometimes falls out, and they wait, it is not easy to judge which they serve; in solitude, one takes upon itself the government, and then it is visible what attendants it hath.

As it is said of grief, *Ille dolet vere qui sine teste dolet*, He grieves truly, that weeps without a witness; so it may be said of godliness, He is sincere in his godliness, who is godly in secret. The best characters, and truest pictures, which can be drawn of the minds of men, are to be taken from the bent of their thoughts, rather than from their works. Wicked men cannot do the mischief they conceive, for lack of the midwifery of fit instruments and opportunities to bring it forth; good men are unable to act all the good they would, because they want power and ability for execution—as Paul acknowledged that he was better at willing than performing; but every man hath liberty to devise and meditate, to study and contrive, what he will. Though a man's hand or actions may be overawed and overruled against his own will, yet his heart and thoughts cannot: 'As he thinks in his heart,' saith the wise man, 'so is he,' Prov. 23:7. Practices may be swayed by outward ends, but the thoughts are always genuine and natural. Violence may cause the former, but love carrieth the latter in its own way. Hence good men have been signalled for saints, from the holiness of their thoughts. They 'thought upon his name,' they 'meditate in his law day and night,' Mal. 3:16; Ps. 1; and they have even appealed to God with comfort, upon their confidence of their uprightness, from the goodness of their thoughts, 'Try me, O God, and know my thoughts,' as being the purest and most unfeigned issues of the soul, and such as have least danger of infection from foreign aims. It is observable also, that wicked men are set forth by this secret mark: 'They devise mischief, they imagine wickedness; the thoughts and imaginations of his heart are evil; God is not in all his thoughts;' because, as Adam begat a son after his own likeness, so doth the heart of every man beget thoughts according to its own likeness, whether it be spiritual or carnal.

The bowl runs as the bias inclines it; the ship moves as the rudder steereth it; and the mind thinketh according to the predominancy of

vice or virtue in it. The more the fire of grace burns clear in the soul, the more of these sparks will ascend towards heaven. The more earthly a soul is, the more his thoughts will tend downward, the more he will mind earthly things, Philip. 3:17, 18.

Naturalists tell us of the Gnomon, commonly called the mariner's needle, that it always will turn to the north star; though it be closed and shut up in a coffer of wood or gold, yet it loseth not its nature. So the true Christian is always looking to the star of Jacob; whether he be shut up in a prison, or shut himself up in his closet, he is ever longing after Jesus Christ. A true lover delights most to visit his friend alone, when he can enjoy privacy with him.

Our blessed Saviour doth not without cause call the pharisees hypocrites, though they fasted and prayed, and gave much alms, because they performed those duties chiefly, if not only, in company, and to be seen of men. The applause of others was the weight that set their clocks agoing; when that was taken off, as when they were alone, they stood still. Therefore Christ adviseth his apostles to take another course, if they would evidence the truth of their Christianity: 'Enter into thy closet, shut thy door, and pray to thy Father in secret,' Mat. 6:6. One fervent prayer in secret will speak more for our sincerity than many in public.

When a prince passeth by in the streets, then all, even strangers, will flock about him, and look upon him; but his wife and children think not this enough, but follow him home, and are not satisfied unless they can enjoy him there. A false Christian, and one that is a stranger to God, if he have but a superficial view of him in his courts, is pleased; but the true believer, and one that is nigh to him in Christ, must have retired converses with him in his closet, or he is not contented.



## SECTION III

I come now to shew how a Christian should exercise himself to godliness in solitude.

1. If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness when thou art alone, guard thy heart against vain thoughts; this is the first work to be done, without which all that I have to commend to thee will be in vain. It is to no purpose to expect that a glass should be filled with costly wine, when it is filled already with puddle water. When the house beforehand was taken up by strangers, there was not room for Christ himself in the inn. If such flies be suffered and allowed in our hearts, they will spoil our best pots of ointment.

Some persons, though poor, when they are solitary, delight in the fancies and imaginations of great preferments, and pleasures, and riches, as if they were real, whereas they are the mere chimeras and fictions of their own brains, and have no existence, but in their thoughts. No wonder our Saviour saith, "Ἐσωθεν γὰρ ἐκ τῆς καρδίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀφροσύνη, 'Out of the heart of man proceedeth madness,' Mark 7:21, 22. Such thoughts are distracted thoughts, and suitable to those that are out of their wits, who please themselves in thinking that their filthy holes in Bedlam are stately palaces, that their nasty rags are royal robes, that their iron fetters are chains of gold, and the feathers stuck in their caps are imperial crowns. As the Spanish page, in a high distemper of fancy, imagined himself to be some great emperor, and was maintained in that humour by his lord; so some foolish men build these castles in the air, and then allow themselves a lodging in them.

Others please themselves in the thoughts of sinful sports, or cheats, or unclean acts, and sit brooding on such cockatrice' eggs with great

delight; it is their meat and drink to roll those sugarplums under their tongues. Though they cannot act sin outwardly for want of strength of body, or a fit opportunity, yet they act sin inwardly with great love and complacency. As players in a comedy, they act their parts in private, in order to a more exact performance of them in public.

Others entertain themselves with needless and useless thoughts, such as tend neither to the informing the mind, nor reforming the heart or life. Like vagrants, a man meets with these in every place, but can neither tell whence they come, nor whither they go; they have neither a good cause, nor do they produce any good effect. Such thoughts might be in a David's heart, but they were the object of his hate: Ps. 119:113, 'I hate vain thoughts.' The best Christian's heart here, is like Solomon's ships, which brought home, not only gold and silver, but also apes and peacocks; it hath not only spiritual and heavenly, but also vain and foolish thoughts. But these latter are there as a disease or poison in the body, the object of his grief and abhorrency, not of his love and complacency.

Though we cannot keep vain thoughts from knocking at the door of our hearts, nor from entering in sometimes, yet we may forbear bidding them welcome, or giving them entertainment: 'How long shall vain thoughts lodge within me?' Jer. 4:14. It is bad to let them sit down with us, though but for an hour, but it is worse to let them lie or lodge with us. It is better to receive the greatest thieves into our houses, than vain thoughts into our hearts. John Huss, seeking to reclaim a very profane wretch, was told by him, that his giving way to wicked, wanton thoughts was the original of all those hideous births of impiety which he was guilty of in his life. Huss answered him, that though he could not keep evil thoughts from courting him, yet he might keep them from marrying him; as, saith he, though I cannot

keep the birds from flying over my head, yet I can keep them from building their nests in my hair.

Christian, be careful when thou art out of company, as well as in it, for these guests will visit thee as soon as ever thou art alone; and if thou shouldst not frown upon them, they will turn thy solitude into a crowd, as Jerome found Rome in a wilderness. The heathen Cicero employed his solitude to better purpose than most seeming Christians: I being weary, saith he, of living amongst wicked men, with whom all places in a manner swarm, betake myself to solitariness as much as I can; yet that none may think I trifle away my time idly, to say no more, let my books speak how I employ myself. Yet, alas! when many Christians are retired out of the crowd and throng of worldly men, they suffer worldly things to crowd and throng so abundantly in their hearts, that, as it was said of Ephraim, strangers devour their strength, Hosea 7:9. Earthly things, though tending to no profit, waste their time and devour their thoughts, which, as Reuben, are the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of strength.

## SECTION IV

Secondly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness in solitude, labour to spiritualise earthly things. I must say this is one of the most excellent and enriching arts in Christianity; though these occasional thoughts resemble lightning, as well in the suddenness of their journey, as the vastness of their way, being able to reach from one end of heaven unto the other, yet such light gains, with quick returns, make a heavy purse.

He that hath learned this mystery is the true chemist; he leaves the dregs and lees of things, and extracts the substance and quintessence

of them. He hath better than Midas's wish; he turns all he toucheth into better than gold. Many a great scholar begs with rare notions of the nature of silver, and gold, and pearls, when some merchants who never saw a mine, or furnace, or read a book concerning them, hath his coffers full of them. The Rabbis of the world, were they able, like Solomon, to speak of all plants, from the cedar to the hyssop, and of all beasts, and fish, and fowl, nay, and of all creatures, in a physical and philosophical way, are not comparable to the illiterate countryman who can read his God in them, and improve them for his spiritual advantage.

Luther relates a story of two cardinals riding to the council at Constance, how by the way they heard a shepherd weeping and crying out sadly, upon which they turned aside to know what was the matter, and found the shepherd looking upon an ugly toad. They asked him the ground of his lamentation. He answered, I cannot but weep to consider the goodness of God, that he did not make me such a loathsome creature, and my own unthankfulness, that I should be no more sensible of it. At which one of the cardinals was so affected, that he fell from his horse in a swoon, and coming again afterwards to himself, told his brother: Well said St Augustine, *Indocti rapiunt cœlum, &c.* The unlearned take heaven by violence, whilst we, with all our parts and learning, wallow in the mire of the earth and flesh.

Natural beings are as spades, wherewith we may open the mines, and dig out spiritual riches. He that hath a gracious fancy, may, like the bee, suck honey from every flower in the garden of the creation, and climb up by the stairs of the meanest creature to the supreme and infinite Creator. All objects to a wise Christian may be wings to mount him up to heaven. As the old Romans, when they saw the blue stones, thought of Olympus, so the holy person by every work is elevated to admire some excellency in the workman.

There is a threefold aspect which men cast upon the works of God, according to the difference of their eyes, or the degrees of their understandings.

1. Ordinary and vulgar persons, who differ little from brutes, and behold the face of nature as beasts do a picture, only viewing the outside and surface of it rudely and superficially, never considering any art or curiosity in it. As the horse and mule, which have no understanding, they view and drink of the streams, but mind not the purity or clarity of the water, or the fountain whence it floweth; these look on God's works at best, but as passengers on a clock, to know the time of the day, but take no notice of the wheels and poises, and their several motions and contrivances.

2. Scholars and philosophers, who go a step higher, and view this picture somewhat exactly, as artists contemplating its curious workmanship, its proper colours, comely features, and rare composure of the whole with admiration. As Nicostratus, that told the countryman who wondered at his wondering at the exact piece of Helena drawn by Zeuxis, If thou hadst my eyes, thou wouldst be affected as I am.

3. Christians and spiritual men, who move above the philosopher and most skilful naturalists in their own sphere; these look on the face of nature with a spiritual eye, as a lover on the picture of her beloved, delighting more in the resemblance than the table; contemplating the matchless power, embroidered wisdom, and infinite goodness of their God which appear in his creatures. These are the men that can turn the stones and dirt of the streets, yea, the snakes and serpents of the earth, into bread for their souls; if they should be denied the Scripture, (which God forbid,) they can fetch spiritual food out of the creature. The heron findeth her food in lakes

and rivers, and picks it out with her long bill, where other birds can get none: so saith Hesychius, The Christian by meditation can get food for his soul, where others, that understand not this duty, starve.

Our blessed Saviour teacheth us to see the face of heavenly things in earthly glasses, and to make a ladder of the creatures, whereby we may ascend to heaven in our thoughts. He hath set us a pattern that we should follow his steps. What honey of profit and pleasure doth he teach us to draw from all the flowers and weeds too that grow in the garden of the creation! He instructeth his disciples by lilies growing, and seed sown in the field; by trees and vines in the orchard and vineyard; by pearls, treasures, tares, leaven, mustard-seed, water, bread, nets, fish, salt, oil, lamps, and, as at Cana in Galilee, turns all this water into wine, as well for their imitation as information. A mean scaffold may serve to rear up a goodly building; and an ordinary creature may afford matter for excellent meditations. God likens himself to many, to shew that there is something of him in all. He compares himself to a builder, to a buckler, to a castle, a captain, to a fortress, to a fountain of living water, to a helper, to health, to a habitation, to light, to life, to a rock, a refuge, a reward; to a shadow, a shelter, a shield; to a lion, an eagle, a leopard, a bear; to fire, dew, a moth, the sun. And why? but to teach us to read him in his creatures. In heaven the Christian shall know God, and all the creatures in him, but on earth we must learn to know him by them.

God hath given us three books, which we ought to be studying whilst we are living: the book of conscience, the book of Scripture, and the book of the creature; in the book of conscience we may read ourselves, in the book of the creature we may read God, in the book of Scripture we may read both God and ourselves. The great God sets us excellent lectures in the volume of the creation; though this book

hath but three leaves in it, heaven, earth, sea, yet it teacheth us many rare lessons. If we think of the visible heavens, and behold those great lights of the world; how swiftly they move in their proper orbs; how unwearied they are in their perpetual courses; how they fail not a minute of their appointed time, nor wander an inch out of their designed way; how they divide the day and night, and the several seasons of the year; how they bless the earth with their smiling aspects, and keep the inhabitants of this lower world from finding it a dungeon by their enlightening beams, we may therein discover the wisdom and power of its Maker, and cry out with David, Ps. 19:1, and 8:2, 3, 'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and stars which thou hast made: what is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou dost thus visit him? O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! and thy glory above the heavens!' What rare fruit may a soul gather from these celestial trees! If the porch of heaven be such a curious piece, the work of his fingers, i.e., an elaborate piece of embroidery, how curious is the palace within! If the outward court be so glorious, how glorious is the holy of holies! If light be so sweet, and it be so pleasant a thing to behold the sun, how sweet is the light of my God's countenance! and how pleasant is it to behold the Sun of righteousness! Oh what a blessed day will that be, when the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun as the light of seven days, when all believers shall shine as the sun in the firmament of their Father! Lord, thou speakest to the sun, and it riseth not, to the moon, and it standeth still; why should not thy servant be as obedient to thy command, even when it is against my natural depraved course? Oh speak but as powerfully to thy poor creature, and he will as readily obey thy pleasure!

If we look a little lower, to the clouds, and meditate on them in their natural cause—thin vapours exhaled by the sun; in their principal use—to drop fatness on the earth; in the tenuity and smallness of their bodies, the weight and greatness of their burdens, the waters in them being like lusty children, encompassed only with a tender film; how they are tossed to and fro, hurried hither and thither with tempestuous winds, and yet burst not in pieces through lack of vent, nor sink under the heaviness of their load, nor leak out one drop till the hand of their Master unstop their bottles; we may well admire that infinite invisible power that upholds and governs them, and say, as Eliphaz, of their author, 'He doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number: for he giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth water upon the fields,' Job 5:9, 10. What excellent water may I distil with the lembics of the clouds! If the favour of a prince be as a 'cloud of the latter rain,' Prov. 16:15, so refreshing and comforting, what is the favour of the King of kings! As the clouds mask the sun from the sight of mortals, so doth sin hide the smiling countenance of my God from the view of my poor soul. As the cloud is consumed, and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. If showers from above make the earth soft and fruitful, surely the showers of heaven's grace would make my hard and barren heart both tender and abundant in holiness. Lord, whilst I am in my journey towards my heavenly Canaan, let thy good Spirit be my pillar of cloud to direct me; suffer me not to be as a cloud without water; do but say unto me, I have blotted out thy transgressions as a thick cloud, and I will bless thee for ever.

If we look to the earth and view her well, though she hath been called and counted the vilest and grossest of the elements, we shall find her a glorious body, and not in the least degree a disparagement or disgrace to her Maker. Take her inside, and she is curiously and wonderfully made. Her centre, like the heart, is seated in the most



convenient place, for the benefit of every part; her several channels underground, as so many veins, do convey her pure, though pale blood, for the animating and actuating, as it were, every member. Though her wealth lieth deep, and much of it was never discovered to any mortal, yet what rare jewels and rich metals have been seen in her very guts and garbage! Take her outside, and that clothing will be found better than of wrought gold; her garment is richer, in any part of it, than Solomon in all his royalty. The fine linen of Egypt, silks of Persia, and curious works of Turkey, are exceedingly inferior to her daily attire; she is covered with the costly curious arras of herbs, and plants, and flowers; embroidered with variety of all sorts of colours, perfumed with the most fragrant and delightful odours; she is attended by birds and beasts of several orders, that all in their proper ranks move to and fro, acknowledging their engagements to her. Oh, who is like that God that hath made himself such a footstool! If his footstool be so glorious, how glorious is his throne! But, besides all this, he that shall ponder the fruitfulness and fecundity of her womb, her unweariedness in bringing forth, her wonderful care of her offspring, in bringing them up, providing them all, though of different kinds, food suitable to each of their natures whilst they live, and receiving them kindly into her bosom and embraces when they die, and all else are weary of them, may well cry out by way of admiration, 'O Lord, the earth is full of thy goodness, the earth is full of thy glory!' What rich mines may I dig out of the bowels of the earth! When my God is angry, the earth shakes and trembleth, and the foundations thereof are moved; and shall not my flesh tremble for fear of the God of the whole earth, and my soul be afraid of his righteous judgments? His hand hath laid the foundation of the earth, and his right hand hath spanned the heavens; when he calls they stand up together, and shall not I hear his call and obey his command? Lord, if the earth be thine, and the fulness thereof, the world, and all that dwell therein, whose, then, am I? Surely thine. Oh

help me to disown all title to myself, to quit all my interest in myself, and to live as one that is not his own, but the Lord's. The earth is full of thy riches, let my heart be full of thy righteousness, and that will turn earth to me into heaven, whilst I am full of thy likeness and thy love.

If we consider the ocean, that amazeth a beholder with its fierce countenance, and seems to have neither banks nor bottom, how it threatens the earth with its boisterous billows, as if it intended to swallow it up in a moment, and yet, when it hath swollen itself to the height of its pride, and its insulting waves have shewed their teeth, how soon it retreats, like a coward, as if it were afraid of the smallest worm, and had already outgone its bounds and commission! What innumerable fish, both small and great, take up their chambers in the waters, and find their food in the jaws of that devourer! What multitudes of massy vessels she fetcheth off from one island, and carrieth upon her back, as a porter his burden, and sets them down safe at another! how she playeth with them, what frights she puts them in by the way, as men do little children, tossing them up to heaven, and then throwing them down again, as if her belly should be the certain place of their burial, and after all her frowns and fury, refresheth them with her smiles and favour, and doth but prepare them thereby to salute their harbour with the greater joy and gladness! How she sendeth out of her storehouse provision for the several families of the world, furnishing the several pipes and aqueducts of the earth with fresh springs and streams for the comfort of man and beasts; if we but consider these things, what cause shall we have to say with the psalmist, 'They that go down into ships see his wonders in the deep;' and with those mariners, 'What manner of man is this, whom the winds and the seas obey?' What manner of God is this, who gathereth the waters of the sea together, and layeth up the floods in storehouses; who shutteth in the ocean with bars

and doors, and saith, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed;' who puts a bridle in the jaws of such a monster, and, when she threatens nothing but death and destruction, pulls her in, and makes her retreat to her own den without doing the least hurt? Oh, what a God is this, whom the rugged, blustering winds, and raging, boisterous seas obey! What excellent conclusions may a Christian gather from such premises! Do the winds and seas obey God, as stubborn and surly as they are, and shall not I obey him? Are they kept within their banks, and shall not I be kept within my bounds? Lord, thou stillest the noise of the seas, the noise of the waters, and the tumults of the people; oh, why dost thou not quiet the headstrong passions in my breast? Thou observest how they roar and make a noise continually, what frightful storms they raise within me; if thou wouldst but say to them in their height and heat, Peace, be still, there would presently ensue a calm. Oh, suffer not these high winds to overturn me, nor these swelling waters to overwhelm me! I am ever ready to sink, save me, Master, or I perish.

Thus a Christian may consider the works of God either collectively or severally, both in their insides and outsides, to his marvellous advantage. As the Rabbis say of the word, I may say of the works of God, Turn it over, and over, and over again, for all is in it; turn them over, and over, and over again, for all is in them. There is wisdom in them, in their variety, diversity of natures, subordination, and serviceableness each to other: 'O Lord, how marvellous are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all.' There is power in bringing with a breath the whole creation out of the barren womb of nothing: 'He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.' There is mercy in providing so bountifully for every of his creatures: 'The whole earth is full of thy goodness.' There is faithfulness in upholding all things in their being: 'Thy faithfulness is

unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth; yea, mercy and truth meet together. Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens, and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds.' Every of God's works is so profitable, that, as the aromatic fruit, not only the kernel is a nutmeg, but the skin of it is mace. As in a fair suit of arras, though the hangings never appear to their full advantage but when they are opened in all their dimensions, and seen together, yet a small shred may assure you of the excellency of the colours, and richness of the stuff; so, though the divine perfections would appear most in their beauty and glory, if we were able, at one view, to behold the whole world in its several eminences and beauties, yet a little part of it may speak the worth and richness of the whole. It was an honest speech of a monk, who, being asked how he could endure that life without the pleasure of books, answered, The nature of the creatures is my library, wherein, when I please, I can muse upon God's deep oracles. The Egyptians were instructed by characters and hieroglyphics: by something presented to the eye, notions were represented to the understanding.

Reader, it is thy privilege that thou mayest perform this duty in any place. No sight, no sound, but may afford matter for meditation. If thou walkest in thy garden, thou mayest turn it into an Eden by delightful meditations. Dost thou behold the flowers standing in their ranks, what a goodly show they make, thou mayest think what a lovely sight it is to see Christians continuing in those several places and stations in which God hath set them. Some flowers open and shut with the sun, so doth the Christian observe the shining and withdrawing of the Sun of righteousness. Some flowers die, having a worm gnawing their root, so will all hypocrites wither, and come to nothing, notwithstanding their gaudy show. Flowers are tender things, and must be charily looked to, or they fade away; so saints, if the Spirit of God were not choice of them, and ever watchful over

them, would perish. How lovely are flowers to the eye! how pleasant to the taste! how soft to the touch! what ornaments to a house! How amiable are the children of God to those that have eyes to see his image on them! how fragrant is the smell of their spikenard, and calamus, and cassia! what a grace are they to any family or society! Dost thou walk into thy garden, to observe how thy flowers thrive? Cant. 7:11; so Jesus Christ goeth into his garden to see how his plants flourish. Thou wilt not allow any weeds or barren flowers in thy garden, and Jesus Christ will not permit such wicked, unprofitable ones in his church. Flowers are lovely and beautiful one day, and withered and fallen off the stalk the next, Isa. 40:6; so man is a comely living creature one day, and a deformed corpse the next. Thus a saint may make every flower like the gillyflower, cordial to him.

If thou walkest by a river, thou mayest change the water there into spirits by meditation. How fitly may thy thoughts be raised by that object to the cleansing, refreshing properties of the word of God, to the water of life, to the well of salvation, to the river whose streams make glad the city of God, to the rivers of pleasures at God's right hand for evermore! The same water which, being liquid, is penetrated with a horse-hair, will bear the horse himself when hard frozen; so those threats and judgments of God, which penetrate deep into the tender consciences of the regenerate, enter not at all into the hearts of carnal men, hardened by custom in sin; and hence thou mayest gather the reason whence the sword of the word, that in some divideth the joints and marrow, in others glanceth only, or reboundeth, not making the least dint or impression upon their frozen, adamantine hearts. If thou art eating and drinking, thou mayest feed thy soul as well as thy body, by meditating on the 'meat that endureth to everlasting life'—on that 'flesh which is meat indeed, and that blood which is drink indeed.' Thou mayest think, If my outward man need food, and without it cannot subsist, surely

spiritual food is as needful for my inward man, and without it that will starve. If a famine of bread and water be so dreadful, that the tongues of men cleave under it to the roof of their mouths, and their countenances become as black as a coal, how dreadful is a famine of the word of the Lord! If natural food be so pleasant and savoury to my taste, surely spiritual food is sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb. If all the labour of man be for his belly, what labour doth the soul deserve! If the ordinances of my God now are so pleasant to me, that my soul is even filled as with marrow and fatness, and refreshed as with wine on the lees, well refined, what a blessed day will it be, when I shall eat bread in the kingdom of heaven, and drink new wine in my Father's kingdom! O 'blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'

If thou beholdest thy candle, thou mayest consider how that light which makes small show in the day, yields a glorious lustre in the night, not because the candle hath then more light, but because the air hath then more darkness; so that holiness and grace, which in a day of prosperity and life seems of small worth and price, in a night of adversity and death will be of infinite value. Or thus, I set up this candle to help and direct me about my business; so God sets up the candle of my life, and affords me the light of his word for me to work out my salvation, not to play by them. Or thus, this candle is spending itself for my good; so I should be willing to spend and be spent for the good of others' souls. Or, this candle is always consuming, and will at last be quite wasted; so is my life daily wearing away, and ere long will be quite extinguished. The great candles, whilst they burn, make the greater light, but when they go out, leave the greater stench; so ungodly men, the greater they are, the more they shine with glory whilst they live, but when they die, leave the more stinking savour behind them. If thou art putting off thy clothes, thou mayest ponder thy duty to put off the old man,

which is corrupt according to his deceitful lusts, and to put off the works of darkness, as also that ere long thou shalt put off thine earthly tabernacle. Art thou lying down in thy bed? Thou mayest think of thy grave, wherein thou must shortly lie down, and never rise up till the morning of the resurrection. Is the night dark? Thou mayest meditate thence on the darkness of thy mind naturally, of the works of darkness, of the blackness of darkness for ever. Ah, what a dark dungeon is hell, where not the least spark of light appears, though so much fire! My night will end, but sinners' evening will find no morning. If a bed be so refreshing to my wearied body, how refreshing is a Redeemer to a wearied soul! How lovingly he inviteth me, 'Come to me, all that are weary, I will give you rest!' And how refreshing will that rest be, which remaineth to the people of God! When thou wakest in the morning, thou mayest say with the psalmist, 'When I awake, I shall be satisfied with thy likeness;' or, 'When I awake, I am still with thee;' or rouse thyself up with, 'Awake to righteousness, and sin not. Awake, thou that sleepest; arise, and call upon thy God.' When thou art rising, thou mayest meditate on the church's garment of needlework, the fine linen of the saints' righteousness; thy putting on the new man, created after God, in righteousness and true holiness; thy putting on that most excellent clothing, which is for warmth, for ornament, and defence, the Lord Jesus Christ. Dost thou look on the glass to dress thyself? Think of the glass of God's law, how necessary it is daily to look into it, for the discovery of thy spiritual spots and filth. Dost thou wash thy hands? Oh wash thy heart from wickedness, and forget not that great laver of the blood of Jesus Christ! Doth thy stomach call for some food? Think of thy spiritual appetite, and how savoury it will make the dainties of God's house to thee: 'They did all eat of the same spiritual meat, and they did all drink the same spiritual drink; they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.' Art thou to go about buying or selling, or worldly bargains? Take some

thoughts of buying that one pearl of great price, which the wise merchant sold all he had to purchase, of buying that gold of grace, and fine linen of the saints' righteousness, Mat. 13:44; Rev. 3:18. Amongst all thy gains and gettings, consider: 'What will it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what will a man give in exchange for his soul!' If the gaining a little silver or gold be worth so much time and pains, how much is holiness and heaven worth! Surely ten thousand times more. Art thou in the day to take a journey, thou mayest consider, I am but a pilgrim and stranger in this earth; I am every day travelling towards my long home; I have no abiding city here, but look for one that is to come, whose builder and maker is God. Oh that I could prepare for it, and daily make some progress towards it. Art thou to spend the day in thy shop, or fields, and about many businesses? Think on that of Christ: 'Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall never be taken from her.' This, reader, were an excellent improvement of thy time in solitude, by such occasional meditations, which are obvious to ordinary understandings.

## **SECTION V**

Thirdly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness in solitude, mind solemn and set meditation. In the former head I advised thee to occasional, in this to deliberate, meditation; hereby thou wilt not only prevent those covetous, ambitious, lascivious thoughts, which otherwise might crowd in upon thee, and pollute thee, but also exceedingly further thy soul in holiness. Occasional meditations do some good, but these much more, as making a greater impression upon the soul, and abiding longer with it. They differ as a taste and a full meal, as a sip and a good draught. Occasional meditations are



like loving strangers, that afford us a visit, but are quickly gone. Deliberate meditations are as inhabitants that dwell with us, and are longer helpful to us. The former, as the morning dew, do somewhat moisten and refresh the earth, but quickly passeth away; the latter, as a good shower, soaks deep, and continueth long. Because this is of great weight, I shall acquaint thee what solemn meditation is, and then give thee a pattern of it.

Solemn meditation is a serious applying the mind to some sacred subject, till the affections be warmed and quickened, and the resolution heightened and strengthened thereby, against what is evil, and for that which is good.

There are five things in this description.

1. It is an application of the mind. The understanding must be awake about this duty; it is not a work to be done sleeping. If the mind be not stirring, the affections will be nodding. The understanding in this is, as it were, the master workman—if that be out of the way, or missing, the servants of the affections will be idle, and stand still. It is by this sun that heat is conveyed to the lower world. Darkness, like the night, is accompanied with damps and cold. The chariot of light is attended with warming and quickening beams.

2. It is a serious applying the mind. Too quick digestion breeds crudities in the mind as well as in the body, and doth often more distemper than nourish. There must be a retentive faculty to hold fast that which nature receiveth, until a thorough concoction be wrought, or little strength will be gotten by it. Hereby it differeth from occasional meditation, which is sudden, and soon vanisheth: this calls at the door, salutes us, and takes its leave; that comes in and stays some time with us. Occasional meditation is transient, like the dogs of Nilus, that lap and are gone; set meditation is permanent

—it, as the spouse begged of Christ, lodgeth all night between the breasts. This duty cannot be done unless the mind be kept close to it; the person that is negligent, cannot do this work of the Lord. Things of importance are not to be huddled up in haste; loose thoughts, as loose garments, hinder us in our business. We need as much our hearts united to think of God, as to fear God. Short glances do little good; it is the abiding influence of the sun that turns the earth into silver and golden metal; it is not once dipping the stuff into the dye-vat, but frequently doing it, that giveth the pure scarlet colour. The true mithridate, which is so cordial and opening, is long a-making. The yellow wax lieth long in the beams of the sun before it changeth its colour, and attaineth a virgin-like whiteness and purity. He that rides post, though he wearies himself in travelling from place to place, is less able to give an account of the country through which he passeth, than he that is more slow in his course, but more constant in his abode; *omnis festinatio cœca est*, saith Seneca. It is much blowing that makes the green wood to flame.

3. It is about some sacred subject. As good meat and drink breed good blood, so good subjects will breed good thoughts. There is abundant matter for our meditation: as the nature or attributes of God, the states and offices of Christ, the threefold state of man, the four last things—the vanity of the creature, the sinfulness of sin, and the love and fulness of the blessed Saviour, the divine word and works; out of these we may choose sometimes one thing, sometimes another, to be the particular subject of our thoughts, *Exod. 15:11; Ps. 1:1, and 119:148; Prov. 6:22; 1 Tim. 4:13*. To undertake more than one at a time, will deprive us of the benefit of all. Too much food will rather destroy than increase the natural heat. A little wood may help that fire to burn, which a great quantity would smother. Whilst the dog runs after two hares, now after one, and presently after the other, he loseth both. Many subjects, as a press or crowd of people,

do but hinder one another. Those streams are strongest which are most united. Greediness of appetite, and receiving too much food, weakeneth digestion. Simples are most operative; mixtures and compositions are often used to allay their force.

When thou hast fixed upon the subject, meditate, if it may be, on its causes, properties, effects, titles, comparisons, testimonies, contraries, all will help to illustrate the subject, and to quicken and advantage thee; they do all, as so many several windows, let in those beams which both enlighten the mind and warm the affections, but they must be considered in their places, and methodically. The parts of a watch jumbled together serve for no use, but each in their order make a rare and useful piece.

4. It is that the affections may be warmed and quickened. Our hearts and affections should answer our thoughts, as the echo the voice, and the wax the character in the seal. If our meditations do not better our hearts, they do nothing. Whilst they swim in the mind, as light things floating on the waters, they are unprofitable; but when they sink down into the affections, as heavy and weighty things, making suitable and real impressions there, then they attain their end. Our design in meditation must be rather to cleanse our hearts, than to clear our heads. 'Whilst I was musing, the fire burned.' We strike fire by meditation to kindle our affections. This application of the thoughts to the heart is like the natural heat, which digesteth the food, and turneth it into good nourishment.

When we are meditating on the sinfulness of sin. In its nature; its contrariety to God, his being, his law, his honour; its opposition to our own souls, their present purity and peace, their future glory and bliss. In its causes; Satan, the wicked one, its father, the corrupt heart of man its mother. In its properties; how defiling it is, filthiness

itself; how infectious it is, overspreading the whole man, polluting all his natural, civil, spiritual actions, and making his praying, hearing, singing, an abomination; how deceiving it is, pretending meat, and intending murder. In its effects; the curse of God on all the creatures, evident by the vanity in them, the vexation they bring with them; in the anger of God on sinners, apparent in those temporal punishments, spiritual judgments, and eternal torments which he inflicteth on them; I say, when we meditate on this, we should endeavour to get our hearts broken for sin, ashamed of sin, and fired with indignation against sin. Oh what a wretch am I, should the soul think, to harbour such a traitor against my sovereign! What a fool am I to hug such a serpent in my bosom! What sorrow for it can be sufficient! what hatred of it is enough! What watchfulness against it, what self-aborrancy, because I have loved it, and lived in it, can equal its desert! Oh that I could weep bitterly for the commission of it, and watch narrowly for the prevention of it, and pray fervently for pardon of it, and power against it! How much am I bound to God for his patience towards so great a sinner! How infinitely am I engaged to Christ for taking upon him my sins! It was infinite condescension in him to take upon him my nature; but oh, what humiliation was it to take upon him my sins! What life can answer such love! what thankfulness should I render for such grace, such goodness! The close applying of our meditations to our hearts, is like the applying and rubbing in oil on a benumbed joint, which recovers it to its due sense. He that omits it doth as a chapman, that praiseth ware and cheapens it, but doth not buy it, and so is never the better for it. David proceeds from meditation of God's works, to application of his thoughts: Ps. 8:2–4, 'When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, &c. What is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou dost thus visit him?'

5. It is a serious applying of some sacred subject, that his resolutions may be strengthened against evil, and for good. The Christian must not only pray his good thoughts, but practise them; he must not lock them up in his mind, but lay them out in his life. A council of war or of state is wholly useless, if there be none to execute what they determine. That kingdom flourisheth best where faithful execution followeth sound advisements: therefore the heathen pronounced that city safe which had the heads of old men for consideration, and the hands of young men for execution. Action without consideration is usually lame and defective; consideration without action is lost and abortive. Though meditation, like Rachel, be more fair; execution, like Leah, is most fruitful. The beasts, under the law, were unclean, which did not both chew the cud and divide the hoof. *Ruminatio ad sapientiam, fissa ungula pertinet ad mores*; Chewing the cud signifieth meditation, dividing the hoof a holy conversation, without which the former will be unprofitable, saith Augustine.

Reader, hast thou thought of the beauty and excellency of holiness, in its nature, its conformity to the pure nature, and holy commands of the blessed God—in its causes, the Spirit of God its principal efficient, the holy Scriptures its instrumental; in its names it is the image of God, the divine nature, light, life, the travail of Christ's soul, grace, glory, the kingdom of heaven; in its effects or fruits, how it renders thee amiable in God's eye, hath the promise of his ear, is entitled to pardon, peace, joy, adoption, growth in grace, perseverance to the end, and the exceeding and eternal weight of glory, and hast applied this so close to thy heart, that thou hast been really affected with its worth, and wished thyself enriched with that jewel, though thou wert a beggar all thy life; and resolved with thyself, Well, I will watch, and weep, and hear, and pray, both fervently and frequently, for holiness; I will follow God up and down, and never leave him till he sanctifieth my soul? Now, I say to thee, as

Nathan to David, when he told him of his thoughts and resolution of building a temple: 'Do all that is in thine heart, for God is with thee,' 1 Chron. 17:2. Or as God to Moses, concerning the Jews: 'They have well spoken all that they have said; oh that there were an heart in them to keep my commandments!' It is well thou art brought to any good purposes; but it will be ill if they be not followed with performances. Good intentions without suitable actions is but a false conception; or like a piece charged without a bullet, which may make a noise, but doth no good, no execution. Indeed there is no way better to evidence the sincerity of thy intentions than by answerable actions. David was good at this: 'I thought on my ways,' there was his serious consideration; 'and turned my feet to thy testimonies,' there is his holy conversation; so again, 'I will meditate on thy precepts, and will have respect to thy testimonies.' It is in vain to pretend that, like Moses, we go into the mount of contemplation, and converse with God, unless we come down, as he did, with our faces shining, our conversations more splendid with holiness. This, saith the chief of the philosophers, will [bring] a man to perfect happiness, if to his contemplation he join a constant imitation of God in wisdom, justice, and holiness.

Thus I have despatched those five particulars in meditations. The first three are but one—though for method's sake, to help the reader, I spake to them severally—and are usually called cogitation, the other two application and resolution. Cogitation provides food, application eats it, resolution digests it, and gets strength from it. Cogitation cuts out the suit, application makes it up, resolution puts it on and wears it. Cogitation betters the judgment, application the affections, and resolution the life. It is confessed, this duty of set meditation is as hard as rare, and as uneasy as extraordinary; but experience teacheth that the profit makes abundant recompense for our pains in the performance of it. Besides, as millstones grind hard at first, but,

being used to it, they grind easily, and make good flour; so the Christian, wholly disused to this duty, at first may find it somewhat difficult, but afterwards both facile and fruitful.

Reader, to help thee herein, I shall give thee an example, though I would desire thee to remember that the advantage of meditation is rather to be felt than read. He that can paint spikenard, or musk, or roses, in their proper colours, cannot, with all his art, draw their pleasant savour; that is beyond the skill of his pencil.

Let us, O my soul, a little retire out of the world's company, to converse with the word of thy God. I cannot but hope the malefactor hath a high esteem for that psalm of mercy, without which he had lost his life. I have reason to believe that thou hast no mean value for that gospel of grace, and the grace of that gospel, without which thou hadst lost thy soul, thy God, thy joy, thy delight, thine all, and that for ever; yet sure I am, the price thou settest on it is far inferior to the worth of this pearl; and, besides, I have observed of late, whether partly because of its constancy with thee,—things common, though never so necessary and excellent, being less valued than meaner things that are rare,—or chiefly because of thy old seeming friend, or rather real enemy, thy flesh within thee, that never speaks well of it, because of its contrariety to the word, from which it hath received its death-wound, and therefore would die as the thief on the cross, spitting out its venom and malice at it, or whatever be the cause, I perceive too much thou beginnest to decline in thy respect to it; what else doth thy backwardness to read it, thy carelessness in minding what thou dost read, and thy negligence in practising it, signify? Therefore let us take a turn or two together, and argue the case, lest it be argued against thee in a higher court, to thy cost; and I charge thee before the dreadful God, at whose judgment-seat thou art to stand or fall for ever, that thou attend to me seriously, and not dare

to give me the slip, till the whole be debated, for it is not a vain thing, but is for thy life.

What is this word which thou art so prone to despise? Consider it, O my soul, first, in its causes, and then tell me whether the child be not worthy of love and esteem in the superlative degree for his parent's sake.

1. Its principal efficient cause is the glorious and supreme Majesty of heaven and earth, the spring and fountain of all excellency and perfection: 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.' It is the word of the Lord, the breath of his mouth, the law of his lips; whoever were the pens or scribes, his mind indited, and his hand wrote, every sentence in it. What a word must that be, which is the result of infinite wisdom! How precious are those tables which are the writing of God himself! How glorious is that beam of light which was darted from this sun, to whom a whole firmament of suns were worse than perfect darkness! If the breath of a man be so sweet, that his doctrine drop as the rain, and his speech distil as the dew; if the heart of a man can indite a good matter, and his tongue resemble the pen of a ready writer, oh what is the speech of the tongue of a God! 'Never man spake as he spake;' his enemies themselves being judges, John 7:46. The Queen of Sheba came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and blessed those servants that waited at his table and heard his wisdom. But, lo, O my soul! a greater than Solomon is here: 'How blessed are they that wait at his gates, and that watch at the posts of his doors!'

2. The penmen and scribes of it were men of choice gifts and graces. Some of them were, like Saul, higher by the head and shoulders than their brethren in the fear and favour of God. As Moses, the meekest man upon the face of the earth; David, the sweet singer of Israel, a



man after God's own heart; Solomon, who excelled in wisdom all that were before him, or came after him; Isaiah, of the blood-royal, an evangelical prophet, or prophetic evangelist, whose prophecy is clean and clear, and curiously garnished with all kind of rhetoric; John, the beloved disciple that leaned on the bosom of Jesus; Paul, who was rapt up into the third heavens, and as famous for active and passive obedience as any in the world in his days; all of them were men extraordinarily inspired, and assisted by the Spirit of God. Not only the notions, but the very phrases and words were imprinted on them, and infused into them by God himself. The writings of some naturalists have been bought at a great price, and thought worthy to be presented to great princes; but the best of them (though the prophecy of the sybils, which the heathen so highly esteemed, be included) is but a bundle of folly and vanity to this book: 'Prophecy came not of old time by the will of men, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' Oh how excellent must that Scripture be, of which such incomparable persons were the penmen or amanuenses, and to whom the infinite wisdom of God did dictate every word!

3. The matter of them is heavenly and divine, the epitome of all equity and righteousness, the compendium of whatsoever is fit to be believed or practised. The Scripture is a perfect rule, both for faith and manners; it informeth us fully in our carriage towards God, and towards men—how we ought to walk in all relations and conditions; it forbiddeth evil, all evil in the very thoughts; it commandeth good, whatsoever is good, in the whole course of our lives; it speaketh of such things as are far above reason, and yet nothing that is contrary to reason. The truths delivered in it, are many of them such as no human or created capacity could have possibly invented, yet such as are all agreeable to a rational understanding. It would have exceeded the wisdom of an angel to have thought of such a sweet mixture of

justice and mercy, as is discovered in the gospel, about the redemption of fallen man. It teacheth the nature and excellency of God, the trinity of persons, the unity of essence, the immensity of all his attributes; how he is infinite in his being, wisdom, knowledge, holiness, mercy, and faithfulness; how he is a pure act, without the least passion; a perfect being, incapable of any addition; eternal, without either beginning or ending; immutable, without the least alteration; incomprehensible, beyond all conceptions; omnipresent, without any circumscription. It instructed us in the person, and offices, and states of the blessed Redeemer; how he, being the Son of God, was partaker of the human nature, that the sons of men might be partakers of the divine nature; how God and man were united in one person, that man and God might be united in one covenant; how the eternal God married our nature, that he might exalt his boundless grace in marrying our persons; how man was the debtor, God-man the surety, who made satisfaction to God the creditor; how he was born of a mean woman, that we might be born of the most high God; he was tempted, that he might conquer Satan for us, and sueeour us when tempted by him; what a life he led, filled with miracles and miseries; what a death he died, imbittered with shame and pain, and all that we might be exalted to eternal honour and pleasure; how he triumphed over death, the grave, the curse of the law, Satan, and hell, in his resurrection, and ascended into heaven, leading captivity captive; appears in his Father's presence, pleading his death, as the price of his chosen's safety and life, sitteth at his right hand, and ever liveth to make intercession for us. Its precepts excel all the commands, and statutes, and laws, that ever were in the world, in purity, and justice, and goodness, much more than the firmament of stars doth a wisp of straws; its promises are exceeding great and precious, of special efficacy, superlative excellency, and unquestionable certainty. In a word, the Scripture hath all in it

requisite either for counsel or comfort, for necessity or delight, for knowledge or action, for direction in life, or consolation in death.

4. The form of the Scripture renders it worthy my highest esteem and hottest affection.

(1.) Its inward form is, that perfect correspondence and agreement between the commands and promises laid down in the word, and that infallible and certain truth of God's own understanding. The books of men are suitable to their minds, and their minds being but in part sanctified, their works must be answerably imperfect; but the Lord's understanding being infinitely pure and true, his word must bear some proportion to it. God is truth, without the least shadow of error; holy, without the least tittle of mixture; hence his word is certain, without the smallest colour for doubts: 'Thy law is the truth;' pure, not admitting of the least sin or darkness; 'thy word is very pure, therefore doth thy servant love it.' Because of its exact conformity to the eternal will of God, it is called his word. As a man maketh known his mind by his words, so doth God; hence it is called the mind of God, Prov. 1:23; the word of God, 1 Pet. 1:15; the counsel of God, Acts 20:27; the oracles of God, Rom. 3:2; the law of God, Ps. 1:2. Not only in regard of its author, which is the divine wisdom, but also in regard of its matter, which is the divine will.

(2.) Its outward form is both plain and difficult; according to Gregory, so shallow that lambs may wade in it, and so deep that elephants may swim in it. Its style is so plain as to encourage the most unlearned, and yet so difficult as to exercise the greatest scholars and most profound rabbis. To those that are babes in understanding, the Scripture is milk; to them that are men in knowledge, the word is strong meat; it is therefore called light, the nature of which, is both to discover itself and other things also. 'Thy

word is a light to my feet, and a lamp unto my paths;' it is 'a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts,' Ps. 119:105; 2 Pet. 1:19.

It is plain in regard of fundamentals and things necessary to be known and done. What we are to believe concerning God, the Mediator, our own estate of innocency, apostasy, recovery; what we are to practise in order to salvation, are all perspicuous and clear to ordinary capacities. Though there be some whose 'eyes the god of this world hath blinded, lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine upon them;' yet 'all wisdom's ways are plain to him that understandeth,' 2 Cor. 4:4; Prov. 8:9. The Scripture sheweth the greatest simplicity, both in words and phrases and figures, that the weakest need not be afraid of searching into it. There is such obscurity also in things not absolutely necessary to salvation, that the deepest understandings need not be ashamed of reading and studying it. Peter affirms that in the epistles of Paul, there are *δυσνόητα τινά*, some things hard to be understood. There are such abstruse texts in the word of God, that no man can make a certain comment on them. The Jews themselves confessed that in the latter end of Ezekiel, there are many things mentioned which are beyond all their apprehensions, against which, and all other difficulties in the Old Testament, they comfort themselves according to the expression of the woman of Samaria, *Messias venturus est, qui nobis annunciabit omnia*, The Messiah will come and tell us all things. Now the wise God seeth fit to let some truths in Scripture be dark;—

(1.) To shame us for our ignorance, which is the fruit of our fall from him. The pride and height of man is laid low, by the profound and hard places in the word of God.

(2.) To quicken us to diligence, in reading and meditating, and comparing scripture with scripture. The deeper a mine of gold lieth in the earth, the harder we must labour to dig it out.

(3.) To raise our price of the word of God. We are apt to slight things that are easy and ordinary, and to value things at the highest, that cost us dearest.

(4.) To provoke us to pray to God, that he would give us his key, whereby we may unlock this cabinet of precious jewels. He only that made the Scripture can best acquaint us with his mind in the Scripture; therefore David entreated divine light, that he might understand the divine law: Ps. 119:18, 'Open mine eyes, that I may see the wonderful things of thy law.'

5. The final cause of the word, will speak it full of value and worth; namely, the glory of the great God, and the salvation of lost man, John 7:18. The honour of God shines more brightly than the meridian sun, through the whole heaven of the Scripture, 2 Cor. 4:6. The Scripture exalteth God in regard of his infinite nature and being, his transcendent excellencies and perfections, his eternal decree, his works of creation and providence. It advanceth God in all his attributes, declaring to us,

(1.) His wisdom; how he is the only wise God. The foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men; yea, that angels themselves are fools to him. His understanding is infinite.

(2.) His power; how he is mighty in strength, the Almighty God; to him nothing is impossible; doth whatever he pleaseth; can do more than he will do.

(3.) His mercy; how he is full of mercy, rich in mercy, the Father of mercies; hath multitudes of tender mercies, his mercy endureth for ever, hath a height, and depth, and length, and breadth in it which none can reach.

(4.) His justice; how he fails not the least in the performance of his promises, and accomplishment of his threatenings; how he will by no means clear the guilty, not the greatest of his favourites, not for the least of their offences; how he hath manifested his justice in the deluge brought on the old world, in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, in his carriage towards apostate angels, rebellious Israelites, his own chosen people, and the Mediator his own Son, when he took upon him man's sin; in the instruments of eternal death, which he hath prepared in hell for sinners, and the solemn triumph which justice shall have at the great day, and to all eternity in the other world.

(5.) His holiness; how he loathes sin with the greatest abhorrency, cannot behold the least iniquity, shoots the arrows of his vengeance against its actors and authors; will be sanctified in, or upon, all that approach him; is terrible in his holy places, forbiddeth the least compliance with sin, though but in a sudden thought; and makes it his end in his providences, ordinances, the gift of his Son, his Spirit, to make men holy. I might shew how it exalteth him in all his properties, but I pass on. It glorifieth him in every part of it. Its precepts and commands speak his purity and dominion; its promises and covenant speak his boundless mercy and compassion; its threatenings and comminations speak his justice and jealousy; its prophecies and predictions speak his wisdom and omniscience.

The Scripture tendeth also to the eternal good of men. It is helpful to beget a soul to Christ: of his own will begat he us again by the word

of truth. The word of grace is instrumental for the conveyance of grace, Acts 2:37; Rom. 10:14. It is helpful to build the soul up in Christ: 'As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby,' 1 Pet. 2:2. Grace is increased by the same means by which it is generated; as the same sun that begets some living creatures is helpful for their growth. The word of God, of stones raiseth up children to Abraham, and of children maketh young men and fathers. It is so penned, that all sorts of persons, all ranks of Christians, may be directed into the way of truth, and guided by it in the way of life. It is able to make us wise to salvation: To shew the path of life, 2 Tim. 3:15; Ps. 16:11. As Joshua, it leads the Israelites into Canaan. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable,—

1. For doctrine. Where Scripture hath not a tongue to speak, I must not have an ear to hear. *Scriptura est regula fidei*, Scripture is the rule of faith; hence the doctrine of the apostles and prophets is called a foundation, Eph. 2:20.

2. For reproof. It is the hammer of heresies. Ignorance of Scripture, is one main cause of error. 'Ye err, not knowing the Scripture.' By this sword of the Spirit Christ vanquished Satan, Mat. 4:4; and the Jews, John 5:45; and Sadducees, Mat. 22:29. *Lapidandi sunt hæretici sacrarum literarum argumentis*, Heretics are to be stoned with Scripture arguments, saith Athanasius. The word of God hits that unclean bird in the eye, and wounds it mortally.

3. For correction of manners. The sword of the word pierceth the sinner's conscience; like Christ to the woman of Samaria, it tells him all that ever he did, and makes him smite upon his thigh, and say, What have I done? Scripture is a glass, which sheweth him the spots that are in the face of his heart and life.

4. For instruction in righteousness. It is the way in which we should walk, the rule of our spiritual race. What is written on some psalms, may be written on every psalm and chapter in the whole Bible, Maschil, or psalm for instruction. Its precepts teach us what to follow, its prohibitions tell us what to forsake; its promises are to allure us to sanctity, its threatenings to affright us from sin. The good example of the saints speaketh as Christ to Peter, Follow thou me; the wicked actions and ends of sinners cry aloud, as Abner to Joab, Knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the end?

5. For comfort. There is no such cordial for a fainting spirit as a promise in the word. The gospel in the Greek is glad tidings, and not without cause: 'This is my comfort in my affliction, for thy word hath quickened me.' When souls have been ready to despair under the sense of their wickedness, and to sink in deep waters, the word of God hath held them up by the chin, and preserved them from drowning: 'Unless thy law had been my delight, I had perished in mine affliction.'

6. For salvation. The word is called the kingdom of heaven, partly because it revealeth God's thoughts of such an inestimable happiness to the children of men. The celestial Canaan was terra incognita till that discovered it. 'He hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel,' 2 Tim. 1:10, partly because it prepares the soul for heaven: the word sanctifieth, and so saveth, precious souls. By filling us with grace, it fitteth us for glory, Rom. 1:16; John 17:17, partly because it is the seed of heaven. As the harvest is potentially in the seed, and a tall oak potentially in an acorn; so heaven and eternal life is potentially in the word of life. It is called the grace of God that bringeth salvation. It bringeth salvation to men, and it bringeth men to salvation.



Secondly, Consider it, O my soul, in its properties; they will also speak its preciousness.

I. It is pure and holy. There are some dregs that will appear in the exactest writings of the best men, when they have been shaken by a critical hand; but none could ever justly fasten the least filth upon the Holy Scriptures. The word of Christ is like the spouse of Christ: there is no spot in it. The Alcoran of Mahomet alloweth polygamy, promiseth sensual pleasures as the reward of his servants; but the Scripture winketh not at the least sin, no, not so much as in a motion of the heart, or a glance of the eye, and its promises are also pure and spiritual. The doctrine of the wisest heathen and philosophers were a mixture of good and bad. Theft was no fault amongst Lycurgus' laws, but if done slyly commended highly. Aristotle permitted revenge, and obscene jesting, which Scripture expressly forbids. 'Thy word is very pure;' 'the words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.' There is not the least dross of evil or error in it.

1. Its principal author is the original and exemplar of all holiness, his nature is the pattern, and his will the rule of purity, Exod. 15:4; Isa. 6:3.

2. The scribes of it were holy men, moved and actuated by the Holy Ghost.

3. Its effect is to sanctify and make holy: 'Ye are clean, through the word that I have given you.'

4. The matter of it is holy; its commanding part is holy. 'The law is holy, just, and good,' Rom. 7:12. Its assertory part is holy: what it affirms to be, is; what it denieth to be, is not, Ps. 19:7. Its promissory part is holy, both formaliter, in its own nature, and effectivè, in its

end and fruit. Its historical part is holy: other books are properly called profane histories, in distinction from this. The Scripture's expressions are pure, of the most impure actions. 'He knew her no more:' 'men with men doing what is unseemly,' Gen. 38:26; Rom. 1:27.

II. It is powerful. As fire, it can melt the hardest metal; as a hammer, it can break the most stony heart, Jer. 23:29.

1. It is powerful for conviction. It sets men's sins before their eyes, and makes them behold their ugliness and deformity, whether they will or no. It tells the sinner, as Elisha, concerning the Syrian king, to the king of Israel, what he doth and saith in his bed-chamber, in the retiring-room of his heart. It makes the spirit of the stoutest sinner to tremble, as the leaves with the wind; and though he strives to put off his quaking fits by some humane cordials, yet he finds his soul-ague still continuing upon him. Sturdy murderers of Christ spring in trembling, and an earthly Felix quakes under the power of this word. This voice of the Lord is powerful, it shakes the cedars of Lebanon. The batteries of the word have shaken the senseless conscience, and shattered the flinty heart in pieces.

2. It is powerful for conversion. It is able to change the nature, and turn a heart of stone into a heart of flesh. It hath many a time enlightened dark minds to see the things which they never saw; enlivened dead souls, and enabled them to stand up from the dead. 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.' It hath dispossessed the strong man, cast him out of his strongholds, wherein he had reigned many years, and subdued the soul to another Lord and Sovereign. What hath been said of God, may be said of the word in the hand of the Spirit: Who ever resisted its will? How powerful is that word which can make the proudest creature, that

scorned former reproofs and precepts, threatenings and judgments, to cry and weep bitterly, like a child under the rod; that can create the new creature, the choicest of God's works! By the word of the Lord are the new heavens, wherein dwelleth righteousness, made, and all the glorious host thereof, of sparkling, graces, by the breath of his mouth.

3. It is powerful for conquering spiritual enemies. The noble victories achieved by the Lord's worthies are, most of them, obtained by this sword of the Spirit; whole armies of sins have been discomfited and forced to fly before the face of this weapon. God hews these by his prophets, and slays them by the word of his mouth. This word, like the rod in the hand of Moses, worketh wonderfully for the destruction of such Egyptian enemies. Satan is another enemy of the Christians, but, as powerful and as politic as he is, he falls down like lightning from heaven before the preaching of the word. This sword hath so wounded that leviathan, that destroyer of souls, that he can never recover himself: 'They overcame him (i.e., the devil,) by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony,' Rev. 12:11. In a word, it must needs be strong: for it is 'the power of God to salvation;' 'the rod of his strength,' Rom. 1:16; Ps. 110:2.

III. It is perfect; it contains in it all that is necessary and sufficient for our eternal salvation. It is a full and complete rule and measure, both of things to be believed and practised; it will admit no addition, because it is defective in nothing; it will suffer no diminution, for it is redundant in nothing. If any man shall add unto it, God shall add unto his plagues. If any man shall take away from the words of this book, God shall take away his part out of the book of life. Jesus Christ, who was the great teacher sent from God, was faithful in his office, and gave his church whatsoever precepts or doctrines were needful for her, in order to her endless good. He tells us, 'Whatsoever

I have heard of the Father, I have made known unto you,' John 15:15. And his apostle speaks to the same purpose: Acts 20:21, 'I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God.' Besides, it is able to make the man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto every good work, which it could never do if it were not perfect itself. Nil dat quod non habet, nothing can give that which it hath not in itself, either formally or virtually. Traditions are no way necessary to complete the canon of Scripture. Since God did reveal his will in writing, every age had that revealed to it, which was sufficient for that age, to make such as then lived wise to salvation; but, as God was pleased to reveal more, the latter did assist us in the understanding of the former, therefore, so long as any truth was necessary to be more fully known, he inspired holy men to do it, and the completing of the divine canon was reserved for Christ and his apostles, John 15:15, 7:8, and 6:13; Acts 20:27; Gal. 1:6–8.

IV. It is true and certain. Not a tittle of it shall fail. It is called truth, 'the truth,' Ps. 119:142; 'thy truth,' John 17:17; 'the Scripture of truth,' Dan. 10:21; 'the word of truth,' Eccles. 12:10; 'the gospel of truth,' Col. 1:4; 'a more sure word,' 2 Pet. 1:19; the comparative for the superlative; 'the most sure word,' Gal. 1:8; Christ prefers it before information from the dead, Luke 16:31; the apostle before revelation from angels, or any other way whatsoever, 2 Pet. 1:19.

1. The precepts of it are true; they are perfectly agreeable to the mind of the speaker: 'Thou art near, O Lord, and all thy commandments are truth,' Ps. 119:151. The words of men may be true, but the word of God only is truth. There is no error, no mixture in it, it is therefore called 'sincere milk,' 1 Pet. 2:2.

2. The promises of it are true; they are accomplished to the least particle of them. Hence they are called the sure mercies of David.

The promises of God are unquestionable, because their speaker is unchangeable, and one for whom it is impossible to lie. They are surehold, and will eat their way through all the Alps of opposition: 'Not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord our God hath promised,' Joshua 21:45.

3. The histories of it are true; whatsoever is written in it of the first or second Adam, of any persons, or nations, is exactly true. There never was such an impartial historian as the inditer of the word. This is the book which hath no errata in it.

4. The threatenings are true. The sinner shall as certainly feel them, as he reads or hears them. He shall as surely be damned as if he were already damned, therefore he is said to be 'condemned already,' John 3:18, to speak its certainty. He shall find the gnawing worm and the eternal fire, as unquestionably as if he felt them at this hour. Hence God appeals to the consciences of the Jews, whether, though the prophets died, his threatenings (which were denounced by those prophets) did not live, and take hold of them, Zech. 1:5.

5. It is true in the predictions and prophecies. The predictions of the Israelites' distress in Egypt four hundred years, and deliverance thence, of their possessing Canaan, of Cyrus' birth, of the Jews' redemption out of the Babylonish captivity, of the four monarchies, and of Christ's coming in the flesh, his mean birth, afflicted life, death, burial, ascension, are all already accomplished. Those prophecies in Daniel and Revelation, concerning the future estate of the church, the ruin of Pope and Turk, the vocation of the Jews, and the glorious and pure condition of the people of God in the latter days, shall all to a tittle be fulfilled. It is observable, therefore, that some predictions that were or are future are set down in the present tense: 'To us a son is born,' Isa. 9:6; 'Babylon the great is fallen, is

fallen,' Rev. 18:2; to assure us that they shall be as certainly fulfilled as if they were fulfilled already.

6. It is the rule of all truth. Other books are true no further than they are agreeable and commensurable to this. All other sayings and writings are to be tried by this touchstone. It is not what sense saith, or what reason saith, or what fathers say, or what general councils say, or what traditions say, or what customs say, but what Scripture saith, that is to be the rule of faith and life. Whatsoever is contrary to Scripture, or beside Scripture, or not rationally deducible from Scripture, is to be rejected as spurious and adulterate: 'To the law and to the testimonies, if they speak not according to this, it is because there is no light (no truth) in them,' Isa. 8:20.

Thirdly, Consider it, O my soul, in its names, and they will speak much to the excellency of its nature. What is this word which thy thoughts are now upon? It is called 'Scripture,' John 10:35; or 'Scriptures,' Mat. 22:29; by an antonomasy or excellency of phrase, as the most worthy writings that ever saw the light. It is called the 'word of God,' 1 Pet. 1:15; both in regard of its efficient cause, which is the 'Spirit of God,' 2 Tim. 3:15; the material cause, 'which is the mind of God,' Eph. 1:9; the final cause, 'which is the glory of God,' Eph. 3:9. It is called the 'law of the Lord,' Prov. 20:17; the 'law of liberty,' James 1:25; the 'law of faith,' Rom. 3:27; 'a perfect law,' Ps. 19:7; 'a royal law,' James 1:8; the 'book of the law,' Josh. 1:8; 'the book of the Lord,' Isa. 34:16; 'the book of life,' 2 Kings 22:8; the 'gospel of peace,' Eph. 1:16; the 'gospel of God,' Rom. 1:1; the 'gospel of God's grace,' Acts 20:24; the 'counsel of God,' Acts 20:27; the 'charge of God,' 1 Kings 2:3; the 'breath of God,' Job 37:10; 'the mouth of God,' Jer. 9:12; the 'oath of God,' Deut. 29:12; the 'oracles of God,' Acts 7:38; the 'paths of God,' Micah 6:9; the 'wisdom of God,' Prov. 8:14. It is called a 'good thing,' Rom. 10:14; the 'good

part,' Luke 10:42; the 'key of knowledge,' Mat. 16:19; the 'key of heaven,' Luke 11:52; 'tidings of salvation,' Luke 2:10; 'glad tidings of peace,' Isa. 52:7; 'a good way,' 1 Sam. 12:23; a 'perfect way,' Ps. 101:2; a 'narrow way,' Mat. 7:13. Many other titles it hath which shew the excellency of this word of truth.

Fourthly, Consider it, O my soul, in its comparisons, which will shew thee somewhat of its perfections. Whereunto is this word resembled? It is resembled to a light, to a lamp. Solomon tells us, 'The commandment is a lamp, and the law is light,' Prov. 6:23; it is likely he learned it of his father, 'Thy word is a light to my feet and a lanthorn to my paths,' saith David, Ps. 119:105.

1. It is light for its clarity and beauty; light is the ornament of the world, which is most incorporeal of all corporeal beings, therefore termed spiritual. Though it discovers all the pollutions of the earth, yet it is not polluted therewith. The word is the glory of this lower world; the law is spiritual, and its beauty is not faded, nor its purity stained, by all the filth of false doctrines and heresies which have been cast into the face of it, from the beginning of the world to this day. The word of the Lord abideth for ever.

2. Light is pleasant and delightful; darkness is affrighting and dreadful, but light is refreshing and reviving. 'Light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun,' Eccles. 11:7. The word of God is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing with the eyes of faith to behold the glorious sun of divine truths. The eye is not more affected with curious sights, nor the ear with ravishing music, nor the palate with rare meats, than a spiritualised understanding with spiritual truths. David found not only delight in the singular, but delights in the plural number, all sorts and degrees of delights in the word of God; 'Trouble and anguish have taken hold of me, but thy

commandments are my delights.' His delights in the law of God were so rare and ravishing, that they quite extinguished all sensual delights, as the light of the day the light of a candle, and drowned the noise of all his crosses and troubles by their loud and amazing melody. Chrysostom compares the Scripture to a pleasant garden, wherein every flower yields a fragrant flavour. Ambrose to a feast, wherein every book is a dainty dish, affording food both pleasant and wholesome.

3. Light discovereth and maketh things manifest. The night conceals things, and the day reveals them; 'That which maketh manifest is light,' Eph. 5:13. Light discovers things in their proper shapes and colours, whether beauties or deformities. When the sun appeareth, we see the dust in corners, and dirt in ditches, which before lay hid. The word of God maketh a discovery of an unknown world of sin in the heart of man, and the great mystery of iniquity which lay hid there. 'I was alive without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died,' Rom. 7:9. The faults, and spots, and defects of his duties, were visible by the light of the word; 'All things are naked and open before it; it is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart,' Heb. 4:12. The word sheweth the beauty of holiness, the love and loveliness of the Redeemer.

4. Light directs us how and where to walk. In the night we wander and go out of the way, we stumble and fall, but the day helpeth us both to see our way and to walk in it, without stumbling. 'If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world,' John 11:9. The word of God doth preserve us from sin, and guide our feet in the way of peace, Luke 1:73. It is our pole-star, as we are mariners; our pillar of fire, as we are travellers. 'The law of God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide,' Ps. 37:31. Our feet, by the



light of the word, are preserved from falling, and our steps from sliding, Ps. 119:105.

5. Light scattereth darkness. As the sun, where it ariseth, and displayeth its beams, dispelleth mists and clouds, causeth an alteration in the face of the air, and makes the shadows to fly before it, that they cry, like the angel to Jacob, 'Let me go, for the day breaketh;' so, the light of the word scattereth that darkness which was before upon the minds of men.

(1.) It dispelleth the 'darkness of error,' Mat. 22:29. Naked truth conquereth armed error; and little David with his small stones out of the silver streams of the sanctuary, the great Goliath of heresy. With this, silly women have confuted and conquered profound doctors, notwithstanding their deep and intricate arguments, and have wounded them as mortally, as that woman without weapons did Abimelech, that great captain, with a millstone.

(2.) It dispelleth the darkness of ignorance. The word is the key of knowledge, and openeth the door that lets us into the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. It is that precious eyesalve with which our blind eyes, being anointed, see. It is sent 'to open the eyes of the blind, and to turn men from darkness to light,' Acts 26:18. When the word comes, the 'people that sat in darkness see a great light,' Mat. 4:16.

(3.) It dispelleth the darkness of profaneness. This weapon of the word stabbeth lust under its fifth rib, and letteth out the very heart blood of it. The devil puts off his rotten wares in the dark shops of heathen, and unbelieving, and unchristian Christians; but where the word hath arisen upon any soul, it discerneth his cheat, and is too wise to be cozened by him. 'By what means may a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto, according to thy word,' Ps. 119:9.

The word is resembled to rain, to water, to dew. Moses tells the Israelites, 'My doctrine shall drop as the rain, and my speech distil as the dew.' Christ calls it the water of life, John 6:35.

1. Rain is from above. God keeps that key under his own girdle. 'Can any of the vanities of the heathen cause rain? Art not thou he?' Jer. 14:22. Man may speak long enough to the clouds before they will distil one drop; but if God command those bottles, they are presently unstopped, and pour down in abundance. 'He covereth the heavens with clouds, and prepareth rain for the earth,' Ps. 147:8. Thus the word of God came down from above. Every of the penmen of it might have spoken as David, 'The Spirit of the Lord spake by me,' 2 Sam. 23:2. It did immediately inspire me what particulars to utter, and in what phrases to deliver them. That which is said of some of the prophecies, may be said of every book, and of every chapter and verse in every book, 'Thus saith the Lord;' 'The word of the Lord which came to Amos;' 'The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.' It is all one to say, 'The Scripture saith,' and 'God saith.' Compare Rom. 4:3, and 10:11, with Rom. 9:25, and Heb. 4:3, and Gal. 3:21, with Rom. 11:32. Some observe that the word which Moses useth for doctrine dropping like rain, signifieth received doctrine, because the doctrine in the word is received from God, not devised by men, Deut. 32:2. 'I received from the Lord that which I also delivered unto you,' 1 Cor. 11:23.

2. Rain is mollifying and softening. When the earth hath been like brass and iron under our feet, by long drought or hard frosts, a few good showers supple it and make it tender. Therefore David speaking of the earth, saith, 'Thou makest it soft with showers,' Ps. 65:10. So the heart of man is compared to a stone, to a rock, to a flint, to an adamant—the hardest of stones—for its hardness hath been suppld and softened by the word. The Jews that had embrued their hands in

the blood of Christ had certainly very hard hearts. The thought of such a murder would have made a deep impression upon any conscience, that was not seared with a red hot iron, yet this word preached melted them, as hard metal as they were. When they heard these things they were pricked to the heart. Peter's sermon, like Moses' rod, fetched water out of the rock, Acts 2:37. David, upon the disorder and intemperance of his soul in the matter of Uriah, had a hard swelling, which continued and increased upon him several months; yet when Nathan comes and gently bathes it with this oil of the word, it groweth soft and tender, as appeareth by the title of Ps. 51, 'A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.'

3. Rain maketh the earth fruitful, therefore some call it the earth's husband, because it helps the earth to bring forth. 'He watereth the hills from his chambers, the earth is satisfied with his works; he causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herbs for the service of man,' Ps. 104:13, 14; so Ps. 65:9–12. So the word of God turns that heart which was as a barren wilderness into a fruitful meadow, 1 Pet. 2:2.

4. Rain reviveth and refresheth the earth. When the earth is chapped and faint, when it gaspeth and is weary, a shower of rain recovers and refresheth it. The psalmist tells us that upon such droppings from above, 'the pastures and valleys shout for joy, they also sing,' Ps. 65:13. Thus the Christian, scorched with the apprehension of God's wrath due to him for sin, draweth all his comfort and refreshment out of those wells of salvation, the promises of the word. When conscience is sore and raw through the wounds sin hath made in it, and the weight of guilt that lieth continually grating upon it, 'He sendeth his word, and healeth them,' Ps. 107:20. David had experience what a healing medicine the word was: 'In the multitude

of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.' When Philip had preached the word to the eunuch, he went away rejoicing. That milk which runs from the breasts of the two Testaments is never sucked with the mouth of faith without abundant satisfaction. That wine which is drawn from the pipes of the promises, rejoiceth the heart of man indeed. These things are written that your joy may be full. The saint never sits at a fuller table of joy, than when he is feasting on the dainties of the gospel.

O my soul, how many thoughts mightst thou spend about those several things to which the word is aptly and excellently resembled! It is compared to armour, to a tree of life, to a portion, to milk, to strong meat, to pastures, to seed, to an ornament of grace, to rest, to a crown of glory, to hidden treasures, to gold tried in the fire, to a glass, to oil and ointment, all which, as so many curious colours well laid, may help thee to admire and prize more the beauty of that face which they resemble and represent.

Glorious things are spoken of thee, O thou word of God. Many books have done virtuously, have acted famously for the overthrow of sin and Satan, for the advancement of Christ and holiness, but thou hast excelled them all. Thou hast changed lions into lambs, ravens into doves, beasts into men, and men into angels. Thou hast subdued headstrong passions, mortified natural and riveted corruptions, tore up old and sturdy lusts by the roots, conquered principalities and powers, led captivity captive, and turned the world upside down. By thee wonders are wrought, the blind restored to their sight, the dead raised, the deaf hear, the dumb speak, the lepers are cleansed, and the poor have the gospel preached to them, and are changed into the nature of it. Where thou ridest conquering and to conquer, the whole world runneth after thee. Thy neck is like the tower of David, builded for an armoury, wherein there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields

of mighty men. Thy weapons are not carnal, but spiritual, and mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. By thee poor, weak, and contemptible men have subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained the promises, stopped the mouths of roaring lions, quenched the violence of hellish fire, escaped the edge of heretics' and persecutors' sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Thou hast not only, like Saul, slain thy thousands, but, with David, thy ten thousands. Thou hast broken the serpent's head, destroyed the great leviathan, tramplest on scorpions and vipers, and nothing can hurt thee. Thou bringest heaven down to earth, and carriest earth up to heaven. Thou art the joyful message from a far country, the river whose streams make glad the city of God. Infinite wisdom contrived thee; infinite truth proclaimed thee, and infinite goodness discovered thee; the Father indited thee; the Son confirmed thee; and the Spirit revealed thee to the children of men. The countries and kingdoms of the earth were overwhelmed with worse than Egyptian darkness, till thou didst arise upon them, and with thy glorious beams enlighten and enliven them. By thee fools have been made wise, sinners made saints, ignorant men have been instructed, wandering men reduced, weak ones confirmed, and lost ones saved. By thee the heavens were established, the foundations of the earth formed, the sorrowful are comforted, the scandalous reformed, the needy relieved, and the righteousness of God revealed. Thou art eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, and food to the hungry, and rest to the weary, and physic to the sick, and life to the dying. The ablest historian will infinitely fall short in describing thy heroic deeds. None can declare thy noble acts, or display half thy praise. Angels may well pry into thee with admiration and astonishment, and make the contents of thy chapters

the subject of their songs and substance of their hallelujahs to all eternity. When that heavenly host preached on earth, thou wert their text; be thou their triumph in heaven for ever.

Oh thou savour of life, thou living water, thou well of salvation, thou tidings of great joy to all nations, thou ministration of righteousness, thou mystery of godliness, thou mine of unsearchable riches, thou way of holiness, thou word of the kingdom, that thou wert written on the tables of my heart, and graven with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond on that rock for ever! Thou wast once written on tables of stone with the hand of God himself; how precious was that book wherein every leaf was immediately of God's making, and every line in it of God's writing! My heart is a heart of stone, I find it by too much experience, but if thou wert engraven on it, it would be a precious stone; its price would be far above rubies, the onyx and the sapphire should not be valued with it; the gold and the crystal should not equal it, neither should it be exchanged for coral or pearls. Oh that I were manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, known and read of all men. Oh that my soul were the house, and thou the inhabitant for ever. Oh that the word of Christ might dwell richly within me, that I were able to say with holy David, 'I delight to do thy will, O God, thy law is within my heart, or in the midst of my bowels.' Thou art the oracles of God, all thy sayings are faithful and true, and worthy of all acceptation; when, oh when shall I give it them! Thou art worthy of the eye: 'Blessed is he that readeth the words of this prophecy,' Rev. 1:3. Thou art worthy of the ear: 'Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.' Thou art worthy of the heart; oh that I could hide thee in mine heart, that I might not sin against the Lord. Thou art a counsellor to the doubting, a comforter to the distressed; thou art health to the navel, and marrow to the bones, an ornament of grace unto the head, and a chain of gold about the neck. They that walk in

thy ways are safe, and their feet do not stumble. Thou teachest in the ways of wisdom, and thou ledest in right paths; oh that my ways were directed to keep all thy commandments, for thy steps tend to holiness, and thy paths take hold of heaven.

O my soul, is it possible for thee to hear the excellency of Scripture thus opened to thee, and not to burn in love to it? Hast thou been all this while in such a hot bath, and still cold and shivering? Hast thou felt its power, tasted its savour, seen its beauty, often heard its awakening voice, and known its universal virtue, and dost thou yet doubt its divinity, or question its excellency? Surety, if ever thou shouldst again through unbelief ask it the same question, which the scribes did Christ, when they beheld his miraculous actions: 'By what authority dost thou these things, or who gave thee this authority?' thou mayest answer thyself in the words of the man born blind, and then seeing, to the Jews: 'Is it not strange?' or, 'This is a marvellous thing, that thou knowest not whence it is, yet it hath opened thine eyes,' John 9:30. Was there not a night of dread and horror with thee, when thou didst sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, till this sun did arise, with light and life under his wings. Oh cry out with the psalmist, 'I will never forget thy precepts, for by them thou hast quickened me.' I was wallowing in my filth, weltering in my blood, rotting in the grave of corruption, till thou didst say unto me, live; yea, till thou didst say unto me, live. Thy voice is powerful, overcoming all opposition. The love revealed in thee is wonderful, far surpassing the love of woman. Thy promises are exceeding great and precious, more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold. Thy Maker may well prevail for thine acceptance. Who would not reverence the issue for the author's sake; surely that coin deserves esteem, which hath that King's image and superscription on it. The matter in thee merits respect: thou art a love-letter from God to his creature, revealing his eternal thoughts of good will, publishing his

acts of grace and oblivion to all traitors and rebels in arms against his Majesty, upon condition they will throw down their weapons and become loyal subjects for the future. Thou art the church's charter, containing all the privileges which the blessed Jesus purchased for her. What wise man would not value the deeds and evidences which speak and give a right to pardon, love, grace, joy, peace, and the undefiled inheritance for ever? When thou comest to a soul, salvation comes to that soul; thou art always attended with a rich train of all sorts of comforts. The good tidings thou bringest, and great blessings thou conveyest wherever thou comest, may well make thee welcome. I may well say unto thee, beholding the bracelets and ear-rings wherewith thou adornest the spouse of the true Isaac, as Laban to Abraham's servant: 'Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; why standest thou without? I have prepared lodging for thee.'

If I am bound to bless my God for the natural lights which he hath made, the greater to rule the day, and the lesser to rule the night, because thereby it appears that his mercy endureth for ever, Ps. 136:7–9; how much am I bound to bless him for the spiritual light of his word, that true, that marvellous light which shineth in a dark place, till the eternal day dawn! Oh what mercy, what mercy enduring for ever, is there in every leaf, in every verse, in every line of that sacred book! If regeneration be a mercy, to be partaker of the divine nature, the stamping the lovely image of the glorious God upon thee; then the word is a mercy, for that is the seal in the hand of the Spirit which imprinteth it on thee, James 1:18. Is faith a mercy, that shield of the soul, whereby it quencheth the fiery darts of the devil, that ladder by which the soul mounteth to heaven, and converseth daily with its Lord and Master? then the word is a mercy, for 'faith comes by hearing,' Rom. 10:14, the word is 'the door of faith,' Acts 14:27. If repentance be a mercy, those second and best thoughts of the soul, that recovery of the man to his wits and right



mind; then the word is a mercy, for it is the voice of Christ in the word that casteth the devil of impenitency and sensuality out of the heart, where it reigned and raged, sending out fire and flames, like Ætna, for many years, and makes the man like him in the Gospel, out of whom the devil was cast, to sit at Jesus's feet in his right mind, bitterly weeping and mourning for his former folly and madness: it is the hot beams of love that shine in the gospel that thaw the frozen spirits. Is hope a mercy, that helmet of salvation which defendeth the head of Christians from swords and muskets, the souls of saints from the darts and dangers of temptations, those bladders of the soul, which keep it from sinking in deep waters? then the word is a mercy, for we through 'patience and comfort of the Scripture have hope,' Rom. 15:4. Hope had never looked out at the window, longing for the coming of its beloved, if the word had not come before as a faithful messenger, and brought certain news that he was upon the way. Are pardon, reconciliation with God, adoption, growth in grace, yea, heaven itself a mercy? then the word is a mercy: all those jewels are locked up in that cabinet. Man durst not have presumed, he could not have conceived that the glorious, jealous God should ever have such infinite respect for such wretches and rebels, if he had not found it written with his own hand in the word. It is on the waters of the sanctuary that the saint saileth safely through the sea of this world to the port of salvation. There was no visible bridge laid over the gulf of God's wrath for sinners to pass into the kingdom of grace here, and glory hereafter, till the gospel erected one.

O my soul, what honour can be high enough, what love hot enough, for the Holy Scriptures!

1. Consider the preciousness of them in the eyes of good men, and the love they had for them. Job preferred them before food, before his necessary food; Solomon before ornaments of gold, crowns of

glory; Paul before all other doctrines, though preached by angels; David before the honey and the honeycomb, great spoils, thousands of gold and silver, all riches. And when he ceaseth to compare, beginneth to admire its worth. 'Wonderful are thy testimonies,' and his own fervent affection to it, 'Oh how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.'

2. The price paid for it. It cost the blood of thy beloved; well may the Scriptures be called testaments, they were both sprinkled with blood and made valid by the death of the testator. Heb. 9:15–17, 'And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of transgressions that were under the first testament, they which were called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance; for where a testament is, there must of necessity also be the death of the testator; for a testament is of force after men are dead, otherwise it is of no strength at all whilst the testator liveth.'

3. The pearl hid in it. The Lord Jesus Christ is the matter as well as the author of it. Well may it be called the word of Christ. 'Search the Scripture, for they are they that testify of me.' He was the substance of the law, and he is the sum of the gospel. Thou hadst not known sin but for the law; nor the Saviour, but for the gospel.

When David considered the kindness he had received from Jonathan, he said to his servants, 'Is there none left of the house of Saul that I may shew kindness to, for Jonathan's sake?' He could not but in gratitude study some return suitable to that good will of his dear friend. Great is the kindness I have received from the Scripture; what wilt thou say, what wilt thou do, O my soul, for this word of thy God? 'Oh, swear unto the Lord, and vow unto the mighty God of Jacob; surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, I will

not go up into my bed, I will not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the law of the Lord, and an habitation for the gospel of the God of Jacob.' Wilt thou not willingly, O my soul, rather than this worthy guest should lie without doors, take it into thy heart? Oh that thou wert the ark wherein the two tables, the two testaments, might be laid up for ever. Lord, I will through thy strength ponder all thy sayings in my heart, and make them the rule of my life; I will delight in thy law, and meditate therein day and night. I will give diligence to reading, be frequent in hearing, and uniform and constant in obedience to it. I will teach it diligently my children, and talk of it when I sit in mine house, and when I walk by the way, when I lie down, and when I rise up; I will bind it for a sign upon my hand, it shall be as a frontlet between mine eyes; I will make thy statutes my songs in the house of my pilgrimage, I will rejoice in thy testimonies more than they that find great spoils; I will choose thy statutes as my heritage for ever, for they are the joy of my heart; I will delight in the law of God after the inner man. I will incline my heart to keep thy statutes always unto the end; I have sworn, and I will perform, that I will keep thy righteous judgments. But ah, Lord, what do I say? I have even cast thy law behind my back, I have broken thy bands asunder, and cast thy cords from me. My carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; I can of myself break thy law, but only through thy strength keep it; I have gone astray like a lost sheep, oh seek thy servant, and I will keep thy statutes. Be surety for thy servant for good, that I may observe thy precepts. I am a stranger in this earth, hide not thy commandments from me. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not unto covetousness. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments, for therein do I delight. Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I will keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I will keep thy law; yea, I shall keep it with my whole heart. Thou art good, and dost good; oh, teach me thy statutes.

Thy hands have made me and fashioned me; oh give me understanding that I may keep thy commandments. I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart. Oh send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill, unto thy heavenly habitation. Then will I go into the presence of God, even of God my exceeding joy; yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God, for ever.

Fourthly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness in solitude, accustom thyself to soliloquies, I mean to conference with thyself. He needs never be idle that hath so much business to do with his own soul. It was a famous answer which Antisthenes gave when he was asked what fruit he reaped by all his studies. By them, saith he, I have learned both to live and talk with myself. Soliloquies are the best disputes; every good man is best company for himself of all the creatures. Holy David enjoineth this to others, 'Commune with your own hearts upon your bed, and be still. Selah,' Ps. 4:4. Commune with your own hearts; when ye have none to speak with, talk to yourselves. Ask yourselves for what end ye were made, what lives ye have led, what times ye have lost, what love ye have abused, what wrath ye have deserved. Call yourselves to a reckoning, how ye have improved your talents, how true or false ye have been to your trust, what provision ye have laid in for an hour of death, what preparation ye have made for a great day of account. 'Upon your beds:' Secrecy is the best opportunity for this duty. The silent night is a good time for this speech. When we have no outward objects to disturb us, and to call our eyes, as the fool's eyes are always, to the ends of the earth; then our eyes, as the eyes of the wise, may be in our heads; and then our minds, like the windows in Solomon's temple, may be broad inwards. The most successful searches have been made in the night season; the soul is then wholly shut up in the earthly house of the body, and hath no visits from strangers to disquiet its thoughts.

Physicians have judged dreams a probable sign whereby they might find out the distempers of the body. Surely, then, the bed is no bad place to examine and search into the state of the soul. 'And be still:' Self-communion will much help to curb your headstrong, ungodly passions. Serious consideration, like the casting up of earth amongst bees, will allay inordinate affections when they are full of fury, and make such a hideous noise. Though sensual appetites and unruly desires are, as the people of Ephesus, in an uproar, pleading for their former privilege, and expecting their wonted provision, as in the days of their predominancy, if conscience use its authority, commanding them in God's name, whose officer it is, to keep the king's peace, and argue it with them, as the town-clerk of Ephesus, 'We are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this day's concourse,' all is frequently by this means hushed, and the tumult appeased without any further mischief. 'Selah:' This signifieth elevation, or lifting up either the mind, or voice, or both. For the matter of it, it importeth,—

1. An asseveration of a thing so to be. Hence the Chaldee paraphrast, and some other Hebrews, have turned it, For ever. The foregoing assertions are true, and shall be so for ever.

2. An admiration at it. Such truths call both for our assent and wonder. Selah is affixed by way of emphasis, to note the excellency of the thing asserted, and the impression it should make upon our spirits.

As David enjoined this duty to others, so he practised it himself. Ps. 77:6, 'I call to remembrance my song in the night, I commune with mine own heart, and my spirit made diligent search.' He communed with his own heart, was not a stranger at home. Indeed, a hypocrite, as the philosopher speaks of a vicious person, is not friends with

himself, but endeavours more to avoid himself than any others, and is never in so bad company as when he is alone, for then he is forced to keep company with himself. Where conscience is an abused and incensed judge, it is no wonder that a guilty malefactor would flee from its presence. The servant that hath rioted all day, is unwilling his master should reckon with him at night. The heathen persecutors would not hear the Christians, because their cause would have appeared so just that nature itself would have justified them. The ungodly will not, for a contrary reason, hear the indictments which conscience prefers against them, because their cause will appear so bad, that they cannot avoid condemning themselves. It may be said of whorish hearts, as of the harlot, 'Her feet abide not within her house.' But the sincere Christian, that allows himself in no sin, delights to commune with his own soul, and when he is debating things with his own conscience, esteems himself in good company. He had rather God's deputy, conscience, should admonish him to contrition, than that God himself should do it to his confusion.

According to the apostle's doctrine, every one of us must give account of himself to God; therefore every one of us must take account of himself beforehand. It will be but a sad account which some will give at the great audit-day, when conscience shall confess against them, 'They made me keeper of others' vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept.' And it is but a poor trade that they drive at present, who make little use of their shop-books. The greatest merchants, and the most thriving, are much in their counting-house.

5. In solitude, accustom thyself to secret ejaculations and converses with God. Lovers cast many a glance at each other, when they are at a distance, and are deprived of set meetings. A little boat may do us some considerable service, when we have not time to make ready a

great vessel. The casting of our eyes and hearts up to heaven, will bring heaven down to us: 'My meditations of him shall be sweet,' Ps. 104:34. Secret ejaculations have meat in their mouths, and will abundantly requite such as entertain them. If they be much in our bosoms, as Abishag in David's, they will cherish us, and put warmth into us. They are sweet in the day, like the blackbird, cheering us with their pleasant notes, and do also afford us, with the nightingale, songs in the night. A true Israelite may enjoy more of his God in a wilderness than in an earthly Canaan. Christians are nearest their heaven, when farthest from the earth. What care I how much I am in solitude, so I may but enjoy his desirable society? Ah, how foolish are those persons that neglect the improvement of this glorious privilege! They that, like swine, can look everyway but upward, may well lie rooting in the earth, desiring no more then fleshly pleasures, because they know no better. Surely, the company of my God is of such weighty consequence and universal influence, that I need no other, I can have none to equal it. The society of my best friends, for all their love to me, and tenderness of me, is but as the company of snakes and serpents, to the company of my God. They have not pity enough for the thousandth part of my misery, nor power enough to answer in any degree my necessities. Their hearts are infinitely short of my God's; his love to me, like his being, is boundless; but their hands come far short of their hearts; though they are not unwilling, they are unable to relieve me. How often have I told them of my doleful case and distressed condition in vain, when thereby I have rather added to their afflictions than lessened my own? But my God is all-sufficient, both for pity and power; he hath bowels and mercy, enough for my greatest sufferings and sorrows, and strength and might enough for my support and succour. My best friends are waspish, and upon a small cause are ready to snap asunder their friendship, when my God's good will is everlasting, and though he scourge me, he will never remove his loving-kindness from me. What

need I those puddle streams, whilst I have this well of living water? Oh, let me enjoy him more, though I never enjoy friend more.

Because I shall have opportunity to speak more to soul conferences, and also to converse with God in secret duties, in other parts of this treatise, I shall speak no more in this place.

### **A good wish about the exercising ourselves to godliness in solitude, wherein the former particulars are applied**

The blessed and infinite wise God, who made my soul for himself, and knoweth it will never be satisfied without himself, commanding me in all company to converse with his sacred Majesty, and calling me sometimes to solitude, that being freed from worldly distractions, I might have more of his society; I wish that my nature may be so suitable to his holy being, and my love so great to his gracious presence, that though his providence should cast me alone into a prison, yet enjoying his favour there, I may esteem it sweeter and pleasanter than the stateliest palace. It is both his precept and my privilege, that in the greatest company I should be alone to him; and in my greatest solitude, in company with him. There is not the most solitary place I can come into, nor the least moment of my life, but I have still business with my God, and such as is neither easy nor of mean concernment. All my transactions with men about house, or land, or food, or clothes, or the most necessary things of this present life, are nothing to my business with God about my unchangeable being in the other world. If they were all laid in the balance with this, they would be found infinitely lighter than vanity and nothing. My understanding is ready to be overwhelmed with the apprehension of an endless eternal state. All my business with meat, or drink, or sleep, or family, or friends, or mercies, or afflictions, nay, or the means of grace, or ordinances themselves, is no more worth or



desirable than they tend to the furthering my everlasting good. All other things are but as passengers, to which I may afford a short salute, but it is my home where I must abide for ever, that my heart must be always set upon; and it is my God, upon whom this blissful endless life depends, that I have most cause to be ever with. O my soul, by this thou mayest gather with whom to deal, and about what to trade when thou art alone; tell me not henceforward, in the words of the lazy worldling, I am idle, for I have nothing to do. Hast thou pardon of sin, the image of thy God, an interest in thy Redeemer, freedom from sin, the law, the wrath to come, a title to life and salvation to get and secure, without which thou shalt be a firebrand of hell for ever, and hast thou any while, any time to be idle? Hast thou that high, that holy, that weighty work of worshipping and glorifying the great God of heaven and earth, and of working out thy own salvation, and yet hast thou nothing to do? Oh that I might never hear such language in thy thoughts, much less read it in thy life, when thou hast so much business of absolute necessity to be done, lying upon thy hands, that if all the angels in heaven should offer thee their help, unless the Son of God himself do assist, thou canst not despatch it in many millions of ages! Lord, I am thine, absolutely thine, universally thine; all I am is thine, all I have is thine. Oh, when shall I live as thine? I have no business but with thee, and for thee. Oh that I could live wholly to thee! I confess it is thine infinite grace to suffer such a worm as I am, to converse with thy glorious Majesty; that heaven should thus stoop to earth, and the most holy condescend to so great, so grievous a sinner. Oh, affect my heart with thy kindness herein, and so fill me with thy blessed Spirit, that as thou art ever with me, whether I am alone, or in company, so when I awake, I may be still with thee.

I wish that I may esteem solitude, when my God calls me to it, a gracious opportunity for more united and intimate converses with

his Majesty. How often hath the company of men distracted my spirit, and hindered me from having my conversation in heaven. Their misapprehensions, and carnal interests, and predominant passions, do frequently bring such prejudice to their associates, that none would be over-fond of their honey who hath once felt their stings. If I converse with wicked men, I hear their oaths, and blasphemies, and ribaldry, their mocks, and taunts, and jeers, against God and his people; I see their intemperance and profaneness, and injustice, and oppression, and persecution of them that fear the Lord; I can read in their wicked language, and cursed carriage, their bitterness, and rage, and enmity, against their Maker and Redeemer; I may behold the body of Christ wounded, and his precious blood trampled on, the law, and love, and worship, and honour, of the blessed God, scorned and despised, and such vileness and wickedness committed in an hour, as shall be bewailed and lamented for ever. Such sights as these call for my deepest sorrow, and the best that I can get by such company is inward trouble and abundant grief; but it is many to one if they do not make me either directly or indirectly to contract real guilt. Oh what pleasure can I take to be in a room filled with smoke, which will certainly wring tears from mine eyes, and probably smut and defile me? If I converse with good men, though their company in many respects be desirable, and I have found it to be profitable, and I would prize them whom God esteemeth, and love them that have his beautiful image, and with whom I must live for ever; yet how many things are in them to allay the virtue and benefit of their society. Their peevishness, and passion, and pride, and selfishness, which are still too much in them, the difference of their judgments, and dispositions, causeth their company to be far the less eligible and lovely. Besides, their readiness and activeness to propagate their errors, and their power and prevalency to draw others to join with them in their wanderings from the truth, doth not a little abate of that comfort and delight,

which I might have in them. Again, their miseries, and wants, and necessities, which are many, and great, and urgent, which I am wholly unable to relieve or remedy, call me to tears and weeping. Once more, their slips, and falls, and weaknesses, and backslidings, which I must observe, and reprove, and bewail, are far from being occasions of joy or pleasure to me. They are at best, as we say of children, certain cares, and uncertain comforts. Though they are roses, they have prickles which offend, as well as their pleasant smell to refresh us; the truest friend I have may occasion me as much trouble as comfort. When I travel with a cheerful good companion, I promise myself much delight in my journey, but anon he falls and wounds himself, or tires, or proves sick, and unable to go further; and instead of going forward, I must stay to attend on him; and thus, instead of being my help, he becomes my hindrance. Indeed I have the more cause to bear with it in another, not knowing how soon it may be my own case; but, however, these accidents which too often fall out, as they speak the benefit of it to one, so also the perplexity and trouble of it to another. If I converse with great or rich men, what disdainful looks do they give me! at what a distance do they behold me! It is hard to obtain the liberty of speaking to them; but if I would obtain their favour it will cost me more than it did the chief captain for his Roman freedom; unless I can gratify their lusts, I must not expect their love. If I can drink, and swear, and curse, and roar, at their hellish prate, it may be they will afford me a good word; but alas, what man in his wits would pay for their best words so dear a price? Their friendship can hardly be got without a breach with my God; and what wise man would lose the goodwill of the Lord for the gain of the whole world? When I have, by many friends, and with much difficulty, and even danger to my soul, procured their favour, how little am I the better for it! The most rotten tree is not so hollow; for as cunning wrestlers they will get within me to give me a fall: the wind itself is not more wavering than they are; except I can be

contented to be their footstool, that by their treading on me they may be lifted higher in the world, I must expect to be quite cast by. It is possible whilst they may make some use of me to decoy and trepan others, or to raise and advance themselves, they may carry me upon their shoulders, as men do their ladders, when there is hopes thereby of climbing to their desired height; but when that is done, or if the ladder prove too short, they will throw it upon the ground. If I will not always be some way or other making provision for their flesh, I shall be dismissed with the brand of an unworthy fellow. If I converse with mean and poor men, I find but little comfort in their company; I see their poverty, and indigency, and hunger, and nakedness, which I cannot help or prevent; I hear their cries, and groans, and complaints, by reason of oppressing landlords, or tyrannical revengeful neighbours, or unfaithful friends, or distempered bodies—all which affect my soul, and grieve me to the heart, that I am ready to sit in the dust, and cry, and groan, and mourn with them. Let me go where I will to converse with any, in this wilderness of the world, I find little but briars, and brakes, and thorns, and thistles, and matter of sorrow and lamentation; but when I retire alone to converse with my God, I am freed from those distracting clamours and vexations, cries and disturbing noise, and might, could I but leave an ungrateful unbelieving heart behind me, find in him a heaven upon earth. I may, with Moses, go up to Mount Pisgah, and take a view with the prospective glass of faith, of Palestine, and that goodly land flowing with milk and honey. I may enter into the suburbs of the new Jerusalem, taste some clusters of the grapes of Canaan, and view as in a glass those celestial beauties and glories which I hope one day to see face to face, and to be partaker of. O my soul, what needest thou care how much the world scorns thy company, or to what place thy God see fit to banish thee, if thou canst but as Zaccheus, when gotten out of the crowd, climb up into the sycamore of meditation and obtain a sight of thy Saviour? If

he want no company who is with the king, surely thou mayest deny all the company on earth for the King of kings! Look how lovingly he invites thee to take a turn or two with him alone in the fields. 'Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the fields; there I will give thee my loves.' Hast thou not many a time sighed out to him, 'O kiss me with the kisses of thy lips, for thy love is better than wine.' Lo, he tells thee the place where he will answer thy petition. There will I give thee my loves. Thy bridegroom is bashful, and desirous to satisfy thy longings in secret. Isaac met his bride in the fields, and thou mayest meet thy beloved when thou turnest aside from the world to entertain thyself in solitude. Oh, how pleasant should solitude be to thee for his sake! What matters it whether thou art driven, or who be the whips that drive thee, when thou art driven farther from men to be nearer the Lord Jesus Christ? A loving husband is instead of all company to a faithful spouse. Is not Christ dearer to thee than all the world? Be not thou dejected though thou shouldst be turned as he was into a wilderness, but expect an angel, even the angel of the covenant, to be sent from heaven for thy comfort. Lord, it is my support that wherever I am thou art continually with me. Oh that I were able to say, I am continually with thee. I would willingly, with Jacob, leave all my company to meet thee alone, so I might but as he did, weep in secret, and make supplication, so as to prevail with thee for thy blessing. Though I should find cause to say with David, 'Lovers and friends stand aloof from me;' and with Job, 'My friends scorn me;' yet, if thou pleasest, by parting me from them, to draw me nearer to thyself, and to afford me more of thy quickening, cheering presence, I shall account their absence a desirable advantage. The best society without thee is as a barren desert, and a howling wilderness; the greatest solitariness with thee is as a fruitful country and delectable Canaan. How precious are thy thoughts (my thoughts of thee) to me, O God. Let me rather dwell alone in a prison with thy company than in a palace without thee.

I wish that I may be the more careful of my carriage in secret, lest what I intend as an opportunity for my God's service should prove a season and advantage for Satan. The body must be looked to narrowly when it comes out of a hot bath, lest the pores, being open, it should take cold. The soul must be carefully tended when it comes from Christian communion, lest, in solitude, it lose what it hath gained in good company. When the countryman hath been at market, and filled his purse, he is in most danger of robbing as he goeth home alone. The tempter will be sure to be present with me, whoever be absent. He walks to and fro in the earth, and whilst I am in his circuit, I must expect his company. Though he be more bold than welcome, and though I deny his desires, defy his works, and resist him, and sometimes foil him, yet he will still attend to solicit me to folly. Wherever I go, he will find me out; and whatever I do, I must expect him at my elbow; he hath a double advantage of me in solitude, partly in that I have no visible second to assist me; he hopes, when I am alone, it is a good time to set upon me, and that he is strong enough by force to ravish and defile me. Partly in that shame, which restrains from sin in public, hath no place, no prevalency in private. He will tell me that secrecy may be a curtain to hide my sins from the world's eye, of which I am so much afraid. As Joseph's mistress, he will cry, 'Come lie with me, be bold to sin, to take thy pleasure, for here is no man present to know it, or to reveal it to thy disgrace.' And for God, he hath forgotten, he hideth his face, he will never see it. How shall God know? can he judge through the dark cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he doth not see, and he walketh in the circuit of heaven. But, O my soul, thy double danger calleth upon thee to be the more vigilant and diligent in minding thy duty. When thou hast no human friend to watch over thee, thou art the more concerned to watch over thyself. They that live far from neighbours are the more liable to thieves, and therefore, if wise, will make up that want by extraordinary watchfulness, and a

greater provision of armour and weapons. If one devil be too hard a match for many secure Christians, how unable will one single Christian be to encounter with many, with a legion of devils! Shouldst thou be idle in solitude, or suffer thy thoughts to wander, expect more than good company, and such as will employ thee about works of darkness. Besides, consider, though thy thoughts are mantled from the view of men, yet thy God knoweth thy thoughts afar off, long before thou thinkest them, and will judge the secrets of men's hearts according to his gospel. He that numbereth the stars of heaven numbereth all the thoughts of thy heart: 'I know the things that come into your mind, O house of Israel, every one of them,' Ezek. 11:5. And he that punisheth men for wicked deeds, doth not let them escape for their evil thoughts: 'Hear, O earth, behold I will bring upon this people the fruit of their thoughts,' Jer. 6:19. Nay, thy God will scourge men both for and by their thoughts; accusing thoughts are stinging vipers. That worm of conscience which will ever gnaw the sinner's heart, to his inconceivable misery, is bred in his thoughts. Oh, therefore, wash thy heart from wickedness, let not vain thoughts lodge within thee. Remember also, O my soul, if thy most retired thoughts are legible to thy God, then thy secret actions are all open and visible to his eye. Never presume upon sin in hope of secrecy, for though thou mayest cover the candle of creatures with a bushel, yet thou canst not the glorious Sun of righteousness; nothing is hid from his sight. There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves. Lord, thou hast told me, 'There is nothing hid which shall not be revealed, nor secret which shall not be made known.' I confess my wicked heart is apt to argue impunity from secrecy, and to think I am invisible to thee, because thou art invisible to the eye of my sense. Oh, affect my heart so thoroughly with thine omniscience and omnipresence that I may keep thy precepts, because all my ways (whether inward or outward) are before thee.

I wish that I may have this comfortable evidence of my sincerity, by the conscientiousness of my behaviour in secret. The lineaments and features of the body are best discovered in the night, when it is stripped naked of those garments which in the daytime covered it, and were not wholly answerable to the proportion of its several parts. The shape and countenance of the soul is much better revealed when it retires from the world, and is freed from those objects and businesses which hurried it hither and thither, possibly much differing from its own inclination. There is no right judging of the patient by his water, till it is settled; nor true discovery of the state of a Christian by his heart, till it be quiet and composed. When men are busy upon the stage of the world, surrounded with spectators, they put on strange habits, and act not their own, but the parts of others, and so are not easily known who or what they are; but he that followeth them into the retiring room, where they undress themselves, may soon discover them. The frame and bent of my heart in private, to sin or holiness, will speak its temper whether good or bad. The soul is not at such liberty to vent itself and to manifest its genius and disposition in its outward actions, as in its inward motions and meditations. External acts may flow from external principles, which as a team of horse draw the cart after it by force, but internal thoughts ever flow from an internal principle, which, as the natural and proper offspring of the mind, discover what its parent is. The laws of men, the fear of punishment, the hope of reward may tie my hands in company; but it is nothing but the fear of my God can bind my heart to its good behaviour in secret. My thoughts are not liable to an arraignment at any earthly bar, nor my person to any arrest from men, for any tumult or disorder in them, because the law of the magistrate can take no cognisance of them, they being locked up from all human eyes in the privy cabinet of my heart. Though I am limited in my words, not to speak what I will, and also in my works, not to do what I will, by reason of that shame or



penalty, or ill-will from friends or superiors, which dishonest actions and unseemly expressions may bring upon me; yet my thoughts in this sense are free: I may think what I will, notwithstanding any of these considerations. Again, outward actions, both good and bad, materially considered, are common both to sinners and saints. What good duties are there, but as to the matter of them, wicked men may perform them as well as the godly? Abstinence from gross sins, praying, fasting, hearing, reading, alms-giving, have been practised by some hypocrites in a larger measure than by some sincere Christians; on the other side, there are few sins so great, but some of the children of God have, at some time or other, been guilty of them. Gluttony, drunkenness, fornication, incest, murder, &c., have been committed by them that were truly sanctified: where then lieth the difference between them, so much as in their usual and predominant thoughts? Once more, my God judgeth of my actions by my thoughts, and therefore, by them I may well judge of my spiritual condition, Isa. 10:7; Gen. 22:16, 17. Lord, I have often heard out of thy word, 'Where the treasure is, there will the heart be also;' I know every man will be frequent in thinking of that which he esteems his happiness and treasure. The covetous wretch hugs and embraceth his wealth in his heart and thoughts, when it is out of his sight, and in other men's hands; the adulterer pleaseth himself in the meditation of his wanton dalliances with his foolish minion, when he hath no opportunity for the execution of his lust; the proud man fancieth himself in a fool's paradise, whilst he imagineth multitudes waiting upon him, in the presence-chamber of his crazy brain, with their bare heads, their bended knees, admiring and applauding the worth of his person, the vastness of his parts, and himself as the only epitome of all perfections. Oh, give me that character of thy children, to meditate in thy law day and night. Let my thoughts be conversant about those riches that are not liable to rust, those pleasures which satisfy a rational soul, and that honour which is from God; give me to know

that my treasure is in heaven, with thyself, in thy Son, by having my heart and my conversation there also.

I wish that whenever I sequester myself from worldly business, I might leave all my sinful and worldly thoughts behind me. There can no work of concernment be done in secret, unless these disturbers be absent. Should I entertain such guests, I forbid Christ my company. Vicious thoughts are his sworn enemies, and he will not dwell in the same heart, in the same house with them. If I desire him to sit upon the throne of my heart, I must give him leave to cast down every imagination, and to bring every thought to the obedience of himself; places that are full of vermin are not fit for a prince's presence; vain and unnecessary thoughts about lawful objects are strangers, though not sworn enemies, and will give my best friend distaste. Though a noble person should come to give me a visit, if he should hear me debasing myself to converse needlessly with inconsiderable impertinent fellows, I may look that he should pass by without calling in; Christ loves not to be entertained in a room full of dust-heaps and cobwebs. If vain thoughts lodge within, the blessed Jesus will stand without; gold and clay will not mingle; if these mists arise, and these clouds interpose, they will hinder my sight of the true sun. Besides, my works will be answerable to my thoughts; if my thoughts be wicked or fruitless, so will my actions be. My hands are but the midwife, to bring my thoughts, the conception of my heart, into the world. My thoughts are the seed that lieth in the ground out of sight; my works are the crop which is visible to others; according to the seed, whether good or bad, such will the crop be. If men be so careful to get the purest, the cleanest, and the best seed for their fields, that their harvest may be the more to their advantage; how much doth it concern me that my heart be sown with pure and holy thoughts, that my crop may tend both to my credit and comfort! Lord, there is no good seed but what comes out of thy garner. I confess the piercing

thorns of vicious thoughts, and the fruitless weeds of vain thoughts, are all the natural product of my heart. Oh, let thy good Spirit plough up the fallow ground of my soul, and scatter in it such seeds of grace and holiness, that my life may be answerable to thy gospel, and at my death I may be translated to thy glory.

I wish that I may in solitude, when I have no men to discourse with, converse with other creatures, and spell the name of my Creator out of them. It is my privilege, that I may with Samson get honey and sweetness by occasional meditation, out of the carcase of every creature. The whole world is a great vast library, and every creature in it a several book, wherein he that runs may read the power, and goodness, and infinite perfections of its Maker. Every object is as a bell, which, if but turned, makes a report of the great God's honour and renown. Some have compared the creation to a musical instrument; sure I am, every individual in it is a string, which, if touched by serious consideration, will loudly and sweetly proclaim its author's praise. He that hath much stock may well trade high. They who, by every sight, by every sound, by everything felt or tasted, are minded of their Father and fountain, may well be taken up with frequent apprehensions and admirations of him: 'For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead,' Rom. 1:20. The highest and lowest, the kings and worms, the sun and stone, the cedar and hyssop, the smallest inanimate and irrational creatures read to me dumb lectures of my God's might and love; they are so many masters to instruct me, though silently, in his greatness and wisdom. The world below is a glass in which I may see the world above. The works of God are the shepherd's calendar, the ploughman's alphabet, the King of heaven's divinity professors, and why not my catholic preachers? Certainly those several varieties, choice rarities, and excellent contrivances which appear in them,

were made as well for my inward soul as outward senses, and chiefly for my soul through my senses. The word of God is food for faith, and so may the works of God nourish faith by sense. Faith seeth God in himself, sense seeth God in his creatures, and, thereby may be helpful to faith. Take a view, O my soul, of thy beloved in those pictures which are always before thee, representing his glorious and eminent perfections. Ah, how strange is it, that he who is so near to thy senses, should be so far from thy thoughts! Try a little what wholesome cordial water thou canst distil out of these herbs and flowers that grow in this earthly Eden, by the fire of meditation: 'Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; or the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?' Job 12:7–9. Thou needest not judge the attributes and excellencies of God, or the work he requireth of thee, so mysterious that none but men of extraordinary parts can reach or teach them. Though the longest line of created understanding cannot fathom his bottomless perfections, and though his commandments be exceeding broad, yet the meanest creatures do after a sort teach thee his wisdom and power, and thy duty and carriage. Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; as brutish as they are, they may instruct thee in many rare lessons. They will teach thee,—

1. Gratitude and thankfulness to thy Maker and preserver; 'the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know,' Isa. 1:2. If the dullest of beasts, the ox and ass, acknowledge their master, how shouldst thou thy benefactor!

2. Dependence on the fountain of thy being; if they depend on him for provision, wilt not thou? Jezreel crieth to the corn, wine, and oil to nourish her; these cry to the earth, the earth crieth to the heavens,

the heavens cry to God, upon whom they depend, Hosea 2:19. The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou satisfiest the desire of every living thing; he giveth to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry, Ps. 145:15, and 147:9. If the great housekeeper of the world be so careful to fodder his cattle, surely thou mayest believe that he will not starve his children.

3. The dread and awe of thy God; when the lion roareth, all the beasts of the forest tremble. What fear should possess thee, when thy God is incensed, and uttereth his terrible voice in his threatenings! Thy flesh may well tremble for fear of him, and thou hast good cause to be afraid of his righteous judgments.

4. Providence and diligence in thy place and calling; 'Go to the pismire, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise; she provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest,' Prov. 6:6–8. If she be so wise as to know her season, and to improve it, how inexcusable wilt thou be if thou shouldst neglect it!

5. Innocency; the sheep will suffer many injuries, and offer none. He went as a sheep to the slaughter, dumb before the shearer, and opened not his mouth.

6. Wisdom and prudence; the serpent will, if possible, secure her head, whatever part of her be wounded. Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field; the Christian must be careful to secure his faith; be wise as serpents; ask the fowls of the air, and they will tell thee; how many truths, O my soul, will the very birds chatter out to thee! They will tell thee,—

(1) Concerning thy God, his goodness and mercy. 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and yet not one of them falleth to the

ground without thy Father's providence,' Mat. 10:29. His providence reacheth the meanest creatures.

(2.) Concerning the wicked one, his cunning and policy. As the eagle, when she seizeth on the carcase, will first pick out the eyes, and then feed on its flesh: so Satan first blindeth the mind, and then leads them hoodwinked to hell. As the eagle carrieth the shell-fish into the air, only that he might break them by their fall, and devour them; so the devil, by his costly courtesy, advanceth many to their destruction, Prov. 1:32. As birds are caught with several baits by the fowler, some with chaff, some with corn, some with day-nets, some with a lowbel; so the archfowler hath various ways to seduce and catch poor souls: ye are not ignorant of his devices.

(3.) Concerning thyself, they will tell thee,—

[1.] That heavenly-mindedness is the only way to cheerfulness. Birds sing most when they are got above the earth. The pretty redbreast doth chant it as merrily in September, the beginning of winter, as in March, the approach of summer. Thou mayest give as cheerful entertainment to hoary frosts as to warming beams, to the declining sun of adversity as to the rising sun of prosperity, if thy conversation be in heaven.

[2.] That simple souls are soon seduced and slain. When the larker's day-net is spread in a fair morning, and himself is whirling his artificial motion, by the reflecting lustre of the sun on the wheeling instrument, not only the merry lark and fearful pigeon are dazzled and drawn with admiration; but stouter birds of prey, the merlin and hobby, are invited to stoop, and, gazing on the outward form, lose themselves. So when Satan spreadeth his day-net of pleasure and honour, he allures not only heathens and Indians, but even unsound

and secure Christians; 'As the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time,' Eccles. 9:12.

[3.] That those that would conquer their spiritual enemies must be full of courage and valour. The kite is audax in minimis, timidus in magnis, bold in dealing with tame fowl, as chickens and ducks, but cowardly in meddling with wild ones, that will not yield. Give not place to the devil; resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

[4.] The misery and mischief of contention. The hawk thinks constantly to make a prey of the heron, but sometimes the heron, when she cannot by any winding shifts get above the hawk, nor by bemuting his feathers make him flag-winged, resumeth courage out of necessity, and strikes the hawk through the gorge with his bill, and so have both been seen to fall down dead together. So rich men many times presume that they may oppress their inferiors at their pleasure; but the event of their strikes and lawsuits (after all their turnings and winding meanders in the law, sought out to get above each other) hath proved the undoing of both.

[5.] The unreasonableness of diffidence and distrust. They will teach thee a lesson of faith, and help to banish our fears. 'Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them; are ye not much better then they?' Mat. 6:28.

[6.] The observation of times and seasons. It is thy prudence to take notice of the storms of judgments, and sunshine of mercy. 'The stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord,' Jer. 8:7.

[7.] The pains thou shouldst take for spiritual food. The fowls of the air will fly far for meat; where the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. No labour should be thought too great for the meat that endureth to eternal life.

[8.] The regard thou shouldst have to the preservation and safety of thyself and family. They build on high, and make their nests on the tops and small twigs of trees; and will spare it out of their own mouths, to feed their young. He who provides not for his family, is not only worse than an infidel, but also worse than the very birds of the air.

O my soul, proceed further. Speak to the earth and it shall teach thee,  
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1. A lesson of humility. Thou art but breathing earth, enlivened dust, as vile as the dirt that every beast of the field trampleth on. 'Behold, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes,' Gen. 18:27.

2. A lecture of thy frailty, that thine earthly tabernacle will ere long fall to the ground. 'Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return.'

3. A lesson of fruitfulness. It bringeth forth thirty, forty, sixty, a hundred for one. 'And Isaac sowed in the land, and had a hundredfold increase.'

4. A lesson of faith and trust in God. The earth hangs on nothing, it hangs in the thin air, where a hair ball, nay a straw, will not stay without a support: Job 26:7, 'He hangeth the earth upon nothing.'

Once more, and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Though they are mute masters, yet they are great teachers; they declare unto



thee,

1. The affection and communion that ought to be amongst saints. Fish of the same kind flock together in shoals. The Greek word for fish is ἰχθὺς, which is derived, as some think, from ἰχνεύω, to come, and θύω, to be carried with force and violence, so the fish swim in troops with great force. The safety of saints consisteth much in their society.

2. The misery of want of government. The greater fish devour the lesser; the pike feed upon roach. 'Thou makest men like fishes of the sea, that have no governor,' Hab. 1:14. So men without magistrates, like cannibals, feed on each other.

3. The folly of men that take not warning by others. Silly fish are caught by the angle or net, and carried to the fire, yet they that remain are still greedy of the bait. Satan takes some sinners with the snares and baits of his temptations, jerks them out of the water of life, and casteth them into the unquenchable fire; yet those that survive are as ready to hearken to his suggestions as if there were no such thing. Eccles. 9:12; 2 Tim. 2:26, 'For man knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.' 'That they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive at his will.'

4. The subtle malice of Satan. When thou seest the fisher baiting his hook, thou mayest think of the policy of the devil, who sugars over his poisoned hooks with seeming profit and pleasures. Eve's apple was candied over with divine knowledge; 'Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.'

5. The multitude of believers that are begotten by the gospel. When the psalmist speaks of the sea, he saith, 'Wherein are things creeping innumerable, both great and small beasts,' Ps. 104:25. The Latin *piscis* cometh of the Chaldean word *push*, which signifieth, to multiply and increase, for nothing multiplieth more than fish; so the great increase of Christians under the gospel is compared to the number of the fish of the great sea. Ezek. 47:9, 'And there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither, for they shall be healed,' &c.

6. The duty of men to abide in their places. Fishes do not change their element; birds are sometimes aloft in the air, sometimes below on the earth, but fish keep always in the water. 'Let every man abide in the same vocation wherein he is called,' 1 Cor. 7:20.

7. The benefit of abounding in holiness. Fishes are then sweetest and acceptable to the palate, when they begin to be with spawn. The fruitful Christian is most pleasing to God. 'Herein is my Father glorified, if ye bring forth much fruit,' John 15:8.

8. The noisomeness of sin. Fish cannot abide any ill savour; when the pump of the ship is emptied, they fly from the stench and smell of that nasty water; 'hating the garment spotted with the flesh,' Jude 23.

9. The necessity of faith and holiness. No fish were counted clean, but such as had fins and scales; the fins guide the fish, the scales are a defence and ornament to them; faith is a Christian's guide, and good works his garment. As the fish by the fins are raised from the mud to the top of the water, so faith lifteth the soul from earth to heaven; it is the evidence of things not seen. Good works are as scales, a shield to a Christian, and are not unfitly called the breastplate of righteousness. Thus, O my soul, though thou couldst

not read a line in any printed book, thou mightest read many good lessons in this natural book. Even things without mouths can preach and speak thy Maker's praise and pleasure; their voices are heard in every language, and their words go to the end of the world, Ps. 19:4.

Wheresoever, O my soul, thou goest, thou mayest by meditation get some steps nearer thine eternal weal. Art thou walking? Consider, thou art but a sojourner and traveller in this world, thy life is a continued motion, thy way is the Son of God, thy home is the Father's house, thy motion is painful, thy way is perfect, and thy home will be full of pleasure. Why shouldst thou wander and come wide, or loiter and come short of heaven? Oh, be sure to walk in the right way, and be content to travel hard, that thy safe way may find its end in solace, and thy painful walk make thy home more welcome. Art thou walking in thine orchard? Thou mayest from every tree, as a text, gather many profitable doctrines and inferences; take a turn or two among the trees, and thou mayest find much wholesome fruit on them.

1. Some trees are profitable for one purpose, some for another; some to quench thirst, some to comfort and refresh the inward parts, &c. So the children of God are diversely serviceable, according to the different gifts bestowed on them by the Holy Ghost.

2. Every living fruit-tree is in some measure fruitful; though some bring forth more fruit, some less, yet all bring forth some. All living Christians are thriving and bearing fruit; though some are more eminent for growth and proficiency in grace, yet all bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. The hypocrite, like a dead stake in a hedge, continueth at a stay, is without good fruit, nay, groweth more rotten every month than other; but the true saint, like the living tree, the

longer he continueth rooted in Christ, the more abundant he is in the work of the Lord.

3. The best trees have a winter, wherein they seem to be dead and barren, yet they have their life and sap at that time remaining in the root. Christians under desertions and temptations may be judged by themselves and others to be dead and undone, but even at such seasons their life is hid with Christ in God; though they may fall foully, they cannot fall finally.

4. Fruit-trees are tossed and shaken by the wind, but there is no danger of their overturning or death, whilst their root remains firm in the earth. Saints may be stirred and tossed by the high winds of Satan's and the world's temptations, but can never be overthrown, because they are rooted in Christ. Grace may be shaken in, but never out of, their souls.

5. The winter which the trees suffer in frosts and snow, and the continuance of their sap underground, is profitable for them, and helpful to their greater growth in spring; so the various and severest providences of God towards his people, are serviceable to their good, and their seeming delusions, in order to their greater growth; as children under a fit of an ague, they may at present be weakened and stand at a stay, but afterward they shoot up the more.

6. The fruits of trees are harsh and little worth till they are grafted; so the fruits of all by nature are wild and unpleasant to God, till they are grafted into Christ.

7. Those trees that stand most in the sun, bring forth the sweetest and the largest fruit; so those believers that live nearest God by a holy communion, do the more abound in the fruits of righteousness,

and their fruits are the more acceptable, springing from a principle of love to God.

8. The more the boughs are laden, the more they bow down to the earth; so the more abundant they are in holiness, the more humble and lowly they will be.

9. The husbandman chooseth what plants he pleaseth to bring into his orchard; and his grafting of them, and care about them, makes the difference between them and others: so God chooseth whom he pleaseth, out of the wilderness and waste of the world; and his grafting them by regeneration, and conduct of them by his Spirit, distinguisheth them from all the rest of the earth.

10. The leaves drop from the trees in the beginning of autumn. Such is the friendship of this world: whilst the sap of wealth and honour lasteth with me, and whilst I enjoy a summer of prosperity, my friends swarm in abundance; but in the winter of adversity they will leave me naked. Oh, how miserable is that person who hath no friends but of this world! How happy is he that hath the sap of grace, which will remain with him in the coldest winter! Thus, O my soul, whilst thou art walking with regenerate creatures, thou mayest better thy spiritual senses, and walk with thy Creator. Oh, how may thy thoughts be raised to the trees that are planted in the house of the Lord, and flourish in the courts of thy God, that are planted by the rivers of waters, and bring forth their fruit in due season! Lord, I confess thy goodness in giving me so many ushers, yet, alas, my dull and blockish heart to this day hath not learned those lessons which thou hast set me by them. Unless thou, who art the chief Master of the assemblies, undertake the work, all will be in vain. Thy creatures are as burning glasses, they cannot make the sun to shine, but when it doth vouchsafe its heavenly beams, they help to increase both light

and heat. It is thine own promise, that all Zion's children shall be taught of God. Let it please thee to undertake the tuition and instruction of thine untoward scholar. Oh, do thou spiritualise my heart, and then I shall spiritualise all the works of thine hand; do thou enlighten me so powerfully by thy blessed Spirit, that I may turn every spark into a candle, and every candle into a star, and every star into a sun; and by the light of all be enabled to see more of thy beautiful face and blessed perfections.

I wish that I may not only taste by occasional, but make a full meal, by set and serious meditation, of that food which my God provideth for my soul. If a drop, a little, be reviving and strengthening, surely a good draught will yield me more comfort and profit. If ever it be true it is here, the best is at the bottom. That rare object which upon a transient view gives me some delight, upon a permanent vision will afford more pleasure. If my meat abide in my body, it will afford me the better nourishment. Fluxes in the mind, as in the outward man, are arguments and authors of weakness. The milk must be set some time before it will turn into cream. The longer physic remains within me, the more operative it will be. The flame of David's extraordinary affection to God's law, was kindled at the hot fire of his constant meditation. 'Oh how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.' His love was hot burning coals. He speaks not barely by way of affirmation, I love thy law; and by way of interrogation, How love I thy law? but also by way of admiration, 'Oh how love I thy law!' But his abiding thoughts on it were the warm beams, which, beating constantly upon him, put him into such a violent heat: 'It is my meditation all the day.' As the hen, by sitting on her eggs some weeks, warmeth them and hatcheth young ones; so may I, by applying savoury subjects home to my soul, and brooding some considerable time on them, bring forth new affections and new actions. Though my affections seem as dead as the Shunammite's

son, by stretching my thoughts thus on them, I shall warm and enliven them. Many blows drive a nail to the head, many thoughts settle a truth on the heart. Oh that I might not only at some times exchange a few words with the subject of my meditation occasionally, as I do with a friend passing by my door, but also at set times invite it, as Lot did the angels, to stay with me all night, being confident it will pay me bountifully, as they him, for my charges in its entertainment. Yet I would not only have my affections renewed, but also my actions reformed by my meditations. If I meditate what is good to be done, and do not the good meditated on, I lose my labour, and take much pains to no purpose. Cogitation is the sowing of the seed, action is the springing of it up; the former is hidden and under the ground, the latter is visible, and many are the better for it. If the seed should still lie buried in the earth, it is but lost and thrown away, it is the springing of it up that causeth the harvest. Meditation is the womb of my actions; action is the midwife of my meditations. An evil and imperfect conception, if it hath the favour of a birth, yet the mind is but delivered of a monster, and of that which had better been stifled in the womb than ever seen the light. A good and perfect conception, if it want strength for its birth, perisheth and comes to nothing. Like Ephraim, it playeth the part of an unwise son, and stayeth in the place of the breaking forth of children. It is pity that such conceptions should prove abortive, or such beautiful children be still-born. Lord, thou hast appointed me to meditate seriously on thy statutes, and those excellent subjects contained in them. I confess my heart is unwilling to this needful and gainful work, and apt to be unfaithful in the management of this sacred duty. If thou pleasest not to lay thy charge upon it, and to use thy power over it, it will either wholly omit it, or perform it to no purpose. Why should it not dwell now upon thee by meditation, with whom I hope to dwell for ever? What unspeakable joy might I receive in and from thyself, could I but get above this earth and flesh! Oh, who will bring me into

that strong city not made with hands? Who will lead me into thy holy hill of Zion by meditation? Wilt not thou, O God? Grant me thy Spirit, I beseech thee, that my spirit, which lives upon thee, may be united in thinking of thee, and may live wholly to thee.

O my soul, now thou art spending thyself in wishes, set upon the work, and turn thy prayers into practice, for an example and pattern to others, and for thy profit. There is one attribute of thy God to which thou art infinitely indebted and beholden for every moment's abode on this side the unquenchable fire, even his patience and long-suffering. Ah, where hadst thou been at this hour had not that attribute stood thy friend? Let the kindness thou hast received from it encourage thee to a serious consideration of it. Old acquaintance and former courtesies may well plead and prevail also with thee to afford it entertainment for some time in thy thoughts.

What is this patience of thy God to which thou art so much engaged? It is his gracious will, whereby he beareth long, and forbeareth his sinful creatures. It is that attribute whereby he beareth their reproach, and forbeareth revenge. It is sometimes called slowness to anger, Ps. 103:8. He is not easily overcome by the provocations of men, but striveth to overcome them by his patience. A small matter doth not incense him to anger; he is not presently put into a fury, and his wrath is not easily heightened into revenge. 'Thou wast a transgressor from the womb; for my name's sake I will defer mine anger, and refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off,' Isa. 48:8, 9. It is sometimes called long-suffering, Exod. 34:6. He expecteth and waiteth a long time for the repentance of sinners. He doth not only pity our misery, which is his mercy, and notwithstanding all our wickedness and unworthiness load us with benefits, which is his grace, but also bears many days, many years, with our infirmities, which is his long-suffering. Men are transgressors in the womb;



before they are able to go they go astray, yet after a thousand and thousand affronts, from the womb to the tomb, he bears with them. 'Forty years long was I grieved with this generation.' Infants, or green wood, are fit fuel for the eternal fire, yet he forbears rotten oaks and old sinners. They owe an infinite debt to justice, and are liable every moment to the prison of hell; but patience stoppeth the arrest of vengeance. He endureth 'with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction,' Rom. 9:22.

This patience of thy God is amplified by considering,—

1. How odious sin is to him. The evil of sin never obtained a good look from God. 'Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.' He seeth all sins with an eye of observation, but he seeth no sin with an eye of approbation. It is not out of any love to sin that he is so long-suffering toward sinners, for sin is the object of his anger and dislike. 'He is angry with sinners every day.' Sin is the object of his wrath, which is anger boiled up to its greatest heat. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men. Nay, it is the object of his hatred, which is the highest degree of detestation. Hatred is abhorrency heightened to an implacability. Bare anger might be appeased, wrath might be pacified, but hatred is irreconcilable. 'The foolish shall not stand in thy sight, thou hatest all workers of iniquity.' 'Six things doth the Lord hate, yea, seven are an abomination to him.' There is an antipathy in his nature against the smallest sin, as sin is contrary to his being, law, and honour. Though he be so perfect a God that no sin can be hurtful to him, yet he is so pure a God that every sin is hateful to him. Therefore the Scripture, speaking of God after the manner of men, represents it as offensive to every of his senses. It grates his ears, and thence he complains of the cry of Sodom. It provoketh his eyes, and hence it is said, 'Evil cannot stand in thy sight, neither canst thou behold the workers of

iniquity.' It oppresseth his feeling, wherefore he is said to be pressed with sin, as a cart is pressed with sheaves. It displeaseth his smell, and so he calleth sinners rotten carcases, open sepulchres, that send forth noisome savours. He proclaims to the world the offensiveness of sin to his sacred Majesty by the names he gives it in his royal law, wherein he forbids it. He calls it dung, mire, vomit, filth, superfluity of naughtiness, filthiness, a menstruous cloth, a plague, an issue, an ulcer. And yet, though sin be thus infinitely loathsome and odious to him, he bears with men that are all over infected with it in the highest degree.

2. The condition of sinners. His patience is much heightened by considering who they are that distaste and provoke him with their sins. They are his creatures, the work of his hands. They rebel against him, who were made and are every day maintained by him. They forget him that formed them, and fight against the fountain of their beings. They are his obliged creatures, such on whom he hath laid millions of engagements. They cannot speak a word, or think a thought, or fetch their breath without him. They live every moment wholly upon his mercy. Hear, O heaven! give ear, O earth! he hath nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against him. He is daily multiplying mercies on them, and yet they are daily multiplying iniquities against him. They are creatures full of enmity against him. They sin against him out of hatred of him. 'The carnal mind is enmity against God.' If it could lay a plot to take away the life of God, it hath malice enough to put it in execution. Hence there appears little reason why he should pity or spare them. If a man find his enemy, will he let him go? Yet God is patient towards them.

3. The multitude and greatness of sins and sinners. He cannot look down from heaven but every moment he beholds millions of transgressors proclaiming war against him, walking contrary to him,

and provoking him before his face. The whole world is a field wherein the inhabitants are continually, with drums beating, and colours flying, with brazen foreheads and stubborn hearts, letting fly whole volleys of sins and impieties against heaven. Their whole work is to stretch out their hands against God, and strengthen themselves against the Almighty. From the highest to the lowest they disown his authority, deny his dominion, deface his image, dishonour his name, despise his laws, scorn his love, and mock at his threatenings. 'All sin, and come short of the glory of God.' The whole earth is a kind of hell in regard of blasphemy and pollutions, and all manner of provocations. His pure eyes behold the devil-worship amongst the heathen, the impostor-worship amongst Turks, the idol-worship amongst papists, and the belly and flesh-worship amongst protestants. He seeth in the rich, oppression, atheism, swearing, cursing, pride, persecution of others; in the poor, envying, murmuring, carnal-mindedness, drunkenness, and ignorance; in the young, headstrong passions, uncleanness, youthful lusts; in the ancient, impatience, covetousness, profaneness. He understandeth the several hearts of men, so many sinks of sin; and the several lives of men, so many treasons and conspiracies against his being and law; and so many men in the world, so many monsters of wickedness. Though he enjoin them his precepts, they cast them behind their backs. Though he would allure them by his promises, they scorn them as babies to fool children withal. Though he would affright them with his comminations and threatenings, they laugh at the shaking of those spears, and look on all his words no better than wind. Though he endeavours by his works to reclaim them from their wickedness, sometimes loading them with his benefits, that his goodness might lead them to repentance—sometimes scourging them in measure, that they might not be condemned with the world—yet they slight his favour, are not afraid of his fury, and, by their impenitency and continuance in sin, dare him to his very face.

He sendeth his ministers to tell them of their danger, he sets up conscience within them to mind them of their duty, he hangs up others before them as spectacles of his wrath, that they might take warning and escape destruction; and yet they laugh at ministers for their weeping over them, check conscience for its boldness to check them, and think themselves wiser than to be frighted with the scarecrows of God's judgments on others. They sin against his wisdom, his power, his goodness, his faithfulness, his patience, his providence, his ordinances, his Son, his Spirit, his law, his gospel, their own promises and engagements, the voice and cry of his vicegerent within them, and that day after day, and this throughout the whole earth; and yet, notwithstanding all these high affronts and notorious indignities, repeated and continued every moment, he beareth with them.

The meekest man in the world, no not all the men in the world, have patience enough for one sinner; what patience then hath God, that beareth so much with a world of sinners! It is the saying of one, If but any tender-hearted man should sit one hour in the throne of God Almighty, and look down upon the earth, as God doth continually, and see what abominations are done in that hour, he would undoubtedly the next set all the world on fire. Oh, how patient is that God that beareth with it so many years! The meekest man upon earth could not endure the frowardness of one people, and they the best people in the world; the peevishness of the Jews drove him into that passion, for which he was excluded the earthly Canaan. How meek and patient then is God, who beareth the evil manners of all the nations of the world, the greatest part of which make it their work to spit their venom, and malice, and blasphemy in his face every day! The whole world is a volume, in every leaf, and in every line of which patience, meekness, gentleness, long-suffering, forbearance, are written in broad letters.

4. How he knoweth all their sins. He doth not forbear sinners from ignorance of their sins; he seeth and knoweth all things. All the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings. His eyes behold, and his eyelids try the children of men. Men bear with others, because they know not their secret treasons and heart-rebellions; but God knoweth all the wickedness that is committed in the world, he telleth man his thoughts. All secret sins are public to him; all men are naked and open to him. He knoweth every thought, word, and action of every man as exactly as if he had none but him to mind. His knowledge is infinite; he knoweth all the sins of all men clearly; they are as visible to his eye as if they were written with the brightest sunbeam on the clearest crystal. He knoweth all the sins of men distinctly, not in a confused heap or lump, but one by one; knoweth all the sins of all men every moment. All the sins that are, that ever were, or that ever shall be, are continually in his eye and view.

5. How he is able to revenge himself every moment. David did bear with Joab, because the sons of Zeruah were too hard for him. He was a tender plant that was scarce rooted, and feared to be overturned by their fury; but God beareth with sinners though he be Almighty, and can do all things. He can as easily turn the sinner into hell, as tell him of hell; he can blow the sinner with his breath into the bottomless pit. By the blast of God they perish, by the breath of his nostrils they are consumed. The most secret sin is within the sight of his countenance, and the strongest sinner within the reach of his vengeance. This is wonderful indeed; he is infinite in patience who is infinite in power. 'The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power,' saith the prophet, Nahum 1. He that can in a moment speak the whole creation into nothing, beareth many years with his rebellious provoking creatures. The Lord looked upon the Egyptians and troubled them. It is an easy matter to look, especially for him

that made the eye. A glance of his eye will overthrow the proudest, stoutest sinner. Men are great in anger, who are little in power; their hearts are good, I should say bad enough, speedily to ruin such as offend them; but their hands are weak and straitened, that we may thank their want of power, not their patience, for our preservation. But God, who is all power, is all patience. He that can spurn the whole world into endless woe, more easily than all the men of the world can spurn a football into the water, forbeareth them year after year.

6. He doth not only forbear, but also do men good. His goodness towards them is positive as well as privative; he upholds them in their beings, protects them in their goings, supports them by his power, supplieth them by his providence, as well as forbear them by his patience. His enemies are hungry, he feeds them; they are thirsty, he gives them drink. He gives them that corn, and wine, and oil, which they bestow on Baal; he bestows on them those mercies with which they fight against him; he blesseth them with life, health, strength, food, raiment, sleep, reason, friends, peace, liberty, riches, honours, the gospel, sermons, Sabbaths, offers of pardon and life, whilst they persist in their provocations against him. He is at infinite cost and charge, night and day, in sending provision into the camp of his enemies.

7. He wooeth us to be reconciled. He doth not only command and enjoin rebellious man to throw down his weapons of unrighteousness, but even prayeth and entreateth him with much importunity to accept of peace and pardon. 'As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.' He is earnest and instant by his ministers, by the motions of his Spirit, by the calls and convictions of conscience, that he might persuade miserable men to be happy, 2 Cor. 5:15, 20; 2 Chron. 36:15;

Isa. 65:2, and 42:14. 'I have stretched out my hand all the day long to a rebellious house, that have walked in a way that is not good.'

8. He doth all this without any expectation of advantage to himself. He gains not by our holiness, neither is he a loser by our wickedness. The arrows of sin are always too short to reach him, and he is so high that he is far above our highest service, our blessings, and praises. Infinite perfection admits of no addition. 'Can a man be profitable to God, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous, or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?' He begs as hard as if it were for his own life, but it is wholly for ours; he loseth not the least, if we be lost; he saves nothing by our salvation; it is all one to the sun whether men open their eyes and are refreshed with its light, or shut their eyes and behold nothing of its glorious splendour.

9. He forbearth us, who is infinitely our superior. It were much for a king to bear with affronts from a vile beggar; but it is infinitely more for the King of kings to bear with indignities, and treasons, and malice, and hatred, from his vile creatures. Oh, the patience of God! Man cannot suffer a disrespect from his fellow; but God doth from them that are infinitely his inferiors. The apostles were good men, yet upon a little disrespect from some of the same make and mould with themselves, they presently call for fire from heaven. What patience and goodness is then in God, who beareth with such innumerable and notorious affronts from his slaves, and vassals, from them that in comparison of him are much less than nothing!

10. He warneth before he striketh; he threatens that he might not punish, and thundereth with his voice, that he might not overthrow us with his hand; he shoots off his warning pieces, that he might spare his murdering pieces. Men that are set upon revenge are silent.

When Absalom resolved on the destruction of Amnon, he spake not a word to him, either good or bad; but God tells men fully what is intended against them by his justice, that it might be prevented by their fitness for mercy. The bitterest cup of threatenings hath the sweet of love at the bottom.

11. He punisheth temporally, that he might spare eternally. When he is forced to strike, he uses the rod that he might not use the axe; we are chastened of the Lord, that we might not be condemned with the world; he forceth tears in this world to prevent eternal weeping. How many a man's way doth he hedge up with thorns, that he might not find the path to eternal death.

12. He is thus patient towards men, who did not wait at all on angels. The angels were more noble creatures, and able to have done him more and better service than man; yet, when they sinned, he did not wait a moment for their repentance; but he stretches out his hand all the day long to man. He that would not wait upon disloyal courtiers, waits upon rebellious beggars.

Consider the causes of it.

The moving cause is his own gracious nature. Men forbear punishing malefactors, sometimes because they are related to them, sometimes from hope of advantage by them, sometimes because they are afraid of them; but God forbears none upon any such grounds. His goodness is the only string that tieth his hand from striking; 'Yea, many years didst thou forbear them, for thou art a gracious and a merciful God,' Neh. 9:30, 31.

The final cause is manifold.



1. That he might exalt his great name. It is light straw that upon the least spark takes fire. The discretion of a man deferreth his anger, and it is his glory to pass by infirmities; mean and low spirits are most peevish and passionate; sickly and weak persons are observed to be the most impatient. God makes his power known, when he endureth with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. He intendeth the advancement of his praise in the lengthening of his patience: 'For my name's sake will I defer mine anger; for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off,' Isa. 48:9.

2. That sinners might amend. He is patient, that men might not perish. 'The Lord is not slack, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' He defers their execution, that they might sue out their pardon. The Lord waiteth, not that he might be blessed in himself, but that he may be gracious to sinners.

3. That impenitent sinners might be left without excuse. If sinners that are turned out of the womb into hell, will justify God, surely those upon whom he waited twenty, or thirty, or forty, or fifty years for their conversion, will condemn themselves. If all mouths shall be stopped, then they that tasted so largely of forbearing mercy may well be silent. Oh, how little will they have to say for themselves upon whom grace waited so many years, knocking hard at the door of their hearts for acceptance, and they refused to open to it, or bid it come in. How justly will they suffer long in the other world, to whom God was so long-suffering to no purpose in this world, Rom. 4:2.

How fully, O my soul, doth the Scripture mention this patience of thy God! 'The Lord passed by and proclaimed his name, The Lord, The Lord God, gracious, long-suffering.' Though sinners try his patience

by their heaven-daring provocations, yet the Lord is gracious, slow to anger, and of great kindness; oftentimes they do their utmost to kindle the fire of his anger, but many a time turned he away his anger, and did not stir up all his wrath. What monuments of his patience hath he reared up in his word! It is also written in broad letters in his works; he bore with the Jews after their unparalleled murder of his own Son, above forty years. The old world had larger experiences of his forbearance. 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man, yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.' The Egyptians, though cruel persecutors of his own people, that were as dear to him as the apple of his eye, yet were suffered four hundred years. He beareth with men till he can no longer forbear. The woman with child is forced, though she hold out long, to fall in labour at last. 'I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman,' Isa. 42:14.

O thou dear friend of mankind, that thou wert imprinted in my thoughts, engraven in my heart, and always before mine eyes! O my soul, consider this long-suffering of thy God, till thou tastest some relish of its sweetness! This name of thy God is as ointment poured out, which yieldeth a refreshing fragranc; hath it been all thy days so near thee, and done so much for thee, and wilt thou not give it some warm entertainment within thee? Hast thou not infinite cause to cry out, 'Oh the depth of the patience and forbearance of God!' As soon as thou wast conceived, thou wast corrupted; before thou wast born, sin was brought forth in thee; thy God might have turned thee out of thy mother's belly into the belly of hell; devils might have been the midwife to deliver thy mother of such a monster, and their dungeon of darkness the first place in which thou didst breathe; yet he, who might have caused eternal death to have trodden upon the heels of thy natural birth, spared thee. Had he then suffered the roaring lions, his executioners, to have dragged thee to their own

den, he had got himself glory, and prevented much dishonour, which thou hast since brought to his name. As thou didst grow up, sin grew up in thee, and patience grew up with thee. Numberless have thine iniquities been, and his advantages for thy destruction, yet he hath forborne thee. What hath he got by all his long-suffering towards thee? He might have ruined thee, to his eternal honour; but his forbearance hath seemed to impair the revenues of heaven. Wicked men question his power, and good men quarrel with his providence, and all because of his patience. When some sinners are hanged on gibbets, as spectacles of his justice, others are kept in the more awe; but if judgment be not speedily executed, the hearts of the sons of men are set in them to do mischief. The thanks that are usually paid him for his patience, are indignities and affronts; the sleeping of vengeance occasioneth the awakening of sin. Besides, their thoughts of him are the more profane as well as their actions. If he be patient towards the sinner, he is judged a party in the sin. 'These things thou didst, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself;' because he is silent, they judge him consenting. O my soul, may not thy God be well called the God of all patience, when he aboundeth so much in it, though he be so great a loser by it? Was not the patience of thy Redeemer on earth wonderful, in bearing such mockings, smitings on the cheek, spittings in his face, scourgings on his back? But thy Redeemer in heaven endureth more affronts every moment against his divine nature, than he did all his time of abode in this world, against his human nature. Oh, why art thou no more warmed with it, and wondering at it? Even a Saul was so affected with the forbearance of David, that he should spare his enemy when he had him in his hands, and might as easily have cut his throat as the skirt of his garment, that he lift up his voice and wept. And art not thou affected with the patience of thy God, in whose hand is thy life, and breath, and all thy comforts, who can with a glance of his eye turn thee into the fiery furnace, against whom thou art an open

traitor and professed rebel, that he should spare thee so many years, and instead of heaping up judgments on thee, lade thee with his benefits? Consider,

1. He is not patient towards all men as he hath been towards thee. Some have found justice arresting them immediately upon their contracting of new debts, and haling them presently to hell upon the commission of their sin. There are those of the serpent's brood, that have been crushed in the egg, and others that have stayed longer, have been ripe for ruin, before they had attained their full age. Though the creditor hath forborne thee five hundred talents, yet he hath not forborne some others five hundred pence; wrath hath sometimes followed sin so close, that it hath lodged where sin supped. Gehazi's leprosy and lie were contemporary; Absalom's life and treason against his father expired together. A sudden thunderbolt from heaven hath struck some into hell without any forerunner to give warning of it, yet thy God hath spared thee.

2. He that forbore thee who hast so often offended him, did not forbear angels a moment, after they had once offended. Behold the severity and goodness of God! Towards angels, the highest and noblest house of the creatures, severity; towards thee, goodness. He that stated those excellent natures in-an irrecoverable condition of woe and misery upon their first fault, hath borne with and forborne thee after millions of affronts.

3. He that spares thee did not spare his own Son. The Son of God did no sooner stand in the place of sinners, but it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief, and to make his soul an offering for sin. Though he were free from sin, he was a man of sorrows; and thou who art little else than sin hast not so much as tasted what such sorrows are. Thy God hath forborne thee, a monster of rebellion and

wickedness, when he would not in the least forbear him who was a miracle of obedience and dutifulness; nay, he did not spare him, that he might spare thee, and would not forbear him, because he intended to forbear thee. Wonder, O my soul, at this transcendent grace and goodness! Is it possible for thee to consider how a sudden arrow hath shot others dead on thy right and left hand! how angels themselves, upon their first breach of the divine law, were without any pity or forbearance reserved in chains of darkness, to the judgment of the great day! Nay, how the Son of God's boundless love, who never offended him, for becoming only a surety for others' sins, was without the least forbearance arrested and forced to pay the utmost farthing; and that thou who art a lump of lust, a sink of sin, an old enemy and traitor against the crown and dignity of the King of heaven, after thousands and millions of provocations against law and gospel, light and love, precepts and promises, are to this day spared! Canst thou, I say, consider all this, and not be transported into a high and holy passion of love and admiration, at such unparalleled patience? Thou mayest well say with the holy apostle, 'In me Jesus Christ hath shewed forth all long-suffering and patience, for an example to them that should hereafter believe in him unto eternal life.'

O my soul, what dost thou think of these things? Was ever patience represented in such lively lovely colours? Thou mayest now fully satisfy thyself in the reason of thine abode so many years on this side the unquenchable lake. Dost thou ask, Why was I not cut off from the womb, and hurried through the light of this world to blackness of darkness for ever? I answer, Because thy God is patient. Dost thou ask, Though I was not as a poisonous viper, crushed to death, as soon as brought forth, with the foot of divine wrath, for the venom which was in me; yet when I put it forth to the injury of others, and did spit it in the face of God himself, why was I spared? I answer, Because

God is patient. Thou sinnest often, every day, every hour, in every thought, in every word, in every deed, and he spares as often, because he is patient. Thou readeſt of a ſeaſon when the patience of the ſaints doth eſpecially triumph. 'Here is the faith and patience of the ſaints;' this world is the ſtage, and this life is the time, wherein the patience of thy God doth act its part, to the amazement of all judicious ſpectators; here is the faithfulneſs and patience of thy God. Oh that I could affect and admire it, embrace and entertain it according to its worth! Oh that my heart were filled with its warmth, my tongue with its praiſe, and my life with its end! Oh thou that art ſo much in favour with God, and ſo great a friend to men, that thou wert engraven upon the palms of my hands, and thy walls were ever before me! Oh that thy noble deeds, and what wonders thou haſt wrought for the children of men, were written for the generations to come, that the people yet unborn might praiſe the Lord! When, oh when ſhall this patience of my God make a ſuitable impreſſion upon my ſpirit! I live upon it, I live by it, I had been a firebrand of hell at this moment had it not been for it, yet how great a ſtranger am I to it! It goeth with me when I walk abroad, it abides with me when I ſtay at home, it followeth me up and down day and night; I am beholden to it for my life and all my mercies, for my preſent enjoyments and future expectations; yet, alas, how little am I affected with it! I wonder at the patience of ſome choice Chriſtians, that hold their tongues when others revile them, and their hands when others aſſault them; and do not wonder at the patience of my God, when their injuries are nothing to his, either for nature or number; and their patience to his far leſs than the ſmalleſt drop to the ocean. O my ſoul, how wilt thou be able to answer for this ſenſeleſs ſtupidity? Muſt the candles of creatures be gazed at with amazement, and thy God alone be neglected? Is a beam of the ſun worthy of ſuch admiration, and not its glorious body worthy of much more? Wilt thou not value a pearl of ſuch infinite price, and

disesteem all the meekness and forbearance of men, in comparison of the patience of thy God? Oh, where is thy judgment, that thou valuest so little such unsearchable riches, that thou dost not cry out, Oh the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the forbearance of God? Where are thy affections, that they do not cling about it, cleave to it, close with it, delight in its presence, and desire its continuance? Where is thy heart, that it doth not taste its sweetness, smell its savour, love its gracious author, and meditate on its precious nature and pleasant effects night and day? Where are my spiritual senses, that they are not conversant about so worthy an object? I cannot open mine eyes, but I may behold it in everything that is visible. The food, and raiment, and life, and health, and strength, and liberty, that I and others enjoy, present the patience of God unto me. Every friend I converse with, every drunkard and unclean person and atheist—yea, every man I meet, tells me, God is patient. The oaths, and curses, and murders, and adulteries, and blasphemies, and profaneness of wicked men, cry aloud in mine ears, that God is patient. The persecutions, and oppressions, and prayers, and cries, and tears of good men, proclaim to my conscience, that God is patient. The Sabbaths and ordinances, and seasons of grace, and offers of pardon and life, which both good and bad enjoy, speak plainly and distinctly, The Lord is patient. Oh that mine eyes could see it, mine ears hear it, and mouth taste it, my mind discern it, and my soul relish it in all these! O thou beautiful beam, darted from the Sun of righteousness, that callest poor mortals to life, when they are at the brink of death, thou that art the wonder of glorious angels, and glorified saints, be thou unto me as a bundle of myrrh, and a cluster of camphor, always unto me; let me love thee much for my own sake, because thou hast done so much for me, but most for the Lord's sake, because he is all in all unto me.

Well, O my soul, how wilt thou requite the kindness thou hast received from this patience of thy God? When Ahasuerus, a heathen, had read and considered how Mordecai had saved his life, by discovering the two traitors that sought to lay hands on the king, he cried out, What honour hath been done to Mordecai for this? and could take no rest till he had given him some signal honour. Thou hast read, for thy whole life is a book written within and without with it, how the patience of thy God hath saved thy life, the life of thy soul, when sin and Satan conspired together to take it away; now wilt thou not say within thyself, What honour hath been done to the patience of God for this? and be unsatisfied till thou hast done it some honour, for this good office it hath done thee? What love doth that friend deserve who saves thy life? What esteem doth that hand of pity merit, that keeps thee out of the bottomless pit? What thanks is that messenger worthy of, that brings thee, a condemned sinner, certain news of a reprieve, and great hopes of a pardon? Surely the respect thou owest to the patience of God, which doth as much for thee as all this, should be very great, especially considering thy disrespects formerly to the God of patience have been very grievous. Lord, I acknowledge I have formerly much abused thy patience, using it as an encouragement to profaneness, and turning thy grace into wantonness; but now through thy strength I will no longer despise the riches of thy forbearance, but be led through thy goodness to repentance. I know thou intendest it as a city of refuge to the penitent, not as a sanctuary to the presumptuous. Oh, let me never make it a pillow for a hard heart, but a plaster for a wounded spirit! Let this servant of thine, and friend of mine, obtain his errand, and accomplish the end for which thou hast sent him. Thou sparest me here that thou mightest spare me hereafter, thou waitest upon me that thou mightest be gracious unto me, and art long-suffering, because not willing that any should perish, but that all might come to repentance. Oh that therefore I might wait upon thee in all thy



providences and ordinances for grace, that so thy long-suffering may be unto me salvation! Thou hast told me, Though the sinner live a hundred years, and God prolong his days, yet it shall not go well with the wicked. His preservation is but a reservation to the sorer and great destruction. Though thou sufferest long, thou wilt not suffer always; and when thou strikest impenitent ones, the slowness of thy pace will be recompensed in the heaviness of thy hand. The longer the child of vengeance is in the womb of the threatening, the bigger it groweth, and the more pain it will put the sinner to, when it cometh to the birth of its execution. Oh how dreadful will my doom be, when thou comest to reckon with me for all thy patience, if I do not at this day prevent it by repentance! If thy patience do not now make me bend, hereafter it will make me bleed; it is a sweet friend, but a bitter enemy; no fury like that which is extracted out of abused patience. It were far better to be sent from the mother's breasts to everlasting burnings, than to live many years at the charge of patience, and then to die impenitent. If I cause thee to suffer long now in vain, thou wilt cause me to suffer long in the other world, and the more dreadfully for thy long-suffering in this. Since thou art gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, oh take me not away in thy long-suffering, but give me to mind in this day of thy patience, the things that concern mine everlasting peace, that I may to eternity give thee honour and praise for thy wondrous and boundless patience. Amen.

## CHAPTER VI

**How a Christian may exercise himself to godliness, on a week-day from morning to**

## night

Fourthly, Thy duty is to exercise thyself to godliness every week-day. I have spoken, in the first part, how a Christian may make religion his business on a Lord's-day; I shall therefore in this place discover how he may do it on a week-day.

Every day with a godly man is a holy Sabbath to the Lord. Godliness is not his holy day's, or high day's, but every day's work, and his exercise every part of every day: 'I have inclined my heart to keep thy statutes,' not by fits and starts, but 'always unto the end,' Ps. 119:112. The flower called heliotropium or turn-sol, turneth its face towards the sun from morning to night, so doth the true Christian towards the Sun of righteousness. The command of God is: 'Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long,' Prov. 23:17. And the carriage of holy men is answerable hereunto: 'The twelve tribes served God instantly day and night,' Acts 26:7. As the angels, though they are employed up and down in the world for the service of the saints, yet they always behold the face of their Father; so the children of God, though they are occupied about civil and natural actions, are called hither and thither as their occasions are, yet they pass the whole time of their sojourning here in fear, 1 Peter 1:17. That watch is naught that goeth only at first winding up, and standeth still all the day after; that man's religion is little worth that, like Ephraim's goodness, is as a morning cloud or dew, which vanisheth away ere noon. The rivers run ever towards the sea, notwithstanding that hills, and rocks, and mountains interpose and force them to their winding meanders; nay, their compass about is not without profit, for they water those grounds in their passage through which they seemed to wander. The person that hath the living water of grace in him is always tending towards the ocean of his happiness, notwithstanding his seeming

diversions, by his worldly actions, and particular vocation; nay, he is doing good, and serving his God and his soul, as well as his family and body, in those interjections. The wheel of a chariot, though it be in motion all the day, and turning about on the ground, yet it is but a small part of it that toucheth the earth at one time, the greatest part of it is always above it; so the true Christian, though he be all the day busy about earthly affairs, yet it is but his body, his lesser part, that is employed about them; his soul, his affections, which are his greatest part, are always above them.

## SECTION I

I shall first offer thee two quickening motives, and then acquaint thee wherein thy daily exercise to godliness consisteth.

First, Consider, any day may be thy last day, and therefore every day should be a holy day with thee; I mean, not a holy day for play or recreation, but for the work of religion. He that knoweth not how soon his master will come and reckon with him, had need to be always employed about his master's business. Because there is no time of life in which thou art secure from death, therefore every day of thy life thou oughtest to be about thy duty: Prov. 27:1, 'Boast not thyself of to-morrow, thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.' Every day is big-bellied, and hath more in the womb of it than any man knoweth; he that salutes the morning with a smiling aspect, may bid the world good night for ever before the evening. The candle of thy life may be blown out on a sudden before it is half burnt out. The poets fable that Death and Cupid lodging together at an inn exchanged arrows, whereby it hath since come to pass, that old men dote, and young men die. Death cometh up to the young and strong, old and weak men go down to death. Thou mayest be called forth to

that war in which there is no discharge, and not have an hour's warning to prepare thyself for a march. Sturdy trees are overturned by an unexpected wind, lusty men by violent fevers, or outward accidents; our enemies are strong, our earthly houses weak, the coming of our landlord is unknown, the lease of our lives is uncertain, we are every moment liable to be ejected, and shall we not be so employed that our Lord when he comes may find us well-doing? I remember I have in some author read, that the invention of clocks was not primarily to mind us of the sun's posting in the heavens, but of our lives passing on earth. It was Calvin's reason for his unweariedness in his studies, when his friends urged against it the injury it did his body, Would ye have my Lord when he cometh find me idle? It will be woeful for that servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find doing evil, or doing nothing: 'But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the men-servants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him asunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers,' Luke 12:45, 46.

In which words we may observe, 1. The sin of the unfaithful servant.  
2. The severity of his Lord.

In the sin, we may take notice,

1. Of the nature of. He beats his fellow-servants, and eats and drinks, and is drunken; he gives himself up to all manner of wickedness; he is unrighteous to his fellow-servants, he beats them, and unfaithful to his master, he abuseth his goods, he eats and drinks and is drunken. Sin doth not lie skulking in the secret trenches of his heart,

but appeareth boldly in the open field of his life. It is a sign an enemy hath great power when he sheweth himself openly.

2. The occasion of it. His plea for it, his Lord delayeth his coming; because he hath not a speedy reward, he layeth aside all good works; because of God's gracious forbearance, he argueth a general acquittance for all his evil works. He makes bold to riot, because he is not called to a speedy reckoning. We tremble not at the noise of those cannons which we fancy to be a great way off. That which is looked upon at a distance seems small, and so is despised, though the same, beheld near, appears great and terrifieth us.

In the severity of the Lord, we may read,

1. How sore his judgment is. He shall cut him asunder, and give him his portion among unbelievers. These two expressions speak the dreadfulness of his doom, though no words can speak fully how woeful it is. He shall cut him asunder; an allusion to some tortures then in use amongst the heathen, to shew the exquisite pain which his body shall suffer, and give him his portion among unbelievers. Because the hottest hell is reserved for such: 'The wrath of God abideth on them,' John 3:36, to note the extreme punishment which his soul shall undergo.

2. How sudden it is. Unexpected evils are most dreadful. The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him. Sudden frights overwhelm the spirits; those miseries which, seen at some distance, have been, entertained with patience, surprising men on a sudden, have stricken them into despair. Death comes sometimes like a thief up into our windows; coming in at the door is ordinary, but coming in at the window is unlooked for, Jer. 9:21. As the snare secretly and unexpectedly seizeth the silly bird, so doth a day of death the simple children of men, Luke 21:35. Our Saviour speaks of

his coming in the second or third watch of the night, which the Jews called, *Intempestum et gallicinium*, not in the first and fourth, because, saith Theophylact, they are the dead time of the night, when men are in their soundest sleep, to shew us how suddenly and unexpectedly he shall surprise most men, Luke 12:38.

Reader, this present day's work may be the last act of thy life, it behoveth thee therefore to do it well. When thou art in thy closet, thou mayest think with thyself, I may possibly never pray more, never read the word of God more; how reverently, uprightly, graciously, should I therefore pray and read! When thou art eating or drinking, or refreshing nature, thou mayest consider, for aught I know, this may be the last time that I may use these creatures of God; how fearful should I be of abusing them! How should I eat my bread as before the Lord! When thou art in thy shop, or about thy calling, thou mayest ponder this, Possibly my last sand is running, and I must this day bid adieu for ever to wares and shops, and flocks and fields, and all civil commerce; oh, how heavenly should I be about these earthly affairs! How spiritual about these temporal things! Who would not do his last work well! Ah, how holy should he be at all times, who hath cause every moment to expect the coming of a holy and jealous God, to call him to an account.

Secondly, Consider, God's eye is all the day long upon thee, and therefore thou hadst need to be all the day long in his awe. It was a frequent speech of Seneca, *ubicunque eo; quodcunque ago; Demetrium circumfero*; wheresoever I go, whatsoever I do, I carry Demetrius along with me. Thou mayest, upon better grounds, say, 'Whatsoever I think, or speak, or act, wheresoever I go, whether to my closet, or shop, or field, or neighbours' houses, I have a holy, jealous God along with me.' Thou mayest write over every room which thou enterest into, 'Thou God seest me,' and call it by the like

name which Hagar did the well, 'Beer-lahai-roi; The well of him that liveth and seeth me. Thou hast, in all the passages of the day, that God with thee, who takes notice of, and will reckon with thee for every passage. Thou mayest call every place thou comest into, 'Bethel,' or 'Penuel, I have seen God in this house,' or, 'God is in this place.' He is not like Jupiter of Crete, whom some pictured without ears, and publish never to be at leisure to take notice of small matters. He is all eye, all ear. He observeth the greatest, the smallest things and actions. As the optic virtue in the eye, he seeth all, and is seen of none. Cicero tells us, The King of Lydia had a ring, which, when he turned the head of it to the palm of his hand, he was invisible to others, and yet others were visible to him. The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good, though none hath seen God at any time, nor can see him; as a well-drawn picture, which way soever you turn yourself, it seems to have its eye still upon you, and to follow you. God doth that really which the picture doth seemingly; he beholds every person, and every action, with so direct a face, as if he beheld none or nothing else.

Reader, it concerns thee to be every day pious, who art all the day long in so holy a God's presence: 'I have kept thy precepts,' saith David, 'for all my ways are before thee,' Ps. 119:68. The scholar will ply his book when his master is present, though he play and prate in his absence. The thief will not steal when the judge looketh on. He that was accused to force the queen before the king's face had a gallows for his end. If the eye of good or great men will prevail with us to be handsome and comely in our behaviour and carriage, how holy should they always be that are ever in the presence of the infinite God, who is clothed with majesty as with a garment, and who is so holy that the heavens are unclean in his sight! If a king sitting upon his throne scattereth evil with his eye, how much more should the eye of a God! Prov. 15. The sun, locally in heaven, is virtually on

earth; its light, heat, influence, overspreadeth the face of sea and land. He that shuts his eyes, and will not see the light of it, doth feel its heat and influence; its presence scattereth clouds, and mists, and fogs. Though God's glorious and most joyful presence be in heaven, his real, essential, and gracious presence is on earth. They who put out the eyes of their reason and conscience, and will not see him, do yet feel him in their beings and blessings, for in him they live and move and have their beings. Shall not his presence disperse those clouds of sin, which would obscure his glory, and hinder the light of his countenance from shining on us?

## SECTION II

As to the exercising thyself to godliness on a week-day, though what I have written in former chapters, in this and the two former parts, hath much prevented me, yet I shall commend to the reader six particulars.

First, Begin the day with God. Never expect a good day unless you begin with a good duty. He hath the best good-morrow who meets God first in the morning. Though some sunshiny mornings are overcast before night, yet the heavens are usually all day clear to him that sets out early in the way of God's commandments. The mind retains a tincture all day of its first serious exercise in the morning. When the right watch or clock is wound up well in the morning, it will be regularly going and moving all day after. He that loseth his heart in the morning in a throng of worldly affairs seldom finds it to purpose in any part of the day. It was the honour of Rusticus, that though letters were brought him from Cæsar, he refused to open them till the philosopher had done his lecture. Surely the worship of the blessed God is of more worth in itself, and of more concernment



to us, than any moral philosophical doctrines to him, or any affairs whatsoever, and, therefore, ought to be first minded and performed.

As soon as thou awakest lift up thine heart to heaven. Great and noble persons are usually first served. Though others that are our inferiors wait our leisure, our superiors have the precedence of our time. Let the first messenger thou sendest forth be sent to the Lord of thy life, to present thy humble service and thanks to him for his providence over thee, and the rest and refreshment he hath afforded thee the last night. Thou mayest say with the psalmist, 'I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me.' For 'except the Lord keepeth the city, the watchman waketh but in vain; he giveth his beloved sleep,' Ps. 3:5, and 127:1, 2. Be mindful also, in some short ejaculation, to beg his guidance, protection, and blessing, all the ensuing day. For it is he that can make a hedge about thee, thine house and all that thou hast: 'If he bless the work of thine hands, thy substance will increase in the land,' Job 1:10. This small taste of ejaculatory prayer will quicken thine appetite after a full meal of set and solemn devotion. If thou canst after this keep thy mind intent whilst thou art dressing thyself on some divine subject, thou wilt be much the more fit for thy secret duties, and in a fair way to walk with thy God all the day.

The next thing I would advise thee to, or rather Christ enjoineeth: 'Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father, which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.' Here is,

1. A precept to secret prayer: 'Pray to thy Father in secret.' The priest was every morning to renew the fire on the altar, and to offer sacrifice: 'And they offered burnt-offerings unto the Lord, even burnt-offerings morning and evening. And they offered the daily

burnt-offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required,' Ezra 3:3, 4. So also in David's time, 'Asaph and his brethren ministered before the ark continually, as every day's work required,' 1 Chro. 16:33. Solomon took after his father, 2 Chro. 8:14. And what is the substance of those shadows, but that Christians, who are a spiritual priesthood, should every day have their solemn morning and evening addresses to God, and offer up holy sacrifices, acceptable to God in Jesus Christ. David's purpose was to be early at prayer. 'O God, my voice shalt thou hear in the morning; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.' And his practice was answerable: 'I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried,' Ps. 5:3, and 119:147. He was up before the day, and risen and at work before the sun. Nay, he tells God, In the morning shall my prayer prevent thee. As if he would be at his prayer before God were stirring and going abroad. But surely we cannot rise so early but God is awake before us; for he that keepeth Israel never slumbereth nor sleepeth. His eyes are ever waking who holdeth sometimes our eyes waking. But David meaneth rather, that his prayers should prevent God's servants, his severest or most solacing providences, not God himself. He would send a messenger with petitions or thanksgivings to God, before God should send any messenger with good or bad tidings to him; he would be too early either for crosses or comforts.

2. The promise to secret prayer: 'And thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.' God heard Paul in the dungeon, as well as Peter on the house-top. The Sun of righteousness looks as well into the narrow closet casement, as into the large church windows. Secret prayers are audible to him that made the ear; as he bottleth up our secret tears, so he registereth our secret prayers. Though the ark was close on every side, that every man might not look into it, yet it had a window open to heaven.

As the flowers open themselves in the morning to take in the sweet influences of the sun, so should the Christian open his heart in the morning, to receive a blessing from the Father of lights. Mary went early in the morning to the sepulchre of Jesus, and had the honour and favour to have the first sight of him, after his resurrection. Many a saint hath had a blessed vision of the glorified Saviour in a morning prayer. Knowest thou not, O man, saith Ambrose, that thou owest the first fruits of thine heart and voice to God? Therefore meet the Lord at the sunrise, that the sun rising may find thee ready. It is reported of Cardinal Wolsey, that though he was Lord Chancellor, and had great and weighty employments, yet he would not go abroad any morning before he had heard two masses. I wish the popish matins did not shame the protestants for their sluggishness, and their frequent omissions. It is much that some should be so diligent at their blind devotion, which comes to nothing, and others that have experience, how profitable their spiritual trade is, so backward to it, and careless about it.

God's mercies prevent us early, and therefore our prayers should prevent him. 'His going forth is prepared as the morning, he satisfieth us early with his mercies, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days,' Hosea 6:3; Ps. 90:14. If his mercies are renewed on us every morning, our acknowledgments may well be renewed unto him. Every favour makes us debtors, and all the pay he expects is thanks. If any man should every morning send us, who have little of our own to live upon, very considerable presents, we should esteem ourselves very uncivil and unworthy, if we should not as often return him our service and thanks, and sense of his kindness. How great and how many are the mercies with which our God loadeth us every morning; and are we not sordidly ungrateful if we neglect the acknowledgment of them? Our ordinary mercies are of extraordinary merit, and deserve hearty thanks. The damned, could we speak with

them, would tell us, that life, a naked abode on this side hell, were an infinite mercy. The sick, and such as are troubled with continual aches, or tortured with the stone, or gout, or colic, would tell us that health is a great mercy. The blind, and lame, and deaf would tell us that limbs and senses are a great mercy; the hungry, and naked, and house-less, and friendless would tell us that food, and raiment, and habitations, and friends, are great mercies. Poor prisoners, and such as are vexed with cruel wars, and forced to fly before their enemies, will tell us that liberty and peace are great mercies. The saints in heaven, could we speak with them, would tell us, the patience of God, the gospel of our salvation, the tenders of grace, are inestimable mercies; and do not all these, which every morning are, notwithstanding our notorious abuse, and frequent forfeitures, renewed upon us, deserve our solemn and sincere thanks every morning? The Jews, some tell us, are bound to say over a hundred benedictions every day, and among the rest these two, when they go out in the morning: Blessed be he that created the greater light; and when they come in at evening: Blessed be he that caused darkness. David was frequent at this duty: 'I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall be continually in my mouth. Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments,' Ps. 34:1, and 119:164. It is a motto, say some, often repeated in Mercers' Chapel, Think and thank.

Our many wants and necessities command us to be every morning at heaven's gate for supply. We are needy indigent creatures, and must get our living wholly by begging; all the day long we want forbearing, preserving, supporting mercy. It must be divine power, that must enable us to follow our callings, to stir or move about our business, that must defend and protect us in our outgoings and incomings, and prosper and succeed our undertakings. God alone can shield us from spiritual and corporal enemies, that can supply us with inward and

outward good things, and surely such blessings are worth asking. They who will have mercies that are not of the growth of their own country, (earth,) must send thither (to heaven) where they are to be had. Prayer, like the patriarch's, and Solomon's good housewife, fetcheth our food from far; as the merchants' ships, it supplieth us with commodities of all sorts, from foreign countries. No mercies hang on so low a bough, as to be pulled to us, and gathered by our own arms, therefore it behoveth us to beg, 'Give us this day our daily bread;' besides, our dangers and difficulties every day are many, and call us to be early and earnest at this duty. Our callings, every company, all earthly affairs are snares and temptations to us, unless they are sanctified by prayer. It is not safe to drink of those streams wherein so many poisonous creatures dip their venomous heads, unless this unicorn hath healed them.

They who walk abroad without prayer, may fear they walk abroad without God's protection. *Oratio matutina clavis diei*, morning prayer is the key of the day, which openeth the treasury of divine bounty, and locketh the soul up in safety. A prayerless person goeth all day unarmed, and may expect many wounds from that hellish crew, that lie always in ambush to destroy him; the neglect of this pass, gives Satan a great advantage to take the city; when Saul had left off calling at heaven's gate, the next time you hear of him is knocking at (a witch's, at) the devil's door. Prayer is one of the great ordinances that batters down the strongholds of the devil; hence he sets his wits at work, to divert men from it. It is the soul's armour, and Satan's terror; he that knoweth how to use this holy spell aright need not fear but he shall fright away the devil himself. The Lord Jesus, when he marched out against the powers of darkness, and was to fight with them hand to hand, armed himself beforehand with prayer, Luke 3:21, 22, not only for his own protection, but also for a pattern to us. Every day we walk in the midst of enemies, which are

both mighty and crafty, and will watch all advantages to undo us; and should we go amongst them without prayer, we are sure to become their prey. It is too late to wish for weapons, when we are engaged in a battle; Cæsar cashiered that soldier, who had his armour to furbish and make ready when he was called to fight. The moral of the fable is good; the boar was seen, whetting his teeth, when no enemy was near to offend him, and being asked the reason why he stood sharpening his weapons when none was by to hurt him, he answered, It will be too late to whet them when I should use them; therefore I whet them before danger, that I may have them ready in danger.

Another duty that concerns thee in secret, is to read some portion of the word of God. The workman must not go abroad without his tools. The Scripture is the carpenter's rule, by which he must square his building; the tradesman's scales, in which he must weigh his commodities; the traveller's staff, which helpeth him in his journey. There is no acting safely, unless we act scripturally. 'Bind it continually upon thy heart, and tie it about thy neck; when thou goest it shall lead thee, when thou sleepest it shall keep thee, when thou wakest it shall talk with thee; for the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life,' Prov. 6:21–23. The lawyer hath his Lyttleton or Coke, which he consulteth; the physician hath his Galen or Hippocrates, with which he adviseth; the scholar hath his Aristotle; the soldier his Cæsar; and the Christian his Bible, that book of books, to which all those books are but as a coarse list to a fine cloth, and scarce worthy to be waste paper for the binder to put before this to shelter it; this will teach the lawyer to plead more effectually than Cicero, when, undertaking the cause of Quintus Ligarius, one of Cæsar's enemies, he did by the power of his oratory, make Cæsar his sovereign to tremble, and often to change colour; and when he described the battle of Pharsalia,

caused him to let his books fall out of his hand, as if he had been without spirits and life, and forced him against his will to set Ligarius at liberty; this will teach him so to plead, as to prevail with, and overcome God himself. This will teach the physician to work greater cures than ever Æsculapius wrought, to produce more strange and rare effects, than themost powerful natural causes. The weapon-salve, and most extraordinary cures that ever have been wrought, are nothing to the healing a vitiated nature by the Spirit, and a wounded conscience by the blood of Christ, which have been frequently done by the word of God. It hath opened the eyes of the blind, abated the dropsy of pride, softened the stone in the heart, stopped a bloody issue of corruption, healed the falling sickness or backsliding, and raised the dead to life. 'He sendeth his word and healeth them,' Ps. 107:20. The waters issuing out of the sanctuary, are healing waters, Ezek. 47:9. This will teach the scholar to know more than the greatest naturalists, or than the Delphic oracle could enable him to, though it told him his duty, even to know himself. It is a glass, clean and clear, wherein he may plainly see the spots and dirt, and deformity of his heart and life; it will teach him to 'know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, whom to know is life eternal.' This will teach the soldier how to war a good warfare, how to fight the Lord's battles against the prince of darkness, and all his adherents, and over all to be more than a conqueror. There is no guide, no counsellor, no shield, no treasure (among all the books that ever were written) comparable to the Scriptures. It is reported, that a certain Jew should have poisoned Luther, but was happily prevented by his picture, which was sent to Luther with this warning, from a faithful friend, that he should take heed of such a man when he saw him; by which picture he knew the murderer, and escaped his hands. The word of God discovereth the face of those lusts in their proper colours, which lie ready in our callings, in all companies, in our goings out and comings in, to defile us, and which Satan would

employ to destroy us; 'By them is thy servant forewarned,' saith David, Ps. 19:11. By reading and applying it, we may know their visage, and prevent their venom; 'By the words of thy mouth, I have kept myself from the paths of the destroyer.' Cyprian would let no day pass without reading of Tertullian, nor Alexander without reading somewhat in Homer; shall the Christian let a morning pass without an inspection into the word of Christ? As God commanded Moses to come up into the mount early in the morning, with the two tables in his hands; so, reader, he commandeth thee to give him a meeting every morning, with the two testaments in thy hand.

After the refreshment of nature, about which I have given thee directions elsewhere, and therefore shall omit it here, it will be requisite that thou shouldst call thy family together, and worship the blessed God with them. Our relations, namely, children and servants, have mercies bestowed on them, wants to be supplied, dangers to be prevented, natures to be sanctified, souls to be saved, as well as ourselves, and therefore must not be neglected. Some tend and feed the souls in their families on the Lord's day, and starve them all the week after; but herein they are guilty of dishonesty and unfaithfulness. They rob God of the service which is due to him from all in their house jointly. They wrong the souls in their families, by not allowing them the liberty, at least by not calling and causing them to hear the voice and seek the face of God with others. And they injure themselves most, by being false to their trust. Should they feed the bodies of their children and servants on the Lord's days, and make no provision for them on the week-days, their consciences would fly in their faces, and tell them they were inhuman and unnatural; and yet they omit all regard of their immortal souls, which are far more worthy of care and tendance, without remorse and sorrow. I must tell such persons, that if atheism had not the predominancy in their hearts, it would not bear such sway in their



houses. Such men are like swine with their pigs, as if all their noses were nailed to the trough in which they feed, they look not up to the God of their food and of all their comforts. Such children and servants will in the other world find cause to curse the time that ever they knew such fathers and masters.

Others there are—some of whom I hope to be godly, though not in this particular—that pray in their families every night, but omit morning duties, as if God were the God of the night, and not of the day, as the Syrians blasphemously affirmed that he was God of the hills, but not of the valleys. These, as Austin speaks of those that worship the moon, are atheists by day, as they that worship the sun are atheists by night. 'The day is thine, the night also is thine, thou preparest the light and the sun,' Ps. 74:16. Surely, though evening sacrifice ought to be minded, yet there is as much, if not more reason for morning duties. A man at night in his chamber is like a soldier in his garrison, subject only to the unavoidable and more immediate hand of God; whereas in the day, when he straggles abroad from his quarters to fetch in his supplies, he is then exposed to many unexpected casualties, and un-thought-of accidents. Family perils and dangers, every day call for family prayers, and duties every morning; family favours and kindnesses, every night call for family thanks, and acknowledgments every day. When many are joined in a bond, they go often together to see the money paid. All in a family join in borrowing domestic mercies, therefore they must all join in paying hearty praises.

Reader, if thou art governor of a family, consider that thou canst not faithfully serve God as a commander, unless thou takest care that all the persons under thy power do their duties in their places. The Lord of hosts will never thank that officer who is careful to fight for him in his own person, but suffereth his company, through his carelessness,

to fall away to the enemy. Do not pretend servants are abroad, or scattered here and there about their employments, and are not at leisure. But answer—

1. Art thou and thy servants contented to go all day without God's protection and provision? Without question thou art most unworthy of them, that dost not think them worth asking. Surely God may as well say he hath no leisure, he hath other employment than to defend, and feed, and preserve thee, as thou, that thou hast no leisure to serve him.

2. Dost not thou, and do not thine, squander away more time idly and vainly, than need to be taken up in morning duties?

3. Do not children and servants come together every morning to feed their bodies, and why not to feed their souls?

4. If any man should make use of thy goods, or servants of thy time, without leave, thou wouldst take it very ill at their hands. Thou art God's, and all that thou hast; may not God, therefore, take it unkindly that thou shouldst dispose of thyself and thine affairs without his leave?

5. Is it not plain atheism, and horrid disrespect to the blessed God, to put 'thyself, or them under thy roof, upon worldly employments, without asking his providence and blessing? Is it not too plain a speaking that there is no such need of him, that thou canst do well enough without him?

6. Thou wilt not say that thou and thine have no leisure in the morning to plough or sow, or buy and sell, or follow earthly affairs; and why not leisure as well to serve and worship the Lord? His worship is of greater worth, of greater weight; it is of more necessity,

it concerns thine endless bliss in the other world; it will bring in the greatest profit. In the doing of his commands there is great reward. Dost thou not believe that he is a better paymaster than the world?

7. Art thou able to do anything in any part of the day without his assistance? Dost thou not depend every moment upon him for all thy motions and actions, and is he not worth acknowledging?

8. Wilt thou say thou hast no time, no leisure, to be saved, to escape hell, and to attain heaven? I must tell thee, if thou hast no time to serve God, he will have no time to save thee.

9. Wilt thou stand to this plea at the day of Christ? When God shall ask thee why thou and thy family went abroad prayer-less, and drowned yourselves in worldly affairs, and were taken and torn by snares and temptations, and disowned him and his laws, as if they were not worth regarding, dost thou think it will be sufficient then to answer, Lord, I was a knight, or a squire, and though I had many servants, yet they had their several offices and employments, and could not spare time to pay that homage they owed to thy Majesty, to implore thy mercy, and to entreat an interest in the merits of thy Son. We had other things to look after than thy beautiful image, and the blessed vision of thy face for ever. Or suppose thou art of an inferior rank, canst thou imagine it will be a comfortable plea to say, Lord, early in the morning my children and servants were called to tend my shop, or flocks, or cattle, or set upon some needful business or other, that they could have no leisure to mind their inestimable souls, or to approach thy glorious Majesty in holy ordinances? Oh blush, reader, if thou art guilty of morning omissions, and either cast away thy frivolous pretences, and set upon the duty, or else stand to thy foolish pleas, and try whether they will bear weight at the great

and terrible day of the Lord Jesus; but remember, in the meantime, that thou hast had one warning more.

I have written somewhat largely about family duties in the first part, and therefore had intended only to have saluted them in this place, and so to have left them; but observing how some families, even where governors are judged to fear God, are without morning, though not without evening, sacrifices, I dwelt the longer upon it, to quicken them to this duty, that they might be able to say with Abijah, 'The Lord is our God, and we burn incense, and offer sacrifice every morning and evening unto him,' 2 Chron. 13:10, 11.

## SECTION III

Secondly, Spend the greatest part of the day in thy particular calling. He that mindeth not his closet before his shop is an atheist; and he that mindeth not his shop after his closet is a hypocrite. The world is God's great family, and he will allow none in it to be idle. Though he distinguisheth some from the common mass, and maketh them vessels of honour, as superiors and officers in his house, yet to every one he committeth some talent or other, and commandeth them to trade till he come. The ancient Massilians would admit no man into their city who had not a good trade, knowing what pests and plagues such are to the people among whom they dwell. He that is void of, or negligent in, his calling, is at best as a snail, (φερέουκος, according to the Septuagint; Domiporta, according to the Latins,) keeping house, and unprofitable. But usually such a one is mischievous, and may not unfitly be compared to kites, that fly, lazing up and down, scarce moving their wings, making a querulous complaining noise, filching their food out of the shambles or warrens, or out of children's hands by force. Idleness is usher to murmuring and thieving. He quickly learns to do ill, by doing that which is next to ill, nothing. The air, when still, corrupts and putrifieth. Wheat, if not stirred, groweth musty and unwholesome for man's body. The earth, if not tilled, breeds thorns. Millstones, if there be no grist, waste and wear out themselves. The soul needeth exercise as well as the body, to preserve it in health; action keeps the soul sweet and clean. It is no wonder that persons are almost choked with the phlegm of corruption, that deny themselves the benefit and advantage of motion; that they do not thrive who refuse to trade. It is a worthy speech of holy Master Boulton's, He is a cursed drone, a child of idleness, the very tennis-ball of temptation, most unworthy the

blessings and benefits of human society, who doth not one way or other co-operate and contribute to the common good, with his best endeavours, in some honest particular calling. Job saith, 'Man is born to labour;' but how many gentlemen sing the rich fool's requiem to their souls—Soul, take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years—till at last they come to his end, and that place where there is no ease day nor night for ever and ever; but as a bone out of joint, so is a good man out of his calling.

The sons of the husbandman in the fable, being told by their father on his death-bed, that he had left much gold buried in his vineyard, fell presently a-digging and delving with diligence, whereby they obtained, though not the gold they sought for, yet a rich harvest, by stirring the mould about the roots of the trees: 'In all labour there is profit,' Eccles. 5. Though the Christian doth not ever, by diligence in his calling, reap that gold of outward profit (which is promised conditionally so far as God seeth fit for him) in this world, yet he reaps peace and comfort in the discharge of his duty, and prevents temptations, by being employed about other things.

It is in vain for any to pretend that they are so busy in praying, and reading, and hearing, and holy duties, that they cannot attend their particular callings; for the same God that calls them to spiritual traffic, commands them their temporal trades, and hath allotted them sufficient time for both. He doth the devil too great a courtesy, who makes the commands of God to quarrel and clash one against another. If Satan can prevail with men to neglect their callings whole days together, and leave their families declining, and almost starving through their idleness, for private fasting and praying, he never fears the good such a man shall get by all that devotion, which is, as Paul speaks of himself, born out of due time. He knoweth God doth not usually send in blessings at such back-doors, and that he is provoked

as truly by leaving our shops, when our callings require our company, as by passing by our closets, when he calls us in to speak with us there. The best food may prove unwholesome and burdensome to the stomach, if a fit season for taking it be not observed. Our best duties, like some children, are utterly lost by being brought forth before their time. The Roman general said, *Non amo nimium diligentem*, I love not them that are too diligent, meaning them that leave their own callings, and are busybodies in others. God loves not such over-diligent, nor any negligent ones. As he commandeth our dependence on him for a blessing, so he commandeth our diligence in our several places.

But, having also treated largely of the Christian's carriage in his particular calling in the first part, how he should undertake it in obedience to the divine command, follow it with a heavenly heart, depend upon God for a blessing, I shall say no more.

Thirdly, Be watchful all the day long. If thou wouldst walk safely, walk as one that hath his eyes in his head. Ponder the paths of thy feet. Every man walketh every day in the midst of traps and gins, and rubs and blocks; now, the secure person is as a blind man, stumbling at every stone. When a man goeth upon cords, straightened and fastened on high, it concerns him to look well to his footing, lest he totter and fall, and break his neck. There is no Christian but walks as dangerously as he that danceth on the ropes; it behoves him therefore to walk watchfully. The children of God are called to be soldiers, to fight a good fight of faith under Christ, the captain of their salvation; but soldiers must be upon their guard, especially such as are encompassed on all sides, at all times, with enemies of all sorts. Should they, who are the mark at which the world and hell are continually shooting their fiery darts to destroy them, give themselves to sleep? 'Watch ye; stand fast in the faith; quit

yourselves like men,' 1 Cor. 16:13. The devil watcheth to devour us, and he is politic to ensnare us, and shall we slumber? Machiavel saith, A prince ought to know the tempers of men, that he may fit them with baits, and wind them to his own ends. Satan hath not waited on men, and observed them so long, but he knoweth the length of their feet, and can fit them to their will and woe; as Agrippina, the wife of Claudius, gave her husband poison in that dish which he loved best, so he can give them that meat which they love, with poison for its sauce. He is a serpent for his subtlety, and can bait his hooks answerable to the love and liking of poor silly fish. We read of his wiles, of his devices. As the chameleon, that lieth on the ground to catch flies and grasshoppers, changeth himself into the colour of the grass, whereby they are deceived and caught, so Satan can transform himself into any shape, even into an angel of light for a shift, that he may deceive and destroy. Though he appeared in the form of a serpent to Eve, he appeared in the form of a saint to the second Adam. If he should be quiet, yet our own flesh is free and forward to pollute and pervert us. Were he at any time absent, (though I fear he never is, but watcheth us night and day, more narrowly than ever keeper did his prisoner, for whose escape he was to die,) our own wicked hearts are his deputy to supply his place, and despatch his business effectually for him. Occasion and our own corrupt natures seldom meet, but, like two inordinate lovers, they sin and defile themselves together. The flesh is instead of a thousand traitors within the garrison, conspiring to deliver it up into the enemy's hands, who is resolved to give no quarter; and is it not time for the soldiers to be upon the guard, and to keep strict watch? Though both Satan and the flesh should grant a truce or cessation for a few hours, (which they never did, nor ever will,) yet the world, like a harlot, is always watching, with her fair breasts of pleasure and profit, to allure us to folly. Like the whore the wise man mentions, she is subtle of heart, and lieth in wait at every corner; she catcheth



the careless sinner and kisseth him, and with an impudent face, saith unto him, 'I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves. With much fair speech she causeth him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she enticeth him. He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life,' Prov. 7:10 to the end. Oh what reason hast thou, reader, to watch, who hast so many and such crafty and mighty adversaries, every moment to encounter with! 'Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.' Believe it, if thou sleepest, the enemy will sow tares.

Watch thyself in thy closet; good duties must not be done between sleeping and waking. Praying and reading are not works that can be done nodding. Therefore Christ saith, 'Watch and pray;' and the apostle, 'Continue in prayer, and watch in the same,' Col. 4:2. The nightingale, that delights herself in her night songs, knowing, if she should fall asleep, she should be a prey to night-birds, she keeps a thorn at her breast to keep her waking. Watch in thy family among thy relations; thy wife and children may be Satan's instruments to wound thee. Abraham caused Sarah to dissemble; Eve brought Adam to undo himself and all his posterity. The nearer the person is to us, that dischargeth a piece at us, the likelier to hit, and the more dangerous the bullet. Watch in thy shop; Satan lieth in ambush in every corner, sin in every counter, to defile and destroy thee. When thou art in company, when thou art alone, at bed, at board, when thou goest out, when thou comest in, keep thy heart with all diligence, for under every pile of grass there is a snail, under every

fig-leaf, as Cleopatra found to her cost, there is a poisonous asp, in every place there is a snare.

Watch against the occasions of sin. They who have a brand or a candle flaming in their hands, had need to beware of thatch and straw. If the flesh and opportunity, like Shechem and Dinah, meet together, they will not part, unless there be the greater watchfulness, before they are polluted. It is ill to parley with the wicked one. The French have a good proverb, When the Spaniards talk of peace, then double bolt the door. The greatest wounds that were ever made in conscience, had at first but weak beginnings. David's horrid murder and adultery had their rise only from a glance of his eye; 'keep thee far from an evil matter,' Exod. 23:7. The crocodile, say naturalists, is no bigger at first than a goose egg, and yet groweth to thirty cubits. An occasion of sin, embraced but a little, like a thief in the candle, insensibly makes sad work and waste.

Watch especially against thy own sin. This is, as the Philistines said of Samson, the great destroyer of the country, the great destroyer of thy conscience. Wise governors of a garrison besieged will take care of every part of the wall, and repair the least decays thereof; but if one gate be more likely to be entered than another, or if one part of the wall be weaker than another, they will be sure to set the strongest watch in that weakest place. Our soul is our garrison, committed to our trust by the Lord of hosts, to be kept for his use and service; Satan is our enemy, that besiegeth it, to surprise it; sin is the wall or gate, by which alone he hopes to enter and destroy us. Our beloved sins, the sins of our callings, or conditions, or constitutions, which we hug and cocker most, which none must touch or reprove, these are the weakest part of the wall or gate, and so require a stronger watch and guard: 'Take heed and keep thy soul diligently,' Deut. 4:9.

## SECTION IV

Fourthly, Be careful to redeem time. Look upon time as one of the most precious talents which thy God hath intrusted thee with, and which he will reckon with thee for, and therefore not to be vainly spent, or needlessly squandered away. They are worthy to be punished, that spend their gold and silver lavishly, and waste their estates prodigally; but of how much sorer punishment are they worthy of that are prodigal and lavish of time, that is far more precious than gold and silver! Time is of inestimable value, in regard of its present use, and because, when once lost, it is irrecoverable. Friends lost may be reconciled, an estate lost may be regained, but time lost can never be recalled. He is the best workman that can cut his stuff to the least waste; and he is the best Christian who can contrive his affairs, and cut out his time, to the least loss. Remember that time is given thee, not to squander away in needless visits, or idle talking, or long meals, or unnecessary sleeping, but to get thy person justified, thy nature sanctified, to secure thine interest in Christ, and the covenant of grace and heaven; and surely things of such infinite weight deserve all thy time, if thy life were lengthened to the age of Methuselah. Sleep robs us of much time; friends, saith one, are the greatest thieves of time; vain discourse, foolish sports and pastimes, idle company, sitting long at table, must all, like luxuriant branches, be pared off, because they suck the sap and juice away from the good boughs. 'Walk not as fools, but as wise men, redeeming the time,' saith the apostle, Col. 4:5; Eph. 5:16. It is an allusion to wise merchants or tradesmen, who, dealing for most precious commodities, make the most of their markets, and buy their wares while a fit time of buying them serves; and having possibly had great losses formerly, or spent their time idly, do by their diligence seek to redeem, and, as it were, to buy back again the time that is

past. The Lacedæmonians were penurious of their time, and spent it all about necessary business, not suffering any citizen either to play or be idle; when their Ephori heard that some used to walk in the afternoons for their recreation, they forbade it, as savouring too much of pleasure, and commanded them to recreate their bodies by some manly exercise, which might breed them to be serviceable to the commonwealth.

Reader, the time of thy life goeth post, thou art hastening to thy last stage. Whether thou art eating or drinking, walking or sitting, buying or selling, waking or sleeping, death is always making speed towards thee; the time of thy departure hence is concluded and resolved, beyond which it is impossible for thee, whether thy work be done or undone, to stay one day; no, not one hour, nay, not one moment, and shouldst thou waste thy time upon toys and trifles, as if thou hadst nothing to do, no God to make peace with, no Redeemer to lay hold on, no soul to take care of? He that hath a great way to go, or much work to do, and that upon pain of death, and but a little time for it, hath little reason to laze or loiter. When we have but a little paper, and much to write, we write small and thick. Oh how much work hath every Christian to do in this world, which, if he neglect, he is lost for ever! how many headstrong lusts to subdue, how many duties towards God and men to perform, how many graces to exercise, providences and ordinances to improve, and can all this be done in a little time? The candle of our lives burns low; if, like foolish children, we play it out, we may thank ourselves if we go to bed in the dark, without the light of comfort to our graves.

It is one of the most irrational, yet ordinary actions of the children of men, especially persons of estate and quality, to waste time in dicing, or carding, or hawking, or hunting, or chambering, or revelling, and yet to murmur that they want time, and tell us, It is a pity man's life

is so short, that it is not spun out to a longer thread. I must tell such, that they complain of God, when they should of themselves; he is not penurious, but they are prodigal in misspending it. I must ask them, Why would they have more time? Is it to be more riotous, and profane, and vicious? The shortest moment is too much for the service of sin; he that sinneth but once, sinneth too much by once. If it be that they might honour God, and get grace, and lay hold on eternal life, why do they not set about it, and make it their business? Every one would accuse him of folly, that were condemned one assize to be hanged, but was reprieved till the next, and had that time allotted to sue out his pardon, if he should in the interim give himself wholly to gaming and drinking, and take no care about his pardon, yet complain to all that came to him, that his time was short, and he had not enough to get his pardon in, or prevent his execution:

Our days are sufficient for our duties, had we grace to number them, and to apply our hearts to wisdom; but there is no overplus of time to be abused to fleshly or worldly lusts, or to be lavished away in idle and unnecessary things. A good man that liveth all the day long in the fear of his God, and husbands his time to the best advantage of his soul, finds it so sufficient for his work, that he is always ready to be called to an account, and whenever he dieth, he dieth full of days, and hath had his fill of living; but men waste their time in vanity and folly, sacrifice their youth to frowardness and unprofitableness, their manhood to pleasure and passion, their old age (if they live so long) to earthly-mindedness and atheism; nay, they will sit down and contrive sports, or send for, or go into, idle company to pass away the time, and then complain that time is little, and life is short, and they have not enough to provide for death and eternity in. The moralist observeth truly, *Non exiguum temporis habemus, sed multum perdimus*, It is not a little time that we have, but it is much which we waste. God is bountiful in allotting us time; but we are lavish of it,

and then grumble that it is no more. The largest possessions in a country, though worth thousands per annum, are nothing in the hands of a prodigal heir, who useth to throw away thousands at a cast, and must pay the bills which pride, and luxury, and gluttony send him in daily; but a twentieth part of those revenues were a large estate in the hands of a frugal person. The vast incomes of Egypt and all the eastern provinces were but a small sum when they were gathered to maintain the pomp and ambition of Antony, and the riot and fleshly lusts of Cleopatra; when some prudent, provident emperors have lived freely and nobly a whole year with less than they consumed in a day. Foolish men that are riotous and prodigal of their time, as if it were given them only to sport, and play, and roar, and revel in, pine and whine at last that they are lost, because their time is so short; but wise and gracious persons that deny themselves, and crucify the flesh, that can redeem time from toys and idle talk, and foolish sports, and unnecessary diversions, to pray, and hear, and read, and examine their souls, and bemoan their sins, and provide for heaven, these grow rich in good works, and find the days of their pilgrimage sufficient for them.

## **SECTION V**

Fifthly, Call thyself to an account at evening. Take a review of thy carriage the whole day, how thou didst behave thyself. Begin with the morning, consider whether thou didst awake with God, what was the frame of thy spirit in closet and family duties, in company and solitude. Reflect upon thy actions, thy passions, thy speech, thy silence, thy behaviour at table, in thy shop; whether thy affections were heavenly, above the world, when thy actions were earthly, about the world; whether thou wast righteous in thy particular calling, and didst set upon it out of conscience to God's precept, and with an eye

to his glory; whether thou didst not lose an opportunity of advantaging thy brother's soul, and doing thy God service; whether thou hast not failed in thy thoughts, or words, or deeds, in thy demeanour towards thy relations, or neighbours, or strangers; whether thou didst in all walk according to that rule which thy God hath prescribed thee. This is the way to make the day more pious, and the night more pleasant. Conscience will be the more faithful all day, when it knoweth beforehand that it shall be called to an account at night; and the more conscientious we are in the day, the more cheerful we shall be at night. Seneca reports of Sextius the Roman philosopher, that every night before he took his rest, he would examine his soul. *Quid hodie malum sanasti? cui vitio obstitisti? in qua parte melior es?* What evil hast thou this day healed? what vice hast thou resisted? in what part art thou bettered? and then he addeth, How sweet is the sleep which ensueth upon such a review!

As the shopkeeper hath his day-book, wherein he writes down what he buyeth, what he selleth, which he looks over in the evening; so must the Christian, that would thrive in his general calling, at night reflect upon his well-doing, his ill-doings, his gains, his losses, lest his books cast him up (as some find by experience) because he will not take the pains to cast them up.

The merchant findeth it a ready way to make his factors and cash-keepers faithful, to reckon with them frequently. When great persons neglect to account with their stewards, they tempt them to be dishonest. Our consciences are corrupted as well as other faculties, and will be false, if not timely examined. Seneca acquaints us with his own practice, which may shame many Christians: *Utor hac potestate, et quotidie apud me causam dico. Cum sublatum e conspectu lumen est, et conticuit uxor, moris jam mei conscia, totum diem mecum scrutor, facta ac dicta mea remetior. Nihil mihi ipse*

abscondo, nihil transeo; quare enim quiequam ex erroribus meis timeam, cum possim dicere: Vide ne istud amplius facias; nunc tibi ignosco. In ilia disputatione pugnacius locutus es.... Illum liberius admonuisti quam debebas; itaque non emendasti sed offendisti. I use, saith he, this authority, and daily plead my cause with myself. When the candle is taken away, and my wife (acquainted with my custom) is silent, I search into the whole day, and review all that I have said or done; I hide nothing from my own scrutiny, I pass by nothing; for why should I fear anything by reason of my errors, when I can say, See that thou do it no more, and for this time I will pardon thee, &c.

Pythagoras taught his scholars to talk thus with themselves, Τὶ παρέβην, τὶ δε ἔρεξα; What evil have I committed, what good have I omitted? Reader, let not them who knew not God rise up in judgment against thee. Put every night some brief queries to thy conscience upon these few heads: How did I behave myself in religious duties, in natural actions, in my particular calling, in recreations, if any were used, in company, and in solitude? Compare the carriage of thy heart and life herein, to the word and law of God; bring all to the touchstone. Hereby,

1. Sin will be prevented. The child will be the more dutiful and diligent all day, who expecteth to be examined, by them that have power to punish or reward for every part of it, at night. The Christian will keep his heart as clean as the neat maid her house, who is ever in fear of a severe mistress.

2. Hereby, if sin be committed, it will speedily be repented of. The wound will be healed before it be festered; a disease is much more easily cured at the beginning, than when it is habituated in the body. Had David called his conscience to a serious account, at the close of



that day wherein he defiled Bathsheba, he had prevented both much sin, and much sorrow.

3. Our hearts will hereby be the better prepared for evening duties. The reflection upon the sins committed in the day past, will make the streams of our sorrow to run the more freely; wounds when fresh, bleed most. Our petitions also will be the more fervent for divine strength, when we are newly affected with the sad consequence of our own weakness. The more we feel our pain, the more urgent are our cries for a physician; a review of the mercies newly received, will likewise enlarge our hearts the more in thankfulness. Divine favours, like flowers, affect us most when fresh and green. Old courtesies, as old clothes, are too often cast by, and thought little worth.

4. Hereby our souls will be always ready for our great account, whenever God shall summon us to give it up. The keeping a diary of receipts and disbursements, facilitates the steward's annual reckoning with his lord. They who make all even between God and their souls every day, need not fear calling to account any day. None will give up their accounts with such comfort at the great day, as they that cast up their accounts with conscience every day; often reckoning will make long friends. He that will not hear the warnings of conscience, must look to feel the worm of conscience.

Sixthly, Close the day with God, in praying, and. reading his word, both in thy closet and family. Our bed is resembled to our graves, sleep to death; it is of worse consequence to go to bed before we have made our prayers, than to our graves before we have made our wills. God is the first and the last, and ought to be the beginning and ending of every day: 'Thou causest the out-goings of the morning and evening to rejoice.' Some understand the inhabitants of east and west, others the vicissitudes of day and night, for which men rejoice

in God. David was mindful of the word at night: 'I have remembered thy law, O Lord, in the night;' and also of prayer: 'Evening and morning will I pray and cry aloud,' Ps. 119:55; and 55:17.

The sins of the day call for our mournful confession. The mercies of the day call for our sincere thanksgiving. The perils of the night call for fervent petitions, so that none can want matter for a night's prayer. Our wanderings and aberrations in the day may well engage us to confession and contrition every night. They who do not paddle in every gutter, or thrust their hands into every ditch, though they washed clean in the morning, find them dirty at night. We cannot meddle with money, but we foul our fingers; nor about earthly affairs, but we defile our soul. Infirmary bewrayeth itself in all the actions of fallen man. We are steady in nothing but wantonness and wickedness. The feet of men limp at best, and are too slow to follow the word of God close at the heels. If we intend well in any action, like arrows that are shot in mighty winds, we wander from the bow that sent it, and miss the mark. Now whilst the ship leaketh, the pump must go; whilst we sin daily, we must sorrow daily. He is unworthy of the least favour from his creditor, who thinks much to acknowledge his debt. Augustine had David's penitential psalms written by his bedside, which at night he used to weep and read, to read and weep.

Our daily infirmities and imperfections must not be passed over. Some have died of very slight wounds in their fingers or toes. Small sands may sink a great ship. Small drops of rain make the earth miry and dirty. Vain thoughts, spending time idly, omission of doing good when a price hath been in our hands, are counted by us small sins, but such small drops will pollute our consciences to purpose, if not bewailed timely.

The mercies and good providences of the day deserve our acknowledgment at night. If God command his loving-kindness in the day-time; his loving-kindness may well command our thanksgiving in the night season. As David had his soliloquies in the day, so he had his songs in the night, Ps. 77:6. All our success in our callings and undertakings, is the fruit of God's providence; we may work, but God only can prosper. Human gains are from divine grace. The tables that are spread for us, like Peter's sheet, wherein were all sorts of four-footed beasts, and fowls, come down from heaven. How many perils are we protected in! how many dangers are we delivered from! how many evils are prevented, good things bestowed every day, and shall not our sun and shield be adorned! We may well every night speak in the words of the psalmist, 'Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with his benefits, even the God of our salvation, Selah,' Ps. 68:19.

The perils of the night call for our prayers at night. If there were no fear of visible thieves and robbers, yet there is of invisible devils. We cannot bolt our doors so fast, but they will find the way in. We never lie down to sleep, but those roaring lions are waking and waiting by our bed-side to devour us. If God were not our guard, we could not sleep a moment in quiet. He that goeth to bed before he hath gone to God, by humble and hearty supplication, lieth down before his bed is made, and may well expect to find it uneasy all night; nay, like a foolish governor of a fort beleaguered with cruel and crafty enemies, he takes his rest before he hath set his watch, and is liable to be called up at midnight, or to be killed in his bed every moment.

Cyril speaks of a certain people that chose to worship the sun, because he was a day god; for, believing that he was quenched every night in the sea, or that he had no influence on them that lighted up candles, they were confident they might be atheists all night. I fear,

many who worship the sun are too much of the minds of that people in their night atheism. Though they know not, but when they close their eyes they may sleep their last, and never open them more, yet they will rather die intestate, than take the pains, by fervent prayers, to bequeath their souls into the hands of their dearest Redeemer. Reader, take heed of going prayerless to bed, lest Satan take thee napping. How unworthy art thou of God's protection, if thou dost not esteem it worthy a petition! I have read of a prince that would walk abroad every evening in a disguise, and stand hearkening and listening under his subjects' windows, to understand what they said. It is true enough that the great God looketh down from heaven every evening; he is under thy window and in thy chamber, to observe whether thou hast the manners or grace to bid him good-night, before thou goest to rest. Believe it, if thou forgettest him, thou wilt find, sooner or later, that he will remember thee to thy cost.

**A good wish about the Christian's carriage on a week-day from morning to night, wherein the former heads are applied**

The rock of ages, and everlasting Father, to whom a thousand years are but as one day, having out of his rich mercy afforded me a short time in this world, not to play or toy with temporal things, but to prepare my soul for my blessed eternity, I wish that I may never waste that precious season, which is given me for the working out my own salvation, about needless affairs, but mind the one thing necessary, and pass the whole time of my sojourning here in the fear of my God. Every day that I live, and do not improve for my eternal good, is lost. If I live to eat, and drink, and sleep, the beast liveth in me, not the man; I do but act a brutish part in a human shape. If I live to buy and sell, and increase my heaps, the heathen liveth in me, not the Christian; what do I more than an infidel? Time is a silver

stream, gliding into the ocean; eternity depends upon this poor pittance of time; as I use time well or ill, so eternity will use me. The everlasting harvest will be suitable to the seed that is sown in time, whether wheat or tares. It is irrational to expect a crop of barley, if I sow thistles; or a crop of bliss for ever, if I now sow to the flesh. My life is given me, to dress my soul in for the coming of my bridegroom at death. Whatsoever I do, if it hath not relation and subserviency to my last end and chiefest good, it is lost time, and waste strength; and though I may be so busy as to sweat about it, yet Christ may say to me, as to him that stood in the market-place, Why standest thou all the day idle? Lord, my time is not mine own, but thine; the day is thine, the night also is thine. It is thine by creation, and why not thine by a religious observation? It was thy favour that I was not turned out of the womb into the unquenchable fire. I could wish that, as soon as ever the sun of my life arose, I had gone forth to my spiritual labour till the evening of my death, that my childhood and youth had been employed in remembering my Creator; but since it is impossible to recall those days and years which I have spent in folly and vanity, oh teach me so to number my remaining days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom, and live every day of my life in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

I wish that the uncertainty of my life, and certainty of my death, may quicken me to be religious every hour of every day. Every day may be my last, therefore every day should be my best. There is no part of my time in which I am privileged from an arrest by the king of terrors. Am I young? yet I am old enough to die. Death observeth no order. Some drop out of the arms of their earthly mothers, into the embraces of their mother earth, and do no sooner speak, but they are sent to the place of silence. My sun may set in the morning of my age, and death may tread upon the heels of life. Some have experienced those words of the wise man: There is a time to be born, (so little to

live that it is not mentioned,) and a time to die. Am I strong? this Samson of death can fetch meat out of the eater, and out of the strong sweetness. Death's harbinger, sickness, which prepareth its way before it, will make me melt like wax before the sun, though my strength were the strength of stones, and my flesh as brass. Fresh flowers are cropped in their pride and greatest beauty; the autumn of death comes ordinarily before the winter of old age. Besides, I am liable every day to many sudden accidents, and unexpected surprisals. How many die in their shops or fields, or in the church or streets, as well as others in their beds! All men do not go out of the world at the fore-door of sickness, many at the back-door of a violent death. When my blood frisketh merrily in my veins, and light sparkleth gloriously in mine eyes, when my countenance is most fresh and lovely, and my senses are most quick and lively, even then, at my best estate, I am altogether vanity. I may draw a long line of life, because nature may afford radical moisture enough for it, when death lieth in ambush like a thief in the candle, and wasteth all on a sudden. Should I, as the rich fool, reckon falsely to a million, when I cannot count truly to one, and promise myself many days, when my soul may be required of me this night, how gross is my delusion! Ah, how sad, how fatal is that error that can never be mended!

The time past is gone, and never, never, to be called back. All my prayers and tears, all the revenues of the world, cannot regain the last moment. The time to come is God's, not mine own; it is not in my hands, therefore I have no reason to reckon upon it; I am both foolish and dishonest if I dispose of another's goods. Reversions are uncertain, and he may well be poor that hath no estate but what he hath in hope, or rather presumption. Lord, thou reckonest my life, not by ages, no, not by years, but by days. Thou hast told me that my days are few, my time is little, though my work be great; I acknowledge my proneness to put far from me my dying day,

whereby I gratify my grand enemy, in drawing nigh to the seat of iniquity. Oh, help thy servant to live every day as if it were his last day; grant that I may live well and much, though my life be little and short, because there is no day of my life in which I can promise myself security from the arrest of death; let me expect it every day, and every hour of every day, that whenever my Lord shall come, I may be found well-doing.

I wish that since the eye of my God is ever on me, my eye may be ever on him, and I may be so pious as to carry myself all the day long as in his presence. Whatever I do, my God observeth, whatever I speak, my God heareth, whatever I think, he knoweth; I may call every place I come into Mizpeh, the Lord watcheth and observeth. Ah, how holy should he be, who hath always to do with so pure and jealous a Majesty! The Jews were to dig and cover the natural excrement of their bodies, because the Lord their God walked in the midst of their camp. Sin is the spiritual excrement of my soul, and infinitely more odious and loathsome to God; oh, how watchful I should be against it, who walk ever in in his company! The sun is said by some to be all eye, because it hath a thousand beams in every place; it filleth the largest windows, and peepeth in at the smallest keyhole; it shineth on the prince's palace, and the poor man's cottage; the heavens above, the earth beneath, and air between; it looks on every person with so direct a countenance, as if it beheld none beside. The natural sun is darkness to the Sun of righteousness; the whole world to him is a sea of glass—he seeth it through and through. The watchmaker knoweth all the wheels, and pins, and motions in the watch; he that made me cannot be ignorant of me, nor of anything in me, or done by me. Whether I be in my shop or closet, abroad or at home, in company or alone, the hand of God is with me, and the eye of God upon me; oh that I could set him ever before me, and set myself ever before him! and that I could always see him who always seeth me,

and like a sun-dial, so receive this sun in the morning, as to go along with him all the day. 'Lord, thou searchest and knowest me; thou knowest my down-sitting and up-rising; thou understandest my thoughts afar off; thou compassest my paths and lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways; for there is not a word in my tongue, but, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, and whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up to heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the utmost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me; if I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me; yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.' Oh teach me to walk before thee, and to be upright!

I wish that the end of all my days may be the beginning of every day, that my first thoughts in the morning may be of him by whom alone I think. The firstling under the law was to be the Lord's, and why not the first-fruits every day under the gospel? Surely the worthiness of the person deserves precedence of despatch. It is no mean incivility to let an honourable man wait our leisure; what impiety is it, then, to let the great God stay till the dreggy flesh or world be served! Ah, how unworthy, as well as wicked, is it to put that God off, who deserves all I am and have, with the leavings of his slaves! Besides, the soul usually walks up and down all day in the same habit in which it is dressed in the morning. The day is usually spent well or ill, according to the morning employment. If Satan get possession in the morning, it will be many to one but he keeps his hold all day. What youth is to age, that is the morning to the day; if youth be not tainted with vice, age is employed in virtue; he that loves chastity will not marry her that spent her youth in whoredom. A man may give a



shrewd guess in the morning, when second causes are in working, what weather will be most part of the day. If I set out early in my heavenly journey, I am the more likely to persevere in it all the day. As some sweet oils poured into a vessel first, will cause whatsoever is put into it afterwards to taste and savour of it; so, if godliness and the immediate worship of God do first in the morning possess my soul, my natural and civil affairs will probably relish of it. Again, men's hearts are generally upon that in the morning which they esteem their happiness and portion. The covetous muckworm no sooner openeth his eyes, but his heart is tumbling in his heaps; the voluptuous beast no sooner wakes, but he is sporting in sensual waters; the ambitious peacock no sooner is able to think, but his gay feathers, and gaudy dress for that day, come into his mind; and why should not my heart send its first thoughts into heaven? 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee.' The birds early in the morning salute the rising sun with their sweet notes, and shall not I the Sun of righteousness? Further, my wants, my mercies call for morning duties; I walk in the midst of deaths, of dangers, every day, and shall I dare to travel without my defence? Men clothe their bodies against the sharpness of the weather, and why not their souls against the assaults of the flesh, the world, and the wicked one? There is no safety without this breastwork. If Satan take me out of my trenches and strongholds, as Joshua did the men of Ai, it will be no wonder if he rout and ruin me. If I do not bless God in the morning, how can I expect that he should bless me in the day? Is any earthly prince so prodigal of his favours, as to throw them away upon those that esteem them unworthy to be desired? If I do not serve the precepts of God, I am presumptuous to look that his providence should serve me. Should I undertake my affairs on earth, before I have despatched my business with heaven, I am a notorious cheat and thief. I am a thief to God, by robbing him of his glory, and that natural allegiance which I owe to my Maker; I

am a thief to myself, in robbing myself of that blessing which I might have on my callings and undertakings. Oh that prayer might be the girdle to compass in the whole body of my natural and civil dealings and concernments. And that I could every day of my life forestal the world's market, by setting early about closet and family duties. Suitors find it fittest to wait upon, and despatch their business with, great persons, betimes in the morning. Lord, freedom of access to thy throne of grace is an unspeakable favour. Access is hard to earthly princes. No worldly court is so open as to admit all comers. Those that with much difficulty present their petitions, are often, against all reason, denied. Thy gates are open night and day; all that will may come, and be welcome. Thou invitest souls to come into thy presence, and delightest to hear and grant their prayers. Thine ears are more open and ready to hear, than their mouths to ask. Thou pressest upon many undesired blessings, but deniest none who ask not stones instead of bread. Importunity never angers thee; the more fervent and frequent my soul is with thee the more prevalent. Thou fillest the hungry with good things, and dost not send any that desire thy grace empty away from thy gate. What care I how little notice or knowledge the nobles of the earth will take of me, when I can speak so freely to their better, their sovereign, and not fear a repulse. Oh teach me the right art of begging! and then I need not be afraid of poverty. If I be but skilful to follow that trade, my returns will be both sure and large. Thy mercies are renewed upon me every morning, so are my necessities; oh let my praises and prayers be as frequent and early! 'I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall be continually in my mouth. O God, my God, early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee in a dry and barren wilderness, where no water is. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning. O Lord, in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.'

I wish that, having done with the more immediate service of my God in praying and reading, both in my closet and family, I may proceed to serve him in my shop and particular calling. When God saith, Man is born to labour, I must not sing, with the fool, Soul, take thine ease. An idle person is like caterpillars and mice, that devour God's creatures, and do no good to others. It is pity he ever lived, the book of whose life is filled up with nothing but ciphers. Nature never intended men to be drones, to feed on others' labours; nor bats to spend their lives in the company of sleep, the brother of death. My God, my soul, my family, my country, do all call upon me to be diligent in that calling whereto he hath called me. My God is a pure act himself, and hath capacitated all his creatures for action. He created all men, but never made a sluggard. The idle person wholly degenerates from the end of his being, and receiveth his faculties in vain. The command for civil labour hath the same divine stamp as that for sacred rest. I have also his pattern for my encouragement, as well as his precept for my warrant: 'Hitherto my Father worketh, and I work.' My soul also stands in as much need of exercise as my body. Idleness is the door at which diseases enter into both. Rust eats up vessels that are laid by, and unused. The mind is never more bright than when it is in employment; from doing nothing, we proceed to do evil. Idleness is not only a vice itself, but also hath this unhappiness, to usher in all other. This is [not] the least advantage of industry, that it gives the soul no leisure to play with sin, or to entertain the wicked one. Standing waters do not sooner putrefy than lazy souls. It is action that preserves the soul in health. As gnats dance up and down in the sun, and then sit down and sting the next hand they seize upon, so they who have no time to work, have much to employ in slandering and backbiting others. One sin never goeth alone. Again, my family may well rouse me out of the bed of laziness. If I expect supply of their wants, it must come in with God's blessing at the door of diligence. I am stealing from my wife and children all

the while I am loitering. The heavens may cause seed sown to ripen into a joyful harvest, but untilled land will afford no crop, save of weeds or stones. Once more, my country commands me to my calling. I am but an ill member in the body politic, if as a diseased part I take of its nourishment, but rather hinder its growth than contribute to its health. A jarring string is not more prejudicial to the rarest viol in the hands of a skilful artist, than an idle person to the music and composure of the universe. The most venomous creatures that nature produceth, are some way serviceable to their fellow-creatures. Oh that I might never, by filling up my life with laziness, be a wen in the face of nature, serving no way to profit, only to disfigure it. Yet I desire that my diligence in my particular, may be regulated by my duty towards my general calling. Oil, moderately poured in, feeds the lamp; excessively, drowns it. Alexander's soldier run so lightly upon the sand, that he made no impression with his feet. My duty is to give earthly things my hands, but my heart only to the things of heaven. Lord, it is as well thy pleasure that I should work here, as thy promise that I shall rest hereafter. Let thy grace be so operative in me, that I may never give Satan advantage against me, by being negligent, or over-diligent, in my particular calling. Suffer not the interposition of the earth ever to cause an eclipse of holiness in my soul; but let thy word so limit me, and thy Spirit guide me, that as one diligent in his business, I may come at last to stand before the King of kings, to my eternal comfort.

I wish that I may no part of the day be so overcharged with the cares of this life, by my particular calling, as to expose myself to wickedness by neglecting my spiritual watch. If my heart be full of earthly vapours, they will fume up into my head, and make me drowsy. A drunken man is no sooner set in his chair, but he is fast asleep. Sober and vigilant are sisters in Scripture: 1 Thes. 5:6, 'Let us watch and be sober;' 1 Pet. 5:8, 'Be sober and vigilant.' The

immoderate love of the world will incline me as effectually to spiritual slumbers, as immoderate drinking of wine to bodily. If Satan can get me to take this opium, he doubts not but to lock me fast to my bed, and to have me at what advantage he pleaseth.

Oh how easy is it to destroy a sleeping body, to defile a sleepy soul! Noah, Lot, David, Solomon, walked, in their sleep and dreams, in strange and sensual paths. When the eye of the soul's watchfulness is shut, the soul is open to all dangers and assaults. Whilst the husbandmen sleep, the enemy soweth tares. Sisera's head was nailed to the earth whilst he lay snoring on the ground. Epaminondas was not more severe than exemplary, when he ran the soldier through with his sword whom he found sleeping upon the guard, as if he intended to bring the two brothers, sleep and death, to a meeting. The hare therefore, say some, being liable to many enemies, sleepeth with her eyes open, to see danger before it surprise her. I walk continually in the midst of powerful and politic adversaries. The Canaanite is yet in the land, though not master of the field, yet skulking in holes and ambushments, watching an opportunity to set upon and destroy me; there is not only an army of temptations besieging me without, but also many traitors conspiring within to open the gate of my heart to them, that they may enter and undo me. My own heart is like Jacob, a supplanter, and conspireth to rob me both of the birthright and the blessing. Let me go where I will, I tread upon lime-twigs, which the arch-fowler layeth to entangle and ensnare me. Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him, and to slay him, 1 Sam. 19:11; Satan sendeth messengers after me in all places where I come, to watch me, and to slay me. The whole world is as the vale of Siddim, full of slime-pits; and without watchfulness, the anointed of the Lord are taken in those pits, Gen. 14:10; Lam. 4:10. Sin is a sly thief, that steals upon the soul to rob it when it is asleep. Oh what need have I of the greatest watchfulness

and circumspection imaginable! As the eyelids guard the tender eyes from harm, so doth watchfulness preserve the soul from wickedness. O my soul, canst thou not watch with thy Redeemer one hour, when he ever liveth to make intercession for thee? It is but the short night of this life that thou art commanded to stand sentinel; ere long thou shalt be called off the guard, and freed from that trouble. Lord, thou art ever watchful over me for good; thou never slumberest nor sleepest, but thy seven eyes are ever upon me. Thou mayest say to me, as to thy vineyard, 'I the Lord do keep it, I water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I keep it night and day.' Oh, since thou watchest to preserve me, let me watch to serve thee! set a watch, O Lord, before my lips. Be thou the governor of my heart; lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death. Let mine enemies never find me nodding, lest they leave me dying. Thou hast told me, 'Behold, I come as a thief; blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.' Give me so to wake and watch now, that death may bring me a writ of ease, and call me to my endless rest.

I wish that I may all the day long be even covetous of my time, as knowing it is allowed me, not for the service of the flesh, but for the service of my God, and to dress my soul for heaven. If I be lavish of my time, I am the greatest prodigal in the world. If he be a spendthrift that throweth away a hundred pound every day, he is a far greater that wasteth half an hour in one day; time is more worth than the revenues of the whole world. He that can command millions of treasure, cannot command one moment of time: the Father of eternity hath the sole disposition of time. The value of this commodity is not known to this beggarly world in a day of life. Now men study sports, and pleasures, and company, and plays, to waste time; it lieth as a drug upon their hands, and they think themselves beholden to any that will help them to put it off; but when the king of

terrors with his ghastly countenance approacheth them, and summons them to a speedy appearance before the King of nations to receive their eternal dooms, oh then their judgment will be quite altered, and time will be precious indeed. Then they who play away their time, and give all to the world or flesh, will tell me that time was good for something else than to eat, and drink, and sleep, and trade; that it was good to feed an immortal soul in, and provide for an eternal estate. Then the rich and covetous, as well as they loved their wealth, though it be now dearer to them than their God and Christ, and souls and heaven, will part with all they have for a little time. Then the swaggerers and gallants of the world, who spend twenty hours in taverns to one hour in the temple, and if it were not for play-houses, and alehouses, and whore-houses, and hawks, and hounds, and cards, and dice, could not tell what to do with their time; who mark all the days in the calendar of their lives for festivals, and make them all play days, as if there was never a working day among them; that are as busy and tedious in dressing their worm-eaten bodies, as children in dressing babies, and are more troubled at the smallest disorder in their hairs, than the greatest disorder in church and state; would give up all, and much more if they had it, for a little time. Then the nobles, and kings, and emperors of the world, will disesteem their honours and height, and trample upon their robes, and sceptres, and crowns, for a little time. Then they who dally with their days of grace, and delay the preparation of their souls for death and judgment, as if time were at their command, and they could force it to attend their leisure, that live as if death were their servant, and must wait on them till they thought fit to come to their graves; will find that time was time indeed. O my soul, of what worth will time be at that day, and wilt thou waste it at this day? Alas, how little is that time which thou hast to improve for thine unchangeable estate! My life is but a shadow, that is gone when the sun hides his head; a bubble, that vanisheth when a small breath of wind

appeareth; a day that is soon overtaken by a night; a span, nothing. Thou hast made my days as a hand-breadth; mine age is nothing unto thee. Wert thou able to secure a long life, though thou hast work enough of infinite weight to employ it all, yet thou mightest have more colour of reason for being lavish; but when thy time is little, and thy business of such consequence, what unspeakable madness is it to be wasteful of it! He that hath thousands of acres of land will spare some for a park, some for a bowling-green, some for a courtyard, some for pleasure and pastimes; but he that hath but a little land, upon which himself and his family must live, and by which, they must be maintained, can spare none at all for vain pleasures, but must improve all to real profit. Man that is born of a woman, is but of few days; he comes up as a flower, fleeth as a shadow, and continueth not; and wilt thou, O my soul, revel and riot away this poor pittance in which thou shouldst work out thy salvation? Oh that I could value this jewel in some measure answerable to its worth, and do the work of the day, in the day allotted me for work! Time rightly husbanded is acceptable time; a day well employed is a day of salvation. Lord, though my journey be great, my time is little; nay, how much of that little time have I lost! A considerable part of it hath been taken up with my infancy and childhood, wherein I did little above a beast. My youth hath been squandered away in trifles and vanity, and too much of it in lust and iniquity. Much of what remains, if thou shouldst add a few more days to my life, must be spent in eating, and drinking, and sleeping, and necessary natural actions; and shall I not redeem it to my power, for the service of my Saviour? Oh affect my soul thoroughly how eternity rides upon the back of time, that I may prize time highly, redeem it carefully, and improve it so faithfully, that eternity may be my friend, and when time shall have an end, I may enjoy that joy which hath no end.



I wish that I may every day so cast up my accounts, that I may be always ready for the great audit-day. Wise stewards do not write down great sums in gross, which they have disbursed for their lords at several times, but set down the particulars, whereby they are prepared for a general reckoning, and enabled to justify their accounts. My trust is more weighty than of any prince's steward on earth; my Master will be more exact than the severest human lord; and am I not then concerned so to number my days, as to reckon every day what I receive from my Lord, what I disburse for my Lord, and at the foot of every day to write the total sum? How foolish is he that rejects his books, till his books reject him! Ah, is it not better for me to look over the book of my conscience, and observe what blots and errors are there, whilst I have licence and liberty to correct them, than to neglect them till those eyes, which are purer than to behold iniquity, come to look it over, and leave me denied of ever amending what he finds amiss? O my soul, this evening, now I am writing this page, I must send to thee Amaziah's challenge of Joash, 'Come let us see one another in the face!' Why should we, that are so near together, be such strangers to each other? I must ask thee, as Elisha did Gehazi, Whence comest thou? Where hast thou been? What hast thou done this day for God and thyself? Hast thou lived, or only been in the world this day? Doth thy soul-work, thine eternity-work, go forward or backward? Hast thou lived as if thou wert going to die, and walked in the fear of the Lord all the day long? Hath the awe and dread of the divine Majesty all along possessed thee? Dost thou consider that thou hast one day less to live, and one day more to account for? Suppose God should come to thee this night, as he did to Belshazzar, with a Mene, mene, It is numbered, it is numbered; thy days are told, God hath counted them up and finished them; thou shalt not live to see a morrow. Thy days are extinct, the grave is ready for thee. Art thou ready for thy grave? If God should say to thee, as that lord to his servant, Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou

shalt be no longer steward; Are thy accounts and God's even? Dost thou reckon as he doth? What do all the actions of this day stand for in thine account, figures or ciphers, something or nothing? What were thy first thoughts in the morning? Was he, who came first to thee with his morning mercies, first served by thee? How didst thou pray in thy closet and family? What sorrow accompanied thy confessions? Was thy heart broken that thou hast broken his holy laws? What faith and fervency did accompany thy requests? Was the heat of thy affections answerable to the weight of thy petitions? Didst thou present thy petition to the master of requests, the Lord Jesus Christ, by him to be delivered to the Father? What spiritual joy and delight didst thou find in thanksgiving? Didst thou wonder at that infinite cost which the glorious God is at with such an unworthy wretch? How didst thou read the word this day? Did it come with power and authority to thy conscience? Was it mingled with faith? Didst thou hide it in thy heart? Hadst thou any resolution to make it thy rule, and counsellor, and comforter, and to order thy conversation according to it? How didst thou eat and drink this day? Didst thou feed with fear? Didst thou receive thy meat as in God's presence, and hadst thou an eye therein at his praise? How didst thou behave thyself in thy particular calling? Did it no way encroach upon thy general? Was thy conversation in heaven, whilst thy dealings were about earth? Wast thou diligent in the exercise of it, righteous in thy dealings in it, depending on God for a blessing on it? What was thy carriage in company? Was thy life holy, spotless, exemplary, profitable to others? Mightest thou not in such a place have done thy God more service, and thy brother's soul more good? May I not say to thee, as God to Jonah, Didst thou well to be angry at such a time upon no cause? What were thy thoughts in solitude? How wast thou employed? Had God any true share in thy thoughts? Hast thou watched thyself this day, and kept thy heart with all diligence? Hath none of thy precious time been lavished away on

unnecessary things? Answer me faithfully to all these particulars, that I may be able to return an answer to him that sent me. Oh that I could but employ one half hour every day, with seriousness and uprightness, in such soliloquies! Lord, thou didst create the world in six days, and thou wast pleased to look back on every day's work, and behold it was very good, and then ensued thy Sabbath. Cause thy servant to be a follower of thee, as a dear child, in minding every day the work thou hast given me to do, that I may every night review it with comfort, finding it good in thy Christ; at the end of all my days, looking back upon all my works, I may see them very good, through the acceptance of thy grace, and with joy enter into my eternal Sabbath.

I wish that I may end every day with him who is the beginning and first-born from the dead; that I may every night go to bed as if I were going to my grave, knowing that sleep is the shadow of death, and when the shadow is so near, the substance cannot be far off. Though lovers cannot meet all day, yet they will make hard shift but they will find an opportunity to meet at night. Should my devotion set with the natural sun, I may fear a dreadful night of darkness to follow. That bed may well be as uneasy as one stuffed with thorns, that is not made by prayer. If the soul lie down under a heavy load of sin, the body can have no true rest. Jacob could sleep sweetly upon a hard stone, having made his peace with God, when Ahasuerus could not, though on a bed of down. I cannot sleep unless God wake for me, and I cannot rationally expect his watchfulness over me unless I request it. My corruptions in the day call for contrition in the night. How many omissions, commissions, personal, relative sins, heart, life wickedness am I daily guilty of! and should I lie down under their weight, for aught I know, they may sink me before morning into endless woe. Whilst blood is in my veins, sin will be in my soul. The weed of sin may be cut, broken, pulled up, yet it will spring again. I

shall as soon cease to live, as cease to sin. Though I should be free all the day long from presumptuous enormities, and only defiled with ordinary human infirmities, yet these, if not bewailed, are damning. The smallest letters are most hurtful to the eyes, and far worse than a large character. Those sins which are comparatively little, if not lamented, are far more dangerous than David's murder and adultery, which were repented of. When the soul, like Tamar, hath, notwithstanding its utmost endeavours to preserve its chastity, been ravished, and by force defiled, it must, with her, lift up the voice and weep. If the sun may not go down upon my wrath against man, much less may I presume to lie down under the wrath of God. Besides, how can sin be mortified, if it be not confessed and bewailed? Arraignment and conviction must go before execution.

The favours of the day past are not to be forgotten, but to be acknowledged with thankfulness. I receive every day more considerable mercies than there are moments in the day; and when I borrow such large sums, the principal of which I am unable ever to satisfy, shall I be so unworthy as to deny the payment of this small interest, which is all my creditor requireth? Whatsoever gain I have got in my calling, whatsoever strength I have received by my food, whatsoever comfort I have had in my relations or friends, whatsoever peace, liberty, protection, I have enjoyed all the day long, I must say of all, as Jacob of his venison, 'The Lord hath brought it to me.' surely the hearer of my morning prayers may well be the object of my evening praises. Ah, how unreasonable is it that I, like a whirlpool, should suck in every good thing that comes near me, and not so much as acknowledge it! Should any one be the thousandth part so much indebted to me as I am to God, how ill I should take it if he should not confess it! If a beggar at my door receive a small alms from God, by my hands, I look for his thanks. How often have I complained of the baseness and unworthiness of some that are

engaged to me! Oh what tongue can express, what heart can conceive, how much I am indebted to my God every moment, though I am less than the least of all his mercies! and doth not all his goodness merit sincere thankfulness? Lord, I confess there is not a day of my life wherein I do not break thy laws in thought, word, and deed. Sin is too much the element in which I live, and the trade that I drive. I find continually a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and captivating me to the law of sin and death. Ah wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death? Since I am no day innocent, make me every night penitent. As my sins abound, let my sorrow abound, and thy grace much more abound. Though I can never requite thy favours, help me to admire and bless the fountain of them. Suffer me never to go to bed, till I have first asked thee my heavenly Father's blessing. Let the eyes of my soul be always open to thee in prayer and praise, before the eyes of my body be shut. And oh, be thou always pleased so to accept my confessions, petitions, thanksgivings, my person and performances, in thy dear Son, that I may lay me down in peace and sleep, because thou, Lord, makest me to dwell in safety.

Finally, I wish that every day of my life may be spent as if it were the day of my death, and all my time employed in adorning my soul, in trimming my lamp, and in a serious preparation for eternity. Whilst I am living I am dying; every moment my sand is running, and my sun is declining. I am as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away. I fly away as a dream, and shall not be found. My life is chased away as a vision of the night. The eyes which have seen me shall see me no more, neither shall my place any more behold me. I must live now or never; if I die, I shall not live again. Oh that all the days of my appointed time, I could wait till my change cometh! Were I to take my leave of the world this night, and were my life to end with the day, how then would I spend every hour, every

moment of it? Should I lavish away my time about this or that vanity? Would I play it away in vain company? Would I neglect my spiritual watch, or waste my talents upon trifles? Should I dally about secret or private duties, or be careless of my carriage in my calling? Would I starve my immortal soul, or cast off all care of eternity? No; but I should all the day long act by the square and rule of the word. How serious should I be in praying, in reading, in working for my soul, for my salvation! how diligent to do all the good I could, to receive all the good I might! How watchful to catch at, and embrace all opportunities of honouring and serving my Maker and Redeemer, because my time is short, and I must pray, and read, and work for eternity, now or no more, no more for ever! And why should I not be as holy, though I do not know that I shall die this night, when I know not but I may die this night? How foolish is he who neglects doing his work till his work is past doing! Besides, other creatures are constant and unwearied in serving their Maker; they are every day, all the day long, in their stations obedient to his commands. If I look to heaven, to earth, to inanimate, to irrational creatures, I behold them all as so many soldiers, in their several ranks, exactly and continually subject to the orders which they receive from the Lord of hosts; and shall I be shamed by them? I am at present more indebted, more intrusted by God. I have a reward hereafter of joy to encourage me, of pain to provoke me to unweariedness in well-doing, which they neither hope nor fear. Lord, I live every moment upon thee, why should I not live every moment to thee? My life is by thy providence, oh that it were according to thy precepts! I would not be thine hireling, to serve thee merely for wages—thou thyself art my exceeding great reward—but I would be thy days-man, to work for thee by the day, every day, all the day long. Oh help me to live well in time, that I may live well eternally! Let every day be so devoted to thy praise, and every part of it so employed in thy service, that I may be the more fitted to please and

worship thee in that place where there is no night, yet all rest—no sun, yet all day, all light, all joy; where I shall have no meat, or drink, or sleep, or shop, or flocks, or family, and, which is best of all, no unbelieving, selfish, carnal heart, to call me from, or hinder me in, thy work, but I shall worship and enjoy thee without diversion, without distraction, without interruption, without intermission, both perfectly and perpetually. Amen.

## CHAPTER VII

### **How a Christian may exercise himself to godliness in visiting the sick**

FIFTHLY, Thy duty is to exercise thyself in visiting the sick. The visitation of the sick is a work of as great weight as any enjoined us relating to others, and as much neglected and slighted in its management as almost any duty commanded. Sickness is so common, and death so ordinary, that with most their frequency takes away the sense of them, and charity in many sickens and dieth as fast as others' bodies. The generality of pretended Christians, like the priest and the Levite, if they see a man wounded, both in his body and soul, though it be to death, pass on the other side of the way, not caring to meddle with any that are in misery. They tell us they are true members of Christ, but, like a bag of suppurated blood, they feel nothing, neither have any communion with the body. Many on their dying beds, whose souls are worse and more dangerously sick than their bodies, may speak to their minister or neighbour (for the duty belongs to the people as well as the pastor) almost in the words of Martha to Christ, Sir, if thou hadst been here, my soul had not died.

Some visit the sick, but rather out of a compliment than out of conscience, or to profit themselves more than their neighbours. The ingenious heathen Seneca, will tell such, If a man visit his sick friend, and watch at his pillow for charity's sake, and out of his old affection, we approve it; but if for a legacy, he is a vulture, and watcheth only for the carcase. The discourse of these is chiefly about worldly affairs, and nothing about the great concernments of eternity. Others sometimes go about the work, but perform it so ill, administering cordials when there is need of corrosives, sewing pillows under their sick friends' heads, that they may die easily; or if they tell them of their danger, they do it so coldly and carelessly, and by halves, that, as he said, there is plus periculi a medicamento quam morbo, more danger from the physic than the disease; their soul-sickness is curable, but the unsuitable medicines they take make it incurable. It may be said of many a soul, as Adrian's counsellors said of him, Multitudo medicorum, &c., Many physicians have killed the emperor. Ah! how dreadful is it, when unskilful and unfaithful mountebanks undertake to tamper and trifle with immortal souls, that are just entering into their eternal estates; 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.' Galen saith, in respect of bodily medicines, In medicina nihil exiguum, There is nothing small in physic; everything in it is of great consequence; a little mistake may cause death. I may upon greater reason say, There is nothing little in spiritual physic; a small error in our prescriptions to sick souls, may cause dreadful mischief; instead of curing, we may kill the patient. Hazael's wet cloth was not more deadly to his master's body than the discourse of most is to their sick neighbours' souls. Fear of displeasing, and a natural propensity to flatter, prevail with too many to soothe their dying friends into unquenchable flames. But surely there is more love (as well as more faithfulness) in frightening a sick person out of his spiritual lethargy, than in fawning him into the eternal lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. Some venomous



creatures tickle a man till he laughs, even when they sting him to death; so doth the flattering minister or neighbour—he raiseth a sick man, void of grace, to the pinnacle of joy, and highest hopes of heaven, and thereby throweth him down into the gulf of irrecoverable sorrows, and leaves him to undeceive himself in hell.

I shall first lay down two or three motives to stir up the reader to this work, and then direct him about it.

## SECTION I

First, It is a duty commanded thee by God. Men are apt to think the visitation of the sick to be only an act of courtesy and civility, which they may omit or perform at their pleasure, when it is an act of charity and Christianity, which every Christian is bound to by a divine precept. The ministers of Christ are especially enjoined this task; but every member of Christ also, when God gives him opportunity, oweth this debt to his neighbour: James 5:14, 15, 'If any be sick, let him send for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him.' The same word which commandeth the sick man to send, commandeth the elder to go. Indeed, it is a gross fault in many sick persons (and therein they are exceedingly their own enemies) that they either send not at all for the minister, or if they do, not till they have done with the physician; when their bodies are past all hope, then they look after some hope for their souls. But without question, it is a duty for the elder sometimes to go uncalled. It is good manners to be an unbidden guest at a house of mourning. Our Master was found of them that asked not for him, and so should his servants. There are those that can invite themselves to their neighbours' tables, who withdraw themselves from their chambers. Some are drunk so often with their parishioners whilst they are in health, that

they are afraid or ashamed to discourse seriously with them when they are sick. God may speak to many, as to the shepherds of Israel, Woe be to the shepherds of England, that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flock? 'Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed; but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them,' Ezek. 34:3, 4. None are more cruel to the flock than those that are most covetous of the fleece.

Oleaster, on Lev. 14:44,—'Then the priest shall come and look, and, behold, if the plague be spread,' &c., (that being the third time the priest was to visit the infected house,)—hath this useful observation, *Si sacerdos toties invisit leprosam domum, cur tu non ægrum?* if the priest were commanded so often to visit the leprous house, why dost not thou visit the sick person? The plague in the heart calls for more pity and help than the plague in the house.

This duty also belongs to private members, as well as to public officers. Every Christian should love his neighbour as himself, which he cannot do unless he have a sense of his sickness, and endeavour to improve such an opportunity for his neighbour's salvation. True love, like fire, burns hottest when the weather is coldest. Histories make mention of one Ursinus, a physician, that being to die for the gospel, and beginning to waver, Vitalis, a godly man, stepped to him, and, though he knew it would cost him his life, encouraged him, saying, What! have you been so industrious heretofore, to preserve men's bodies, and will you now shrink at the saving your own soul? Be courageous! For which faithful counsel he was condemned, and suffered accordingly. It is our duty to assist them that die natural, as well as those that die violent deaths. To visit persons in their

affliction, is one testimony of the truth of our religion at this day. Holiness and charity are like father and child. 'Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and the widows in their afflictions,' &c., James 1:27. The fatherless and widows are expressed, (but the sick, and strangers, and captives are included,) because these are usually most afflicted and most neglected. Those that have received mercy, cannot but shew mercy. As visiting the distressed is a sign of it now, so it will be the test of Christianity at the great day. Mat. 25:34–36, 'Come ye blessed, &c. I was hungry, and ye fed me; naked, and ye clothed me; sick, and ye visited me,' &c. Works of mercy fill up the whole bill, as the evidence of the saints' right to heaven. Whereof Luther gives this reason: because the consciences of the wicked shall justify Christ as well in the absolution of the godly, as in their own condemnation. Though Christians do not give their alms, or visit the sick, to be seen of men, yet in doing many offices of love, and acts of charity, they are seen of men. So they who can witness the truth of Christians' mercy, will be forced to acknowledge the equity of Christ's sentence.

## **SECTION II**

Secondly, It is a special opportunity of doing and receiving good.

1. Of doing good. I think it the more necessary to speak to this motive, because many are apt to judge all pains with sick persons to be to no purpose. They are discouraged from endeavouring the conversion of profane men upon sick-beds, supposing that such men's repentance will be as unsound as their bodies, even when they are sick unto death. Though I would not give the least encouragement to any men to defer their turning to God, believing him worse than mad who puts off the weighty business of his soul,

because peradventure God may grant him repentance hereafter; yet I must obviate this suggestion of the devil, which hinders men from doing their duty—God may shew mercy to a soul at last. There is one example in Scripture, that none might despair. Sickness is with some men the tide-time of devotion. They who scorned godly men, and made a mock of godliness in their health, will prize the saint, and desire his sanctity above all the world, when they lie upon sick-beds, and consider what a holy God they are going to appear before. Sickness, as one saith, is, *Officina virtutis, morum disciplina*, The shop of virtue, and the school of manners. Therefore king Alfred was wont to say, I ever find myself best when worst; best in soul when worst in body: the sickness of my body is physic to my soul. Experience daily informeth us that the swaggerers and gallants of the world (whose consciences are not seared with a hot iron) though they gave themselves up to drunkenness, and gluttony, and gaming, and whoredom, and all manner of wickedness in their youth and strength, yet when they are weakened much with a disease, and have no hopes of continuing longer on earth, begin to wish that they had spent their time to more purpose, and are sensible of their neglect of God and Christ, and their souls, and eternity; then many of them will desire the company of those that fear God, and beg their prayers, and hearken to their counsels, and would give all they are worth for a little of their grace and holiness. Even Benhadad, the king of Syria, an enemy to the prophets and people of God in his health, will send a prince to Elisha with a large present, and most submissive expressions—'Thy son Benhadad'—in his sickness, 2 Kings 8:9. Sickness gives men a double advantage for holiness.

(1.) It takes off their hearts from creatures, by teaching them experimentally what a poor, weak cordial the whole creation is to sick or dying men. When men are strong and lusty, they can taste and savour earthly things; carnal comforts hinder their endeavours

after spiritual. They take up with creatures, as Esau, and say, they have enough; but sickness makes them know the emptiness of all sublunary things. When men are sick, they cannot relish the world's dainties and delicacies. The preferments, and riches, and pleasures of the earth, are all unsavoury and uncomfortable to them. They now see the vanity of those things which heretofore they so much idolised; how unable they are to revive their fainting spirits, or to allay their pain, or purchase them the least ease, or procure them the least acceptance in the other world; and hence the price of the world's market falls abundantly in their judgments. Bernard tells us of a brother of his, that when he gave him many good instructions, and he being a soldier, regarded them not, he put his finger to his side, and told his brother, One day a spear shall make way to this heart of thine, for admonition and instruction to enter.

(2.) In sickness conscience is usually allowed more liberty to speak its mind, and men are then more at leisure to hear it. In health, their callings, or friends, or lusts, or sports, or some carnal comfort or other, take up their hearts and time; that conscience must be silenced, as too bold a preacher, for offering to disturb them in their pleasures, or if it will use its authority, and continue to speak in God's name, and forbid their foolishness, and atheism, and sensuality, and profaneness, they are deaf to its calls and commands, and drown its voice with the noise of their brutish delights. But in sickness they are taken off from their trades, and pastimes, and merry meetings, and jovial companions; when their bodies are weak, their fleshly lusts are not so strong as formerly, whereby conscience hath a greater opportunity to tell them of their miscarriages and wickedness, and they themselves are more attentive to its words and warning.

Reader, it is a special piece of wisdom to improve such a season for the good of thy neighbour's soul. When the wax is softened, then we clap the seal upon it, lest it harden again, and be incapable of any impression. When the hand of God hath by sickness made the heart of thy wicked friend or brother soft and tender, then do thy utmost to stamp the image of God upon it. Paul would preach whilst a door was opened, and there was likelihood of doing good. It is a great encouragement to work, when the subject upon which we bestow our pains seems capable of what we prosecute, and probable to answer our labour. We have some heart to strike a nail into a board, because there is hope it will enter; but no list to drive a nail into a flint, because we despair of effecting it. The smith strikes when the iron is hot; he knoweth, if he should stay till it is cold, his labour would be in vain. Friend, take the advantage of others' bodily sickness to further their spiritual health, lest they either die in their sins, or harden upon their recovery. Opportunity is like a joint in some part of a fowl, which, if we hit upon, we may easily carve and divide the fowl; but if the knife fall on this side or that side of the joint, we do but mangle the meat, and take pains to no purpose. It is the speech of Master Richard Rogers in his Seven Treatises, I have visited some persons that have been condemned to die, in whom, (through the blessing of God upon his endeavours,) I have found as good signs of saved persons as of any that died in their beds, not having tasted of repentance before.

2. It is a special opportunity of receiving good. We are taught more effectually by the eye than by the ear. The sight of a sick or dying person hath often a strange and a strong operation upon the beholder. When the father heard of one that sinned notoriously, he cried out, I may be as bad as this man is. When thou seest one dangerously sick, thou mayest think with thyself, I must be as this man is, sick unto death, when none of my relations or possessions

can afford me the least comfort; and oh how much doth it concern me to prepare beforehand for such an hour! If this man's work be now to do, when his life is ending, how sad is the condition of his precious soul! Oh that I were wise to consider timely, and to provide seasonably for my latter end! The sight of a dead man was instrumental to the spiritual life of Waldus. The sight of others' sickness may well quicken me to the greater industry and diligence after spiritual health. Do I behold my neighbour, whose sail formerly swelled with a full gale of worldly enjoyments, now wind-bound, chained to his chamber, or fettered to his bed, unable to relish his food, or take any comfort in his friends? do I see him full of aches and pains, tossings and tumblings, crying out in the evening, Would God it were morning, and in the morning, would God it were evening, because of the anguish of his spirit? do I behold his cheeks pale, his eyes sunk, his lips quivering, his loins trembling, his heart panting, and nature striving and struggling with the disease to keep its ground, and yet at last forced to quit the field, and leave the victory to its adversary? how many excellent observations may I draw from such a text! What a fool am I to trust the world, which leaves this man in his greatest want! How mad am I in loving sin, which is the cause of all these crosses and miseries, and which makes death so mortal to poor souls! Of how much worth and value is the blessed Redeemer, who will comfort a Christian in such a time of need, and carry him through his last conflict with joy and conquest! How careful should I be to get and keep a good conscience, which in such a day of extremity will yield me true courage and confidence! The wise man doth not without cause tell us: 'It is better to go into the house of mourning, (to the terming or charnelhouse,) than to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to heart,' Eccles. 7:2. Men in a house of feasting are apt to be forgetful of their duty to God, themselves, and their neighbours, Isa. 22:13, 14; Amos 6:3, 6; Isa. 5:11, 12. When the body is filled, the soul

is often neglected. Job was afraid of this in his sons: Job 1:6, 'It may be my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts,'—i.e., when they had been feasting at their elder brother's house. God gives Israel a special caution against this, Deut. 8:12, 14. Men, in a house of mourning, are put in mind both of God's sovereignty, who draweth away their breath and they perish, Ps. 104:29, and their own frailty, how soon they are gathered and withered, even in their prime and pride, Ps. 39:5. I am blind if I do not see mine own end in the end of another; and distracted if I do not provide for my last enemy, which I must necessarily encounter. Thus it is a mercy to ourselves, to be merciful unto others; and whilst we visit the sick, we visit our own souls. Who would not do his neighbour good, when he may be confident it will tend to his own gain? I have but hopes by my visit of advantaging a sinner; but I may be sure, if I be faithful therein, of profiting myself.

### **SECTION III**

Thirdly, It may be the last opportunity thou mayest ever have of advantaging thy sick neighbour's soul. His sick-bed may be his death-bed, and then it will be too late to counsel or advise him. There is no purgatory in the other world. Diseases, both bodily and spiritual, must be purged away before death, or never. He that is filthy at death, must be filthy still, even to all eternity. All the tears in hell will not wash out the least spot in the soul; all the fire of hell will not purge out the least dross. Therefore Christ took the opportunity of dropping good counsel into the heart of the thief on the cross, knowing that if he had omitted it a very few hours longer, the soul of the poor thief had been lost for ever. Hadst thou a friend going to sea, and never to return again, waiting at a port for a wind, and then to be gone, and hadst business with him of as great concernment to



him as his life—thou couldst tell him of a quicksand which he must beware of, or he will be cast away—wouldst thou not be quick and speedy to acquaint him with it, lest he should be under sail before thou didst see him? Would it not cut thee to the heart, if he should miscarry through thy negligence? The application is easy. The soul of every neighbour is, or ought to be, dearer to thee than the body of thy nearest friend or relation. When thy wicked neighbour is sick, his soul is launching, for aught thou knowest, into the ocean of eternity, whence he shall never, never, return more. He waits only for a wind, a word from God, and he is gone. The sick-bed is the passage or pathway to the grave. Thou hast work to do with him, that is more worth to him than his life, that is of as great value as his immortal soul, and eternal salvation. Now thou mayest acquaint him, while he is on the shore, with his danger, and the way of his delivery; but if once he launch into the main, thou mayest call loud and long enough after him in vain. Oh, will it not pierce thee to the quick, if his soul should be swallowed up in the boundless and bottomless sea of divine wrath, through thy laziness or unfaithfulness? When the day drew near for the destruction of the Jews, the heart of Haman swelled with hopes, and Esther had then an opportunity to step in and preserve the lives of her countrymen. Mordecai tells her, 'Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?' She made use of the season, and saved their lives with the hazard of her own. Had she delayed a little longer, it had been too late; they had all been sacrificed upon the altar of Haman's ambition. When the hour of a wicked man's death approacheth, the heart of the roaring lion is big with expectation of his prey, and a Christian friend hath then possibly an opportunity to save the poor creature's soul. Now or never; there is no knowledge nor wisdom in the grave, whither the sick person is going. If he make use of the price God puts now into his hands, by serious, prudent, faithful, and affectionate counsel, he may help the sinner to heaven. Who knoweth whether he

be come, by the providence of God, into the sick man's chamber for such a thing as this?

I have but one thing more to commend to thee, and then I shall speak to the work itself.

Before thou goest to thy sick neighbour, go to God by prayer; entreat him to direct thee what to speak, and to succeed what shall be spoken; it is his own ordinance, and therefore thou mayest the more comfortably beg and expect his assistance. Nehemiah would speak to God before he spake to the king for the afflicted Jews; Esther prefers her petition, first to her Maker, that her prayer might prosper, and then her petition to her husband for the lives of her countrymen. God is the principal agent; and if he be left out, all thy labour will be lost.

Wherein the exercising thyself to godliness in visiting the sick consisteth—

1. In endeavouring to benefit the soul of thy neighbour.
2. In getting some spiritual profit to thyself.

First, In endeavouring the spiritual good of thy neighbour. We are enjoined, in the eighth command, to mind and further our neighbour's temporal wealth, but much more his spiritual welfare. It was true which Bucer's physician told him, when he expressed his eagerness to die, *Non sibi, sed multorum utilitati, se esse natum*, That he was not born for himself, but for the good of many others; every saint is to be, as it were, a common stock for the profit of many. He is born, and new born, not only for himself, but for others' benefit. The lynx is a spotted, unclean beast, that, knowing how his urine will congeal into a precious stone, and be profitable to men, maketh a hole in the ground when he pisseth, to hide it from them.

Job, who knew the advantage that might accrue to others thereby, would not conceal either the word or works of God from them, Job 6:10, and 27:11. To this end—

1. Labour to be acquainted with the state of the sick person's soul. It is dangerous to give either purges or cordials ignorantly, or at peradventure. The souls of men are of unconceivable value, and therefore not to be tampered or trifled with. It is a good step to the cure to understand fully the disease, and the constitution of the patient; therefore physicians feel the pulse, view the urine, inquire of the sick person, or his friends, concerning his former course of life, diet, present digestion of his food, place of his trouble or pain, &c., that they may proceed upon good grounds, and give suitable and effectual advice. So shouldst thou, reader, in visiting the sick, inform thyself, either by conference with some serious Christians of their acquaintance beforehand, or by some searching, prudent questions to the sick, concerning the condition of their souls. The ignorance of a physician may occasion the death of the patient. Some practitioners in physic, who intend much good, do much hurt for want of judgment to find out the tempers and distempers of the sick. A mistake in soul-cases is of more hazard than in body-sickness. If I undertake to humble a person who is already cast down sufficiently, and wants a cordial, or to comfort one who is full of presumption already, and needs a corrosive, how good soever my meaning may be, my acting is evil; and instead of relieving, I may destroy my brother. The eastern churches did not without cause enjoin the minister, or such as were appointed to visit the sick, to continue with them seven days together, that in that space they might discover the man before they applied themselves to him, either in a way of admonition, or counsel, or consolation. Job's friends, when they came to visit him, spake not a word, either reproving or advising him, till they heard him open his mouth and curse the tongue that told the news of his

birth. The knowledge of the sick man's spiritual condition is, as it were, the foundation upon which we must build all our discourse with him, and prayers to God for him; or at least it is the rule by which we must build, and therefore it is very dangerous to mistake in it. If the foundation be laid ill, the superstructure will never stand well; if the rule be crooked, the building cannot be straight. A blind archer may as soon hit the mark, as one ignorant of his neighbour's state advantage his soul.

## SECTION IV

2. Apply thyself to him suitably to his condition. As the conditions of men are several, so must the application be; that which cures one may kill another. One medicine will as soon cure all diseased bodies, as one way all sick souls; indeed the physic to be prescribed every patient is the same for substance—the blood of Christ; 'by his stripes we are healed.' But there are several ways of tendering this to sinners, that they may be prepared for it, and give it all acceptation; that physic which is given to one in a potion, is given to another in a powder, to a third in an electuary, to a fourth in a pill, according as it will be most profitable and most acceptable to them. It is not easy so to write the bill, that the sick may receive what is prescribed to his greatest content and advantage; for as many perish *errore medici* as *vi morbi*, by the error of the physician, as by the power of the disease. Though I judge it next to impossible for me to set down, exactly and fully, directions answerable to the difference of sick persons' condition, disposition, education, calling, guilt, &c., yet I shall speak to the most ordinary cases, and be careful not to omit the main work, namely, that which concerneth the conversion of graceless and Christless persons, if, on a sick-bed, God peradventure will give them repentance.

If the sick person be judged carnal and unregenerate, (for the tree is known by its fruits; besides, it is no breach of charity to fear the worst of them whose lives do not speak a positive holiness, especially whilst we are endeavouring their good,) then in general I would advise thee to speak,

(1.) To the depravation of man's nature, and the transgressions of life, with the sad aggravations thereof; how holy man was by creation, how universally and desperately vicious he is by his fall from God, and what horrid unthankfulness he is guilty of in continuing in sin, notwithstanding the grace that is offered to him in the gospel. It is fit to speak to the purity and equity of the law of God, and to the difference and contrariety of his heart and life to it; to the sinfulness of sin, in its offensiveness and opposition to the nature and word of an infinitely holy, glorious, and gracious Majesty; in its destructiveness to the present peace and future perfection of his own precious and immortal soul; and in that the stain of it is so deep, and the venom of it so great, that nothing beneath the blood of God could wash out its spots, or be a sufficient antidote for its poison. Tell him of the folly of sinners in refusing heaven for earth, angelical delights for brutish pleasures, the blessed God for a base lust; and of his own madness likewise in running on so eagerly upon his own ruin, against the counsels of men, the commands, threatenings, and entreaties of God, the convictions of his conscience, the calls and invitations of a loving Redeemer, and the motions of the Holy Spirit.

(2.) Speak to the merit of sin, how it being committed against an infinite Majesty, deserveth infinite wrath and severity. Tell him that the wages of sin is death, temporal, spiritual, eternal. Acquaint him with the justice, holiness, and jealousy of God; how he will by no means clear the guilty, but hath threatened all manner of plagues and judgments on the workers of iniquity, and cannot fail in the least

of accomplishing his word; how he is resolved to make all the children of men feel sin to be an evil and bitter thing, either in broken bones on earth, or broken backs, and endless torments in hell. Let him know his own obnoxiousness, by reason of his many and grievous sins, to the curse of the law, the wrath of the Lord, and the vengeance of the eternal fire. Tell him that he is by nature a child of wrath, an enemy to God, and an heir of hell; that it had been just to have cast him out of the womb into hell; that God's patience in bearing with him thus long, will but increase his condemnation and endless misery, unless he prevent it by sincere conversion.

This is the first thing requisite in order to the recovery of his soul. Till sin be discovered in its heinous nature, and bloody colours, it will never be lamented, nor the Saviour esteemed according to the duty of the sinner. The first thing usually which the Spirit doth in the change of a sinner, is to convince him of sin, John 16:8; and this is also first in the minister's commission, Acts 26:18. The great neglect of this, in ministers and others, is one reason that so few sinners are awakened; the needful work of humiliation is so dangerously slighted, that poor souls go sleeping and dreaming all is well, till they come to be undeceived in hell.

(3.) Speak to his own inability to help himself, that no less than infinite power can recover him out of his miserable condition. Men are prone to act like brutes, when they are wounded, to undertake the licking themselves whole, as if it were an easy thing to renew a carnal creature, and heal vitiated nature; but, alas! the work is not so soon done. It is another manner of work to open the blind eyes, and enliven the dead soul, than the secure careless worldling doth imagine. It is called a resurrection from the dead, a new creation, the work of God, because nothing less than a divine almighty power can effect it, Rev. 20:6; Eph. 2:10; John 6:29; Eph. 2:6.

(4.) Speak to the necessity of a change in him, both of his disposition by repentance, and of his condition by faith in Jesus Christ. That these are not works which may be done, or left undone, but such as must be done, or he is undone for ever. Tell him the necessity of a change,

[1.] Of his nature, by repentance; how God himself hath said, Except he repent he shall perish, and that it is not possible for the whole creation to make void God's word. That, as he is a corrupted, depraved creature, he is no way capable of heaven, for God hath shut him out, and barred the gate of bliss against him: 'Into it (i.e., heaven) can in no wise enter anything that defileth, or is unclean,' Rev. 21:27; and he hath shut himself out by his vicious nature, for spiritual pleasures are not suitable, neither can be enjoyed by depraved and ungodly creatures. Let him know that swinish dispositions cannot relish heavenly delights, and therefore, if it were possible for him to get to heaven in a carnal estate, heaven would be no heaven, that is, no place of joy or pleasure to him. Acquaint him especially wherein the nature of repentance consisteth, not in a few sighs or sobs for sin, or in crying God mercy, or saying, I am sorry I ever sinned, but in a real change of the heart and nature; that his mind must be changed to see the ugliness and deformity of sin, his will to refuse it as the greatest evil, his affections to loathe it and hate it above all things whatsoever; that he must abhor himself, and loathe himself, and bemoan himself, for all his abominations, if ever he would find mercy, Job 42:3; Jer. 31:18; Ezek. 47; that he must in his whole man be altered, turned upside down, be contrary to what he is by nature, be converted and born again, or he can never see the kingdom of God, Mat. 18:3; John 3:3. Forget not also to discover the necessity of a change,

[2.] Of his state, by faith in Jesus Christ; how the Son of God can alone deliver him from the wrath of God; that there is no name under heaven by which he can be saved, but the name of Christ; that all his prayers, and tears, and duties, cannot satisfy the divine justice for the least of his sins, or deserve the least favour on the behalf of his soul; that he must of necessity be united by faith to Christ, and submit to his guidance, and give up himself to his government, or perish eternally; that though Christ died for him without his will, yet he will not save him against or without his will, but he must be heartily willing to accept Christ as his Saviour and sovereign, as ever he looks for salvation by him. Here it may not be amiss to acquaint him with the fulness of Christ's merits, and the freeness of God's mercy to them that do sincerely repent and believe. How God commands, entreats, threatens, promiseth, and all to draw men to mind the things of their peace.

(5.) Speak to the shortness of his time to do this weighty and necessary work in; that now there is no dallying, no delaying, for within a few hours it may be too late; that grace must be got now or never; that Christ, and pardon, and life must be obtained now or never; that no sin shall be forgiven, no person shall be justified, no soul renewed or cleansed in the other world, that is not pardoned and sanctified in this; that heaven and hell are before him, and within a short time the matter will be determined which of the two he shall be in for ever; that he must now get a title to bliss, or miss it for ever; now prevent the unquenchable fire, or burn in it for ever; that he is now upon the shore, just stepping into the ocean either of honey or wormwood, joy or horror, and therefore it concerns him nearly to consider what he doth, and to be diligent to the utmost, if he would escape the endless company and torments of devils and damned spirits. Take heed of giving him hopes of recovery, which many do to please the sick or their friends; for hereby thou mayest



exceedingly injure his soul, frustrating all the means used for his spiritual health. Think not much to be often with the sick person in case thou hast opportunity. Let his misery move thee, and the love of Christ draw thee. When we fell an oak, thirty or forty of the first strokes seem to be lost, because the tree stirs not; yet if we continue, it comes at last down, and sheweth the effects of the first as well as the last strokes. If he be converted thou wilt be satisfied; however, thy reward is with God. If this unconverted person be scandalous, then it may be sometimes convenient to hint at the horrid nature of such sins, being committed against common light, and abhorred by many of the very heathen, and marked particularly for vengeance by the jealous God, 1 Cor. 6:9, 10; Gal. 5:19–21; Eph. 5:5, 6. Thou mayest have the more hopes of success in visiting such a one, because conscience in this sinner will probably prove thy friend, and join with thee in terrifying him for those sins from which it could not (though it frequently attempted) dissuade him.

If the unconverted person be one that lived civilly and orderly in his outward conversation—paying every man his own, keeping his church, forbearing enormous crimes, &c.—it will be then needful to commend his civility; Jesus looked on such a man and loved him. But also to discover its defects and insufficiency, that there is one thing lacking; how his nature is universally polluted, and it must be thoroughly purified, or he is a lost man; that it is one thing to have a wound hid, and another thing to have it healed; that many infidels have been unblameable in their outward carriages, who yet perished, being without Christ; that the scribes and pharisees went farther than most civil men, for they had not only a negative holiness in denying gross sins, but a positive holiness, (in show at least,) they prayed, fasted, &c.; yet he, to whom it is impossible to lie, tells us, Mat. 5:20, 'Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of

heaven.' It will be good also, in dealing with such a person, to insist much upon the latitude and purity of the law of God; how it forbiddeth (and condemneth for) the least sinful thought, and how nothing less than perfect obedience can answer its demands, or satisfy the law-giver; because such men are apt to judge themselves righteous, comparing themselves with those that are notoriously vicious. They think all is well, their minds being darkened, and unable to discern and discover the secret lusts which are hugged in their hearts; besides, their consciences being defiled as well as other faculties, are not so true to them as to convince them powerfully of that pride, hypocrisy, unbelief, impenitency, atheism, and ungodliness which they are guilty of. And Satan hath a strict watch over them to keep them asleep in sin, not caring, so men go to hell, whether they go thither in the dirty road of scandalous and crying crimes, or in the cleanly path, and through the fair meadows of civility. Whether the person be scandalous or civil, it will be needful to let in light at some crevice, and not to leave the sinner wholly in the darkness of despair. The good Samaritan poured oil as well as wine into the wounds of him that fell among thieves. A little hope may melt that heart which despair would harden. Sturdy thieves have wept at the news of a reprieve, that have stormed and raged at the sentence of condemnation; but this is wisely to be done, lest the sinner be encouraged to presume. Lenity is to be joined with severity. Let there be love, but not emboldening them to sloth; let there be terror, but not driving them into a fury, saith Gregory.

If the sick person be one that is judged a true member of Christ, then speak to the excellency of grace, and Christ, and heaven; to the certainty and worth of those promises that are entailed on believers, to make his passage into the other world as comfortable as thou canst. It will be fit also to speak to those graces of faith, patience, love, heavenly-mindedness, and joy in God, which should be minded

and exercised in a time of sickness; how the time of affliction is the spring, the special time wherein those graces should shoot up and shew themselves; that God expecteth some service from him under his sickness; and that his last works should be better than his first. If he be under doubts and fears—for Satan will take the advantage of his sickness to assault him with his fiery darts, and saints are too apt to question God's love when they feel his hand, the weakness of the body discomposing the mind, and denying it the free exercise of spiritual judgment—then advise him to review his former experiences of divine goodness, and trials of divine grace within him; to hold fast on Jesus Christ, and to consider that sickness is common to men, good as well as bad; that though they differ vastly in the other world, yet not at all in their passage thither. Singular saints have been afflicted with the sorest sickness; Job was a non-such for sanctity, yet full of sores. It is a question whether he were more eminent for corporal distempers or spiritual health; Hezekiah, David, Asa, Paul, Epaphroditus, were all thus chastened of the Lord, but not condemned with the world.

Whatsoever the sick person be, whether gracious or graceless, it will not be amiss to mention the three great lessons which God would teach every one by affliction.

First, The emptiness of the world, appearing in its inability to afford the least ease to the body, or comfort to the soul, of the sick. How little worth is that which fails a man in his greatest need!

Second, The preciousness of Christ, and grace, and the promises of the gospel, which can enliven and encourage a dying person; that can cause light in darkness, joy in sorrow, and life in death; that can enable a Christian to rejoice in tribulation, and to welcome pain and

sickness, nay, and the very king of terrors, and to look into the other world with comfort and confidence.

Third, The sinfulness of sin, which is the original of all diseases, and aches, and grief, and separation of friends, and losses, and miseries whatsoever. The rabbis say, that when Adam tasted the forbidden fruit his head ached. It is clear sin is the original of sickness. The body is the instrument of unrighteousness, therefore the subject of diseases; 'for this cause many are weak and sick,' 1 Cor. 11:30. All the evil in this and the other world are the issue and offspring of sin. Ah! what a root of bitterness is that, which brings forth such bitter fruit! Be sure to take the thoughts of the sick off from resting in physicians, or any means used for their cure; this was the fault of good Asa, 2 Chron. 16:12. Let them know that it is God that wounds, and he only that can heal, and therefore he must not be tempted, either by despising those helps which his providence giveth, or by relying on them. Hippocrates gave this counsel to all physicians, that when they went upon any occasion to visit their patients, they should consider, first of all, whether there was not *divinum aliquod in morbo*, something of God in the disease. If so, he held the patient to be desperate, and his recovery impossible: *Cujus contrarium verum est*. If it were the hand of God that smote them, the same hand can help them, for with him nothing is impossible. Let them understand that sickness hath a supernatural as well as a natural cause. That all diseases are, like the centurion's servants, at the command of God: He saith to one, Go, and it goeth; to another. Come, and it cometh; to a third, Do this, and it doeth it. God would have the Israelites know that not only sword, and famine, and captivity, but also pestilence, consumptions, fevers, and burning agues, are sent from heaven, Deut. 28:21, 22. He causeth those storms, and tempests, and quarrels, and contentions that are between the humours in our bodies, to their disturbance and destruction. Therefore Moses,

beholding the whole body of the Jews (except two renowned members) corrupted—for he lived to see all that came out of Egypt besides to die—cried out, 'Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, Return, ye children of men.'

## SECTION V

3. Deal closely and faithfully with him; let not fear of giving distaste, or hope of some advantage to thyself, make thee false to the soul of the sick. Do not play the part of a mountebank, in using palliating medicines to allay the distemper, or anodynes to stupefy the patient, and neglect the root of the malady. Alas! carnal wretches are prone enough of themselves to deceive and flatter their own souls, till it be too late for second thoughts, and the wicked one will be at their bedsides, to hinder, if it be possible, all means from awakening and undeceiving them. Be careful, therefore, lest thou shouldst be any way accessory to Satan's design. Sin is like the little serpent aspis, which stings men, whereby they fall into a pleasant sleep, and in that sleep die. Sinners need all the rousing and affrighting considerations that may be. He that gives a potion, which, instead of furthering health, procureth death, is a murderer. The flatterer is like the worm teredo, mentioned by Pliny, (in Nat. Hist.,) as soft as silk in the feeling of the hand, but it biteth so hard with the teeth, that it eateth out the heart of the strongest timber. Flattery is to sin, what oil to fire; it makes it flame the more. Oh it is dangerous to speak peace where God speaks war I shouldst thou do so, the blood of such a soul would be required at thy hands, Ezek. 33:8; Jer. 23. Faithful dealing will bring thee in most comfort at present, and most credit hereafter, as also be most advantageous to the sick person. When the great day comes, the man that hated flattery, and scorned, for a little profit or favour, to disown his duty, or prove false to the soul of his neighbour, will hold up his head with courage, but the cowardly and fearful will hang down their heads with shame, Rev. 21:8.

4. Pray with him, and for him. Sick persons are often full of pain and grief, and are more than usually assaulted by Satan, whereby they are the less able to pray for themselves, and have the more need of the prayers of others. It is observable that though the Holy Ghost commandeth men in other afflictions to pray themselves—'Is any afflicted? let him pray'—yet when he mentioneth sickness, he saith not, 'Is any sick? let him pray'; but, 'Is any sick? let him send for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him,' James 5:14—i.e., A sick man is not so fit to pray himself; he wanteth others to pray for him, and with him. The soul sympathiseth in the sufferings of the body, and the inner man is seldom at rest, if the outward man be distempered and disquieted. The mind is unfitted for duties by the diseases of the flesh. Paul calls his bodily weaknesses a temptation, Gal. 4:13, 14. Afflictions on the flesh are temptations to the spirit, and sickness is a piercing arrow in Satan's quiver of temptations.

If the person be carnal, what motives hast thou, from his misery, to quicken thee to the duty! The poor creature is going to hell, and knoweth it not. His destruction is near, and he is not aware. How should the thoughts of that extremity and eternity of torments which he is every moment liable to, stir thee up to be earnest and instant with God on his behalf! It may be thou wouldst sit up a whole night to watch with him for the comfort of his body; dost thou not know that the soul is infinitely more worth? Oh watch and pray, that he enter not into eternal condemnation! Thou art not ignorant that God hath made promises of grace, as well as promises to grace, and canst not tell but that grace waiteth in heaven for the sick person, only thy prayer must be the messenger to fetch it thence. God hath shewn mercy at the last; he can do it to this man, therefore thou mayest have the more hopes. Besides, it may be his sickness shall not be unto death, but only to heal his diseased soul, and so to give him a new life, both natural and spiritual. The question before thee is,

whether that poor sick creature's soul shall be Christ's or the devil's for ever; and wilt thou not plead hard with God that it may be thrown in to Christ, whose title is unquestionable, and that the grand and arch-enemy of Christ and men may be frustrated and disappointed in his expectation? Zeal to the advancement of thy Redeemer's interest, and love to the soul of thy neighbour, should actuate and animate thy requests, and put life and fervency into thy petitions.

If the sick man be godly, thou hast the more encouragement to pray. God hath promised as much to him as thou canst rationally desire for him. He hath hopes to speed, that goeth to an honest, able man, and sheweth him his bond for what he demands. God is infinite, both in righteousness and power, so that there is no fear of a repulse, if you can shew his hand for your request. He delights to hear his promises pleaded in prayer, and to see his children so full of affection, as to be fervent in their petitions for each other. Thou mayest send the same message by prayer to Jesus, that the sister of Lazarus did, 'Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick,' and mayest be confident of the like gracious answer: 'This sickness is not unto death (eternal) but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.'

Next to thy endeavours for the good of thy sick neighbour's spiritual estate, it will be fit to advise him about his temporal estate, that he may dispose of his worldly affairs, and his wealth, if God have given him any, with wisdom, and settle things so firmly, that his relations may not be wrangling for his goods, when his body is at rest in his grave.

Secondly, The exercising ourselves to godliness in visiting the sick, consisteth in getting good to our own souls by it. Though it be forbidden us to inquire of the dead, and ask their counsel, yet it is commanded us to inquire of the dying, and to learn of them, Deut.



18:11; Eccles. 5:1, 2. Sick men may teach them that are in health many excellent lessons. Some say that ground covered with ashes, is made thereby the more fruitful. The dust of the dead, falling upon a right soil, an honest heart, will make it the more abundant in holiness. A Christian findeth walking in hospitals or churchyards, among the sick or dying, much conducing to the health and life of his soul. He that was cast dead into his grave, by touching the bones of dead Elisha, was ravished to life. That which Elias said to Elisha, when he begged a double portion of his spirit, 'If thou seest me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee,' may fitly be alluded to in this place. The sight of others' sickness and death, and their departures from us, is a great means to increase the spirit in us, and to double our care and diligence in preparing for such an hour.

1. In laying to heart thine own frailty. He is but a cold clod of clay, and dead already, who doth not see his own death in the death of others. Sickness is but one remove from death; the sick-bed is the way to the coffin; therefore, when thou visitest the sick or dying, reflect upon thyself, and consider: This will be my case, or a worse, a violent stroke. The same enemy that encountered my neighbour, is upon his march towards me, and will certainly overtake me. The feet of them that carry my friend to his grave, are ready to carry me also; what need have I to be always in a dying frame, and ready for death! The very next arrow that death shoots, may be levelled at me; and shall not I stand always upon my guard in expectation of it, and armed for it! Oh how deep will the head of that arrow pierce me, if it find me naked.

2. In considering God's mercy to thee, and blessing him for the health thou enjoyest. The pain of others will tell thee that ease is a mercy; the racking sickness, and restless nights of others, do speak aloud in thine ears, that health and rest are mercies. Oh how

shouldst thou adore that God who distinguisheth thee thus graciously from others. Mayest thou not think with thyself, here is a person full of pain, the day is full of darkness to him, and wearisome nights are appointed to him. Lo, his wife, and children, and friends are weeping about him, but cannot relieve or redress him; all the comforts of this life are unsavoury to him. His aches, and grief, and diseases, hinder him much in spiritual performances, and in the prosecution of a better life; how much am I bound to the Lord, that it is not so with me! I can relish outward mercies, and am refreshed with bodily comforts. I have no such distemper or pain to take me off from prayer or Scripture, but I may be as frequent and as urgent as I will about my soul and eternal concernments. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all within me praise his holy name. Surely health is the prince, the first-born, of outward blessings. Though foolish men deprive themselves frequently of it, for the satisfaction of a sensual, wanton appetite, yet it is more worth than a thousand of those brutish transitory delights. A stomach is of more value than meat, and a good digestion than raiment. Men think not much to part with much of their wealth in their sickness for a little health. Oh, it deserves thy prayers to God for it, with submission to his will, when thou wantest it, and thy praising of God for it, with enlarged affections, when thou hast it!

3. In observing the necessity of a timely repentance, and its difficulty on a dying bed. How unfit is a man to begin to live, when he is racked with pain, and going to die. The dolour and trouble of his body are great impediments to the good of his soul. When the outward man is in great distress, and the inner man sympathising with it, the best words are often wasted and thrown away, and the mind is unfit either to receive counsel or comfort. Further, how irrational is it to give Satan our prime, our health, our strength, and God our weak, and consumptionate, and dying parts; to present our enemy with our

quick, and nimble, and active faculties and members, and to put off our best friend with a body full of sores, and a soul full of sin. Besides, the longer men continue in sin, the more difficult their conversion will be. He that hath wandered or travelled out of the right way all day, will hardly be persuaded to go back all the way, and set out again at night. Where Satan hath dwelt long, he will hardly be removed. A ship, the longer it leaketh, the harder it is to be emptied. The farther a nail is driven in, the more trouble to get it out. The longer my soul continueth in disobedience, the harder it will be to bring it to repentance. The more sin is riveted and habituated in me, the more pains, and toil, and grief, it will cost to get it subdued and slain.

4. In learning more the excellency of grace, and an interest in Christ and God, which will do a man good in a day of sickness, and an hour of death. He is a friend indeed that is a friend in a day of adversity. The sinner's folly in neglecting durable riches, teacheth the Christian wherein true wisdom consisteth, and the worth of it; that it consisteth not in heaping up such treasures, or getting such friends as will be useless and unprofitable in a time of need, but in laying up a treasure in heaven, and insuring eternal comforts. Cold sharp weather sheweth the value of a healthy constitution. A storm will speak the worth of a sure anchor and a skilful pilot. The excellency of grace, and holiness, and Christ, and God, are not fully known till we come into the other world, where all sublunary comforts are wanting; but the more any condition in this world resembleth that, and the nearer we approach that, the more visible is the value of divine and lasting blessings. A cordial is not esteemed till we come to fainting fits. A soul that in time of health, and wealth, and outward prosperity, made the fear and ways of God, and the estate of the godly, the object of his scorn and contempt, when he comes to be awakened by the alarum of death, and to look into the other world,

will make them the object of his choice, and give a world, if he had it, for them.

**A good wish about the visitation of the sick, wherein the former heads are applied**

The righteous Lord, and God of all grace, who for sin afflicteth man with sickness, yet in the midst of judgment remembereth mercy, intending his instruction, not his destruction, by it—having designed such afflictions, as rods to whip men to himself, to make them out of love with sin, the spring of all their sufferings and sorrows, and to wean them from the earth, who otherwise would make it their heaven; and hath also appointed men to be the means through which these mercies shall be conveyed, and sicknesses sanctified to them; I wish, in general, that I may never omit to visit those neighbours with pity, whom God hath visited in fury; much less insult, as the Edomites over the afflicted Israelites, and persecute them whom God hath smitten, drawing blood from those wounds which are already blue with the blows of the Almighty; but may be faithful to the precept and purpose of my God in this particular, and adopt my second table duties into the family of the first table, by visiting the sick, not out of common civility, but out of charity, and in obedience to the God of my health. It is my privilege that my alms may become sacrifice, my courtesies worship, and in paying that debt of love which I owe to my neighbour, I may pay that duty which I owe to my Maker. Oh that in all my common transactions I might move upon principles of reason, and, especially in works that have a tendency God-ward, act upon grounds of religion. Lord, thou hast an eye to my good in all thy providences and dealings; why should not I have an eye to thy glory in all my practices and actings? Cause thy fear so to possess my heart, that I may visit the sick out of conscience, and let

thy grace so assist and accompany my endeavours, that thou mayest visit them to their eternal comfort.

I wish that the command of my God may be a sufficient motive and warrant to make me set about the practice of this work. It is my duty to visit them that are sick, as I am the Lord's servant. I disown his authority, I deny his image, if I do not sympathise with others in misery. Nature itself commandeth me to be affected with the conditions of such as are afflicted. All creatures will commiserate those of their rank and order that are in misery. Bees will rather stay and starve with those of their kind that are unable to fly to their hives, by reason of the weakness of their wings, than stir from them or forsake them. The swine are so sensible of their fellows' sufferings, that if one of the company be lugged, all the rest will after their manner condole it. If a beast be slain, and its blood spilt, others of that sort will shew their love and pity by scraping earth on the blood, burying their fellow, and solemnising his funeral with a kind of lamentation. Grace doth much more enjoin me to be sick in others' sickness, poor in others' poverty, and to remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them, and them that suffer adversity, as being myself also in the body. David, speaking of his enemies that sought his destruction, saith, 'But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother,' Ps. 35:13, 14. My God hath said, 'To him that is afflicted, pity should be shewn.' Sickness is one of the greatest outward afflictions; it renders all the comforts of this life uncomfortable. The largest houses, revenues, honours, the most loving acquaintance, friends, relations, are all unsavoury to them that are under great sickness. To visit the prosperous and healthy is courtesy, but to visit the distressed and sick is charity. The sweetest

showers should fall on the lower grounds. Lord, thou art the Father of mercies, and art afflicted in all the afflictions of thy children; thy soul is grieved for the miseries of Israel. How suitable is it for them who expect mercy another day, to shew mercy at this day! Make me a follower of thee, as a dear child, to put on bowels of compassion, and to be merciful in heart, tongue, and hand, as thou my Father in heaven art merciful.

I wish that, as a wise merchant, I may make the use of this price, which is put into my hand, for the furtherance of my own and my neighbours' peace. Sickness is a special opportunity, wherein I may advantage others' souls; the most poisonous viper is at such a season benumbed with cold, and so may be handled without much danger. The strength of the body of sin is much abated, at least in regard of act and exercise, by the weakness of the natural body. They who counted holiness a fancy, and holy ones fanatics, in their health and power, will beg hard for purity, and desire the saints' prayers in their sickness. The waters of those passions, which in a summer of prosperity did overflow their bounds, and threatened to overwhelm and overthrow all that was near, are frozen up in a winter of adversity, and kept within their banks; there are many nicks in time, as we see in a clock, which, if they hit, the work goeth on well. The hardened hearts of sinners are often melted, when their persons are confined to their warm chambers; as tinder when dry easily takes fire, by the least spark that falls on it, so when the souls of ungodly men are made soft by sickness, and their thoughts of the evil of sin in the pain it brings on their bodies, makes their affections combustible, it will be much the easier to kindle the fire of repentance in them. Affliction boreth or openeth the ear, and then it is seasonable to drop some wholesome counsel into it. Though a load on the ground be hard to be stirred, yet a load on the wheels is easy to be drawn. The illness, and aches, and distempers of sinners' bodies do, as it were,

set the work of conversion, and minding the good of their souls, upon the wheel, and therefore such opportunities ought to be diligently improved. Sickness is a good time when charity is in season. It is a grace to have an opportunity for the service of my God, but a greater to improve it. The eastern people do plough and sow their grounds, when the former rain hath softened it; and why should not I endeavour to plough up the fallow-ground of my neighbour's heart, and to sow in it the seeds of savoury instructions, when it is made tender by sickness? Lord, thou layest hold of every opportunity to bless me with mercy answerable to my necessities; make me both wise to discern time and judgment, and faithful to make use of all such seasons to do thee service.

I wish that the opportunity I have thereby of doing good to my own soul, may move me to be the more careful and conscientious in visiting the sick. It is the wise man's speech, 'It is better to go into the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting; for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart.' It is better, as it is most suitable to my present state. It is not proper for pilgrims to spend their time in pleasure. Sorrow is becoming in a valley of tears. A house of mourning agrees well with the mourners in Zion. This world is a sea, I am a mariner, and mariners rejoice in the haven, not in the tempestuous ocean. This life is a warfare, I am a soldier; it is too soon to be joyful whilst I am fighting; it will be time enough when all my enemies are foiled. Oh how harsh is it for a child to be jocund, when he is far from home! Weeping is good language for them that sit down by the river of Babylon; how can I sing the Lord's songs in a strange land? Again, it is better to go into the house of mourning, as it is most profitable to my precious soul. Grace thrives best in a wet soul; 'by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.' The inner man is best when clad in mourning. Trees planted by the water-side hang with clusters, and bring forth fruit in due season.

The sick-bed is a pulpit, and though there be a wicked man in it, he may teach me rare instructions; if he be wholly silent, his condition preacheth to me that sin is the greatest evil, that the world is a cheat and imposture, and that grace is the most desirable created good. His dark chamber, weeping friends, watered couch, aching head, trembling heart, pale lips, quivering loins, all call aloud to me to consider of and prepare for such an hour. Abel, being dead, yet speaketh; my sick, my dead neighbour speaketh, Prepared be to follow me. Some have been raised to life by beholding the dead. Oh that I were wise to observe and improve the opportunities which free grace affordeth me, for my own and others' welfare! If I lose a good market for the furtherance of my outward estate, I befool and bewail myself. Ah, why should I not be as much affected with the loss of opportunities for my inner man! Sinners observe their seasons for the gratifying their loves, and the satisfying their lusts. The thief waiteth for the full purse till the market is over, and commodities be sold. The adulterer makes use of the dark night for his deeds of darkness. Satan watcheth every opportunity to ensnare and destroy me; if I give him the least advantage, by idleness or carnal security, or running into occasions of sin, he doth presently lay hold on it to pollute me. All men indeed may shame me. The mariner doth spread his sails when the winds blow. The merchant observes his exchange hours, when he may meet with many friends, and despatch much business in a little time. The lawyer minds his terms. There is a time when kings go out to battle, 2 Sam. 11:1, which soldiers will not neglect. The husbandman makes hay whilst the sun shines; yet, ah, how foolish am I to let slip those golden seasons which my God giveth me, for working out my own salvation! Lord, thou hast made everything beautiful in its season; but poor silly man knoweth not his time, Eccles. 3:11, and 9:12. Grant me so much prudence, that, as the men of Issachar, I may have understanding of the times, 1 Chron. 12:32, and so much piety as to serve the times, not as worldlings, in



altering my course according to the fashions and customs of men, but in embracing what is tendered in due time, for my own and others' good, always adhering to the commands of thee my God.

I wish that the uncertainty of my sick neighbour's outward recovery, may make me the more careful and solicitous about his spiritual health. If he die, he is stated and fixed for ever and ever, and I am for ever deprived of all opportunities of profiting or advantaging his soul. Now he is sick, he is nigh death, but one step from it. The sick stand upon the borders of the grave, upon the brink of the pit, nay, of eternity. Those that are in most perfect health, are inclining towards death; but they that are sick, are approaching the chambers of darkness. Such a man may speak, in the language of Haman, 'My life draweth nigh unto the grave,' Ps. 88:3. Should he depart this life in a natural estate, he falleth into the jaws of eternal death. All prayers for him will then be fruitless, and there is no giving counsel to him after death. I must now advise, exhort, persuade, beseech him to mind faith and repentance, or never do it; I must now put up hearty cries and groans to God on his behalf, or never do it. The loving-kindness of God cannot be declared in the grave, nor his faithfulness in destruction, Ps. 88:11. When he is wailing in hell for the ungodliness of his heart and life, I may be weeping on earth for my neglect of him, or unfaithfulness to him, but both our tears will be ineffectual, and our cries comfortless. Oh that the love of my Saviour, the command of my God, the worth of a soul, the weight of an eternal estate, the fear of losing such a season, and the impossibility of recalling or recovering it, may all provoke me to be instant with the sick, to turn to God, and abhor and bewail their sins, and to be fervent with God, that he would crown my endeavours with success! Lord, I may speak thy mind and will to men, but thou alone, who didst make the ear, canst enable them to hear; let it please thy Majesty so to affect my heart with a due sense of others' misery, so to

direct my tongue what to speak in order to their recovery, and so to prosper the undertakings of thy servant, that as often as I visit any unconverted person in his sickness, I may turn a sinner from the error of his ways, save a soul alive, and hide a multitude of sins.

I wish that I may be solicitous to understand the spiritual conditions of the sick, that my prescriptions may be profitable, being suitable to their several sores. The knowledge of the disease must necessarily precede directions for its cure. It is folly to undertake their recovery, whose estates I am ignorant of. He works at the labour-in-vain who goeth about to heal a wounded patient, when he knoweth not the place or nature of his pain. The mistake of the physician may be as mortal and dangerous as the disease itself. It will be no wonder if a blind man shoot awry, and miss the mark. This was the cause that Job's friends, though holy men, and designing a good end, wandered exceedingly; and instead of administering comfort by their visitation, wounded him to the quick, and proved his greatest cross. The Sabeans and Chaldeans robbed him of his cattle, Satan wronged him in his body, but his three friends vexed his soul, and did break him in pieces with words. Their ignorance was the ground of the hurt they offered, instead of the help they intended, Job 19:2. A friend may do that mischief upon a false supposition, which an enemy doth out of malice. Though the doctrine be true and right, if the application of it be wrong, I may kill sooner than cure the person to whom I apply it. The husbandman must know the nature of his ground before he casteth in his seed, or otherwise he will miss of his expected crop. Lord, thou knowest the conditions and dispositions of all men by immediate intuition, and needest not that any should testify of man; thou knowest how needful it is for me to understand by rational discourse who and what those sick persons are, how things stand betwixt thy Majesty and their souls, whose recovery I go about. Oh

help me to find out their sickness, and to give such advice out of thy word, that thou mayest work their cure!

I wish that, when the condition of the sick person is found out, neither fear nor flattery may make me unfaithful to his soul. Those prescriptions cannot be profitable that are not answerable to his estate. I am unfaithful to God, my neighbour, and myself, if my application be not suitable to his condition. My God commandeth me to proclaim war against the presumptuous, to preach peace to the penitent; and if I act otherwise out of fear or affection, I act contrary to my commission; I am false to my trust if I keep not close to the will of my Lord. He that takes not his master's precepts for his rule, will at last be counted and punished as an unfaithful servant. I hinder also my neighbour's good, whilst I give him counsel unsuitable to his case. I may pretend love and respect, but it is real hatred to flatter him who is hastening to the unquenchable fire. How dreadful will his fall be, from the high turret of presumption into the infernal pit of perdition! and how little thanks will he give me in the other world for cozening his soul, by telling him all was well, till he came to see his own and my mistake in hell! Again, the guilt of such a crime would make a deep gash in my own conscience. It is ill slighting or tampering with inestimable souls. His blood will be required at my hands; and if the blood of a slain body cry so loud for vengeance, what will the blood of a murdered soul do? Why should I, to humour any man's lust, injure his soul, hinder my own peace, and incur the anger of the Lord? Oh that no foolish pretences whatsoever may keep me off from acquainting sinners with the evil and end, the nature and danger of their sins. It is God's order, first to cast the soul down, and then to lift it up. The ground must feel the plough before it receive the seed. Sorrow must precede comfort; and they must sow in tears who would reap in joy. God must shake all nations before the desired of all nations will come to him. We come to Sinai, the mount

that burneth with fire, and to blackness and darkness, and a tempest which makes even a Moses to fear and quake exceedingly, before we come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. The law is a schoolmaster to drive us to Christ. Austere John, with his axe laid to the root of the tree, threatening the fire to those that bring not forth fruit, prepareth the way for the sweet alluring Jesus. Mourning and grief is the midwife of true mirth; penitential tears are the streams that lead to the rivers of pleasures. Even the doleful sound of the trumpet attendeth the judge when he is going to acquit a prisoner by public proclamation. Violence must be offered to corruption, or there will be no acceptance of the Lord Christ. The building of holiness is the more strong for having its foundation of humiliation laid deep. The safety of the soul doth depend, like Jonah's, upon his being cast overboard, and utterly lost in his own apprehension.

The blessed Jesus himself is brought into a desolate wilderness, before angels are sent from heaven to comfort him. Oh that I might follow my God in his usual way, and never prophesy smooth things to rugged and wicked men, but endeavour to break their hearts on earth, who have persisted in the breach of his holy laws, that their backs may not be broken in hell. Yet I would not, instead of beating down the rotten paper walls of presumption, drive any into the dungeon of desperation; but, as the good nurse, have the breast of consolation, as well as the rod of correction, in readiness for such children. Moses and Christ met together upon Mount Tabor. The gospel must be preached to heal those wounds which are opened and discovered by the law. The Lord sendeth me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Lord, thou killest and makest alive, bringest down to the grave, and

bringest up. It is easy and ordinary with thee to break those bones which thou intendest to rejoice, and to perplex those rams in briers and thorns which thou intendest to accept of as a sacrifice. Teach thy servant to know how to speak a word in season, both to the wicked and to the godly; how to divide thy word aright, both in its minatory and consolatory parts, that, as occasion shall be, I may awaken the wicked out of their deadly slumbers, and quicken the godly to their spiritual watchfulness, and help to sweeten that bitter cup which thou hast put into their hands. Oh that thy blessing might water my labours for both their welfares! Alas! poor sick unregenerate ones are dropping into boundless and endless sorrows, and yet are without sense. Though they are dying, they know not what they are doing, nor whither they are going. Their eyes are shut by the god of this world, that they see not that unspeakable misery to which they are liable every moment; their hearts are hardened through custom in sin, that neither threatenings nor promises prevail with them to feel their wounds and sores. O thou great physician, thou Lord of life, thou God of health, open their eyes; send some Ananias to them, that they might receive their sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost; enable them so to mourn now, that they may be comforted when the time of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and help thy servant to deal so faithfully with those whom thou callest me to visit, that I may never give thy Majesty cause to say of me, as once of the prophets of Israel, 'They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace.'

I wish that I may be close and home in my applications to sick persons, and speak what is proper to their estates, with ardency and affection, to their very hearts. It is ill dallying with edged tools. Oh, how sad is it to toy and trifle, to be formal or customary, in counsel, or reproof, or comfort to immortal souls that are launching into the ocean of eternity! Death is a serious thing, and that which they never

did before, nor shall ever do again. Sin is a serious thing, as the damned find in hell by woeful experience. Though there they are in blackness of darkness, yet they have light enough to see sin to be the evil of evils, and altogether sinful. Christ was serious when he took upon him my nature, and therein did offer up himself a sacrifice for sin. God is serious in commanding faith and repentance, and in promising heaven to the faithful and holy, and hell to unbelievers and atheists; and shall not I be serious and in earnest when I am dealing about matters of eternal life and death, and about the concernments of God and Christ, and souls and eternity? Oh, with what earnestness should I persuade the wicked to turn from their wickedness and live! If ever their souls would draw near to the Lord of life, it concerns them to do it when their bodies are drawing nigh to the chambers of death. It is but a very few hours, and their condition will be past all amendment, all alteration. In this poor pittance of time, all must be done upon which the scales must turn for their salvation or damnation. They are going to make that change which will admit them into endless joy or torment, and render their estates unchangeable. Their time is hastening that they must struggle with dreadful pains, and strong distempers, and death, the king of terrors, and must review that life which is ending, and look back upon all that they have done, and judge their persons and actions impartially, whether they will or no; that they must take their leave of all their friends, and food, and sleep, and lands, and houses, and honours, and pleasures, and riches, and step into eternity, and appear before God, without their relations, or possessions, or any worldly comforts to help or encourage them; that they must be tried by a holy law, and a holy judge, for their everlasting lives or deaths; and can my expressions be too full of weight and reason, or my affections too full of bowels and pity, in my dealing and discourse with such men? Lord, thou knowest the poor silly children of men are unable to judge of eternal affairs according to their weight; they

are quickly lost, when in their thoughts they begin to launch into that boundless sea. The ponderousness of the subject is ready to affright and press them down, being so much beyond and above their shallow understandings. But wouldst thou please to enable them, though it were but to peep into the other world, and to behold, through some crevice, what is doing and enjoyed there, both by thy friends and thine enemies, they would soon have other thoughts of thee and thy service, and other carriages when they are about thy work. The greatest seriousness would then be too little, the greatest ardour would not be thought enough for thy worship. They would then, indeed, be fervent in spirit when they are serving the Lord. Oh teach thy servant, though he cannot see into the other world with the eye of sense, yet so to look into it with an eye of faith, that he may transact the concerns thereof with that diligence, faithfulness, and fervency which thou acceptest, and whilst he liveth be zealous of good works!

I wish that my heart may be so affected with pity towards sick and afflicted persons, that I may often and earnestly remember them in my prayers. A little captive, considering the leprosy of her master, was instrumental for his cure, by crying out, 'Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.' I have more reason, when I behold a leprous soul, near its last gasp, to look up to heaven with, Would to God that poor creature were with Jesus Christ, that great prophet of his church, who is able and willing to enliven, and pardon, and sanctify, and save! would to God he would be persuaded to come to Christ, to cling to Christ, to close with Christ! for he would recover him. And what do I know but my prayers may be prevalent on his behalf? Christ; when dying, prayed for his enemies, for them that imbrued their hands in his blood; and shall not I pray for my friends when they are dying, and possibly ignorant whither they are going? My prayers are a cheap courtesy, and diminish nothing of my estate, either spiritual

or temporal. Their misery is an awakening motive to the duty. Never did they stand in such need of help from others, and wrestling with God on their behalves, as now that they are taking their journey into a far country, and entering upon an unchangeable condition. They may say to me, as Nehemiah to Geshem, I am doing a great work, &c. I am going to die, to bid adieu to all the folly, and vanity, and comforts of this world, to take possession of my long home, of the place wherein I must abide for ever. Oh pray for us, that we may be pardoned and saved, that we may repent and believe, that we may die in the faith, and obtain the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto life eternal. They have many distractions upon their own spirits, by reason of pains and bodily distempers, and the loss and lamentation of their kindred and relations, that they cannot pour out their hearts to God with that freeness, and seriousness, and earnestness which probably they desire. Their enemies, and assaults, and temptations at such a time are more quick, and strong, and violent, and full of rage, having but a short time. I must now pray for them, or never pray for them; now beg mercy for them, or never beg mercy for them. When their life is gone, all tears, and cries, and groans for them are in vain. David's greatest passions for dead Absalom were to no purpose. They are then gone the way they shall not return, and fixed in that place whence they shall never remove. Lord, I confess that my narrow heart hath not pity enough for afflicted, and sick, and dying souls, and my weak hands have not power enough to supply or support them in their sad estates; but thou hast both. Oh be pleased to look down from heaven, the habitation where thine holiness dwelleth; behold their miseries, hide thy face from all their iniquities, out of thine infinite fulness relieve their necessities! Let the eyes of their souls be opened to see their sins and their Saviour, before the eyes of their bodies be closed. Give them patience and strength answerable to the burden thou layest on their backs; enable them to do their last works well, and let them be better than their first. Open



thou their lips, and let their mouths shew forth thy praise, before they go to the place of silence. Stand by them in their last conflict with their enemies, death and devils, that they may overcome both—be more than conquerors through him that loves them, and pass through the jaws of death to the joys of a blessed eternal life!

I wish that my soul may be the more sound for every visit I bestow on sick bodies. There is not so much danger of catching their outward diseases, as there is hope of increasing my spiritual health, if I am not wanting to myself. The sick and dying bed is a pulpit, out of which I may be instructed more fully in many serious truths, though the sick or dying man be speechless. King Joash obtained three famous victories over the Syrians, by visiting sick Elisha, and might have gotten a complete conquest over them, if it had not been his own fault, 2 Kings 13:14–20. The fight of sick and dying men may assist me in my conflicts with the three great enemies of my present purity, and future comfort and bliss. It teacheth me how vain it is to make provision for that flesh which will itself ere long be provision for worms. Ah, how foolish am I to pamper and please that which, instead of relieving or refreshing, will in my extremity pierce and pain me! It teacheth me that the world itself is the greatest cheat and impostor in the world. That though it laughs and smiles on men, dandling them on her knees, and hugging them in her arms, whilst they are in health, and promising all sorts of comforts and pleasures; yet in their sickness and misery she turns them off and leaves them, as Absalom's mule did him, to be shot through with the heart-cutting arrows of eternal death. By discovering the emptiness and falseness of these two seeming ends, the flesh and the world, it helpeth me to overcome my third enemy, and to repel the fiery darts of the devil. The cup of temptation, which hath so often bewitched me to drink down his deadly poison, had its prevalency from the worldly profit with which the outside was gilded, or the fleshly pleasure with which

the inside was sweetened. Ah, could I but bid a hearty defiance to the world and the flesh, and conquer them, I need not fear the wicked one. They are the powerful advocates by which Satan pleads, and too often prevails with the soul; by these handmaids he wooeth the mistress. But the sick-bed is a book in which I may read their deceitfulness and treachery, their perfidiousness and fallacies, and thereby learn to avoid them.

Further, I may read the sinfulness of sin in others' sickness. That parent must needs be a deformed monster, that begets such uncomely and ill-favoured children. In the dreadful effects I may behold the poisonous cause. Man had never known sickness in his body, if he had not known sin experimentally in his soul. It is the plague and stone of the heart that causeth those in the flesh. When I behold the sick man labouring under his distemper, how he is chastened with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain, so that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat; how his flesh is consumed away that it cannot be seen, and his bones stick out; he is filled with tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day; when I behold his eyes sinking, his heart panting, his wife and children wailing and wringing their hands, his friends weeping, his tongue faltering, his throat rattling, his breath failing, his strength languishing, his whole body in a cold clammy sweat, wrestling with his pain and disease, may I not well cry out, Oh what an evil is sin, which bringeth all this upon the poor children of men! My Redeemer is therefore said to bear our sicknesses, because he bare our sins in his body on the tree, 1 Peter 2:24; Mat. 8:17; and in all his applications for the cure of the diseased, he had an eye to the root of the malady. To one that was diseased he said, 'Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee;' to another, 'Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.' When the angel was smiting Israel with a pestilence, holy David's thoughts ran upon the procuring cause, 'I

have sinned, I have done very wickedly.' My God teacheth Israel the grievous nature of their defilement in the greatness of those judgments which they brought upon them. Speaking of his severity towards them, he tells them, 'Thy way and thy doings have procured those things unto thee; this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart,' Jer. 4:18. Our bodies are full of natural corruption, because our souls are full of moral corruption. Oh how fitly may I therefore, when I behold the evil of affliction on others, abhor and bewail the evil of sin in myself!

Once more, I may be instructed in the necessity of a timely preparation for such an hour of affliction. Can I think a sick-bed a fit place, an hour of pain and grief a meet season, to begin that great business of turning from sin, of loathing myself for all my abominations, and working out my own salvation? Is it rationally to be imagined that trembling joints, dazzled eyes, a fainting heart, failing limbs, a body full of aches and diseases, a soul sympathising with it, and full of vexation and grief, should be fit instruments about such a work, which an angelical strength, and agility, and freedom, is little enough for? Ah, what wise man would build his eternal making and welfare upon such a tottering and sandy foundation! The greatest strength, and longest time, and most vigorous health, is not in the least degree too much for this needful and weighty business; and shall I put it off till my strength fails, my health is gone, and my time near its last sand? Lord, beside all these, I may learn the excellency of thine image and thy favour. Sickness cannot waste them, nor death itself destroy them. Where the curtains are drawn, and the windows close, in the darkest chamber of the dying man, the comeliness of thy likeness, and the sweetness of thy love, are most sparkling and glorious. The want of outward comforts doth convince the unbelieving world of the worth of eternal blessings. When the flesh and world, that made show of such love to their deluded

favourites, turn them off in their extremity, as the Jews did Judas, complaining to them of his folly and wickedness, 'What is that to us? see thou to that.' Thou standest by and ownest thy servants, thou knowest their souls in their days of adversity; and, however thou dealest with them in their health, wilt be sure to tend and look to, to be both nurse and physician to thy sick children. Thy grace is a reviving cordial, and thy love will make even death itself a sweet and desirable dish. Oh help thy poor servant to gain much spiritual good by those natural evils which others suffer! As others' sickness speaketh these things to mine ears, and their conditions make them visible to mine eyes, do thou write them in my heart, that all such providences of thine towards others may make sin more ugly, the world more empty, thy graces and favour more comely and desirable, and that, furthering my purity at present, they may further my eternal peace hereafter.

Finally, I wish that the sickness of others may cause me to be the more industrious in a faithful improvement of my health, and take me wholly off from priding, and pampering, and making provision for that flesh, which is so apt to breed diseases, and in its greatest beauty and strength is so near to death. The goodliest structure of body is but earth a little better wrought, or more curiously than usually moulded up, and with an ordinary disease is marred and defaced, and so calleth on me to be humble rather than lifted up. The flesh that I provide for my flesh, is not more subject to corruption, or more perishing, than the flesh for which it is provided. Within a few days I shall have an end both of food and feeding. Oh that I might waste that body in God's service, which will ere long waste with sickness! spend and be spent in his work, who gives me my health, and strength, and hath promised a bountiful reward! Sure I am, I can never bring them to a better market, nor put them off at a higher price. Is it not better to consume my flesh in doing good, in glorifying

my God, than with idleness and ease, or with distempers and diseases? Satan's servants do not grudge to give their prime and chief, their health and strength, to their lusts; and shall not I give mine to my Lord? Ah, Lord, an unthankful, selfish, unbelieving heart, hath too much hindered me from, and disturbed me in, those excellent duties which thou callest me to. Oh deliver me from it, for thy mercies' sake! Strengthen me by thy good Spirit, both to do good to, and receive good by, such as thou chastenest with sickness; so to consider the poor and afflicted, and to visit others in my health, that thou mayest visit me with thy saving health. Strengthen me upon my bed of languishing, and make all my bed in my sickness, that my most mortal sickness may not be unto death (eternal), but for thy glory, and my passage into endless bliss; yea, that in the other world, I may stand among thy sheep on thy right hand, and hear that blessed heart-cheering voice, 'Come, thou blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for thee before the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and thou gavest me meat; I was thirsty, and thou gavest me drink; I was a stranger, and thou didst take me in; I was sick, and thou visitedst me;' when my soul shall be above all sin, and my body above all sickness, and both blessed in thy favour and fruition, for ever and ever. Amen.

## **CHAPTER VIII**

### **How a Christian may exercise himself to godliness on a dying bed**

Sixthly, and lastly, Thy duty is to exercise thyself to godliness, if God give thee opportunity, on a dying bed. The work of a saint is to glorify

God, not only in his life, but also in his death. The silk-worm stretcheth out herself before she spin, and ends her life in her long-wrought clew. The Christian must stretch out himself on his dying bed, and end his life in the work of his Lord. Every man by his death payeth his debt to nature. He is earth in regard of his original creation, and must be earth in regard of his ultimate resolution: 'Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return,' Gen. 3:19. The sinner, when he dieth, payeth his debt to sin, Satan, and the law. To sin, as he is the servant of unrighteousness, and so must receive its wages, which is death; to Satan, as he hath sold himself to work wickedness at his will, and so must have his tempter to be his eternal tormentor; to the law, as he hath violated its precepts and commands, and therefore must undergo its punishment and curse. The saint, when he dieth, payeth his debt to God, for he oweth him honour as well by his death as by his life. Hence we read, not only of their living in the Lord, and to the Lord, but also of their dying in the Lord, and to the Lord, Rom. 14:8; Rev. 14:13. Which, though some expound, in that place of the Revelation, to the cause for which they died,—they did not die out of humour, or obstinacy, or any carnal, selfish interest, but purely as martyrs at God's call, and for God's cause; they loved not their lives to the death for the testimony of Jesus;—yet the words may as clearly speak—

1. The state in which they died. They died in the favour of God, reconciled to him through the death of the Mediator. The castle of their souls was not taken by storm, or in a state of enmity and opposition, but by a quiet voluntary surrender, or in a state of peace and amity.
2. The manner of their deaths. They died in the fear of God; they exercised grace as well in sickness as in health, and when dying as

when living; their spiritual motions were quick, when their natural motions were slow.

Plutarch reports of Lucius Metellus, high priest of Rome, that though he lived to a great old age, his voice did not fail him, nor his hand shake in his sacrificing to the gods. It is said of Moses, when he was a hundred and twenty years old and died, that his natural sight did not fail him, neither was his heat abated. So it may be said of the Christian, that though he die old, his spiritual sight doth not fail him, nor his divine heat abate. As Caleb, he is as strong in regard of grace, his inward strength, when he is entering into the promised Canaan, as he was when he first went forth as a spy by faith, to search the land flowing with milk and honey. The heathen counted him happy that died either in the midst of the goods of fortune—hence they say, if Priamus had died a little before the loss of his town, he had died the greatest prince in all Asia—or in the exercise of their moral virtues. Hence they so highly extol Seneca and Socrates, who seemed to dare even death itself, out of resolution and fortitude. Though those seeming virtues were but, as Augustine terms them, *splendida flagitia*, famous vices, and their confidence arose not from any grounded knowledge of their good estates, but from their blindness and ignorance of their depraved, wicked, and woeful estates. He is the happy man indeed that dieth in the faith, that sleepeth in Jesus, that goeth to his grave in the exercise of grace. The master of moral philosophy commendeth that pilot whom a shipwreck swalloweth up at the stern, with the rudder in his hand. The most high God commendeth that person whom death seizeth, doing the work for which he was sent into the world. Even the blind mole, if naturalists may be credited, opens his eyes when he comes to die; and the crooked serpent stretcheth out herself straight, when she is going to fetch her last breath: and shall not the saint be best at last?

Reader, observe how careful the saints have been to do their last work well, and to go out of the world like some sweet spices, perfuming the room in which they fetch their last breath with holiness, and leaving a sweet savour behind them. Jacob, when dying, worshipped, leaning on his staff, Heb. 11:21. What a character doth he give of the angel of the covenant! and what blessings doth he pray for, and prophesy to come on his children, when he was going from them! How was his heart enlarged in pantings after the Lord Christ! Gen. 48:16, and 49 per tot. The living waters of his graces ran with the greater strength, when they were emptying themselves into the ocean of glory. Moses, like the dying swan, sings most sweetly, being to go up to Mount Nebo to die there. What excellent doctrines, reproofs, instructions, doth he deliver to the Israelites! How pathetically, rhetorically, divinely, doth he dictate his last legacies to his political children! Who can read, and not be ravished with wonder and delight, Deut. 32 and 33. Joshua, like the morning star, shines brightest at last; he gives his people so strict a charge to serve the Lord, such gracious counsel, when he was going the way of all the earth, that it could not but be remembered many days after. Dying Joseph will lay his bones at stake for God's faithfulness, and that he will visit Israel and deliver them out of Egypt. Samson did the church of God more service, in slaying more of her enemies at his death, than in his life. Julius Cæsar among the Romans, and Olympias, the mother of Alexander, among the Grecians, were famous for their care to die handsomely, and not to commit at last any ill-beseeming action, whereby their memories should have been rendered inglorious; but the Christians' care hath always been, to die holily, and to do their God most service when they are going to that place, where they shall do him no more in a proper sense. Philosophers tell us that the soul, upon death's approach, is more divine and supernaturally inclined; certain it is, the soul of a saint only doth then more aspire heavenward, when it is returning πρὸς τὸ πρόγονον



θεῖον, to its original divinity, according to Plotinus's phrase of death. As his Saviour, he brings out his best wine at last, and his last works are more than his first, Rev. 2:19.

The blessed Prince, and Lord of life, should be our pattern at death. He got his Father most glory, he did his church most good, by his death, though he was eminently serviceable to both all his lifetime. It is said of him, he was obedient, Phil. 2:7, to the death; which may import,

1. His continuance in well-doing. His obedience lasted to the last moment of his life; so should ours. Elisha would not leave his master, till taken from him into heaven; and we should not leave our Lord, till taken to him into heaven. Polycarp, in his old age being urged by the proconsul to deny Christ, answered, I have served him eighty-six years, and he never once hurt me, and shall I now deny him?

2. His obedience in his death. His death was a free-will offering, in obedience to his Father's command. Not only his birth and life was an answer to his Father's call, 'A body hast thou prepared,' &c. 'Then said I, Lo, I come (to put on that body, to take upon me that nature, and thereby and therein) to do thy will, O God;' but also his death was in pursuance of his duty: 'This commandment received I of my Father.' Thus the Christian's death must be offered up as a sacrifice to God, in obedience to his command. The sinner's soul is pressed to this war, in which there is no discharge: 'This night thy soul shall be required of thee.' The saint, understanding the orders from the Lord of hosts, is a volunteer; he gives up the ghost: 'Into thy hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.'

3. The gracious manner of his dying. The Sun of righteousness, when setting, did shine most gloriously. Though at his death he had such infinite disadvantage, being to wrestle with the frowns of an incensed

God, the fury of earth and hell, and met with clouds, black and thick enough to have obscured the graces, and hindered the holiness of any but himself from shining at all, yet how brightly did they break forth in the midst of all those fogs, and mists, and darkness! What holy counsel and comfort did he give his disciples to prepare them for his departure, in his last (and one of his longest) sermon! John 14, 15, 16. What a heavenly prayer doth he put up to his Father for them, and all his elect! to give them both a taste and a pledge of that intercession which he was going to heaven to make for them. When he was hanging on the cross, under such a heavy weight as the sins of the whole world, grace was not depressed. His love to his mother is observable: 'Woman, behold thy son! And from that hour that disciple took her to his own house,' John 19:26. But his love to his members, though enemies, was wonderful: 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.' His faith in his Father: 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' His pity to one of the thieves. His patience in bearing the scoffing words and taunts, more bitter than wormwood, of them that passed by, reviling him, as well as in suffering the racking of his bones, and whole body, and the anger of an infinite God in his soul, without any murmuring, may well call for our admiration. Reader, he hath set thee a pattern, that thou shouldst follow his steps. Some tell us the phoenix of Saba, in Arabia Fælix, (so called from Phœnicea, or the purple colour of her wings,) liveth six hundred and sixty years, at the end of which time she buildeth her a nest of cassia, calamus, cinnamon, and other precious spices and gums, which the sun, by the extremity of his heat, and the wavering of her wings, fires, and she, taking delight in the sweetness of the savour, hovers so long over it, that she burns herself in her own nest. Thus did the blessed Jesus, and thus ought his followers, to expire in a nest of sweet spices, the exercise of the graces of the Holy Spirit. It was a poor farewell to the world, which even Octavius Augustus gave when at the point of death he called for his looking-

glass, commanded to have his head and beard combed, and his shrivelled cheeks smoothed up; then asking his friends if he had acted his part well; Cum ita responderint, Vos omnes igitur, inquit, plaudite. It is a dreadful conclusion which Pliny relates the Hyperboreans to make, who, when they have lived to one hundred years or more, make a great feast, to which they invite all their friends, and after their jollity and mirth, throw themselves down a steep rock, and so perish.

Ungodly men are always worst at last; when they come to the bottom, they are flat and dead, and nothing but grounds and dregs. How often, in the eyes of the world, do wicked persons go out like a lamp, leaving a stench behind them! The scandalous sinner usually, like the goat's beard, or star of Jerusalem, closeth up the flower of his presumptuous hope at high noon; he is cast in his own conscience long before his death. The hypocrite ordinarily, as the daisy and dandelion, declares the approach of the evening by shutting up before its approach. If he be gold in the morning, and silver at noon, yet (as we say of butter) he is lead at night. What is the hope of the hypocrite, when God shall take away his soul! As it is storied of the Pandora, a people in India, that in their youth they have silver hairs, but in their age their hairs are quite black; or as the she-wolf hath a yearly defect in generation—the first time she hath five, the second time four, then three, then two, then one, then barren ever after; so the hypocrite declines and decreaseth in goodness, faster than the moon in its last quarter, and is commonly worst at last. But the sincere Christian hath his best at the bottom, and hath his daintiest dish reserved to be served in at the last course. Naturalists tell us of honey, that that is the thickest and best honey which is squeezed last out of the comb. Oh, what excellent periods and endings, both in regard of the exercise of grace and comfort, have many of the children of God made! The death-bed to some saints hath been like

Tharah to the Israelites in the wilderness, where, after many journeys, growing near to the land of Canaan, they rested themselves, and it was called Tharah, from Roah and Tarah, which signifieth a breathing time. The sun, when it declines into the west, hath even then much more light than any of the stars. The meanest upright Christian, when he is near setting, hath more joy and comfort than a specious hypocrite any day of his life. When some asked Æcolampadius, lying on his death-bed, whether the light did not offend him, he answered, pointing to his breast, *Hic sat lucis*, Here is abundance of light, of joy. He asked one of his friends, What news? His friend told him, None. Then, saith he, I will tell you some news—I shall presently be with my Lord Christ!

I shall give thee two or three quickening motives, and then direct thee about the work of exercising thyself to godliness on a dying bed; and because it is the last time of a Christian's working for his God, I shall in the third place annex some brief helps to this duty.

In reference to the motives, consider—

First, What a serious thing death will be to every man and woman in the world. It is ill and dangerous for any to cozen themselves, and undertake to mock God in their health and life; but it is worst of all and desperate for any to do this on a sick and dying bed. The heathen, hardened in sin, and wholly under the power of Satan, ignorant of the evil of their hearts and lives, and of the sad consequence of a wicked end, made light of death. Flavius Vespasian, none of the worst of the Roman emperors, died, as Sir Thomas Moore, with a jest in his mouth: *Ut puto, Deus fio*; Methinks I am going and growing to be a god. Augustus Cæsar, esteemed the best of them, whose death the people so much lamented, that they said, *Utinam aut non nasceretur, aut non moreretur*, Would he had never

been born, or never died, went off the stage of the world with a compliment, *Livia, nostri conjugii memor vive, et vale*, Farewell, and live, wife, mindful of our marriage. Galba died desperately, crying out, *Feri, si ex re sit populi Romani*, Strike, if it be for the common good. Tiberius died dissemblingly, of whose death Tacitus wittily, *Jam Tiberium vires et corpus, non dissimulatio, deserebant*, Now strength and life hath left Tiberius, but not dissimulation. But Christians, who understand the holiness and justice of God, the infinite demerit of sin, the certainty of an unchangeable condition in the other world, either in joy or torment, know that death is no jesting matter; that to die is one of the most serious, searching things that they can possibly do.

Two or three particulars will shew what a serious thing death is.

1. Death will try men. When the bridegroom comes, it will appear who have oil in their vessels, and who have none. As soon as ever thou takest thy leave of temporal good things, thy spiritual riches will be known. A scorching summer discovers what streams are fed with ponds, and what with springs. The wind sheweth which clouds have rain in them, and which have none. Death will anatomise every soul, and reveal all that is in it. Conscience will then bring in a true verdict, in despite of all those bribes and frights which formerly kept the bill in suspense, or caused it to write on it an *ignoramus*. There are marks by which saints and sinners may be distinguished whilst they live, as great men's servants are by the liveries that they wear; but these characters, being most inward, and known to none but themselves, and the Lord they serve, it is their dying only that will reveal infallibly what they are, and to whom they belong. This world is as a common inn, wherein all are lodged, and no difference is made between the good and bad, only that the worst men have the best usage; but the very moment of men's dissolution makes a plain

and vast distinction. Death is the way of all the earth, according to Joshua's periphrasis of it; but this way hath two turnings, one on the right hand, to joy and bliss, another on the left hand, to misery and horror. Now, as when the attendants of two lords travel together on the road, their servants cannot easily be distinguished, especially if the servants of the one counterfeit the livery of the other; but when they come to the bivium, the parting way, then it is clearly known who belong to the one, and who to the other, for each then followeth his own master, waits on him to his house, stayeth and abideth there with him. So, though whilst men live, all professing themselves Christians, and most, for a show at least, putting on the livery of Christ, it is not known who belong to the Prince of life, and who to the prince of the powers of the air; but death will discover it to themselves and the elect angels.

2. It will appear that death is a serious thing, in that it stateth the creature for eternity. When thou diest, thy condition will be like the law of the Medes and Persians, such as cannot be altered. At death thou goest the way that thou shalt never return. David, speaking of his dead child, saith, 'I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me;' and Job, by asking the question, denieth it: 'If a man die, shall he live again?' God will never trust thee with a second life, or give thee leave for second thoughts, or better purposes, or more serious and sober actions, when thou art once landed in the other world. He will not offer thee a Christ, and grace, and heaven, when thou art gone from this earth. Think of it seriously, is not that work to be done well, which can be done but once? Shouldst thou not use thine utmost care, and strength, and diligence to die well, when thy everlasting making or marring dependeth on it? Ah, friend, if thou failest now, thou failest for ever; if thou dalliest now, thou art undone eternally: 'There is no wisdom nor knowledge in the grave, whither thou art going,' Eccles. 9:10.

3. Death will appear to be a serious thing, in that all the powers of hell will then assault thee. Thou mayest say of it, in some respects, as Christ did to wicked men, and the wicked one, 'This is your hour, and the power of darkness.' The devil, it is observable, is most busy at the conclusion of a duty, as of prayer, that the Christian might be hindered and distracted, when he closeth up all in the name of Christ, and so all his desires be frustrated; so he is most busy in the conclusion of our days, adding fearful dreams to our slumbers, strong distractions to our fancies, increasing our pains with terrors, driving the good, if possible, to despair, and intoxicating the bad with presumptuous conceits, and all because his time is little: 'The devil is come down, having great rage, knowing that his time is short,' Rev. 12:12. At the approach of death, through pain of body, and perplexity of mind, men are least able to resist, and therefore this cowardly enemy will then be most ready and fierce to assault. When the Christian is down, then, if possible, he will trample upon him. The last persecutions of the church, under Dioclesian and Maximinian, were the sorest. The last messenger the devil sent to Job, concerning the sudden violent death of all his children, pierced his heart deepest. The subtle serpent reserved that great ordnance for the last, hoping the former small guns, of the loss of his cattle, and estate, and servants, would have done some execution, in making some breach upon his faith and patience; and this great gun playing, when he was before tired in defending, must needs shatter him in pieces. He may fitly be called the wolf of the evening, Jer. 5:6, that devoureth. This roaring lion walketh in the night to seek his prey. There have been few eminent saints but have found their death-bed a bed of thorns, in regard of temptations. Mr Knox said, when he came to die, In my lifetime the devil tempted me to despair, casting my sins in my teeth; but now, in my sickness, he tells me, I have been faithful in the ministry, and so have merited heaven; but blessed be God, who brought those texts into my mind, 'Not I, but the grace of God in me:'

'What hast thou that thou hast not received?' The Israelites never met with so much opposition as when they were to take possession of the land of Canaan; then all the kings of Canaan combined together, and came out and fought them. When Satan was to be cast out of the possessed person, and never to enter into him more, he rent him and tore him, that the people thought he was dead.

Now, reader, what need hast thou to be serious and holy on a dying bed, to the utmost of thine ability, and to fetch in all the strength thou canst from heaven, when thou hast such cruel powerful enemies to encounter with! It was one of the most quickening, prevalent arguments, that Alexander used to the Macedonians, before their third and last fatal battle with Darius, that they were to fight with all the strength of Persia at once. What an awakening argument should it be to thee, that thou art to fight with all the powers of hell at once!

Secondly, Consider, it is a special season wherein thou mayest glorify God. A saint by his death may bring God more honour than by all his life. The actions and speeches of dying men make a deep impression on the hearts of those that are about them. The wicked themselves, who have mocked at the purity and strictness of the saints' lives, have admired their patience and cheerfulness in their deaths. Though they look on the believer's words in health as savouring of self and sinister ends and humour, and so neglect them; yet when they hear a dying saint commend the love and faithfulness of God, the pleasantness and excellency of his ways and worship, and to bless the time, and pains, and strength, that ever they spent in his service, they esteem his language, and begin to have other thoughts of holiness and heaven; for they consider, that surely now the man is entering upon the borders of eternity, he is serious and in earnest. Hence the patriarchs, knowing the prevalency of such words, urge Joseph with Jacob's dying charge: 'Thy father, when dying, said, Forgive, I pray



thee, the iniquity of thy servants,' Gen. 1:16. That Russian that would live with his fellow-rioters, beholding the holy behaviour of Ambrose on his death-bed, would choose to die with Ambrose. The enemies of Christ, beholding at the death of Christ how the rocks were rent, darkness covered the face of the earth; how the veil of the temple was torn in sunder, the graves were opened, the dead raised, were forced to cry out, Doubtless this man was the Son of God. So when the adversaries of God's people see them on their death-beds, and behold their patience in bearing their sickness, their faith in relying on their Saviour, their charity in forgiving their enemies, their zeal for the honour and interest of their Master, their constancy in defending the gospel they did before profess, they are compelled in their consciences to acknowledge, Doubtless these are the servants, the sons and daughters of God. Much more will a holy behaviour on a dying bed benefit such as fear God. It convinceth sinners, that they, whether they will or no, must have other thoughts of holiness and holy men than formerly, and it confirmeth saints in their gracious practices, and makes them more diligent in their preparation.

Mr Bilney, the day before he suffered death, being told that, though the fire was hot, God's Spirit would cool it, to his everlasting refreshing, answered, putting his hand in the flame of the candle, I feel by experience, and have known by philosophy, that fire by God's ordinance is very hot; but yet I am persuaded, by God's holy word, and by the experience of some spoken of therein, that in the flame they felt no heat, and in the fire no consumption; and I constantly believe, howsoever the stubble of this my body shall be wasted by it, yet my soul and spirit shall be purged thereby; a pain for the time, whereon followeth joy unspeakable. And then he most comfortably treated on Isa. 43:1, 2, 'But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with

thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.' Which words he applied both to himself and his friends then present; of which some reaped such fruit that they caused the words to be fair written on tables. The comfort whereof, in several that were with him, was never taken from them to their dying day. Oh, it is very profitable to others, when a saint so behaveth himself on his death-bed, that he may say to his friends and relations, as Sir Robert Harleigh did to his children, I have formerly taught you how to live, and now I teach you how to die.

Thirdly, Consider, it is the last opportunity that thou shalt ever have to do any work for thy God and Saviour, and thy own soul. When thou diest, thou goest to the place where thou shalt receive thy reward, and shalt never, never more have any season to sow to the Spirit in, to serve thy Redeemer in, and to manifest thy thankfulness to him for his love to thee: 'I must work the work of him that sent me, whilst it is day,' saith Christ, 'for the night cometh, wherein no man can work,' John 9:4. Thou mayest, when dying, say to thy friends, as the crier of the Ludi seculares, which happened but once in a hundred years, did at Rome, Come see that which ye never saw before, nor shall ever see again. He that hath but one arrow to shoot, but one throw to cast, but one opportunity left him to work out his salvation in, may well improve it to the utmost. A certain martyr going to suffer, expressed his sorrow that he was going thither, where he should do his God no more service. Our God is so good, that his work is desirable; and were it possible for any grief in heaven, saith Dr Sibbes, it would arise from a Christian's consideration, that he did no more for his God, and that it cost him so little pains and labour to be saved. When Samson was nigh his death, and should have no more opportunities to exalt his God, and advantage his church, he lifted up his heart to heaven, 'Assist me this once, that I may be

avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes.' So, reader, when thou enterest thy chamber, and art betaking thyself to thy dying bed, what weighty reasons hast thou to pour out thy soul, and wrestle with God for divine strength! Lord, I am now come, in my own apprehension, to the close of my days, after which, I shall never more enjoy a season to glorify thy Majesty, or further my own account. I am going to do a great work, which I never did before, nor shall ever do again. I acknowledge that I have been guilty of too much slothfulness, and unfaithfulness, in my life, and have given these Philistines, that are enemies to my soul, too much advantage against me, and occasion to mock and deride me. Oh assist me now this once, that I may do thee and thy church some eminent service, that I may be strong in faith, an example of patience, humility, heavenly-mindedness, and charity, and be the death of those uncircumcised ones, my cursed corruptions, and be avenged on them, for all the dishonour they have done to thee, though I die with them.

I come now to shew wherein thou oughtest to exercise thyself to godliness, on a dying bed.

First, In commending God and his ways to others. The words of dying men are living oracles, and do not die with them. It is the unhappiness of worldlings and wicked men, that when they come to die, they cannot commend the work that they have followed, the wages which they have merited, or the master whom they have served; but it is the privilege of Christians, that they have cause to praise the sweetness of that love which they have tasted, the equity of those laws which they have obeyed, the grace, and mercy, and bounty, and faithfulness of that Lord whom they have prayed to, and delighted in, and worshipped, and the vastness, and richness, and certainty, and eternity of that reward which they are going to possess. The men of this earth, when they are dying, do often cry out

and complain of the falseness and unfaithfulness of the world, and the flesh, how they have cozened, and cheated, and deceived them; and of their own folly and madness, in toiling and moiling, and drudging night and day, to please and gratify that which now in their extremity turns them off. Oh how should the children of God extol their Father, and his care of them, and kindness to them, magnify their Redeemer, and his passion for them, and affection to them, exalt the word and ways of the Lord, as those which they have found by experience to be the most comfortable and gainful ways. The last breath of a saint should be spent in his God's service. *Oportet imperatorem stantem mori*, was Vespasian's motto. *Oportet episcopum, concionantem mori*, was holy Jewel's motto. *Oportet Christianum glorificantem Deum mori*, should be every saint's motto.

Dying Jacob will speak highly of God's providence, though he bring it in, as it were, in a parenthesis: 'The God which fed me all my life long to this day,' Gen. 48:15. Dying Joseph will praise the Lord's faithfulness to his promise, and pawn his body for its performance: 'I die; and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence,' Gen. 1:24, 25. Dying Moses ascribes greatness to his God, tells the Israelites, 'He is the Rock, his work is perfect; all his ways are judgments; a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he,' Deut. 32:3, 4. Dying Joshua will appeal to the consciences of his hearers, whether God had not kept touch with them to the least tittle: 'I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord our God hath spoken,' Joshua 23:14. As Moses and Joshua did sound forth the praises of their God, so also, when dying, they did persuade and exhort the Jews to godliness, Deut. 32:23; Joshua 23 per tot. So Paul,

meeting with those Ephesian elders, that should see his face no more, doth solemnly charge them to take heed to the flocks, over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers.

I remember, saith Senarclæus, concerning Alphonsus Diazus, his friend and bed-fellow, when he and I were at Neuberg, the night before he was murdered, he prayed before he went to bed more ardently, and somewhat longer than ordinary; after which he spent a good part of the night in discourse concerning the works of God, and exhorting me to the practice of true piety; and truly, I found myself so inflamed, when I heard him, that I thought I heard the Spirit of God speaking to me.

Mr Knox gave good advice to all his visitors; among the rest, the Earl of Morton came to see him, to whom he thus spake: My lord, God hath given you many blessings—wisdom, riches, and many great friends, and now is about to prefer you to the government of the realm. (The Earl of Mar, the late regent, being newly dead.) In his name I charge you, use these blessings better than formerly you have done; seeking first the glory of God, the furtherance of the gospel, the good of his church and ministers. Be careful of the king, to procure his good, and the welfare of his realm. If you do thus, God will be with you, and honour you; if otherwise, he will deprive you of all these honours, and your end shall be shame and ignominy. These words the earl called to mind nine years after, at the time of his execution, saying, that he had found John Knox a true prophet.

Mr Ignatius Jordan, of Exeter, one famous in his generation for godliness, was observed, in his sickness, to take all occasions to exhort others to constancy in the truth, zeal for God, and to make sure of heaven; and when the mayor of the city sent to visit him, he said to the messenger, Remember me to Mr Mayor, and tell him

from me, that he make sure of heaven, be careful to do justice, and provide for the poor.

We should, when dying, in a special manner mind this work of commending God and godliness to our relations, 1 Chron. 28:1, 8, 9, vide; they are more affected than others with our sickness, and so also with our sayings. Our counsel may probably do them good, when we are turned into corruption. Jacob calleth his children together to bless them; David layeth a strict command on his son Solomon: 'And thou, Solomon my son, know the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind.' Cyrus, upon his death-bed, conjures his sons to peace, lest they should lose the kingdom he left his heir. The saint must conjure his children to purity in the first place, lest they lose their souls and the kingdom of heaven. Mr Robert Bolton, on his death-bed, called his children together, wished them to remember the counsel he had formerly given them, and he verily believed none of them durst meet him at the great tribunal in an unregenerate estate.

Mr Sanders, a little before his death, in a letter to his wife, writeth thus: Dear wife, riches I have none to leave behind me, wherewith to endow thee, after this world's manner, but the treasure of tasting how sweet Christ is unto hungry consciences (whereof I thank my Christ I feel part, and would feel more) I bequeath to thee, and to the rest of my beloved in Christ, to retain the same in sense of heart always. Oh, how pathetically, how earnestly, should dying. Christians, who know somewhat of the worth of grace and holiness, and of the evil and end of sin and sinners, persuade their children and relations to love, and fear, and serve the Lord, when it is the last time that ever they shall advise or counsel them. How hard should they woo, that the souls of their kindred may be married to Christ.

Secondly, In commending thyself and others to God by prayer. When the body breathes shortest, it breathes quickest. Though the Christian on his death-bed may want strength for long solemn devotion, his short ejaculations should be both fervent and frequent. The first thing a child of God doth, when new born, is to breathe, to pray, Acts 9:11. And it is one of the last things he doth, Acts 7:60. He entereth praying into the place of praise. Paul the hermit was found dead, saith Jerome, with his hands and eyes lifted up to heaven, that the dead corpse seemed to pray. *Demus operam ut moriamur in precatione*; Let us endeavour to die at prayer, saith Augustine.

1. The sick man should pray especially for himself. Lord Jesus receive my spirit, saith Stephen; Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit, saith Christ; Lord, saith dying Beza, perfect that which thou hast begun, that I suffer not shipwreck in the haven. Children desire to die in their father's bosom, or on their mother's lap. Mr Perkins died begging remission of sin, and entreating mercy at God's hands. Bishop Usher was often heard to desire the like end that Mr Perkins had; which he obtained; for the last words which he was heard to utter were, But, Lord, in special forgive my sins of omission; not long after which he expired. Luther's prayer, a little before his death, or rather thanksgiving, was, *Pater mi cœlestis, Deus et Pater Domini nostri Jesu Christi, ago tibi gratias quod filium tuum Jesum Christum mihi revelasti, cui credidi, quem sum professus, quem amavi, &c.*; My heavenly Father, the God and Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, I thank thee for revealing thy Son Jesus Christ to me, whom I have believed, whom I have I professed, whom I have loved.

Others must not be forgotten by us, but our own souls must in a special manner be remembered. Bellarmine tells us of a desperate advocate in the court of Rome, who, being exhorted on his death-bed to pray to God for mercy, made this speech, Lord, I have a word to

say to thee, not for myself—Ego enim propero ad inferos: neque enim est ut aliquid pro me agas—for I am hastening to hell, neither is there anything that I would beg on my own behalf, but for my wife and children. This he spake, saith Bellarmine, who was then present, as boldly as if he had been taking his journey only to some neighbouring village.

2. For his relations. The more hot our affection is to any, the more fervent our petitions should be for them. Praying parents are the most loving parents. When dying, chiefly they should bless their children in the name of the Lord. So Isaac did, Gen. 28:1; thus Jacob, Gen. 48:15, 16. Godly parents may plead the covenant made to them and theirs, unto God, on their dying beds with comfort. They are best acquainted with their children's conditions, conversations, wants, weaknesses, and so fittest to open their cases to God, and to beseech grace on their behalves, that they may be a holy seed, a generation arising to shew forth his praise. Christ, when nigh death, committed his spiritual children to his Father, and earnestly begged his care of them, and favour for them: 'Holy Father, I come to thee; I am no more in the world, but these are in the world; keep them through thy name, keep them from evil, sanctify them through thy truth.' So should a godly father, or mother, when dying: Lord, I am leaving my poor children in the midst of snares, and temptations, and miseries, Ruth 1:8, and 2:19; 2 Tim. 1:18. I am coming out of the world to thy Majesty, where I shall be above all frights and fears, and beyond all malice and mischief; but my children are in the world, and will daily be environed with allurements and affrightments, with assaults and batteries, from their spiritual enemies; thou knowest the power and policy of the world and the wicked one, the treachery and deceitfulness of the flesh within them, and their weakness and inability to wrestle with, and overcome the flatteries of the world, and the suggestions of the devil. Oh, keep them through thy name,



that they may look beyond the world, live above the world, and expect and eye their portion and happiness in a better world. Though they live in the world, let them not live as the world, but walk all their days as heirs of another world. Keep them from the evil of sin, however it please thy Majesty to deal with them about the evil of suffering. Give them the shield of faith, whereby they may quench the fiery darts of the devil. Let thy covenant of grace be their portion, thy love their cordial, and thy mansion-house their eternal possession. Be thou their Father, to direct, protect, govern, and provide for them, and give them a name in thy house, better than of sons and daughters. Oh sanctify them through thy truth, that they may be saved, and may meet me with joy at the great day! Luther, when dying, made this will for his wife, great with child, and his little sons: O Lord God, I thank thee, that thou wouldst have me to be poor in this world; I have no house, land, or money that I should leave them. Thou hast given me wife and children, I restore them to thee. Do thou, O Father of orphans, and judge of widows, nourish, teach, keep them, as thou hast hitherto me.

3. For the whole church of God. It is good to pray by ourselves, but it is ill to pray only for ourselves. When we are dying, and going to the church triumphant, we should be sure to put up some requests for the poor members of Christ, and the church militant. Calvin was heard before his death often to sigh out, How long, Lord, how long will it be ere thou avenge the blood of thy servants? The people of God are the purchase of Christ, and of the same family and body with the dying Christian, and therefore must needs be dear to him.

4. For his benefactors, and those that have done good to him and his, Ruth 1:8, and 2:19. Paul had received some kindness from Onesimus; he refreshed him in his bonds, and in 2 Tim. 1:18, which was the last of his epistles, and thought to be written but a little before his death,

for he tells us in it, 'I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand,' how pathetically doth he pray for him! 'The Lord grant that he may find mercy at that day.'

5. For our enemies. This is to follow God's pattern, who doth good for evil, and to obey his precept, who commandeth us to pray for them that despitefully use us. Stephen, when departing out of the world, entreats mercy for them who were cruel to him: 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,' Acts 7:60. Our blessed Saviour dying, begs hard for their eternal lives who were the instruments and authors of his bloody death: 'Father, forgive them; they know not what they do,' Luke 23:34.

Thirdly, In a holy exercise of faith, courage, repentance, charity, and patience.

1. Faith. It is the character of God's children that they live by faith, and they die in the faith, Hab. 2:6; Heb. 11:31. The water, say some, of the pool of Bethesda (wherein the priest washed the sacrifices before he offered them) was of a reddish colour, to note that men must be washed by faith in the blood of Christ, before they are ready to be offered a peace-offering to God by death. The dying Christian must expect strong assaults against the bulwark of his faith; but whatever he let go, he must keep his hold on Christ. I know no grace that the devil is such a sworn enemy to as faith, and I know no season that he is more diligent in to overthrow their faith, than when they are under some dangerous sickness; therefore it is the observation of a good man, that he seldom seeth a sick saint, followed close with temptations, to recover of that sickness; for Satan, knowing he hath but a little time, useth all his craft and strength to separate the soul from the Rock of his salvation. Upon a dying bed, reflect upon former experiences of God's love to thy soul,

and recollect the former evidences of thy title to Christ, and thereby to heaven. I must tell thee, though the certainty of thy salvation depend upon the truth of thy faith, the comfort of thy dissolution will depend on the strength of thy faith. Faith is the shield of the soul, and therefore, above all, in thy encounter with thy great enemy Satan, and thy last enemy death, take the shield of faith, Eph. 6:14. Epaminondas, after his victory at Leuctrum, wherein he was mortally wounded, understanding that his buckler was safe, bade his chirurgeon boldly to pluck out the dart that stuck in his side, and died cheerfully. The saint, the soldier of Christ, who is wounded even to death, and keepeth his shield of faith safe, may leave the world with courage. The apostle Paul, who knew whom he had believed, 2 Tim. 1:12, rings a challenge in the ears of death: 'O death, where is thy sting?' and sings a triumphant ditty at the approach of death: 'The time of my departure is at hand, I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,' 2 Tim. 4:7, 8. When Jacob had believed the report of Joseph's life, his heart was revived. 'Is Joseph yet alive?' saith he; 'I will go down and see him before I die.' When the true Israelite can firmly credit the testimony which God hath given of Jesus, the son of Joseph, how he, being an enemy, was reconciled to God by the death of his Son, and shall much more, being reconciled, be saved by his life, and by faith can cling on him, his heart, though dying, is then enlivened. Oh with what comfort can he take his journey into the other world! When Philip viewed his young son Alexander, Now, saith he, I am content to die. Old Simeon springs young again at a sight of Christ; and having embraced his Saviour in the arms of faith, as well as in the arms of his body, he begs a dismissal out of this valley of tears, being assured thereby of an admission into fulness of joy: 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace (ἀπολύεις), according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.' Having with an eye of faith beheld Christ, he

counts his life but a bondage, and desires to depart or be loosed from fetters, as the word signifieth, and is taken, Mat. 27:17. We read of the Lord's worthies, that by faith they stopped the mouths of lions. Death is a fierce and cruel lion, but faith will pull out its teeth, that it cannot hurt us; or stop its mouth, that it shall not devour us. This grace, like the angel sent from heaven when Daniel was cast into the lions' den, will save the Christian from being torn in pieces.

O friend, the robes of Christ's righteousness is the only coat of mail which can defend thy soul against the shot of death. If thou canst with Moses go up to Pisgah, and take a view by faith of the land of promise, thou wilt comfortably, with him, lay down thine earthly tabernacle. Job desired death as eagerly as the labourer in a hot summer's day desires the shadow; Paul longed for it as vehemently as the apprentice for the expiration of his indentures; and all because they had first beheld Christ by faith. It is no wonder that many of God's children have called earnestly to be laid to bed, knowing that it would prove their everlasting happy rest; and when their bodies are carried by mortal men to their mother earth, their souls should be conveyed by glorious angels to their Father in heaven.

2. Courage. A Christian should be a volunteer in death. Many of the martyrs were as willing to die as to dine; went to the fire as cheerfully as to a feast, and courted its pale and ghastly countenance as if it had been a beautiful bride. When King Lysimachus threatened Cyrenæus Theodorus with hanging: *Istis quæso (inquit) ista horribilia minitare purpuratis tuis; Theodori quidem nihil interest, humine an sublime putrescat*: Threaten these terrible things to thy brave courtiers; Theodorus cares not whether he rot in the air or on the earth. Cyprian said amen to his own sentence of martyrdom. Jerome reports of Nepotianus, that he gave up his life so cheerfully, that one would have thought he rather walked forth than died. When Ignatius

was led from Syria to Rome, to be torn in pieces of wild beasts, he often wished by the way that he were in the midst of those beasts that were to devour him, and that their appetites might be whetted to despatch him; fearing lest it should happen to him, as to some others, that the lions, out of a kind of reverence, would not dare to approach them, being ready, he said, rather to provoke them to fight, than that they should suffer him to escape. Bradford being told by his keeper's wife that his chain was a-buying, and he was to die the next day, pulled off his hat, and thanked God for it. When some wondered that Adam Damply could eat his food so well, when his end was so near, he told them, Ah, masters, do you think that I have been God's prisoner so long in the Marshalsea, and have not yet learned to die? Yes, yes, and I doubt not but God will strengthen me therein. Anne Askew subscribed her confession in Newgate thus: Written by me, Anne Askew, that neither wisheth for death, nor feareth his might, and as merry as one that is bound towards heaven. Indeed it is said of a wicked man that his soul is required of him, and that God takes away his soul, Luke 12.; Job 27:10; but of a godly man, that he giveth up the ghost, and he cometh to his grave, Gen. 25:8; Job 4:21. Nature will teach the heathen that death is the end of all outward miseries to all men, hence some of them drank of its cup with as much constancy and courage as if it had been the most pleasant julep; but grace will teach the Christian that death is not only a remedy against all his bodily and spiritual maladies—as Sir Walter Raleigh said of the sharp axe that should behead him, This will cure all my infirmities-but also an inlet into fulness of joy and felicity. Reverend Deering said on his death-bed, I feel such joy in my spirit, that if I should have the sentence of life on the one side, and the sentence of death on the other side, I had rather a thousand times choose the sentence of death, since God hath appointed a separation, than the sentence of life. Titus Vespasian, the mirror of mankind, being a stranger to Christ, was very unwilling to leave the world; being carried in a horse

litter, and knowing that he must die, looked up to heaven, and complained pitifully that his life should be taken from him, who had not desired to die, having never committed any sin, as he said, but only one. Socrates, and some of the wiser heathen, comforted themselves against the fear of death with this weak cordial, that it is common to men, the way of all the earth. Hence it was, when the Athenians condemned Socrates to die, he received the sentence with an undaunted spirit, and told them they did nothing but what nature had before ordained for him. But the Christian hath a greater ground for a holy resolution, and a stronger cordial against the fear of death, even his hopes of eternal life; and surely, if he that exceeds others in his cordials be exeelled by them in courage, he disgraceth his physician. Aristippus told the sailors, who wondered that he was not, as well as they, afraid in the storm, Ye fear the torments due to a wicked life, and I expect the reward of a good one. It is no marvel that they who lived wickedly should die unwillingly, being frightened with the guilt of their past sins, and with the fears of their future torments. Therefore the Holy Ghost saith of such a one, 'The wicked is driven away in his wickedness,' Prov. 14:32, as a beast that is driven out of his den to the slaughter, or as a debtor driven by the officers out of his house, wherein he lay warm, and was surrounded with all sorts of comfort, to a nasty, loathsome prison; but that the righteous, who hath hope in his death, should even die almost with fear of it beforehand, is matter of wonder. Lot's soul is exceedingly vexed with Sodom, yet he is not loath to leave it. This world is a wilderness, a purgatory, a step-mother, a persecutor to all the saints, and yet some of them, when called to leave it, sing loath to depart, and would linger behind; partly from nature, which dreads a dissolution, and partly from the weakness of grace. To fear death much argueth sometimes wickedness, always weakness.

3. Repentance. It is said of St Augustine, that he died with tears in his eyes, in the practice of repentance; and Posidonius saith of him, that he heard him often say in his health, that it was the fittest disposition for dying Christians and ministers. Laudatos, saith he, Christianos et sacerdotes absque digna et competenti pœnitentia exire de corpore non debere. We die groaning in regard of our bodies, why should not our souls sigh that ever they sinned against so good a God? Beasts bite their enemies with more venom and indignation, when they are ready to die; Maxime mortiferi solent esse morsus morientium animalium. The Christian should give sin his most deadly bite, his greatest abhorrency, and grief, and shame, when he is dying, and shall never see sin, or sorrow, or shame more. As it is noble and excellent to die forgiving sinners, so also taking revenge upon sin. Moses, a little before his death, is commanded to avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites, and then he is gathered to his people, Num. 31:1, 2. Samuel takes vengeance on Agag, when he was old, and knew not the day of his death; David could not die with comfort, till he had charged Solomon to execute that justice on Joab which he had omitted. The last time the judge seeth the felon, he passeth sentence of death upon him. Oh, how should the soul of a dying saint be inflamed with anger against sin, when he considers the rich love that it abuseth, the glorious name that it dishonoureth, the blessed Saviour that it pierceth, and that vast happiness which he is going to possess, of which, without infinite grace and mercy, it had deprived him. Some persons, when they have been to take their last revenge on their enemies, have done it to purpose. The believer, on his dying bed, takes his last revenge on sin; he shall never have another opportunity to shew his love to his God and Saviour in his spite at, and hatred of, sin; therefore then he should do it to purpose, as dying Samson put forth all his strength, and beg divine help, that he may utterly destroy it, and be avenged on it, for all the defilement and bondage it hath brought on his soul,

and dishonour to his Saviour. Dying Jacob cursed the sins of his own sons: 'Cursed be their wrath, for it was fierce; and their anger, for it was cruel; O my soul, enter not thou into their secrets.' The dying child of God should curse his passions, his pride, his unbelief, his selfishness, even all his lusts, for disobeying such righteous laws, and displeasing such a gracious Lord. When David Chrytæus lay a-dying, he lift up his head from his pillow to hear the discourses of his friends that sat by him, saying, I shall die with the more comfort, if I can die learning something. The Christian, both by his painful sickness, and approaching death, may learn something of the evil of sin, and certainly he may die with the more comfort, (for godly sorrow and joy may be contemporaries, as the heaven shine and shower at the same time,) if he die in a flood of tears for his unkindness to Christ.

#### 4. Charity in a double respect.

(1.) In forgiving them that have wronged thee. If the natural sun should not go down upon our wrath, much less should the sun of our lives. It is bad to bear anger or malice one hour in our hearts against any, but it is worst of all to carry it with us into the other world. How can he expect to die in peace with God, who dieth in war with men, when God himself hath said, 'Except ye forgive others their trespasses against you, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses'? Amilcar, the father of Hannibal, when he was dying, made his son take a solemn oath to maintain a perpetual war with the Romans. Edward the First adjured his son and nobles, that if he died in his expedition against Bruce, king of Scotland, they should not inter his corpse, but carry it about with them till they had avenged him on that usurper. But certainly it is a desperate thing to leave children heirs to the parent's wrath and rage, as well as to his riches. Oh how dreadful is his estate, who takes his enemy by the



throat, when God by death is taking him by the throat, and ready to throttle him for ever. If thou hast wronged others, either in name, or goods, or body, seek reconciliation, and make satisfaction; for this is righteous and just. If thy brother hath aught against thee, thou hast never more need of reconciling thyself to him, than when thou art approaching the altar of death, there to offer up the last sacrifice to God in this world. If thy brother have wronged thee in any sort, remit it—this is charity; to do otherwise, is to give place to the devil, Eph. 4:16, 17, and thou hast least cause to give him ground when his rage is greatest, and his batteries strongest, in thy last conflict with him. Oh imitate that blessed martyr Stephen, and the incomparable Saviour, in begging God's love for them who hate thee! Acts 7:60; Luke 23:34.

(2.) In remembering the poor and afflicted, if God hath made thee able. It is best to be merciful in our lifetime, to make our own hand our executors, and our own eyes our overseers, for the payment of our gifts and legacies to our spiritual kindred; for such have a particular promise that God will make all their bed in their sickness. But it is good to be charitable when we are dying; true friends shew most love at parting. Though justice must be blind, not to see persons, yet charity must be quick-sighted, to pick out the fittest objects, viz., the poor, and the pious poor in the first place. Our goods will not extend to God, therefore they must to the saints. When Jonathan was beyond the reach of David's charity, he doth for his sake manifest it to his son. God is beyond all our gifts, therefore for his sake we must bestow them on the godly, that are his children: 'Make you friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when that faileth, ye may be received into the everlasting habitations.' Hereby men lay up a good foundation against the time of need. Godly parents are ignorant how their children may employ the estate they leave, whether as fuel for corruption, or as oil to keep the lamps

in God's sanctuary burning. It is good therefore for themselves with prudence to dispose of what they may to God's servants and service.

Some men have estates dropping on them out of the clouds, as it were; large inheritances, fair patrimonies, like Canaan, both in regard of their fruitfulness, and abounding with all sorts of comforts, and in regard of their easiness of obtaining them without sweat or labour. They inherit, as the Israelites, houses which they built not, wells which they digged not, and vineyards which they planted not; upon both these accounts, such persons are engaged to do good, and distribute, and to be rich in good works. God expects a return of his talents with advantage. How liberal, nay, lavish, have many papists been upon their death-beds, to friars and monks, even to the wronging their wives and children, that some states, as Venice, have been forced to make laws to restrain men, lest the church should in time swallow up all the revenues of the commonwealth, and all this upon a foolish, vain conceit, that they should the sooner pass through purgatory. It is certainly a great disgrace to the disciples of Christ, and no mean dishonour to Christ himself, that so many, and such large gifts, have proceeded from the false faith of merit-mongers, when the faith of his most glorious gospel doth not work the like in true believers. How will Christians answer it, that an idle dream, and fancied fear of an imaginary purgatory, should do more than the sure persuasion of the love of God, and the certain hope of eternal life?

(4.) Patience and submission to the will of God, both as to our death or life, and also as to our pain or ease in sickness. As to our life and death, we must know God is wise, and will never gather his fruit but in the best season. None, unless a fool, but will be willing God should choose for him. It is excellent for a sick person to be wholly at God's disposal, as knowing that whilst he is here God will refresh him with

the first-fruits, and when he goeth hence, receive him into that place where he shall enjoy the whole harvest. It was the speech of dying Julian, He that would not die when he must, and he that would die when he must not, are both of them cowards alike. To desire to live, when one is called to die, is a sign of cowardice; for such a one is afraid to enter the list with the king of terrors. To desire to die, when one is called to live, speaks a faint-hearted creature; for such a man dares not look an affliction or disaster in the face, therefore would take shelter in death. Cato, Cleombrotus, Lucretia, shewed more cowardice than courage in being their own executioners. The Romans commended Terentius for his resolution to live after his army was routed by Hannibal. He is the most valiant person that can die willingly when God would have him die, and live as willingly when God would have him live. He that is weary of his work before the evening is an unprofitable servant, and is either infected with idleness or with diseases. When Dr Whitaker was told death was approaching, he answered, Life or death is welcome to me, which God pleaseth. Mr Robert Bolton being told that it would be better for the church of God if God pleased to spare his life, said, If I shall find favour in the eyes of God, he will bring me again, and shew me both it and his habitation; if not, lo here I am, let him do with me what he pleaseth. Another pious soul in his sickness cried out, Domine, si tibi sim necessarius, non recuso vivere, Lord, if I may be further serviceable to thee, I am willing to live. Lucius Cornelius, lieutenant in Portugal under Fabius the consul, was infamous to following ages for his impatience in complaining of his physician, and railing at Æsculapius for not accepting his vow and passionate desire of having his life spun out to a longer thread. We cannot blame them who have their portion in this life for their unwillingness to leave it, and to become beggars in hell for ever. *Mori timeat qui ad secundam mortem de hac morte transibit*, saith Cyprian, *de Moral.*, Let him fear death who must pass from this death to the second death. To

such a one, indeed, death is a murderer; like Jehoram's messenger, comes to take away the life of his soul and all his happiness, and therefore he may well call, as Elisha did, Shut the door, and keep him out.

Many saints who died violent and cruel deaths yet gave their very enemies cause to admire their patience. They wearied out their bloody persecutors by their meekness and patience. Bonner said of the martyrs in Queen Mary's days, A vengeance on them; I think they love to burn. When that old disciple, Polycarp, came to the stake at which he was burnt to death, he desired to stand untied, saying, Let me alone; for he that gave me strength to come to the fire will give me patience to endure the flame without your tying. Cassianus, with admirable meekness, suffered a cruel martyrdom from his own scholars, who, at the command of the barbarous tyrant, became his executioners, some with their pen-knives pricking and lancing his flesh, others casting stones at him, till they had killed him. Eulalia, a chaste virgin of a noble family in Portugal, being for a time kept close by her parents, for fear her bold profession should cause her death, one night getting from them, and appearing before the tribunal of Maximinus, she was, for refusing to sacrifice to his idols, executed in this manner: first, two hangmen, with all their might, rent her joints in sunder, then her flesh was scratched from her sides with the talons of wild beasts, and hot burning torches were set to her sides, which ended her life.

A Christian should also exercise patience and submission to God's will under his pain. It is the rule of Hippocrates, that that sickness is most dangerous in which the sick man alters his countenance. Undoubtedly it is ill and unbecoming Christianity, when men who in health are mild and meek, in sickness are altered to be peevish and passionate; that their relations and attendants, who pity their pain,

and pray for their ease, and watch and work night and day to serve them, are requited with harsh words and fretful returns. Caius Marius suffered the veins of his legs to be cut out for the cure of his gout, and never shrunk for it. The Grecians were cowardly in their encounters with men, but valiant and patient in their conflicts with diseases. Master Jeremiah Whitaker, who on his death-bed had dreadful fits of the stone, bore them with marvellous patience, often turning up his eyes to heaven, and saying, Blessed be God this is not hell. The saint who is in covenant with God, and hath engaged himself to God to submit to all his providences, and hath God engaged to him to lay no more upon him than he will enable him to bear, may well with patience endure the divine pleasure.

Vincentius, a Spaniard, who was martyred at Valence under Dacianus, the president of the cruel tyrant Dioclesian, was used in this manner: first he was laid upon the rack, and all the joints of his body distended till they cracked again; then all the members of his body were pierced and indented with deadly wounds; then they vexed and tore his flesh with iron combs sharply filed; then they laid his body on an iron grate, and when they had opened his flesh with iron hooks, they seared it with fiery plates, sprinkling the same with hot burning salt; last of all, they cast him into a vile dungeon, the floor whereof was first thick spread with the sharpest shells that might be gotten, his feet then being fast locked in the stocks, there he was left alone till he died—all which he endured without murmuring or complaining—and, according to his name, (Vincentius,) was over all a conqueror. And shall not Christians, who die in their beds in peace, with much less pain, be patient! Many who knew not God did look on death as a favour, and one of the greatest which their gods could bestow on them. Agamedes and Trophonius, having built the temple of Apollo, asked of that god a reward for their services. They were answered, that within seven days they should be bountifully

paid for their pains; at the end of which time they died in a sleep. One of Cæsar's crazed soldiers desired the favour of the emperor to have leave to kill himself.

Especially, the thoughts of the happy issue of the most painful sickness and death to a child of God may, as the wood thrown into the bitter waters of Marah, make them sweet unto him. Some choose to be cut rather than to be daily tortured with the stone, though they know that cutting will put them to much pain, because they hope that cutting will cure them of their distemper. When a jailer knocks off a prisoner's fetters and bolts, though it puts him to much more pain than the constant wearing them, though every blow goeth to his heart, yet he flincheth not, he complaineth not, because he knoweth his future ease will make amends for his present pain. Christians are here fettered with sin and misery, which constantly grate upon their spirits. Death is the jailer to knock off their shackles, and let them into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. What though it put them to much pain; they may bear it with much patience, knowing that it will end in eternal pleasures.

Though a hypocrite, like a piece of brass, when stricken with the hammer of sickness or death, maketh a sharp and irksome noise with impatience, and breaketh in pieces, is undone for ever, yet the sincere soul, as a piece of gold, when so smitten, may sound sweetly and be pliable. True gold may be stretched out in length and breadth, in thin and fine leaves, as you please.

Now, reader, that thou mayest thus glorify thy God, credit thy profession, further thine account, and advantage others by thy death; it is requisite that thou be always ready for it. The quarter-day never comes amiss to him that hath always his rent ready by him. The loving husband, let him come when he will, is ever welcome to a

faithful spouse. The actual unpreparedness of some holy persons hath caused their petitions for a longer stay when God seemed to call them hence, Ps. 39:13. As a nobleman who is a loyal subject, and affectionately desires his prince's presence and company at his house, may wish that it may be deferred when his house is out of repairs, till it is in a better order. The habitual unpreparedness of sinners—I mean, their predominant impenitency and unbelief—hath made death cutting to them indeed. The pismire fears not the winter, having laid in her provision against that season; but the grasshopper, being unprepared, is starved therein.

Let thy whole life be but a preparation for death. He that would die but once—I mean, escape the second death—must die daily, live in a constant expectation of it, and preparation for it. Pliny calleth a sudden death the greatest fortune of a man's life. Julius Cæsar, the day before his death, in discourse with Marius Lepidus upon that point, what was the best end of a man's life, preferred that which was sudden and unlooked for, which was his fate the next day. Augustus, his successor, was of the same judgment, and desired *mortem celerem, et insperatam*; but the Christian findeth by experience that death to be the best which was most expected and prepared for. *Meditatio mortis, vita perfectissima*, The meditation of death is the holiest life, saith the father. *Tota vita, meditatio mortis, et discendum est mori*, The whole life is but a learning to die, saith the philosopher. Wise princes lay up ten years for one day's battle. A wise Christian will lay up every day somewhat for his last day, knowing that if he win that combat, he is made for ever. Invasions or insurrections, like a sudden breach of the sea, carry all before them, when pitched battles give equal advantage, and cause less terror on each side. Evils premeditated are often prevented, always mitigated, the mind gathering reason and strength together wherewith to

encounter them. But unthought-of troubles, like fire in the night, are most frightful, startling the secure sinner from his quiet repose.

In order to this preparation, I shall mention two or three particulars, but briefly, having spoken to them elsewhere.

1. Keep a clear conscience in thy health. Remember that sin is the sting of death; therefore be afraid of sin, if thou wouldst not be afraid of death. It was Nero's answer to Seneca, when he advised him to desist his wicked courses, that he might please the gods, Vereor ego deos, cum talia facio, Do you think I fear the gods, who dare run upon such actions! But he who did not dread the gods found death dreadful to him; for the historian observeth that he cried pitifully, like a child, when he was called forth to be killed. It is the righteous only that is bold as a lion, because the righteous only hath a conscience sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb, and a conscience void of offence towards God and man. When Hilarion was nigh death, Depart, my soul, saith he, depart; what dost thou fear? Thou hast served Christ almost seventy years, and art thou afraid of death? Bernard observeth of Gerrard, I beheld him, exultantem in morte hominem, et insultantem morti, exulting in death, and insulting over death. St Ambrose undauntedly encountered his last enemy, saying, I have not so lived that I am afraid to live any longer, neither do I fear to die, because we have a good Lord. The testimony of a good conscience was the great apostle's comfort in the midst of his trials and troubles, 2 Cor. 1:12. It is guilt which makes us shy of a severe and holy God's presence.

It is no marvel that Alexander the Conqueror was struck almost dead at the sight of Cyrus's tomb; that Sigismund, when dying, should forbid his servants to mention the word death; that Louis the Eleventh should, while in health, enjoin his courtiers not to speak of



death, and when sick, prohibit the naming it upon pain of death. I do not wonder that Saul, upon the news of his approaching danger and death, falls grovelling on the ground, and hath no strength left in him; nor that Belshazzar, upon the tidings of this sergeant's coming to arrest him, fell into an ague, quaking and shivering so violently, that all the wine which he drank so plentifully in his golden bowls could not cheer his heart, nor fetch blood into his cheeks. The malefactor may well dread the thoughts, much more the approach, of an assize, knowing that he is bound over to it, and must appear to be arraigned, condemned, and executed. The entry of death may well be forcible upon them whom it ejects out of all their happiness, and whose lives have been made up of unholiness. It is vice that paints death with such a formidable countenance, with a whip and flames in its hand. Friend, let thy conversation be pious, if thou wouldst die in peace.

Such as a man's life is, usually such is his death. An unholy life is ordinarily followed with an unhappy end. A filthy adulterer, mentioned by Luther, expired in the arms of a harlot. So also Tigellinus, Cornelius, Gallus, Ladislaus, king of Naples. One of the popes died in the embraces of strange flesh. A great swearer, when he came to die, saith Mr Bolton, swore apace, and as if he had been already in hell, called upon the standers-by to help him, with oaths. King Henry the Second on his death-bed cursed his sons, the day wherein he was born, and in that distemper departed the world, saith the historian, which himself had so often distempered. We read of one who lived well, that died ill; and of but one in the whole book of God who lived ill, that died well. A sinner may presume upon peace at death, and bespeak, in the language of Jehoram to Jehu, 'Is it peace, Jehu?' Is it peace, death? Or as the elders to Samuel, 'Comest thou peaceably?' But the answer will be the same with that of Jehu to him, 'What peace can there be so long as the whoredoms of thy

mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?' What peace can there be so long as thy lusts, and atheism, and ignorance, and profaneness abound, and thy abominations are so many? It is no wonder that such persons, like owls, are never heard but at night, the close of their days, and then they screech horribly. What shall we call a mocking of God, saith a learned person, if they do not mock him who think it enough to ask him forgiveness at leisure, with the last drawing of a malicious breath? These find out a new god, make one, a leaden one, like Louis the Eleventh of France. And again, let us not flatter our immortal souls to neglect God all our lives, and know that we neglect him, trusting upon the peace we think to make at parting; for this is no other than a rebellious presumption, and a contemptuous laughing to scorn, and a deriding of God, his laws, and precepts. Unquestionably such will be grossly mistaken at last, in falling from their heights into hell. As the daughter of Polycrates dreamed that her father was lifted up, that Jupiter washed him, and the sun anointed him; but it proved to him but a sad prosperity; for, after a long life and large prosperity, he was surprised by his enemies, and hanged up till the dew of heaven wet his cheeks, and the sun melted his grease.

Reader, let me bespeak thee, as Jotham did the men of Shechem, 'Hearken unto me, that God may hearken unto you;' hearken unto me in this day of thy health and life, that God may hearken unto thee in the day of thy sickness and death. Make thy peace with God now, give a bill of divorce to sin, strike a hearty covenant with Christ, keep thy conscience clean every day; allow not thyself in any known sin, if thou wouldst leave this world in favour with God, in the love of good men, and to thy eternal gain. *Nihil est in morte quod metuamus, si nihil timendum vita commisit*, saith the ancient; Death hath nothing frightful, but what a profane life makes so. They who fly from the holiness of God in life, may well fear the justice of God at death. A

sinner, indeed, is every day carrying more fagots to that pile in which he must burn for ever, and always twisting those cords with which devils will eternally scourge him; and therefore the guilt of his wicked life, and fear of his dreadful wages, may well represent death to him in a frightful vizard. But he who makes it his constant business to please his Maker, to mortify his earthly members, to crucify the flesh, to serve the will of God in his generation, and to dress his soul against the coming of the bridegroom, shall find his latter end comfortable, and the day of his death better than the day of his birth. O friend, if thou wouldst die comfortably, live conscientiously! A happy death is the conclusion of a holy life; God hath joined them together, and none can part them asunder. It is reported of the Dardani, that they never wash but three times, when they are born, when they marry, and when they die. The true Christian must be daily washing his soul by faith in the blood of his Saviour, and bathing himself in the tears of repentance, and hereby his soul will be fit to be commended into the hands of God by well dying.

2. Clear up thine evidences for heaven. Be not contented to leave thy salvation at uncertainty. They who walk in the dark, are full of frights and fears. The comfort of thy death will depend much upon the clearness of thy deeds and evidences for eternal life. The want of diligence about this, hath caused many of the children of God to go crying to bed, and wrangling to their eternal rest. They die, and know not how they shall speed in the other world; they fall into the hands of their enemy death, as the lepers into the hands of the Syrians, expecting nothing but cruelty and misery, trembling every step of the way, though they find good cheer, and all sorts of comforts.

3. Dwell much in the thoughts of death. Cicero said of fencing, *Fortissima, adversus mortem, et dolorem disciplina*, it was the

strongest fence against the fear of death; so I may say of entertaining death frequently in our meditations, it is a good guard against the terror of death; custom diminisheth the dread of things which to nature are so frightful. Marius, before he would bring out his soldiers to fight with the Cimbres, caused them to stand upon the trenches, to acquaint themselves with the terrible aspect of those savages, and so brought them to contemn them, which at first sight they so amazedly feared. When we are on a sudden surprised by an unexpected adversary, we want time to unite our strength to resist the assault; but what we expect we provide for, and so are the better able to encounter with it. The old people that lived near the Riphæan mountains, were taught to discourse much of death, and to converse with it, and to speak of it, as of a thing that will certainly come, and ought so to do; hence their resolutions were strengthened to undergo it with patience and courage. As cordials lose their virtue, so even poisons their venom, by frequent use. Mithridates, by constant use of it, made it so far from being mortal, that it was nourishing to him. Though death in its own nature be venomous, the Christian, by frequent meditation of it, and application of the blood of Christ to his soul, may make it profitable to him.

4. Wean thy heart from the earth. They who love the earth as their heaven, will be unwilling to leave it, though for heaven. Canst thou bear the loss of some worldly comforts, when God takes them from thee? If not, how wilt thou be able to bear the loss of all worldly comforts in a dying hour? If running with footmen weary thee, how wilt thou be able to run with horsemen? If a little loss, a little load, be ready to break thy back, what wilt thou do under the weight of a great one? Paul was martyred in his affections, before he was martyred in his body; and dead to the world, before he was slain by the world; hence he came to dare even death itself, and to bid it do its worst: 'I protest by your rejoicing, which I have in Christ Jesus, I die

daily.' Should a messenger have come to Paul and told him, You must die to-morrow, and leave all the good things of this life; he might have said, That is not now to do, for I died yesterday, and this day, and every day, and I have already taken my leave of this world and all its vanities. Those that, like eels, lie in the mud of worldly pleasures, are unfit to be sacrificed to God, as being unclean creatures, and unwilling to part with their present delights, though for those that are more excellent. The immoderate love of sublunary vanities makes men say, as Peter at Christ's transfiguration, 'It is good to be here;' albeit, like him, they know not what they say.

5. Set thy house in order. After the heart is set in order, the next work is to set the house in order, according to God's counsel, Isa. 38:1. Abraham was careful, before his death, to settle the affairs of his household, as appeareth by his providing a fit spouse for Isaac, and his giving gifts to the children of his second wife, and sending them away, Gen. 24:1, 2, and 25:6. This ought to be done in the time of our health and strength, partly because we are uncertain whether we shall have time and ability in sickness to do it or no. How many have died suddenly; and why not thou and I as well as others? Some who had a mind to make their wills, have not had a tongue to do it with. Others who have had a tongue, have lost the use of their understandings. Partly because in sickness we should have as little as may be to do with the world. All occasions of disturbance or distraction to our souls should be prevented.

The disposition of what God hath given thee must be with prudence, for the maintenance of love among relations; with plainness, that thy meaning may not be mistaken; and with judgment and ability, for the preventing of all quarrels and lawsuits amongst such as are interested in it.

Reader, if thou art careful and faithful in the discharge of these particulars, thy funeral will prove a festival, and the sun of thy life will set, as the natural sun, in a clear evening, not in a cloud, but in such a red sky as to prognosticate the ensuing day to be fair—thy certain and comfortable resurrection to bliss and honour. Thy name will live when thou art dead, and thy memory be blessed amongst all that fear the Lord. Tacitus makes one of the Sempronii, not wholly to degenerate from the honour of his house, only for dying well: *Constantia mortis haud indigna Sempronio nomine*. Nero did tacitly wipe Claudius the emperor, though himself were the worst of the two, when, in an ambiguous phrase, he mentions his death: *Desinit morari inter homines*. Every sinner goeth out like a snuff, but the just shall be had in everlasting remembrance. By practising these duties thou shalt come to die in the Lord, to rest from thy labours, and to have thy works following thee to thine endless blessed reward.

**A good wish about the Christian's exercising himself to godliness on a dying bed; wherein the former heads are applied**

The righteous God having appointed death to be the end of all the children of men, as the common road through which they pass into the other world, to receive according to what they have done in this life, whether it be good, or whether it be evil, I wish that I may be wise to consider of my latter end, and so live that I may rather desire than be afraid to die; that my last days may be my best days, and I may imitate my Redeemer in bringing my God much honour, and doing his church much service, when I am entering into my Master's joy. The evening praiseth the day; the last scene commends the act. The rivers, the nearer they draw to the sea, the sooner they are met by the tide. Though to guide a vessel safely along in the ocean argueth much skill, and such a pilot is worthy of praise; yet at the

very entrance into the haven, then to avoid the rocks, and to cast anchor in a safe road, argueth most skill, and deserveth most praise. Musicians reserve the sweetest strain for the close of their lesson. Orators, though in every part of their speech they use great care, yet in the close of their speech they use the utmost of their rhetoric, and put forth all their art and skill to stir up all the affections of their hearers, that they may leave at last the deepest impressions upon their hearts of those things which they would persuade to. My whole life ought to be nothing else but a pleading with my God for mercy, and a walking according to his word; but when I come to the period of my days, how powerful should my prayers, how pious my practices be! how lively my graces! how holy my whole conversation! that my God may say of me, as once of Thyatira, 'I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.' Though violent motions are slowest at last, as being farthest from that strength which forced them contrary to their own inclinations; yet natural motions, proceeding from an inward principle, the nearer the centre, the swifter the motion. Though hypocrites, and such as have only a form of godliness, grow worse and worse, and fill up the measure of their lusts with the measure of their lives, yet gracious persons, and such as have the power of godliness, grow better and better, and complete their task with their time. Oh that the longings, the desires, the faith, the hope, the delight of my soul, like the approaches of a needle, may be so much the more quick, by how much they draw nearer to their loadstone, Jesus Christ. Lord, thou hast an absolute dominion over me, both living and dying. It is thy word, 'None of thine liveth to himself, or dieth to himself; but whether they live, they live unto the Lord, and whether they die, they die unto the Lord; and whether they live or die, they are the Lord's.' Oh help me to glorify thee, both by my life and by my death! Let thy Spirit be strong within me, when my flesh is weak. When the keepers of the house shall tremble, shew

thysself the keeper and strength of my heart. When the grinders shall cease, because they are few or weak, give me to feed on the manna of thy promises, and that bread which came down from heaven. When the daughters of music shall be brought low, let me hear by faith the song of Moses and the Lamb, sung by the celestial choir. When they that look out at the window are darkened, let the eyes of my soul be opened, to behold, with thy dying martyr Stephen, Jesus sitting at the right hand of God. Let my hope and desire look out at the windows, and say, 'Why is his chariot (sent to fetch me to himself) so long of coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariot?' 'Make haste, my beloved, be thou like the hart and roe upon the mountains of spices. Whether I perish in the field with Abel, or in the prison with the Baptist, or in my bed with Jacob, grant me thy gracious comforting presence, and then, though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear none ill. Oh do thou undertake my conduct in my passage over the rough waters of this Jordan, into Canaan, and then there will be no danger of drowning! Assist me so to live by faith, that I may die in the faith; and when my friends take my earthly body to their disposal, oh do thou receive my heaven-born soul into the arms of thine infinite mercy, for thou hast redeemed it, Lord God of truth.

I wish that I may frequently ponder what a serious, solemn thing it is to die. However light, or vain, or jesting my life hath been, my death will be in earnest. I cannot dally or trifle with it; it will not dally or trifle with me. It can be done but once, and upon it my everlasting making or marring depends. It is so certain, that all must, willing or unwilling, ready or unready, undergo it. Neither the policy of Ahithophel, nor the strength of Samson, nor the wisdom of Solomon, nor the beauty of Absalom, nor the piety of Abraham, nor the wealth of the rich glutton, can prevail to avoid it. No time, no place, no company, no houses, no lands, no relations, no youth, no strength,



no power, no preferments, can privilege me against the arrest of death. God hath decreed it, sin hath deserved it, and I must expect it. It is so searching that it will discover all the children of men, both to themselves and angels. Though ships are usually distinguished by their flags, yet that is no sure sign; for mariners, when in sight and fear of their enemies, will ordinarily hang out the colours of other nations, and say they belong to them; but when they come to their haven to unload their vessels, it appears to what country they belong. Though men are usually distinguished by their outward behaviours, yet many for their own ends put on Christ's livery, who are of Satan's family; but when they come to be searched and unladen at the end of their lives, it will be known to whom they belong. When I come to die, then the great controversy between Christ and Satan concerning my soul will be determined, whose it shall be for ever. O my soul, that thou couldst but conceive what it will be to be sent by death into an unchangeable estate, either of bliss or misery! If thou diest in thy sins, thou art killed with death. Shouldst thou now live without conscience, thou wilt die without comfort, and remain comfortless for ever. Ponder a little with thyself the fearful death of a sinner, that thou mayest fly his wicked acts, as thou wouldst his woeful end. In the midst of his jollity and mirth, when he is in an eager pursuit of carnal pleasures, and posting in the way of worldly delights, and running to all excess of riot, he is on a sudden, by death's harbinger, sickness, commanded to stand, and proceed no further. This cuts him to the very heart. His former prosperity, like oil, hath suppled his body, and makes him more sensible of his present pain. And his immoderate love to those fleshly delights doth abundantly greaten his grief, and increase his loss. Now the man is thrown, whether he will or no, upon his sick-bed, that must be his death-bed. In this his extremity, his companions, and friends, and wife, and children, and honour, and places, and preferments, and silver, and gold, and houses, and lands, and costly attire, and dainty fare, are all dry

things, and unsavoury to him; no creature can afford him the least comfort. If he look into his chamber, his wife is weeping and wringing her hands, his children are sighing, his friends are lamenting and wailing, but all this doth increase, not mitigate, his vexation and misery. If he looks into his conscience, he finds that taking courage, and telling him to his face, that though formerly he would not suffer it to speak, yet now it must tell him the truth, that death, and hell, and wrath, are the wages of his ungodly works. It will bring to his mind the time he hath misspent, the talents that he hath misimproved, the day of grace that he hath despised, the great salvation that he hath neglected; his secret, and private, and public sins, the sins of his childhood, of his youth, of his riper age, those sins which he had forgotten, and thought should never have been remembered, are all set in order before his eyes. His heart, which was before harder than the nether millstone, is now pierced, though not with an evangelical contrition, yet with legal terrors and torments. His sickness will allow no rest to his body, and his sins will afford no ease to his soul. In the evening he crieth, Would God it were morning; in the morning, Would God it were evening, because of the anguish of his spirit. His bones are filled with a painful disease, and his body with unquietness. The arrows of the Almighty are within him, the poison thereof drinks up his spirit; and the terrors of God do set themselves in array against him. His review of his past actions, his remembering of his slighting Christ for a brutish pleasure, or a little fading treasure, or a base lust, and provoking God, and continuance in sin, against mercies, judgments, warnings, the light of conscience, the motions of the Spirit, are as so many envenomed arrows sticking in his side, and piercing him through with many sorrows; but the thoughts of his necessity of dying, and his forethoughts of the consequence of death, how hell rides upon its back, and eternal torments attend it; how he must fry in unquenchable flames, and take up his everlasting lodging amongst

roaring lions, frightful dragons, and the hellish crew, sink him quite down. To add some more gall and wormwood to his cup of bitterness, the devil now steps in, and sheweth him his sins in their black hue, in their bloody colour and countenance, to make him hopeless and desperate. The poor creature, in this miserable plight and plunge, knoweth not what to do, whither to go for relief. Die he would not, but must; live he would, but cannot. Now he wisheth that he had prayed and served God, and minded his soul and salvation more, and gratified his flesh, and embraced the pleasures and honours of the world less. Now he desireth that he might live a little longer, and thinks, Oh how would I redeem time, and follow after holiness, and walk with God, what would I not do and suffer to lay up some comfort, some cordial against such an hour! But whilst he is thus in the midst of his vain wishes, death tells him, by the violence of his distemper, that the time of his departure is at hand. His eyes now begin to sink, his speech to falter, his breath to shorten, and his heart to fail him, and a cold sweat to seize on his whole body. He strives and struggleth with all his might to continue here, but death, like a cruel sergeant, drags him to the bar of God, whence he is immediately, with frowns and fury, dismissed, and hauled to the dreadful and eternal dungeon of hell. Oh the howlings, the screeching, the groans, the grief, which possesseth this poor soul, when he is attacked by devils, those merciless officers, and carried by them to the lake that burns with fire and brimstone for ever! The spirit being now gone, the body remains a cold lump of clay, forsaken of its dearest friends, loathsome to its nearest relations, fit for no company but the worm-eaten congregation, amongst which it must abide till the last day, when it shall be joined to the soul, and partake with it in unconceivable and endless torments.

Ah, who can read such a soul's estate with dry eyes; or think of such a condition without sorrow! O my soul, what are thy thoughts of such a

death? Wouldst thou, for the most prosperous worldling's life, die such a death? Doth not thine heart ache whilst thou art musing on it? If thou wouldst not meet with the end of such men, avoid their ways. Lord, I confess myself a great sinner, and thou mightst justly leave me to walk in the counsel of the ungodly, and to go in the paths of the destroyer, that my feet should tend to death, and my steps take hold of hell; yet, for thy Son's sake, teach me thy way, and lead me in thy righteousness, that my soul may never be gathered with sinners, nor my life with bloody men, that I may die the death of the righteous, and my latter end may be like his.

I wish that I may look upon a dying bed as a fit pulpit in which I may preach my Maker's and Redeemer's praise. The speeches of dying persons are often highly prized, as savouring of most sincerity, and least suspected of selfish ends. They who scorned my counsel, and rejected my advice, in my health and strength, as fearing it proceeded rather from interest than simplicity of heart, will, if they have the least grain of charity, believe me in earnest, and my words to be the language of my soul, when I am dying, and entering into my eternal estate. The worst of men have some reverence and respect for dying Christians. What thrusting and crowding, even to the prejudice of their bodies, hath there often been to hear the speeches and last words of dying men. The vilest malefactor, who is cut off by the sword of justice, is permitted with patience to speak, and attended to with diligence at the gallows. If enemies have some respect for dying felons, and will hearken to them with meekness, what hopes may a dying saint have of advantaging the souls of his friends! Oh that I might greedily embrace such an opportunity of advantaging the interest and honour of my God, the service and good of my neighbours, and by my pious language and gracious carriage at my latter end, make others in love with holiness, holy men, and the Holy One of Israel! Sinners catch hold of every season to propagate their

ungodly seed, and commend Satan's rotten wares to the men of the world; why should not saints be as vigilant, as diligent, for their God and Saviour? Lord, I know not in what manner, by what distemper, it will please thee to call me to thyself. I beg, if it may seem good in thy sight, that nothing may befall me on my dying bed, which may render me incapable of commending thee, and thy ways and worship, to others. My cheerfulness in bearing thy will, and activeness to extol thy work and reward, may through thy blessing persuade Satan's drudges to forsake his slavery, and admit themselves thy servants. Oh that I might allure others to prepare for such a day, by lifting up my head with joy, when that day of redemption draweth nigh! The apprentice makes merry when his time is expired, and he enjoyeth his freedom. The bride hath a feast and music when her marriage-day is come. This life is my time of service, death sets me at liberty. In this world I am contracted to my dearest Saviour; my solemn marriage is in the other world, into which I pass through death. Why should I fear that messenger which brings such good news, and be troubled at that friend who will do me so great a courtesy? Oh enable me to live every day according to thy gospel, that keeping my conscience clean, and my evidences clear, I may, in the day of my death, rejoice and be exceeding glad. Give me to savour the sweetness of thy love, the pleasantness of thy paths, to feel the powerful influences of thy Spirit, the virtue and efficacy of thy word; so to relish communion with thyself and thy dear Son all the days of my life, that when I am going out of the world and coming to thee, O Father, I may from my own experience quicken and encourage others to forsake earthly vanities, before earthly vanities forsake them, and to take thee for their chiefest good, and choicest happiness, who will never leave them nor forsake them.

I wish that the nearer I draw to my reward, the more zealous and industrious I may be about my work; and that when my body

droopeth and faileth most, my soul may be most vigorous and active in the exercise of grace. I am infinitely indebted to the blessed God, for his unspeakable grace to my precious soul; my engagements to the dearest Redeemer, for loving me and washing me in his own blood, are far beyond my apprehension. This is the last opportunity that I shall ever enjoy to testify my thankfulness, and to do my God, my Saviour, my soul, any service; oh how diligent should I be to promote their interest, and improve this season! Nature, in its last conflict with a disease, puts forth itself to the utmost. It draweth in those spirits, which before were scattered in the outward parts, to guard and arm the heart; it rallieth all those forces which are left, if possible, to win the day. Oh why should not grace, in its last encounter, muster up all its strength, and put forth itself to the utmost! Lust is strong to the last. When nature is weak and spent, and the sinner disabled from his unclean or intemperate acts, even then he can hug them in his heart, and roll them under his tongue as a sweet morsel, and commit them over and over again in his thoughts, and fancy, and affections. The dying thief on the cross, when his hands and feet were nailed, and by force kept in order, could yet find his tongue at liberty, before his death, to rail at and revile the Lord of life. Ah, is it not a thousand pities that grace should be outvied by lust, and that those that are paid with such lamentable wages as everlasting burnings, should die serving their cruel master, and enter into hell, belching out their blasphemies, and spitting their poison in the face of Heaven! and that the children of God should do their Father so little service, when they are going to their blissful mansions, and can do him no more! Love to myself, as well as to my God, may quicken me to labour with all my might, when I draw near my last hour. As I fall now, I lie for ever. My eternal estate dependeth more upon my death than my life. It is possible, though rare, that a profane life may be corrected by a penitent death; but a wicked death can never be amended. He that shoots off a piece, if he be not steady

just at its going off, loseth his charge, and misseth his mark. He that dieth ill, dieth ever; he is killed with death. He that goeth awry, when he goeth out of the world, shall never come back to recall or amend his steps. If I am a conqueror now, I am a conqueror for ever; if I am foiled now, I am foiled for ever. Cowards will fight desperately when they are in extremity, and must either kill or be killed. The historian saith of Cn. Piso, a confederate of Cataline's, that though he had a heart like a hare, yet he could fight like a lion when he apprehended a necessity of fighting for his life. Oh that my pains, my diligence, may be answerable to my peril and my danger. Lord, when that day and hour draweth near, that I must go hence and be no more seen, do thou draw near in boundless mercy to my poor soul. When I must enter into the chambers of death, and make my bed in the grave, save me from the paws of Satan, and the power of hell, that the bottomless pit may not shut her mouth upon me; and give me to triumph in that hour of tribulation, as knowing that neither tribulation, nor persecution, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor life, nor death, can separate me from thy love, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord.

I wish that, when I am going to the place of silence, I may speak the excellencies of my God, and make his praise glorious. It is the unhappiness of worldlings and wicked men that they cannot, when they die, commend the principles whence they have acted, nor the vain pleasures which they have minded and pursued. How many of them, whose lives have been nothing but a bundle of falsehood and lies, when God hath called them to leave the world, have spoken the truth, and told their friends and relations that sin is an evil and bitter thing, that carnal pleasures are gilded poisons, that the greatest and choicest of worldly comforts, though they may have honey in their mouths, have a sting in their tails; and what a vain, empty nothing the whole creation is! How often have they complained how the

world hath deceived them, the flesh deluded them, and the devil beguiled and destroyed them! It is my privilege, as well as my duty, to extol my Master whom I have served, to commend the sweetness of his ways, the pleasantness of his worship, the reasonableness of his precepts, the richness of his promises, and the vastness of that portion which he hath laid up for his children when they come to age. I have sometimes tasted his work and ways to be sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb. I have viewed by faith his reward to be vastly glorious, and beyond all apprehensions excellent. Oh, why should I not dissuade others from their eager pursuit of foolish, fading shadows, and persuade and encourage them to earnest endeavours after real substance and durable riches! The sinner, who hath wallowed all his lifetime in the mire of filth and wickedness, will, when he comes to die, and begins to return to his wits, from his own experience of the emptiness and unprofitableness of his ungodly courses, and from the convictions of his natural conscience, acknowledge a sober, sanctified conversation to be safest, and the ways of God to be most gainful; and upon these accounts, advise his friends and relations to forsake and abandon the lusts of the world and flesh, and to follow after holiness, as they would be happy eternally. And have not I much more cause to shew my abhorrency of sin, and love to my Saviour and his image, when I am entering into my Father's house? The sinner hath only found at last a fleshly life to be vain and fruitless, and is like to pay dear for his learning; but I have known the paths of piety to be paths of pleasantness, and rejoiced more in them than in all riches. The sinner hath only the dim light of nature to shew him the loathsomeness of vice, and the loveliness of grace; but I have the Holy Spirit of my God to enlighten my mind in the knowledge of both. The sinner hath only a carnal love to his neighbours and kindred; he knoweth not what it is to love them in Christ, and for Christ. I have some knowledge of the love and law of Christ, of the worth of their souls, of the price paid for them by



the Lord Jesus, and their unchangeable conditions in the other world. Oh that my language to them might be somewhat answerable to the love of Christ to me! Lord, it is unrighteousness to die in debt to man, and not to endeavour to make them satisfaction according to my power. I am sure to die in thy debt; for I am less than the least of all thy mercies, and unable to requite thee for the smallest of thy favours. It is my comfort that all the recompense thou expectest is a thankful acknowledgment and hearty acceptance of thy grace and goodwill. Oh what injustice and ingratitude were I guilty of, should I deny thee so small a request! Be pleased to help thy servant in his last hours, both to accept unfeignedly of thy grace for his own good, and to acknowledge thy goodwill, and bounty, and faithfulness, to thy glory, for the good of others.

I wish that my last breath may be drawn heavenward; I mean, that I may enter praying into the house of blessing and praise. I am no Christian, if I do not give myself to prayer whilst I live. It is one choice piece of my spiritual armour, whereby I have often assaulted and conquered my soul-enemies. It is the ambassador which I have many a time sent to the heavenly court, that always received a favourable audience, and obtained his errand. It is the vessel which hath brought me food from far, and ever returned richly laden, if it were not my own fault. It is the element in which I live; the aliment by which I subsist; the pulse, the breath of my soul, without which it must needs die. On my death-bed I have as much need of its succour as at any season. My adversaries will then employ their greatest power and policy to rout and ruin me; I am but weak flesh and blood, altogether unable to combat with principalities and powers; and how can I expect supplies from the Lord of hosts, unless I send this messenger to entreat it? My wants and weaknesses at such a time will be more than ordinary. Faith must then be acted, in spite of all the frights and fears which a malicious devil, and an unbelieving

heart, from the number and nature of my sins, the strictness of the law, and the justice of God, may put me to. Repentance must then be exercised, and my sins lie nearer my heart than my sharpest diseases. In patience I must possess my soul, under all the pains and pressures which the wise God shall lay upon me. I must then cheerfully submit to the divine pleasure, and by my willingness to leave all the world to go to Christ, shew that I hate father, mother, wife, child, house, lands, life, and all for Christ. Those graces, and many other, must be put forth at such a time, none of which I can do by my own power, and therefore have abundant cause to fetch help from heaven by prayer. Besides, the distempers of my body will discompose my soul, and unfit it in a great measure for all holy service. Again, my benefactors, my near friends and relations, the poor afflicted church of God, do all call aloud to me to pray for them, as the last kindness I shall ever do for them. I profess I love them, how can I manifest it better than by commending them to God in prayer? Should I leave them thousands of silver and gold, if I were able, it would not all amount to the price of one fervent prayer. My riches might wrong them through the deceitfulness of their hearts, and cause them to be contented short of heaven; but my prayers cannot prejudice them, but may much further their eternal welfares. Men whose natures are crabbed and cruel, have granted the requests of their dying children, when they have been contrary to their own humours; how much more will God, the Father of mercies, whose nature is love, whose bowels are infinite, satisfy the desire of his dying children, when they fall in with his own design and desire? If Joab had hopes to speed in his supplication for Absalom, because he knew the king's heart was more for it than his own, may not I be confident to speed, when I beg that he would pay my debts in spirituals with interest to those who have bestowed carnals on me for his sake; when I ask that my children and relations may love, and fear, and worship his Majesty, and be his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works;

and when I entreat that he would accomplish all the great and good things which he hath promised to his church, the purchase of his Christ, knowing that his heart is infinitely more for these things than mine can be! Lord, when I die, I shall no more put up prayers for myself or other particular persons. My natural obligations to my kindred and relations, my civil engagements to my friends and benefactors, besides my spiritual bonds to them and thy whole Israel, may well provoke me to be fervent and instant with thy Majesty at such an hour on their behalf. My Redeemer, before his death, wrought hard at this duty: he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears. Ah, how should I pray for myself and others, when I am taking my leave of prayer! Oh let thy Spirit of supplication be so poured down on me, that I may pour out my spirit in supplication unto thee for my own and other souls, through thy Son, with the greatest success.

I wish that the night of my death may shine gloriously with the sparkling stars of divine and heavenly graces. In particular, I desire that when the time of my combat with my last enemy, and my last combat with any enemy, shall come, I may above all take the shield of faith, whereby I shall be sheltered against the sting of death, and quench the fiery darts of the wicked one. The wise mariner, perceiving a storm approaching, makes haste to fasten his vessel with anchors, that it may be steady, and not altogether at the mercy of the winds. I must expect the greatest tempest when I am entering into my eternal haven; then all the powers of darkness will conjure up their strongest winds, if possible to shipwreck the vessel of my soul. Ah, how much doth it concern me to put forth this grace, the anchor of my soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, and thereby to fasten on the rock of ages! If I fail in this, I fall, I miscarry for ever. God is a severe judge to condemn all guilty malefactors. Without his Son, I am clothed with guilt, and so

under his boundless wrath. When Adam had disrobed himself of original righteousness by disobeying the law, he fled from God, and dreaded the summons of offended justice. There is no appearing in the Father's sight with acceptance, but in the garments of his Son. None can have boldness to enter into the holy of holies, but by the blood of Jesus. It is faith only that interesteth in this blood. I know that through the Red Sea of this blood I may pass safely, though enemies pursue me hard, into the land of promise. Lord, I confess, through an evil heart of unbelief, I have many a time departed away from the living God; yet, Lord, I believe, help mine unbelief. O Lord of life, be not far from me, when devils and death are near me; help me, with thy servant Stephen, to see heaven open, by faith, and the Son of man at thy right hand. Enable me to disclaim whatsoever duties I have performed, or graces I have exercised, and to rely alone on a crucified Christ for pardon and life. Though thou killest me, let me die trusting and clinging on, and cleaving to, Jesus Christ. Let this pilgrim's staff of faith be never out of my hand, till I come to my journey's end. Thou art the Lord of hosts, and the captain of my salvation. Oh help me to put on the whole armour of God; grant me such skill to use it, that I may be able to stand in the evil day. Teach thou my hands to war, and my fingers to fight, that through thee I may do valiantly, and through thee may tread down mine enemies. Grant me so to finish my course, to fight the good fight of faith, that at death I may receive the crown of righteousness, which the righteous judge shall give to all that love his appearing.

I wish that my faith may ripen into full assurance, that thereby I may depart with joy, and an abundant entrance may be ministered unto me, into the kingdom of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Moses and Simeon could sing at their own funerals. The great apostle could call to be put to bed, expecting thereby his sweetest eternal rest. How many martyrs have gone more joyfully to die than ever epicure did to

dine, and leaped when they drew near the stake, believing that they drew near their home, their happiness, their heaven! What is it, O my soul, that makes thee start and flinch back at the sight of this bugbear? What is there in death that is so dreadful to thee? Is it the sweetness of life, or the pain of death, or thy future estate after death? Consider them all seriously, and then judge rationally whether any of these should make thee sigh, so loath to depart.

First, The love of life need not make thee so backward to obey the call of death. If all thy time were made up of holidays, death would bring thee greater advantage. The garlic and onions of Egypt are nothing comparable to the clusters of Canaan. But, alas! it is far otherwise; thy whole life is a civil death. Thou art born to sorrow as the sparks fly upward. Thy days are few, but full of trouble. The earth to thee is a valley of tears; the cross is thy daily companion, which accompanieth thee wherever thou goest. The sufferings of the flesh are neither few nor small. How many diseases in thy body, losses in thy estate! how much disgrace, ignominy, slander, oppression, art thou liable to! The sufferings of thy spirit are more and greater. Thine own sins, the provocations of others, the dishonour of thy God, the wants, and weaknesses, and oppression, and persecution of the church of Christ, do all give thee daily occasion to mingle thy bread with ashes, and thy drink with weeping. What is this world, that thou art so fond of it? Thy God calls it a sea of glass, mingled with fire, Rev. 15:2. A sea for its turbulency; it is never at rest, but ebbs and flows continually, though sometimes more, sometimes less. Its work is to bubble up mire and dirt, especially on them who are chosen out of the world. A sea of glass for its fragility; all its pomp and pride on a sudden vanisheth. Glass is both easily and irrecoverably broken in pieces. A sea of glass, mingled with fire, for the fiery and dreadful miseries that befall men in it. All its apparent comforts are mingled with real crosses. In heaven there is solace, without the least grain of

sorrow; in hell there is mourning, without the smallest drachm of mirth; but on earth there is no estate without mixture. The saints have joy in God, but if need be they are in heaviness through manifold tribulations, 1 Pet. 1:6. The merry sinners, in the midst of their pleasures, have their hearts heavy. Some of the wiser heathen were so sensible of human miseries, that one of them, when ancient, told his scholar, that if it were offered him to be young again, he would not accept it. Saints, of all men, must expect a large draught of sufferings; the world is their enemy, and raiseth all its forces against them. If I be a disciple, I must look to follow my Master in bearing his cross. O my soul, why shouldst thou hug that which hates thee, and doat on this world, which is neither a fit match for thee, as being unsuitable to thy nature, nor, if she were, can be faithful to thee, being made up of wavering and inconstancy. Or, secondly, Is it the pain of death that thou art so frightened at? Surely the fear of it is the greatest torment. How many have felt greater pain in divers diseases, as in the stone, or strangury, or colic, than in a dying hour! Some of God's children have felt very little pain, in the judgment of those that have seen them dying. The waters of Jordan, though rough to others, have stood still when the ark was to pass over. But though I were sure my pain should be sharp, yet I am sure it shall be short. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, I shall be transported over the gulf of misery into endless glory. My pangs will be almost as soon gone as come; sorrow will endure but for a short night, joy will come in the morning. If I were assured of a great purchase made for me in Spain or Turkey, which upon my first coming over I should enjoy, would I not adventure a passage through the boisterous ocean to take possession? My Saviour hath made a larger, a better purchase for me in heaven. He is gone before to prepare a place for me. My passage thither, though it may be more painful, is less perilous. It is impossible for me to miscarry in it. Oh, why am I so slothful to go in and possess the good land! Surely the pleasures of the end may well

sweeten the ways to it, were they never so bitter. With what cheerfulness do some women undergo their sharp throes and hard labours, supported with this cordial, that a child shall thereby be born to them! Oh, how infinitely inferior is the joy of a manchild brought forth into this world, to the joy of a sanctified soul, brought out of this world into heaven!

Again, I have a tender Father, who knoweth my frame, and will lay no more upon me, living or dying, than he will enable me to bear. He hath said it, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' O my soul, thou hast little reason to dread a contest with this enemy for this cause! Thou mayest contentedly undergo a little pain to go to thy dearest Lord, when many a sinner hath suffered greater to satisfy his hellish lust.

Thirdly, Is it thy future condition that makes thee unwilling to die? Dost thou not know that death is thy portal, through which thou shalt pass into the true paradise? It is the strait gate through which thou shalt enter into life. Though it is the wicked man's shipwreck, which swalloweth him up in an ocean of wrath and torment, yet it is the saint's putting into harbour, where he is received with the greatest acclamation and richest welcome imaginable.

Travellers who have met with many dangers and troubles in their journeys, rejoice when they come near their own country. I am a pilgrim here, and used, or rather abused, as a stranger; shall I not be glad when I come near my blessed home, my eternal, happy habitation? Children in some parts, when they first behold the stork, the messenger of the spring, testify their joy with pleasant and loud shoutings. Oh, why shouldst not thou lift up thy head with joy, when sickness, the forerunner of death, is come to bring thee tidings that the winter of thy misery, and cold, and hardships, is past, and the

summer of thine eternal light, and joy, and pleasure is at hand? Thy death may well be a free-will offering, considering that though the ashes of the sacrifice (thy body) fall to the earth, yet that divine flame (thy immortal spirit) shall ascend to heaven. In death nothing dieth of thee but what thou mayest well spare, thy sin and sorrows. When the house is pulled to pieces, all those ivy roots in the wall shall be destroyed. The egg-shell must be broken, that the little chick may slip out. Thy body must be dissolved, that thy soul may be delivered; yet thy body doth not die, but sleep in the bed of the grave till the morning of the resurrection. That outward apparel shall not be utterly consumed by the moth of time, but locked up safe, as in a chest, to be new trimmed, and gloriously adorned above the sun in his greatest lustre, and put on again when thou shalt awake in the morning, never, never, to put off more. Oh that I could so live, that I might not only be always ready, but also, when God calls me, desirous to die. If I borrow anything of my neighbour, I pay it back with thanks. My life is God's; he lends it me for a time. Why should I not, when he calls for it, restore it with thanks, that he hath been pleased to lend it me so long? Lord, thy children love thee dearly, and believe that when they come home to thee thou wilt entertain them kindly; yet their flesh, like Lot's wife, is still hankering after the Sodom of this world, and loath they are to leave it, though it be for their exceeding gain. Give thy servant such true faith in thy Son, that I may neither love life nor fear death immoderately; but as the heart of Jacob revived when he saw the waggons which Joseph sent to fetch him to Egypt, so my heart may leap for joy to behold the heavenly chariot which the Son of Joseph shall send to convey me to the true Goshen.

I wish that I may with patience submit on my dying bed to the divine pleasure. It hath been far from some moralists to murmur, either at the extremity of their sickness, or the necessity of dying. By



impatience I do not help, but rather kill myself beforehand. It is the general lot of mankind to sicken and die. Am I angry that I am a man, that I am mortal? Because I know that I must be sick and die, I know that I must submit. The knowledge of an approaching evil is no small good, if improved. Though it cannot teach me to prevent it by all my power or providence, yet it may teach me to prepare for it, and to bear it with courage and patience. Discontent and quarrelling are great arguments of guilt and a defiled conscience. The harmless sheep, conscious of their innocence, do quietly receive the knife, either on the altar or in the shambles, and give death entrance with small reluctancy, when the filthy, loathsome swine roar horribly at their first handling, and with hideous cries are haled and held to the fatal block. The children of God and members of Christ, who are perfect through their head, do often give up the ghost, and desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ; when the souls of wicked men are required of them, they are strangely passionate at the approach of death, and with dreadful screeches salute its harbinger, sickness. Oh that patience might have its perfect work in me, when I am taking my leave of it, and its work is near an end! Lord, my heart is too prone to be impatient under thy hand, though thou art infinitely wise as well as gracious, and knowest what is best for me. In my sickness turn mine eyes upon my sins, that my discontent may be at myself, for that which is the original of all my sorrows; and then I shall never repine or murmur against thee.

I wish that I may daily think of death, and wait, believing and repenting, and working out my salvation, till my change shall come. My whole time is given me, that therein I might prepare and dress my soul for my blessed eternal estate. Why should it not be employed for that end? The child who hath all day been diligent about his duty, may expect his father's good word at night. But what master will give a reward to him in the evening, who hath all the day long served his

enemy? My life is the seed which will yield a crop of horror, or comfort, in an hour of death. If that be good, my harvest will be glorious and joyful; if that be sinful, my harvest will be bitter and sorrowful. 'Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?' The grapes of comfort are not to be expected from the thistles of corruption; nor the figs of peace, from the thorns of impiety. I should blush to commit to the keeping of a cleanly and considerable person, a foul and filthy vessel. With what face can I commend to the holy and glorious God an impure and polluted soul? Oh how dreadful will it be to meet with my dying bed, before I have met with the Lord of life; and to be going out of the world, before I have seriously considered why I came into it! My great work in this world is to get my depraved nature healed by the blood and Spirit of Christ; if I forget my business when I have time to do it, and trifle away my days in doing evil, or doing nothing, I lose my soul, am unfaithful to my Master, and deepen my judgment by the number of my days. That traveller may well be aghast and perplexed, who hath a long journey to go upon pain of death in one day, for which the whole day is little enough, and seeth the sun near setting before he hath begun his journey. How ill doth the evening of my time, and the morning of my task, accord together! How justly may God reserve the dregs of his wrath for me, if I reserve the dregs of my days for him! What folly am I guilty, of, in deferring my preparation for death! If he be a ridiculous person, that having choice of lusty horses, should let them all go empty, and lay an extraordinary heavy load upon a poor tired jade, that is hardly able to go, much more foolish is he that prodigally wasteth his youth, and health, and strength, in the service of the flesh and the world, and leaves the great and weighty affairs of his soul and eternity to be transacted on a sick or dying bed. O my soul, what little cause hast thou to future or delay thy solemn provision for the other world! First, thy life is uncertain; thou hast not another day at thy disposal. There are some creatures, they say, in Pontus, whose

life lasteth but one day: they are born in the morning, come to their full growth at noon, grow old in the evening, and die at night. What is thy life but a vapour, that soon passeth away? The first minute thou didst begin to live, thou didst begin to die. Death was born when thou wast born; the last act of life is but the completing of death. As on thy birthday thou didst begin to die, so on the day of thy death thou dost cease to live. How many outward accidents, and inward diseases, art thou every moment liable to! May I not say to thee, as Michal to David, 'Save thyself to-night, for to-morrow thou shalt be slain'? Others have died suddenly, by imposthumes, or the falling-sickness, or violent means; and if thou promisest thyself a fair warning, before the fatal stroke, thou dost but cozen and cheat thyself. But, secondly, If thou wert sure to see the evening star of sickness, before the night of death overtake thee, thou art not sure thy sickness shall not be such as may not incapacitate thee for the working out thy salvation. Extremity of pain, anguish of body, lack of sleep, the violence of a fever, may indispose thee, and distract thee, that thou canst not so much as think of God. Or thy distemper may be such, that the physician may charge thee not to trouble thyself with melancholy or sad thoughts, lest thou wrongest thy body, and yet the minister commandeth thee to pull up those sluices of sorrow, if thou wouldst not lose thy soul for ever. Or cold diseases, as the lethargy or palsy, may surprise thee, and incline thee to continual slumbers, till at last thou sleepest the sleep of death. Oh how sottish art thou, and how grossly doth the destroyer of souls delude thee to defer that work of absolute necessity, of conversion to God, upon which thine endless weal or woe dependeth, to a dying bed, when thou art not sure to die in thy bed, but mayest as well die in thy shop or fields, or in the streets; when thou art uncertain what disease, if thou shouldst meet with a dying bed, should send thee to thy eternal home; when thou art neither master of thy time nor reason, nor of thy natural abilities, much less of supernatural grace, which is

indispensably requisite to this great work! Oh that, since I must die once for sin, I might die daily to sin; and as the Philistines, that they might the better deal with Samson, cut off his hair, wherein his great strength lay; so that I may the better deal with death, I may by faith and repentance, daily cut off and destroy sin, wherein the strength of death lieth! May I not say to thee, O my soul, as Joshua to Israel? 'Prepare ye victuals, for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go to possess the land which the Lord your God giveth you.' Prepare the spiritual food, the flesh of Christ, which is meat indeed, and the blood of Christ, which is drink indeed; a heart weaned from the world, longing to be with God; for within a few days thou shalt go in, to possess the land of promise. Lord, I know nothing more certain than death. Sin hath deserved it, my brittle body enforceth it; thou hast decreed it, and none can prevent it. I know nothing more uncertain than the time when, or the manner how. Thou hast many ways and means to bring me to my grave; not only ordinary distempers of my body, but thousands of casual dangers. I cannot promise myself freedom from it, in any place or condition. Death may seize me abroad, at home, in company, in solitude, at bed, at board. Why should I not always provide for that extremity, that enemy, which I cannot avoid? Why should I not ever be ready for that which may come at any time, and will come at some time or other? Surely I do not hasten my death by preparing for it, but sweeten it exceedingly. I shall not die a moment the sooner, but infinitely the better. Should death overtake me in my sins, alas! where am I? What will become of me for ever? I may well salute it, as Ahab Elijah, with, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? For it will come to me, as the prophet to that king, with doleful, dreadful tidings. It will bring me news of a dismal dungeon of darkness, to be my habitation; of lions, and scorpions, and dragons, to be my companions; of a never dying worm, an unquenchable fire, pure wrath without mixture, full torments without measure, to be my

portion for ever and ever. Oh teach me so to live above this vain empty life, so to be crucified to this world, so to make my peace with thy Majesty, through the great peacemaker, and Prince of peace, my Lord Jesus, so to set my heart and house, my spiritual and temporal concernments in order, that I may be delivered from the paw of the lion, from the teeth of this monster, from the sting of this serpent; and though my body be destroyed, yet my soul may escape, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler, and mount up to thyself, to enjoy that happy life which shall know no death.

I wish that all the days of my appointed time I may exercise myself herein, to keep a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards all men. There are but two which can afford me real comfort in a dying hour, which always take the same side, and join together, God and my conscience. Human friends often stand afar off, when they should be most near, and I have most need. Some of them are loath to come to a sick man's chamber. Mournful objects must not disturb their jollity and mirth. They are sworn enemies to sorrowful occasions, and banish such foes their quarters, or themselves from such coasts. Others, if they come to visit me, love not to see my ghastly countenance, like not to hear my deep and deadly groans. But be they never so full of pity, they can only sympathise with me, they cannot relieve, refresh me. The most they can do, is to accompany me to my grave, and there they leave me. But, oh the comfort which a loving God, and a conscience sprinkled with the blood of Christ, and purged from dead works, will afford me in a dying hour! The smiles of a God, and cheerings of a good conscience, will be music indeed, to welcome me to the shore, after all my tumblings and tossings in this tempestuous ocean. They will make my bed in my sickness, help me to lie easy, hearten me in my sighs and groans, be my feast at my funeral, bid me be of good cheer, for my sins are forgiven me; tell me that my Redeemer liveth, and because he liveth, I shall live also;

lodge my body in a grave, as in a bed of spices, and convey my soul into my Saviour's bosom and embraces; when my houses, lands, honours, friends, wife, children, leave me, they will cleave to me; nay, when my breath, life, heart, flesh forsake me, they will not fail me; yea, when faith, hope, patience, repentance, shall bid me farewell, weeping, as Orpah did Ruth, these, like Naomi, will stick to me, go with me, and seek rest for me. Oh that my heart may be so upright in the service of my God, that when I shall receive the sentence of death, I may be able to say, with good Hezekiah, 'Remember now, I beseech thee, O Lord, how I have walked before thee, in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight.' O my soul, what a friend shouldst thou be to thy God, thy conscience, how faithful to their warnings, now in life, if thou wouldst have them thy friends at death! Hereby thou mayest be able to triumph in that hour of temptation, to defy death itself, and bid it do its worst. Though it be the common gate through which the sinner goeth into prison, where he meets with chains and fetters, and cold, and all sorts of miseries, yet thou shalt go through it, into the king's palace, where thou shalt have rivers of pleasures, and choice entertainment. If Jacob went down so joyfully into Egypt, when God had said to him, 'Fear not to go down, for I will go down with thee, and I will bring thee up again;' what needst thou fear to go down into the grave, when thy God hath undertaken to go down with thee thither, and to bring thee up again? Thy body may be turned into dust, but thy God is in covenant with thy dust; and thy head, the blessed Redeemer, will not suffer one muscle, or nerve, or artery, or vein of any of his members to be lost. With what cheerfulness mayest thou take thy leave of thy body. Farewell, sweet body, thou hast been in some measure faithful to thy soul, in the service of thy Lord. Farewell, I must bid thee good-night, till the morning of the resurrection. Be thou content to go to bed and sleep in the dust, and rest in hope; 'For though after the skin, worms destroy this body, yet

in my flesh shall I see God. Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold him, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me.' Though thou art sown in dishonour, thou shalt be raised in glory; though thou art sown in weakness, thou shalt be raised in power; though thou art sown a natural body, thou shalt be raised a spiritual body, and fashioned like unto the glorious body of Christ himself. Thy dust shall live, and thou shalt arise and be joined to this soul, and both join with the great assembly of the first-born, in singing the praises of thy Master and husband. The soldier is glad when he is called to receive his pay, though the ways be deep and dirty through which he travelleth to the place of muster. The husbandman rejoiceth when his fields are white to the harvest, and with piping and shouting accompanieth his last load into the barn. Oh that my life might be so sanctified and devoted to my God, that at my death he may be my solace! Ah, Lord, it matters not who be failing to visit me on my sick-bed, so thou be present with me. Nay, though mine enemies come and say. When shall he die, and his name perish? An evil disease cleaveth to him; now that he lieth down, he shall rise up no more. If thou pleasest to visit me with thy saving health, I shall not be afraid when I walk in the valley of the shadow of death. Oh, when the sun of my life shall be setting, let the Sun of righteousness so arise upon me, that I may be delivered from the power, curse, and sting of death, and may find it, through his merits, to be my haven of rest, after all my foul weather; a bed of ease, after my sore labour; a release out of prison, and my jubilee to give me possession of an inheritance undefiled, incorruptible, that fadeth not away, which is reserved in heaven for me. Amen.

## CHAPTER IX

## **Means whereby Christians may exercise themselves to godliness. A good foundation. Living by faith. Setting God always before our eyes**

I come now to the second thing promised—namely, to lay down the means whereby Christians may come to make religion their business.

First, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, be sure that thou layest a good foundation in a renewed heart and nature. I begin with this, because it is the chiefest requisite, and the basis of all. Godliness must first spring up in the heart, before it can overflow in the life. Other means are like those parts of the body, the want of which may be supplied by others; but this is like the heart, which if wanting, nothing can make up its want. A dead man will as soon arise and walk, as an unsanctified person make religion his business. Everything will act according to that principle which is predominant in it; though for a time it may, by violence, work contrary to its natural inclination, yet it will endeavour the removal of that force, and return to its old course. Fire moveth upwards, and earth downwards, both striving to overturn what standeth in their way—because the place of fire is above, of earth, beneath. A river may be stopped and hindered in its current; but it will never cease till it hath overborne the dam, and attained its former passage. Water that is naturally sweet, may be made brackish by the overflowing of salt water; but it will not leave till it hath worked out that saltness, and returneth to his natural sweetness. So every man, whether good or bad, will act according to his nature, whether gracious or vicious. A good man may be hindered in his holy course by temptations, and the violence of the flesh; but, because his nature is gracious, he will never be at rest till he hath forcibly broke through those



impediments, and got into his former way of godliness. An evil man may step into the path of piety through the example of others, or good education, or some slender convictions of a natural conscience; but he will quickly be weary; he will not hold out in it; he will break through those obstacles, because his nature—the stream of his heart—runs another way.

The heart of man is like the spring of the clock, which causeth the wheels to move, right or wrong, well or ill. Hence it is that God's precept is to this, 'Make you a new heart, and a new spirit;' and his promise of this, 'I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall never depart away from me.' The fear of God in the heart will bind thee fast to God in thy life. If the heart be thoroughly drawn to him, the tongue and hand will not depart from him. If the heart once set forward for God, all the members will follow after: the mouth will praise, the ears will attend to him, the eye will watch him, the feet will go after him; all the parts, like dutiful handmaids, in their places, will wait on their mistress. There was a great master among the Jews, which bid his scholars to consider and tell him, What was the best thing, or the best way, in which a man should always keep? One said, A good companion was the best thing in the world. Another said, A good neighbour was the best thing he could wish. A third said, A wise man, or one that could foresee future things. A fourth said, A good eye, that is, a liberal disposition. At last came one Eleazer, and he said, A good heart is better than them all. True, said the master, thou hast comprehended in two words all that the rest have said; for a good heart will make a man both contented, and a good companion, and a good neighbour, and help him to foresee things that are to come, that he may know what is on his part to be done. Indeed, without this there can be no godliness; all professions and performances are but a show, a shadow; and where there is this, there is all godliness in all manner of conversation. As the king of

France said of Dover, that it was the key of England, and if his son, who then invaded the Britons, had not that, he had nothing; so it may be said of the heart, it is the key of the whole man,—it opens and shuts the door to godliness and wickedness,—and if grace hath not this, it hath nothing. The philosopher, when he would persuade the king to settle his residence in the midst of his dominions, and thereby keep all his people the better in subjection, took a bull's hide ready tanned, upon which, when he stood on any side of it, still it rose up on the other; but when he stood on the middle, he kept down all alike. The only way to subdue sin is to do it in the heart; that commands all; otherwise, though one unruly passion may be kept down, another will rise up.

The heart is the great workhouse where all sin is wrought, before it is exposed to open view. It is the mint where evil thoughts are coined, before they are current in our words or actions: 'Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts,' Mat. 15:19. That is the nest in which those hornets breed. The heart is the original of sinful words, as well as sinful thoughts: 'Out of the heart proceed false witness, blasphemies,' Mat. 15:19. They were in the heart before ever they were in the tongue. It is said of the weasel, that it conceives at the ear, and brings forth at the mouth. Every sinner conceiveth at the heart, what he brings forth at the mouth. Such stinking breath comes from rotten inwards. The heart is the vessel of poisonous liquor, the tongue is but the tap to broach it: 'Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh.' The heart is the forge also where all our evil works, as well as words, are hammered out: 'Out of the heart proceed murders, and thefts, and adulteries, and fornications,' Mat. 15:19. You will say that murders and thefts are hand sins, and that adulteries and fornication belong to the eye and outward parts of the body; but, alas! the heart is the womb wherein they are conceived and bred. The outward parts are but the midwives to deliver the mother of those monsters, and to

bring them into the world: 'An evil man, out of the evil treasure in his heart, bringeth forth evil things.' There is no sin but is dressed in the withdrawing-room of the heart, before it appear on the stage of the life.

Apollodorus dreamed one night that the Scythians had taken him and flayed off his skin, with an intent to boil him; and as he was lifting into the cauldron, his heart said unto him, It is I that have brought thee to all this. There is a real truth in this, that the heart brings men both to all their sins, and all their sufferings. As the chaos had the seed of all creatures, and wanted nothing but the motion of the good Spirit to produce them; so the heart hath the seed of all evil, and wanteth nothing but the motion of the evil spirit, and a fit opportunity to bring it forth.

It is in vain to go about a holy life till the heart be made holy. The pulse of the hand beats well or ill, according to the state of the heart, and the inward vital parts. Our earthly members can never be mortified, unless the body of sin and death be destroyed. The foul bird of sin must be killed in the nest, the heart, or it can never be thrown on the dunghill, die in the life. Therefore the Holy Ghost calls on men to take away the cause, if they would have the effect to cease: 'O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness.' 'Cleanse your hearts ye sinners, and purify your hands ye double-minded;' first the heart cleansed, then the hands, Jer. 4:14; James 4:8. If the chinks of the ship are unstopped, it will be to no purpose to labour at the pump. It is not rubbing or scratching will cure the itch, but the blood, whose corruption is the cause of it, must be purified. When the water is foul at the bottom, no wonder that scum and filth appear at the top. There is no way to stop the issue of sin, but by drying up the matter that feeds it.

As Moses cast the tree into the bitter waters, and sweetened the springs; and as Elijah cast salt into the fountain, and thereby healed the waters; so the salt of grace must be cast into the spring, the fountain of the heart, or the streams of the life will never be sweet. Till trees are grafted, and their nature altered, all the fruit they bring forth is wild and harsh, and little worth; till the Christian is grafted into Christ, and a new and another nature be infused into him, all his fruit is unsavoury and unacceptable to God, vain and unprofitable to himself. Such a one is like a cypress tree, fair to look on, but barren. Like a painter, he may make a great stir about the colours and shadows of things, the form of godliness, and shew all his wit, and art, and skill in expressing the outside, but wholly neglecteth the substance, and contemneth the inward parts, the power thereof.

There be several things which may help to make the life fair in the eyes of men, but nothing will make it amiable in the eyes of God, unless the heart be changed and renewed. Indeed all the medicines which can be applied, without the sanctifying work of the Spirit, though they may cover, they can never cure, the corruption and diseases of the soul. The best man, without this, is like a serpent painted as it were without, but poisonous within; as the herb biscort, he may have smooth and plain leaves, but a crooked root; or as a pill, be gilded on the outside, when the whole mass and body of it is bitterness. It is one thing to be angry with sin upon a sudden discontent, as a man may be with his wife, whom he loves dearly, and another thing to hate sin, as that which we abhor to behold, and endeavour to destroy. A filthy heart, like a foul body, may seem for a while to be in good plight; but when the heats and colds of temptations appear, it will bewray itself. Some insects lie in a deep sleep all the winter, stir not, make no noise, that one would think them dead; but when the weather alters, and the sun shines, they revive and shew themselves; so though lusts may seem dead in an

unregenerate man, they are only laid asleep, and when opportunity is, will revive. Shame may hide sin, but it will not heal sin; corruption often lieth secret in the heart, when shame hindereth it from breaking out in scabs and blotches in the life. Some court holiness as hard in show, as Saul did Samuel, to be honoured before the people, when, like him, they hate it in their hearts.

Fear may do somewhat to curb a vitiated nature, but it cannot cure it. The bear dares hardly touch his desired honey, for fear of the stinging of the bees; the dog forbears the meat on the table, not because he doth not love it, but because he is afraid of the cudgel. Many leave some sin in their outward actions, as Jacob parted with Benjamin, for fear they should starve if they kept it, who are as fond of it as the patriarch of his child. This inward love of sin is indeed its life, and that which is most dangerous and deadly to the soul. As an imposthume is most perilous for being inward, and private rocks under water, split more vessels than those that appear above water; so sin, reigning only in the heart, is oftentimes more hurtful than when it rageth in the life. Such civil persons go to hell without much disturbance, being asleep in sin, yet not snoring to the disquieting of others; they are so far from being jogged or awaked, that they are many times praised and commended.

Example, custom, and education, may also help a man to make a fair show in the flesh, but not to walk after the Spirit. They may prune and lop sin, but never stub it up by the roots. All that these can do, is to make a man like a grave, green and flourishing on the surface and superficies, when within there is nothing but noisomeness and corruption. It hath often appeared that those means which the great moralists have used to bridle their lusts and passions, have rather, like strong scents to epileptic bodies, raised them than recovered them. Indeed, if the chief fault were not in the vital parts, then

outward applications might be effectual; but when the heart, and lungs, and inwards, are all corrupted, plasters applied to the face, or hands, or thighs, or sides, will do little good. When the fault is in the foundation of a house, it cannot be mended by plastering or rough-cast. A leopard may be flayed, but he is spotted still, because the spots are not only in the skin, but in the flesh, and bones, and sinews, and most inward parts. When the disease is accidental, as to lose the sight by the small-pox, or the like, there the physic of morality may be advantageous; but where the disease is natural, as in the man that was born blind, there physic will do no good—a miracle alone must restore such a one to sight.

Unsanctified persons at best act from themselves, and therefore for themselves. As the kite, they may spread their wings and soar aloft, as if they touched heaven, when at the highest their eyes are upon their prey upon earth. Lucullus told his guests, when he had feasted them liberally, and they had admired his bounty in their costly entertainment, Something, my friends, is for your sakes, but the greatest part is for Lucullus's own sake. An unconverted person may do something, some small matter for the sake of religion, from common gifts of illumination, &c., but the most that he doth is for his own sake, for that credit or profit which he expecteth thereby. If anything be enjoined which thwarteth his interest, he will reply with Ajax, when commanded to spare Ulysses, In other things I will obey the gods, but not in this.

Reader, make sure of this inward change; otherwise, though thy conversation may be specious, it can never be gracious, nor thy profession durable. If the house be built on loose earth, it will never stand long. When the principles are variable and uncertain, so will the practices be. If the arguments upon which thou takest upon thee the livery of Christ, and the grounds of thy engagement in his service,

be not firm and constant, the love of God, and hope of eternal life, &c., such as the world and flesh cannot overtop, thou wilt throw up thy profession, and leave thy master, when thou art offered in thy blind judgment a better service, though it be but the pleasures of sin for a season, with eternal pains at the end of them, for thy soul, and Saviour, and eternal salvation. How well may he prove a bankrupt, who is worse than naught when he first sets up? I wonder not that many professors disown the Lord Jesus, when they were ignorant why they at any time owned him. He that takes up religion on trust, will lay it down when it brings him into trouble. As the celandine springeth and floweth at the coming of the summer birds, but withereth at their departure; and the corn, that promiseth a good harvest in the blade, is blasted in the ear, because its root is withered and naught; so the person that hath no sound foundation, though he seem to look high, will never hold out.

The turnsole makes a show for a time, with white velvet leaves, and yellow flowers, but fadeth away without bringing forth any fruit. Christ tells us, some which heard the word, though for a season they rejoiced in it, when tribulation came because of the word, were offended at it, because they had no root.

To prevent that sad apostasy which many are guilty of to their eternal undoing, friend, consider seriously beforehand, what it will cost thee to be a Christian indeed. A foolish builder, that undertakes to raise a structure as high as heaven, and pondereth not the charge thereof, gives over before he hath finished it, and so loseth all his expense and labour. As in marriage, one that is wise, and considereth the person, his portion, and his precepts, with the cares and burdens that are incident to that condition, for such must have trouble in the flesh, and after this, upon mature deliberation, accepteth him for a husband, will stick and cleave to him loyally and faithfully, whatever

befalls him; whereas a foolish maid, that huddlith up a match in haste, hand over head, promising herself nothing but delight and pleasure, when she comes to suffer poverty or imprisonment, or disgrace with her husband, repenteth of her bargain, and forsakes the guide of her youth. So the Christian, that hath duly pondered the excellencies in Christ, his misery without Christ, absolute necessity of Christ; what love, and joy, and peace, and endless bliss, God offereth with his Son; what Christ expecteth from all that will be married to him, even the denial of themselves, the taking up of their cross, the contempt of father, mother, wife, children, estate, life, and all for him, and after he hath duly considered all this, gives himself up to Christ, will be faithful unto death, and own the Lord Jesus Christ, whatever it may cost him; when the man that followeth Christ for the loaves, or for fashion, or on a sudden stikes a leagues with him, expecting nothing but comforts and joy in his contracts, will quickly leave him, if called to suffer with him. He that followeth Christ, he knoweth not why, will forsake him, he knoweth not how.

If thou art, reader, to begin this work of entering thyself into Christ's army, I would advise thee to bethink thyself upon what grounds thou engageth in his quarrel; for Christians are not called to their spiritual war for love of fighting, as cocks, that fall to it upon sight of each other. Consider the enemies thou art to fight against, how potent, and crafty, and cruel they are, continually seeking thy destruction. The captain thou art to fight under, how wise he is to direct and command thee, how able to protect and defend thee, how faithful and bountiful to crown and reward thee. The excellency of the cause; it is for thy soul, thy God, thy Saviour, thy salvation. The dangers thou must encounter, and hardships thou wilt be called to endure. The certainty of thy conquest; how impossible it is to miscarry in so just a quarrel, under such an almighty captain, and then lift thyself to



fight the good fight of faith, and fear not but thou shalt be more than a conqueror through him that loves thee.

Secondly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, live by faith. The life of faith, it is the only life of holiness; and unbelief is the mother of all apostasy. When God would persuade Abraham to sincere and singular godliness, he doth it by offering him sure footing for his faith: 'I am God All-sufficient,' or the Almighty God; 'walk before me, and be thou perfect,' Gen. 17:1; knowing that, unless his faith were firm, his steps could never be even; if he had not believed God's power, he could not be evangelically perfect. And hence that father of the faithful became so eminent in obedience, from the strength of his faith. It is said of him, Isa. 41:2, that he came to the foot of God. That child was dutiful indeed, that, when his father did but stamp with his foot, left whatever he was about, though it were never so delightful or gainful to him, and ran to his father to know and obey his commands. Thus truly did Abraham, when God called him to turn his back upon his relations, and the place of his nativity; nay, to sacrifice his Isaac, the child of the promise, as well as of his love; he did not question God's pleasure, nor quarrel with his precepts, but obeyed them presently, and all from his faith. His strong faith caused strong obedience, Heb. 11. It is observable that all the noble and heroic acts of obedience of the Lord's worthies, mentioned in that little Book of Martyrs, were performed under the conduct and command of faith.

Faith is one of the best antidotes against the poison of profaneness, and one of the greatest helps to holiness. None are more faithful to God than they who have most faith in God. They who believe, will be careful to maintain good works, Titus 3:8. As the natural heat is the life of the body, and as that increaseth with the radical moisture, strength and health abound; so faith is the life of the soul—as that is

strong or weak, his godliness is more or less. He that is highest in affiance is highest in obedience. This is the strength of the soul: according to man's strength, such is his walk, either straight or stumbling; according to a man's faith, such is his life, either even or crooked.

1. Faith destroyeth sin.

2. It enableth to live to God.

1. It killeth sin. If the pulse of a Christian's hand or life beat uneven, it is because his faith, which is his heart, doth falter. This is the shield of the soul, which secures it against all assaults and dangers. Other pieces of the Christian's armour are serviceable to defend particular parts of the new man, as the girdle of truth, the loins; righteousness, the breast; the gospel of peace, the feet; but faith is a shield, moveable at pleasure, and surroundeth and guardeth the whole man: 'With favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield,' Ps. 5:12. Faith secureth the head from evil principles. What sense denieth, and reason understandeth not, faith believeth. Aristotle, reading Moses, concerning the creation, is reported to say, *Egregie dicis, domine Moses, sed quomodo probas?* Thou speakest nobly, but how dost thou prove it? The answer to him is easy, 'By faith we believe that the worlds were made of God,' Heb. 11:3.

Faith clears up the understanding, and scattereth the mists of error. The presence of this sun disperseth those clouds. Faith secureth the heart from evil purposes. It is the besom that sweepeth out such dust, and keeps the heart clean: 'Having their hearts purified by faith,' Acts 15:9. Faith entertaineth the King of saints into the heart; it sets him on the throne, and these traitors fly before him. His presence makes these rebels to hide their heads. Who ever could find in his heart to hug sin, whilst he was viewing, by faith, his bleeding

Saviour! Faith secureth the hand from evil practices. The martyrs chose the flames rather than the denial of their Master, and all because of their faith. Those worthies of the Lord, of whom the world was not worthy, through faith stopped the mouths of lion-like lusts, quenched the violence of hellish fires, were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection, Heb. 11:33–35. 'By faith we stand,' 2 Cor. 1:24. As a soldier, under the protection of his shield, stands his ground, and doth his duty, notwithstanding the shot that are made against him; so a Christian, under the protection of faith, keeps his place, and mindeth his work, whatsoever opposition he meets with. Faith, like Joab, stabbeth this Abner under the fifth rib; it wounds sin mortally. Hope, like Saul, hath slain its thousands, but faith, like David, its ten thousands. Whole armies of lusts have turned their backs at the sight of this warrior. By faith the walls of Jericho fall down. Whilst unbelief liveth, no sin will die. All iniquity sheltereth itself under the banner of infidelity. If once the banks of faith be broken down, a flood of wickedness will rush and flow in. What made Abraham deny his wife, and expose her to such temptations and wickedness, but unbelief? What made Isaac tread in his father's steps, and leave Rebekah to the heathen's lust, but unbelief? What made David dishonour his God, by his uncomely carriage before Achish, and injure his soul by his unholy language, that he should one day perish by the hand of Saul, but unbelief? What made Peter deny and forswear his Master, but unbelief? These tares were sown by the enemy, when the husbandman, faith, was asleep: had they believed the power and faithfulness of God to defend them in their dangers and distresses, without their lies, and his grace and bounty to reward them largely, for all their sufferings for his sake; had they believed that God, when he called them to straits, would, without any sinful means, have brought them off safe on earth, or safe to heaven, they would never have used such sinful shifts for their own safety. Faith would secure

the soul against all those temptations, and prevent such sinister and sinful doings. He that believeth, maketh not haste. He will patiently wait God's leisure, and submit to his pleasure, and not venture upon forbidden courses, and unlawful ways, to deliver himself out of distress.

Unbelief is the dung which makes the soil of corrupt nature so fruitful in the unfruitful works of darkness. Whence cometh such immoderate love of a perishing world, but from want of faith and belief of that transcendent glory that is to be revealed? Whence cometh such dulness and deadness in holy duties, but from unbelief, either of the holiness and jealousy of that God with whom we have to do, or of his goodness and mercy, that his reward will pay the charge of diligence in his work? Whence comes such cozening, and cheating, and overreaching in dealings with men, but from distrust of God's power and providence, as if he could not, or would not, spread a table for his children in the most barren wilderness? Whence comes that impatience and murmuring in adversity, but from want of faith, which would encourage the heart in the Lord his God, in the saddest estate, and when the fig-tree doth not blossom, nor the vine yield its fruit, enable the soul to rejoice in the Lord, and be glad in the rock of his salvation? Whence cometh such pride and carnal confidence in prosperity, but because men believe not the meanness, and vanity, and emptiness of riches, and that divine mercy, not the merits of men, are the original of them? There is no sin so monstrous, but unbelief will venture upon it. He that believeth not, will never be allured by divine promises, nor affrighted at divine threatenings, nor obey divine precepts, nor submit to divine providences. As Cicero said of parricide, I may say of unbelief, It is a teeming vice, a well of wickedness; many sins are bound up in it. No wonder the apostle gives such a serious warning, and so strict a charge, against infidelity, as the mother and nurse of all apostasy: 'Take heed lest

there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, whereby ye depart away from the living God,' Heb. 3:12. The superstitious pagans thought that their idol Vibilia kept them from erring out of their way; the religious Christian knoweth, by experience, that his faith keeps him within the limits of his duty. Faith ingrafts the soul into Christ, and into the fellowship of his death, by which 'the old man is crucified, and the body of sin destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin,' Rom. 6:5–8. For therefore did Christ bear our sins in his body on the tree, that we might become dead to sin, 1 Pet. 2:24.

Faith enableth the soul to conquer sin, by enabling it to overcome the three grand provocations to sin: the world, the flesh, and the wicked one. There is neither of these enemies but faith hath wounded mortally.

(1.) Faith enableth to overcome the world. The world, indeed, hath conquered millions; the greatest soldiers have been slain by it. Alexander could subdue the nations in it, but could not subdue his affections to it. As great a conqueror as he was over it, he was its slave and vassal; for his ambition was still larger than his dominions. But faith, clothing the Christian with the sun, helps him to trample this moon under his feet: 'This is your victory over the world, even your faith,' 1 John 5:4.

The world hath two faces—the one ugly and deformed, to affright the saint; the other comely and painted, to allure him to sin; but faith seeth how pitiful, only touching the body, her threatenings are, and how poor, only skin deep, her promises are, and makes the soul to disdain both.

It was by faith that Luther could say, *Contemptus a me Romanus et favor, et furor*, I scorn both Rome's favour, and Rome's fury. The world's furnace and music are much alike to a believer; he is blind

and deaf, nay, dead to both. The special object of faith is the cross of Christ, whereby, saith the apostle, I am crucified to the world, and the world to me. Tickle a dead man, or lance him, it is all one, he is sensible of neither. As Fabricius, the noble Roman, told Pyrrhus, who one day tempted him with gold, and the next day sought to terrify him with elephants, I was not yesterday moved with your money, nor to-day with your beasts. So Basil, when first offered preferment, and afterward threatened with imprisonment, if he would not deny Christ, and turn Arian, to this purpose answered the messenger, Such babies of preferment are fit to catch children with, and such bugbears of bonds and imprisonment may fright your tender gallants and courtiers. Faith enableth the Christian to mount up to heaven, and thereby secures him from the baits and shots, the snares and lime-twigs, which attend him on earth. Homer saith Ulysses caused himself to be bound to the mast of the ship, and every one of his fellows' ears to be stopped with wax, that they might not hearken to the songs of the syrens, and so be drowned in the sea. Faith fastens the soul to Christ, and so ravisheth its ears with the glad tidings of pardon, and peace, and eternal life, that it is deaf to the world's music.

[1.] Faith enableth the soul to overcome the affrightments of the world. Faith, like blown bladders, keepeth the soul from sinking in deep waters. It is a target under which a soul is free from the hurt, though not from the smart, of evil. It is the ark wherein he rides triumphing, when the windows from above are opened, and pour down, and the floods from beneath are broken up. In this strong tower the soul finds shelter. Faith, like Joseph, layeth up in a time of plenty against a time of scarcity, in a day of prosperity against a day of adversity, and so feareth it the less.

Faith sheweth the Christian a place of refuge in the time of trouble. He shall hide thee, saith faith, in the secret of his presence, i.e., cover thee with the warm wings of his providence. He shall keep thee secret in his pavilion—an allusion to princes' retiring rooms, which are sacred and secure places for their favourites. Nature teacheth all creatures to run in distress to that which they count their defence. The conies run to the rocks, the goats to the hills, the ravenous beasts to their dens, the child to his mother's arms. This grace discovereth to the soul a rock, a refuge, a fort, a fortress, a high tower, which makes him fearless of the world's threatenings and bugbears. The lame and the blind, those most shiftless creatures, when they had got the stronghold of Zion over their heads, scorned the host of David, 2 Sam. 5:6, 7. The Egyptians that dwell in the fens are much troubled with gnats, therefore they sleep in high towers, whither those insects cannot fly. 'The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run unto it, and are safe,' Prov. 18:10, Such a soul is like a strong tree, which no wind can shake, or like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved. Therefore he can sing when unbelievers quake and tremble: 'Though the earth be troubled, though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though the waters roar, and the mountains shake, yet we will not fear. The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge,' Ps. 46:2, 3, 7, and 91:2. Faith is like the cork in the net; when the lead would sink the net, the cork keeps it above water. This faith is the anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil, and so stayeth the saint against all the winds and waves of affliction. Faith or belief of the resurrection, and that happiness which then should be enjoyed, was that which enabled Paul to die daily, and to fight with beasts at Ephesus, 1 Cor. 15:31, 32.

In the greatest distress, faith can see deliverance; and when it is at the greatest distance, salute it, as Abraham did Christ's day, afar off.

When the weather is cloudy, it can see the heaven begin to clear, and notwithstanding his present pain and poverty, cause the Christian to rejoice in his hope of bliss and glory. The eye of faith, looking to the recompense of reward, seeth afflictions with the Israel of God, much more eligible than the pleasures of sin. Symphorianus, a Christian young man, after he was almost scourged to death, being dragged to execution at Augustodunum, met his mother, not crying, or tearing her hair, but like a holy lady thus comforting him, Son, my son, I say, remember life eternal, look up to heaven. Life is not taken from thee, but exchanged for a better. At which words of his mother, he went on willingly to the block, and exposed his throat to the fatal axe. One of the Dutch martyrs, feeling the flame coming to him, said, Oh what a small pain is this, to heaven! Our blessed Saviour had an eye to the joy set before him, and thereby was encouraged to endure the cross, and despise the shame. Indeed, if faith spring a leak, then the waters break in, and the Christian sinks apace, as we see in Peter's denial of his Master.

As faith in the promises, so also faith in the threatenings, makes the Christian a conqueror over the world's affrightments: where the world threatens bonds, and whips, and dungeons, and death, if the Christian will not sin against God, and begins to stagger the soul: Take heed what thou dost, saith faith, for God threateneth fire, and brimstone, and chains, and blackness of darkness for ever, as the wages of all sin. Is the wrath of an infinite God not more to be feared than of weak dying men? Is the pains of a violent death, which will quickly be over, and the most the world can do against thee, comparable to the pains of eternal death? And thus faith, by the terror of this great ordinance, drowns the noise of those small pieces, that the soul is deaf to their report.



[2.] Faith enableth the soul to overcome the allurements of the world. If the world cannot terrify the saint with its fiery furnace to disown and deny his Saviour, it will seek to enchant him with its music, and thereby to make him deaf to the call and commands of Christ: thus it served Joseph. When it could not prevail on the left hand, by selling him for a slave, it trieth him on the right hand, by setting a Delilah to tickle him with pleasure; but by faith he saw the hook under the bait, and durst not nibble at it, much less swallow it. Though the world, like Jezebel, painteth her face, and tireth her hair, to render her amiable and lovely, and as a strumpet, sheweth her naked breasts of pleasure and profit, to entice the believer to go a-whoring after her; yet he vieweth by faith the deformity of her person, under all her daubery, and the dregginess and deceitfulness of her pleasures, notwithstanding their show of clearness, and so rejects them with scorn and disdain. Pliny saith of Cato that he took as much pleasure in the honours he denied as in those that he enjoyed. The believer can glory more in his refusal of glory for Christ, than unbelievers in all their preferments. Indeed, if the Christian did consult with sense, or carnal reason, he would take the world's present money; but the believer doth not consult with flesh and blood, like wise Abigail. Knowing how much it will conduce to his advantage, he can part with his estate for God, and never make those Nabals privy to the design, lest they should hinder it.

Besides, faith discovers pure rivers of pleasures, more noble and excellent delights, to be the portion of those that refuse to grate their teeth with such kennel water. As man is a rational creature, he would sell his wares to them that will give most. Now faith sheweth how infinitely God outbids the world. Sense saith, The world offereth fair—it offereth comforts, suitable to thy flesh, such as they desire, and it offereth ready money, present possession: but saith faith, God offereth thee better; the comforts he offereth are more excellent,

being suitable, not, as the world's, to a carnal, brutish nature, but to a heavenly, divine soul, and more durable, being eternal, when the pleasures of sin are but for a season. He that hopes for no better market, will take the present money offered him; but he that is assured of greater gains, will refuse the lesser. An unbeliever, who expects no better bargain than what this life affords him, may well take up with present pay, whatever it be; but the believer, who seeth the glory to be revealed, and fulness of joy in heaven, and is assured that if he be faithful unto death, he shall receive that eternal crown of life, turns his eyes off the honours and comforts of this beggarly world. Those stars of creature joys do all disappear in the presence of this sun. Gold bears little sway with the soul that knoweth his title to the new Jerusalem, that is paved with gold, in which gold is trampled under foot. Those birds that fly aloft in the firmament, are not so easily snared by the fowler's gins. Though the things of this world were glorious in his eyes, during his estate of unbelief, yet now he hath discerned a world beyond the moon, and sent faith as a spy to search and coast that country, which hath brought word back, that it is a good land, flowing with milk and honey, and in it there is want of nothing, they have no glory, by reason of that glory that doth so infinitely exceed. When a man is below, things above seem small; the great stars, that are bigger than the earth, seem not so big as a bushel, and things below seem great: but when a man is above, as upon the top of a steeple, then things below seem little—he beholdeth men like grasshoppers. Were he conveyed to the highest hill in the world, men would not be discerned; great kingdoms would be but small cottages. Unbelief sets a man below, here on earth, and so the things of heaven are little in his eye; but faith soars aloft, it carrieth the Christian up to heaven, and then the whole earth is but a small spot in his eye. Joseph bids the patriarchs, 'Regard not your stuff, for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours:' so saith faith to the Christian, Regard not the lumber and rubbish of this world, for

all the great and good things of the other world are thine. Faith gives the soul a taste, the first-fruits of heaven: 'And as no man having drunk old wine, desireth new, for he saith the old is better;' so no man, having tasted the wine of heaven's pleasures, desires carnal delights. A pilgrim travelling to Jerusalem, saith one, came to a city where he saw a goodly training and mustering; there he had a mind to stay, but that he remembered that was not Jerusalem. He came to another city, where he saw gallant sports and pastimes; there he had some goodwill to abide, but that he remembered it was not Jerusalem. He came to a third, where were goodly buildings, fair ladies, curious music, &c., where also he had some thoughts of settling, but still he remembered it was not Jerusalem. So the believer, when the world offereth him great treasures, high honours, &c., may, through the subtlety of his flesh, have a mind to embrace them, only seeing by faith Jerusalem, where are greater treasures, higher honours, he slights and rejects them. By faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, esteeming the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had an eye to the recompense of reward.

Faith makes things future, present; it looketh into heaven and saith, as David, before he had conquered those places, Gilead is mine, Manasseh is mine; heaven is mine, eternal life is mine, fulness of joy is mine, that kingdom in comparison of which this whole world is a dunghill is mine, because God hath sworn by his holiness, that he will not lie unto his David; and whilst the soul by faith seeth and is assured of these felicities, for their sake it can trample under foot the world's largest offers.

(2.) Faith enableth the Christian to conquer Satan. Though the wicked one be full of power and policy, yet faith makes him flee like a coward. It is said of the crocodile, that he flieth if resisted, but

followeth those that fear and flee from him; truly so doth Satan: James 4:7, 'Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.' But how must he be resisted? the apostle Peter answers that question, 'Whom resist steadfastly in the faith;' 1 Pet. 5:9. The crocodile cannot endure the sight or smell of saffron, therefore in Egypt they sow saffron to keep him away. Faith is this saffron, Cant. 4:14, which drives away the devil. Faith, like little David, wounds the great Goliath of hell. 'They overcame him (meaning the devil) by the blood of the Lamb.' The wild bull, say naturalists, cannot endure a red colour, therefore the hunter putteth on red garments, and standeth before a tree, which the bull runneth against with all his might, and the hunter stepping aside, his horns stick fast in the tree, whereby he is taken. The Christian, by faith in the blood of Christ, overcometh those infernal spirits who thought to overcome him. This is the only holy water that will fright away the devil. Our blessed Saviour, in his speech to Peter, acquaints us how to subdue Satan: 'Peter, Peter, Satan hath desired to winnow thee as wheat is winnowed, but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.' Which words imply, that whilst Peter's faith stood firm, he should not forsake Christ; whilst that was up, he could not be down; his faith flagged before his courage failed, or he himself fell so foully. A tree is soon felled when the root is once loosened; faith roots the soul in Christ, and therein his safety consists; but as his faith fails, so he is loosened from Christ, and thereby in danger of falling. The Christian's strength lieth in his faith, as Samson's in his hair; if the uncircumcised one can deprive us of this, he may make sport enough with us. Hence it is that Satan's chiefest guns are shot against the royal fort of faith, knowing that that commandeth all; and if he can make a breach there, he fears not but to enter with success. The first mine which he ever sprang, to blow up the first Adam and his wife, and in them the whole race of mankind, was by weakening their faith: 'Hath God said, In the day ye eat thereof, ye shall die?' When he came to the second Adam, he endeavoured to slay him with

the same sword: 'If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones,' &c. And without question, his aim was more at Job's faith, than his cattle, or servants, or children; he had a greater intent to have blown down that house of Job's conscience, than that wherein his sons and daughters were feasting.

Therefore, reader, 'Above all, take the shield of faith, whereby thou mayest quench the fiery darts of the wicked one,' Eph. 6:16. Goats in the island of Crete, when they are stricken with a dart, do seek for the herb dittany, which will cause the dart to fall out. Truly, such juice hath faith, that it makes all the darts which Satan shoots at the Christian ineffectual.

(3.) Faith enableth to conquer the flesh. The great apostle, who lived by faith, brought under his body, and crucified the flesh. Faith seeth the safety of the body to consist in its subordination to the soul, and that the only way to save the life, is at God's call to lose it. By faith Abraham left his kindred and country, and obeyed, and went out, not knowing whither he went, Heb. 11:8. Indeed, the flesh is the worst enemy of the three—partly in that it is so near us, always about us, so that we can as well fly from ourselves as from it. A traitor in the bedchamber, is much more dangerous than one in open arms against us in the field. A snake in the bosom, is like to do more hurt than one under the grass; partly in that it knoweth our minds exactly, and so can temper its poison suitable to our palates; but faith can discover its secret conspiracies, and prevent their execution. Though it dig its mines never so closely, and covertly, and craftily, faith will find them out, and countermine them.

2. Faith enableth, as to die to sin, so to live to God. The life of holiness doth so much depend on faith, that it is said to consist wholly in it. The just shall live by his faith. Though he cannot live by

sense, that upon which he lives being invisible; nor by reason, because his food is supernatural; yet he can live by faith, and make a good living of it too. As the body lives by the soul, so religion lives by faith. A mortal wound in faith, lets out the heart blood of all holiness. It is faith that actuates and animates the new creature. Faith puts him upon high designs, and holy enterprises, for God and his own soul. David saith, 'I believe, therefore have I spoken.' It may be said of a Christian, he believeth, therefore he speaks so much of God, for God, and to God. He believeth the unquestionable certainty, incomparable excellency, and eternity of that reward which is set before him, and therefore he prayeth, and watcheth, and readeth, and heareth, and denieth himself, and worketh night and day that he may attain it. Ferdinando of Arragon, believing the report of Columbus, concerning the richness of the Indian mines, and the likelihood of his possessing them, was at great cost and charge in sending out men in ships, and made them venture their lives, and labour hard to get those golden and silver veins. Faith believeth the report which the gospel makes of the glory to be revealed, and the unsearchable riches in Christ, and the likelihood, nay, certainty of his enjoying them, if he will but strive and labour, and use those means which God hath appointed; and this puts the soul upon its greatest industry and integrity, in the performance of what the word requireth, in order thereunto, and a resolution to obtain them, whatever it cost, or to die in the undertaking.

It is by the sap, which from the root is derived through the bark to the branches, that makes them fruitful; it is from the strength which faith derives from Christ, that the Christian becomes so abundant in holiness. Cut off the bark, and the tree withereth; take away faith, and no more good works. The extension of the branches, ariseth from the intension of the sap; and how shall that be conveyed but by the bark? Christ, like Joseph, keeps the granaries, wherein is

abundance of soul-food, and faith unlocks those storehouses, and takes out supplies. As Pharaoh, when the Egyptians cried to him for bread, said, 'Go ye to Joseph, and what he saith to you, do;' so God saith to Christians that call on him for grace, Go ye to Christ by faith, and he will relieve you. It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell. Here is—

(1.) Fulness, abundance; not a drop, or a small degree of living water.

(2.) All fulness, a redundance; the fulness of a spring, a fountain, not of a vessel.

(3.) All fulness dwelling, abiding there to eternity; running over, and running ever. But you will say, What is a Christian the better for it? I answer, Of his fulness, by faith, we all receive grace for grace. As a pipe from the river supplieth the house upon all occasions, and the several offices therein with water; so doth faith supply the Christian with grace from Christ, answerable to his several exigencies and necessities. Indeed, all the graces act valiantly in their several places, under the command of this general. Hence, though fear, and love, and heavenly-mindedness, were specially operative in many of the patriarchs' actions and passions for God, yet still the crown is set upon the head of faith, under whose banner and conduct they fought, Heb. 11. per tot. When this champion, like Goliath, is vanquished, the other graces, as the Philistines, are put to the rout. As dark clouds obscure the glorious stars, so doth unbelief blemish the lustre of a Christian's graces. If this shepherd, faith, be smitten, other graces, like sheep, are scattered. If this grace keep the field, the rest always keep their ground. The length of the days depends upon the shining of the sun; as this shines more or less, so the days are longer or shorter. The degrees and measures of other graces depend exceedingly upon this grace. The branches blossom answerable to

the sap which they receive from the root. Other graces bud and blow according to the sap which they receive from faith.

For example sake;—

[1.] Repentance is more or less according to the degrees of faith. It is the fiducial apprehension of divine love that mollifieth the stony heart. None mourn so much as they who apprehend God a father. The hot beams of divine grace and favour, by faith united in the soul, thaw the most icy heart. They shall see him whom they have pierced, i.e., with an eye of faith, and mourn for him as one that mourneth for his only child. Peter saw Christ's love in his look, and then went out and wept bitterly.

[2.] Humility. We are never lower in our own eyes than when faith assures us that we are high in God's favour. The centurion's humility seems to keep equal pace with his faith. Though Christ saith of his faith, 'I have not found so great, no, not in Israel;' 'Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof; neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee.' When Nathan brought David word that God had a great respect for him, and would build him a sure house for ever, he presently crieth out, 'What am I? and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?' &c., 2 Sam. 7:18.

[3.] Love. The fire of love flames more or less according to the fuel which faith provides: 'To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much.' The knowledge of a pardon granted by such a Lord, who hath all the reason in the world to loathe the soul, turns it into a lump of love.

[4.] Joy. Faith broacheth the pipe of the promises, and presenteth that wine which rejoiceth the heart of the new man: 'In whom



believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,' 1 Pet. 1:8.

[5.] Patience. He that believeth his bonds are good, that his estate is in safe hands, and that his forbearance doth abundantly increase it, will wait quietly for the day of payment. He that believeth, maketh not haste. None quarrel or fret, but from want of faith: 'Run with patience the race set before you, looking at Jesus.' If the Christian be weak, faith will give him the staff of the word to lean on; if he be weary, faith will shew him his journey's end. Lo, yonder is heaven, saith faith; hold out a little longer, your work is almost done. As the eagle by stretching herself towards the sun, through its heat hath her old feathers fallen off, new ones growing in their places, and her strength renewed; so the Christian cleaving to Jesus Christ, the Sun of righteousness, by faith reneweth his strength, as the eagle, runneth and is not weary, walketh and is not faint. It is reported of the crystal, that there is a virtue in it to quicken all other precious stones; when it toucheth them, it puts a lustre and brightness on them. It is true of faith, it hath a virtue in it to enliven and quicken all other graces. These stars have the greatest influence, when in conjunction with this sun.

As the philosopher saith of water, ἄριστον μὲν ὕδωρ, It is of all things the best, most sovereign, and precious, because it is of universal influence in the life of man; so I may say of faith, it is of all graces most excellent, in regard of the universality of its influence upon all duties, graces, providences, ordinances.

It is by faith that prayer becomes so prevalent: 'Whatsoever ye ask of the Father, believing, ye shall receive,' John 16:23. An unbelieving prayer, is a messenger without a tongue; no wonder if he despatch not his errand, Heb. 11:6.

It is by faith that Scripture is so powerful. This sword of the Spirit doth no execution, save in the hand of faith: 'The word did not profit them, not being mingled with faith in them that heard it,' Heb. 4:2.

It is by faith that the Lord's supper becomes so nourishing and strengthening. This is the hand that receiveth that flesh which is meat indeed, this is the mouth that eats it, this is the stomach that digests it; without this thou mayest receive the elements, but not the sacrament, 1 Cor. 11:24, 25. Unbelievers, like wasps, may sit upon the tops of these flowers, and seem to gather honey, but, alas! they are far from any such thing.

It is by faith that crosses are turned into comforts, and afflictions into mercies. This, like Mithridates, can digest poison, and get strength from the wrath and rage of men and devils, Phil. 1:19; Heb. 11:38.

It is by faith that water is turned into wine, temporal mercies into spiritual advantages; faith worketh by love, and draweth men with the cords of love.

It is by faith that men are so fruitful in their lives, Heb 11:32, 33; and so cheerful in their deaths, Rom. 8:37–39. O reader, above all thy gettings, get faith, and above all thy keepings, keep faith; for it must be faith that must keep thee from falling in an hour of temptation, and from fainting in an hour of persecution. The unbeliever is fitly called an unreasonable man, because it is unreasonable that the God of truth should not be credited, and that he, to whom it is impossible to lie, should be distrusted; and also an absurd man, because it is absurd for a workman to go without his tools, which he shall every moment have need of. It is said of the serpent, that of all her parts, she is most careful of her head, well knowing that, though she be mangled and cut never so much in her body, yet if her head be whole,

that will cure the wounds of all her other parts. Let thy great work be to secure thy faith; if that be whole, all will be well; whatever decays there may be in other graces, this will help them to shoot forth again.

Thirdly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, set God always before thine eyes. Subjects will carry themselves handsomely and loyally when they are before their sovereign: they who walk before God, will be upright. His eye is the best marshal to keep the soul in a comely order. Let thine eye be ever on him, whose eye is ever on thee: 'The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good,' Prov. 15:3. Seneca persuaded his friend Lucilius, for the keeping him within compass, to imagine that some grave man, as Lælius, did still look upon him. Reader, couldst thou walk ever as in God's presence, thou wouldst keep close to his precepts. Consider, therefore, that in all places, in all companies, at all times, the eye of God is on thee, and he takes exact notice of all thy thoughts, words, and actions; that he knoweth thy natural parts: 'In his book were all thy members written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was not one of them;' that he knoweth all thy moral passages: 'Thou understandest my thoughts afar off, and art acquainted with all my ways:' 'There is not a word in my tongue, but thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether.' There is no drawing a curtain between God and thee; he seeth thee through and through, far more perfectly than thou canst the clearest crystal: 'Darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day; to thee the darkness and the light are both alike.' The darkness of the air may hide thee from men, and the darkness of thine understanding may hide thee from thyself; but there is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves from him. Neither the ring of Gyges, nor the helmet of Pluto, can hide thee from God's eye. Observe how strict God is in observing thy ways: 'Thou numberest my steps; dost thou not watch over my sin?' Job 14:16. By steps, is

understood his inward motions, and outward actions; whatsoever is done either in the retiring room of the heart, or common hall of the life. To number the steps, notes an exact account; we say of a man that goeth very leisurely and softly, such a man telleth his steps. God is said to tell or number our steps, because he is so exact in his observation of, and so severe in his inquisition into, all our thoughts, words, and deeds. He is supposed to be void of shame, that doth not fear to sin before many witnesses. Though thou art in secret, consider, conscience is present, which is a thousand witnesses, and God, who is a thousand consciences. The Italian was somewhat conceited, who wrote a supplication to candle-light, to disclose to him the secrets of his kingdom. It is thought the light of the candle seeth more wickedness than the light of the sun; but to God the day and night, darkness and light, are both alike; he seeth all things, in all places, and at all times.

It was a pretty fancy of one that would have his chamber painted full of eyes, that which way soever he looked, he might still have some eyes upon him; and he fancying himself, according to the moralist's advice, always, *Sub custode et pædagogo*, under the eye of a keeper, might be the more careful of his carriage. And it was a wise answer of Livius Drusus, when an artist offered him so to contrive his house, that he might do what he would, none should see him; No, saith Drusus, contrive it so rather that all may see me, for I am not ashamed to be seen.<sup>2</sup> If the eyes of men make even the vilest to forbear their beloved lusts for a while, that the adulterer watcheth for the twilight, and they that are drunk are drunk in the night, how powerful will the eye and presence of God be with those that fear his anger, and know the sweetness of his favour! Moses forsook the sinful pleasures of Pharaoh's court, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he saw him that was invisible. A good commander causeth good

government in a town or city. This truth wrought home, and set close to the heart, would cause good orders, good government, in it.

The thought of this omnipresence of God will affrighten thee from sin. Gehazi durst not ask or receive any part of Naaman's presents in his master's presence; but when he had got out of Elisha's sight, then he tells his lie, and gives way to his lust. Men never sin more freely than when they presume upon secrecy. 'They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage. They slay the widow and stranger, and murder the fatherless; yet they say, The Lord doth not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it,' Ps. 94:5–7. Eliphaz, though falsely, accuseth Job as guilty of the same crime, upon the same account, Job 22:5–7, 13, 14. They who shut God out of their hearts, shut him also out of the world, through their atheism, and then are at liberty for all manner of wickedness. They who abounded in abominations said, 'The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth,' Ezek. 8:9–12.

The wise man dissuadeth from wickedness, upon the consideration of God's eye and omniscience: 'And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings,' Prov. 5:20, 21. Joseph saw God in the room, and therefore durst not yield; but his mistress saw none but Joseph, and so was impudently alluring and tempting him to folly. I have read of two religious men that took contrary courses with two lewd women, whom they were desirous to reclaim from their vicious course of life. One of the men told one of the women that he was desirous to enjoy her company, so it might be with secrecy, and when she had brought him into a close room that none could pry into, he told her, All the bars and bolts here cannot keep God out. The other desired the other woman to company with him openly in the streets,

which, when she rejected as a mad request, he told her, It was better to do it in the eyes of a multitude than of God. How doth the adulterer, or drunkard, or thief, when they come abroad at midnight for the satisfaction of their lusts, sneak and steal away when they spy the watch, or any persons who would be witness of their vices! and shall not the presence of that God who hates sin, who is resolved to punish it with hell-flames, make us ashamed or afraid to sin, and dare him to his face?

2. The thoughts of this omnipresence of God will quicken thee to holiness. The soldiers of Israel and Judah were prodigal of their blood in the presence of their two generals, 2 Sam. 2:14. Servants will generally work hard whilst their master stands by and looks on. It is said of Alexander, that his presence caused such courage in his soldiers—*ut illo præsente nullius hostium arma vel inermes timuerunt*—that when he was with them, though they were unarmed, they feared not the weapons of any of their enemies. Our blessed Redeemer exhorteth to prayer in secret, upon this consideration, that God seeth and heareth it, Mat. 6., and to charity in secret, because, though the left hand knoweth not what the right hand doeth, God knoweth what the right hand doeth: 'Your Father which seeth in secret will reward you openly.'

There is a story of Bishop Latimer, that he having in a sermon at court much displeased the king, (Henry VIII.,) was commanded to preach again the next Lord's-day, and to recant his former sermon. According to appointment, he cometh up, and prefaceth to his sermon in this manner: Hugh Latimer, dost thou know this day to whom thou art to speak? even to the high and mighty monarch, the king's most excellent majesty, who can take away thy life if thou offendest; therefore take heed how thou speakest a word which may displease; but, (as if recalling himself, he proceeded,) Hugh, Hugh,

dost thou know from whom thou comest, upon whose message thou art sent, and who it is that is present with thee, and beholdeth all thy ways? even that almighty God who can cast body and soul into hell for ever; therefore look about thee, and be sure thou deliverest thy message faithfully. And so he went to his text, and confirmed what he had spoken the day before, and urged it with more, vehemency than ordinary. The eye of God, as of the sun, will call the Christian to his work. Those countries that are governed by viceroys seldom flourish or thrive so well as those kingdoms where the prince is present in person. Conscience, God's viceroy, may much quicken a Christian to holiness; but God the prince himself much more. 'I have kept thy precepts,' saith David, 'for all my ways are before thee.'

## CHAPTER X

### **Means whereby Christians may exercise themselves to godliness: A constant watchfulness, frequent meditation of death, daily performance of sacred duties**

Fourthly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, watch over thyself continually. This spiritual watchfulness is the main guard of the soul, which, if once called off, we lie open to the shot of every enemy. This, like one of the Nethinims, must stand continually porter at the door of our hearts, God's temple, to keep out whatsoever is unclean. Watchfulness is a diligent observation of ourselves in all things, and at all times, that we may please God always. He that watcheth hath his eyes in his head, according to the wise man's phrase, and seeth, as the Chinese say of themselves, with both eyes. David expresseth it fitly: 'I said, I will take heed to my ways,' Ps. 39:1—i.e., I will ponder my paths, and consider where I set my feet, lest I should tread awry. Without this wariness there is no safe walking. Secure Laish is made a prey to their enemies, Judges 18:9, 10; and the secure soul is made a prey to his spiritual adversaries. Soul lethargies are most dangerous, most deadly. Those that slept in the sweating sickness generally died. He who watcheth not is led about, like one in his natural sleep, by any temptation, he knoweth not how nor whither. When the wolves in the fable once prevailed with the sheep to part with the dogs, they soon devoured them. If Satan can but get men to forego this means of their safety, he will soon make them his prey. The old world was drowned in sleep



before they were drowned in water. Sodom and Gomorrah were secure when they were destroyed by fire.

It is reported of the dragon, that whilst he sleepeth, a jewel is taken out of his head. Noah lost the jewel of temperance, David the jewel of chastity, whilst they were fallen asleep. If this eye of watchfulness be once shut, the soul is open to all wickedness. When Argus, notwithstanding his hundred eyes, was by Mercury piped into a sleep, he was transformed into a cow.

Reader, hearken to God's watchword: 'Ye are all children of light, and children of the day; we are not of the night nor of darkness; therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober,' 1 Thes. 5:6, 7. Sleep is not seasonable in the day of grace, nor suitable to a child of light: 'They that sleep, sleep in the night,' 1 Thes. 5:7. The night is for sleep, therefore in it God draweth a curtain of darkness about us; as the nurse, when she would lay her babe to sleep, throweth a cloth over the head of the cradle. But the day is for watching, for working.

He hath little reason to give himself to sleep, who is every moment surrounded with mortal enemies, which are neither few nor weak. Naturalists tell us that the bird onocratulus and the pelican take their rest with their beaks upright, expecting the hawk; and that the whale and dolphin sleep with their heads erected above water, for fear of hurt. Though there were but that one text of Scripture, 1 Pet. 5:8, relating to this duty, it were enough to alarm any wise man, and to call him to his arms: 'Be sober, be vigilant; for your adversary the devil walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.' If that voice among the ancient Romans, Hannibal ad portas, Hannibal is at the gates, were sufficient to make them leave whatsoever they were about, and run to their weapons, and stand

upon their guard, what watchfulness should this voice of the Holy Ghost, 'The devil is at the door,' call thee to! Reader, take that verse a little in pieces, and see what a foe thou hast to fight with, and then tell me whether it doth not concern thee to watch. Consider,

1. His power: 'Your adversary the devil.' It is not a weak man, but a mighty devil. Thou art not called to wrestle with flesh and blood, but principalities and powers. Is man a match for a devil? or a stripling nodding fit to enter the lists with Goliath? What is a pigmy to a giant, or a dying creature to the prince of the powers of the air? Had David been asleep when the lion out of the wood came against him, the lion had sooner tore him by the throat than he had taken the lion by the beard. The cobweb may as soon withstand the broom in the maid's hand, and the dust oppose the force of a violent wind, as a nodding, secure Christian the temptations of Satan.

2. His policy: 'Seeking whom he may devour.' Had our enemy strength without craft, there were not so much danger, nor cause of vigilancy; but when he hath seven heads, as well as ten horns, and exceeds us in subtlety as much as in power, it concerneth us to be watchful. He that playeth with a cunning fencer will heed his wards the more. Reader, the devil hath a shrewd guess what Delilah is most likely to entice thee, and deprive thee of thy spiritual strength; and if amongst all the uncircumcised there be any that will fit thee, thou shalt not want her. He hath not walked to and fro in the earth so long for nothing; but he knoweth what weeds will take best and thrive most in the soil of thy heart; and be confident he will help thee both to the seeds and plants of them. The subtle serpent, that could wind himself into paradise, knoweth surely how to wind himself into thee. If he were too crafty for man when he was perfect, much more is he for man polluted. And can such a strong politic foe be resisted when thou art lazing upon thy bed of security?

3. His industry: 'Your adversary the devil goeth about.' He is a diligent servant, never from your elbow. As Joseph's mistress, when denied, still solicited, and Samson's harlot pressed him with continual importunity night and day, that his very soul was vexed unto death; so the devil serveth men; he will never forsake them, but follow them with his darts and assaults, till they are safe in heaven from him, or safe in hell with him. He is called the prince of the powers of the air, and his angels spiritual wickednesses in high places; the air is the seat of his empire, and truly, as ravenous fowl hover up and down in the air, to catch and kill little chickens; and though they be frightened away by any one, yet they lie near at the catch, and the person is no sooner gone, but they are descending to destroy them; so those infernal spirits are hovering up and down, walking to and fro, to defile and destroy souls; and though they are resisted and foiled, yet they impudently continue their former endeavours to undo us. Now, hath he any time for sleep that is every moment in such danger?

4. His cruelty: 'As a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.' The lions of the forest have no pity: 'Lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces,' Ps. 7:2. The lions brake the bones of Daniel's accusers before they came to the bottom of the den. But the lions of hell have much less pity; his tender mercies are cruelties indeed. It is not the loss of thy life, but of thy soul, and thy God, and thy Christ, and that for ever, which he looks after. The racking of thy body, and rending thy bones, is nothing to the flames, and whips, and torments which he makes men suffer, and that not for a day, or week, or year, or age, but to all eternity.

Reader, is there not infinite reason for watchfulness? Had not the apostle ground enough for his precept, 'Be sober, be vigilant,' when our adversary is so strong a devil, so sedulous, going about, so cruel,

as a roaring lion, and so crafty, seeking by all means whom he may devour? Yet, alas! this is not all. Go where we will, we see abundant cause to look well to our feet. Every place we come into is a net to ensnare us; we cannot look out of our eyes, but we see a baited hook, nor open our ears, but we hear the syren's songs; we cannot put forth our hands, but we touch pitch, nor set our feet, but in the midst of nets; every part of the body is a Judas, a traitor to the soul. Our crosses and afflictions, if we be secure, will be to us as the jail to a prisoner, filling us with vermin. Our greatest earthly comforts, if we be not watchful, prove but like traps set for vermin, pleasant and killing. When the world sings most sweetly in our ears, she doth but, like Orpheus with his pipe, endeavour to lead us by the ears into unquenchable flames. Thieves with provender in their hands catch horses to steal them; the world allures our hearts by its pleasures and profits, and steals them from God. Our own hearts are Jacobs, supplanters of us, deceitful and desperately wicked. As the water-fowl in Friesland will decoy other wild-fowl in a net, and then give a watchword to their master to seize on them, so officious will our own hearts be to the devil. And shall we not watch and pray that we enter not into temptation?

Sleep is the great leveller which makes all equal. The strongest Samson is as liable in his sleep to be slain as the smallest infant. When a deep sleep from the Lord had seized on Saul and his soldiers, how easily might David, if he had pleased, have killed them! He took away Saul's spear and cruse of water, to assure him that he could have taken away his life. Ah, how soon may the devil, or world, or flesh, defile, deceive, and destroy a sleeping soul! Bees, that have many enemies, mice, spiders, drones, hornets, birds, and beasts, never dare, say naturalists, to give themselves to security, but night and day have their scouts, and sentinels, and corps-de-garde, to keep watch and ward, lest some of their many enemies should on a sudden

surprise them. The Christian may learn this duty from such creatures. Spiders weave their cobwebs near the flowers where the bees use to gather, and also just over the passage out of their hives, that so at their going out, but especially at their coming in, laden and weary, they may catch them, and make a prey of them. David saith, 'In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.' So mayest thou, reader, say, In the way wherein I daily walk doth Satan privily lay baits to catch me; at my table, in my closet, in my shop, in my bed, in the streets, in all places where I go, he hath laid snares for my soul. If there be a snare, and such danger in all things, then let me advise thee, if thou wouldst avoid them, in the words of Paul to Timothy, 'Watch thou in all things,' 2 Tim. 4:5.

Watch against sin, against all sin. The gardener doth not only watch over his flowers, to water and cherish them, but also watcheth all weeds, to pluck and root them up. Take heed lest there be any root of bitterness. Epiphanius tells us, when a dead corpse was carried by any of the Israelites' houses, they used to shut their doors and windows, intimating that men must be watchful against the scent and infection of sin. It is in vain for a captain to guard one gate of a castle, to prevent the enemy's entering there, if he leave another open, when the whole fort is beleaguered and surrounded with mortal enemies.

Watch especially against thine own sin. If a man have many wounds, whereof one is more dangerous than the rest, being near a vital part, though he will be mindful and careful of all, yet he will have a special care of that which is most dangerous. A Christian must watch against all sin, all soul diseases, but principally against his own sin—that disease which is most dangerous; as a wise governor will have a special eye upon that particular person in his garrison whom he knoweth to be a traitor.

Watch for the doing of good; for seasons of prayer, and hearing, and Christian communion. The countryman watcheth for the bell ringing on the market-day, when the sacks will be opened, that he may buy food for himself and his family. The mariner watcheth for the tide; the diseased folk watched for the moving of the waters by the angels. David watched as a sparrow on the house-top, where he might peck up some corn, get some spiritual nourishment. An opportunity of worshipping God is a jewel; the Christian may well watch to take it up.

Watch in duties. The child must be watched at school, or he will play and toy, instead of getting his lesson. The heart must be watched in an ordinance, or it will wander wholly from the business in hand: 'Continue in prayer, and watch in the same,' Col. 4:2. Take heed how ye hear. The Bible will drop out of the sleeper's hand, and prayer is a wrestling with God, which is not a work to be done nodding. They who talk in their sleep talk idly.

Watch after duties. Running carelessly into the open air, immediately after the taking of physic, is dangerous. When the garden is dressed, and the seed sown in it, we must watch it lest hogs get into it, and root up all. Satan thinks to take the Christian at an advantage, after the duty is over; and though he could not beat him in the fight, yet to do it when the saint hath laid by his weapons. It was a wise speech of Marcus Aurelius, after he had vanquished Popilion, general of the potent Parthians, and won the day: I tell thee of a truth, that I stand in greater fear of fortune at this present than I did before the battle, for she careth not so much to overtake the conquered, as to overcome the conqueror. Truly Satan will be industrious to destroy both the conquered utterly, and to overcome the conqueror.

Watch thy senses. These are the Cinque Ports, as one calls them, of the Isle of man, which, if not well garrisoned, will let in strangers and disturbers of our peace. At these havens much of Satan's lading is taken in. Job made a covenant with his eyes; he would not suffer them to gad and gaze at random, lest they should return defiled. Democritus walking abroad, would shut his eyes, lest by their wandering his mind should be taken off from the contemplation of honest things. Actæon became, as the poet fancieth, meat for his dogs, by suffering his eyes to wander. Lusting hath often been the issue of looking; witness Joseph's mistress, David, Achan, the Israelites, Num. 15:39. Stratonice took Mithridates with a song. The heart hath often been angled into sin by the ear, and led into temptation by the eye; therefore Cassian relates that, to preserve the cleanness of the heart, the Egyptian masters taught that men must be surdi, cœci, muti, deaf, blind, and dumb. If those outworks be well guarded, the royal fort is in the less hazard. Shut up the five windows—i.e., guard the five senses, that the whole house may be full of light, according to the Arabian proverb.

Watch your affections. If those waves be tempestuous, they will cast up much foam and froth, mire and dirt. He had need to make a strong wall, that would keep these raging waters within their bounds.

Watch your tongues. The sea hath not more need of banks to keep it in, than the tongue of a bridle. The tongue is compared to a sword, to a razor, both which are keen weapons, and must be handled warily: Ps. 39:1, 'I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle, whilst the wicked are before me.'

Watch your hearts. The heart is the forge, the spring of life, and a wound there is mortal. Keep thy heart with all diligence, (super

omnem custodiam, above all keeping, Jun.;) out of it are the issues of life. Watch over all things, watch in all things. This voice, saith Bucer, should always sound in our ears, Watch, watch.

How frequent is Christ in his precepts to this duty, as knowing fully the weight and concernment of it: 'Watch ye therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh. Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.' And he is as frequent in his promises to it: 'Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find watching;' 'blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments;' 'and if he shall come in the second or third watch, and find him so, blessed is he,' Luke 12:37, 38, 43. Surely blessedness is worthy our waking; bliss is worth keeping our eyes open a few days for. Apollonius, held in his time for an oracle, coming early in the morning to Vespasian's gate, and finding him, then a private person, up, and at study, he said to his companion, This man is worthy to reign and command an empire; which afterwards came to pass. He that watcheth, with Christ, the short hour of this life, shall be counted worthy to reign with him in his kingdom for ever. Sion, which is frequently put for the church of God, signifieth a watch tower, because from that hill a man might see the Holy Land, and all the countries thereabout; but the spiritual signification of it may be this, that all the members of God's church must be like soldiers in a watch-tower, observing who cometh in and who goeth out, lest traitors should steal into the fort of the heart undiscovered.

Fifthly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, think often of thy dying day, and of what price and value godliness will be to thee at such a time. There are few thoughts more terrible or more profitable than of death. Hence it is that God commands man so often to remember his latter end, because the meditation of it is so gainful to



him. The first day man was made, he was called to think of his last day. God minded him of death in the tree of knowledge, and the threatening annexed to the prohibition, that he might thereby keep him from sin. Satan could not prevail with Eve to taste of that killing fruit, till he had prevailed with her to distrust that threatening of death, 'Ye shall not surely die,' Gen. 3:4. After the fall, God reneweth this meditation, by turning the conditional into an absolute commination, 'Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return.' And though the Holy Ghost omitteth many particulars about God's carriage with the long-lived patriarchs, and their holy conversation before him, yet he is exact in registering their deaths—and he died, and he died, of every one, Gen. 5.—to quicken us to fear God, because we are but dying, frail men. There is hardly anything about which we deal, but God gives us by it a memento of death. Our clothes are all fetched out of death's wardrobe, our food out of death's shambles. The sun is an emblem of life's posting, the night of the chambers of darkness. The year hath its autumn, the day its night. Our candles should mind us of the wasting of our days, the evening of the shadow of death; our undressing, of our putting off our earthly tabernacles; and our lying down in our beds, of our lying down in our graves.

If thou wouldst make religion thy business and main work, think often and seriously of thy death and departure of this world. He that guides and steers the ship aright, sits in the stern or hindermost part of it. He that would order his works, his way, according to God, must be frequent in the meditation of his end. The end of his days must be at the end of all his thoughts. Zeno Cittiaëus consulted with the oracle how he might live well, and received this answer, Εἰ συγχρωτίζοιτο τοῖς νεκροῖς, If he would be of the same colour with the dead.

Reader, if thou wouldst live much, and well, get thy heart as much affected with godliness in health as it will be in sickness. Have the

same thoughts of it, the same seriousness about it, the very same carriage towards it, whilst the world salutes thee with its smiling face, and bewitching features, which thou wilt wish thou hadst had when thou shalt come to take thy leave of it, and lie upon thy dying bed. Be of the same colour with the dead. Oh what thoughts have the dead of godliness, and of making it one's business! The dead in Christ, and the dead out of Christ, have both other manner of thoughts of religion, and making it one's occupation, than thou canst possibly imagine.

Those who, while they live, delay repentance, and dally about religion, minding it as if they minded it not, who neither, in their dealings with men, nor duties towards God, nor in their relations nor vocations, make it their business, but misspend their precious time, misemploy their weighty talents, neglect God and their eternal welfares, as if they had not been made to mind either, when they come to die, and perceive in good earnest that that surly sergeant death will not be denied, but away they must go into the other world, and fare well or ill for ever, according as their hearts and lives have been godly or ungodly, good or bad here, good Lord, what thoughts have they then of godliness! How hearty are their wishes that they had made it their business! What worlds would they give that religion had been their principal work! What prayers and tears do they pour out for a few days to mind it in! What sighs, and sobs, and groans, that they have neglected it so long! What purposes do they take up, what promises do they make, if God spare them, to follow hard after holiness, and make it their only business! A philosopher asking Euchrites which of the two he had rather be, Cræsus, one of the richest and most vicious in the world, or Socrates, one of the poorest and most virtuous, Euchrites answered, Cræsus vivens, et Socrates moriens, Cræsus while he lived, and Socrates when he died.

The cuckoo, when wearing away, changeth her note. The worst men, when they come to die, alter and change exceedingly.

It is worthy our observation, that those who are greatest strangers to death are most familiar with the works of darkness. No place abounds more in wolves, no person in wickedness, than where this mastiff is wanting: 'Jerusalem hath grievously sinned. Her filthiness is in her skirts; she remembereth not her last end; therefore she came down wonderfully,' Lam. 1:8, 9. Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; hath sinned sin—Heb., Hath committed a great or grievous sin, so the Chaldee. Behold here the colour of her sin; it was not of an ordinary dye, but of a black, a bloody, a heinous nature. 'Her filthiness is in her skirts.' Lo, here her carriage after her sinning: she made of it an open show, so far was she from shame. It is a term taken from prostituted strumpets or menstruous women, saith Diodat. The outward looks of the former bewray her inward lusts, and the marks of the latter's defilement are visible on her garment. Thus the show of Jerusalem's countenance did publicly evidence her crime. She did as clearly by her skirts proclaim her filth, as if it had been written on her face and engraven on her forehead. Here was impiety in her practice, 'Jerusalem hath grievously sinned;' and impudency to purpose, 'her filthiness is in her skirts.' But what dust was that which bred such vermin? what polluted seed was that which begat such a poisonous serpent? Reader, if thou wouldst know the mother which brought forth and bred up this ugly monster, 'she remembereth not her last end, therefore she came down mightily.' It was her forgetfulness of death which nourished and cherished her wicked deeds. They who mind not their reckoning, care not how much they riot and revel.

They who put far away the evil day, cause the seat of violence to come near, Amos 6:3. The further we drive death from our thoughts,

the nearer we draw to sin. They who fancy their foe to be very far off, will not prepare and make ready to fight. Men that are young do not consider that the old ass often carrieth the skin of the young to the market; that death comes like a thunderbolt and lightning, and blasteth the green corn, and consumeth the strongest buildings; if they did, they would flee youthful lusts.

He who seeth death at his door, will be most diligent about his duty: a serious consideration of the death of the body will be a sovereign though a sharp medicine to kill the body of death. The naturalists tell us, that the ashes of a viper, applied to the part which is stung, draweth the venom out of it. They who look on themselves as pilgrims and strangers, will abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul, 1 Pet. 2:11. Who would make his belly, his gut, his god, who considereth that every meal may be his last? or that thinketh his dainty diet, his fine fare, doth but provide a greater feast for worms? Who would give way to sinful wantons, who believeth that whilst he is unloading his lust, God may put a period to his life? He that is high in conceit of himself, little dreameth how low he must shortly be laid. Who would be proud of that body which shall ere long see corruption, become such a noisome, loathsome carcase, that the nearest and dearest relations will not endure the sight or scent of it? He who loveth the world inordinately, forgetteth that he may leave it suddenly, and must leave it certainly. Would Haman have bragged so much of Esther's banquet, if he had known that his own corpse should be served in for the last course? Would the Israelites have tempted God for meat, if they had thought that death should have been their sauce? Would Achan have coveted the golden wedge, if he had mused of his so sudden departure into the other world? Without question he would, have forborne the Babylonish garment, if he had seen death at his back, so ready to strip him naked. Had the rich fool thought that his bed should that night have proved his

grave, he would never in the day have prided himself in his goods. Who would not at God's call vilify that flesh which will be ere long a lump of filth, and be choice of that soul which lives for a more high and heavenly flight!

It is reported of the Brahmans, that they use no clothes but bear-skins, no houses but caves, no food but such as nature dresseth. When Alexander came to them in his travels, he asked them the reason of this severe kind of living. They answered him, We know we shall die, whether to-day or to-morrow we know not; and therefore why should we take care, either for power to govern others, or for riches to live in pleasures, or for honour to be esteemed of? None are so loose to the world, that great hinderance of holiness, as they who ponder they must leave it. Travellers who look on themselves near their journey's end, care not to burden themselves with much baggage. Their moderation will be known to all men, who believe the Lord is at hand.

Those who are most mindful of their deaths, are most faithful in their lives. Job was eminent in grace, because Job was daily conversing with his grave. All the days of his appointed time he waited till his change came, Job 14:14. That servant will follow his work most and best, who expecteth his master's coming every moment.

It is said of the kite, that by the turning of his tail he directs and winds about his whole body; the same is reported of the glede or puttock. Fish also, say naturalists, turn and wind about by the fins in their tails. Reader, could I but prevail with thee to mind the end of thy life, it would help thee very much to order thy conversation aright. Oh, said God, that my people were wise! then would they consider their latter end, Deut. 32:29.

The Thebans made a law, that no man should build a house for himself to dwell in before he had made his grave. Several of the philosophers had their graves made before their doors, that whenever they went abroad they might remember their deaths. If thou wouldst but in thy outgoings and incomings behold the place of thy burial, I doubt not but thou wilt be watchful over all thy ways. When thou art in the midst of thy delights, as Joseph of Arimathea, have thy tomb in thy garden, and it may prevent thy surfeiting by those dainties. When thou sittest at table, let the first dish set before thee be, according to Prester John's custom, a death's head, and then with what fear wilt thou feed; how thankfully wilt thou receive the creatures, even as through the beloved Son! how soberly wilt thou use them, even as in God's sight! If God raise thee to the height of prosperity, and some friend do but (as Moses and Elias to Christ, when his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was as white as snow, Luke 9:30, 31) talk to thee of thy decease, which thou must shortly accomplish, it will abate thy love to the world's withering vanities, and quicken thine endeavours after the eternal weight of glory. If God cast thee into great adversity, and thou dost but consider thy time here is but short, and therefore thy troubles cannot be long, this will make thee contented in the saddest condition. When thou beholdest thy relations, and forethinkest that thine eternal separation from them is at hand, and that within a few days thou shalt never have another opportunity to help them heavenward, how will it stir thee up to do them all the good thou canst now, both by thy precepts, pattern, and prayers! If, when thou attendest on public ordinances, thou wilt but cast thine eye on the graves in the churchyard, as thou passest along, and meditate thus: Within a little time I must be laid in the dust, when I shall hear no more, pray no more, enjoy a Sabbath no more; when I shall never, never more have a tender of a Saviour, never more have a season to beg mercy in for my poor soul. After such awakening thoughts, with what attention

wouldst thou hear! with what affections wouldst thou pray! with what intension and devotion, with what seriousness and uprightness, wouldst thou perform every duty!

Some say that nothing in this world is so strong as death, because it subdueth the mighty, it conquereth the greatest conquerors, it overcometh all. Sure I am, that death hath great force and power over men's souls, as well as over their bodies. The thought of it hath raised some to a spiritual life. The consideration of death hath also caused others to live much in a little space; when they have seen the sun of their lives near setting, and the night of their deaths approaching, they have in the day followed their work with the greater diligence. None will work so hard as they who think themselves near their everlasting homes.

There were two emperors, Adrian and Charles the Fifth, that in their lifetime caused their coffins to be carried before them, and their exequies to be solemnly celebrated, to this end possibly, that, considering they were but men, dying men, they might thence be righteous in their government, and virtuous in their actions.

It is reported of Turannius, that after he was ninety years old, he got leave of Cæsar to retire himself from court; and the old man would needs be laid in his bed, as one that had breathed out his last, and all his family must bewail his death. Friend, do thou in earnest what he did in jest. Suppose thou wert this day to bid adieu to thy friends, relations, honours, and possessions, and to travel into the unknown other world; to take thy leave of hours, and days, and months, and years, and time, and to sail into the boundless ocean of eternity; suppose thou sawest death creep in at thy chamber window, come up to thy bedside, draw the curtain, take thee by the hand, and tell thee that he is come from the infinite, almighty, jealous, most holy God, to

fetch thee immediately into his presence, there to answer for all thy thoughts, words, and deeds, and to receive either matchless and endless pain, or unchangeable and unconceivable pleasures, according as thy practices have been, what wouldst thou think at such a time of godliness? Good Lord, what a price wouldst thou set upon it! what wouldst thou not do or give for it! Then godliness will be godliness indeed, as little and as lightly as thou settest by it now. And why is it not worth as much now? Dost thou not see death like a mole digging thy grave under thee? Dost thou not feel that worm within thee, which will ere long consume thee?

Believe it, thy death may be nearer than thou dreamest; the glass of thy life may be almost out, though thou thinkest it is but new turned. The murdering piece which kills thee, parting thy soul and body, may be discharged with white powder, give thee no warning at all. The next arrow which is shot may hit thee; the next time the bell goes may be to tell others that thou art dead; the next time the earth is opened may be to receive thy body in. Thou seest some fall on thy right hand, some on thy left hand, some of thy very age, and of greater strength and health, and canst thou esteem thyself shot-free? Is not every carcase a crier, and every tomb a teacher, calling upon thee to number thy days, and apply thine heart unto wisdom?

Silly man is like the foolish chicken, though the kite comes and takes away many of their fellows, yet the rest continue pecking the ground, never heeding their owner, nor minding their shelter. Death comes and snatcheth away one man here, a second there; one before them, another behind them, and they are killed with death, undone for ever, Rev. 2:23; yet they who survive take no warning, but persist in their wicked and ungodly ways. 'They are destroyed from morning to evening; they perish for ever without any regarding it. Doth not their



excellency which is in them go away? they die, even without wisdom,' Job 4:20, 21.

It is the saying of a heathen, That it is impossible for a man to live the present day well, who doth not purpose to live it as his last. I may say to thee, friend, it is impossible for thee to live the present day ill, if thou wilt but live it as thy last day. If thou dost but consider, Well, this place may be the last place I shall come into, shall I pollute it with sin? or shall I not rather perfume it with sanctity? This expression may be the last that ever I shall speak, shall it be tainted with vice? or shall it not rather be seasoned with grace? This action may be the last that ever I shall do, and shall it be a deed of darkness? or shall it not rather be a work of the day, of the light? This sermon may be the last that ever I shall hear, and shall I now be heedless? After this I shall never more have a call from Christ, and shall I now be careless? This prayer may be the last prayer that ever I shall pour out to God; if God deny me now, I am damned and undone for ever, and shall not my head, and heart, and will, and mind, and all be working, that it may be a prosperous, a prevalent prayer? This Sabbath may be the last Sabbath that ever I shall sanctify; I may from henceforth and for ever be deprived of all such opportunities of getting and increasing grace, of serving and honouring my Saviour, and of working out my own salvation. If I sow not now good seed, I must never expect a happy harvest. If I buy not now, the market will be quickly over. Shall I lose any precious minute of this holy day? Is it time now to trifle about the affairs of my soul and eternity? Well, I will, through Christ, take heed how I hear; I will hear in hearing, I will pray in praying; I will hear and hearken, cry and call, with all my heart, and strength, and soul, and mind, that if it be possible, the Lord may not leave me without a blessing. When the orator thinketh he is at the close of his oration, then he useth his

chiefest art and rhetoric to move his auditors' affections; he would have his last part his best part.

O reader, if thou wilt but often wind up this weight of thine approaching death, it would keep thy soul in a quick, spiritual, and regular motion at all times. As ashes preserve fire, and keep coals from going out, so the thought that we shall ere long be turned into ashes will preserve the fire of grace alive and in action.

Sixthly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, mind a daily performance of sacred duties. He that hath nothing of his own whereupon to live, must be frequently fetching in provision from the shops or market where it is to be had. The Christian's life is maintained, not by himself, but by what he receiveth from God; not that we are sufficient of ourselves, our sufficiency is of God; therefore there is a necessity of daily converse with God by holy ordinances, and of waiting at his gate; as the beggar, who hath neither a bit of bread, nor a penny to buy any, at the rich man's door for supply. Our spiritual strength is like Israel's manna, rained down daily; we are kept by a divine power, and allowed but from hand to mouth, that we might continually depend on, and resort to, the Lord Jesus for our allowance. Paul speaks in some places of his great disbursements—how much he laid out for God and his people, that he laboured more than all the apostles; but you must think, Whence had Paul such a spiritual stock that he was able to outvie all others in his expenses? He tells you that the Son of God kept house for him, and that he was the steward to spend of his treasure, and thence his disbursements were so large. 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I live in the flesh is by the faith of the Son of God,' Gal. 2:20. As the plant mistel, having no root of its own, both grows and lives in the stock or body of the oak; so the apostle, having no root of his own, did live and grow in Christ. As if he had said, I live, I keep a

noble house, am given to hospitality above many, in labours more abundant, in watchings, in fastings more frequent, in perils, and dangers, and deaths often; but the truth is, I do all this at another's cost and charge, not at mine own; I am beholden to Christ for strength to do and suffer whatsoever I am called to. He carrieth the purse for me, and gives out to me according to my necessities. I have not a farthing of my own wherewith to buy the least morsel. I can do nothing of myself, but I can do all things through Christ strengthening me.

Man is a weak creature, and so far from running, that he is not able to creep in the way of God's commandments, unless Christ strengthen him: 'Without me ye can do nothing,' John 15:5. If Christ withdraw himself as the sun, he carrieth the light of holiness along with him. The easiest duty is too hard, and the weakest enemy too strong for us, unless Christ assist us. It is upon his wings alone that we can mount to heaven, in an ordinance, and through his power, that we do improve any providence. It is not the standing army of habitual grace that will make the Christian a conqueror, he must daily be recruited with auxiliaries from heaven. The watchman doth not only make the watch, and set every wheel in its right place, but he or some other must wind it up daily, or it will stand still. Exercising grace is as requisite to our spiritual motion, as habitual grace to our spiritual being. The razor, though it be never so sharp or keen at first, if it be used, must be often at the whetstone, or it will grow dull.

The wife that hath frequent occasions for money for provision for herself, and children, and servants, and for clothes and all family necessities, and not a penny but what comes out of her husband's purse, and he, fearing she should be prodigal, lets her have money by driblets, but from hand to mouth, must be always going or sending to

him, or otherwise starve. The shopkeeper that drives a great trade in the country must go often to London, or abroad in other parts, to fetch in commodities. The Israelites in the wilderness were maintained for water by the rock. They drank of the rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ. The rock followed them; they did not only drink of it at first, but had a constant morning's draught, and drank of it often in the day; it ran in a stream after them, and every day supplied them. It is no marvel the apostle commandeth us, Pray continually, pray without ceasing, pray evermore, when he knew all our living was got by begging, that all our supplies must be from above, and we must expect nothing without asking. Ordinances are the food of the soul. As cows afford us both milk and beef, so ordinances are milk to babes, and meat for strong men. Our God is the fountain of spiritual as well as of natural life. It is said most truly, in respect of a natural life, 'In him (meaning God) we live, and move, and have our being,' Acts 17:28. 'We live.' Now as God hath made the heart the spring of natural life, and hath drawn from thence a multitude of arteries to carry the vital spirits through the whole body, and disperse life through every part of it; so he hath made the Mediator the spring of spiritual life, and his ordinances the arteries to convey life to every part of the soul. 'In whom we move.' As God hath from the head derived manifold sinews to carry out thence the animal spirits, and with them the faculty both of sense and motion over all; so the Lord, from Jesus Christ the Church's head, through the sinews of sacred duties, conveyeth spiritual sense and motion to all his members. 'And have our being.' To preserve our being, he hath made the liver a fountain of blood, and from thence drawn the veins to convey it over the body, to the nourishment of the whole. Ordinances are those veins which convey and disperse gracious spirits over the whole new man. 'With him is the well of life,' Ps. 36:9.

Sacred duties are as needful every day for our souls as food and raiment for our bodies. The body must continually be repaired with nourishment, because it is continually consumed by our natural heat. Yesterday's bread will not keep the labourer to-day in strength and vigour to go through with his work; he must have new diet, or he cannot hold out. Friend, I must bespeak thee, as the angel to Elijah, Up and eat, for the journey is too great for thee. Up and be doing in prayer, and Scripture, and holy ordinances, that thou mayest feed and receive spiritual nourishment; for otherwise the business of exercising thyself to godliness, the duties required of thee to be performed, the graces to be exercised, the temptations to be resisted, the deadly enemies to be conquered, will be too hard for thee, the journey will be too great for thee. The Amalekite, by long fasting, grew faint and unable to go his journey. If the bringing stream be not as large as the running stream, the bottom will quickly be without water. The greatest stock will lessen apace, if a man spend daily on it, though but in a small quantity, if he hath no way of getting. Those that are under-kept, and called to hard labour, can never perform what is required of them. The spirits daily are decaying, and if not daily renewed by proper nourishment we perish. The vessels that are always leaking, must stand constantly under the conduit to get what they lose. When Jonathan, through fasting, became faint, he tasted a little honey, and his eyes were enlightened. 'How much more,' said he, 'if haply the people had eaten liberally of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines,' 1 Sam. 14:29, 30. The more a Christian mindeth divine ordinances, in obedience to God's precept, and affiance on God's promise, the more strength he shall receive to conquer his spiritual adversaries, and to discharge the several duties incumbent on him. The truth is, our religious life, our heavenly flame, is like a straw fire to malt, which must constantly be tended and fed with fuel, or it will go out. There is not more need of

the shepherd's constant and daily tending his weak sheep in the summer season, than of the saint's daily regarding his precious soul. As trees being well ordered with skill and diligence, they become abundantly fruitful; but being left to themselves, without culture and care, they bring forth little or no fruit. So Christians, by a diligent use of means, abound in the fruits of righteousness, but neglecting ordinances, they decline and decay.

The heart of man is, like Reuben, unstable as water, and is stablished with grace, Heb. 10, which cannot be expected, but through the means of grace. The viol, that with every change of weather is apt to be out of tune, must be constantly hung within scent of the fire. Whilst we are in the care of this world we are full of damps, and therefore need all means of quickening. Our hearts are like clocks, twice a day at least the plummets must be pulled up, or their motion and course will be hindered.

Indeed, as God could preserve our bodies without food or any sustenance by his omnipotent power, as he did Moses and Elijah forty days together, but he will not where he affordeth ordinary means; so he could preserve our souls in life without ordinances, but he will not where his providence giveth us opportunity to enjoy them.

Reader, I must say to thee, as Jacob to the patriarchs, 'Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt; get you down thither and buy for us, that we may live and not die.' Behold, thou hast heard there is spiritual food in heaven; the son of Joseph hath his granaries full of corn, go thou thither daily by sacred duties, that thy soul may live and not die. There is a sensible decay of the strength in husbandmen, whose work is great, upon one day's abstinence. If tradesmen grow careless of their business, and neglect their shops, they quickly decay in their estates. When Christians grow careless of duties, and neglect

their closets, it is no wonder that they decline in their spiritual stocks. When the moon hath her open side downward she decreaseth, but when her open side is upwards towards heaven she increaseth in light. There is no growing in grace and holiness, but by conversing with heaven. Grace, like armour, may easily be kept bright if it be daily used, but if it hang by the wall, it will quickly rust, and cost much time and pains to scour.

Much fasting takes away the stomach; and omission of closet duties at one time makes a man more backward to them, and dead about them, another time. When a scholar hath played the truant one day, it is difficult to bring him to school the next day. Fear and shame both keep him back; when he comes thither he is the more untoward about his book. Our deceitful hearts, after they have discontinued holy exercises and are broken loose, are like horses gotten out of their bounds, not found or brought back without much trouble. When an instrument is daily played on, it is kept in order; but if it be but a while neglected and cast into a corner, the strings are apt to break, the frets to crack, the bridge to fly off, and no small trouble and stir is requisite to bring it into order again.

We read of the Jews' daily sacrifice, Luke 1:10, which was morning and evening, Exod. 29:38, and 30:7, 8. David was for morning, and evening, and noontide, Ps. 55:17. Daniel was three times a day upon his knees, Dan. 6:10.

In the morning the saints were at their devotion, which is thought to be the third hour, when the Holy Ghost descended on the apostles, Acts 2:15. This is deemed to be our ninth hour.

The middle or mid-day prayer was termed the sixth hour, which is our twelfth, John 4:6. At this time Peter went up to the house-top to pray, Acts 10:9.

The evening prayer was at the ninth hour, which is our three o'clock in the afternoon. 'Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour,' Acts 3:1. So Cornelius, Acts. 10:30, 'At the ninth hour I prayed in my house.' Some think the primitive Christians had these three hours in such regard and use that thence they were termed canonical hours. David tells us, 'Seven times a day do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments,' Ps. 119:164; 1 Thes. 5:17. The more frequent a Christian is at holy duties, (supposing he doth not make the commands of God to interfere, and neglect his calling and family, when his presence is required in them,) the more thriving he shall be in his spiritual trade. The oftener we go to the fountain or river, the more water we bring thence. As runners in a race do daily diet their bodies, and use exercise to keep themselves in breath, that they may be more able and active when they run for the wager; whereas, if they should neglect it, they would grow palsy and short-winded, and unlikely to hold out when they run for the garland; so Christians, who would hold out to the end, and so run as to obtain, must be daily feeding and dieting their souls, and renewing their strength by these means which God hath appointed.

As the sun is the cause of life and growth in vegetables, so is the Son of God the efficient cause of motion and growth in Christians; where the Son is present in any soul, there is spiritual motion and growth, budding, and blossoming, and bearing fruit; but when the sun withholds and withdraws, when this sun departs, the soul is at a stand. Now, ordinances are the means whereby the Mediator conveys heat, and life, and growth to men.

## CHAPTER XI



**Means whereby Christians may exercise themselves to godliness. Frequent meditation of the day of judgment. A daily examination of our hearts, avoiding the occasions and suppressing the beginnings of sin**

Seventhly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, meditate much upon the day of judgment. They will prepare themselves best to the battle who always hear the sound of the last trump in their ears. Zisca, that valiant captain of the Bohemians, commanded his countrymen to flay off his skin, when he was dead, and to make a drum of it. Which use, saith he, when ye go to battle, and the sound of it will drive away the Hungarians or any of your enemies. Could the Christian but, with Jerome, hear the sound of the last trumpet in his ears at all times, it would encourage him in his spiritual warfare, and enable him to fight manfully, and to cause the enemies of his salvation to flee before him. He who can frequently, by faith, view the Judge sitting on his throne of glory, hear the last trumpet sounding; behold the dead raised, the books opened, the godly examined by the covenant of grace, all their duties, graces, services, sufferings publicly declared, approved, and rewarded; the wicked tried by the law of works; all their natural defilements, actual transgressions in thought, word, and deed which ever they were guilty of, with their crimson bloody circumstances, openly revealed, their persons righteously sentenced to the vengeance of the eternal fire, and that sentence speedily, without the least favour or delay, executed on them, will surely loathe sin as that which brings him certain shame and torment, and follow after holiness, which will be his undoubted credit and comfort at that day. The apostle, writing to the Jews

concerning the terror of that day, how the heavens must pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works therein burnt up, makes this use of it, 'Seeing, then, that all those things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?' 2 Pet. 3:11, 14. And again, 'Wherefore, beloved, seeing ye look for these things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.' He had need to be exact in his conversation, who must undergo so strict an examination. Well may the time of judgment be called a day, for it will declare and manifest the worth of grace and holiness, which in the night of this life is not observed.

Ah, who can conceive the value which the vilest wretch on earth will put upon holiness at that day! Then grace will be grace indeed, and godliness will be godliness indeed. Then they who mock at saints for their purity and strictness, and look upon sanctity but as hypocrisy, and the acting of a part to cozen the world with, and think it is enough to put God off with a few prayers now and then, when their pastimes and lusts will give them leave, will call to believers, as the foolish to the wise virgins, 'Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out;' then the graceless princes and potentates of the world will throw their crowns and diadems at the feet of the meanest Christian for a drachm of his grace and holiness.

The apostle, speaking of that day, puts the question, 'Where shall the sinner and ungodly appear?' 1 Pet. 4:18. Now, indeed, those that scoff, and deride, and scorn at holiness and holy ones, may appear before great men in many parts of the world with praise and applause. Now they may appear in the country, and be respected of their drunken, atheistical, brutish neighbours, and probably be the more honoured for their opposition to the spirit of grace and holiness; but then, where will the sinner and ungodly appear? Not in

heaven, for that is no sty for swine, no kennel for clogs, no jail for malefactors, no place for such unholy, God-provoking persons. Into it can in no wise enter that which is defiled or unclean. Such a palace is not fit for beasts; snakes, and serpents, and adders are more fit for the bosom and embraces of men, than such men for the bosom and embraces of God. Heaven cast out wicked angels, and will not take in wicked men; where shall they then appear? Not on earth, for that will be burnt up with fire. Their houses and places must know them no more for ever. The earth groaned under their weight whilst it bare them, but now is eased of such loads, and shall not be pestered with such plagues again. But where shall they appear? Not before Christ the judge with any comfort, for him they have derided, buffeted, crucified; they have rejected his laws, trampled on his blood, told him to his face that they will not have him to reign over them. But where will they appear? Not before the saints, for they have maligned, oppressed, imprisoned, persecuted them as a company of cheats and hypocrites. Oh, where shall the sinner and ungodly appear?

1. Consider the holiness of the Judge. He is the holy Jesus. He loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity, Ps. 45. What will the ungodly sinner do when he shall be judged by the holy Saviour? Who can stand before this holy God? 1 Sam. 6:20. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and so he knoweth the most secret works of darkness. His law is very pure, and observeth and condemneth the least spots, the least defilement; and how will unclean ones endure to be judged for their everlasting lives and deaths by such a law? His throne is a white throne; and how will the black sinner do to stand before this white throne?

Reader, thou hast need to be a faithful and loyal subject, if thou wouldst then be owned and acknowledged by thy sovereign. How

exact should he be in his life, who must be tried by so holy a law! 'If thou callest him Father, who without respect of persons will judge every man according to his works, pass the time of thy sojourning here in fear,' 1 Pet. 1:17.

2. Consider the strictness of his proceedings. Every thought, word, and action shall be revealed, examined, and weighed in the balance of the sanctuary: 'There is nothing hid that shall not be revealed, nor secret that shall not be made known.' The thoughts of thy heart shall then be as visible as the features of thy face: 'When God shall judge the secrets of men's hearts by my gospel,' Rom. 2:16. All thy words will then be as audible as if thou hadst had a voice to reach every child of Adam, both alive and dead: 'Verily I say unto you, that of every idle word ye shall give I an account at the day of Christ,' Mat. 12:36. Every action of thine will then be legible, not only to God, as it is at this day, but also to angels and men: 'We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account of all things done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil,' 2 Cor. 5:10. All the works of darkness will then be brought to light. We must all appear, *φανερωθῆναι*, not only be present in person, and not by a proxy, but be laid open and manifest, be transparent, so the word signifieth, to give an account of everything done, &c., to render a reason of every individual thought, word, and deed—what was the principle from which we acted, what was the rule by which we acted, what was the end for which we acted. When Benjamin's sack was opened, the silver cup appeared. On that fair day all men's packs will be opened, and then it will be known what ware they carry about with them.

Hence some have conjectured that it will not be a short time, nor the judgment soon passed over. It is called a day, but not in relation to our natural or artificial days, for Christ, judging as man in his human

nature, by his divine power, will probably employ a far greater time in searching into, and publicly revealing, every man's condition and conversation. Though I am not of their opinions who say it will be precisely a thousand years, because it is said, 'A thousand years are in thy sight but as one day,' yet I judge it to be taken indefinitely; and, as Augustine saith, that the day of judgment shall begin is certain, but when it shall end is uncertain. I find two divines, eminent both for grace and learning in their generations, speaking: one saith, I humbly conceive that the day of judgment shall not be passed over in an instant, but shall be of long continuance; for if Christ should judge only as God, he could despatch it in a moment; but he, judging as man, it must be after the manner of men, that the creature may understand, admire, and approve what is done. The other saith, It must take up some large quantity of time to manifest all the secret sins of men, and therefore it may be made evident, both from Scripture and reason, that the day of Christ's kingly office, in judging the world, shall last haply longer than the day of Christ's private administration now in governing the world.

3. Consider the weight of the sentence. It is called the eternal judgment, because the sentence then pronounced shall never be reversed, but stand for ever. In this world God judgeth men sometimes mediately, sometimes immediately, which is the first judgment, from which men may appeal by repentance to his mercy seat; but this the last judgment, once for all, once for ever, in which men receive their final, their eternal doom, John 11:24. Here Jacob appeals from Laban to a higher tribunal, Gen. 31:53; and David from Saul to the King of kings, 'The Lord judge between me and thee,' 1 Sam. 24:12; Ps. 17:2; and Paul appeals from Festus to Cæsar, 'I stand at Cæsar's judgment seat,' Acts 25:10. But then there can be no appeal to a higher court, no writ of error can be brought, no arrest of judgment, no second hearing obtained. The sinner condemned to

eternal death then is gone for ever: no pardon, no, not so much as a reprieve can be procured for one hour. The saint, absolved and declared an heir of eternal life, is blessed for ever; he shall be beyond all fear, all doubts in himself; above all shot, all opposition from others. In this life Nineveh was threatened, Nineveh repented, and Nineveh was spared. The sentence pronounced was not executed, at least it was respited; but then every sinner will repent, weep, and wail, but repentance will be hid from the eyes of the Judge; all their tears will be in vain. When they are cast, then they are gone for ever.

To provoke thee to holiness,

4. Consider the felicity of the godly at that day. Oh, with what joy will they lift up their heads when that day of their redemption is come! This life is the day of their oppression and persecution, but that day will be the day of their redemption. At this day they are troubled and vexed with a tempting devil, and deceitful hearts, and false, proud, unbelieving flesh, but that will be the day of their redemption from them all. No wonder they love the appearing of Christ, and look and long for his appearing, when it will be the day of their redemption, and time of their refreshing from the presence of the Lord. When thousands and millions shall howl and lament; when the orator will be silenced, and have his mouth stopped; when the soldier, that durst venture into the mouth of the cannon, and dare death itself, shall play the coward, and seek for any hole to hide himself in; when the captains, and kings, and nobles, shall call to the rocks to fall on them, and the mountains to cover them from the presence of the Lord, and the wrath of the Lamb, even then the godly shall sing and rejoice.

(1.) Their godliness will then be mentioned to their eternal honour. As God hath a bag for men's sins, ('Thou sealest up mine iniquities in

a bag,') so he hath a book for their services: 'A book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name.' Then all their prayers, and tears, their watchings, fastings, faith, love, zeal, patience, alms, imprisonment, loss of goods, name, liberty, life for Christ and the gospel, will be manifested to their honour, and praise, and glory at the coming of Christ, 1 Pet. 1:7; Mat. 25:34.

(2.) Their names will be then vindicated. With the resurrection of bodies there shall also be a resurrection of names. Now, indeed, the throats of wicked men are open sepulchres, wherein the credit of the godly is buried. Joseph is an adulterer, Nehemiah a traitor, Jeremiah a rebel against the king, Paul a mover of sedition, a pestilent fellow, and one that turned Christian for spite, because the high priest would not give him his daughter in marriage; but when the sea, and death, and hell shall give up their dead, then shall the throats, the open sepulchres of wicked men, give up the names of the godly: 'Then their righteousness shall be cleared as the sun, and their uprightness as the noon-day.'

(3.) Their persons shall be then publicly acquitted. They shall be cleared by public proclamation before God, angels, and men. Hence it is said, 'Their sins shall be blotted out, when the time of refreshment shall come from the presence of the Lord.' The sentence of absolution passed in their conscience by the Spirit at this day is sweet, and puts more joy into their hearts than if all the crowns and sceptres of this world had befallen them; but oh how comfortable will it be to be declared just by the Judge himself before the whole world at that solemn and imperial day! They may then ring that challenge, 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?' Rom. 8:33; and none will accept it, or take up the gauntlet. Who? Shall God, whose children and chosen they are? No; it is God that justifieth. Shall the

Judge? No; it is his undertaken work to present them to the Father without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. He hath washed them in his own blood, and made them as white as innocent Adam or angels. He was judged for them, and will not pass judgment against them. He cannot condemn them, but he must condemn himself, for they are his members, his body, his brethren, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. Shall the law? No; they have fully answered all its demands, superabundantly satisfied it through their surety, both in perfect obedience to all its precepts, and undergoing its punishment. What the law saith, either in regard of commanding complete subjection, or cursing for the omission of it, it saith to them that are under the law; but they are not under the law, but under grace. Shall conscience? No; next to God and Christ, it is their best friend. As Christ pleads for them to his Father, so conscience pleads for them to themselves: 'This is their rejoicing, the testimony of good consciences, that in simplicity and godly sincerity they had their conversations in this world,' 2 Cor. 1:12. Shall Satan? No; the accuser of the brethren will be then cast down, and his place will be found no more in heaven; then, then those blessed promises will be performed, 'The seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head,' and 'the God of peace shall tread Satan under your feet.'

(4.) The saint's happiness will be then perfected, and he shall never know more what sin or sorrow meaneth, or what want of God's favour, or doubt of Christ's love, or defect of joy and comfort meaneth. The Christian hath so much laid out upon him in this world, vocation, adoption, pardon, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost, hopes of glory, that, in the worst condition that men and devils can plunge him into, he finds cause to say, 'Yet God is good to Israel, to them that are of a clean heart;' but then, when he shall enjoy all that is laid up for him, and know the full extent of God's promises to him, the all of Christ's purchase for him, and the utmost reward of his



piety, then surely he will cry out with the psalmist, 'O how great is that goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!' Clemens Alexandrinus makes mention of a place in Persia where there were three hills; when people came to the first, they heard a clashing of armour; when they came to the second, they heard a confused noise; when to the third, nothing but songs of triumph. At the day of the saint's conversion, he comes to the first hill, then he heareth a clashing of armour, listing himself under the captain of his salvation, and proclaiming open war against the world, flesh, and wicked one. At the day of death he comes to the second hill, a confused noise; his friends are weeping and grieving, his wife and children are mourning and bemoaning their loss; though his soul be rejoicing to think of the rest to which it is going, yet the flesh sweateth, panteth, is pierced and pained. At the day of judgment he comes to the third hill, where he heareth nothing but songs of triumph—Victoria, Victoria, hallelujahs, salvation, honour, glory, praise to the Lord, and to the Lamb for ever! At that day of judgment the whole world shall see and say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous; then shall the wicked return and discern a difference between them that fear God, and them that fear him not. Then grace will appear in all its embroidery and glory on that day of its coronation, when the worst in hell shall admire and adore it. Now holiness hath a wonderful disadvantage, partly by the persecutions, afflictions, bonds, and imprisonments that attend it, and chiefly from the darkness of men's understanding, and the weakness of their eyes, they are not able to view the thousandth part of its comeliness; but then holiness shall be freed from that black guard of hell that dogs her to destroy her, and then the eyes of all the world shall be strengthened so much as to behold her amiableness; then she shall be owned, honoured, acknowledged by God, angels, and all the children of Adam; then she shall be attended, not with mulcts, and

penalties, and bonds, and fetters, but crowns, and sceptres, and palms, and kingdoms; and then, oh then, how lovely, how beautiful, will she be indeed!

5. To affrighten thee from sin, consider the misery of sinners at that day. It is called the day of perdition of ungodly men. Sin will be sin indeed at that day. When sin shall be stripped naked of the favour and countenance of great men, of the preferments, and advantages, and riches, and honours, and offices with which it is clothed here below, and instead thereof be invested with fire, and flames, and brimstone, and blackness of darkness, and whips, and serpents, and inconceivable and eternal torments, what an ugly, loathsome strumpet will she be, even in the eyes of them that now dote on her, commit whoredom with her, and sacrifice their strength, and time, and estates, and souls, and God, and Christ, and heaven, and all to her! Then the drunkard will find his liquor more bitter than wormwood, when he shall have a cup of pure wrath, without the least mixture of mercy, brought to him, and he forced to take it down, though there be eternity to the bottom. Then the persecutor of God's people shall find that it had been better to have been rotting in a ditch, or boiling in a furnace of lead, than to have spent his time in wronging the poorest, meanest member of Christ, when God shall recompense tribulation to them that persecute his people, and to them that are persecuted, rest and peace; then every sinner will believe and feel what now, though God himself tell him, he will be an infidel in, that it is an evil and bitter thing to depart away from the living God. The wicked is reserved, as the beast for the slaughter-day, to the day of destruction; he shall be brought forth, as the condemned malefactor on execution-day, at the day of slaughter. Ah how dreadful will the sinner's doom be then! The tribunal of the Judge will be a tribunal of fire; he shall come in flaming fire, to render vengeance, &c.; the law by which he will try them shall be a

law of fire, or a fire of law, Deut. 33:2; the Judge himself to them will be a consuming fire, Heb. 12:29; and the judgment which he will denounce against them will be, 'Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels for ever.' Ah who can dwell in everlasting burnings? who can abide devouring flames? Who can imagine the shame that will cover their faces, the horror that will fill their hearts, the terrors, and tortures, and torments that must seize them for ever? If Judah was so ashamed when he saw Tamar's signet and staff, the remembrances of his sin, how will they be confounded when all their revellings and roarings, their chambering and wantonness, their cursing and swearing, and all their sins shall be opened before all the world! If Herod was so affrighted when he supposed that John was risen from the dead—that the Baptist's ghost, by walking in his conscience, robbed him of all comfort—what affrightment will possess them to see the saints whom they have nicknamed, disgraced, imprisoned, and it may be murdered, risen from the dead, owned and honoured by the Judge, and the chief favourites in the heavenly court? If Saul was so troubled when he did hear Christ call to him out of heaven, that he fell to the ground, what trouble, what tribulation, will possess them whom he shall curse with a bitter curse, and call to devils to seize on, and associate with, and prey upon, for ever and ever? The saint shall find mercy, the sweetest mercy, in that day of judgment; but the sinner shall have judgment, the sorest, the most cutting, killing judgment, without the least drop of mercy. If the day when God gave the law was so dreadful, full of thunderings, and lightnings, and fearful noises, that the people cried out, 'Let not God speak to us, lest we die,' and Moses himself did exceedingly quake and fear; and if the day were so dreadful when the Son of God's infinite love bare the curse of the law, that the rocks were rent, the earth trembled, the sun was darkened; how dreadful will that day be when God shall make inquisition into, and deal with the vessels of wrath for the breach of the law! 'Who can abide that

day of his coming? who shall stand when he appeareth?' Well may it be called the great and terrible day of the Lord Jesus. Well might the wise man, when he had seemingly laid the reins on the young man's back, and given him leave to run on in the way of his own heart and eyes, pull him in with this curb, 'Remember that for all these things, God will bring thee to judgment.'

When Sapore, king of Persia, had raised a violent persecution against the Christians, Usthazanes, an ancient nobleman, and a Christian, who in the king's minority had the government of the people, was so terrified that he denied the faith; but sitting at the court-gate, when Simeon, an old bishop and holy person, was leading to prison, he rose up to salute him; but the good bishop, frowning on him, turned away his head with indignation; upon which Usthazanes fell a-weeping, went into his chamber, put off his courtly attire, and burst out into this speech, Ah, how shall I appear before the great God of heaven, whom I have denied, when Simeon, but a man, will not endure to look upon me! If he frown, how will God frown when I come to appear at his tribunal! Upon these considerations he repented of his apostasy, assumed courage, and became a glorious martyr for Christ. If Felix, a heathen, trembled when Paul reasoned of judgment to come—nay, if the very devils so far believe that day as to tremble at the thoughts of it—well may the consideration of that day make Christians tremble at the thoughts of sin, and not dare thereby to treasure up wrath upon their heads against that day of wrath, and the declaration of the righteous judgment of God.

Reader, at this day think much of that day of judgment; hereby thou wilt be stirred up to judge thyself, to repent of sin, to ensure an interest in Christ the Judge, to keep a good conscience, and so to think, speak, and act as one that must be judged by the law of liberty,

1 Cor. 11:31; Acts 3:19, and 17:31; 2 Peter 3:11; Eccles. 12:14; James 2:12; Acts 24:16.

Eighthly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, call thyself often to account. This is a special help to holiness: 'I considered my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies,' saith David, Ps. 119:59. A man that goeth out of his way will continue wandering, if his mind be occupied about other things, and he consider not what he is doing, and whither he is going. The Christian that is careless of his carriage, and seldom compareth his heart and life with the divine commands, to observe how they agree or disagree, will never order his conversation aright. When a clock is out of order we take it to pieces, and search where the fault lieth, knowing that one wheel amiss may hinder the going of the whole clock. Our hearts are every day out of order; our work must be to take them to pieces by examination, and to see where the great fault is. Seneca's sober young man, *ita laborat, ita ludit, ita cænat, ita potat, ita loquitur, ita vivit, ut qui ephemerides patri est approbaturus*; So labours, so playeth, so eateth, so drinketh, so speaks, and so lives, as one that is daily to be accountable for all to his father. He that would keep his spiritual estate must keep his account-books well; the neglect of this hath been the breaking of many tradesmen. When shopkeepers live high, far above their incomes, and for want of searching into their books are ignorant whether their gains will allow such large expenses, it is no wonder if they prove worse than naught. They who expect the coming of great and severe strangers, who will observe narrowly how their house lieth, and how their vessels are kept, and publish it either to their credit or discredit, according as they find, will keep their houses in order, sweep them clean, have their pewter bright and clear, and all things exactly in their places. When the Christian looks every night for the coming of God's deputy, his conscience, to spy and search into his heart and life, how clean and holy both have been kept all the

day, it will be a special means to make him watchful over his ways, and exact in his carriage and conversation. Bee-masters tell us, that they are the best hives which make the greatest noise; so that conscience is the best which makes the greatest noise in daily reasonings and debates before its own bar.

Examination is the quickest way to bring the erring sheep home to the fold. Honest men will examine their weights and measures by the standard, that if they be defective they may be mended. The honest heart will examine its thoughts, its words, its actions, by the royal law, that their unsuitableness to its strictness and latitude may be repented of, and to the utmost of its power reformed. 'Let us search and try our ways.' For what cause? What will be the issue of such a scrutiny? 'And turn again to the Lord,' Lam. 3:40. What man will seek to a physician, or accept his advice, or take his prescriptions, who doth not know himself distempered, and feel his disease? It is examination of our hearts and lives, by the holy and pure law of God, that gives the knowledge of our spiritual sickness, and helpeth us to feel it, to prize our physician, and thankfully and heartily to accept his directions for our cure.

It is observed of the Dutchmen, that they keep their banks, notwithstanding the threats of the insulting ocean, with little cost and labour, because they look narrowly to them, and stop them up in time. If there be but a small breach, they stop it presently, and hereby save much charge and trouble. Frequent examination will do this courtesy for the Christian; it will maintain his peace with little charge and trouble comparatively. As soon as any breach is made by sin, that arch-makebait, between God and the soul, it will help the Christian to run presently to Christ, to heal and make it up in heaven by his merits; and in the soul, by his purifying and pacifying Spirit.

The counsel which the philosopher gave the young men at Athens may suitably and profitably be applied to Christians, That they should often view themselves in a glass, that if they were fair and well-featured, they should do such things as were befitting their amiable shape; but if foul and ill-favoured, that then they should labour to salve the body's blemishes by the beauties of a mind accoutred with the ornaments of virtue and good literature.

Examination is a special preservative against sin. No children are more bold to defile themselves, and to play with dirt, or rake in kennels, than those who know their parents are so foolishly fond, like David of Adonijah, that they never displease them at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so? The child that expecteth to be reckoned with at night will be careful how he dirtieth his clothes in the day.

Examination will help the Christian, if not to hinder a coming I disease, yet to prevent its growing and increase.

The ship that leaketh is more easily emptied at the beginning than afterwards; the bird is easily killed in the egg, but when once hatched and fledged, we may kill it when we can catch it. A frequent reckoning with ourselves, will pluck sin up before it is rooted in the soul.

Examination will help the Christian that hath fallen and bruised himself to heal the wound whilst it is fresh, before it is festered. This one advantage, if there were no more, is extraordinary. As the sting of a bee, though the bee be fled, works itself into the flesh deeper, and diffuseth its venom more strongly, causing the greater pain, that every man, unless foolish, will speedily pull it out, lest he increase his own anguish; truly so doth sin; though the honey, the pleasure of it, be gone, yet the sting remains; and the longer it is before it is pulled

out by faith and repentance, the deeper it works itself into the soul, and the more sorrow it will put us to, in this or the other world.

It is examination at night that brings the soul to mourn for and repent of its failings in the day. It is like the tree which Ctesias speaks of in describing India, that besides fruit, distilleth certain tears, of which are made precious amber; or as the drops of the vine, it is excellent against the leprosy of sin. Ephesus would never repent till they had examined and considered whence they had fallen.

When sin is admitted into the soul, and as a thief in the night stole in at unawares when the eye of the soul's watchfulness was fallen asleep, examination will light the candle of the word, and search the house narrowly, and find out this ill guest; and before it hath done so much mischief as it intended, apprehend it, indict, condemn, and execute it.

Examination every day is like purging the body at the beginning of a distemper, which takes it before it hath habituated itself, and so is much the more easily repelled. An enemy may much sooner be forced out of his holds, when he hath newly taken possession, than when he hath continued so long as to cast up his banks, make his ditches, placed his guns, and fortified them. After we have been foiled by our spiritual enemies, and by examination find out the cause, it will make us more watchful at that gate at which they entered, and careful of that particular wherein they got the advantage of us. As when David had received intelligence that the Ammonites had given his army some small defeat, he sends Joab word of the reason—'they went too near the city'—and wisheth him to make the battle more strong against the place, 2 Sam. 11.; So examination finds out the reason of a Christian's defeat by Satan:—either it was through self-confidence, or want of spiritual



watchfulness, or love to some known sin,—and helpeth the saint to bewail the cause of his defeat, and directeth him how to provide better against the next onset.

Frequent examination keepeth the conscience raw and tender, that the least touch of sin will be offensive and troublesome to it. When the heart is used to yield at a small willow, it will never be quiet under a great oak. Searching into our souls makes sin more loathsome to us. Whilst these filthy sinks are unstirred, they do but little disturb us or annoy us with their filthy savour, but when by examination we rake into them, their noisome stench offendeth us extremely, and shews us what need we have of cleansing.

Examination every night will help the Christian to a good night's rest. How comfortably may he lie down who hath made all even with his Maker, and heard his everlasting Father bidding him good-night! How quietly may he sleep who has his pardon under his pillow! He needs not fear any officer to call him up at midnight, and attach him for any treasons or misdemeanours.

It is said of Cato, that constantly at evening he would call to mind whatever he had seen, read, or done that day. It was Pythagoras' rule to his scholars, that they should no night suffer sleep to seize their senses till they had three times recalled the accidents and passages of the day. Oh what a shame is it that moralists, who had no true sense of the benefit of such a duty, should out-go the Christian in the performance of it! that many persons should know the chronicles of other countries or kingdoms, some ages past, and yet not know the passages of their own souls one day past!

Reader, if thou wouldst walk closely with God, and keep even with him, reckon daily with him, call thyself to a strict scrutiny: What do I? How live I? Where am I? Is the work I do warrantable by the word

or no? Is my life the life of faith, of holiness, or no? Am I in God's way, under his protection, or no? Have I truth of grace, the power of godliness, or do I please myself with the form of it? Do I thrive and increase in grace, or do I decay and decline? Suppose I were to die this night, what ground have I to hope for heaven? What assurance that I shall escape the power and rage of frightful devils? What evidences have I that I am a new creature, engrafted into Christ, and thereby entitled to life and bliss? Thus feel the pulse of thy soul, inquire into its state, visit it often, and see how it doth.

Call thyself to an account for thy sins; let heart and life sins, open and private sins, omissions, commissions, personal, relative, be all reckoned for. Ask thy soul, as Rebekah, Why am I thus? Why am I so false to my God, so unfaithful to my covenants? The heart is like a ditch, into which filth is continually running; and therefore it behoveth thee, by examination, to be always emptying it. The stable that is daily fouled must be daily cleansed; the hands that are daily contracting dirt must be daily washed. Our souls are more polluted and diseased than our bodies; we have always a filthy issue of sin running, which we must be daily searching into and dressing, or our stench will make us loathsome to, and unfit for, any communion with God or his people.

Call thyself to an account daily, for thy mercies; ask thyself, How much am I indebted to my God? what privative, what positive mercies do I partake of? what old, what new, what night, what day, mercies? what mercies at home, what abroad? what personal, what domestical, what national, mercies do I enjoy, or am a sharer in? what bodily, what spiritual, mercies do I receive? what time, what talents, have I to trade with and reckon for? This will help the soul to be speedy and hearty in thankfulness, and force it to David's interrogation, 'What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?'

What hot love should I return, what a holy life should I lead? Do this daily; it is much better to pay sums when they are little, than when they are large. Wise men that are able, find it the best way to pay ready money for their wares. Neglect herein causeth many mistakes and inconveniences, and many times differences, among friends.

Having spoken to this particular in the sixth chapter, I shall say no more to it here, though, indeed, I judge it next to a new nature, not inferior to any means of godliness.

Ninthly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, avoid the occasions of sin. He that would avoid the commission of sin, must avoid the occasions of sin. If we would not fall down the hill, we must beware of coming near the brow of it. Keep thee far from an evil matter. Children, which in frost venture upon the ice, may possibly be safe, but yet many times they break their limbs, and sometimes lose their lives. It is possible for a saint to come off safe from occasions of sin, but is very seldom seen. A fair booty makes many a man a thief, who otherwise might have lived honest. It was counted, therefore, a great part of wisdom in Alexander, when he had taken the beautiful daughters of Darius prisoners, not to see the fair ladies, lest their beauty should have enticed him to folly. The same word in Hebrew signifieth both an eye and a fountain, to shew that from the eye, as from a fountain, sin doth too often flow. Job's practice was such, that he would not look on a maid lest he should lust after her; and David's prayer was, 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.' We take the wind of those that are infected with contagious diseases. The wise man gives notable counsel to men, if they would avoid drunkenness: 'Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it casteth its colour in the glass,' Prov. 23:31. When it laughs in thy face, then shut thine eyes, lest it steal into thy heart. We are ready to think, What hurt, what danger is there in beholding the wine in the

glass, sparkling and brisk? But Solomon knew, that from looking on it, men come to like it, from liking to tasting, from tasting to a draught, from one draught to another, till the man is metamorphosed into a beast, Gen. 39:10; Ps. 119:37. The wise Socrates could advise men to beware of those meats; which would entice men without hunger to eat, and those drinks which would entice a man without thirst to drink, knowing that, if men come within those traps and baits, they are easily taken. A guest may easily be kept out of the house at first, but if once entertained, it is hard to turn him out of doors. When a governor of a fort once comes to parley with the enemy that besiegeth him, there is great fear that the place will be surrendered. I have read of one, that, having a great mind to go to Rome, yet knowing it to be a corrupt place, and a corrupter of others, entered the city with his eyes close shut, neither would he be persuaded to see anything there but Peter's church, which he went to visit. Solomon persuades his son, if he should not be enticed by the harlot, that he would not come near her house: 'Remove thy way far from her, and come not near the door of her house,' Prov. 5:8.

He that carrieth always along with him a heart ready to break out into a flame, prone to all wickedness, had need to take heed of those bellows that will help to blow up the fire. I more fear, saith Luther, that which is within me, than that which is from without. When a distempered stomach comes to meet with tossing waves, sickness ensueth, though the prime cause is not from the billows without, but choler within. Occasion and the heart are like Dinah and Shechem, if they meet, they usually part not till folly is committed. Those that desire to hinder the generation of vice, that brat of hell, must keep the male, occasion, and the female, a wicked heart, asunder, one from the other. They who have bodies always ready to take infection, must be more careful of their diet and company than others;

insensible vapours bring forth horrible tempests: 'Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!' The best heart is like a flint; there is fire in it, though it doth not appear; occasion is the steel that fetcheth it forth, which, being let alone, would be quiet. Bees in winter, being sensible of their weakness, keep their hives, and will not expose themselves to the sharp air and bitter frosts, lest thereby they sicken and die. Alas! how weak is man, how unable to resist the occasions of sin!—no more than the hound can forbear pursuing the hare before his eyes, and therefore it concerns him to avoid them. A candle newly extinguished, will quickly be lighted again. Powder meeting with a light match presently takes fire.

For this cause, it was ordained of God in the law of the Nazarite, who did for a time specially consecrate himself to God, that besides his not coming to the dead, and suffering his hair to grow, he should abstain from these things: 1. From wine and strong drink. 2. From the vinegar of wine or strong drink. 3. From any liquor of grapes, though it were but the water wherein they were steeped. 4. From the green or moist grape. 5. From the dried grape or raisin. 6. From the husk or kernel of them, Num. 6:3, 4. Had the Nazarite eaten but the skin of the grape or raisin, he had broken the law. Hereby the Holy Ghost would teach us that those who separate themselves from the world, to be in a special manner serviceable to the Lord, must avoid not only plain sin, but the appearance of sin, and all occasions of it, though we may look upon them but as the husks of grapes, to be of small moment, and little danger. Beza giveth this reason why the Levite, when he saw the man that fell among thieves, passed on the other side of the way, *Ne cadaveris contactu pollueretur*, Lest he should be defiled with the touch of the corpse. He would be so far from touching a dead carcase, that he would pass on the other side of the way when he saw one dying: 'Enter not into the path of the

wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, (i.e., come not near it,) turn from it, and pass away,' Prov. 4:14, 15.

He that will do all he may, will quickly do what he may not. It is lawful to enjoy bodily pleasures and delights, but not to buy them with hazard to our souls. Soldiers in a garrison that venture to the outmost line, are often snapped up by those that besiege them. We sometimes, when in danger of a siege, burn down those houses in the skirts of the city which might be serviceable to us, when we cannot well defend them, lest they should prove helpful to our enemies against us. Theseus is said to cut off his golden locks, lest his adversaries should in fight take hold of them. Even in things lawful, it is commendable for Christians to deny themselves, when there is danger, by taking liberty therein, of gratifying the enemies of their souls. Cotis, king of Thracia, manifested possibly more prudence than prodigality in breaking the cupboard of curious glasses presented to him, lest, his nature being extremely choleric, he should deal too severely with his servants in case they had broken any of them. Aristotle hath a story of Satyrus, that being a pleader, and knowing himself passionate, and in that drunkenness of the mind apt to commit many indecencies, and to rush into foul extravagancies, he used to stop his ear with wax, lest the sense of ill language should move him to choler.

Reader, as thou wouldst shun sin in the action, shun it in the occasion; remember thou carriest thatch about thee, and therefore oughtest to avoid the least sparks. A little wind will drive a ship with the stream and tide, and a small temptation may carry thee that way which thy wicked heart inclines thee. A little pulling will draw a strong man whither he is willing to go; it is safest, therefore, to be out of harm's way, and the greatest magnanimity to fly from the sight of

such an enemy as sin is. He hath most true courage who makes a timely retreat before he be wounded.

## CHAPTER XII

### **Means whereby Christians may exercise themselves to godliness. A humble frame; suppressing sin in its first rise; the knowledge of God**

Tenthly, if thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, walk humbly with thy God. A tree, the more deeply it is rooted, the more it groweth under ground, the more upward in fruitfulness. The Christian will find that, by growing in humility, he shall thrive in godliness. He that turneth his eyes upward, is ready to stumble at every rub that lieth in his way; but he that looketh downward, seeth and avoideth those stones. A proud man is like a little man with a high-heeled shoe, raised thereby, in his own conceit, above others of the same rank, but it fits him with many a fall. The proud person giveth not glory to God, and therefore must not expect that God should give grace to him; but the humble man honoureth God, and sanctifieth his name, and sets the crown on his head, and so may expect, because God hath promised, that God should honour him, and sanctify his soul. God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. He leaves those high hills barren, but makes the valleys to abound in corn. It is in vain to undertake to pour liquor into a full vessel, it will all run over; but the empty vessel will receive it. The proud person is full still of self, and so will not be thankful for an alms; but the humble man is empty, hungering and thirsting, and he shall be satisfied. Proud Vashti divorceth herself, and provoketh her lord to disown and disclaim her; but humble Esther is thought worthy of a crown, and admitted into the king's embraces. The fig-



tree that blooms not at all, brings forth most pleasant fruit, when the sallow, which hath most glorious palms, is barren. Hypocrisy kills the flower of grace at the root; pride nips it in the bud. Sincerity, like Paul, planteth grace; humility, like Apollos, watereth it, and helpeth it to flourish. We may take notice all along in Scripture, that the humblest men were the holiest men; and those that were eminent for any grace, were eminent for humility. The deepest streams were most silent, and made the least noise. Abraham was famous for faith, strong in faith, he believed in hope against hope, but lo, how lowly was he: 'Behold I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes.' So Jacob, named Israel by God himself, for his fervency and prevalency in prayer: 'I am less than the least of all thy mercies.' David, that man after God's own heart: 'I am a worm and no man;' as a child weaned from his mother's breasts for humility. So Asaph, Ps. 73:21; Agur, Prov. 30; Isaiah, chap. 6:3; the Virgin Mary, the centurion, the Syro-Phoenician, Paul, all, like full vessels, sounded not their own praise, and like stars, the higher they were in holiness, the less they appeared. When Elisabeth had conceived, she hid herself three months. They who are most fruitful in holiness, make the least boasting of it. Lord, said holy Hooper, I am hell, but thou art heaven; I am full of sin, but thou a gracious God. Bradford would subscribe his letters, The most miserable, unthankful, hard-hearted sinner, John Bradford. The greater the fire of grace, the less the smoke, or show of it, to the world. The weightiest wheat seeks for the lowest place, when the light chaff flieth in the air.

When the sun is at the highest, the shadow is the least, and the more directly the sun shineth on us, the less our shadow is; so the higher Christians are in God's favour, the lower they are in their own eyes. The more God exalted David, the more he debased himself: 'What am I, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me up

hitherto? and yet thou speakest of thy servant's house for a great while to come,' 2 Sam. 7:18, 19. This was David's language, when Nathan brought him word that God would build him a sure house. Those trees which spread much and grow low, near the ground, most commonly bring forth more and larger fruits than high trees, that aspire up into the air. The highest trees are barren—so the proud and high-minded man; but with the lowly is wisdom.

The humble Christian is nearer God than others, and so must needs thrive above others; though God beholdeth the proud afar off, he dwelleth in the humble heart. The lowly Christian is most lovely in his eye, and shall have most of his company. God appeared to Moses, not in a lofty cedar, but in a low, mean, abject bush. If he that walketh with wise men becomes wise, and is the better for such good company, what good doth the humble Christian get by walking with his God!

Pride is like the remora to a ship, which will arrest it under full sail, hinder the saint in his heavenly passage when he is making the greatest speed; it is like those weeds, which are of so poisonous a nature that they will suffer no good herbs to grow near them. The servant that hath been trusted and honoured by his lord, if he prove a thief and steal from his lord, provokes him to take his stock out of his hands, and to trust him no longer. The proud man steals from God, and robs him of that glory which is due to him; and therefore it is no marvel if he deny to trust such an unfaithful servant with any more spiritual riches.

It is the empty barrel that makes the greatest sound. The poor women that have nothing but a few matches, or pins, or band-strings, or thread-laces, the men that have only a few brooms, or some small coal or roots, make a great stir and loud noise about the

city, and would have everybody acquainted with their ware; when the great usurer, that is worth thousands in bills and bonds, and the rich shopkeeper, whose estate swelleth to a vast bulk, never proclaim what they are worth, but rather endeavour to hide it. Those that have least spiritual riches are most guilty of boasting. Laodicea bragged much, that was poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked, and worse than naught. They who are fullest of faith, and richest in good works, make the least sound. When their hearts and lives, like the face of Moses, shine brightly with grace and holiness, they do not, they will not, know it; they consider their greatest light and lustre is but a reflection from the Father of lights, and therefore they have no reason at all to boast of borrowed goods.

The worm of pride breeds soonest in rotten wood. The proud pharisee, who justified himself, had nothing in him but matter of condemnation; when the poor humble publican, affected with his own vileness and baseness, had something of worth in him, even his sense of his own unworthiness. Brass makes a greater sound, and is heard farther, than gold, but every one knoweth there is no comparison between them. Chaff is seen above the wheat, not because it is better, but because it is lighter.

Alas! what is man? what hath man that he should be proud? He is but enlivened dust, moving earth, refined clay, that which beasts trample under their feet. He hath nothing that good is but what he hath received. He lives wholly upon the alms and charity of another. A proud heart and a beggar's purse do not agree. As he is a sinner, he is more vile and base, more noisome and loathsome, than any toad, or snake, or serpent; and hath he any reason to be proud? Reader, be clothed with humility; learn of thy Redeemer, for he was meek and lowly in heart. Though he thought it no robbery to be equal with God,

yet he 'made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant,' Phil. 2:7, 8.

When pride cometh, then cometh a fall. As a wrestler, if he can lift his fellow from the ground, quickly gives him a fall; so the devil, if he can lift up with pride, doubts not but to throw them. Physicians observe that the dropsy and consumption are usually together; when once thou swellest with this dropsy of pride, expect a consumption of thy godliness. He walks but dangerously who walks on high places, as on the ridges of houses and on ropes; he that walks below is more safe. Angels, Adam, David, Hezekiah, Peter, and many others in Scripture, confirm the wise man's proverb, 'Pride goeth before a fall.' Trees that are set on mountains are easily shaken and torn up by the roots when stormy winds arise. Indeed, it is no wonder that a proud man should fall into sin, for he relieth on his own strength, which is but a broken reed. Peter had not fallen so foully if he had not undertaken to stand upon his own legs, which were too weak to bear his weight. But before honour is humility. The lower the foundation, the higher the building.

A proud man hath a great infelicity, in that he is his own enemy, and makes all others his enemies. God is his enemy; there is no sinner whom he proclaims such open war against, in such express terms, as the proud: 'God setteth himself in battle array against the proud.' It were better earth and hell should unite their force against him than one God. Ah, who knoweth the power of thine anger! Men are his enemies; he disdaineth others for their meanness, or poverty, or want of parts, and they disdain him for his pride. He that overvalueth himself shall soon be undervalued by every one. Pride makes him scorn friends, for familiarity would deprive him, he thinks, of that reverence which he deserves, and therefore all must be his enemies; but he is his own enemy most, in cutting such a gash in his soul by

his pride, and making way for all other sins to fall on. He that is lifted up with pride, quickly falls into the condemnation of the devil. Satan had found this vice, pride, by experience so prevalent to draw the creature from God, that he knew no better bait to catch Adam with, 'Ye shall be as gods;' and when afterwards he encountered David, it was with this weapon—he tempted David to number the people.

Yet, alas! though it be so prejudicial, how natural is it to us! Pride is a weed, a worm that gets into the best garden. It was a witty taunt which a proud cardinal had from a friend of his, that upon his election went to Rome on purpose to see him, where, finding his behaviour stretched to nothing but pride and state, he departed, and put on a mourning suit, and the next day comes in black to visit him. The cardinal, asking the cause why he was in mourning, he answered, It was for the death of humility, which fetched its last breath in him when he was elected cardinal. Most of us have cause to put on mourning upon the same account.

Eleventhly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, suppress sin in the beginning. This foul bird is easiest killed in the egg. When a fire is first broke out in a chimney, it may with much less labour be quenched than when it hath seized the timber of the house. What small beginnings had those fires which have conquered stately palaces, and turned famous cities into ruinous heaps! A hair is but a little thing, yet some have been choked with it. If the tetter be not killed, it will come to be a ringworm. Passion at the first kindling may be quenched; but if let alone, sends such a smoke into the understanding, which thickens into a cloud, and hinders us from the sight of ourselves and our duties. The tree may soon be pulled up before it hath taken root, but then it may be too hard for the strongest man. A prick with a pin or a thorn, being let alone, hath sometimes caused the cutting off of a limb, nay, the loss of life.

Minutes to sin are like cyphers to a figure, which quickly increase it to vast sums. Sin increaseth by degrees, James 1:14, 15: first it surpriseth the heart in a thought, then it stealeth into the affections for approbation, then the affections plead with the will for its consent, and then that commandeth the act of it, and frequent acts cause a habit, and custom in sin causeth despair, despair causeth men to defend sin, their defence of sin a boasting and glorying in it, and the next step is hell. Sin is therefore fitly by the prophet compared to a chain, for one link draweth another.

As the ivy by little and little creepeth upon the oak, till at last it doth destroy it, so doth sin cling about the soul, and by degrees overrun and undo it. When the water begins to freeze, it will hardly bear a pennyweight; let it alone a little longer and it will bear a shilling, then a pound weight, then a man, then a horse, then cart and load and all. As the cloud which Elijah's servant saw was at first no bigger than a man's hand, but afterwards it spread till it covered the heavens. Peter first denieth his Master, then sweareth, then curseth, and forsweareth himself. Cain first harbours envious thoughts of his brother, then murdereth him in his heart, then kills him with his hand, then quarrelleth with God, and despaireth. There is no staying, when we are once down the hill, till we come to the bottom. If this giant of sin get in but a limb, he will quickly get in his whole body. Wanton thoughts, if not stifled, bring forth actual uncleanness. Sin is like water—if we give it the least way, run it will in spite of us. If we get not the conquest over it in its infancy, we shall not overcome it when it is brought to maturity. He that cannot put out a spark will be much more unable to put out a flame. The smallest of these twigs will prove thorny bushes, if not timely stubbed up.

The horse must be broken when a colt, and the lion tamed when a whelp. It is best to deal with sin as Jocasta with Œdipus, to cast it

forth in its infancy. The Israelite must dash these Babylonian infants against the wall, if he would be a blessed man, Isa: 13:18. The Christian that checketh and curbeth sin when it first appeareth, doth, as David to the Philistine, wound it in the forehead, and so slayeth it certainly. As the snail by little and little creepeth up from the root of the tree to the top, consuming the leaves as it goeth, and leaving nothing behind it but filth and slime; so sin gradually infecteth the whole man. This poison, if not presently vomited up as soon as taken down, flieth to and destroyeth the vitals. The apostle calleth it a canker, and truly so it is in regard of its spreading nature, both as to persons, from one man to another, and to parts, from one faculty of the soul and member of the body to another. How dreadful was the effect of a few boys joining with Masaniello in Naples, A. D. 1647, whom the officers and people laughed and jeered at instead of subduing! What murders and burning palaces and churches did ensue and arise from so contemptible means! Therefore, as wise princes will be heedful to suppress riots and petty insurrections, knowing that if they be let alone they will break out into open rebellion, and cause much bloodshed and mischief; so, reader, do thou stifle and kill sin in the womb before it be quick, lest that, like the young serpents, if brought forth, it tear out thy bowels, and its birth cause thy death.

Twelfthly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, study the knowledge of God. It is ignorance of God that is the origin of all sin. Did men know the sad fruits of his fury, they durst not by sin provoke him. Did men know the sweetness of his favour, they would do, they would suffer anything to please him. It is in the mist of ignorance that they lose their way, and wander from him who is the chiefest good. The devil is bound in chains of darkness, and so are all his children.

They who know God most, love him most, and fear him most, and trust him most. It is life spiritual, and the seed of life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent, John 17:3. All godliness, all grace, is seminally in the knowledge of God, and floweth from it. They who with open face behold the Lord, though but as in a glass, are changed into his image, from glory to glory; from one degree of grace to another, 2 Cor. 3:18.

They who know the infiniteness and immensity of his being, cannot but despise all things for him, esteem all things as nothing to him, as nothing without him; look on the whole creation as less than nothing in comparison of him. Ah, what admiring, reverent thoughts of that being of beings, of him whose name is I AM, have they who launch a little, for it is but a little that they can here, into this ocean! All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity; they cannot but desire and labour to enjoy so boundless a portion.

They who know the power of God cannot but fear him, and stand in awe of his presence and threatenings. They fear him who is able to cast soul and body into hell, Mat. 10:28; Heb. 12:27, 28. They will depend on him, because there is no want which the Almighty cannot supply, no weakness which he cannot remove, no danger which he cannot prevent or support in. Acquaintance with him who is mighty in strength makes the Christian resolute in God's cause, and as bold as a lion at his call and command.

They who know the eternity of God, will choose him before temporal vanities. What are the pleasures of sin for a season in his eye, who seeth the pleasures at God's right hand for evermore? What are the honours on earth to him who knoweth the eternal weight of glory? What are temporal relations in comparison of the everlasting Father?



Nay, what is his natural life to eternal life? No good is little that is eternal. How great, then, is the infinite and eternal God!

They who know the wisdom of God will submit to his providences, and acquiesce in all his dispensations. He is wise in heart, his understanding is infinite, and he knoweth what is best for thee, and me, and all others, and therefore there is all the reason of the world why I should rest in his will, and be satisfied in his pleasure. It is the Lord, saith the soul in his greatest afflictions, who is infinite in wisdom, and knoweth what will do me most good. Let him do what seemeth good in his eyes.'

They who know the faithfulness of God will credit his word, and make him the object of their hope and faith: 'They that know thy name will trust in thee,' Ps. 9:10. His truth commandeth our trust. We will rely on faithful men, who will not lie; but the Christian seeth infinitely more reason to rely on the faithful God, who cannot lie.

They who know the mercy, and love, and goodness of God, will love, and admire, and trust, and praise him. The knowledge of his love to us will call out our love to him, as one that deserves it, being infinitely amiable in himself, and the more deserving of our love for his love to such loathsome ones as we are. It will cause us to rely on him; for infinite love, joined with infinite strength and faithfulness, will not, cannot, deceive us. It will help us to see the odious nature of sin, in that it is an abuse of infinite love. The goodness of God will lead the soul to repentance.

They who know the holiness of God will sanctify him in their approaches to him, and walk humbly and watchfully with him. They know that sin is loathsome to him, because contrary to his holy nature, and therefore they hate it. They know that holiness is lovely, as it is his image and excellency, and therefore they follow after it.

They are upright, and serious, and zealous, and humble, and reverent in their holy performances, because therein they have to do with such a holy God.

They who know the anger of God will stand in awe, and not sin. They know that God is not to be mocked; for it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, for our God is a consuming fire. They know his fury is terrible, intolerable; none can abide it, no sinner can avoid it. Therefore they hate sin, the object of it, and fly to Christ, who delivereth from it.

Oh what a work, a gracious sanctifying work, doth the knowledge of God make in the soul! It makes the understanding to esteem him above all, the will to choose him before all, the affections to desire him, to delight in him, more than all; the whole man to seek him, to serve him, to honour and praise him beyond all in heaven and earth. What is the reason that God is so much loved, admired, and worshipped, and glorified in his church, when all the world besides despise him, but this, 'In Judah is God known: his name is great in Israel'? Ps. 76:1.

O reader, be confident of this, the more thou knowest of the excellencies of God, the more thou wilt prize his Son, submit to his Spirit, crucify the flesh, condemn the world, fear to offend him, study to please him, the more holy thou wilt be in all manner of conversation.

Hence the main work of Christ's prophetic office was to reveal God to the world.

And the devil's great work is to keep men from this knowledge of God, knowing that it will tend so exceedingly to their sanctification and holiness, and to the overthrow of his interest. The miller

muffleth and blindeth his horse that draweth his mill, and thereby keeps him at his round, deceiving him in making him to think he goeth forward. The first work of the Philistines was to put out Samson's eyes, and then they made him grind at their mill, and make them sport. The eagle, saith Pliny, (Nat. Hist., lib. x. cap. 20,) before he setteth upon the hart, rolleth himself in the sand, and then flieth at the stag's head, and by fluttering his wings, so dustieth his eyes that he can see nothing, and then striketh him with his talons where he listeth. Satan darkeneth men's understandings, and thereby commandeth their wills and affections, and destroyeth the whole man. 'If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that perish, in whom the god of this world hath blinded their minds, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them,' 2 Cor. 4:3, 4.

When men are spoken in Scripture to be vicious and profane, they are only said not to know the Lord, 'and there is no knowledge of God in the land,' Jer. 4:22; Hosea 4:1; and when God undertakes, in his covenant of grace, to sanctify and make men holy, he is said to put his knowledge in their hearts, and his promise is, 'They shall all know me, from the least to the greatest,' Heb. 10.; Jer. 31:34. And they that would grow in grace are commanded, in order thereunto, to grow in knowledge, 2 Pet. 3:18.

Ignorance is the mother of all irreligion, of all atheism: Eph. 4:18, 'They are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts.' As owls, sinners may see in the night of this world, have some knowledge in worldly affairs; but they cannot see in the day, are ignorant of spiritual, of heavenly things. Sin, like the pestilence David speaks of, walketh in the dark, Ps. 91:5; and Satan is the enemy that soweth his tares by night. This is one cause why sin is called a work of darkness. It is

from that darkness which is in men's understandings that they turn their backs upon God, and run upon their own eternal ruins. It were impossible for the rational creature to be so desperately mad as to play with the wrath of God, and slight the love of God, to neglect his mercy, and despise his justice, if they did but know God. When princes go incognito, in a disguise, and are unknown, then they are disesteemed. Hence they who are obstinately profane and resolved on wickedness say unto God, 'Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways,' Job 21:14. The hooded hawk, that seeth not the partridge, will never fly after it. The Israelites pitched in Mithkah, which signifieth sweetness, before they removed to Cashmonah, which signifieth swiftness. They only who know the sweetness of God will fly to him with swiftness. *Ignoti nulla cupido*. He who knoweth the all-sufficiency of God will never turn to the creature; even as the bee, if it did not find honey enough in one flower, would never hasten to another.

Those that are ignorant of God abound in all manner of atheism and wickedness. The families which know not God will not call on his name. There is no truth, no mercy, but lying and stealing, and swearing and killing, where there is no knowledge of God, Hosea 4:1, 2. It is no wonder to see blind men stumble and fall, and break their limbs. I do not marvel to see ignorant men, who know not God, to live without him, to turn him out of their hearts and houses, as if they had no dependence on him, or engagements to him.

Whence is it that men are regardless of their souls and eternal estates, that they dance over the unquenchable lake, and are merry and jovial at the very brink of destruction; that they despise the God that made them, preserveth them, bought them, and hath them in his hands and at his mercy every moment; that they slight his Son, his Spirit, his law, his love, his wrath, his promises of eternal life, as if

they were things of no value, and rather fit to be trampled on than esteemed; that they can lie down and sleep, and rise up and eat, and drink, and follow their sports and pleasures, and laugh and sing under the guilt of sin and curse of the law, and infinite wrath of the Lord, but their ignorance of God? Ah, did they but know his holiness, his jealousy, his power, his justice, they would sooner undergo any misery that men could inflict on them, than incur his anger, or provoke him to jealousy; they would never neglect his worship, or put him off with a few heartless prayers. *Ludentes cum Deo ut pueri cum suis pupis*, as Calvin hath it; playing with him, as children with their babies, when they come immediately to his presence, and pretend to seek his face.

The holy times under the gospel, wherein the people of God should be of one heart, are spoken of as proceeding from this cause: 'The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as waters cover the sea,' Isa. 11:9. The perfection of grace and holiness in heaven will be the effect in part of this knowledge of God. When we shall see him (perfectly) we shall be (perfectly) like him, 1 John 3:2.

Reader, be persuaded, therefore, to study this knowledge of God; think no labour too much for it; pray, and read, and hear, and confer, and mourn that thou mayest know God. Believe it, it is a jewel that will pay thee well for all thy pains. Incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thy heart unto understanding. Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God: 'For the Lord giveth wisdom, and out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding,' Prov. 2:2–6. Did men but spend that time and strength about the knowledge of God which they spend in endeavouring to raise their families, and advance their parties and

interest, and to suppress them that in their apprehensions stand in their way, we should quickly have a nation as famous for peace, and love, and holiness, as now it is notorious for divisions and profaneness.

## CHAPTER XIII

### **Means whereby Christians may exercise themselves to godliness. A contented spirit; avoiding those things that hinder godliness**

Thirteenthly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, labour to get a contented frame of heart. A settled, fixed frame of heart as to all outward occurrences, is like ballast to a ship, which will help it to sail trim in all waters; whereas a discontented spirit is as a light, small boat in the ocean, tossed about with every blast, and always in danger of drowning. I doubt not but the great apostle's diligence to learn this lesson perfectly—'I have learned in what state soever I am to be contented; I know how to be abased, and how to abound,' Philip. 4:12—was a special means of his extra ordinary growth and proficiency in grace. It is generally observed that peevish persons, whom nothing pleaseth, are usually lean and thin in their bodies; but those who are of cheerful tempers, and not overmuch troubled with any disasters, are thriving and healthful. The discontented soul, whom every heat or cold above ordinary puts into a fright or fever, will rather decline than increase in his spiritual health; but the Christian who is ever cheerful in his God and Saviour, and lives about these lower things as one indifferent about them, will never be hindered by them in his work of holiness. As a sickly man is hindered

in his journey by every storm, and ready to run to a house, or stand under a hedge, at every shower; so is a discontented person ready to turn aside, or stand still, at every unexpected providence, when a contented man, like a lusty, resolved traveller, keeps on his course whatsoever weather comes. Godliness requires a contented mind to grow in, 1 Tim. 6:6. It is said of the pelican that she is caught by the shepherds in this manner: they lay fire not far from her nest, which she finding, and fearing the danger of her young, seeks to blow out with her wings so long till she burns herself, and makes herself a prey, out of foolish pity to her young. So many men, out of unwise pity to their relations and possessions, when they are at any time in danger for want of this contented spirit, and quiet submission to infinite wisdom, trouble themselves so much and so long about them, till they make themselves a prey to Satan, and no whit preserve or secure those persons or things about which they are so immoderately anxious and solicitous.

Whilst we are in this world we must expect various winds—some sharp, some warm, some nipping, some refreshing, some with us, some against us; and unless we are prepared for all by a holy pliability, we shall be injured by every one. Every strong wind, whether with us or against us, will be ready to overturn us if we want this ballast. There is no condition in this life so blessed as to afford the perfection of content; and yet there is no estate in this life so wretched but a Christian may be contented with it. If thou hast as much as thou wantest, thou hast as much as in reason thou desirest, and therefore hast cause to be contented.

The way to true riches, saith Plato, is not to increase our heaps, but to diminish the covetousness of our hearts. It were well for the world, saith another, if there were no gold in it; but since it is the fountain whence all things flow, it is to be desired, but only as a pass to travel

to our journey's end without begging. Every man is rich, or may be so, if he will equal his mind to his estate, and be but poor in his desires. He that hath most wants something, as Haman, when he had the commander of one hundred and twenty provinces at command. He that hath least wants nothing, if he wants not a contented spirit.

He that can bring his heart to an even poise in all providences will avoid many temptations, and escape many snares in which others are entangled. The want of this renders many a man's life as unserviceable to God as uncomfortable to himself. The discontented person, like the sea, is seldom seen without storms and tempests. A small matter puts him out of order and joint, and so unfits him for spiritual actions. As hot iron, the smallest drop sets him a hissing; like a ruffled skein of silk, every way taken to compose him entangleth him. Discontent, like ink poured into a bottle of water, turns all into blackness. O friend, beware of it!

It hinders from praying. A discontented man will rather pour out his passions than any sober prayers before the Lord.

It hinders examining ourselves. Though quiet and calm waters will, like a glass, if we look into it, shew us the image and likeness of ourselves, yet troubled and muddy waters will make no such representation. Though the heart, when calm and contented, may shew us the face and features of our souls, yet if muddied by discontent they cannot do it, John 14:27; Ps. 4:4, 5.

It hinders from hearing. The noise of passion drowns the voice of the preacher. Men must with meekness receive the ingrafted word, if they desire it should save their souls, James 1.

When a fountain is troubled, there can no water be drawn out of it but what is filthy and unsavoury. When a person is discontented, all



his duties are distasteful and unacceptable to God. Therefore, Christ more than once dissuades his disciples from it: 'Let not your hearts be troubled. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid,' John 14:1, 27.

Diogenes resolved, since many evils would befall him, to keep himself steady in all. He would oppose resolution to fortune, nature to the law, his reason to his affections. But the Christian hath a better guide, and better grounds for contentedness.

There be several thoughts which may quiet and compose the heart in all occurrents.

1. That infinite wisdom ordaineth whatsoever befalling me, and the present condition that I am in is ever best for me. If a greater portion of outward good things had been good for me, I had had it. My Father is not so careless of his children as to deny them anything that is good for them; and if it be not good for me, why should I desire it? He acteth without reason, as well as without religion, who craveth what is hurtful to him. If my condition were cut out by the will of malicious men, I might have some ground of grumbling; but when it is cut out by the infinite wisdom of a gracious God, I have not the least cause of discontent. I take it ill if my children be not satisfied with what food and raiment I think fitten for them; and may not God much more take it ill at my hands if I sit not down quietly with his allowance, be it more or less?

2. That the smallest mercy is above my merits. If my condition be not so good as I desire, yet it is better than I deserve; if my estate be not so flourishing as I would it should be, it is not so bad as I know it might have been. Beggars must not be choosers; they who have nothing but of charity and alms, must be satisfied with a bare allowance, and contentedly be at another's disposal: 'Why doth living

man complain?' Lam. 3:39. Man, a reasonable creature, and complain against his Maker! Living man complain, when the most miserable estate out of hell is a mercy to him!

3. That, be our estate as low as it will, it is better than we brought with us into the world. Some give us this reason why man, when none besides of the visible creatures, is born naked, weeping, helpless, but to teach him contentedness. Have I any food? I brought none with me. Is my garment coarse and thin? I was born naked. Am I blessed with any comforts? I came into the world without any: 'Naked came I into the world, and naked shall I go out of the world; the Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord.'

4. That a better condition might and would make me worse. If I were mounted high in the world, I should be like the flag at the top of the mast, more liable to storms and winds. The full purse invites the thief, and perhaps may occasion a stab, when the empty pocket is secure, and the poor man may travel the road without any such danger. Low shrubs escape many a cold blast with which tall trees are assaulted: 'They have no changes; therefore they fear not God,' Ps. 55:19. Atalanta lost the wager she ran for, by gathering up the golden apples which Hippomenes for that purpose had thrown in her way.

5. That others, who are better than I, and more holy, are worse for this world, and suffer more hardships. In spiritual things look on those above thee, that by an honest emulation thou mayest reform and amend; but in temporal things look on those below thee, that thou mayest not complain or murmur. How many are in fetters, wandering up and down from house and home, set upon the rack of diseases, and have an ounce of misery for every drachm which thou

hast? Stay, sirs, said the wise Harry in the fable, let our estate content us; for as we run from some, so others run from us.

6. That all shall work for my good. The saint is sure to thrive by his sufferings. When children meet with nuts, or apples, or primroses, in their way, those are oftentimes occasions to make them loiter in their errands, incur their parents' anger, and sometimes their late return finds the door shut against them; when such as meet with danger make the more haste, and their speed procureth them the greater welcome. They who meet with pleasures are apt to loiter; they who meet with miseries make the more haste, and shall find the better cheer. The Christian hath a promise, and the very Godhead of the Almighty engaged for its performance: 'We know that all things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose,' Rom. 8:28. Why should not the Christian, with a holy resolution, hold a steady course in all weathers; and though he be forced with cross winds to shift his sails and catch at side winds, yet wisely steer and keep on his course by the cape of good hope, when he may be certain that every wind that bloweth shall help him forward to his eternal joyful haven. Though we cannot see how some passages of God's providence, as persecution, oppression, loss of relations or estates, sickness or disgrace, should do otherwise than hurt and injure us; and are ready to darken counsel by words without knowledge, and to say, as Jacob, 'Joseph is not, and Simeon is not; all these are against me.' Children are not, honours are not, riches are not, liberty is not; all these are against me. But Christ may say to us of such severe dispensations, as once to Peter, 'What I do thou knowest not now, but shalt know hereafter.' The issue will prove a truth in God's promises, and the conclusion will speak what was in the womb of the promises. I am confident, when God sendeth afflictions, they are at that season more fit for me than outward mercies; and though at present I am ready to

blaspheme, yet when I find the fruit of them in being thereby partaker of his holiness, I bless him for them. A Lacedæmonian woman, when Sparta had got the day in a battle, could not only submit, but rejoice, though her five sons were slain in the fight. If I get the victory over one sin, I have cause to rejoice, though it cost me some outward comforts.

7. That the more I repine, the worse I make my condition. A discontented man, like one in a barrel of pikes, which way soever he turns, he finds something that pricks; he is best at ease when he lieth still. Murmuring turns whips into scorpions, and makes that which would be but as a little finger, heavier than weighty loins. They who by an even poise may sit safe in a boat when the waters are rough, by rising up or stirring are drowned. Passions, like rain or mist to the best firs, breed vermin in the soul. Because this man hath not what his lust craveth, he enjoyeth not what God hath given him; but like an ass, feedeth on herbs, whilst he carrieth better food on his back for others. A single mischief by discontent is made double. The prisoner galls his legs by striving with his fetters.

8. The examples of others may have some prevalency with us; Abraham, Moses, Paul were eminent for this grace.

Many heathen who were ignorant of the wisdom, goodness, and faithfulness of God, yet upon principles of morality were constant and even in their behaviours, not changing their countenances with the change of their fortunes and conditions, but bringing their mind to their estates, when they could not bring their estates to their minds. Xantippe said of Socrates that she always found him returning home—though he often met with affronts and abusive language abroad—with the same face and carriage with which he went out. Furius Camillus was ever like himself, neither by obtaining

the dictatorship inflamed with arrogancy, nor, being banished his country, sick with melancholy. The whole body of Rome, after their disaster at Cannæ, where their consul was slain, and the flower of their gentry and soldiery cut off by Hannibal, when the whole world did ring their passing bell, and judged their fortune dying and desperate, were even then heroic in their carriage, and acted nothing unworthy their former greatness. In their Asian enterprise they proposed, before the battle, conditions to Antiochus, as if they had conquered him; and after the fight and victory offered him the same terms as if they had not conquered.

Abdolomius, a poor gardener, though of the king's stock, when advanced by Alexander to be king of Zidon, and asked by him how it was possible for him to endure his poverty with contentedness, answered, I pray the gods I may continue the government of this kingdom with the like mind; for those hands were sufficient for me to live by, and as I had nothing, so I wanted nothing.

9. The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. He doeth thee no wrong, he cannot do thee any wrong; now why shouldst thou complain when not injured? It is unreasonable to murmur when a man hath right done him.

10. God is gracious and good in all his dealings with thee.

If thine estate be but little, yet that little, with the fear of the Lord, is better than the possessions of many wicked men, Ps. 37. A penny which is the earnest of some great bargain, is another manner of thing than an ordinary penny, and more worth than many pounds, being given and received under another notion. Thy little is an earnest of infinitely more than thou canst imagine, and therefore more precious than others' thousands. A dinner of herbs, with the love of thy God, is infinitely more eligible than the stalled oxen of the

wicked, and his wrath therewith. Who would desire Eglon's present with the dagger, Sisera's milk with the nail and hammer, and Haman's banquet with the gallows that trod upon the heels of it? Truly such is the riches of every wicked man.

The smallness of thy temporal may increase thy spiritual estate. If God recompense thy want of earthly with a supply of heavenly riches, thou art no loser. Nicephorus tells us of one Cyrus, a courtier in the time of Theodosius the younger, who, through the envious occupation of some favourites, being spoiled of his goods, of a pagan became a Christian, and of a Christian a minister of Christ. Eudoxia, the daughter of a philosopher in Athens, being cast out of her father's house by unkind brethren, and coming to Constantinople to beseech Theodosius to right a poor orphan, found such favour in his eyes that he made her his queen. Affliction is the way to honour with men, to more holiness from God, when prosperity causeth our fall both into sin and misery. He holds the garments of his godliness fast in a boisterous wind, who would lay it off in a sunny day.

Lastly, If thou wouldst exercise thyself to godliness, take heed of those things that will hinder thee therein. As if a man would have his trees to thrive, he must not only open the earth sometimes and mind its watering, but also lop off superfluous branches; and as a gardener, if he would have his herbs and flowers to flourish, must be sure to keep his banks and beds well weeded, as well as dunged or watered; so if thou wouldst thrive and flourish in godliness, there is a necessity of avoiding what is hurtful to it, as well as of using what is helpful.

There be several things which will keep a Christian from the exercise of his holy calling, some of which I shall but briefly name, having had occasion to speak of others, and also to these, in other chapters.

1. Avoid evil company. Wicked persons delight to have or to make fellows. Hence we find in Scripture that they go as the unclean beasts into the ark in pairs: Adam and Eve, Simeon and Levi, Ammon and Jonadab, Hymeneus and Alexander, Phygellus and Hermogenes, Ananias and Sapphira. Can a man take fire in his bosom and not be burned? Expect not that the flowers of thy graces should flourish unless these weeds be removed from them. He that walketh in the rain must expect to be wet; he that walketh in the sun must expect to be tanned; and he that walks among polluting persons must expect to be polluted.

2. Take heed of idleness. An idle man is like a heap of dry straw, quickly fired by the sparks of Satan's temptations, Prov. 28:19; 1 Tim. 5:13; 2 Thes. 3:10, 11.

Whilst the oyster lieth gaping against the sun, he is devoured by the crabfish. Whilst the Christian lieth lazying on the bed of idleness, he is a prey to Satan.

The purest river water, if it stand still in a vessel, will become unsavoury. The best corn, if not stirred, will be musty. As the caterpillar consumeth the leaf, and the canker the rose, so will idleness thy godliness, Ezek. 16:49.

As men in war lying in the field, if they be slothful and lie lazying on the ground, must expect to be a prey to their enemies; the Amalekites found this by experience. The sluggard will rather be killed than take the pains to defend himself. A slothful man, who will not employ his stock, cannot expect to improve his stock. The diligent hand maketh rich, in goods and in grace.

3. Love not the world. The thorns of the world hinder the growth of the good seed of grace. This world's best, are the other world's worst

husbands. It is hard for the periwinkle in the sea to swim, because of the house on her back; it is impossible for them to swim heavenward who have the world, not on their backs, but in their hearts. The more thou delightest in this world, the more thou wilt neglect the other world. He who is taken with, and fond of a harlot, will quickly abate in his love to, nay cast off, his honest wife. The palm-tree is least at the bottom, and the higher it groweth, the thicker and greater it is, contrary to all other trees. The higher a Christian mounts in his affections, and the more heavenly he is, the more he will thrive in Christianity. The child cannot thrive that feedeth on dirt; the more a man loveth the earth, the less he will do or suffer for heaven. Such Esaus will sell the birthright for a mess of pottage; such Gehazis will dishonour and belie their master for a talent of silver; such Achans will destroy themselves and families, and trouble a whole Israel, for a wedge of gold; such Judases will sell their Lord and Saviour for a goodly price, thirty pieces; for a piece of bread such a one will transgress. The fire which breaks out of this bramble devours the cedars of Lebanon. The Athenians did set up a pillar, wherein they published him to be an enemy to their city who should bring gold out of Media as an instrument to corrupt them. Inordinate love of creatures is a canker which in time will eat up the very life of godliness. Reader, if thou art risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ is. It is recorded by divers historians, both of the East and West Indians, and some blackamoors in Guinea, between both, that many subjects willingly die with their princes, and women with their husbands; that some men give their wives, others their children, others their servants, to be buried alive in the grave with their kings, to serve him, as they conceit, in the other world; that some women cast themselves into the fire in which the dead bodies of their husbands are consumed. If these can cast away and condemn the world and all things in it for the love of a poor wretched creature, what a shame is it to Christians if the love of



Jesus Christ, their head, their prince, their husband, do not mortify them to the world, and make them despise all in it, to enjoy him whilst they live, and to be with him where he is when they die!

4. Allow thyself in no known sin. This is like a thief used to the shop, which will steal away all thy gains, and keep thee assuredly from thriving in thy heavenly calling. There is no possibility of making religion thy business without the gracious concurrence of the Holy Spirit; he it is that must lay the foundation, rear up the building, and perfect what he beginneth; but thou canst not expect his company or assistance if thou harbourest any corruption in thy heart. Though this dove may fly to thee, desirous to make its abode with thee, as the dove went out of the ark, yet if it behold the earth under water, thy heart in any way of wickedness, it will return again whence it came; doves will lie clean, or be gone. Bees will not continue in a stinking or impure hive; therefore those that would not lose them, prepare the stools where they set them with perfumes and sweet-smelling boughs, lest ill savours force them to forsake their stations. Thus, saith Chrysostom, deals the Holy Spirit; our souls are the hives, which, if perfumed with grace, invite his presence, but, if polluted with any known sin, provoke him to depart. Oh let there not be any way of wickedness in thee, if thou wouldst run the way of God's commandments!

## CHAPTER XIV

**Motives inciting Christians to exercise themselves to godliness. The vanity of**

## **other exercises. The brevity of man's life. The patterns of others**

Thirdly, I shall annex some motives to quicken thee to exercise thyself to godliness, and then conclude the treatise.

First, Consider the vanity of all other exercises and labours. The wise man begins his Ecclesiastes with vanity of vanities, all is vanity; and after a large and exact demonstration thereof, makes this use, and ends his book with, 'Hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.' It may be, reader, thou takest much pains and spendest much time; thou risest early, and sittest up late; and wastest thy body, and wearest out thy strength; and toilest and moilest about the things of this life; but, alas! to what purpose? to what profit? The foot of all thy accounts, when at the end of thy life the total comes to be summed up, will be only ciphers, and signify nothing. Thou workest all this while at the labour in vain. Like the disciples, thou fished all night, and catchest nothing. Thou spendest thy strength for what is not bread, and thy labour for what will not satisfy. If the word of truth, and the God who whom it is impossible to lie, may be believed, all the things of this life separated from godliness are lying vanities, broken cisterns, ashes, lies, wind, vanity of vanities, and things of naught, Jonah 2:8; Jer. 2:13; 1 Sam. 12:21; Hosea 10:13, and 12:1; Eccles. 1:2; Hab. 2:13. It is Chrysostom's saying, that if he had been to preach to all the world, and could so have spoken that all should have heard him, he would have chosen that text, 'O mortal men, how long will ye love vanity, and follow after leasing!' Democritus gave that for the reason of his continual laughter, which occasioned his countrymen to look on him as distracted, that when he beheld the labour and diligence, the running and riding, the sweating and panting, nay, the

fighting and killing of men to get one above another, and to heap up a fading treasure, he could not but deride their folly.

Indeed, though the heathen laughed at the ridiculousness of such persons, the sensible Christian seeth great cause to weep at the emptiness and unprofitableness of such actions, and the madness of the agents. Cyprian advised his friend Donatus to suppose himself at the top of the highest mountain, and thence to behold the tumults and chances of this wavering world, and told him that then he could not but either laugh at it, or pity it. It is no such wonder that brutish horses should leave good provender to feed on litter, as some jades do; but that men who are indued with reasonable souls, that seeming Christians, who have a table spread before them with hidden manna, with angels' food, with meat indeed, and drink indeed, with all the dainties of heaven, should neglect these and feed on ashes, may well be matter both of admiration and lamentation.

The Holy Ghost tells such, that they follow after vain things, which cannot profit them, 1 Sam. 12:21. All outward things are like an olive or date stone—hard to crack or cleave; but when with much labour they are opened, they are nothing worth.

The wise moralist, speaking of such laborious loiterers as work hard for nothing, compares them to such as spend many months to learn to write with their feet, and when they have learned it, are never the better for it. Cæsar compares them to such as fish for gudgeons with a golden hook—hazard more than the fish when taken are worth. Life is precious; health, and strength, and time are precious, because all these have a relation to an eternal estate; now how foolish is he that wasteth them upon toys and trifles, and neglecteth provision for the other world! 'Surely every man walketh in a vain show; surely they are disquieted in vain,' Ps. 39:6.

Observe, reader, how dearly men pay for their gilded nothings, for their earthen potsherds covered with silver dross; they walk up and down, run hither and thither, disquiet themselves with cares and fears, and heart-piercing frights and vexations, for a vain show: 'The people labour in the fire, and weary themselves for very vanity,' Hab. 2:13. Their work is hot and hard; they labour in the fire, even to lassitude and weariness. But is it about the noble concernments of their immortal souls? Is it that their sins may be pardoned, the vitiosity of their natures healed, and that their souls may be fitted for the heavenly mansions? No, it is for very vanity; for that which will not afford them the least good, or make them in any respect better or blessed. Alas! how much below, nay, contrary to, reason doth man act, to cast away pearls upon swine, gold upon dross, diamonds upon dirt—to throw away his time and seasons of grace, which are more worth than rubies, than all riches, upon that which is vanity and vexation of spirit!

It was a worthy check which Cyneas the orator gave to the monstrous ambition of Pyrrhus. When that king of Epirus was solicited by the Tarentines, and other people in Italy, to become the head of their league against the Romans, whilst he was musing upon that affair, his favourite Cyneas came into his presence, and perceiving the king in a study, desires the knowledge of his thoughts. Pyrrhus courteously opens his heart to him, and asketh his advice whether he were best to accept of that honourable offer or no, but resolving before to join with them, and promised himself success. The orator answered him, That in case he should join with them and prevail, what would he then do? Pyrrhus told him, Then Sardinia and Sicily will be at my command. Cyneas consented, and replied, What then will you do? Pyrrhus told him, Then Africa will soon be conquered. Cyneas asked, What then will you do? Then said Pyrrhus, Greece will yield to my victorious arms. Cyneas continued, When Greece is

brought under, what will you do next? The king, perceiving the intention of his favourite, replied, smiling, Then, Cyneas, we will sit still, rest ourselves, and be merry. That, said Cyneas, you may do presently without any bloody fight or barbarous outrageous acts, without tiresome marches, pinching quarters, tormenting fears of losing the day, without any hazard or danger to yourself or others.

Truly, reader, I may tell thee, if thou art one that busiest thyself about a throng of worldly businesses, and crowdest thy mind and heart with projects and designs to increase thy heaps, and advance thy name, and provide for thy children, and procure thyself a comfortable subsistence for a few days, that after all thy care, and trouble, and restlessness, and vexation, and hazards, and dangers, thou wilt be never the better; thou wilt but, like them that spend their time, and money, and thoughts for the philosopher's stone, reap thy labour for thy pains, and find all unprofitable. Felix Platerus is of opinion that all alchymists are mad, in being so laborious for nothing.

May I not say to thee truly concerning thy pains and time, what Judas did falsely concerning the ointment, 'To what purpose is this waste?' To what purpose is thy waste of time, and strength, and health? Alas! what profit will all thy pains bring thee in?

The vanity of other labours will appear in that all other things are unsuitable, deceitful, unsatisfying, vexatious, and uncertain.

1. Unsuitable to thy soul. Gold is unsuitable to hunger, food to the sick, honour to the weary; so are all the comforts of this life to thy soul. What is an earthly treasure to the poor in spirit? what is the best physic-garden to a wounded conscience? what are all the dainties on the table of the creation to one that is hungry and thirsty after the righteousness of Christ, and the grace of the Spirit? Bodily

things are not suitable to our spirits, nor temporal substance to an immortal soul. The fattest increase of the earth is from the excrements of beasts, which must needs be far from answering the nature of a heaven-born spirit.

2. Deceitful. As Jael to Sisera, the world brings forth meat to us in a lovely dish, and saith, Come in, my lord, turn in; but she puts her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workman's hammer. With the hammer she smites foolish Siseras that trust her; she smites off their heads after she hath pierced their temples. It serveth its greatest darlings in their extremity, as Plutarch reporteth Pompey to have served Cicero, who, when Cicero fled to him in his misery for succour, fled out at a back-door, and left him to the mercy of his enemies. The world, next man's heart, is the greatest cheat and impostor in the world. Like a host, it welcomes us in our inns with smiles and embraces, but kills us in our beds, when we suspect no such matter. As the wise man wisheth thee to be moderate and abstinent at a full table, and to put a knife to thy throat, for they are deceitful meat; so I may say of all the dainties and delicacies of the creation, they are deceitful meat, pleasant, but poison. Like the bramble, the world promiseth us protection and refreshment under its shadow, if we will suffer it to be our king, and reign over us; but a fire comes out of it to destroy the cedars of Lebanon, the souls of men.

As the plover, to put a man out of his way, flieth before him, clapping her wings, that he, minding the noise she makes, and following her, might not find her nest; so the world, with its noise and clamours, its songs and music, keeps men still in admiration of her, and hinders them from finding out her cozenage and thievery: 'He that trusteth in vanity, vanity shall be his recompense,' Job 15:31. It is reported of one Oromazes that he had an enchanted egg, in which, as he boasted

himself, he had inclosed all the happiness of the world; but, being broken, nothing was found in it save wind. Truly such is the world's inside, wind, whatever appearance it hath in the eye of a worldling. As the forbidden tree seemed to promise knowledge to our first parents, but it took their knowledge from them, and brought in ignorance; so the world promiseth great matters, much joy and delight, but payeth us with the contrary—sorrow and horror. The worldling's voice is like that of the thief, 'Come, let us lay wait,' &c.; 'We shall find all precious substance, and fill our houses with spoil;' when, alas! instead of precious substance, they find pernicious shadows; and instead of filling their houses with spoil, they fill their hearts with gall and wormwood. The world, as a cunning courtesan, flattereth and fawneth upon the young gallant, to commit spiritual uncleanness with her, and then casteth him from the height of fancied delights into the depth of real horror, Prov. 1:10, 11.

3. Unsatisfying. All these sublunary comforts are but skin-deep. As a mist, they may wet the blade, but leave the root of the corn dry; they may cause a smile in the face, but cannot refresh the heart, or satisfy the soul. The countryman thinks, if he were at the top of some high hill he should touch the heavens; but when, with much pains, and sweat, and toil, he is gotten thither, he finds himself deceived. Men think if they could attain to such a degree of honour, or such a quantity of riches, or enjoy such brutish pleasures, then they should be satisfied, but they find their thirst after creatures as immoderate as before; like men in a fever or dropsy, the more they drink, the more they desire: 'He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth gold with increase.' Many men have too much of the world, but no worldly man hath enough; his voice still is like the horse-leech, Give, give. Though he hath enough to destroy him, yet he hath not enough to content him. When the Parthians had taken Crassus, the covetous Roman who had robbed the temple, they

poured molten gold into his mouth, saying, Drink now thy fill, thou greedy wretch, of that which thou hast so long thirsted after. The covetous caliph of Babylon, when taken prisoner, was set by the great Khan of Tartary in the midst of those treasures which he had wretchedly scraped together, and bidden eat his fill and satisfy himself, but amongst all his heaps of silver and gold he was miserably famished. The soul will starve, for all the food which the whole world affordeth it. A worldling is like Tantalus, who had apples at his lips and water at his chin, yet pined for want; in the midst of his sufficiency, he is in straits. If thou triest the whole creation, and empanellest every creature upon the jury, to inquire where satisfaction is to be had, they will write Ignoramus upon the bill. If thou askest the sea, it will answer, as concerning wisdom, 'The sea saith, It is not in me; and the depth saith, It is not in me; the earth saith, It is not in me.' Ask every worldly blessing particularly, and it will say, It is not in me. Thou mayest call and cry to them in thy need for comfort, as eagerly and earnestly as Rachel for children, and each will answer, as Jacob did here, 'Am I in God's stead, that hath withholden thy desire from thee?' or as the angel to the woman, 'Why seek ye the living among the dead? he is risen, he is not here.' Am I, a poor finite being, in God's stead, to satisfy the vast desires of thy capacious soul? Why seekest thou living comforts amongst dead creatures? it is gone, it is not here. The world entertains its best guests no better than Caligula did his favourites, whom he invited to a feast, and when they were come, set golden dishes and golden cups empty before them, and told them they were welcome, and he would have them feed heartily. All the trees in the garden of the creation are like those trees which Solinus mentioneth in Assyria, the fruit whereof seemeth as yellow as gold, but, being touched, is as rotten as dirt.



4. The things of this world are vexatious. Their sting paineth far more than their honey pleaseth. They are like the Egyptian reed, which will not only fail them that trust it, but also pierce them with splinters, and wound them deeply sooner or later: 'They who will be rich, pierce themselves through with many sorrows,' 1 Tim. 6:9, 10. Instead of satisfaction, thou wilt find vexation. The things of this world are not only wind for their vanity, but also thorns for the vexation they cause. As when the blood is corrupted by a poisoned arrow, it flieth to the heart, thinking to find some remedy there; but as soon as it toucheth the heart, it findeth death where it looked for life. Thus men that are pressed with miseries, run to the world as their refuge, hoping to find comfort and refreshment there; but, alas! that doth increase their afflictions, and gives them rather matter of more mourning than any abatement of their sorrows. They who dive into the bottom of this sea of the world, to the hazard of their lives, instead of the pearl of contentment and happiness, which they take such pains for, bring up nothing but their hands full of the sand and gravel of vexation and anguish. All the ways of worldly delights are strewed with nettles and briers, so that its greatest darlings are but like bears robbing a bee-hive, that with much labour get a little honey, but are soundly stung for their pains. Therefore reason, much more religion, may sound a retreat, and call us off from our eager pursuit of these lying vanities. Car où il n'y a rien à gagner que des coups, volontiers il n'y va pas: No man makes haste to the market, where there is nothing to be bought but blows.

5. Uncertain. There is no constancy in outward comforts. As brooks in winter are carried with violence, and run with a mighty stream, flowing over with abundance of water on every side, when there is no want nor need of waters; but in the heat of summer is dried up, when water is scanty and hard to be had; such is the friendship of the world; it will promise us many things when we have need of nothing;

but when the wind turns, and afflictions overtake us, it is like a tree withered for want of sap, and as a ditch without any water to refresh us. When the sun of our prosperity is hid and covered with a cloud, these shadows vanish and disappear. As leaves fall off in autumn, so doth the friendship of creatures fail men when the sap of that maintenance which commanded their company is withdrawn from them. Man in honour doth not abide, Ps. 49. As the rising sun, coming into our horizon like a giant ready to run his race, appearing to us with a full and glorious countenance, within an hour's space is obscured with mists, or darkened with clouds; and however, if it meet with neither of these, when it arriveth at its noon-day height, it declines, descendeth, setteth, and is buried under us; so the ambitious person sheweth himself to the world as chief favourite at court, with much pomp and pride; by and by his honour is eclipsed by the hate of the people, or frowns of his prince, or envy of his fellow-courtiers; or if not, yet he dieth, and carrieth nothing away, and his glory doth not descend after him. The like is evident of earthly treasures; they are soon gone, though not soon gotten. As a gallant ship, well rigged, trimmed, tackled, manned, with her top and top-gallant, and her well spread sails, putteth out of harbour to the admiration of many spectators; but within a few days is split upon some dangerous rock, or swallowed up of some disastrous tempest, or taken by some ravenous pirate; so are this world's goods on a sudden taken from their owners, or their owners from them.

There is a hole in our strongest bags, and rust in our choicest metal. The apostle calls riches uncertain riches, and honour a fancy, and all the things of this world a fashion, 1 Tim. 6:17; Acts 24; 1 Cor. 7:31. We are not certain to keep these birds in our yards whilst we live; for riches make themselves wings and fly away; but we are certain, if they do not leave us, that we shall leave them. 'We brought nothing

into this world, and it is certain we shall carry nothing out of the world.'

Reader, how unwise is he who neglecteth eternal substance for fading nothings! The Romans are recorded as guilty of much folly, that in their fight with Mithridates, they were so eager after their prey, that thereby they missed taking the king, who could not otherwise have escaped their hands. Ah, how foolish art thou, if, through thy violent pursuit of a perishing world, thou shouldst lose an eternal kingdom! As Constantinople was lost through the covetousness of the citizens; so is the crown of life and glory, the city that hath a foundation, through men's eager endeavours after earthly things. The beloved disciple doth not unfitly represent all the beauties, and glories, and excellencies of this lower world, under the name and notion of the moon, which is ever in changes, and never looks upon us twice with the same face; and when it is at the fullest, is blemished with a dark spot, and next door to declining, Rev. 12:1.

An old man of Brazil, discoursing with the merchants of France and Portugal, and perceiving the long and dangerous voyages which they took to get riches, asked them if men did not die with them as well as in other countries? They told him, Yea. He asked them who should possess their riches after their deaths? They said their children, if they had any; if not, their next kindred. Now, saith the old man, I perceive ye are fools; for what necessity is there for you to pass the troublesome seas wherein so many perish, and to run so many hazards? Is not the earth that brought you up, sufficient to bring up your children and kindred also? We have children and kindred that are likewise dear to us; but when we consider that the earth which nourisheth us is sufficient to nourish them, we rest satisfied.

That busy bee and great trouble-world, Alexander, had a tart yet wise reproof from Diogenes, when, being taken with the philosopher's witty answers, he bade him ask what he would, and he would give it him. The philosopher desired him to grant him the smallest portion of immortality. Alexander said, That is not in my power to give. Then, saith the philosopher, why doth Alexander take such pains, and make such stir to conquer the world, when he cannot assure himself of one moment to enjoy it! Ah! why should thou neglect thy God and Christ, and soul and eternal good, and tire and weary thyself night and day, for these unsatisfying comforts, which may leave thee to-morrow, and of which thou canst not secure the enjoyment of one moment! If God complain of wicked men, and threatens them with fierce wrath and fiery indignation for selling the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes, and would make them know that he valued his people at a higher price, and would not suffer them to be sold at such a rate; what will become of thee if thou shouldst sell thy soul, thy salvation, thy God, thy Christ, for silver, for vain, unsatisfying corruptible silver, when their value is above millions of worlds! Oh take heed that thou dost not cast away thyself for such transitory trifles. Let not the world's venison cause thee to lose thy Father's blessing. It was a poor change of Glaucus to exchange gold for copper; but oh what a sad exchange wilt thou make to exchange heaven for earth, the endless fruition of the blessed God for a moment's enjoyment of creatures!

Thou wouldst condemn that mariner of folly, who, seeing a fish in the water, should leap into the sea to catch it, which, together with his life, he loseth. What a fool art thou, for mortal comforts to lose an immortal crown! The women of Corinth, saith an ancient father, did set up tapers at the birth of every child, with proper names upon each of them, and that taper which lasted longest in burning, had its proper name transferred to the child. God himself gives the highest

and richest, though conceited worldling, his name: 'Thou fool, this night,' &c. 'Nabal is his name, and folly is with him.'

The plain truth is, the world is the ruin and destruction of men. Its pleasures and honours make the sinner merry and jolly, as the herb sardonia the eater, who eating dieth: 'They that will be rich, fall into temptations and snares, and many hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition,' 1 Tim. 6:9. The world serveth its darlings as that tyrannous emperor did his servants—let them through a sliding floor into a chamber full of roses, that, being smothered in them, they might meet the bitterness of death in sweetness. Oh do not spend thy strength for that which is not bread, but hearken to Christ, and thou shalt eat that which is good, and thy soul shall delight thyself in fatness, Isa. 55:3, 4.

Secondly, Consider the brevity of thy life. He who hath but a little time, and a great task, must work hard, or his work will not be done. The birds know their time, and improve it. In some countries, the shorter the days are, the faster they fly. Heathen have been sensible of this. Theophrastus cried out on his dying bed, *Ars longa, vita brevis*; Time was short, and not sufficient for human arts and sciences. Seneca saith of himself, *Nullus mihi per otium exiit dies, partem noctis studiis devovi*; I lose no day through idleness, but even devote part of the night to my studies. The very devils follow their cursed trade with the greater diligence, knowing that their time is short, Rev. 12:12.

Now, reader, consider how few thy days are. What is your life? even a vapour, a coming and a going, a flood and an ebb, and then thou art in the ocean of eternity. I have read of one, that being asked what life was, was answered answerless; for the party of whom the question was demanded only turned his back and went away. We come into

the world, and take a turn or two about in it, and God saith, Return, ye children of men. A little child may number the days of the oldest man. We project high things, and lay foundations for an earthly eternity, but the longest life is less than a drop to that ocean. Yet, alas! the most are blown off in the spring, and few continue to fall off in autumn. Plutarch compareth Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, in regard of their short reign, to kings in tragedies, which last no longer than the time in which they are represented on the stage.

The river Hypanis in Scythia, bringeth forth every day little bladders, out of which come certain flies, which are bred in the morning, fledged at noon, and die at night: 'Man cometh up like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth as a shadow, and continueth not,' Job 14:2.

This short time posteth away with speed; how soon do our days vanish! Job tells us that his little time made great haste to be gone: 'My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle,' Job 7:6. The weaver's shuttle is an instrument of very swift motion, and so swift that it is used for a proverb, for all things that are swift and speedy. *Radius textoris dictum proverbiale; Radio velocius.* The Latins express it by a beam of the sun, or a word which signifieth a ray, which is darted in a moment from one end of the heavens to another; such speed doth our life make to pass away.

Cardinal Bellarmine, when he had a full prospect of the sun going down, to perceive the quickness of its motion, took a psalter in his hand, and before he had twice read over the fifty-first Psalm, the whole body of the sun was set, whereby he concluded, the earth being twenty-one thousand miles in compass, the sun must go seven thousand miles in half a quarter of an hour. However the Cardinal might be mistaken in his reckoning, yet man's days are 'swifter than a post: they flee away, they see no good. They are passed away as the

swift ships; as the eagle that hasteth to the prey,' Job 9:25, 26. It is our shame and misery that our days should be so swift, and we so slack; that our time should be as speedy as a post, or ship, or eagle, and our hearts as slow about our eternal concernments as a snail. Our negligence herein speaks us brutish, and void of common sense. Reason will teach him that followeth its directions, to be most industrious about matters of such importance.

The heathen historian can agree with Scripture in this: *Vita nostra sicut fabula, non refert quam diu sed quam bene*; Our life passeth away, as a tale that is told; it matters not much whether it be long or short, but whether it be well or ill.

Surely it concerneth thee, reader, to make religion thy business, and work the work of God, when thine everlasting happiness dependeth on it, and thy time is so short that thou hast to do it in. In the days of Ptolomeus Philopater, when the huge and great anchor of the ship *Thalmegos* was laid out upon the shore, the children of Alexandria did ride upon the stalk, and crept through the ring of the anchor, as if it had been made purposely for their pastime, whereas wise men knew it was appointed for better uses, namely, to stable and make sure the great vessel in storms and tempests.

Truly, so do too many serve time; they play, and toy, and trifle it away, as if God had given it to them for that end; when he who hath but half an eye, as we say, may see that it was given for better purposes, viz., to furnish his soul for his eternal voyage, and thereby to help to stablish and fasten him when he shall launch into the stormy ocean. *Protogenes* made himself ridiculous in the judgment of all that are sober, for spending seven years in drawing *Falisus* and his dog; for though the most excellent pictures are longest in drawing, yet to spend years about that which may be finished in

days, argueth want of wisdom. But having spoken somewhat largely to this in the sixth chapter, I am the more brief in this.

Thirdly, Consider the examples of others, who have wrought hard at this heavenly calling. Cicero tells us, Nothing prevails more with men than similitudes and examples. Indeed, worthy patterns are of great power. Thueydides brake forth into tears, out of love to learning, upon hearing Herodotus read a history that he had written. Themistocles tells us, the statue of Miltiades would not suffer him to sleep. Alexander was much provoked to valiant acts by reading the prowess of Achilles and Hector in Homer. Cæsar was so stirred to courage by reading the conquests of Alexander in his youth, that he wept for anger that he had done nothing worthy of himself at that age. Iron put into the fire is turned into fire. Consider, therefore, the prophets and apostles of the Lord, how diligent they were at their duty, how hard they wrought for God.

The great apostle was indefatigably industrious for his soul and his Saviour. Consider him in reference to his outward man, how unwearied was he at his Master's work! and in reference to his inward man, how zealous, how fervent in spirit, serving the Lord! 'From Jerusalem to Illyricum I have preached the gospel.' His travels are computed to be twelve thousand nine hundred and seventy miles. He gives us, when necessitated thereunto, a brief catalogue of his actions and passions for Christ. 'Are they ministers of Christ? I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews, five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in



perils by false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things which are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?' 2 Cor. 11:23–29.

Reader, think thou hearest the apostle speaking to thee, as once to the Corinthians, 'Be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ.' How did our blessed Saviour work the work of him that sent him while it was day? He went about doing good. Godliness was his meat and drink: 'I have meat to eat which ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.' He wrought so hard that he forgot to eat his bread, and was taken by his kindred to be mad. It was his sleep and rest. He went into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. He prayed with strong cries and groans; and being in an agony, he prayed the more fervently. He was taken to be about fifty years old when he was little above thirty, so much was he worn out with labour for his God, Acts 10:38; John 4:34; Luke 6:12; Mark 1:34; Heb. 5:7.

O reader, let Christ be the copy after which thou wilt write, and the pattern which thou wilt follow, and be a follower of others as they are of Christ Jesus. Did Christ work so hard for thee; did he lose his food, and sleep, and wear out himself, that his strength was dried up like a potsherd, and his heart was melted like wax in the midst of his bowels, and wilt not thou spend and be spent for thy Saviour?—I would say for thy own soul; for in serving him thou servest thyself. Think of it when thou art trifling away thy time, and neglecting thy spiritual watch, and dull and dead in holy duties. How eager and earnest, how zealous and sedulous, thy Lord Jesus was in working out thy salvation! He did not play, nor dally about the work of thy

redemption, but made it his business, and did what he was called to with all his heart, and soul, and strength.

## **CHAPTER XV**

### **The excellency of this calling, and the conclusion of the treatise**

Fourthly, Consider the excellency of this calling. As it is said of God in respect of beings, 'Who is like thee, O God? Among all the gods none is to be compared to thee;' so I may say of godliness in respect of callings, What is like thee, O godliness? Amongst all callings none is comparable to thee.

1. It is the most honourable calling. The master that thou art bound to is King of kings, and Lord of lords, the fountain of honour, and Lord of glory; one of whom the greatest princes and potentates of the world hold their crowns and sceptres, to whom they must kneel and do their homage; one to whom the whole creation is less than nothing. The work that thou art employed in is not servile and mean, but high and noble; the worship of the great God, walking and conversing with his blessed Majesty, subduing brutish lusts, living above this beggarly earth, a conversation in heaven, a conflict with, and conquest over, this dreggy flesh and drossy world, and powers of hell, to which the greatest battles and victories of the most valiant warriors that ever drew the sword are worse than children's play. To conquer our passions is more than to conquer kingdoms. Themistocles is renowned by Cicero for telling some who disparaged him for his ignorance in playing on the lute, that he knew not how to play on the lute, yet he knew how to take a city. To subdue one lust, is more than to subdue a thousand cities. Thy fellow-servants are the

elect of God, glorious angels and saints, who are higher than the kings of the earth, princes in all lands, a crown of glory, a royal diadem, a chosen generation, the excellent of the earth, vessels of gold, the children of the Most High, of whom the world is not worthy. The privileges of this calling and company are eminent. Adoption, remission, growth in grace, divine love, perseverance in holiness, an eternal kingdom, are all contained in the charter granted to this corporation. The covenant of grace, that hive of sweetness, that mine of gold, that cabinet of jewels, to which all the world is but a heap of dust, is their part and portion, and contains more in it for their comfort than heaven and earth is able to contain.

To serve God is one of the fairest flowers in the saint's garland of honour. Hence the Lord's kinsman glorieth in being the Lord's servant; and the Lord's mother calleth herself his handmaid, Jude 1; Luke 1:38. If the meanest offices about earthly princes are esteemed honourable, what an honour is it to wait on the King of heaven! The saints' duty is their preferment, and that service which is commanded them a privilege. The great apostle boasteth of his chain for God as his glory and credit, and holdeth it up as a mark and badge of honour: 'For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain,' Acts 28:20, and begins one of his epistles with this honorary title, 'Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ,' Philem. 1.

It is not earthly riches that make a man honourable; we mistake in calling and counting rich men the best men in the parish. Riches without godliness are but a gold ring in a swine's snout, for which the brute is nothing the better. It is not airy applause or worldly preferments that will make a man honourable. Titles are but like feathers in the hat, or glistening scarfs under the arms, which add not the least worth to the man that wears them. A great letter makes no more to the sense of the world than a small one. Worship, honour,

grace, highness, majesty, make nothing to the real intrinsic value of any person. The great monarchs of the world are but beasts in God's account. Antiochus Epiphanes, whose name signifieth illustrious, whom the Samaritans stiled the mighty God, is called by the Holy Ghost, because of his ungodliness, a vile person, Dan. 11:21; 'In his days shall stand up a vile person.' All honour without holiness is fading, as well as fancied rather than real. External nobility, though it glitter in the face of the world, is but, as Seneca saith, vitrea, brittle as glass, and compounded of earth. The potentates of the world are often like tennis-balls, tossed up on high to fall down low. Hence some of the wiser heathen have called them ludibria fortunæ, the scorn of fortune. Haman honoured one day, the next day hanged. Gelimer, the puissant prince of the Vandals, Belisarius, Charles the Fifth, and Henry the Fourth, emperors, and many others, experienced the brittleness of worldly glory. But that honour which is from above is true and eternal. Plutarch tells us the Roman nobles, as a badge of their nobility, wore the picture of the moon upon their shoes, signifying, as their nobility did increase, so it would decrease. All privileges, all prerogatives, all titles, all dignities, without godliness, are vanishing shadows. It is the new creation that rendereth the children of Abraham like the glorious stars in heaven.

The world looks on the saint (possibly he is poor and mean in the world) as the Jews looked on Christ, as a root out of a dry ground, and so saw no form nor comeliness in him; but they who could pierce into the inside of Christ, could see that in him dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and they who can see into the inside of Christians, behold the King's daughter all glorious within. As the precious stone sandastra hath nothing in outward appearance but that which seemeth black, but, being broken, poureth forth beams like the sun, so the church of Christ is outwardly black with affliction, but inwardly more bright and glorious than the sun, with thriving

virtues and celestial graces. The power of godliness in a mean Christian is a rich treasure in a mean cabinet, but vice in robes, in scarlet, is poison in wine, the more deadly and dangerous.

Tamerlane's tomb was rifled by the Turks, and his bones worn by them for jewels, though their enemy, and one that had conquered them in divers combats, and captivated their emperor, and carried him up and down in an iron cage for his footstool. God makes his people honourable in the eyes of the wicked: 'Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou art honourable, and I have loved thee; therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. The sons of them that afflicted thee shall bow before thee, and thine enemies shall lick the dust,' Isa. 43:4. A wicked king, Jehoram, honoureth and waiteth on a servant of God, Elisha; Herod reverenceth the Baptist. Grace is a powerful, though silent orator, to persuade all that see it to love and honour it. What Diogenes spake of learning is truly applicable to grace, or the knowledge of God in Christ. It makes young men sober, old men happy, poor men rich, and rich men honourable.

When Agesilaus was ready to die, he charged his friends that they should not make any picture or statue of him: For, saith he, if I have done anything that is good, that will be my monument; but if otherwise, all the statues you can make will not keep my name alive. The Egyptians, in their funeral orations, never commended any for his riches, because they thought them the goods of fortune, but for his righteousness and justice.

Piety is a lasting pillar, that causeth the righteous to be had in everlasting remembrance. Time shall not outlive the saint's honour: grace renders him more illustrious than ever the Mausolean mountain did that Carian. As the hairs of Tarandrus are not to be

pierced with any weapon, so the name of a saint cannot be hurt by all the slanders and calumnies of the wicked. They who are sainted in heaven's calendar, and whose names are enrolled in the Lamb's book of life, are truly honourable and eternally glorious, maugre the malice of men and devils. The disgrace which the wicked cast on the righteous is, at worst, but like the noise of some loud-tongued gun, ceased as soon as heard; but the honour which God and Scripture put upon the godly is a pillar which endureth to all eternity; such a monument as neither age, nor time, nor envy, can waste or wear out. Demetrius, under all the obloquy and contempt which his countrymen cast upon him, could comfort himself in this, that though the Athenians demolished his statues, yet they could not extinguish his virtues, the cause of raising them.

Sin is so base and beggarly, so loathsome and shameful a thing, that not only the children of God, but even wicked men, have been unwilling to own it, and ashamed to be taxed with it, or found out at the commission of it; when godliness is so high and honourable, so noble and excellent a mistress, that those who deny the power of it, will take upon them the form of it; they who hate its work, will wear its livery. There are hardly any jewels of grace, but for each of them vice hath counterfeit stones. Oh how noble a mistress, how honourable a lady is that, whom all pretend relation to, and even those that hate her would not be thought her enemies, but blush to be taxed as strangers to her!

2. It is the most comfortable and delightful calling. Satan would represent Christians under ugly vizards, and Christianity frightful, to make men loathe both the one and the other. As he transforms himself, the prince of darkness, and his ways, which are darkness, into an angel of light, and seeming light, so he endeavours to transform Christians, who are children of light, and their holy ways,

which are paths of light, into children of darkness and paths of darkness. He endeavours to make men think the power of godliness antipodes to all cheerfulness; but holiness is far from such a crabbed face and austere countenance as he would have us fancy. No trade hath so much mirth with it and in it; joy is one essential part of this calling: 'The kingdom of God consisteth not in meats and drinks, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,' Rom. 14:17. The servants of God do not only rejoice in the forethoughts of their reward, to think of the time when their indentures shall expire, and they shall enjoy the glorious liberty of the sons of God—'We rejoice in hope of glory;' but also in their work. They are joyful in the house of prayer; they sing at their work, 'Thy statutes are my songs in the house of my pilgrimage;' nay, at the hardest and most tiresome of their work: 'We rejoice in tribulation.' 'My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.' Joy is the beam which is darted from the sun, the stream which floweth from the fountain of godliness. It is observable that the beginning, the least degree of grace, causeth joy, great joy; what, then, will its growth and perfection do? When Christ did but call to Zaccheus, he came down hastily, and received him joyfully, Luke 19:6. When the eunuch was converted, he went home rejoicing, Acts 8:39. When the Samaritans had received Christ into their hearts at Philip's preaching, there was great joy in that city, Acts 8:6–8. The jailer, after his heartquake, rejoiced, believing in God with all his house, Acts 16:34. The joy of the saints, as it is invisible, so it is unutterable: 'In whom believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory,' 1 Pet. 1:8. For the measure of it, it is compared to the joy of harvest, to the joy of the bridegroom and bride on their wedding-day, Isa. 9:3; Hosea 2:19.

Hence it is that grace and godliness are compared to, and set forth by, those things which are pleasant and delightful, and bring joy with them: as music, the joy and delight of the ears; a feast, the joy and

delight of the taste; to light, the joy and delight of the eyes; life, wine, which rejoiceth the heart; perfumes, which delight the scent; good, the joy of the will; truth, the joy of the understanding. Godliness hath joy proper and suitable for every sense, whether outward or inward. As the higher the sun is, the greater its light is, so the holier the Christian, the greater his joy is. The more clear the fire burns, the more comfortable it is; smoke fetcheth tears from our eyes. When grace burns clear, it is refreshing indeed; it is the smoke of sin that turns our houses into bochims, places of weeping. When good men step awry, not pondering their goings, then they wrench their feet, or put their bones out of joint, and so put themselves to much pain.

Indeed, wicked men who are ignorant of the mystery of godliness, because they see no sunshine in the faces of godly men, judge it to be foul weather in their hearts. As the Roman soldiers, when they entered into the Sanctum sanctorum and saw no images, presently reported the Jews to worship the clouds; but a Christian's joy is as far out of wicked men's sight to discern it, as out of their power to remove it. A stranger intermeddleth not with his joy: 'Your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy shall no man take from you.' A wicked man's joy is most in his face. As a blackamore, he is white nowhere but in his teeth. Seneca compares him to a commander in a desperate battle, who, lest his soldiers should run away, sets a good face on it, when he is inwardly terrified and full of fear. He is like one in a high desperate fever, having a good colour, when his heart is heavy, and he is at the gate of death. The godly man's joy is most in his heart: he is like that fish which hath a rough outside but a pearl within. When there are storms without, there is music within—peace of conscience, which passeth all understanding. A wicked man is as a book of tragedies, bound extraordinary, gay and gilt on the outside, but full of doleful, dreadful stories within; or, as Alexander said of Antipater, he was white without, but purple within; his face may be



white and smiling, but his conscience is red and fiery. But the godly man's inside is his best side; though his full sacks of joy and delight are not opened till he comes to his Father's house, yet the blessed Jesus gives him, as Joseph the patriarchs, sufficient provision for the way. The law gave the first fruits of the earth to God; the gospel gives the first fruits of heaven to men, which are both an earnest and a taste of their glorious and everlasting harvest.

All sorrows proceed from sin. As the shadow followeth the body, so doth grief follow guilt. Lust, like rotten flesh or wood, will breed worms to gnaw in the sinner's bowels. Therefore it is no wonder that Nabal, Saul, and Belshazzar, when their lusts flew in their faces, died, or were ready to die, with horror. If a godly man sin wilfully, and wound his soul, it is no wonder if he feel the smart and pain of it. When David steps awry, and slips with his feet, and falls dangerously, he may well keep his bed, and water his couch, and cry out of his aches and broken bones; yet the very sorrow of a saint for sin against his God, hath more real joy and delight in it than all the skin-deep pleasures of giggling gallants. Crates could dance and laugh in his threadbare coat, and his wallet at his back, which was all his wealth. The saint can rejoice in his saddest afflictions; though he seldom live in palaces, yet he always lives in a paradise, having, if he be careful to keep a good conscience, a constant youth of joy and perpetual spring, as that place they write of under the equator. The tears of those that pray, saith Augustine, are sweeter than the joys of the theatre.

It is true, godliness doth abridge men of sinful pleasures, but it is the more pleasant for separating itself from that which is worse than poison. Agesilaus could taste by a natural appetite that such pleasures are more fit for slaves than freemen. Averroes and the rest of the Arabian philosophers are ashamed of that sensual and beastly

paradise which their Mohammed provided for them, as most unworthy the soul of man, and infinitely short of true delight.

Godliness doth not deny us our natural delights, only rectify and regulate them, lest we should surfeit on them. It doth not deny us drink, but drunkenness: nor meat, but gluttony. Nature, even in things in themselves lawful, would run out unlawfully if she were not restrained. Grace only keepeth the reins in its own hands, lest that skittish colt should, through its wantonness, break its own neck. It is as the pale to the garden, to preserve the flowers in it from beasts, or as a hedge to a field, to keep what is in it within bounds. As Leonidas the captain, perceiving that his soldiers left their watch on the city walls for the ale-houses, commanded that the ale-houses should be removed to the city walls, that they might both enjoy their pleasure and discharge their duties together. Godliness alloweth men the comfort of their relations and possessions, only it so limiteth our delight in them, that we may not by them be hindered from working the work of God, and minding our eternal salvations.

Godliness brings more noble and excellent pleasures. Others are puddle-water; those pleasures which godliness giveth are pure and clear streams, such as flow from God himself. There is more sweetness in one drop of the fountain, than in all the waters of the sea. There is more joy, more comfort, in a little communion with God, than in the greatest confluence of creature enjoyments. Augustine saith, How sweet was it to me on a sudden to be without these sweet vanities! thou, Lord, who art the true sweetness, didst take them from me and enter in thyself, who art more pleasant than all pleasure, and more clear than all light. The world, as they say of fairies, deprives of true children, and puts changelings in their room; deprives men of true substantial joy, and gives them shadows in the room; but godliness, on the contrary, deprives of painted poisons,

and gives them wholesome and real pleasures. All the comforts of this world, to a person void of grace, are but as a sack of perfumes and medicines, and cordial drugs to the back of a galled horse, which may vex and enrage his sores with their weight, but do not ease or abate his pain with their virtue. A saint's life, notwithstanding his greatest sufferings, whilst it is blessed with the smiles of his Father, is a heaven upon earth; but the sinner's life, notwithstanding his honours, and pleasures, and riches, and relations, whilst under the wrath of an infinite God, and anguished with the gripings of a guilty conscience, is little less than an earnest and taste of hell. Grace is sugar to sweeten all our crosses, and sin is vinegar to sour all our comforts. The iron seems to embrace the loadstone with great delight, and to be rapt with an amorous ecstasy; so as Thales thought it animal. And yet that motion is void of the least sense of pleasure. The wicked man seems, by his smiling face and giggling countenance, to be the only merry man, when he is as far from true pleasure as from true piety. The least bee finds more delight in making and tasting a little honey, than the great sun and all his glorious attendants in their high and perpetual courses. The meanest Christian hath more comfort in making sure his salvation, and tasting the sweetness of his Saviour, than the kings of the earth and their courtiers in their abundance of all earthly comforts.

The wise man tells us concerning the ways of wisdom, wherein a Christian's daily walk is, 'Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace,' Prov. 3:17; and the saints find them so by experience. The word of God, which is the rule of their work, is sweeter to them than the honey and the honeycomb, and they delight to do the will of God. The sinner's life is an uncomfortable life; besides those inward gripes and horror which sin causeth in the conscience at present, and its end, the sting in the tail, which is the eternal fire, there is trouble, and fear, and shame, and vexation in the

very act or commission of many sins. To forgive an injury, which is one piece of Christianity, is pleasant and delightful; but to revenge an affront, what heats and colds, what passions and perturbations, doth it cause! To love our neighbours, and wish their welfare, is a sweet thing, a reward in itself—it hath meat in its mouth; but to envy my neighbour, because he is richer or more honourable, or hath larger gifts and more friends than myself, is as rottenness to the bones; it wasteth and consumeth the inward parts, as rust eateth out iron, according to Solomon's phrases. A contented man hath a heaven upon earth; all the year with him is spring-time or summer; like a child, he takes no carking care for food, or raiment, or house-rent, but minds his duty, and leaves all to his Father, who knoweth what he hath need of. But the covetous, who, like the barren womb, hath never enough, pines with fear of want, and can neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep quietly, lest he should lose what he hath, or not have sufficient to hold out; nay, he will not allow himself convenient food or raiment, though he have never so much; but, like a beast, feeds on thistles, when he hath all sorts of provision upon his back. Temperance hath health and strength with it, and thereby renders the other comforts of this life savoury and comfortable; so also chastity. But gluttony, and drunkenness, and whoredom bring weakness and sickness on men's bodies, and embitter all other blessings, besides the fear of being discovered, to the shame and disgrace of the authors, which tormenteth not a little. There is comfort in dealing honestly and righteously; but if a man will cheat, and cozen, and filch, and steal, no wonder if he tire his head with plots and projects to carry it on cunningly and secretly, and terrify his heart with apprehension that it will be known, and then be shall be branded for a knave, or suffer the penalty of law in a more severe degree.

The sinner is hurried hither and thither by his opposite lords and contrary lusts, and torn piecemeal by them, as a man by beasts, which draw the parts of his body contrary ways. The commands of sin are harsh and heavy; no tyrant ever put his subjects upon more crabbed, painful work; but the commandments of God are not grievous, 1 John 5:3. Sin is slavery, and its servant worse than those that row in Turkish galleys; but God's law is a law of liberty, and they walk at liberty who seek his precepts. The ways of sinners are called crooked ways, rugged ways, which are unpleasant to travel in; but the ways of God are called straight ways, plain paths, which are delightful to passengers. I am confident the true Christian hath more true pleasure in suffering for Christ, or one act of mortification, or victory over one lust, than the highest earthly potentate hath in his largest dominions, in the multitude of his subjects, in the richness of his kingdoms, and in all the honour that is done him, or good things enjoyed by him all his days.

3. It is the most profitable calling. Reader, this argument is Achilleum, or instar omnium, the strongest argument, and instead of all; with most men gain is the great god of this world, that commandeth all their heads, and hearts, and hands, to whom they bow down the knees both of their bodies and souls. The thief and murderer are quickened by this to their hellish trade: 'Come, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause. We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil,' Prov. 1:11, 13. The Shechemites, upon this ground, will endure the pain of circumcision, and throw up their former religion: 'Shall not their beasts, and their cattle, and their substance be ours?' The soul for this will scale the walls, and leap upon the pikes, and run upon the mouth of the cannon. The husbandman for this will rise early, go to bed late, eat the bread of carefulness, toil and moil all day, and make a drudge, a slave, a pack-horse of himself all the year.

The merchant for this will plough the ocean, dance upon the surging billows, suffer many dangers and deaths through his whole voyage. The shopkeeper for this will crowd into any hole of the city, break his sleep, waste his health, run about hither and thither, early and late. Gehazi, Achan, Judas, Balaam, for this will venture their bodies, their souls, any things, all things. Profit is such a bait that all will bite at. The devil, that arch-politician, who hath had so many thousand years' experience, besides his extraordinary natural knowledge, could not judge any topics more likely than this to take with our blessed Saviour: 'All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.' The gods themselves were said by the Athenians to be corrupted with Philip's gold, that their oracles still were in favour of him. Money is the absolute monarch, which can put men upon the most dangerous designs. Therefore Cassius, surnamed the Severe, one of the wisest of the Roman judges, in all doubtful causes that came before him would demand, Cui bono, Who gained, or had the profit? well knowing that that is the bias which turneth men aside to wrong others; and the heady, wanton horse, which breaks through the fence to trespass upon neighbours.

Now, reader, if profit will prevail with thee, godliness with contentment is great gain. All the gold of the world is dross, all the diamonds of the world are dirt, all the gains of the world are loss to this gain of godliness. Egypt watered by Nilus hath four rich harvests, say some, in less than four months. Solinus saith the Egyptian fig-tree beareth fruit seven times in a year. Godliness brings forth thirty, sixty, a hundredfold increase; it giveth a hundredfold in this world, and in the world to come life everlasting, Mat. 19:29. 'After ye had your fruits unto holiness, in the end everlasting life,' Rom. 6:22. Did the sinner but believe Scripture, that speaks the infinite reward of holiness, he would quickly set up this trade. Pindar the poet saith, in regard of the fertility of Rhodia, and the wealth of

the inhabitants, that it rained gold in that country. 'The fruit of wisdom is better than silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all thou canst desire is not to be compared to her,' Prov. 3:14, 15.

Lucian fancieth all the heathen gods and goddesses sitting in parliament, and each making choice of that tree which best pleased them. Jupiter chose the oak for its strength; Apollo, the bay-tree for its greenness; Neptune chose the poplar for its length; Juno chose the eglantine for its sweetness; Venus chose the myrtle-tree for its beauty; Minerva, sitting by, demanded of her father Jupiter, why, since there were so many fruitful trees, they all had chosen barren ones. He answered, *Ne videantur fructu honorem vendere*, Lest they should seem to sell honour for fruit. Minerva replied, Well, do what you please; I for my part make choice of the olive, for its fatness and fruitfulness. They all commended her choice, and were ashamed of their own folly. This fiction doth fitly represent the foolishness of men at this day, in choosing the honours, and preferments, and glory of the world, which are barren and unfruitful things, of no worth in the other world, before that honour which is from God, and the eternal weight of glory, and also the convictions of their consciences another day, which will force them to be ashamed of their own folly; and to commend the choice of a Christian for preferring grace and godliness, which will stand him in stead in an hour of death and day of judgment, and bring him in unspeakable gain, before the airy honours and withering vanities of this life.

Reader, if thou wilt give conscience free liberty to speak its mind, I know it will tell thee that no calling is comparable to this for profit.

The gain of godliness is real gain, rich gain, certain gain, eternal gain.

1. It is real, if the word of truth may be trusted; its fruit is therefore called substance, in distinction from earthly riches, which are shadows: 'I will cause them that love me to inherit substance.'

2. It is called also true riches; other riches are feigned. Hence also godly men are said to be rich towards God, and other men to be rich in this world. It is rich gain, as it hath relation to the best part; it makes the soul of man truly precious, as it is most serviceable to our last end, and prepareth man for the fruition of God, and also as its reward is unconceivable. The vessels of mercy shall swim in an ocean of glory: 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can the heart of man conceive what God hath laid up for them that love him,' 1 Cor. 2:9. Its reward is beyond all expression, above all apprehensions; no comparison can fully resemble it, no understanding conceive it.

3. It is eternal gain. Other gains are fading, deceitful brooks, dying flowers, withering gourds, and vanishing shadows: 'Riches are not for ever,' Prov. 29.; 'Man in honour abideth not,' Ps. 49:12; 'The pleasures of sin are but for a season,' Heb. 11:25; but this gain is for ever. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever, both in the nature of it, it is incorruptible seed, and in the fruit of it, which is the gift of God, eternal life. Though other trades shall all fail, as useful only in this needy world; though other callings shall vanish, and time itself shall be no more, yet this trade, this calling, shall run parallel with the life of an immortal soul. Though gold be a corruptible metal, the gain of this calling is better than much fine gold; it is an inheritance, undefiled, incorruptible. Our work, whether in doing or suffering the will of God, is but for a moment; but it works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Oh what a happy good, what an excellent gain, is that which is eternal! Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall never be taken from her. When thy lands and houses shall be taken from thee, thy place and dwelling



shall know thee no more; when thy friends and relations shall be taken from thee—'Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke;' when all the comforts of this life shall serve thee as vermin and lice do a dead man, though they stick close to him in his life, run from him at death; this calling will stand by thee, encourage thee, never leave thee nor forsake thee. In other things thou chooseth for that which is most lasting. If thou buyest a house, or beast, or suit of apparel, thou art desirous to have that which is most durable and strong. Oh, why shouldst thou not choose that good which is everlasting! When Demetrius had taken Megara, and his soldiers plundered the city, he, fearing the philosopher Stilpo might receive some loss, sent for him, and asked him whether any of his men had taken anything of his. Stilpo answered, No; for I saw no man that took my learning from me. Godliness is such wealth, such learning, as will abide with thee in general plunder; indeed, neither men nor devils can rob thee of it.

4. It is certain gain. He that sets up of this trade may be trusted, for none ever brake of this calling. God himself, whose is the earth and the fulness thereof, is bound for them, and hath undertaken for their preservance, and growth, and gains. The merchant that trades into the other world, is not properly a merchant venturer; for the gospel, which is the insurance office, hath engaged infinite power, and love, and faithfulness for the security and safe return of all the vessels which he sends forth. The promises are all yea and amen, the sure mercies of David; the covenant of grace, which containeth all their gains and riches, is stable in all things, and sure, 2 Cor. 1:20; Isa. 55:6; 2 Sam. 23:5.

If there were a free trade proclaimed to the Indies, and every man that went promised as much gold as he would desire, and a certainty of making a good voyage, who almost would stay at home? What

crowding would there be to port towns, and what haste to take shipping.

Reader, though God will not suffer this to be in reference to earthly treasures, knowing out of his infinite wisdom how hurtful they would be to immortal souls, yet he offereth thee all this, and infinitely more, in calling upon thee to mind godliness. He saith to thee, as Joseph to his brethren, Gen. 45:18, 'Come unto me, and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land.' Come unto me, and I will give you the good of Canaan, and ye shall eat the pleasant fruits of that land flowing with milk and honey.

O reader, didst thou know the worth of this jewel, thou wouldst trample upon all the wealth of this world as dung in comparison of it. Little dost thou think or imagine the advantage, the virtues, of this diamond. It is the true loadstone that draweth all good to it. Luther saith of one psalm: This psalm hath done more for me than all the potentates of the world. I may say to thee, This calling will feed thee with bread that came down from heaven, and clothe thee with fine linen, the robes of God's own righteousness; it will protect thee and maintain thee, it will advance and honour thee, it will enrich and ennoble thee in life, refresh and rejoice thee in death, crown and reward thee after death, do more for thee than all the princes or potentates, relations or possessions, persons or comforts upon earth can do.

In thy prosperity and enjoyment of outward good things, godliness would, like sugar and spice, correct their windiness, and make them wholesome and profitable to thee. It would, like Elisha's meal and salt, make thy meat sweet and savoury, and thy drink pleasant and refreshing to thee. It would make thy bed soft and easy, thy garments warm and sweet-scented. It will so far abate thy appetite to this

luscious food, that thou shouldst not feed immoderately, to the surfeiting thy soul.

As the fiery bush which Moses saw in the mount Horeb, though it was in a flaming fire, did not consume; or as the shining worm, that, being cast into the fire, doth not waste, but is thereby purged from its filth, and made more beautiful than all the water in the world could make it; so affliction should not ruin, but reform and purify thee. In the greatest danger this will be thy defence. Though others, like the old world, are drowned, are destroyed in these waters, yet thou shouldst ride safely in a well-pitched ark; and to free thee from any fear of miscarrying, the Lord himself would shut thee in. When others are in the open air, on whom storms and tempests have their full force, thou shouldst be housed in God's presence-chamber, and kept secret by his side. As Gideon's fleece, thou shouldst be dry, when all about thee are wet. The whale of destruction might digest thousands of mariners, but one godly Jonah is too hard for him. The torrent of fire that ran from Ætna, and consumed the country, yet parted itself to safeguard them that relieved their aged parents. When the Grecians had taken Troy, and given every man liberty to carry out his burden, they were so taken with the devotion of Æneas in carrying out first his household gods, and, upon a second license, his old father Anchises and his son Ascanius, instead of treasures, which others carried out, that they permitted him to carry what he would without any disturbance. Jeremiah, in the Babylonish captivity, was tendered and regarded highly by the king of Babylon. When Sodom was destroyed, Lot was preserved. It was storied of Troy, that so long as the image of Pallas stood safe in it, that city should never be won. It is true of godliness, so long as the fear and love of thy God are within thee, so long as thou makest religion thy business, nothing shall hurt thee, everything shall help thee. Godliness will bring in all gain, and at all times: 'No good thing will

he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' A child of God, by adoption, is in some sense like the Son of God by eternal generation, heir of all things: 1 Cor. 3:22, 23, 'Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours: and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.' Nay, the Christian's riches are not only unsearchable, Eph. 3:8, but also durable, Prov. 8:15. When a wicked man dieth, all his riches die with him. His treasure is laid up on earth, therefore, when he leaves the earth, he leaves his treasure, Ps. 49:17. When a godly man dieth, his riches follow him, Rev. 14:13. His treasure is in heaven, and so when he dieth he goeth to his gains.

O reader, what an argument is here to provoke thee to piety. Godliness is profitable in all conditions, in all relations, in both worlds. In prosperity, it will be a sun to direct thee; in adversity, a shield to protect thee; in life, it will be thy comfort, and, which is infinitely more, in death, that hour of need, it will be thy enlivening cordial. The smell of trefoil is stronger in a cloudy, dark season, than in fair weather. The refreshing savour of the sweet spices of grace is strongest in the saints' greatest necessities.

When death, the king of terrors, comes to enter the list, and fight with thee for thy soul and eternal salvation, for thy God, and Christ, and heaven, and happiness; when all thy riches, and honours, and friends, and relations would leave thee in the lurch, to shift for thyself, as dogs leave their master when he comes to the water, godliness would be thy shield, to secure thee against its shot, and make thee more than a conqueror over it. Thou mightst call thy dying bed, as Jacob the place through which he travelled, Mahanaim, a camp, for there angels would meet thee, to convey thee safe through the air, the enemy's country, of which Satan is lord and prince, to thy Father's house, where thou shouldst be infinitely

blessed in the vision and fruition of thy God and Saviour for ever. Godliness would be the pilot to steer the vessel of thy soul aright through those boisterous waters to a happy port. The Arabic fable mentions one that carried a hog, a goat, and a sheep to the city; the hog roared hideously, when the other two were still and quiet; and being asked the reason, gave this account of her crying: The sheep and goat have no such cause to complain, for they are carried to the city for their milk, but I am carried thither to be killed, being good for nothing else. The ungodly person may well cry out sadly when sickness comes, for then guilt flieth in his face, and conscience tells him death will kill him; he is good for nothing but to be killed with death, Rev. 11:5; he never honoured God in this world, and God will force honour out of him in the other world. He may well screech out dreadfully at the approach of death, whose body death sends to the grave, and his soul to intolerable and unquenchable flames; but the godly man may bid death welcome, knowing it will be his exceeding gain and advantage.

Reader, when others, like the Israelites, are afraid, and start back at the sight of this Goliath, thou mightst, like little David, encounter him in the name of the Lord, and overcome him. Thou mightst triumphantly sing in the ears of death, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' The Lord of life would sweeten death to thee, and subdue it for thee; nay, make it at peace with thee, that thou mightst say to death, as Jacob to Esau, 'I have seen thy face, as if it had been the face of God,' who hath made thee to meet me with smiles instead of frowns. Death would help thee to that sight, to that knowledge, to that state and degree of holiness for which thou hast prayed, and wept, and fasted, and watched, and laboured, and waited many a day; as it is said of Job, there was none like him in the earth, so I may say of this calling, there is none like it upon the face of the earth, the very enemies of it, in their hours of extremity, being

judges. Ah, who would not work for God with the greatest diligence, and walk with God in the exactest obedience, and wait upon God with the greatest patience, when he is assured that, in the doing of his commands, there is such great reward; and those that 'sow to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.'

## THE CONCLUSION

Reader, I have now ended this treatise; but whether thou, if a stranger to this calling, wilt put an end to thy carnal, fleshly ways, and begin this high and heavenly work or no, I know not. If thou art ambitious, thou hast here encouragement sufficient; godliness will ennoble thee, and render thy blood not only honourable, but royal. If thou art voluptuous, here is a bait which may take thee; godliness will bring thee to a river of pleasures, to such dainties and delights as take the hearts of perfect and glorious angels. If thou art covetous, here is a golden weight to turn the scales of thy desires and endeavours: 'Godliness is profitable unto all things;' it hath the promise of this life, and of that which is to come. When thy house, and lands, and honours, and neighbours, and wife, and children, and flesh, and heart fail thee, and forsake thee, godliness would say to thee, and stand to it also, as Peter to Christ, 'Though all forsake thee, yet will not I.' When the world's trinity—credit, profit, and pleasure—serve their lovers and worshippers as rats and mice do a house, leave it when it is on fire, fly from them in their need and extremity, godliness would stick to thee as close, as fast as Ruth to Naomi; where thou goest it would go, where thou lodgest it would lodge; nay, it would follow thee into the other world, and abide with thee, a cordial, a comfort for ever; it would give thee cause to say to it, as she to her daughter-in-law, 'Thou hast shewed more kindness to me at the latter end than at the beginning.'

What canst thou have to object against godliness, that sets thee at such a distance from it? Wilt thou believe a lying world, a deceitful flesh, a destroying devil, or the God of truth? Who is thy greatest enemy, God or they? Who will do thee most good, God or they? If thou wilt be tried by the confessions of the greatest enemies that godliness hath, even they, in their hours of extremity, will tell thee grace is of infinite worth; godliness is the best of all. Ah, how happy had we been at this hour, had we been as faithful servants to religion as we have been slaves to foolish lusts and pleasures!

If reason may be heard, thou wilt not defer one moment the entering thy name in this society, and binding thyself apprentice to thy Saviour; thou mayst see plainly that it is thine interest as well as thy duty; and all thy happiness for this and the other world dependeth on it. If Scripture may be heard, thou wilt quickly set about thy general calling, and make religion thy business; it calleth loudly to thee to turn thy back upon earth, and face about for heaven; to forsake the flesh, before the flesh forsake thee. It telleth thee plainly, under the hand of thy Maker, that if thou livest after the flesh, and sowest to the flesh, thou shalt die eternally. If the conscience within thee may be heard, thou wilt presently give a bill of divorce to thy carnal, brutish delights, and strike a hearty covenant with Jesus Christ; it often warneth thee of thy duty and danger, and terrifieth thee with the forethoughts of that fire and fury which thou art hastening to feel. If thy friends and relations, who have any sense of a jealous God, and eternal estate, may be heard, then thou wilt immediately hearken to the counsel I commend to thee from God, and exercise thyself unto godliness. They advise, and persuade, and entreat thee to turn over a new leaf, and lead a new life, and to mind in thy day the things of thy peace. If the God upon whom thou livest, by whom thou movest, from whom thou hast thy being, may be heard, thou wilt now wink on the world, crucify the flesh, loathe

thyself for thy filth and folly, and devote thy heart and soul to his fear. He commandeth thee by his dominion over thee, and thy obligations to him; he threateneth, promiseth, affrighteth, allureth, and all to make thee mind thy allegiance to him, and the work he hath given thee to do in this world. If thy Saviour, who humbled himself for thy sake, and took upon him the form of a servant, and in thy nature was buffeted, scourged, and crucified, may be heard, then thou wilt immediately take the counsel that is given thee, and turn to the Lord with all thy heart, and loathe thyself for all thine abominations. He pleads with thee most pathetically, presenteth to thee the stripes and wounds which sin caused in his blessed body; the blood which he shed, the ignominy he endured, the agony, the death he suffered, and all to satisfy for sin, to make himself Lord both of the dead and living. He tells thee he gave himself for thee, to redeem thee from all iniquity, and to purify thee to himself a peculiar child zealous of good works. If the daily, and nightly, and hourly mercies that thou enjoyest; if the sickness, or pain, or loss, or disgrace, or afflictions which sometimes thou sufferest, may be heard, there would not be so much ado to persuade a wretched creature to be blessed, and an ungodly person to be holy and happy. If the inanimate and irrational creatures, the earth beneath thee, the heavens above thee, the beasts and birds, about thee, might be heard, thou wouldst, whilst it is called to-day, now, after so long a time, attend to the call and command of him, in whose hand is thy life and breath, and follow after holiness, without which thou shalt never see the Lord. Shall a centurion's servant go, when he bids him go, and come, when he bids him come; and wilt thou not go and come at the voice of God? Did Balaam's ass speak at God's command, and reprove the madness of the prophet? Did ravens at God's command feed Elijah? Did caterpillars, and locusts, and frogs, and lice, execute God's judgments upon Pharaoh? Do fire, and hail, and snow, and vapours, and stormy winds fulfil his word? Doth the earth open, the



rocks rend, the stars fight in their courses, waters stand up in heaps as a wall, the moon stand still, the sun go backward, wildernesses tremble, things cross the course of nature to obey his pleasure, and wilt not thou obey him? O man, bethink thyself! wilt thou be worse than these irrational and inanimate creatures? are not thy engagements to God infinitely above theirs? What wilt thou have to say for thyself, when every stone in the street, as well as star in the heavens, when every bird, and beast, and fowl, will condemn thee? Oh where wilt thou appear?

I must tell thee that a perilous time, a day of extremity, an hour of trouble and anguish, is hastening upon thee, which thou canst no more escape or avoid, than thou canst fly from thyself; when the pleasures, and delights, and honey, and beautiful countenances of those scorpions, thy fleshly lusts, will all be past and gone, but the sting remain to pierce and torment thee; when those dreggy waters in which thou bathest thyself now will all be dried up; when all thy possessions, and preferments, and friends, and relations will serve thee, as women their flowers when they are dead and withered, who throw them away, or as sinking floors, that will fail men when their weight is on them. And then, oh then, what wilt thou do? Thou wilt wish that religion had been thy business, and call and cry to it, as the elders of Gilead to Jephtha, when the children of Ammon made war with them: 'Come thou and be our captain, and save us from our enemies.' Come thou and be my captain, to save me from the curse of the law, the terrors of my guilty conscience, the wrath of the infinite God, and the torments of the eternal fire. But godliness will answer thee, as Jephtha did them: 'Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of my father's house? and why are ye come unto me now ye are in distress?' Didst not thou hate me, and expel me out of thy heart and house? Didst thou not deride, and jeer, and persecute me, against all the commands, and threatenings, and promises, and entreaties of

God and his word? And why art thou come to me now thou art in distress? I must tell thee, thou wilt then weep, and howl, and lament to God, as the Israelites did in their extremity: 'Deliver us only, we pray thee, this day.' Lord, help me, Lord, save me, deliver me this day from the jaws of the roaring lion; Lord, let not hell shut her mouth upon me. Who can dwell in everlasting burnings? who can abide devouring flames? But thou mayest expect the same answer which God gave them: 'Go and cry to the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation. Go to the flesh, and the world; go to thy riches, and honours, and sinful delights, which thou hast chosen and preferred before me; and let them deliver thee in this time of thy tribulation.' 'Where are those gods, the rocks in which thou trustedst? Let them rise up, and help thee, and be thy protection,' Judges 11:6, 7, and 10:14, 15; Deut 32:37, 38.

A saint can sing in such a day of trial, knowing that death is come to him as the angel to Peter, striking on his side, not to hurt, but to awaken him, to beat off his fetters, and set him in the glorious liberty of the children of God.

The saint and the sinner never differ so much, at least in open view, as in their ends. Sin in the bud is sweet, but in the fruit bitter; and holiness, though at first draught seems not so pleasant, yet afterwards is all sweetness.

Though the path of sin be smooth, and pleasing to thy flesh, yet thou wilt find it slippery, and killing to thy spirit: it is like an evening star, to usher in a night of blackness, of darkness, for ever. The way of holiness is more harsh to the body, but the only nectar of the soul. Ah, reader, if thou wilt but choose it, thou wilt find by experience that it will be like Hannibal's passage over the Alps, a way which will

require some pains, but it will lead thee into the heavenly paradise, as that did him into the world's garden, Italy.

Reader, let me therefore bespeak thee, or rather God himself: 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Turn unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto thee, saith the Lord of hosts,' Zech. 1:3. After all thy neglect and contempt of God and his word, after all thy wanderings and wickedness, thou hast one call more to turn and live, in which thy Maker doth three times pawn and interpose the authority of his name to confirm his word. The Lord of hosts: three times he doth as it were bring his angels, his hosts with him, in this precept and promise, as once to Sinai at the delivery of the law. 1. As witnesses of his truth; 2. As avengers of him on them that despise his call; 3. As rejoicers for those that turn unto him. O friend, consider it, that God, who might have turned thee into hell, commandeth thee now, after all thy folly and lewdness, to turn to him; yea, he promiseth that if thou dost come at his call, he will meet thee half way, and turn unto thee. It is not for his own sake that he is so earnest with thee, for he can be happy without thee; he hath no addition by thy salvation, he suffereth no diminution by thy damnation; but he calleth on thee for thy good, that thou mightst be happy in his favour. It was the saying of Antigona, that she ought to please them with whom she hoped to remain for ever. Ah, doth it not concern thee to please that God upon whom thou dependest for thy eternal weal or woe?

When Antiochus was in Egypt, in arms against the Romans, they sent P. Popilius with other ambassadors to him, where, when he had welcomed them, P. Popilius delivered some writings to him containing the mind of his masters, which he commanded Antiochus to read, which he did. Then he consulted with his friends what was best to be done in the business. Whilst he was in a great study. P. Popilius, with a wand that he had in his hand, made a circle about

him in the dust, saying, Ere thou stir a foot out of this circle, return thy answer, that I may tell the senate whether thou hadst rather have war or peace. This he uttered with such a firm countenance, that it amazed the king; wherefore after he had paused awhile, he answered, I will do what the senate hath written, or shall think fit.

Reader, I shall only allude to it, and conclude. Thou art, if in thy natural estate, a rebel against God; thy heart is full of enmity, and thy life of treason against his blessed Majesty; thou art daily discharging whole volleys of shot against him; he hath sent me as his ambassador to offer thee terms of peace, and to require thee in his name to throw down thine arms, and to submit to his mercy. I know thou art ready to consult with thy seeming friends, but real enemies, the world and the flesh, what thou wert best to do in this case; but whilst thou art thus musing, I charge and command thee in the name of God, and by his authority who sent me to thee, that before thou closest the book, thou return to thy Maker in thy conscience thine answer, whether thou hadst rather have peace with him, whose wrath is infinitely worse than death, and whose favour is better than life, or war! If, considering the excellency, necessity, and profit of godliness, thou sayest, I will, through the help of Christ, do all that the Lord hath written, or thinketh fit to be done, in order to my recovery out of this estate of woe and misery, I shall inform thee that God is ready to receive thee, the Spirit to assist thee, thy Saviour to embrace thee, the rich and precious promises of the gospel, containing pardon, love, peace, eternal life, are all ready to welcome thee. But if thou deniest thy God, thy real, able, and faithful friend, and wilt gratify thy professed, though politic enemy, the devil, so much as to continue in thine ungodly courses, I must assure thee that, Phrygian-like, thou wilt repent when it is too late, and be taught by woeful experience that it had been far better to have hearkened to the counsels and commands of God; that with prudent Prometheus thou

mightst have foreseen a danger, and shunned it, than to walk on in the broad way to hell with foolish Epimetheus, without any consideration, till thou art unconceivably and irrecoverably miserable, and plunged in that lake, and amidst those dreadful torments, of which there is no end.

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## MONERGISM BOOKS

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